

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL 2010

SUBJECT TO CHANGE

SILVER SPRING
UNITED METHODIST
COOPERATIVE PARISH



Introduction

During our recent photo shoot for our pictorial directory, we invited our church members to write on a comment card “what they loved most about their church.” Many of you filled them out and wrote about the music program, Bible studies, Sunday school, the people and the Spirit of our Cooperative Parish. But just the other day one of these little comment cards appeared in the offering plate and the neatly printed response read: The way it was before.

All of us, at one time or another, have felt this way. We liked things better the way they were before—before everything changed.

Change is hard. Even when change is welcome, or necessary; even if because of the change things are better than they were before, change is still hard. Change is hard because our very human nature craves stability and security. But the world around us is not static—it is dynamic. The created order was not meant to sit still. We are always in the midst of God’s movement from life to death to new life. One of the few things we can count on in this world is that things will change.

As we enter the season of Advent, we stand on the threshold of change. We believe that God is about to do something, that there will be an in-breaking of God’s power, God’s grace, God’s presence.



We stand here in this moment, anticipating, awaiting, hoping for a change. And if we truly believe in the power of the incarnation, we should expect that it will be nothing like anything we've ever seen before. When we read the Advent scriptures, readings from the Prophet Isaiah and the Gospel of Matthew, we imagine a world completely unlike anything we've ever known. The Prophet casts a vision of weapons turned into farming tools, of predator and prey resting peacefully together, of people's physical limitations being removed and they're being set free and made whole. Matthew's Gospel shakes us awake with the shouts of John the Baptist calling us to repent, and telling us that there is one who is coming who will baptize not with water, but "with the Holy Spirit and with fire." (Matt. 3:11) The coming of the Messiah brings a holy revolution of justice, peace, transformation, and liberation. Clearly, God is about to change everything. The question is: are we ready?

May the blessings of this holy season be yours.

Rev. Rachel Cornwell, Pastor

SUBJECT TO CHANGE

OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW AND SERVE IN ADVENT

— ADULT BIBLE STUDIES —

**Mary Had a Baby: An Advent Study Based on
African-American Spirituals**

Tuesdays in Advent

Nov. 30, Dec. 7, Dec. 14, Dec. 21

7:00pm – 8:30pm at Woodside, Room #22

Text-ing Change: An Advent Bible Study on Transformation

Sundays in Advent

Nov. 28, Dec. 5, Dec. 12, Dec. 19

9:30am – 10:30am at Woodside

6:00pm – 7:00pm at Marvin

— CHILDREN AND FAMILY ACTIVITIES —

Advent Celebration

Sunday, December 5

An afternoon of activities, crafts, and fellowship for all ages!
featuring a Secret Santa Shop for children to buy for presents to
give to others. 12:00pm-3:00pm Woodside Fellowship Hall

Birthday Party for Jesus

Sunday, December 27

A children's party following worship.

11:00am at Marvin

— FEEDING PROGRAMS —

Arleeta's Pantry

Every Saturday at Woodside, Narthex

9:00am – 11:00am

Serve Dinner at Shepherd's Table

Tuesday, December 7

Wednesday, December 15

5:00pm – 6:30pm

Mobile Food Pantry

Tuesday, December 14 at Marvin Memorial

Volunteer — 1:30pm – 4:15pm

Distribution — 3:00pm – 4:15pm



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 1st Sunday in Advent**Isaiah 2:1-5**

The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!



Matthew 24:36-44

“But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.

* God's Plan Through It All

BY GRACE FRITZ

My life has changed a great deal in the last few years with my husband, Russel, having Alzheimer's. I was completely stressed out and exhausted with his care but now can see God has guided me through this time. Before we left for the summer in Maine his neurologist had mentioned that he thought it was time for Russel to be in a home and that families seemed to prefer small group homes. I started to check into it and got a list of possible places. In Maine I started the summer taking him to daycare and then he fell several times and it was impossible for me to pick him up. I took him to his doctor there who insisted that I put him in a home because taking care of an Alzheimer's patient can affect the caretaker's brain. I prayed for guidance and was led to the most wonderful, caring and perfect small group home I could possibly have wished for. He was comfortable and happy there.

