

A D V E N T

ALL SOULS ADVENT BOOKLET 2022



art by Dan Carlson

"Despair is in a certain sense the consciousness of time as closed or, more exactly, of time as prison—whilst hope appears as piercing through time; everything happens as though time, instead of hedging consciousness round, allowed something to pass through it. It was from this point of view that I previously drew attention to the prophetic character of hope. Of course one cannot say that hope sees what is going to happen; but it affirms as if it saw. One might say that it draws its authority from hidden vision of which it is allowed to take account without enjoying it. We might say again that if time is in its essence a separation and as it were a perpetual splitting up of the self in relation to itself, hope on the contrary aims at reunion, at recollection, at reconciliation: in that way, and in that way alone, it might be called a memory of the future."

Gabriel Marcel, **Homo Viator**

THE STUMP OF JESSE

NEW LIFE FROM WHAT REMAINS

This year's Advent theme is the Stump of Jesse, taken from Isaiah 11:1-10. We enter in with the story of the Israelites in a hard place, facing wars and nearly demolished, with only a remnant of their people left. And yet, in the midst of their loss the poet and prophet Isaiah speaks up: there will be new life from this wreckage.

We invite you to use this booklet weekly, as a practice for you, a group of friends, and/or your family.

Each week, we'll light our Advent candles, pray, and read from scripture. This year, will be focusing on a particular passage from Isaiah. You might also choose to meditate on the cover image (graciously provided to us by our previous seminarian, the Rev. Dan Carlson).

We've also provided some questions for discussion or quiet reflection, as well as some poems. Poetry can be a powerful way to engage with our spiritual selves. If you're someone who struggles with poetry, we suggest you treat the experience of reading poems like taking a bath--soak in the sounds and images, worry less about figuring out what they "mean". What do you notice? What words/phrases stand out to you? What do you associate with them? What emotions do they bring out?

During this Advent season, we pray that you enter the imagination of hope inspired by the prophet of Isaiah.

STUMP

LIGHT ONE CANDLE

God of small beginnings,
you bring strength out of weakness
and hope out of fear.
By the power of your Spirit
make us, your children, followers and part-
ners in the grand design of your kingdom
of love,
rooted and revealed in Jesus Christ our
Lord, who lives and reigns with you and
the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.



READ AND REFLECT

Isaiah 11:1-10

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see or decide by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge for the poor and decide with equity for the oppressed of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

The wolf shall live with the lamb; the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the lion will feed together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

FOR REFLECTION

from "Flight and Metamorphosis"
by Nelly Sachs, transl. by Joshua Weiner

Who dies
here last
will carry the grain of sun
between his lips
will thundercrack the night
in death-throe rot.

Blood-
sparked dreams
will shoot from his shoulders
in a jagged flash
branding empyreal skin
with the mystery of affliction.

Because Noah's ark went down
star-figured avenues
whoever
dies here last
will have shoes
filled with water

where a fish
with homesick backsail
draws black dissolving time
into its tomb.

This is the dark breath
of Sodom
and the burden
of Nineveh
cast off
at the open wound
of our door.

This the sacred writing
in flight from the land
all its letters climbing
skyward
feathered blessedness
finding refuge in a honeycomb.

This the black Laocoön
cast on our eyelid
perforating millennia
uprooted grieftree
sprouting in our pupil.

These are salt-stiffened fingers
teardropping in prayer.

This His ocean's tow
dragged back
into the rushing shell of secrets.

This our ebb
star of agony
from our moldering sand—

FOR CONVERSATION

A stump is a tree cut down before its time. What was once a shelter for the people of Israel was violently broken, leaving the people to wonder if God had abandoned them.

Where/in what ways have you been cut down? What seems impossible in your community or life? Where have you become discouraged and failed to hope?

Where do you want to invite God to inspire hope during this Advent season? What in your life is broken that you have hope can be restored?

SHOOT

LIGHT TWO CANDLES

God of small beginnings,
you bring strength out of weakness
and hope out of fear.

By the power of your Spirit
make us, your children, followers and partners
in the grand design of your kingdom of love,
rooted and revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy
Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



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The wolf shall live with the lamb; the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the lion will feed together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

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FOR REFLECTION

my dream about God
by Lucille Clifton

He is wearing my grandfather's hat.
He is taller than my last uncle.
when He sits to listen
He leans forward tilting the chair

where His chin cups in my father's
hand.
it is swollen and hard from creation.
His fingers drum on His knee
dads stern tattoo.

and who do i dream i am
accepting His attentions?

i am the good daughter who stays at
home singing and sewing.
when i whisper He strains to hear me
and He does whatever i say.

FOR CONVERSATION

Reflect on the cover image of this booklet. The shoot coming out of the stump of Jesse is both new and continuous with what had been before. It is hope coming out of wreckage, out of what appears to be dead. God uses all of what is, even what is broken.

