

THE WILL TO DREAM



Devotional





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In this time of upheaval, trust can feel fragile. Truth is often contested. And the distance between us—whether physical, relational, or spiritual—can seem harder to cross. Many of us are carrying quiet questions and deep weariness. We long for something more than certainty—we long for healing, understanding, and hope. This ache isn't a weakness; it's a holy longing. A sacred desire for a world made whole.

The Will to Dream was created with this longing in mind. Whether you're engaging this resource on your own, with your family, or as part of a wider church community, it's here to help you pause, reflect, and reconnect with the radical hope at the heart of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. You'll explore the wisdom of the prophets, name what's broken, and imagine what could be. Feel free to adapt the materials in whatever way works best for your household—this resource is here to support you.

THE WILL TO DREAM DEVOTIONAL

Spend time each week reading the scripture and reflection. Ponder the provided questions or discuss them with someone in your home or your community.

We hope this resource gently guides you through Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany—creating space for reflection, connection, and meaning along the way.

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My boys and I live seven miles outside of town, on top of a hill, in the refinished barn of some friends who live in the house next door. Our two families are the only ones on this side of the hill. We're surrounded by old-growth oak forest, and, on the other side of the hill, three more families make their homes. Years before we moved out here, those families had forged deep friendships, and the children—ten of them between the four families—cut through the woods so often to get back and forth to their playmates, the parents determined a trail should be built.

We weren't around for the original pathmaking, but once we moved out there, we helped keep the ground beaten down with our frequent trips to the other side of the hill. It was a perfect, tiny hike—less than half a mile, starting right outside our front door and leading to a whole new view of the valley (and sometimes, to the herd of elk often found there, but never on our side). Any time we'd been sitting or on screens too long, we could pop up and head out for a quick adventure in the forest, or to visit the other folks who call this small community on the hill a "*farm-ily*."

So, we were upset when we heard from our nearest neighbors that they were going to let the trail return to its wild state as part of an agreement they'd made with the county's soil and conservation district, taking ownership of the land. It made sense, of course. We were just sad to lose the quick access to friends, the path that enabled such easy exchange of soup and stories and care.

But then our neighbors continued, "...so we'll be building a new trail, one that cuts through the property a little lower here, and will still connect us to the other side of the hill. We'll have a trail-building party the Saturday after next. Come join us!"

When we showed up, hiking boots on our feet, work gloves in our hands, we saw that folks from each family on the hill had come to help carve out this new path. Two of the dads—the two that had cut the original path—had spent time walking the forest, determining the best way through, and they'd marked it with pink flags. It would be more winding than the original they told us, but we wouldn't have to cut any trees down. Our trail-building work that day would consist of moving ferns growing in the proposed path.

It was tedious, muddy work, moving those ferns. But it was so gentle. My boys and I were taught to dig deep into the soil to make sure we'd gotten the fern's roots, then dig new holes to nestle them into, often just a few feet from where they'd been growing. We were instructed to ensure any snails or slugs resting in the fern's leaves were carried and re-rooted along with them. We were advised to place the ferns at an appropriate distance from the other green and growing things, so no one plant was too much in another's shadow.

I don't know what I'd been expecting—bulldozers? Chainsaws? Indiscriminate hacking at anything that might be inconvenient or in the way? This was not that kind of path-building. It was a bit disruptive to the environment, and it did change a pattern of nature. But, it was a collaborative project, one meant to preserve connection and care. And so, fittingly, connection and care were woven into the creation of this new trail.

The prophet Isaiah invites us: "Come, let's learn God's ways and walk in God's paths!" Two calls are partnered. We learn God's ways as we journey together. We do not set out only to get to a specific destination, but to accompany one another on a path. How we travel matters. We walk in peace toward peace. We move in justice toward justice. We transform weapons into tools—an intense and intentional process toward life and flourishing—and use those tools to create more transformation.