Meanwhile I was looking for a place in Silver Spring and decided I needed to go home and check out the one that I thought was best and come back and get him when I had things arranged. I visited the home that I had chosen after much prayer and found they had the same philosophy as the one in Maine and I was thrilled. However, they were filled and the new one they were building still isn't ready. The director in Maine is happy to keep Russel there until I have a place for him. I am amazed at the way things opened up for us and I can see God's plan through it all. I am feeling confident that all will work out and even though the cost of all this is great I have no fear because I know that God is guiding me and will look after the situation. I have perfect faith that we will get through all this with God's help. My faith has strengthened as I see God working through the support of family, friends, other caring people and experience. I know it is for good in our lives and I thank God for His care.

Change Is Not All Bad ✨

BY ELAINE UPTON

None of us really likes change. Change is scary. We like to be comfortable, and change takes us out of our comfort zones, to places to which we are not at all sure we want to go. Adapting to change requires effort, and it is hard to commit to that effort when we are not sure we are even going to like the result. A year and a half ago tremendous changes were announced to Marvin Memorial and Woodside United Methodist Churches. Both churches had a long history as independent churches, and joining together as a Cooperative Parish was a scary prospect. What was going to happen to us? Was one church going to swallow up the other...would we lose our church as we knew it? Many of us went on the defensive. Wasn't there a way to save our church without changing things? Undaunted, our new pastors enthusiastically, patiently and compassionately shaped this new Cooperative Parish, leading us to see what could be accomplished by working together to do God's work in our parish, our community and our world. Together we have built up church programs (a vibrant Youth Group, cooperative Bible studies, six choirs), reached out to our community (Habitat Interfaith House, Arleta's Pantry, partnerships with Blair High School, the community Thanksgiving dinner), and extended our mission in the world (more apportionments paid, aid to Haiti, our VIM trip to Nicaragua). We are called to practice our faith out in the world as well as within the walls of our churches. We at Marvin have to admit that we could not have done these things alone. These things could only be accomplished through the very change that we resisted. By embracing each other in the Cooperative Parish we have built up a larger faith community to help each other and to share our faith. We have done great things together and brought wonderful spiritual rewards to all of us. Change is not all bad.

 2nd Sunday in Advent**Isaiah 11:1-10**

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.



Matthew 3:1-12

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, “The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’” Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. “I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

* Requirements Of Change

BY BECKY HILL

Change. This word perfectly describes 2010 for our family. Our year started and continued throughout with my father's illness that required him to move from his home of 55 years into an assistant living facility. This was not an easy move to consider and we had to clean out his home to prepare for renters. It was an emotional struggle on everyone — keep it, throw it away, or store it. Then came the change in my son Dylan's health (also during the time of moving my father) when he suffered a severe concussion and spent the next two months with ongoing migraines, dr visits and tests. A very scary time. My oldest son was moving on from elementary school to middle school. I won't even go into all the financial changes that took place, job changes, and then the physical changes from all the stress — hair loss, weight gain, back injury, depression, and lack of sleep. All the changes from this year required a great deal of time, energy and mental exhaustion. It became increasingly difficult to attend church and be part of this wonderful community. Though through it all, I never felt lost or alone. As the Silver Spring Cooperative Parish continues to expand its outreach by the weekly email, Messenger, Facebook, Vacation Bible School, Kids With Purpose, retreats, and special events continued to keep us connected even when we couldn't attend on Sundays. I always heard God's message loud and clear, that I am never alone. We made it through the year, a bit stronger and wiser. My father is settled into a new home and doing well, all the boys are doing well in school and have their health, job changes took a positive turn for both me and my husband, hair loss has stopped (hopefully the weight gain has too!), sleeping better and feeling better. Change brought us full circle. We've seen the lows and some highs but no matter where we were, our church community was there to remind us of our faith and to hold us tight through it all. God is Good.

A Joyful Call ✨

BY LISA MIDDLETON

Prior to 2008, I was struggling to find my purpose, my confidence, my self-esteem. Looking back, I'm not sure if I could've answered "who are you and where are you going?" I lived a full life with my husband, children, friends and family but I don't know that it was a joyful life.