Where are you most desiring to see God's peace? It could be in your relationship with God, a personal anxiety, a broken relationship, societal strife, or something else. What are you hoping will be restored?

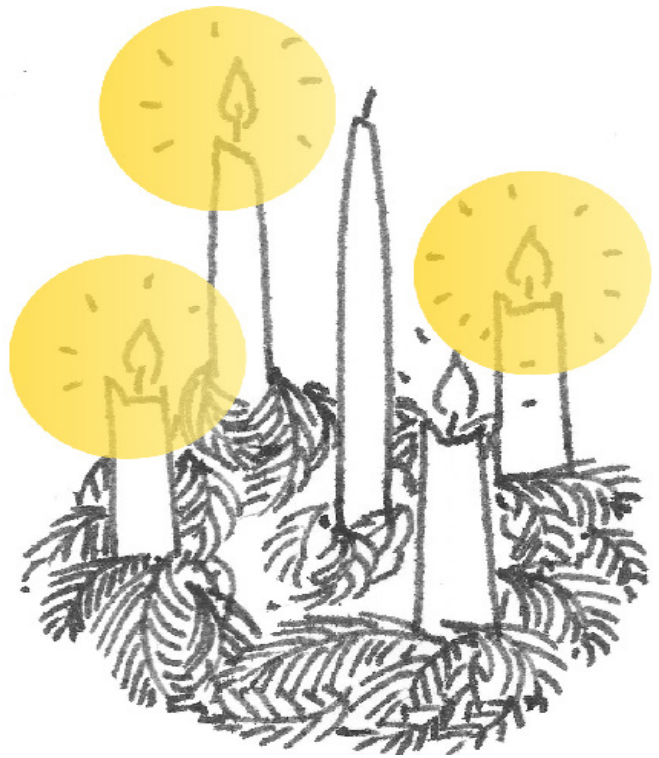
Recall a time when you experienced God's peace. When have you felt God resting on you? Where do you see evidence of newness in your life right now?

BRANCH

LIGHT THREE CANDLES

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you bring strength out of weakness
and hope out of fear.

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make us, your children, followers and partners
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rooted and revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord,
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FOR REFLECTION

Epiphany in the Atheist's Kitchen
by Kate Daniels

One moment her hands
Are soaking in the dishpan's
Sudsy warmth. The next:
She's on the floor, dripping

And kneeling. Bare memory
Of some great blow that
Struck her everywhere
At once--so heavy, she failed

Beneath its weight. Now she's
Down and hollowed out where
She can smell the trashy odor
Of the garbage pail, and feel

The greasy sheen of olive oil
From last night's salad, slicking up
The floor tiles where she fell ...

In the abattoir, the slaughterer's
Hammer hits one true blow, then
Moves on blandly to stun the next
Dumb creature being shuttled

Through the chute to death.
Not Exactly that, she thinks when she
Can think again: not death
Though something has perished,

And some strange force is rapidly
Advancing to occupy the newly emptied
Space. Whatever it was she never
Believed in before, she has to now

Consider that it really might exist. Because
here it is, beside her, right Here in this
room--not saying anything, Not trying to con-
vince her—just

Going about its business, removing
All the agony.

FOR CONVERSATION

The Israelites were intimately familiar with violence and hardship; it defined everyday life. Isaiah imagines a world that stands in stark contrast to the war and destruction the Israelites were so often up against. Cows and bears graze together, calves and lions feed. No longer enemies, all of God's creation lives in harmony. It can be challenging to imagine God's peace in our midst when the evidence of darkness abounds. Like a fragile branch reaching out into the world, it is a vulnerable task, yet this is exactly what the prophet Isaiah calls us to do.

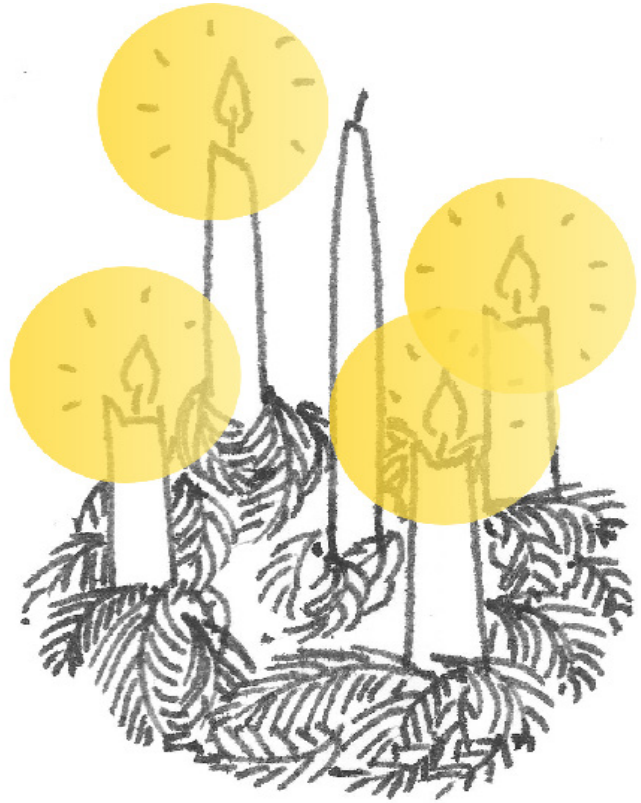
Imagine what this world might be like. Put yourself in the scene, imagining the calf and lion feeding together, the cow and bears grazing together, etc.