And, we take care, with each step, to be grounded here-and-now, shaping the way as we walk it, awake to and engaged with all that surrounds us. We notice our ways are marked by joy and struggle, beauty and pain. Some we bring with us, some make their way from elsewhere, some are inherent in the landscape. We discover God's kin(g)dom is not a destination to be reached, but a verdant path: nourishing us, delighting us, connecting us to one another and to the One in whom our hope is rooted and grows.

Reflection Questions

1. Tell a story of a time you've witnessed, or participated in, a life-giving project.
2. When/where have you accompanied someone on a path? What were the gifts of that journey?
3. What needs to be transformed in your neighborhood, church, or community to allow peace and justice to flourish? How can you be part of that transformation?
4. What is a hope you hold deep in your heart this season?
5. What is one way you, your family, or your community might engage that hope?

One of the worst ideas I've had was giving my personal phone number to a neighbor of the church where I work. I said something like, "I'm not always here, so if something happens on a weekend or late at night, just text me at this number and I'll take care of it."

He was upset about folks gathering in the church parking lot, settling in for the evening with camp chairs, or laying out sleeping bags like they intended to stay even longer. He was upset about shopping carts full of belongings parked near his fence. He was upset about being woken up in the middle of the night by dogs barking or people fighting. I don't blame him for that last one. I get grumpy without a good night's sleep, too.

He used to call the church about these incidents, but at the end of the day at the church, we turn off the lights, shut the doors, and head home. So his calls would ring and ring in an empty office, and he wanted a response sooner than the following morning. At a meeting where we talked through several possible ways forward, he didn't seem eager to try any of them. Feeling desperate and guilty, I scribbled my number on a sheet of paper and passed it across the table to him. "Just text me," I said, "and I'll take care of it."

Now, I hear from him regularly. I respond in ways that appease him—picking up belongings left behind, urging folks to find other places to gather. When things are clean and quiet, he is happy. And I have told myself that if I'm not hearing from him, it means all is well in our neighborhood.

Of course, that's a lie. It is a lie older than John the Baptist, older even than the Hebrew prophets in whose lineage he follows. It is the lie they come to condemn.

When the church parking lot is full with folks sitting in camp chairs, rolling out sleeping bags, setting out bowls of dog food, it is because they do not have other spaces to settle in those ways. When those folks aren't in the parking lot, they are around the back of the Dollar Tree, or outside the soup kitchen, or down by the creek. They can't stay in one place for too long before someone makes sure they're on their way again.

Those of us with privilege have convinced ourselves that the offense, the violence, is the detritus of homelessness we have to see, step over, or swerve to avoid on the way to our cozy comforts.

Of course, that's a lie. It is a lie some of us tell ourselves to not feel the pain others of us suffer—the pain of having no place, no real rest, no safe shelter.

One morning, I sat on the steps with a woman who had come to the church for breakfast. She asked me if we had a tent she could have. We didn't. I suggested she check back again next week—sometimes people donate tents, tarps, sleeping bags—but we didn't have one at the moment.

She shook her head, sputtering, "Next week." She said, "You think you're being so helpful, don't you? You're really proud of all this." I kept quiet. She went on, waving her arms to indicate the breakfast room, the volunteers finding socks and hats for guests. "You're open when you want to be, and you close when you decide the work is done. You help when it's convenient for you, and then you go home. But we are always here."

I knew she didn't mean here, as in, at the church. She meant here, as in, in this reality. Some of us are always here, in this vulnerable state. Some of us are always here, exposed to the elements and to whatever charity or cruelty people fling from their mouths or car windows.

She wasn't asking the church to be open at all hours, or for volunteers to work an endless cycle. She wasn't asking for my phone number. She was asking for some acknowledgment of her world. She was that wild-eyed, truth-wielding prophet from long ago, coming again to disrupt my comfort, challenging the notions of "good" often cherished by church folks, asking us to consider what sacred accompaniment might really require. She was reminding me that quiet streets for some of us do not equal calm hearts, or peaceful sleep, for all of us.

