

*Advent 2024*

# HOLY POSSIBILITIES



*Aurora Borealis, Rochester NY, 2024*

*POSSIBILITY*

*PURPOSE*

*PROCESS*

*PASSION*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	<i>page 3</i>
WEEK ONE: HOLY POSSIBILITY	<i>page 4</i>
WEEK TWO: HOLY PURPOSE	<i>page 7</i>
WEEK THREE: HOLY PROCESS	<i>page 10</i>
WEEK FOUR: HOLY PASSION	<i>page 13</i>

## THEME: HOLY POSSIBILITIES



Advent is somehow here . . . and this year we have an opportunity to bring some thoughtful meditations and devotions each Monday morning, beginning December 2nd, through the church's email. As you may know, for some years now, Bonnie Matthaideess and Susan Shafer have done weekly Advent and Lent devotionals for each of these Seasons, to hopefully enhance your experience of these special designated days. This new way of hopeful enhancement will give you some thoughtful ways of increasing your spiritual experience. We pray with you that this "possibility" will increase the meaning of the Advent Season for you!

BLESSINGS

Ms. Bonnie Matthaideess  
*Spiritual Director*

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It is not over,  
    this birthing.  
There are always newer skies  
    into which  
    God can throw stars.  
When we begin to think  
    that we can predict the Advent of God  
    that we can box the Christ  
        in a stable in Bethlehem,  
    that's just the time  
    that God will be born  
    in a place we can't imagine and won't believe.  
Those who wait for God  
    Watch with their hearts and not their eyes  
    listening  
        always listening  
        for angel words.

*"It Is Not Over", Kneeling in Bethlehem, Ann Weems  
Westminster Press: 1980, p85*

## HOLY POSSIBILITY

For many of us the birth of sweet baby Jesus some 2,000 years ago is our Advent focus and indeed is most significant in this Holy season. But there is more, much more. The Good News is that Advent is not about a one-time event. In fact, we are welcoming Christ Jesus who is forever being born in our human souls and into history.

Advent awakens us to the Holy Possibility of living each day as though Christ is being born in every aspect of our lives – the ups and downs, the joys and sorrows. This indwelling is active, life giving and fills us with the freely bestowed possibility of living Jesus' example.

We know he drew intimately to Abba God as one draws near to a loving father. *Let us draw near.*

We saw him as one who welcomed unconditionally and valued all with no regard to gender, physical abilities, social status or ethnicity. *Let us do the same.*

Jesus modeled strength as he faced adversity. *Let us be thankful for the Living Christ within as we courageously face our challenges.*

He taught, deeply listened, attended weddings, was compassionate, full of grace, wept, prayed, touched those whom others ignored, fed the hungry, sought justice, loved kindness and walked humbly. *Let us respond in kind.*

And there is much more . . . you might take a moment and name what you experience in Christ Jesus.

The Living Christ dwells in you, me and the world. Our Holy Possibilities are limitless; we know that this indwelling enfolds and empowers so that our possibilities become actualities. Let us compassionately offer our gifts to the world. Thanks be to God.

**REFLECTION:**

Take a moment to reflect on the cover picture – What is it speaking to you?

What are the issues in your life that challenge you?

How do you desire the baby Jesus to be birthed in you? How do you desire the Living Christ to be birthed in you? How would this be life giving?

How are you experiencing the Living Christ in your community and the world? Or not?



Antelope Canyon Arizona, 2023

## ***Holy is the Place Within Me Where God's Spirit Dwells***

*from Miryam of Nazareth: Woman of Strength & Wisdom,  
Ann Johnson, Christian Classics; 2005*

## HOLY PURPOSE

Often times, if not every time in worship, the Call To Worship or the Responsive Prayer of Confession has “words” of inspiration or words that capture our lives in expression of truth or invitation. A few Sundays ago, the Call to Worship had a response that affirmed a belief: “God Created us: **unique, and irreplaceable, loved and wanted, known and treasured; You call each by name and uphold us by Your Spirit.**”

Some years ago, (a familiar phrase when you become this age) there was a young man in the confirmation class, probably not there by his own insistence. Several sessions had been spent on the many Biblical images of God. Now, at the conclusion of that exploration, the confirmands were asked to use whatever form of creativity available to explain their own image of God. Traditional images appeared on paper with paint and through clay and other medium . . . as each shared the meaning of their own creation, we came to the last youth in the circle. This one had finished his quickly and waited patiently for the others. Inquiring about his image, he held up two vertical pipe cleaners with three horizontal pipe cleaners fixed to the vertical ones. He explained, clearly and articulately, this was a DNA molecule model; he went on to say we each had the image, God’s DNA, in ourselves. Maybe like others in the class clearly finding his way doing his best in understanding the relationship between each of us and God and how God’s Spirit moves in. AMAZING, out of the heart of that young man neither he nor his understanding shall ever be forgotten.

