

3. *Mary responds to God's call for leadership:
'Here am I, the servant of the Lord'.
She willingly accepts the role of bringing to birth
the one who will bring justice and hope.*
- ✕ *In what ways have we heard God's call for leadership
in bringing to life the light and love we know in Jesus?*
4. *Mary's song expresses a prophetic call to justice for her
people who have suffered oppression and poverty.*
- ✕ *How can we advocate for justice in these times
of economic uncertainty, civil unrest,
brutality and oppression in our world?*

Signs & Stories:

*Take some time to share with one another
the ways that this Advent season has been holy ground
– ways that you experience God's-coming-near
– this time, this year.*

Closing Prayer:

NOTES:

Advent Reflections: In Light of our Hope & our Vision

Year C



Advent Reflections:
In Light of our Hope & our Vision

Our Diocesan Vision is borne out of our deepest hopes. . .

That through our mission and ministry,
we might passionately follow Christ
& faithfully reflect Christ's light and love
– within our world – in our own time.

Think of these Advent Reflections as permission:

– to turn aside for awhile
from the bustling busy-ness of this season
. . . choosing to come together
in conversation with one another
. . . to ponder quietly the deepest hopes
reflected in our shared Diocesan Vision.

There is a time for goal setting,
a time for indicators,
a time for action plans.

This is not that time!

On your own . . . or gathering with others. . .
in the light of the Vision

in reflection on the themes, values, hopes and stories
embodied in our shared Diocesan Vision.

May your Advent season be enlightened
through our Vision;

and may our Vision be enlightened
through your Advent experience and conversation.

Blessed among women!

Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country,
where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.
When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb.
And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit
and exclaimed with a loud cry,
"Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb.
And why has this happened to me,
that the mother of my Lord comes to me?
For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting,
the child in my womb leaped for joy.
And blessed is she who believed
that there would be a fulfillment
of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

(Luke 1)

**Fill us with your grace
that, in all things, we may embrace your will
and rejoice in your salvation;**

(B.A.S.)

Pondering in our Hearts – quiet for reflection

Sharing Insights:

En-visioning

1. Mary's song of joy is not only for her own blessing, but also for the hope, which her Son will bring to her people.
- ✘ With gratitude for our blessings, how can we give hope and comfort to others who are hungry, homeless and without hope?
 - 2. The embrace between Mary & Elizabeth expresses their expectation and joy – not just for their own family – but for God's people.
 - ✘ In our expectation of joy for family & friends in this season, how can we widen our embrace – bringing joy to those who are alone or discouraged?

WEEK 4

III. Joy & Hope

Mary: I am the servant of the Lord;
let it be to me according to God's word.

& Elizabeth: The child in my womb leaped for joy! (Luke 1)

Tell Out My Soul!
My soul is singing!

Opening Prayer:

**God of timeless grace, you fill us with joyful expectation.
Make us ready for the message that prepares the way,
that with uprightness of heart and holy joy
we may eagerly await the kingdom of your Son, Jesus Christ,
who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.**

Hearing the Word:

He shall feed his flock.

You, O Bethlehem – little one,
from you shall come forth one who is will rule in Israel,
And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD;
And he shall be the one of peace. (Micah 5)

Here am I, the servant of the Lord.

"Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.
Do not be afraid, for you have found favor with God.
The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
and the power of the Most High will overshadow you;
therefore the child to be born will be holy;
he will be called Son of God.
Here am I, the servant of the Lord;
let it be to me according to your word.
My soul magnifies the Lord;
For God is doing great things for me;
God scatters the proud in their conceit.
God casts down the mighty from their thrones,
God lifts up the lowly.
God fills the hungry with good things;
the rich are sent away empty. (Luke 1)

PLANNING TIPS & SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THESE ADVENT REFLECTIONS:

YEAR B Advent Reflections for use in small groups or for personal reflection.

