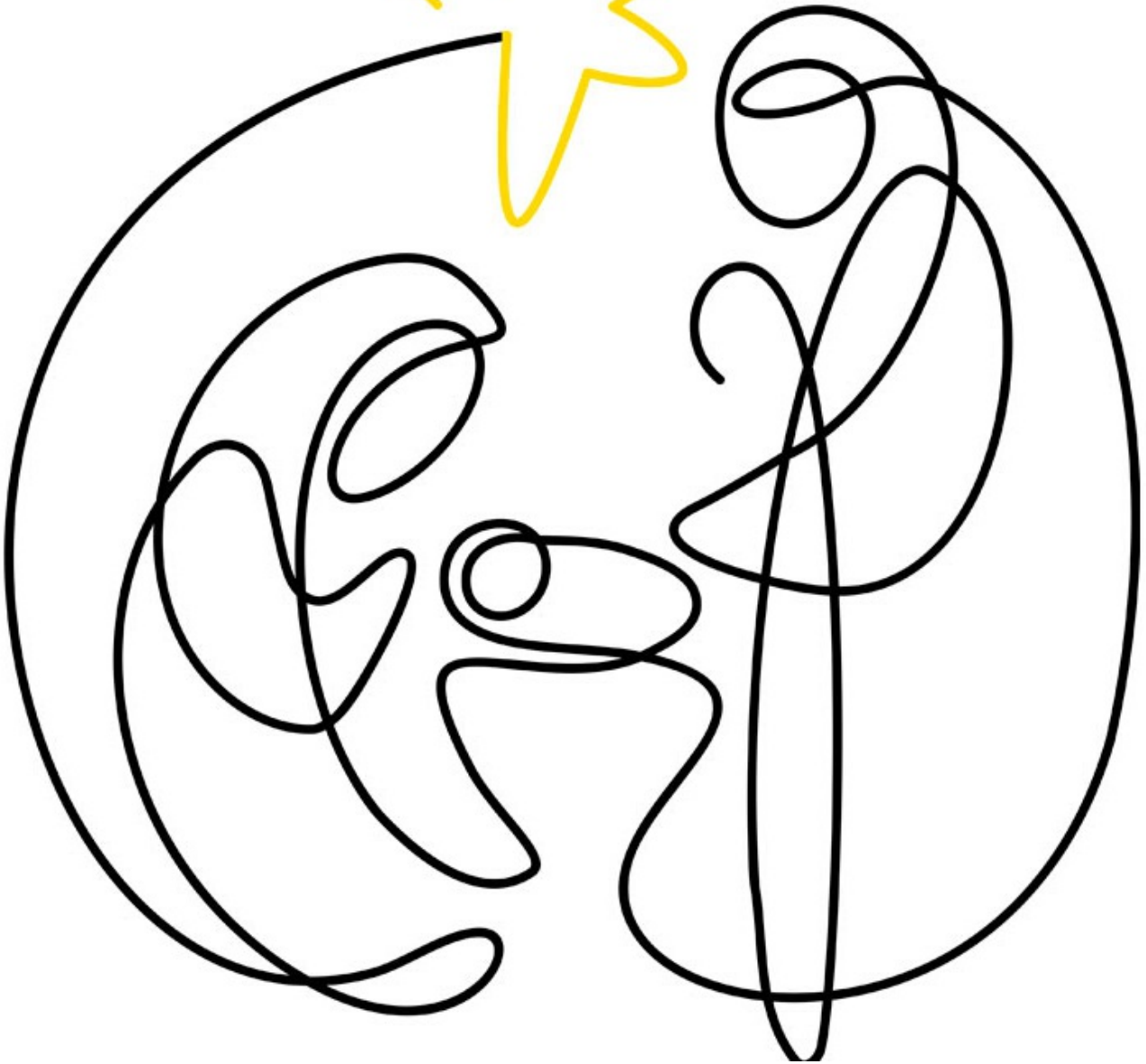


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ADVENT DEVOTIONAL DECEMBER 18, 2024

Weekly theme: Joy

SCRIPTURE

PSALM 147:1-11

- 1 Praise the Lord!
How good it is to sing praises to our God;
for he is gracious, and a song of praise is fitting.
- 2 The Lord builds up Jerusalem;
he gathers the outcasts of Israel.
- 3 He heals the brokenhearted,
and binds up their wounds.
- 4 He determines the number of the stars;
he gives to all of them their names.
- 5 Great is our Lord, and abundant in power;

his understanding is beyond measure.
6 The Lord lifts up the downtrodden;
he casts the wicked to the ground.
7 Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving;
make melody to our God on the lyre.
8 He covers the heavens with clouds,
prepares rain for the earth,
makes grass grow on the hills.
9 He gives to the animals their food,
and to the young ravens when they cry.
10 His delight is not in the strength of the horse,
nor his pleasure in the speed of a runner;
11 but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him,
in those who hope in his steadfast love.

DEVOTION

The Rev. Emily Cooper '19

There is one week left until Christmas Day. If you are like me, you might not be filled with overwhelming joy, but instead filled with anxiety about how everything will get done. Are all the cookies baked? Even the special ones that the kids like to leave for Santa? Have you finished wrapping the presents? Have you started? Have you bought the presents yet? Did you mail the things being shipped out of state? There is so much happening in this final countdown to Christmas!

The season of Advent is one of preparation. Over the past several weeks, we have been preparing our hearts and minds for the birth of Jesus, our Savior. We may have also been creating a giant to-do list to make it to the big day. It is easy to get lost in the busyness of the season. Our joy can be overtaken by our quest for the perfect holiday. We can lose ourselves this time of year.

Today, as you think about all that is left on your to do list, I encourage you to stop and breathe. Read Psalm 147:1-11, then slowly read it again. God is gracious. The Christmas carols we hear everywhere we go are praising the Divine. No matter how we feel today, no matter what our list may look like, God is with us, tending to us. God heals the brokenhearted and is understanding beyond measure. God lifts us up. There is a reason to be filled with joy! God's steadfast love is with us always, giving us what we need each and every day. So, if the chaos of the season is overpowering the peaceful preparation you'd planned on experiencing, know that you are not alone. Take a moment to allow yourself to feel the joy offered in knowing that no matter what you are experiencing, God is with you, and Emmanuel is coming once again on Christmas morning.

PRAYER

God of all seasons, thank you for today. Thank you for days filled to the brim with things needing to be done. Thank you for quiet, calm days. Thank you for seasons of life that are full beyond measure, and thank you for the days when we long for just one thing to do. Kindle your Divine joy in our hearts, so that we may share it with others as we go through our day. In Jesus' holy name we pray, amen.

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