

December 2021



From the Bishop:

Miriam sings, *“Sing to the Lord, for God has triumphed gloriously!”* Exodus 15:21

Hannah sings, *“My heart exults in the LORD; my strength is exalted in my God!”* 1 Samuel 2:1

Mary sings, *“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!”* Luke 1:46

I am so grateful for the stories of Miriam, Hannah, and Mary. I love their spirit. I love their faith. I love their songs. I love that even with the great adversity, sorrow, and difficulty each of them endured, Miriam, Hannah, and Mary defiantly sang.

Each of these women’s stories unfolded in a world that seemed bleak. A world of systemic injustice and no safety nets. A world where people upheld their own power to the detriment of others. A world where people refused to see another person made in God’s image before them. A world where people threw away people because they were perceived as “less than.” A world where people threw away people because they could not bear children. A world where people threw away people because they became pregnant without being married.

And while their experiences are not our experiences, for many still today, the world feels desperate.

Today, so many people are living in dire conditions. So many who are hungry, houseless, voiceless. We have injustice and violence, racism and hatred. We have anger and acrimony. We have the spreading of lies and misinformation. As I write this, our world is grieving the deaths of over 5 million people who have died of COVID. Over 100,000 people died of drug overdoses in the United States this past year. And so many other deaths and losses. There are still people that society throws away. There are still people that other people don’t even look at as human.

And yet ... And yet ...

We have Miriam, Hannah, and Mary. We have their defiant voices lifted up singing not only to their world in their time – but beyond their time – to us – and to future generations beyond us.

In this Advent time, let us turn to the stories and the songs of Miriam, Hannah, and Mary. Let us remember their prophetic voices. Let us remember their perseverance, their faith, and their grit. For even as the reality around them was difficult, they continued to sing of a new day, a new promise, a new reality.

May these amazing prophet women bring hope to us in this time. May we remember that new life is coming. May we trust that the world now is not how the world will be. May we hold before us that, through Christ, a new day is being born.

In this Advent time, we live in anticipation and in faith. And we sing. We sing.

*People of Israel, you heard the prophet tell:
“A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel”;
She conceived him, “God with us,” our brother, whose birth
Restores hope and courage to children of this earth.
ELW #266, All Earth is Hopeful vs. 3*

In Advent Hope,
+ Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee
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From the VEEP

Happy New Year! Here we are once again at Advent, the beginning of our liturgical year – a four-week period of waiting and anticipation. Many of us mark the season by getting out our Advent calendars and candles and marking off the days and weeks until Christmas. However, we are not just called to wait, but also to “prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”

This road building is complicated and difficult. As Isaiah 40:4 declares:

Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

My husband’s grandfather was part of the team that built the ALCAN (Alaska-Canadian Highway) and he knew a great deal about making uneven ground level. A lot of mountains and hills had to be made low to carve a passable road through that wilderness. This is not passive anticipation; this is actively going forward to meet the coming Christ, clearing out obstacles as we go. This is also not a finite activity – once the road is built it must be maintained. Some portions of the ALCAN are subject to frost heave, even now with all our more advanced road building technology. Here in Washington, during the November rains, we’ve seen roads flooded and washed out, landslides eroding our hillsides, fallen trees blocking our progress. It can be disheartening. Here we are, building and preparing and running to meet Christ, only to have our path diverted, our roads washed away. It can feel a bit hopeless. During this Advent, I will look to see what new lessons I can learn from the paths I forge as I prepare the way, what wisdom or insight is revealed as the rains wash away old routes. I will look forward in anticipation, watching for Christ rushing to meet me, ready to turn the world upside down again with God’s endless love and grace. I leave you with this excerpt from Robert Frost’s poem, “In Time of Cloudburst.” I love its take on mountains being made low and valleys being lifted up. May you also begin all over to hope.

Some force has but to apply,
And summits shall be immersed,
The bottom of seas raised dry –
The slope of the earth reversed.

Then all I need do is run
To the other end of the slope,
And on tracts laid new to the sun,
Begin all over to hope.

Here are a few things I or the Synod Council have been up to:

- Synod Assembly planning has commenced.
- Executive Committee met on November 11. Among other actions, we approved a disbursement from the Racial Equity and Reparations Fund.
- Synod Council met on November 20. We focused this meeting on our Intercultural Development work, specifically on communication and conflict resolution.

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