



"And the angel came in unto her and said, Hail, Thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with Thee: blessed art Thou among women."

Annunciation #2 Luke 1:28 KJV

75/300 Joan Bohlig

Let it Be

2017 Advent Devotional

By members of Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church

Let It Be

2017 Advent Devotional

**Hennepin Avenue
United Methodist Church**
511 Groveland Avenue | Minneapolis, MN 55403

Cover Artwork

Seeing the Sacred Text...Etchings by Joan M. Saiberlich Bohlig...*Annunciation*

Artists approach biblical texts with the spirit of lectio divina—
open to what the text will reveal beyond the first reading.
This collection, exhibited in the Carlson Hall, represents nearly thirty years
of the artist's meditative encounters with Scripture.

Let It Be

Advent 2017 at Hennepin

And Mary said, "I am God's servant. Let it be with me just as you have said.

Seven little letters, and yet they hold so much. "Let it be," Mary says to the Angel Gabriel when she learns she will give birth to the child Jesus. Everyone has 'let it be' moments, those times when confronted with a life decision or situation we know will take us to places we had not expected to go. And 'let it be' moments can also be times of letting go, of finally relying on the movement and presence of God in our lives in ways we had not done before.

In this season of Advent, we will live into the power of these seven letters and their message to being awake to the ways in which God breaks into the everyday moments of our lives. We give thanks for the beautiful, inspiring words from Hennepin Church members that grace these pages.

May you be held in the wonder and reflection of this season
as we prepare to welcome the Christ Child.
A blessed Advent to you all!

Jolene Roehlkepartain

Kent Peterson

Sally Johnson

CHRISTMAS EVE: SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24

FOUR SERVICES — ONE FOR YOU



CAROLS & POETRY

2:00 p.m. in the Art Gallery

Quiet, contemplative service featuring prayer-in-motion on the labyrinth path, with carols and poetry of the season



FAMILY WORSHIP & PAGEANT*

4:00 pm. in the Sanctuary

Lively, family-friendly Christmas Eve worship service featuring our youth choirs and children's nativity pageant



CAROLS & CANDLES*

7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary

Traditional worship celebration featuring Hennepin singers and carols by candlelight



CANDLELIGHT WORSHIP

11:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary

10:30 p.m. Prelude Concert

Traditional worship celebration featuring our Sanctuary Choir, Copper Street Brass, and Hennepin Chime, plus carols by candlelight

*free nursery care available

WHOSE BIRTHDAY IS IT ANYWAYS?

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, we encourage you to set a budget for your family giving—and then to match your giving with a birthday gift to Jesus! This year, 100% of your Christmas Offering will go directly to our Outreach Ministries. Each Sunday during Advent, you will be inspired by stories of how our outreach dollars really change lives for the better—not just at Christmas, but all year long—as we give generously to heal a broken world.

Let It be... Restored

First Sunday of Advent

Staying Awake

Kent Peterson

Scientists tell me that every cell in my body replaces itself every seven years. Thus, every seven years, I am completely renewed. I am a new being. The process of change is constant, and I am continuously refreshed and regenerated.

I am being reborn every moment. Every single moment of my life is a rebirth where I have the opportunity to recreate who I am.

It is striking to me, then—in moments of clarity, of wakefulness—how much my always-new self continually repeats patterns of my old self.

So much of my behavior is a product of my conditioning. I observe myself repeating old worn patterns again and again—long after they've outlived their usefulness: caretaking others...denying or withholding my feelings...endlessly ruminating about how I should fix my narcissistic brother...overanalyzing situations...avoiding conflict...overindulging in a bowl of ice cream every evening...obsessing over these truth-defying, nonsensical times that we live in by compulsively consuming cable news channels and the New York Times (while feeling stymied as to how to take effective action....)

Whether I learned these old, protective patterns in my family of origin, or in response to some life event or trauma, I've come to recognize that I largely live unconsciously. And I see that my conditioned patterns have a trance-like quality. I watch myself doing the same things over and over again.

Breaking these patterns is hard. The history and momentum behind my conditioned behaviors seems strong and resilient.

But there is a pathway. I know that I can create change. I've learned that it requires seeing and unmasking the ego—the mysterious boss of my inner life that can only perceive the world with a narrow, limited perspective.

This path requires surrender. It means letting go of the illusion of control. It involves discarding thoughts and behaviors that may have once played an important function and purpose in my life but are no longer serving me. It requires awakening to my attachment to my old coping strategies—and to how sticky they are—and shedding these familiar behaviors, patterns, masks, and personas, layer after layer.

It involves cultivating a deep and aware attention.

That is what dissolves the trance.

That is what leads me to the present moment—to my natural state. To my breath, my Essence.

That is what leads me to Spirit.

It's the key that unlocks my natural radiance.

It leads me home.

