



Community

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

of Clarendon Hills

**Group Devotion
December 2019
Theme: *Wonder and Awe***

Note to Devotion Leader: *This month's devotion includes a link to a video which contains music, one primary image, and large-font lyrics. With small groups, viewing the image from a laptop with the volume turned up so all can hear will be sufficient. In larger groups and rooms, you may decide to project the video. While the experience of this devotion is significantly enhanced by the video, if technology disappoints (as it often does!) the devotion content is designed to provide sufficient opportunity to explore the theme without the video. You are encouraged to test the projection before the meeting!*

Opening Prayer (in unison)

Gracious God, open our hearts, and minds to hear what you are showing us today. By the power of your Holy Spirit give us willingness and courage to faithfully follow you. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Introduction (Leader, 1 min)

In the midst of the demands and commotion of the Advent and Christmas season, it's easy to lose our sense of wonder over God's stunning outpouring of love for us experienced in the birth of Jesus. However, if we lose our sense of wonder, if we fail to be moved to awe by God's miracles, we miss significant opportunities to grow in faith and love. As the Rev. Dr. Renita Weems in her book, *Listening for God*, observes, the experience of awe and wonder is transformative:

*The truly remarkable transformation is not one from
unbelief to belief
nor from
despair to hope.*

*The truly remarkable transformation is from
dogma to wonder
from
belief to awe.¹*

Through the words of Scripture and the carol, "I Wonder as I Wander," let's rest in, and reflect with wonder on, God's abounding love embodied in the infant Jesus.

¹ Renita J. Weems, *Listening for God: A Minister's Journey Through Silence and Doubt* (New York: 1999), 187-188.

Scripture: Luke 2:8-20 Common English Bible

(Leader or volunteer reader, 2 min)

⁸ Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. ⁹ The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified.

¹⁰ The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. ¹¹ Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. ¹² This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." ¹³ Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors."

¹⁵ When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." ¹⁶ They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. ¹⁸ Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. ²⁰ The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.

Holy Wisdom, Holy Word! This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

"I Wonder as I Wander" (4 min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJO6nH7fL2A> (Lyrics provided at the end of the devotion)

Group Reflection (Leader facilitates discussion, 7-10 min)

1. What does the wonder of the Christmas story tell you about how God acts in the world?
2. In what ways do you find an experience with God's awe-provoking ways transformative for your faith? (Reflecting on the experiences that came to mind in the individual devotion may be helpful.)

Cont.

Build a Closing Prayer (2-3 minutes)

To the Leader: There are many ways to build the closing prayer together; please be encouraged to experiment! It's important that all have an opportunity to contribute, and that the prayer reflects the input of the group. Beyond that, you can be creative.

For example, you might invite everyone around the table to say aloud what comes to mind from #1, or maybe they'd rather write down their responses and pass them to you. Or, after everyone has a chance to write, you could begin the prayer and pause, letting the group call out what they have written down. Or, you may have another idea! Feel free to also add the joys and concerns of the group.

1. Together, list:
 - a. What you need from God to faithfully follow (i.e. courage, clarity, comfort, etc.)
 - b. What provision of God's you are particularly grateful for as it relates following (i.e. God's strength, God's persistence and patience, other Christians, etc.)
2. The devotion leader then begins the prayer, filling in the blanks with the list above:

Gracious and loving God (or other naming of God),

we thank you for (list from 1b above) .

With grateful hearts, we want to serve you faithfully and grow in your likeness.

By your grace, we ask these things (list from 1a above) .

ALL: Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.

Reminder: Please include a summary of your group's discussion, including your prayer list, in your meeting minutes.

Cont.



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"I Wonder as I Wander" John Jacob Niles

I wonder as I wander, out under the sky
How Jesus the Savior did come for to die
For poor, orn'ry people like you and like I;
I wonder as I wander, out under the sky.

When Mary birthed Jesus, 'twas in a cow's stall
With wise men and farmers and shepherds and all.
But high from God's heaven a star's light did fall,
The promise of ages it then did recall.

If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing
A star in the sky or a bird on the wing,
Or all of God's angels in heav'n to sing
He surely could have it 'cause He was the King.

I wonder as I wander, out under the sky
How Jesus the Savior did come for to die
For poor, orn'ry people like you and like I;
I wonder as I wander, out under the sky.