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Not Ordinary Church

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Christmas Eve for Ordinary People in Not Ordinary Times

Allyson Sawtell 2023

Meditation

Advent has been a story of ordinary people in overwhelming times. Powerless people in a “power-over” world. Characters caught up in a story of destruction and oppression.

Advent has been a story of ordinary people doing extraordinary things, fighting in small and large ways, against the Empire that sought to define who they were, what their value was, and what their place in the world should be.

And angels keep appearing – to Mary, to Joseph, to the shepherds – and they invite these ordinary people to remake the story in the image of love and justice. To resist the efforts of Empire, and to change the world. One step at a time. In large and small ways.

Through ordinary people.

We are ordinary people in overwhelming times. And the holy still keeps breaking in, challenging us to remake the story of our times into one of love and justice. To resist the efforts of the Status Quo, Business as Usual, the powerful and fearful – the Empire of our times. One step at a time. In large and small ways.

To help remake the story in the image of love and justice.

In the image of God.

Call to Worship

Leader: This is a night of celebration! Yes, we know there’s a dire future looming before us.
Heck, the present is often looming in a pretty dire fashion right now, too.

People: You got that right! And we know you’re going to say, “Celebrate anyway!”

Leader: Yes, celebrate anyway! Because there is also a future looming before us of hope, justice, connectedness and joy! And a present still full of compassion, beauty, and community.

People: So let’s celebrate!

Leader: Let’s celebrate the birth of the One who brings the promise of this new world, this new way to be!

People: So let’s celebrate now! Let the party begin!

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Lighting of the Christ Candle (There will be two people reading and lighting the candle. If your space allows for it, you could have the congregation gather around the table where the Christ candle is lit, bringing their bulletins with them. If space or time does not allow for this, everyone but the readers/candle-lighters can remain seated)

Readings

John 1:1-5

Amanda Gorman, from *The Hill We Climb*

For there is always light,
If only we're brave enough to see it,
If only we're brave enough to be it.

Reader 1: We are invited, with Mary, to celebrate, in awe, joy and gratitude

Reader 2: We are called forth, with Joseph, to question the status quo of Herod and Business as Usual, and to choose connection and relationship

Reader 1: We are called, like the shepherds, to courage and curiosity.

Reader 2: We are called, like the unnamed ones in Bethlehem, to love with strength and compassion.

Reader 1: We ordinary people are called to embody hope, choose justice, relationship and connection. We ordinary people are called to live with extraordinary courage, to turn our backs on Empire and to help build a better world.

People: Let us light this Christ candle, to celebrate Christ's light and love that shine in the gloom of despair, in the shadows of destruction.

Reader 2: We light this candle to say a resounding "Yes!" to God's call to shine with hope, with peace, with joy and with love.

People: One step at a time. Now and always. Together.

All: Yes, Amen!

The Christ Candle is lit

Song *Trust the Vision* (Tune: Regent Square "Angels from the Realms of Glory")

Love has called us to be joyful, live with hope, and strive for peace
God, we know, You won't forsake us, for Your love will never cease.
So, together, let's keep working!
May Creation's joy increase!

Hope is how we live and move and work within Creation's sphere
Peace is part of something stronger that can free us from our fear.
So, together, let's be joyful,
Love the vision, hold what's dear.

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Reading – Celebration (This is an additional, optional reading, and may be used anywhere you see fit)

Reader 1: We've traveled through Advent. Through ordinary people making extraordinary choices:

- Mary saying yes to God's call to co-create a new world
- Joseph saying yes to relationship and love
- Shepherds saying yes to joy and the sharing of it
- Ordinary ones in Bethlehem, sharing, working, comforting, bringing balance to all life,

Reader 2: Here is what we celebrate on Christmas Eve, even in the face of all that would destroy:
We celebrate God's call to turn the world around and to live from hope, one step at a time. We celebrate God's presence with us.

People: Yes, Amen!

Reader 1: We celebrate community and relationship and justice – the things that make for peace.

People: Yes, Amen!

Reader 2: We celebrate joy, and the sharing of it.

People: Yes, Amen!

Reader 1: We celebrate love, the giving and receiving of love, the hard work and compassion of love, the sweetness of love.

People: Yes, Amen! Let us celebrate on this holy night!

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Benediction (Read by pastor or other worship leader)

This is our journey, in Advent and forever. And, in some strange way, these choices, this hard work, laced with tears and questions, cause us to celebrate. These choices blossom into hope, one step at a time.

This is Christmas – celebration of the ordinary become extraordinary. The journey we take together will be surprising, risk-taking and hope-filled. And will be an occasion for real and strong joy.

We are in this together. God is in it with us. May your spirits rejoice! Merry Christmas!



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