

# **Advent 2001: Unknown Territory of Hope**

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**Seekers Church**

**A Christian Community**

*In the Tradition of the Church of the Saviour*

Advent 2001

## **Unknown Territory of Hope**

### **REFLECTION**

A seed in the ground. A flame in the darkness. A hand outstretched. A child in the womb. Hope starts small and overtakes us, stretching the borders of what we have known.

...

Hope starts small, even as a seed in the womb, but it feeds on outrageous possibilities. It beckons us to step out with the belief that the action we take will not only bear fruit but that in taking it, we have already made a difference in the

world. God invites us, like Mary, to open to God's radical leading, to step out with sometimes inexplicable faith, trusting that we will find sustenance.

Jan Richardson, *Night Vision*, pp 56-57

## **PRELUDE**

### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

Leader:           We come because we've seen some hint of hope,  
a hand outstretched,  
a candle standing bravely in the dark.

People:           Our waiting is a time for memories;  
for retelling the ancient stories of our people.

Leader:           We've gathered here, before this empty cross,  
to warm our weary fingers  
while we wait for something we have never known.

People:           The road ahead leads to an unknown territory,  
a place of new life waiting to be born.

All:                       We come to celebrate the outrageous  
possibility

that God is calling forth our gifts in ways  
that have already changed the world.

## **INVOCATION**

## **HYMN**

## **WORD FOR THE CHILDREN**

## **SILENCE**

## **LITANY**

Leader:       It is an age-old story  
that still speaks to us through the centuries.

Voice 1:       It is a story of power and taxation,  
of overcrowded housing and refugee displacement,  
of the slaughter of innocents.

Voice 2:       It is a story of love and family,  
gifts from strangers and the awe of the heavens,  
of individual people saying 'Yes!'

All:                    It is a story of hope being sent to us  
in unexpected ways that we often deny.

## **SILENCE**

## **PRAYERS**

### **CONFESSION**

Leader:            The night is far gone, with no glimmer of dawn.  
The crescent moon is a cradle in the sky.

People:            We are weary, dull to the pain of creation.

Leader:            We close our eyes, lulled by false security.

People:            We sleep fitfully, dreaming dreams of despair.

All:                    Christ is but a memory in the womb of  
God.:

## **INDIVIDUAL PRAYERS OF CONFESSION**

## ASSURANCE

Leader:           Awake to hope, people of the Holy Spirit!

The Light will surely come,

for now Night prepares us.

In her, we grow, wait, and incubate.

At the coming of the Light,

we will rise to meet him,

full-bodied and strong and bright.

All:                       Amen.

## PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY

## **HYMN**

## **THE WORD**

## SCRIPTURE

## SERMON

## SILENT REFLECTION

## **OFFERING**

*The first Sunday of each month we switch to a [Communion Liturgy](#) here.*

## **SHARED REFLECTIONS**

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

## **HYMN**

## **BENEDICTION**

Leader:            May the urgent voice of God's messenger  
pierce our hardened hearts  
and announce the advent of the One  
who baptizes with the fire of the Holy Spirit.

Let our complacency give way to conversion,  
oppression to justice,  
and conflict to peace with one another in Christ.

People:            Amen.

## **Additional Prayers during Advent**

**December 2, 2001**

Prayers by Peter Bankson, Liturgist

**Lessons:            Isaiah 2:1-5**

**Psalm 122**

**Romans 13:11-14**

**Matthew 24:36-44**

### **Invocation**

O holy maker of the mystery of life

we've heard the invitation: "Let us go into the house of God ...

Let us gather there to worship, pray and celebrate."

And we have come, a little band of faithful mariners,

cast up on this island from across this teeming city,

slowing down enough to listen for your call;

waiting for your coming as a child in our midst.

Amazing architect of life and love, we bring our selves,

an earthen vessel fragile as a blade of prairie grass,  
and pray that you will fill us with your holy love,  
for we gather in the name of the one for whom we wait and  
pray,  
Jesus of Nazareth, who is the Christ. Amen.

### **Thanksgiving**

O God, we know this is a waiting time,  
a time when it seems right to rest and let life be what it may  
be.

