



Wednesday Prayer

4th Sunday of Advent – In healing, God is with us.

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit... an angel of the Lord appeared to him (Joseph) in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." (From Matthew 1:18- 23)

In today's text, we are told only of Joseph's concern and fear. There is no mention of Mary's. For a growing number of theologians, this glaring imbalance of who is given "voice" in the Scriptures can become highly problematic. This may be especially true when seeking to walk alongside individuals and communities who have experienced (or are at high risk of) complex trauma in all of its forms. So how can we, as communities of faith, give equal voice to all aspects of the human experience when our texts often do not?

First, Christian communities can intentionally pay attention to how body and mind respond to certain words and stories differently after trauma we or our neighbors have experienced. Secondly, we can build upon the natural strengths of God's grace as expressed through the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibility of our worship and fellowship time together. There is growing research in the field of neurobiology confirming that these practices can help build pathways of violence prevention, trauma healing, and resiliency.

In [The Christian Century](#), author Shelly Rambo explores the role trauma studies are playing in reshaping common worship and pastoral care practices. She writes, "Christian communities, through worship and ritual can provide containers for practices of remembrance... Christians need to pay attention to bodies and to how both mind and body may respond to certain words or stories. We can pay attention to breath, a primary metaphor for God's Spirit. We can summon the breath, as God instructs Ezekiel, and witness to the hope that dry bones can come back to life."

Heavenly Creator, Mother and Father to us all, today we pray for pastors, deacons, theologians, musicians, and artists within our churches. Guide them as they seek new ways to help heal the wounds of individual, collective, and generational trauma so that all people can sing with beautifully resilient voices "Emmanuel. God is with us." Amen.

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