



Advent 4

SARAH BEER
PERU



Luke 1:47– 55

Mary's song describes a God who transforms an unjust system established by people who hold the greater part of the wealth and power and who are full of pride. Mary sings of a God who is taking action in order to challenge injustice and inequality by empowering and taking care of those who are excluded and vulnerable. At the same time, God humbles those who have been consumed by their pride, power and wealth. I have witnessed and experienced firsthand this God, whose mission is to change a world system with deep entrenched injustice, inequality, and conflict. I have found this God to be present in the work and life of our global partner, Centro Esperanza in Chiclayo, Peru.

Flor Obando Capunaz, a female community member of Chosica del Norte commented that Centro Esperanza's work, "Helps me to value myself as a woman and love myself for who I am".

Women, youth and children who live with very low incomes and experience a great deal of life struggles are involved in our Global Partner's many diverse programs. As Flor expresses, many are lifted up and strengthened in the face of hardship through the work of Centro Esperanza. Those who face so many life challenges have a lot of strength, wisdom, and skills to creatively work together in their communities for change. We learn through the work of Centro Esperanza that all people, young and old, rich or poor, have a voice and value in this world to take action for justice, peace, and a sustainable world. We are an embodiment of God's global mission.

Sarah Beer serves as UCC Overseas Personnel with the Centro Esperanza in Chiclayo, Peru.

ADVENT PRINTED RESOURCES

Disturbing Complacency by Lisa Bodenheim – Wild Goose Publications – Readings for the four weeks of Advent: urging us to use this season to address some of the most important issues of our time.

Behold! Cultivating Attentiveness in the Season of Advent by Pamela Hawkens – Upper Room - to help individuals or small groups on the Advent journey through story and personal reflection.

When God Comes Down: An Advent Study for Adults by James A. Harnish. – Abington - An accessible but potentially deep adult study working with scripture and personal experience.

Good News of Great Joy: Daily readings for advent from around the world by Neil Paynter and Peter Millar – Wild Goose –

For all Ages:

The Give-Away by Ray Buckley – Abington - a Christmas Story

Traditional Children's book:

Why Christmas Trees aren't perfect. Richard H. Schneider – a classic on compassion.

Advent Reflections

Lorna MacQueen
Hamilton Conference Minister– Faith
Formation for Discipleship
The United Church of Canada

TOWARD
DARING DISCIPLESHIP

November 2012

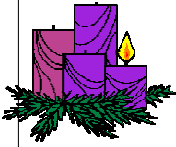
Advent
Reflections from
Overseas
Personnel

*For candle lighting,
studies, reflection,
illustrations,
Minutes for Mission...*



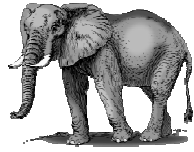
Advent Reflections





Advent 1

TIINA COTE
TANZANIA



Luke 21:25-36

Which side of the mountain of human existence you live on makes a difference in how you are touched by this Advent message of Jesus' second coming.

This message may go largely unheeded by those living on the side which provides for comfortable lives.

But for those who live on the side of scarcity, the apocalyptic redemption message in Luke's Gospel becomes a song of hope.

The majority of the world lives on this one side of the mountain of human existence. Hope is all they have most days. Little food, little water, and confusion as they glimpse the evidence of abundance on one side and multimedia messages on the other. The majority of humanity exists with a simple hope that redemption will draw near very soon. So they wait with a faith that grows stronger every day. A faith nourished by Luke's redemption song of freedom in the return of Jesus Christ. A redemption song that encourages the belief that God will remain true to God's people everywhere and they too will rise into new life soon. This side of the mountain shakes with this particular song of hope in the midst of patient waiting.

May your side of the mountain do likewise this Advent.



Tiina Cote serves as UCC overseas personnel at the University of Dodoma, Tanzania on the Chaplaincy team.



Advent 2

JIM CAIRNEY
PALESTINE



Luke 3: 1-6.

We often ignore the first few verses of this text, to focus on John in the wilderness. But when we quickly move past the opening verses, we miss a crucial reminder about the context of the ministry of Jesus. Luke names these men, and their titles, to place John and Jesus squarely in the context of the Roman occupation of Palestine.

When we take the political context out of our Biblical reflections, we may miss key bits of the message. In these verses, the call to repent – to turn toward God – and the One John heralds, is an affront to Rome which proclaimed: “Caesar is Lord and God.” By ignoring the Biblical context, we may miss one of pushy edges of the Gospel. It also makes it easier to ignore our own ugly political realities.

Proclaiming the sovereignty of God and turning, again, to God is resistance to the occupation, and why Jesus is tried for treason. It is our resistance to the dominant culture of our day.

This Advent, can we consider, or even enlarge our understanding of the present occupation of Palestine by the state of Israel? It's 45 years running! Half “the Jordan” is the occupied West Bank. It exists under martial law with attendant indignities, brutality, violence, human rights abuses, and control by an occupying power.



Jim Cairney served with the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), in Yanoun, on the edge of the Jordan Valley, the summer of 2012.



Advent 3

GARY MACDONALD
CHINA



Luke 3:7-18

A prophet is not for the faint of heart. No prophet is interested in making the world of a believer comfortable and secure. Saints can show us something of God. It takes a prophet to show us the way to God.

Those who surrounded John the Baptist seemed interested in knowing what they should do just as we might today. A prophet is quite clear about this. For a prophet it's all or nothing. We are told what we are to do in a world we can no longer isolate.

For the prophet faith practice is quite clear. “Anyone with two tunics must share with the one who has none,” says John. “And anyone with something to eat must do the same.”

A prophet calls us to accountability when we have watered down our religion rather than kept to the faith of our Baptism.

Our overseas partners serve as modern day prophets through their witness and holding onto faith in times of struggle which we in Canada cannot imagine.

May we remain true to this witness of our sisters and brothers throughout the world. In this we discover how it is that we are to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.



Gary MacDonald is former overseas personnel with the UCC who served many years with the AMITY foundation in China.

