

Generous People Living God's Love
...by being inspired and inspiring

“And Mary said, ‘My soul magnifies the Most High God, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior’ ” Luke 1:46-47.

(Please see Luke 1:46-55 for the full Bible reading)

For the past several years, Advent has been, for me, a season of writing down daily “Gratitude Lists” (I write down a list of 5 people/experiences/things I give God thanks for each night before sleep). Some days, the gratitude flows quickly, while other days I struggle to list things I’d otherwise take for granted (“Thank you, God, for a roof over my head”).

When Advent begins just after Thanksgiving, I’m not yet in the hustle of the holiday season, with church not yet ramping up, and our kids still in school before winter vacation. Unique to 2016 is the last Christmas with our first African-American President in the White House. Gratitude can fuel us for all the work ahead of us for the common good, with priority to people like Mary, who gave thanks to God from her “low estate” (Luke 1:48).

These early days of Advent are a perfect time to live more deeply in God’s generous love by being inspired and inspiring others. In her song, Mary is looking at the injustice around her: some high, proud and rich, while others like herself are lowly and hungry. Yet, God’s action to bring down the mighty and lift up those of low degree has already begun with the coming birth of our Savior.

My hope is that when God seeks us out to receive the inspiration of Jesus Christ, we will say “yes” like Mary, and magnify God to inspire others.

~ Rev. Barbara K. Foltin, Stewardship Discipling Team Chair

Discussion Questions for Church Leaders:

1. What are 5 gifts God has given your congregation, which would be at the top of your congregational Advent Gratitude List?
2. In what ways does your congregation listen to voices in the surrounding neighborhood? Are they the voices of the rich, the poor or a combination?
3. In what ways is your congregation generous and living God’s love?
4. In what ways is your congregation inspired to grow in Jesus’ mission? Discuss how you as church leaders can encourage that