And I needed her. I'd gotten so caught up in keeping the housed neighbor happy, in trusting his assessment of what's just, I'd nearly forgotten Jesus was born in whatever makeshift shelter his mom and dad could beg off a stranger.

Reflection Questions

1. Tell a story of a time you've witnessed, or participated in, a peace-making effort.
2. If "peace" doesn't (always/only) equal "quiet," what might it sound like?
3. What lie is it easy for you to believe? What truth is hard for you?
4. If John the Baptist were to visit your community, what might he ask you to pay attention to? Are there others playing his role now?
5. What resources do you and your community need to engage in peacemaking work? Where might you find them?

We all sat in a circle, facing each other. My pregnant friend sat in a chair decorated with flowers. Someone had woven vines through the wooden slats of the chair's back, around its legs and armrests, and attached blossoms at random intervals, just for this occasion. An ordinary chair had been made into a seat of honor, and my friend—maybe just three weeks away from giving birth—occupied it proudly.

She had invited the rest of us to a Mother Blessing ceremony, a time set aside to ritualize the massive change coming in her life. To begin, we were each invited to introduce ourselves by sharing our own names and matrilineage.

I took a deep breath when my turn came. I kept my gaze on my friend, and began, "I am Erika Jeanne, daughter of Sandra Elaine, granddaughter of Dolly Virginia and Wyona Jean, great-granddaughter of Vera and Marie and Nellie..." When I'd named as many generations as I knew, I trailed off and turned to the woman next to me, silently inviting her to take up the litany.

Most of the other women could do about the same, could name three or four generations of mothers. One woman was adopted, so she didn't cite a biological bloodline, but a communion of loved ones that had raised her from girlhood. By opening the ceremony in this way, our convener announced, we were welcoming the spirits of those ancestors to be present in our gathering.

My friend's ceremony was organized by other friends and held at their church. It was a Saturday morning at the exact hour the sun came streaming through the stained glass window in the parlor room. Its rays cast an erratic rainbow-glow into our circle. The light, color, and many, many names spoken made the room feel much fuller than I would've imagined with just the eight of us there.

Only afterward did I think about the risk of invoking all of these matriarchs: surely not all of them had been ideal. What did it portend, to call them all into the same space—the space where we were blessing our friend for her own motherhood? Regardless, we spoke their names without comment, without judgment, without qualification. Despite how complicated those relationships might have been, we were invited to dwell in the depths of remembered connection and care.

When I think about Mary's story, I wonder...why Elizabeth? What had those two experienced together before this day that made Mary choose her older cousin as the matriarch to run to, the one to share this news with? Elizabeth's greeting—the celebration, the blessing, the embrace—gives away that she already knows Mary well and deeply loves her. How many other mothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, grandmothers, and friends were present in their embrace? Did Mary and Elizabeth, like the writer of Matthew's gospel, remember Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba? What other names might have the two of them invoked as they celebrated each other? How full was the room where they sang?

When Elizabeth proclaims her blessing of Mary, she sees her young cousin not for more than who she is, but for *exactly* who she is: a brave and faithful woman, making space in her own life, and in the life of the world, for God's revolution to come to birth. Elizabeth's affirmation empowers Mary's voice, gives rise to Mary's song.

Mary sees Elizabeth, too—not as an older woman finally worth something now that she'll birth a son, but as a fellow visionary, as someone whose song harmonizes with her own. Elizabeth's blessing models how we all might celebrate one another; Mary's song calls each of us to speak boldly for a world where those long forgotten are lifted up. After the blessing and the singing, Mary settles in; she stays a while with Elizabeth, months that allow continued mutual care and deepened sacred relationship.

Nothing about Mary's or Elizabeth's birth stories is ideal. Even Mary's running to Elizabeth might make us suspicious about how very less-than-ideal her own circumstances were. The other women who make up their matrilineage also have troubling tales to tell. But these two don't ask each other for explanations or apologies, and the author tells the story without comment, judgment, or qualification. Mary and Elizabeth find each other in their need and grant each other the dignity all people deserve. In doing so, they come to know the shared joy born of being truly seen, the gift of blessing that makes each of us, and all the world, new.

