

A photograph of a church interior, showing rows of wooden pews facing a sanctuary. The sanctuary features a large, colorful stained glass window and a wooden altar. The ceiling is made of exposed wooden beams with several pendant lights hanging down. The date "DECEMBER 9, 2020" is printed in white at the top center of the image.

DECEMBER 9, 2020

# AGAPE FROM AFAR

*Adjusting to life amidst Coronavirus*

A WORD  
FROM  
PASTOR  
JILL

As a way to remain connected during this time apart, I will be putting together a weekly newsletter with a reflection based on the upcoming Sunday scripture passage. I hope that by taking a few moments to reflect on the Word of God and pray, we can feel grounded and connected to God and to one another during this uncertain time. *-Pastor Jill*



The scripture for this week is Luke 1:39-56. This text is about Mary visiting her cousin Elizabeth while they are both pregnant. Mary shares a hymn of praise that we know as the "Magnificat". The words of this famous hymn are quite revolutionary. Mary's words foreshadow Jesus' ministry where the lowly are blessed, the hungry are filled with good things and the rich are sent away empty.

Reflect more on this passage on the following pages.



**Read the passage:**

**Luke 1:39-56**

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever." And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.



**Reflect:**

1. Have you ever thought about what Mary's song really says?
2. Where to you think Mary gained the confidence to speak such powerful words?
3. How do you respond to its potentially unsettling message?
3. How might you live more mindful of the lowly and the hungry?
4. What is this passage calling you to do today? This week?

**Pray:**

With Mary, my soul praises you this day, O God. My spirit rejoices in you, my Savior. You are the Mighty One, the holy God at work in this world. Even when I am discouraged, remind me to turn to you. Amen.



In this time when we are not able to sing our favorite Christmas carols together, let us spend Advent looking at the history behind some of our favorite songs:

### **Joy to the World!**

**Joy to the world, the Lord is come!**

**Let earth receive her King;**

**Let every heart prepare him room,**

**And heaven and nature sing.**

Did you know that Joy to the World was not originally written as a Christmas Carol? "Joy to the World," was a poem written by Isaac Watts based loosely on Psalm 98, which says, "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises" (Psalm 98:4). That psalm looks forward to the day when the Lord will come to judge the world in righteousness. Instead of being a carol about Jesus' birth, the original song was about Jesus' return to earth at the end of the age.

In this hymn, Watts reinterpreted the psalm to rejoice in the coming of the Christ. This hymn was sung to various tunes for many years. Then in 1839, Lowell Mason, a banker who happened to be quite interested in church music, published the tune that we now associate with "Joy to the World." Mason borrowed liberally from classical music, and acknowledged his debt to Handel's "Messiah" for parts of this hymn tune.

In this unusual year, it may be difficult to sing "Joy to the World" and feel very joyful. But even in our darkest times we remain hopeful that Jesus will one day return and all people will know "the wonders of his love."

Excerpts from: <https://sermonwriter.com/hymn-stories/joy-to-the-world/>

What Pastor Jill is  
**reading:**

*I'm Still Here* by Austin  
Channing Brown

What Pastor Jill is  
**watching:**

*The Repair Shop*,  
Season 3

What Pastor Jill is  
**listening to:** Behold  
by Lauren Daigle



**Please reach out to  
a staff member if  
you need financial,  
emotional or  
spiritual assistance.  
As always, we are  
here to help!**

**First Church of  
Lombard  
220 S. Main Street  
Lombard, IL 60148  
630-629-2630**

[info@firstchurchoflombard.org](mailto:info@firstchurchoflombard.org)