Now as we ponder this season, we think of God’s Holy Purpose for each of us. God’s gift-giving Spirit and the purpose in Jesus’s birth and ministry, we know our HOLY purpose. Connecting our spirit with God’s Spirit made manifest in Christ Jesus, calls us to love all God’s people in



our own decision making. For when our spirits connect with God's Spirit indwelling our DNA, God's Holy Purpose abides in the world.

**REFLECTION:**

Take a moment to reflect on the intro picture – what is it speaking in you?

How might you express the image of God?

What for you is the meaning of the birth of Jesus?

Was there a time when your expressed spirit knew it was linked with God's purpose?



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## HOLY PROCESS

Many years ago now, the Scientist Alfred North Whitehead introduced the processual nature of the world and God's place and action in the process. This concept became the introduction of "Process Theology." It means that God allows for a continual reintroduction of novelty into the flow of events. It is an intriguing concept that permits us as individuals to invite the Omnipresent and Omniscient nature of God into each moment and decision. If an individual invites or opens one's heart to God into that particular life experience or action, God becomes an integral part of one's decision making and action. It is an intriguing concept uniting science and theology! It is one way of understanding the relationship of God to our lives and our world with a heavy and possible process responsibility for us each to invite God in Christ into our midst and our decision making.

The Advent experience of the birth of Jesus, who came in human form, can then happen again and again as each invites God's presence and action into one's life. The birthing of God into our human experience can move us then from a state of possibility into actuality. This understanding could really change Advent from a one time "God event" to living a life of invitation to the Living Christ to be a part of us all the time.

Wonder with me this Advent Season: was this what made the gift of Jesus so miraculous and so important in the world? Jesus became in *human form* God *re-presented* in our world when we connect ourselves to this Spirit of LOVE and BIRTH. Did Jesus's birth show us the way to have "holy process" for our lives? May we intentionally live guided by the "Living Christ" helping us to live as *Disciples* of the one born in a stable, Christ Jesus?

*Out of expectancy came a possibility –  
Out of possibility came intervention –  
A life changing experience.*

**REFLECTION:**

Take a moment to reflect on the intro picture-What is it speaking to you?

Where and how . . . might this understanding impact your life?

How might this change your Advent experience this Season?



In the silence of the morning  
I am alive to the new day's light,  
    alert to the early stirrings of the wind  
    and the first sounds of the creatures.  
In the silence of my heart  
I hear the yearnings that are in me and the fears  
    the hopes that rise from within  
    and the doubts that trouble my soul.  
In the beginnings of this day, O God,  
    before the night's stillness is lost to the day's  
    busyness,  
    open to me the treasure of my inner being  
    that in the midst of this day's busyness I may  
    draw on wisdom.  
Assure me again of my origins in you,  
    assure me again that my true depths are of you

*from Sounds of the Eternal: A Celtic Psalter,  
by John Philip Newell*

## HOLY PASSION

How is it you learned that God took on flesh to enter the world? Was it a scene of stars shining down upon a stable filled with angels, sheep and shepherds, Mary and Joseph? Did you see them intently focused upon pristine straw filling a manger that cradled sweet, baby Jesus? How lovely, how peaceful, how serene, is that image.

There is another scene to imagine, one before the birth of Jesus, that comes from St Ignatius, creator of his Spiritual Exercises. In this scene, we are called to be with God who is looking down upon a complicated world. God is aware of men, women and children being born and dying, marrying and separating, feasting and starving, laughing and crying, praying and cursing, while others are struggling blind to life with meaning. God sees the old and young, the rich and poor, the happy and sad, including a word of peace, violence and war. Yes, much different than a peaceful, quiet manger scene!

In this second scene what do we image are the possibilities before God as he gazes upon the pain, sorrow, and violence? Was the decision to take on flesh and come be with us a time-consuming process or immediate?

We are blessed to know our Omnipresent, compassionate God chose and chooses for us and for the world to take on human flesh, to take on all that humanity experiences and to dwell among and within us as the Living Christ. A choice to be vulnerable. A choice not to be remote or separate, nor unattainable, but to be fully WITH and WITHN us. This week Ponder these Possibilities for you and for our world.

**REFLECTION:**

Take a moment to reflect on the intro picture – What is it speaking to you? What stirs within?

If today you and God were looking over the world, what would be seen? What would be your reactions?

Be in conversation with God about how you are thinking and feeling about the world situation. What would you like to talk with God about? How do you imagine God responding to you?

How do you imagine God would see today's possibilities?