Then I read a book* that changed my life. That book brought me back to God. I started each morning with a prayer, more like a joyful call — now, imagine me on a roof-top or a mountain-top, with arms spread wide to the sky calling out in a joyful voice "Thank you God for this brand new day — a fresh start — a new day to live the life you have planned for me. I pray for an open heart and open eyes to see what it is You have in store for me. All in Your name, Amen!"

When I started to do this, my life came together. I returned to work after being home with my children for 5 years — with a job close to home, with flexibility a parent dreams of. I moved to a full-time job at a Temple that was challenging at best but again, brought me closer to God — I started going to church shortly after I started working there (it doesn't escape me that I worked in a house of worship!!). Now, I'm back at the office where I started and I know I am helping make a difference every day. All the while, my relationships with my children grew closer and more meaningful and my husband became my best friend all over again.

Now, I can tell you who I am and what I know — with a grateful heart and a joyful call to God, I feel blessed everyday — with God, I know that all things are possible. I know it — from the top of my head to the tips of my toes — I know it.

* Joel Osteen's *Your Best Life Now: 7 Steps to Living at Your Full Potential*.

 3rd Sunday in Advent**Isaiah 35:1-10**

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you."

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.



Matthew 11:2-11

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’ Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

* Change: From a Kid

BY HEATHER PARKIN

Change is a hard thing to deal with, but God always intends it for the better. For instance, when my parents got separated, it was a tough thing to deal with.

But now both of my parents are a lot happier. I still am a little sad, but I know I'll get over it. Change is always for the better, even if it takes a long time for the better to come of it. Believe me, change is a little rough, but God loves you and is helping you in some way. You just got to believe everything will turn out all right.

God's Master Plan ✨

BY LAWRENCE JONES

From the day we are born, we begin the never ending task of learning to navigate through change, physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional. I believe that God, as the ultimate director of life, knows everything about our earthly journey and has the perfect vision and 'road map' for the roads ahead.

This sole belief has given me the courage to embrace the changes that I have encountered thus far in life, and there have certainly been many changes in my life in recent years. The most important was the birth of our daughter, Nohealani, preceded by my marriage to her mother, my beloved Facia, two years prior. The cumulative effect of these two major milestones, and everything that I have experienced since, have been a positive confirmation of the presence of God's hand in my own life, and as the third cord in our marriage.

As time has gone by, it has become clear for me that when change rockets us to places we once thought were out of our reach, or when we encounter road blocks on life's journey, it is God demonstrating that there is a master plan and purpose for our lives. I have been reminded of this over the past 20 years through a book mark in my Bible with the quote "The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God will not keep you."

Finally, coping with change and the uncertainties that come with it is not always easy. For some it can create paralyzing fear and anxiety. But throughout my life I have learned to never fear change, and neither should you as a child of the God. To do so prevents you from experiencing God in the fullest. The 23rd Psalm has certainly made the most difficult changes seemingly easy for me to deal with.

 4th Sunday in Advent**Isaiah 7:10-17**

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test. Then Isaiah said: "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

The Lord will bring on you and on your people and on your ancestral house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria."



Matthew 1:18-25

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. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him 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.' When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

* Change is Coming

BY JEN MIHOK

Since January of 2009, I have been engaged in faith-based advocacy work through the Methodist Federation for Social Action. In that time, I have focused a significant portion of my energy on comprehensive immigration reform: organizing young people for an immersion trip on the US/Mexico border, rallying with about 200,000 others on the National Mall last March. Time and time again I heard from policy experts that this was the year. Change was coming. I was so glad to be a part.

Yet, eight months later, I'm sitting in my office on Capitol Hill aware of little positive change. I've stopped following the movement as closely as I had, in part due to new responsibilities, but also out of fatigue. How many more marches, petitions, emails, phone calls will it take to end the separation of families, the detention of children, the senseless and expensive deportation of hard-working people? How many more will die in the desert before a change is made?

A few weeks ago I received a Facebook invitation to spend today fasting and praying for immigration reform. Despite my weariness, I decided to "attend." I spent my usual breakfast time in prayer and was joined by my roommate, who shared a passage from Romans including this verse:

For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? (8:24)

For who hopes for what is seen? Is it not the call of our faith to seek the unseen, to know and follow a God whose very existence can seem doubtful, to work for change even—and especially—when it's not imminent?