What separates you from living in peace with all of creation? Who do you feel separate from? It might be someone you have political or personal enmity with, someone from a different class, race, gender, etc. Search your heart for what separates you from this person. How can you extend God's peace to them, and/or yourself?

ROOT

LIGHT FOUR CANDLES

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you bring strength out of weakness
and hope out of fear.
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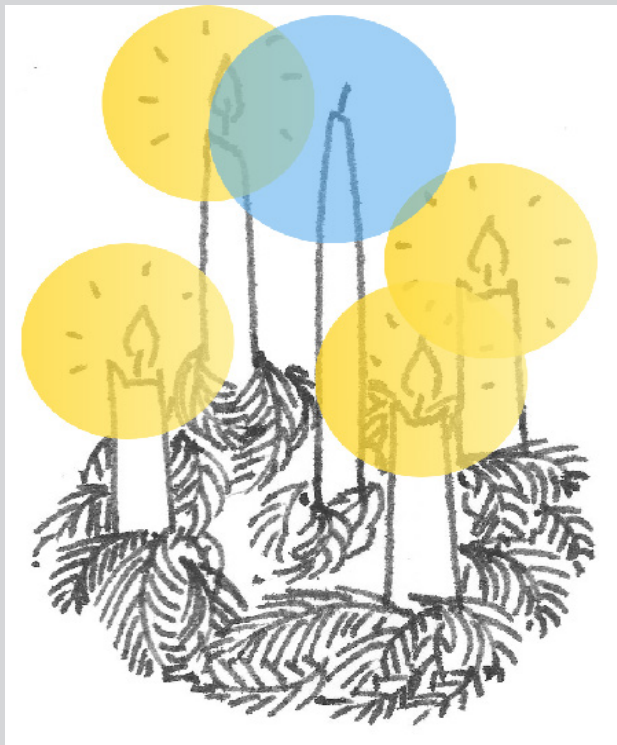
O Darkness
by Jericho Brown

"My arm is so brown and so beautiful," is a thought I have as I'm about to turn off the lamp and go to sleep. I look at it a moment in the soft glow, and see it, briefly, as though it belonged to someone else. A reddish kind of brown, like a toasted almond, only flecked with the fine, gold hairs of summer. And it occurs to me, that I have always loved the brownness of my skin. The way, just now, I stopped to admire my own thigh, its deeper tone against the crisp white of my cotton robe. As a girl, I wanted to be dark as my mother, whose skin shone against crimson, malachite, plum. I loved the way that gold gleamed against her neck, the way dark skin forgives the accumulation of our years and griefs—and still goes on, pliant and smooth and new. It made sense to me that others slathered their limbs with oil, with unguent, laid themselves out on roofs, on decks, on banks of sand, gave themselves to the mercy of the sun. Though when I seek a synonym for dark, I find dim, nefarious, gloomy, threatening, impure. Is the world still so afraid of shadows? Of the dark face of the earth, falling across the moon? The dark earth, from which we've sprung, to which we shall return? What we do not know lies in darkness. The way the unsayable rests at the back of the tongue. So let us sing of it—for the earth is a dark loam and the night sky an unfathomable darkness. And it is darkness I now praise. The dark at the exact center of the eye. Dark in the bell's small cave. The secret cavity of the nucleus. The quark. How hidden is the sacred, quickening in the dark behind the visible world. O Yahweh, O Jehovah, henceforth I will name you: Inkwel, Ear of Jaguar, Skin of Fig, Black Jade, Our Lady of Onyx. That which I cannot fathom. In whose image I am made.

FOR CONVERSATION

The final lines of this passage from Isaiah draw our attention to the root of the tree of Jesse as a signal of hope for the nations to come. Like roots hidden below the surface, we (and the Israelites) might not always see what God is growing in our hearts and lives in the moment. Yet even when a tree is chopped down to a stump, it is from the roots that new life is born.

Recall a time when new life came from loss (perhaps something you couldn't see at the time) or a time you hoped for something that didn't work out as you expected. Looking back, how did this evolve your sense of hope, and how God works in time? How has your understanding of hope matured over the years? What has remained consistent in your understanding of hope?



MERRY CHRISTMAS