Great Mystery, you have set in motion this gift of life and its renewal. In these days of Advent, keep us awake to your light that shines in our darkness. Allow us to let be what holds us back from being our fullest selves. Show us the path that leads us home to you. Amen

Let Go and Let God

Lori Romeyn Sitowski

The ‘let it be’ message really hit home this past spring. In late April, my father unexpectedly suffered acute liver failure. In a matter of weeks, he went from an ultra-healthy septuagenarian to lying on his deathbed—the only potential treatment a liver transplant. Living nearly 700 miles away from my parents, it was difficult to sit on the sidelines and wait for information. Would he qualify for transplant? Would a match be made before it was too late? If a match was found, what would surgery and recovery entail? How can I hope for someone else to die so that my father could live? What should I tell me kids about their grandpa’s prognosis? All questions that kept me awake and wondering how I could control the situation. I am ‘Type A,’ after all, and ‘control’ should be my middle name.

I prayed for a lot in those initial days—for answers, solutions, control, peace of mind—until it finally hit me. I needed to ‘Let Go and Let God.’ God would provide the answers at the right time and help me to find the peace I needed to move forward. Recognizing the need to let it be and actually letting go are very different things, and I’ve learned that repeating the ‘Let Go and Let God’ mantra is often a helpful reminder that I cannot control every situation.

I am thrilled to share that my dad is doing well. He was approved for transplant on May 10th and a donor match was identified less than twenty-four hours later. The transplant occurred May 12th and recovery was slow but ultimately successful. He just passed his six-month milestone and I am so very thankful that he is a living reminder to ‘Let Go and Let God.’

**Creator God, you walk with us in the highs and lows of our lives.
We are thankful for the companionship of your love
which never lets us go. In gratitude, Amen**

Let It Be With Me Just As You Have Said

Diane Goulding

Never have I been so at odds with a chosen Advent theme as I was with “Let It Be.” Right now, for me, this is a time of politics and action and lively discussion. Right now, for me, “let it be” sounds like words murmured in resignation after a great loss, or a listless response to a challenge too daunting to take on. I know that many people have found “let it be” to express acceptance reached after a time of struggle through a painful life challenge and they have received comfort, peace and a renewed spirit from those words. But right now, for me, they don’t resonate. Then I noticed the full response of Mary as recorded, “Let it be with me just as you have said.” Immediately, responses filled my mind.

God has said, “Do you love me? Feed my sheep.” Let it be with me just as God has said.

God has said, “As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” Let it be with me just as God has said.

God has said, “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Let it be with me just as God has said.

God has said, “Be not afraid.” Let it be with me just as God has said.

God has said, “And lo, I am with you always, even to the close of the age.” Let it be with me just as God has said.

And let it be with all of us just as God has said.

**Sometimes it is so difficult to listen for your voice, God.
Sometimes I get distracted by the din of the world.
In these times, speak in a language that I understand
so I can find my way home to you. Amen**

Canoe Trip

Tom Sopoci

With breeze through needled bough
and branch

Trees whisper out my name
Who and what they ask of me
"Why to this isle you came?"

"By birch canoe you paddled here
'Cross gleaming waters blue
No other one to see your face
Your pack, your tent and you"

"To set up camp in wilderness
Three days of travel whence
To leave one hectic busy place
For silence, making sense"

Now here I sit before the fire
As sunset paints the sky
The stars and moon appear and say
"We know not how, but why"

"Listing questions you and many
have

'Bout worth and value things"
The answers come in lap of wave
When call of yon loon rings

"It's love that made the loon to sing
The trees and plants to grow
You are created, love and die
That's all you need to know

But stay awake and learn to see
What love has done for you
In nature, friends, in daily life
God made these for your view"

In morning when I leave my camp
Paddle home to busy things
I'll carry pack and tent with strength
And know what God's love brings

**Advent God, may this day to be a beginning:
of compassion...of justice...of love...of hope...and of gratitude.
For our world and all those who travel with us. Amen**

Are We Listening

Jim McChesney

The angel told Mary that her baby was going to be the savior, and Mary responded, "Let it be."

Was that, "Let it be, Hurrah!"

or, "Let it be ... whatever..."

or, "Let it be, if it has to be."

or, "From God, Let it be for sure!"

How about us? When God sends us a message, do we have various responses, or are we even listening?

How do we react and respond when someone interrupts our plans for the day? Do we live such busy lives that we don't have time for others or God to interrupt us? Does God have trouble getting our attention?

It is the holy season of Advent, a time full of special religious events, special foods and decorations, special music and gift-giving, card exchanges and greetings, and many parties.

In our faith, God is in all of this...are we listening?

It is one of the greatest joys of Advent to discover God or an angel in our busyness. It is one of our great faith blessings when we see, or hear, or feel a holy message or announcement.

Lord, help us to be more alert so we can see your loving actions in our lives and discover the Good News you have for us. Amen

Coming to the Aid of the Earth

Bob Janssen

I don't know much about how music is written and I don't read music but I love to listen to music. When the subject for Advent, "Let it be," was announced, I like many others thought of the Beatles' 1970 song "Let it be."