On my lunch break, I took a walk around the Capitol Building, remembering the people—now unseen—who had filled the Mall some eight months ago, who are still crying out for change. I am weary, but hopeful. Someday a change is gonna' come, it's just not yet in view.

Faith and Change ✨

BY JOSEPH WILLIAMS

In the midst of the most painful years of my unbelievably charmed life, I transitioned from a married father of two to a divorced, part-time dad, navigating uncharted waters in a raging midnight storm. Woodside UMC became my safe harbor, strengthening my faith, and my job as a journalist helped keep me sane: breaking stories, beating deadlines and staying late at the office kept loneliness and guilt at bay.

As two years raced by, things stabilized; the pain faded. Weekend parenting became routine, this new lifestyle began to seem normal, Woodside became a comfortable spiritual home. But my work — the anchor that helped keep me from capsizing during the worst of the storm — had begun to change. I was passed over for promotion, then demoted. I wish I could say I was surprised when they let me go.

That change, however, became a test, one of the hardest I'd ever encountered. I wrestled with self-pity, doubt, anxiety, even fear. After all, my world was changing — again. Yet even in the most difficult moments, what kept me anchored through this nasty storm was my faith: in God, in Woodside, and ultimately in myself. I'd already been tested, and the changes I'd already endured made me stronger. I knew that things would get better. And, eventually, they did: one opportunity came, then another, and I eventually found work in a new field, at a higher salary. My faith had been justified. And change was good.

* What Change Can Bring

BY AUSTIN HILL (6TH GRADE)

My change this year was moving from elementary school to middle school. My whole schedule has changed — when I get up, when I eat, when I come home. Another change is going to Sunday School at night and being part of Youth Group and Youth Book Club. I was nervous at first but then I started making new friends in both places. By going to church, I've learned how important it is to be kind and helpful to others. Like, on my first day in middle school, I met a boy in my class who didn't have anyone he knew in most of his classes. So, I decided to try and get to know him better. He is really nice and I'm glad now that I tried to be friends with him. And in the books we are reading in Book Club, I am realizing how quickly things can really change in your life when you don't expect it. I think God puts changes in your life to help you later in life. I think all the things I learn in church help me reach out to others and accept change when it happens.

Summation of Change ✨

BY DANNY HOSEIN

As part of a background check for a new job, I chronicled each place I have lived or worked for the past decade. The resulting list was a startling summation of the changes I have endured — 17 moves and nine jobs in 10 years. Although the search to verify every detail from the past 10 years was burdensome, I viewed it as an opportunity. Like most people, I devote more time to thinking about the future than the past. Few of us regularly reflect on our pasts — the people who exist today to us only in our funny stories and the places we've lived and left long enough to feel nostalgia. The background check led me to think about both and to reflect on how my faith has changed over time.

My calls to old acquaintances, landlords, and bosses for references were a trip down memory lane to my hometown; to the dorms, with late-night pizza and philosophical conversations; to DC to speak truth to power; to my church, the only one to which I could walk; to couch-surfing in Pennsylvania on a campaign for change; and, to all the places my wife and I will remember as our humble beginnings years from now. People came and people went, all the while shaping me. Through the changes, faith sustained me. But even my faith changed, and in many ways, faith facilitated change.

As a teenager, faith was the humility to accept God. In college, faith was the courage to grow up and the wisdom to finish. And as an adult, faith is devotion to my family and the motivation to make an impact beyond myself. Seventeen moves and nine jobs into life, I know my journey is just beginning. And I cannot help but reflect on Mary and Joseph's journey, finding temporary refuge in a stable; anticipating, but surely unable to grasp the significance of what was to come next.

 Christmas**Isaiah 52:7-10**

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!” Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the LORD returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes. Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.



John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome[a] it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

* Changed to be a Blessing

BY REV. KIRKLAND REYNOLDS

I need to confess that nowadays the word change makes me think of diapers and baby wipes. Sure, there was a time when change would have me thinking about coins, personal or social transition, or others things. But now, as a parent, change has taken on a whole new meaning.