Somewhere, winter settles on the land:

I saw it just a week ago, as driving snow  
filled the prairie without bending even the finest blades of  
grass.

It is a time of endings, too.

Today we thank you for the life of Randy Walker,  
who gave us this fresh image of your cross as DNA,  
of life and love invested in an unknown future.

His call to art came after many years, but still not late in  
life;

His death came quickly, after one last celebration with his  
family.



I know how just one day of harsh, cold wind can change our future,

bring us through a time of grief, to unexpected hope,

surprising us with the power of waiting.

O holy maker of this world we know we can not understand,

hear now our prayers of praise and thanks,

our hopes and hungers for the future of your creation in our time.

### **Intercession**

Holy giver of good news that is to come,

we watch the turmoil all around,

this new veneer of fear,

this fresh embellishment of evil offered up to scare us into cultural catatonia...

We watch, and feel the weight of grief and pain.

Today we gather at this table, beneath this empty cross,

to wait again for you to come among us,

to wonder at the signs and promises,

to listen for your call.

But somehow, we can't come empty-handed:

we bring along our lives, our pains, our fears and our frustrations.

Holy God of unknown hope,

we bring to you our prayers for those in pain and need,

for refugees and soldiers,

for those whose lives have been tipped over by death or robbery,

by illness, unemployment or despair.

Open your heart to the burdens we bring,

for we would set them down this Advent season as we wait.

### **Closing**

O God of strange hope brighter than the moon,

we celebrate the promise that you are here among us,

growing hope within us as we face this unknown future

drawn together by your love through Jesus of Nazareth,

our Saviour, whose birth we know is coming ... soon. Amen.

**December 9, 2001**

Prayers by Peter Bankson, Liturgist

**Lessons:            Isaiah 11:1-10**

**Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19**

**Romans 15:4-13**

**Matthew 3:1-12**

**Invocation**

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch shall grow out of its roots.

And the spirit of God shall rest upon this branch,  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might,  
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of God.

This branch is Jesus, whose birth among us we gather to  
await.

Come let us worship God together.

**Thanksgiving**

O God of hopeful waiting,

God whose coming in Christ is the promise of our salvation,

God of justice and mercy in the face of our doubt,

we come to you in prayer.

We look for the marvelous unfolding of your love –

in signs of hope, in acts of love,

and in the mystery of birth and growth.

We scan the news,

hoping for a glimpse of new beginnings

showing through the gloom like unexpected, bright spring  
buds.

God of all creation,

we know that you are more than we can ever imagine,

that your wisdom is too deep for us to plumb.

We worship you and praise your wonderful working in this  
world.

Mysterious taproot of our faith,

hear now our prayers of praise and thanks –

for life, for hope, for signs that you are here already, even as we wait.

### **Intercession**

Holy Spirit, blowing like a winter wind  
through every culture and community,  
restless Spirit, bringing change to all we know;  
O God of hopeful, comforting compassion,  
we hold your promise of a peaceful world in trembling hands,  
looking for the day when righteousness and justice will  
prevail.

You waited with Mary and Elizabeth  
as they felt new life stirring deep within;  
You waited with Joseph and Zechariah  
as they wondered how the coming birth would change their  
lives;  
and you have promised to also wait with us,  
even in our doubt and fear.

As this year of turbulence draws to a cold, wet end  
we carry on our hearts the burdens  
of so many who are ill and starving;

so many living unprotected, without shelter or community;  
so many whose lives are torn by war and hatred.

We lie still on our beds at night  
hoping for a joyful stirring of new life deep within us,  
asking that this time of painful waiting might be short.

Hear now our prayers for those in need,  
for those whose pain and suffering  
has separated them from your love.

### **Closing**

Mighty taproot of creation,  
we bring our prayers to you, as we wait together  
the coming of your Christ among us;  
the very Christ in whose name we gather and pray. Amen.

**December 16, 2001**

Prayers by Peter Bankson, Liturgist

**Lessons:            Isaiah 35:1-10**

**Luke 1:47-55**

**Psalm 146:5-10**

**James 5:7-10**

**Matthew 11:2-11**

### **Invocation**

O wonderful maker of all creation,  
in ancient days your prophets told that  
your coming means good news for the oppressed,  
healing care for the brokenhearted,  
release for the captives, and comfort for those who mourn.