Reflection Questions

1. Tell a story of a time you've witnessed, or participated in, a joyful blessing.
2. If you were to list your ancestors—not necessarily a bloodline, but a litany of those you've inherited love and care from—who would you name?
3. How might you help empower someone else's song? Or how might you join in the singing?
4. How do you hold the tensions between joy and sorrow, celebration and struggle? What practices help ground and center you in God's love?
5. What connections are you finding especially meaningful this season?

I remember when I saw her for the first time. She'd come early to the high school youth group that night, not wanting to arrive at the same time as everyone else, but not wanting to arrive after everything had started either. Still, she was taking a chance by coming early. She came into our meeting room and walked straight over to the couch in the corner, taking a seat and curling her feet up under her.

She'd been part of our youth group for about two years at that point, but this was her first night coming as a girl. Her dad had talked to me about it, so I was expecting to see her like this—though I hadn't been prepared for how drastic the change would be. Last week: floppy, straight dark hair, athletic shorts, and a plain t-shirt; this week: bleached-blond ringlet curls, eye and lip color, a polka-dotted dress, and Mary Jane sandals.

The congregation is committed to LGBTQIA2S+ affirmation. That was part of the reason her parents had started attending; they trusted, during and after her coming out, this would be a safe space for her. I trusted it, too. But I was nervous about how the group would react to seeing this friend they'd known as a boy last week, so changed.

Footsteps sounded in the hall. I looked at her. "Are you ready?" She nodded, but her eyes betrayed her nervousness.

The door swung open, and on the other side stood the kid I'd been most worried about. He was a nice enough guy, but pretty traditional, and I honestly didn't know how he would react. The two of them were friends, it seemed to me; they'd pair up sometimes for games, and talked easily with each other. But I could tell by the look on her face she hadn't told him about this. She sucked in her breath.

He paused when he saw her, his feet fixed in the doorway. His eyes grew wide. He took her in—the dress, the shoes, the make-up. I silently willed him to be kind. Gentle. A friend. After a few moments, he shook his head and grinned big. "Ah, wow," he said slowly, admiringly. "I...I could never go blonde."

Of all the things he could have said, he somehow landed on the perfect one. He applauded her courage without making her uncomfortable. He acknowledged she was someone new and still spoke to her as an old friend. He could sense the tension in the air and cut it with generous humor.

She exhaled. I did, too. This was going to be alright.

I could see his reaction gave her courage. She sat up straighter. He said, “I mean... really!” and came to sit down next to her on the couch. She touched her curls and laughed.

The other youth arrived, a few at a time, until the group was assembled. They had questions. They wanted to know about her hair, about her chosen name, about how long she had known she was trans. She had been kind of a shy kid before, but she came alive, telling this story. They didn’t all know exactly what to say or how to phrase the questions forming in their minds, but she could tell their curiosity was kind-spirited, and she was patient with them. We let this conversation take the time it needed, then moved on to listening to other youth share their highs and lows of the past week.

Watching these youth receive each other, listening to them give voice to their identities and understandings and experiences, I was reminded of the power we all have to help those around us live into who God has called us to be. After the birth of his son, Zechariah’s bottled-up song spills from him—remembering and celebrating God’s faithfulness to the people, blessing and commissioning this tiny one for a life of prophetic witness. After recounting his father’s blessing, scripture tells us John “grew, and became strong in spirit.” How much of that strength came from that early love song echoing in his bones?

There are times when our reality is almost unbelievable—too horrible, too wonderful, too astonishing—and we lose our capacity to give voice to it. There are times words aren’t what’s called for; times when silence, or touch, or simple presence does the work of care and connection better than words can. And there are times we think we might be speechless, only to sense God has a blessing, a liberating word, to speak through us, to a friend, a child, someone—just like all of us—finding their way.