Yes, Jenny's and my life has changed greatly with the arrival of Molly into our lives. We've seen the addition of late night feedings, we've become more accustomed with all the stuff — the stroller, the infant carrier and it's seat-belted-base, the pack-n-play, the microwavable bottle sanitizing bags — that a baby needs, and we've discovered a whole new understanding of love and blessing.

I continue to be amazed at just how vulnerable a baby is when he or she enters the world. Life begins with a total dependency upon others for nurture, warmth, and security. Molly has a well-provided for life with an abundance of support, love, means and encouragement, and for that I continue to give thanks to God.



Our comfortable situation, and Molly's sufficiency, causes me to think about those in our community and world who experience life with less comfort or support. It is through their lives and stories that I feel God leading me to pray and to also do more than simply pray. Jenny and I are blessed with Molly and she has definitely brought change into our lives. And I believe part of our faithful response to our newfound blessing is to further change our lives so that we may give of ourselves for Molly and for others who are vulnerable and in need of care and support.

In this season of change, I take hope in these words that Mary sung just months before Jesus was born into his own vulnerability amid straw, animals and love:

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; he has lifted up the lowly and filled the hungry with good things; he has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy.

Luke 1:46-47, 52b-53a, 54

Attuned to Grace

BY SARAH PARK

For the past 8 months my mantra has been “create space” — space within my body for the wondrous growth of a new child, space in our house for his arrival, and on a subtler level, space in my mind and heart for the changes that are just weeks away as I write. The sweetest part of all this preparation has been re-awakening to a deep knowing that none of the space I’ve opened up is empty. It is not simply sitting, waiting to be filled by the grace of this child. Rather, it is already perfectly full of the grace of God. By consciously creating space in our lives, especially during times of transition, we can more easily attune to the flow of grace which is always present and never changing.

* Courage to Change

BY MICHELLE BELTON

Change is inevitable – good and bad. Over the past year I’ve experienced both. One I’ve had control over, the other I have had none. My “good” change flowed out of a not-so-good situation. I started a new job, but had to make a change because my former one was making me so miserable. I decided I needed to change because the situation I was in would not, or truly could not change. So, I put my faith in God and leapt. I have a little card that my middle school French teacher, Sr. Marie Thérèse, sent to me while I was living abroad my junior year of college. At times like this, when I’m seemingly jumping out into the unknown, I pull the card out, read it, ponder it, and pray about it. The card simply says “Where the will of God leads you, the grace of God will keep you.” I find this short sentence poignant and comforting and I’m thankful that my former teacher shared it with me. Don’t get me wrong — I don’t think that God’s hand picked my new position for me or anything like that — I’m sure she has bigger things to deal with, but I do think that my faith in God helped me have the strength to leave a bad situation behind — one that was not only making me miserable, but poisoning others around me as well. “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things that I can, and wisdom to know the difference.”

SILVER SPRING
UNITED METHODIST
COOPERATIVE PARISH

2010 ADVENT & CHRISTMAS
WORSHIP SCHEDULE

1st Sunday in Advent

NOVEMBER 28

9:30am Marvin Memorial + 11:00am Woodside

2nd Sunday in Advent

DECEMBER 5

Communion Sunday

9:30am Marvin Memorial + 11:00am Woodside

12:00pm — Advent Event Crafts, carols and a
potluck lunch at Woodside. Fun for the whole family!

3rd Sunday in Advent

DECEMBER 12

9:30am Marvin Memorial + 11:00am Woodside

4:30pm — Blue Christmas at Marvin Memorial.

A Service of Hope & Comfort for those Feeling a Sense of loss

4th Sunday in Advent

DECEMBER 19

9:30am Marvin Memorial + 11:00am Woodside

Christmas Eve

DECEMBER 24

5:00pm — Children & Youth Christmas Musical
and Family Service at Marvin.

10:00pm — Service of Lessons and Carols with Candelighting
and Communion at Woodside.

Sunday after Christmas

DECEMBER 26

10:00am Marvin Memorial (ONE COMBINED SERVICE)
Moravian Love Feast featuring fresh rolls, coffee and juice.