1. These Advent Reflections could begin in the week BEFORE the 1st Sunday of Advent.
2. Ambience: Take the time to create a peaceful environment for these reflective conversations eg. In the centre of your gathering, you might create a reflecting pool – by putting votive candles in a glass bowl filled with water.
3. Sessions: Each week's outline includes the following sections:
 - o **Opening Prayer:**
 - o **Hearing the Word:**
 - a. There are two kinds of texts suggested for your group to ponder:
 - Some are scriptural phrases, drawn from Advent lectionary passages
 - Some are phrases from the Propers & Prayers provided in the B.A.S. Lectionary for Advent Sundays.
 - Pondering the short phrases from both prayer and scripture can deepen our 'hearing of the Word' in this Advent season.
 - b. To help people find a space of quiet attentiveness to the Word, it is suggested that each phrase / passage be read aloud 3 times – with a short silence between each. Similarly, you may choose 3 different voices.
 - o **Pondering in our hearts:**
 - o Use of silence or quiet music can enable participants to allow the Word to SPEAK within their hearts.
 - o Insights experienced in the quiet can be recorded in journals, small notebooks or papers provided.
 - o **Sharing Insights:**
 - o Invite participants to share briefly their reflections on the Word.
 - o **En-visioning:**
 - o The word 'Advent' can be translated 'coming toward'.
 - o God is forever coming to us as we celebrate the life of Jesus.
 - o What is possible – if we contemplate the themes we find at the intersection of our Advent Hope and our Vision Hopes?
 - The questions provided for each week may help you to reflect on Advent themes in light of the Vision – or to reflect on Vision themes in the light of Advent

PLANNING TIPS cont'd

○ **Signs & Stories:**

Encourage participants to identify

- signs of hope – in our own lives & in God's world
- stories which bear witness to our hope and our values
- reflections – on our call to follow Christ passionately – reflecting Christ's light and love – in our own time and place;

○ **Closing Prayer:**

- Consider using a song & choose a closing prayer which suits your community.

- ✕ How can we choose to live with integrity?
c. What does integrity mean to you?
Righteousness? Honesty? Wholeness?
- ✕ Within this faith community,
identify ways that our shared sense of integrity
already shapes and informs our mission.
- ✕ Are we being called to new choices?

Signs & Stories

Closing Prayer:

NOTES:

*This Advent Reflection Resource exists
in a form intended for Year B
and this new one for Year C for December 2012*

We hope to produce a form intended for Year A for 2013.

*The Resource is produced by the Vision Values Group
– resourcing our diocesan conversations about the
Core & the Values embodied in our Diocesan Vision.*

*We appreciate your questions & feedback!
Canon Margaret Murray – megmurray50@gmail.com / 905-699-3725*

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.
Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his name;
make his deeds known among the peoples;
see that they remember that his name is exalted.
Sing the praises of the Lord, for he has done great things, *
and this is known in all the world.
Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion, ring out your joy,
for the great one in the midst of you is the Holy One of Israel. *(Isaiah 12)*

Do not worry. . . Peace will guard your hearts and your minds. Rejoice!

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.
Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.
Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and
supplication with thanksgiving let your requests
be made known to God.
And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. *(Philippians 4)*

'Bear fruits worthy of repentance.'

John went out into the region around the Jordan;
He warned the crowds against complacency
& proclaimed a baptism of repentance.
"Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our
ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up
children to Abraham."
Crowds, tax collectors, soldiers asked him what they should do:
"Bear fruits worthy of repentance."
Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit
is cut down and thrown into the fire."
"Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none;
and whoever has food must do likewise."
The people were filled with expectation,
and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John,
whether he might be the Messiah,
John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water;
but one who is more powerful than I is coming;
I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals.
He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. *(Luke 3)*

WE INVITE YOU

TO EXPERIENCE

A HOLY & BLESSED

ADVENT

IN THE

LIGHT

OF

OUR HOPE & VISION

WEEK 1

I. Expectation:

Look up and raise your heads,
because your redemption is drawing near. (Luke)
Keep alert; keep watch; keep awake. (Mark)

Carrying our expectation and hope like an unborn child.