And so we wait with growing expectations,  
yearning for your coming in this time and place.

God of all salvation,  
we pray that you will fill our hearts,  
open our eyes, clean out our ears and loosen our tongues –  
for we gather in the spirit of the very one for whom we wait,  
the redeemer of creation, who is Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

### **Thanksgiving**

Holy God of all creation,  
we marvel at the power of your presence with Mary,  
who knew so well that she had found favor with you.

We join with those in every generation who call her blessed,  
who knew that she was chosen as the vessel  
to bear your presence into the world as one who walks among  
us.

How glorious are the fruits of your creation,  
the trees and fields at rest;  
the wild deer, and cats more wild than we think;  
the children, wise beyond their own experience.

How clearly they can hear the good news you proclaim!

Divine source of hope and expectation,  
we would be like Mary, in our own way,  
and marvel at the power of your presence in our time,  
giving thanks for all we have received,  
and for this time to wait in growing anticipation  
for your coming once again into our world.



Hear now our prayers of praise and thanks  
for all the bounty of your creation.

### **Intercession**

O God of pregnant waiting,  
we know in ways beyond the words our tongues can speak,  
that you are present to all the irony and agony of life.

We wonder why so many people,  
close at hand and in nations far from here as well,  
are so divided over how to live together in community;  
You are here among us: come quickly, lord Jesus!

We see our land in economic shackles  
and find it hard to celebrate a struggle against terrorism  
that puts at risk so many of our sisters and brothers;  
You are here among us: come quickly lord Jesus!

O God of pregnant waiting,  
there are so many places where we long to know  
that you are present,  
even though we may not see you in the suffering.

Hear now our prayers for those in sorrow and in need,  
for we would know your presence with us,  
even as we wait.

### **Closing**

O God of pregnant waiting,  
be with us as we wait again  
for the good news that life does follow death,  
the news that Jesus Christ is born.

You are here among us: come quickly Lord Jesus! Amen.

**December 23, 2001**

Prayers by Peter Bankson, Liturgist

**Lessons:            Isaiah 7:10-16**

**Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19**

**Romans 1:1-7**

**Matthew 1:18-25**

**Invocation**

Holy God of this unfolding creation,  
the long dark nights of waiting are nearly behind us:  
this people who have walked in darkness begin to see the  
light;  
we have been living in a land of darkness –  
but the light is on the way.

That light is the light of the world:  
Your presence here as one of us, as part of us,  
as new beginning born within us.

O come, O come Emmanuel! Amen.

### **Thanksgiving**

O God of all creation, we pace the waiting room,  
filled with hope and fear –  
hoping that your coming will truly bring the peace we hunger  
for;  
fearing that we hope for more than you are ready to share with  
us.

The dawning brightness all around us  
reaches for a sense of hope hidden deeper than the pain,

and we give thanks.

Our chosen family of faith is gathering – and scattering –  
to celebrate this time of new beginnings,  
and we give thanks.

Your promised light is coming once again,  
and we give thanks.

Fill us with a child's love we pray,  
so we can fill this room with prayers of praise and thanks,  
for all your gifts of life and hope!.

### **Intercession**

O child of hope, born into a world of fear,  
this year is so much like the one  
that saw your birth of Mary in a stable.

Hatred bred so long it seems genetic  
has pushed an angry people out into the cold,  
and called our young to search the icy caves,  
absorb the hatred with their bodies and their spirits,

and somehow turn it into something just and gentle,  
soft enough to set aside unguarded.

Why doesn't it surprise me that you were not born a warrior?

You came in peace, spoke out for justice,  
let the anger penetrate your spirit,  
then died to make the world a better place.

Why should we hope for any less a chance  
to find our ways to do the same?

O Holy God, creator of the universe, we pray for peace,  
and for a future filled with justice, love and hope.

Hear now our prayers for those in need,  
for those who can not say this year  
that "All is calm, and all is bright."

### **Closing**

Holy maker of the universe  
who chose to come among us as a newborn,

we come together as we wait,

eager to cry out so all will hear

that God is with us! Hosanna! Alleluia ... and Amen!