Reflection Questions

1. Tell a story of a time you’ve witnessed, or participated in, a loving affirmation.
2. Have you ever been speechless or unsure of the “right thing” to say? What is that like for you?
3. Are there words—a scripture verse, a song lyric, a note from a friend—that you turn to again and again for courage, strength, or care?
4. Where do you hear hope, peace, joy, and love in Zechariah’s song?
5. How are you called to give voice to love this season?

Lucía lives out in the middle of nowhere. That's what I would've called it once, before I visited. It's two hours from any grocery store. The roads are often impassable after the rains; only a few people have vehicles anyway. The people who live there are people whose parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents lived there. The population of the town is slowly diminishing—most of the young adults head into the city when they're old enough, eager for more, or different, opportunities. But there are some who stay and make this place home. It is work to live here—to cook, to wash—and the work takes time. But there are gifts, too, and time for rest. Toddlers run free, peeking in on elders who light up to see them. Skies and spirits are expansive.

Twenty years ago, Lucía underwent an intensive training program and became certified as a community health worker. She returns to the city once a year for re-certification, to learn new techniques, and to stock up on supplies, returning home with plastic tubs filled with bandages, gauze, allergy and pain relief medications, and other first aid staples. She keeps all this in her home, a small wooden structure with a porch whose footprint is twice the size of the dwelling space.

Lucía's porch serves as the community clinic. Some mornings, she opens the door to come outside and drink her tea with the sunrise, finding a line already forming. She pulls out a raggedy plastic chair and beckons the first patient over. She takes her time with each one—some ask her to treat a physical wound, some ask her to listen to a spiritual trouble. The work is long, and it tires her. But she gives her full energy, her attentive care, to each one who visits her porch. They pay her in coins and eggs and corn and tortillas and respect.

It's not the middle of nowhere. It's far from much else, but it is the middle of a beautifully open landscape, home to folks who depend deeply on each other, folks who have each learned what they can offer so each other can thrive. Lucía's offering—her knowledge, her skills, her space—helps make the health of her whole community possible.

Almost every morning, even when her own hands hurt, Lucía opens her door and offers herself to her community. She does not know what ailments they will bring, and she sometimes has to say an injury is beyond her ability to repair or a symptom doesn't make sense to her. But over the years, she has learned as much from her community members as she has from the training. She trusts and knows her patients as neighbors, too, helping her tend to them when they're hurting.

Given her devotion to the Virgin—the painted wood icons of Mary hanging on her porch, the rosary beads always draped around her neck—Lucía would never stand for the comparison, but she is a God-bearer for her community: saying yes to a call not just to learn healing, but to embody it; saying yes to incarnating promises of holistic wellness and hope in a place all but forgotten. Like Mary, agreeing without knowing what her commitment would entail—there was no way to know—she chose a life of boldness and care. Even beyond tending to the details of specific injuries or illnesses, her dedication to her neighbors lets them know their own belovedness and inspires them to love big, too.

Lucía's daughter was one of those young adults who left for the city, following a dream of earning a nursing degree. After graduation, she had lots of options; she could've joined a practice with some prestige. But, she came home to join her mom on the porch, to take her place in this legacy of care. The choice didn't make sense to some of her classmates, or to some of the neighbors she came home to. But she had seen how much her mother's work mattered in their community, and how little their community seemed to matter to anyone outside of it. She chose them.

Recently, a family invited the neighbors to their land and ceremonially dedicated a corner of it with the hopes that one day, a clinic can be built there. Even in that remote, mostly uninhabited space, the permitting process is proving difficult to navigate. Still, they have plans: everybody wants to pitch in, to frame and build and paint the clinic and turn it over to Lucía, a gift of gratitude for all she has given them. They imagine going to visit her and her daughter at the newly constructed site when they have need. They imagine helping her repair her porch, too, which is showing wear after so many years, and so many people. They'd like to make it a nice place for her to sit and watch the sunrise with her cup of tea.