Opening Prayer:

**God of timeless grace, you fill us with joyful expectation.
Make us ready for the message that prepares the way,
that with uprightness of heart and holy joy
we may eagerly await the kingdom of your Son, Jesus Christ,
who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.**

Hearing the Word:

Expectation of safety & peace – salvation

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness." (Jeremiah 33)

Trusting and hoping:

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.
Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
For you I wait all day long.
God leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.
All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his decrees. (Psalms)

Paul's Prayer for the faithful

How can we thank God enough for you
in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you?
And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love
for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you.
And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness
that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming
of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. (1 Thessalonians 3)

**Remove those things
which hinder love of you, that when he comes,
he may find us waiting in awe and wonder.**

**Fill us with unending joy,
and prepare us for the birth of our Saviour.** (B.A.S.)

Pondering in our Hearts – quiet for reflection

Sharing Insights:

En-visioning

1. Advent is a time for spiritual renewal and yet there is so little time for prayer.
 - ✘ How can we discipline ourselves to listen for God's voice during Advent?
 - ✘ Does God's call come to us in Sunday worship? In scripture? In personal prayer?
 - ✘ What kind of worry hinders our ability to even hear God's promises & God's call.
2. Familiar words. . . 'the peace of God which passes all understanding;'
Praying for peace in heart and mind can help us move beyond our anxiety.
 - ✘ In seeking peace, how can we avoid the complacency that John the Baptist warned people about?
 - ✘ Is it possible that the experience of deep Peace in heart and mind might actually enable our Passion? Share your experiences.
3. This week, we pray, 'remove those things, which hinder our love of God'.
 - a. We live in a culture caught with seasonal Christmas quests – preparing to buy, make and & add new things;
 - ✘ Can we quiet ourselves to see what things we need to 'let go of'?
 - a. Our Vision's call to generosity and abundance must mean more than seeing mountains of presents under a Christmas tree!

WEEK 3

III. Gift & Call from God: REJOICE

*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me
because the Lord has anointed me
to bring good tidings to the afflicted.* (Isaiah)

Opening ourselves in heart & spirit
. . . accepting the gift of awe and wonder
hoping . . . anticipating life-made-new,
restoring and rejoicing.

Opening Prayer:

**God of timeless grace, you fill us with joyful expectation.
Make us ready for the message that prepares the way,
that with uprightness of heart and holy joy
we may eagerly await the kingdom of your Son, Jesus Christ,
who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.**

Hearing the Word:

Do not fear. . . I will bring you home. Rejoice!

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem!
The LORD has taken away the judgments against you.
Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak.
The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory;
he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival.
I will save the lame and gather the outcast,
I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you;
for I will make you renowned and praised
among all the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes before your eyes,
says the LORD. (Zephaniah 3)

'The great one in the midst of you is the Holy One of Israel'

Surely, it is God who saves me; I will trust in him and not be afraid.
For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defence,
and he will be my Saviour.

Keep alert; keep watch; keep awake.

"There are signs – in the universe – in creation – among the people. . . sun, the moon, stars, roaring of the sea and the waves – and distress among the nations, people will faint from fear and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. See the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory.

Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

"Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near.

When you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21)

**Give us grace to cast away the works of darkness
and put on the armour of light.**

**God of love and power,
your word stirs within us the expectation
of the coming of your Son.**

Sustain us with your promises.

God, for whom we wait, you feed us with the bread of eternal life. (B.A.S.)

Pondering in our Hearts – quiet for reflection

Sharing Insights:

En-visioning

In a sense, staying awake and alert is a mark of discipleship for followers of Christ:

1. *Paul's prayer echoes the prayer of the Psalmist – that we might be led into God's ways and that we might abide in love.*

- ✘ Are we (like so many in our world) alert & awake only to the signs of chaos & fear?
 - ✘ When you find your attention is fixed on the signs of chaos, how do you regain your perspective?
1. As a spiritual discipline well-suited to the Advent season, the call to be alert and watchful reminds us to pay special attention to the movement of God's Spirit within our world – and the presence of God's Realm here on earth.
- ✘ What evidence alerts us to the hope expressed in Advent – that God comes to us in the life of Jesus;
 - ✘ What are some signs that the mission of Christ is alive?
 - ✘ Are there possibilities for our mission (or the Church's mission) that we might discover as we pay attention to the diversity of God's creation? – or the diversity within the human family?
 - ✘ How can worship reflect our faith that God always reaches out to us in our everyday lives?

