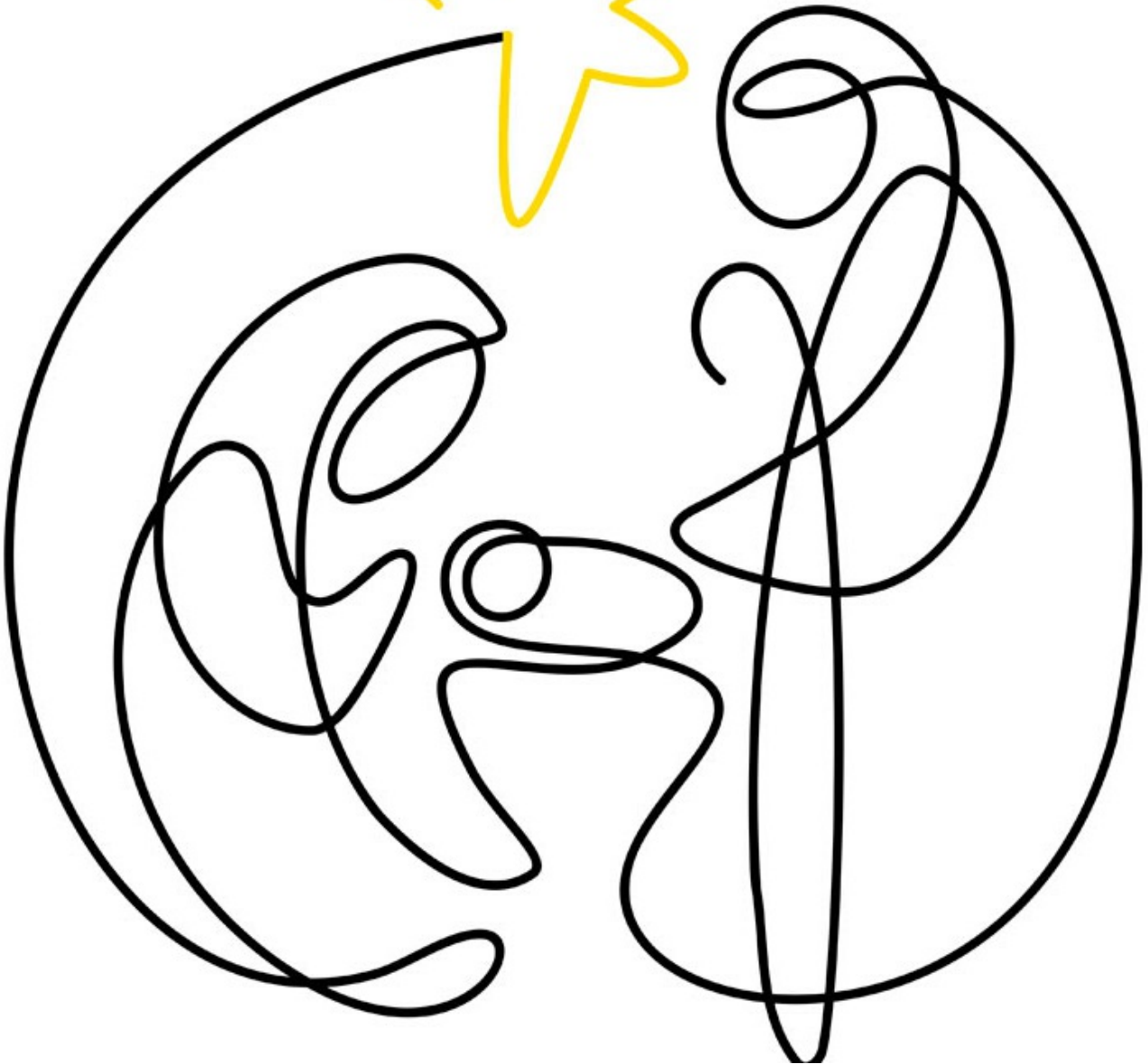


ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

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ADVENT DEVOTIONAL DECEMBER 21, 2024

Weekly theme: Joy

SCRIPTURE

LUKE 1:26-38

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29 But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" 35 The angel said to her, "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. 36 And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God."

38 Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

DEVOTION

The Rev. Norma Prina Murphy '93

I remember when I first sensed a call to go to seminary. I had no idea whether I was to earn an M.A., which would enhance my B.S. in Music Ed. and pave the way for a full-time church musician position, or an M.Div., which would lead to something I'd never imagined.

Honestly, my first reaction was one of disbelief—who, me, God? Go to seminary, God? That's for smart people, wise people, deeply faithful people. And you're calling ME?

Then came the objections—but I have a family to care for, and four choirs to direct, not to mention my 45 private students! How will my family manage if I add classes to that schedule? And where will the money to pay for it come from? Thin air?

But it didn't take long for me to get on board with the notion. The more I considered it, the more I actually got excited about it, because if God is willing it, then a way forward would be made clear, right?

That was not the first 'Mary moment' I have had in my life, nor the last one, either. There have been many during my life, but that moment was the clearest and most parallel to Mary's that I can recall.

So, what was your most memorable 'Mary moment'? When has God laid a path before you and invited you to travel it? An invitation that has caused you to react with disbelief, maybe objections, and finally with more than acceptance—with anticipation and joy?

And what is more to the point: what invitation is God yet laying before you today? That is definitely something to ponder carefully in the next few days—because God is indeed still at work in us. Even now.

PRAYER

God of the impossible, you have called us to a life that we could never imagine. But it is the life that leads to joy. Bless the ending of our Advent journey and coming celebration of Christmas anew. In the name of your Word-made-flesh. Amen.

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