

FIRST READINGS

Vivian Montgomery and Oliver Cotran

Vivian: Our first reading is from the book of Luke, chapter one, the verses known as the Magnificat: Mary's Song of Praise, followed by a poem by author Madeleine L'Engle.

When Mary is told by the angel she will bear a child, she calls out in joy this prophecy:

‘My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favour 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 for ever.’

(Pause...then step aside for Oliver)

Oliver:

“The Risk of Birth” by Madeleine L’Engle:

This is no time for a child to be born,
With the earth betrayed by war and hate
And a comet slashing the sky to warn
That time runs out and the sun burns late.

That was no time for a child to be born,
In a land in the crushing grip of Rome;
Honor and truth were trampled by scorn—
Yet here did the Savior make his home.

When is the time for love to be born?
The inn is full on the planet earth,
And by a comet the sky is torn—
Yet Love still takes the risk of birth.

(Pause...)

Our opening carols begin with some voices and grow into all voices.
Please rise in body or in spirit for *The First Nowell* followed by *Angels
We Have Heard on High*.

(Pause...then exit pulpit.)

SECOND READINGS

Isaiah Johnson

Our second reading is the story of Jesus' birth as it is told in the book of Luke, followed by a single line from the book of Hebrews.

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered.

Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them,

‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.’

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,
'Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!'

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.'

So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

(Pause.....)

And, from the book of Hebrews, chapter 13:

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

(Pause....then exit pulpit.)

THIRD READINGS Andy Wells-Bean and Vivian Montgomery

Andy: Our third reading is “For So the Children Come,” adapted from the writings of Unitarian Universalist educator Sophia Lyon Fahs, followed by the poem “One Heart” by Li-Young Lee.

By Sophia Lyon Fahs:

For so the children come
And so they have been coming.
No angels herald their beginnings.
No prophets predict their future courses.
No wise ones see a star to show where
to find the babe that will save humankind.
Yet each night a child is born is a holy night.
Parents sitting beside their children’s cribs
Feel glory in the sight of a new life beginning.
Each night a child is born is a holy night—
A time for singing, a time for wondering, a time for worshipping.

(Pause...step aside for Vivian)

THIRD READINGS Andy Wells-Bean and Vivian Montgomery

Vivian:

“One Heart” by Li-Young Lee

Look at the birds. Even flying
is born

out of nothing. The first sky
is inside you, friend, open

at either end of day.
The work of wings

was always freedom, fastening
one heart to every falling thing.

(Pause...)

Please remain seated for “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear.”

(Pause... then exit pulpit)

FOURTH READING - Claire

“Funny” by Anna Kamienska

What’s it like to be a human?

Our final reading is the poem “Funny” by Anna Kamienska.

What’s it like to be a human
the bird asked

I myself don’t know
it’s being held prisoner by your skin
while reaching infinity
being a captive of your scrap of time
while touching eternity
being hopelessly uncertain
and helplessly hopeful
being a needle of frost
and a handful of heat
breathing in the air
and choking wordlessly
it’s being on fire
with a nest made of ashes
eating bread
while filling up on hunger
it’s dying without love
it’s loving through death

That’s funny said the bird
and flew effortlessly up into the air