Reflection Questions

1. Tell a story of a time you've witnessed, or participated in, an act of communal care.
2. If you could ask Mary any question, what would it be?
3. Who in your life would you name a God-bearer? Why does that title fit them?
4. What about the incarnation is mysterious to you? What do you wonder about?
5. Where do you see God's love and liberation aching to be born this season?



Have you ever attended a funeral and wished you'd known the deceased person better? I get this feeling not infrequently: listening to the high school friend of a man I'd only known in his eighties share about their earlier years as athletic champions, or hearing from the sister of a woman I worked with, always so serious, tell about the silly games they played, the secret jokes they shared. We so often only know people in part. Maybe that's just practical. Still, it leaves me with longing, this hint that a friend's life was so much fuller than I might have known.

I felt this longing strongly at a gathering for an older woman I'd known briefly and not too well. I knew she was kind and gracious, that she had a generous spirit and a passion for justice. But sitting around before the service with those who knew her better, listening to them swap stories, I was struck when a woman said, "I'll always remember those signs in her trunk." Another woman nodded and laughed. "Yes! I was with her once when she pulled over and got one out." Other folks chimed in—everyone seemed to know of, and chuckle at, the existence of these signs. My curiosity got the best of me, and I inserted myself into the conversation. "What signs?"

"Oh!" they said. "You didn't know?! Betty always kept a couple of placards in her trunk. She never knew when she might need them." They went on to tell stories of Betty, on her way somewhere—the post office, the grocery store, the theater—coming across a crowd of people and feeling compelled to join them. She'd pull over, pop open her trunk, and grab the sign that seemed to best fit the occasion. She was clever with slogans for the protests she planned in advance to attend, they said, always penning something creative or cute. Her words drew people in, and even folks who might not agree with her politics could appreciate her cleverness, her artistry. But she also kept a small stack of signs in her car at all times, because she never knew when she might get the chance to stand up for what she believed in.

These at-the-ready signs, her friends told me, were decorated colorfully, but generically. One just said "PEACE" in big, bright letters. One said "Justice for All" and the "All" was painted like the rainbow. Betty's friends argued about what the other trunk signs said, each remembering them differently, but the thread was the same—Betty was concerned for the welfare and dignity of all people, of all of creation, and by crafting these generic signs and traveling with them, she was ready at a moment's notice to defend, to proclaim, to challenge, to bless.

I wonder if the devotion that motivated Betty's prophetic preparedness is the same that kept Anna so long in the temple. By dedicating herself to that space, Anna knew she would always be ready, always be in the place where people came to praise God so she could add her voice to theirs; always be in a posture of prayer for whatever need might arise.

Maybe Anna made her home in the temple not just because she was waiting for one particular baby to be brought in by his parents, but because every day, new parents were bringing in their babies, and each one deserved a blessing as they embarked on the adventure of being alive.

Our scripture tells us that in Jesus, Anna recognized God's redemption, and she told everybody about it. I wonder what of the sacred spirit she recognized in the other tiny ones who came, squirming in their parents' arms. I wonder if each new set of parents, coming to complete the required ritual, also received the gift of this faithful woman's careful attention, her generous imagination, her visionary blessing, as she named God's promise for each of their beloved children.

I wonder how much other noise was in the temple, if there was competition for the hearing of these declarations of care. Did other folks know to quiet down when Anna began to speak? Did they value the way those years in the temple must have honed her vision, the way her persistent prayer would've shaped her connection to the Holy One? Did they know, if they had asked or listened, she might have had a blessing for them, too?

Reflection Questions

1. Tell a story of a time you've witnessed, or participated in, a bold declaration.
2. Who in your life is a model of long-standing devotion and persistent faithfulness?
3. How might Anna's presence in the temple have restricted her voice? How might her presence there have freed it?
4. What is an activity you—like Betty, like Anna—always want to be ready for?
5. How has a friend, a loved one, or a stranger blessed you this season?



