



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic First Sunday after Christmas Day, December 27, 2020

2020 Christmas Message from the World Council of Churches

Galatians 4:4-7

4:4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

4:5 in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.

4:6 And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

4:7 So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

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 Saviour, who is the Messiah. — Luke 2:10-11

The child in the manger, in its vulnerability, is an image of fragile hope, the beginning of a new story that will culminate in the gift of life and salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. There have been and there are today many reasons to be afraid and to live in despair. In the most difficult days of history, Christians have time and again found consolation and hope in the good news of Jesus Christ that begins with the birth of the Saviour in Bethlehem.

Celebrations of Christmas in churches and families this year will be tempered by the physical distancing and other restrictions brought on by our concern to protect each other from the coronavirus. People will grieve for the many dead around the world and will express their gratitude for those who care for the sick with great dedication and courage.

The pandemic has everywhere torn the social fabric, causing massive unemployment and even hunger, rending our connections to each other, revealing and exacerbating inequalities, raising havoc and dissent, and threatening institutions of good governance. At the same time, violence and war continue, destroying the livelihoods of people with increasing numbers of refugees and migrants and killing so many men, women and children.

Even under these circumstances, however, there is a sound of angels in the air, proclaiming the birth of Christ with great joy. As Christians, we glimpse in this singular event, the birth of the child Jesus in a desolate village at the margins of the Roman empire, the fragile beginnings of our own redemption.

As people of faith, we know that in the Incarnation of the Lord, God, the Creator and Sustainer of all life, draws near to us, loves us compassionately, liberates and accompanies us. As people of hope, we glimpse in the birth of Jesus God's "yes" to life, and the birth of new possibility, new life triumphing over death and despair. The Incarnation is God's decisive "yes" to humanity and creation. In the Incarnation, God cares for us and raises us, gives up God's very self to identify with us, becomes human to make us like him by grace.

This vision is embraced by the theme of the forthcoming assembly of the World Council of Churches in Karlsruhe, Germany: "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity." Encouraged and guided by this vision of the Incarnation of Christ, I pray for people and leadership of our member churches and all people with whom we share this planet that fear gives way to joy, and that this year of sadness, loneliness, and suffering may yield hope, courage, and loving service in the cause of justice and peace.

In a world of pain and death, the event of Christmas allows us to find consolation, lift our heads in hope, and glimpse in deep faith the triumph of life and love in the birth of Jesus. This is good news of great joy for all people. And so, despite everything, together with the angels we sing through our traditional carols: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards people!" (Luke 2:14).

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Message de Noël 2020 (En français): <https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/2020-ChristmasMessage-formatted-FR.pdf>

Mensaje de Navidad 2020 (En español): <https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/2020-ChristmasMessage-formatted-ES.pdf>

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)—Reflecting on the scripture and on the WCC Christmas message, describe the good news you see, hear, and/or perceive.

PRAY: (AMEC, #787)

Almighty God, who has revealed the glory of your love in the fact of Jesus Christ and has called us to live with you as children: fill our hearts as we remember His nativity with the gladness of this great redemption. We would join in the heavenly song of Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good-will toward *humanity*. Breathe into our hearts the spirit of Jesus, that we may be led to You in trust and obedience, and be sent out to live among humanity in *familial* love and

sympathy. Every year, as this joyful festival comes round, may it find the world more and more in harmony with Your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN

ACT:

1. Based on your reflections from the TALK section, find one concrete way to share the good news you perceive with someone who needs to see, hear, perceive it too. This Christmastide, do what you can; help others and yourself by practicing social distancing as much as possible, washing your hands often, and wearing face covering to help prevent the spread of COVID-19— See: <http://www.amechealth.org>.

2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.

3. Check out some other Advent and Christmas Resources for worship and study: AMEC Publishing House (Sunday School Union). <http://www.iamame.org/worship-resources-2/>

Advent/Christmas Daily Devotional from the AME, AMEZ, and CME Departments of Christian Education (Kindle version):

https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B08M6FGLHC?pf_rd_r=VVMNB09AMKMDNH1EDGJS&pf_rd_p=40eb7df6-3345-4945-93b1-96c5bd9a116d

Song:

Hark! the Herald Angels Sing
AMEC Hymnal, #115

1. Hark! the her-ald an-gels sing, “Glo-ry to the new-born King;
Peace on earth, and mer-cy mild, God and sin-ners rec-on-ciled!”
Joy-ful, all ye na-tions, rise, Join the tri-umph of the skies;
With th’an-gel-ic host pro-claim, “Christ is born in Beth-le-hem!”

Refrain:

Hark! the her-ald an-gels sing, “Glo-ry to the new-born King!”

2. Christ, by high-est heaven a-dored; Christ, the ev-er last-ing Lord!
Late in time be-hold Him come, Off spring of the vir-gin’s womb.
Veiled in flesh the God-head see; Hail th’in-car-nate De-i-ty,
Pleased as man with men to dwell, Je-sus, our Em-man-u-el.

Refrain

3. Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righ-teous-ness!
Light and life to all He brings, Risen with heal-ing in His wings,
Mild he lays His glo-ry by, Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them se-cond birth.

Refrain AMEN

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place an Advent wreath, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric (purple or royal blue) to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



The Christian Education Department will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.