Signs & Stories

Closing Prayer:

3. 'Arise – stand upon the heights – and look toward the east, . . . for all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'
During Advent, we prepare for Christmas in a myriad of ways in our parishes and our homes.
- ✘ List the many ways you prepare for Christmas; then, list the ways you prepare for Christ.
4. Repenting is often described as returning to Christ. It is also a journey of returning to ourselves – re-aligning our life with our deepest hopes.
- ✘ List some chosen actions and words that help us turn our hearts towards Christ;
 - ✘ In what way do those choices help us reconnect with our own sense of integrity as we choose actions and words that can help us turn our hearts towards Christ?

Signs & Stories

Closing Prayer:

NOTES

'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'

The word of God came to John,
son of Zechariah in the wilderness.
He went into all the region around the Jordan,
proclaiming a baptism of repentance
for the forgiveness of sins. (Luke)

"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.
Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'" (Isaiah)

Turn our hearts towards you.

Prepare for the dwelling of the Holy One in our midst.

Prepare in our hearts a home. (B.A.S.)

Pondering in our Hearts – quiet for reflection

Sharing Insights:

En-visioning

1. Many people believe that the 'Old Testament' scriptures express more devastation and less hope.
 - ✘ How can we take heart in the prophet's call to arise & anticipate the revealing of God's glory?
2. This week's passages invite us to en-vision our world – as God sees it.
 - ✘ How can we live out our Diocesan Vision so that we are preparing the way – clearing a way – so that people can behold God's coming among us?
 - ✘ Can we be visionary, removing the 'hurdle's & levelling the 'potholes' – so that our congregations & ministries are more accessible & inviting for those who are seeking life and meaning?

NOTES:

WEEK 2

II. Preparing a Way:

*Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.
All flesh shall see the salvation of God. (Luke)
Clearing a way – for the arrival of the Holy One.*

Opening Prayer:

***God of timeless grace, you fill us with joyful expectation.
Make us ready for the message that prepares the way,
that with uprightness of heart and holy joy
we may eagerly await the kingdom of your Son, Jesus Christ,
who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.
Amen.***

Hearing the Word:

Arise! People look east!

*O Jerusalem, take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction,
and put on forever the beauty of the glory from God.
Put on the robe of the righteousness and the diadem of glory
that comes from God;
God will show your splendor everywhere under heaven.
For God will give you evermore the name,
"Righteous Peace, Godly Glory."
Arise, O Jerusalem, stand upon the height; look toward the east,
and see your children gathered from west and east
at the word of the Holy One,
rejoicing that God has remembered them.
Every high mountain and the everlasting hills are made low
and the valleys become level ground,
so that Israel may walk safely in the glory of God.
Even the woods and every fragrant tree have shaded Israel
at God's command.
God will lead Israel with joy, in the light of his glory,
with the mercy and righteousness. (Baruch)*

Zechariah's Vision: deliverance for Israel

*"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.
He raises up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant
David; as he promised through the holy prophets from of old,
that we would be saved.
God has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,
and remembers his holy covenant,
that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,
might serve him without fear,
in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.
And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give God's people knowledge of salvation
by the forgiveness of their sins.
By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon us,
to give light to those who sit in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace." (Luke)*

Paul's Prayer for the faithful:

*I thank God every time I remember you,
praying with joy for all of you,
because of your sharing in the gospel
from the first day until now.
I am certain that the one
who has begun a good work among you
will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.
I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus
and this is my prayer, that your love may overflow
more and more with knowledge and full insight
so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless,
producing a harvest of righteousness
that comes through Jesus Christ
for the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1)*