They sat at the head of the table. We had known them for several years, since our congregations joined together to sponsor their family's journey out of their war-torn country and to the United States. They'd made the trip with their teenage son and tiny daughter, and the family's grandmother also accompanied them.

They'd settled in well. They'd moved into a home offered by one of the congregation's members. Furnishing it, and finding them bikes, then a car, had been a collective effort. They'd landed jobs they enjoy and connected with other folks who speak their language. A woman from one of the congregations came weekly to read to the littlest one, a time both of them enjoyed immensely.

But that was then; this is now. Now—under enhanced immigration policies marked by intimidation, family separation, and inhumane incarcerations—they live in constant fear. One of the congregational representatives said from the other end of the table, "We are so sorry. We never imagined it would get like this."

The refugees had their phones out; they'd been using a translation app for much of the conversation, but they didn't need it to understand this apology. "We know," they said. "We still would have come. It is better here than where we were. But now we need to leave."

Others around the table made a feeble effort to argue. "Do you have to? Could you try to resubmit the paperwork?" "Are you sure? I checked the list, and it doesn't look like people from your country are being targeted." "What about grocery delivery?" "Could you pay for everything in cash?"

They ran these ideas through the translation app and answered each in turn. "We have resubmitted all the necessary paperwork. It is stalled at the processing end. No one can tell us when they will get to it and if we will be safe when they do." "We know our country is not on the official list. We do not trust that list. Agents are detaining people at random. We know people here, from our country, have been taken." And finally, "We appreciate all you are doing to help us. All you have done. But we are afraid—" here the mom broke off, pausing to wipe tears from her eyes, "—we are afraid we will go to a doctor's appointment, somewhere our names are in a record, and...and not come home. And then what will our children do? My mother cannot care for them. Our little one is just four years old! What if we were taken? She needs us."

When she fell quiet, no one dared pose a challenge.

Finally, one of the congregational representatives said, “Tell us what you want us to do. We are here for whatever you need.” The ten people around that table, representing an ecumenical collection of five churches, all nodded their agreement.

This wasn’t the plan when they came together to resettle a refugee family three years ago. Still, they recognized that faithfulness need not be to their own plan, but to this family. They had come to love this family. They’d brought Christmas presents and been sent away with traditional holiday foods. They’d shared stories and songs. The congregations had delighted in seeing the children grow, in soaking up wisdom from grandma, and had looked forward to many more years of both.

But they knew, listening to these parents, that loving them meant honoring the ways they were choosing to protect their family.

The dad spoke into his phone, then read to us the translation on the screen. “We do not know yet what we will need. We are not ready to leave now. But we need to prepare. We know of people who have gone to _____ and are safe. This is what we will do when it is time.” He looked up and added, “We would love to stay here. This is our dream. But we cannot stay in this danger.”

We all knew there was danger in any choice. But we recognized a bit of Joseph in this father’s voice: listening for his family’s path, discerning with care and courage how to guide them, despite the risks, toward their best chance at safety.

We prayed, lamenting the realities of kin endangering one another for profit, for power. We wrapped our arms around each other. As we parted ways, we remembered—always, the Holy Family is on the move, fleeing violence and empire. That movement is hope in action, love with legs. That movement is rooted in sacred imagination.

Our original plan for this family might be changing, but they are leading the way now—refusing to submit to a regime that won’t recognize their humanity, trusting the God who brought them this far will continue to guide their steps. May their faithful courage be a star, lighting a way for us all.

Reflection Questions

1. Tell a story of a time you’ve witnessed, or participated in, a courageous journey.
2. Who from your own life would you call a dreamer? (You?) What do you know about their (your) dreams?
3. Have you ever experienced a holy presence or sacred guidance in the midst of difficulty? Share that experience.
4. Where do you see prophetic work happening in your community? How might you encourage or join with it?
5. What is God stirring in your imagination this season?



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