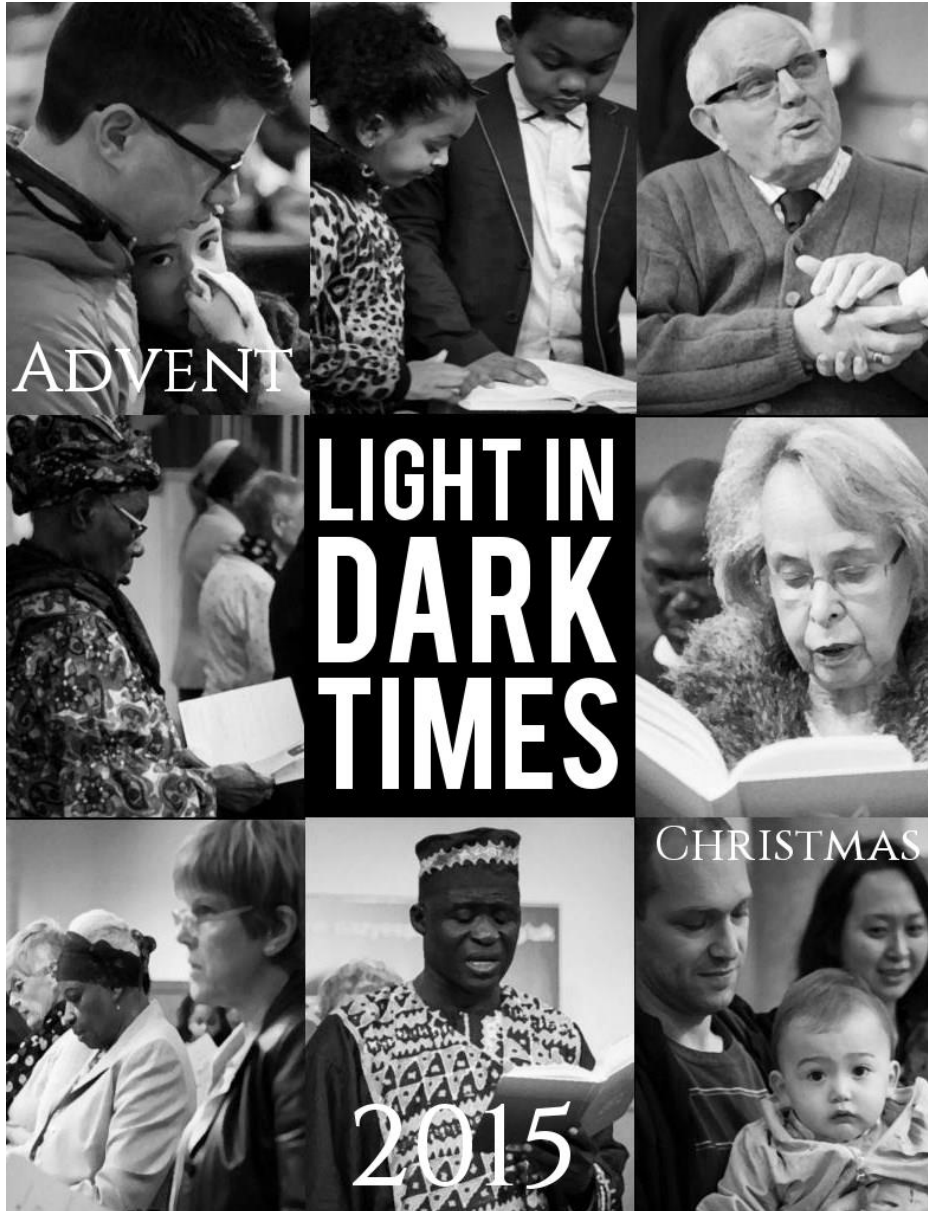




THE CHURCH OF CHRIST THE CORNERSTONE



Reflections for Advent

ADVENT IV

The Light among us

Micah 5:2-5a

“But from you, Bethlehem in Ephrathah, small as you are among Judah’s clans, from you will come a king for me over Israel, one whose origins are far back in the past, in ancient times. Therefore only until she who is pregnant has given birth will he give up Israel; and then those of the people that survive will rejoin their brethren. He will rise up to lead them in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. They will enjoy security for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. Then there will be peace”.

- The message of Micah is one of judgement – fulfilled in the overthrow of Israel and Judah by the Assyrians. (ch 3)
- However Micah also speaks of hope and the coming peace brought about by God, when people shall live in their own homes and cultivate their land rather than always be preparing for war. (ch 4:1-5)
- The verses from ch 5 (above) have been used to refer to the coming of Jesus, and the prophecy that Herod’s advisers quote when they send the wise men to Bethlehem. Was the prophet speaking of something that would happen soon – or later –or maybe both?
- Micah, as many of the other prophets, is concerned with justice rather than strict religious observance which could cover over injustices (ch.6:8)

Luke 1:39-45

Soon after the angel had spoken to her, Mary set out and hurried away to a town in the uplands of Judah. She went into Zechariah’s house and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby stirred in her womb. Then Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and

exclaimed in a loud voice, 'God's blessing is on you above all women, and his blessing is on the fruit of your womb. Who am I that the mother of my Lord should visit me? I tell you, when your greeting sounded in my ears, the baby in my womb leapt for joy. Happy is she who has faith that the Lord's promise to her would be fulfilled!'

- We don't know a lot about Mary. We think she was young, maybe about as young as she could be and still become pregnant.
- She was prepared to say yes to the unexpected and in many ways outrageous expectation of God's messenger. Did she have a choice?
- Elizabeth was at the other end of life – too old to be pregnant- and yet she was. For her God's expectation is just as demanding. Her son too would be killed by a ruler whose power was threatened by him.
- How important was it that these two women were able to share with each other?

FOR REFLECTION

(or discussion if you are in a group)

- Bethlehem was an obscure place, both in Micah's time and when Jesus was born. Why do you suppose that this was the birth place that scripture gives us for the Saviour of the world?
- Do you have a choice when God speaks to you- however you hear that message? Think about times in your own life when you might have heard God – maybe not asking something so dramatic as was asked of Mary and Elizabeth. Did you have a choice?
- Who do you share with when life feels threatening or uncertain?

- If you read through the words of the Magnificat – Mary’s song (Luke 1 v46ff), what do you make of it in terms of today’s world? Are their truths there? Is this relevant today?
- How will you rejoice and celebrate that God has come into the world in Jesus? How does God challenge you to respond?

You might also like to read

Psalm 80:1-7; Hebrews 10:5-10; the Magnificat in Luke 1: from v. 46

ADVENT IV

Prayer of the week

We are called to the light from the hard times of darkness
to welcome a world turning upside down
where the rich ones are humbled and the poor take their places,
where light from one candle is the new light of day.
Lord of Salvation, I believe in your promise
that one obscure birth will bring us exiles home.

AMEN

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