My thoughts immediately jumped to the ecological crisis our Mother Earth is facing. We as humans are slowly but surely destroying the Earth with our current cultural practices—practices that cannot continue. While I was thinking about the Advent theme of "Let it be," I happened to be watching television—prime time news television. An ad came on the screen urging our Minnesota Congressional Representative, Eric Paulsen, not to vote for the drilling of oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. What a positive message to be seen and heard on prime time TV. The words, "Let it be," entered my mind as I watched the advertisement. The first verse of the song, "Let it be," contains these profound words: "When I find myself in trouble, Mother Mary comes to me speaking words of wisdom, Let it be."

The image portrayed in these words is that of the Earth (all Earthly creatures), proclaiming that we are in trouble, and that we, Mother Mary (we humans), must come to the aid of the Earth by proclaiming, "Let it be." Do not drill for oil in sensitive locations where it will destroy the needed habitat of other living creatures.

We as humans are now in control of life on Earth, what will live and what will die—an enormous responsibility. As part of this responsibility, we must realize the importance of not destroying critical habitats that are needed for our fellow living creatures. We must realize the importance of the words, "LET IT BE." As it says in Genesis 1: "Be responsible for the fish in the sea, and the birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth" (from *The Message*, by Eugene Peterson).

God of All, you placed in our care this Earth Home.

Forgive us when we are irresponsible.

Inspire us to live lives that honor you and this planet.

For our sake, for your sake, for the sake of the future. Amen

No One Tells You

Sally Howell Johnson

Like most people, I have romanticized Mary, the mother of Jesus, making her presence forever haloed in gauzy blue. I have sanitized this young, feisty woman who gave her 'Yes' to God. I don't always remember that her motherhood is like most journeys into parenthood, a constant mantra of 'let it be.' Let it be o.k. Let it be something good, something beautiful. Let it be not too painful. Let it be a learning that leads to wisdom. Let it be...

No one tells you
 your work will never be finished.

No one tells you that
 somedays your heart
 will break wide open.

No one tells you that
 once that body moves
 out of your body into
 the world

That each day will hold so much.
 Joy, yes, joy beyond knowing.
 Pride - most assuredly - at all
 the promise of this one life.

No one tells you the pain does not stop
 with this birthing.

The pain of each disappointment,
 each broken heart,
 each unrealized dream,
 each rejection.

And even if you knew - before -
 No one tells you that
 you wouldn't trade
 a moment of this love
 for all the world.

**Holy One, we offer our thanks to Mary and to all the mothers—
 for the promise and the possibility inherent in a new life.
 With each new birth, let it be a gift to the world. Amen**

Let It Be... Proclaimed

Second Sunday of Advent

One Mysterious Precious Life

David McNally

Life can be amazing, yet life can be difficult. Life is abundant with opportunities, yet has many challenges. Life can be full of joy, yet is often painful. At any point in our lives, one of these statements could accurately describe what we are experiencing. As I have endeavored to make sense of the complexity of my own life, I have concluded that life has a mystery to it that I will never fully understand.

This has led me to a realization that to live fully and expansively requires some sort of faith, the purpose of which is to provide us with the courage and resilience to push on. I access this faith from my belief that each of us has a role to play in creating the future of the world in which we live. The evidence suggests that future is influenced significantly by how we choose to live our own lives.

The revered poet, Mary Oliver, completes her poem, *The Summer Day*, with these words: "Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?" Now, in my seventies, this question holds as much power and meaning for me as ever. How will I treasure the days and years ahead? Where will I focus my energy? How will I contribute? What will I create? To whom will I look for inspiration? Who are my role models?

One precious life. Do we realize the magnitude of this gift? Amidst the challenges, have we been awakened to how exhilarating life can be? Most important of all, can we summon the courage to put away the excuses and experience that exhilaration? As hard as this may be to accept, if our lives are mundane we have only ourselves to blame.

It may have taken seventy years, but I have now learned to accept my limitations, my weaknesses, and my laughable idiosyncrasies. I have also been willing to acknowledge and validate my strengths. The world, I have discovered, is full of ambiguity, contradictions and millions of people whose philosophy does not connect to mine. But, as I learn to let all of this be, there is one thing about which I'm certain—each of our lives is precious.

--from *Mark Of An Eagle:*
How Your Life is Changing the World,
by David McNally

**Awaken us to our true purpose, O God,
and ignite our hearts with passion and fire to pursue it. Amen**

No Matter What

Gail Hernandez

Lord, I am tired. Let it be.
I can't go on. Let it be.
Are you sure you'll never leave my side? Let it be.
Can I trust you? Let it be.
Where are we going? Let it be.
I'm frightened. Let it be.
But maybe I can trust you, a little. Let it be.
I feel better now. Let it be.
Thank you.



At one community meeting, we ran into a high-conflict issue. We ran out of time and agreed to postpone this issue until the following week. All week, emotions ran high and opposing views intensified. We eagerly assembled at the next meeting, impatient to get this issue resolved. This was a Quaker community – each meeting began with 5 minutes of silence. On this day, the clerk announced that, due to the intensity of this issue, we would not begin with our usual 5 minutes of silence. We all breathed a sigh of relief, only to hear her announce: “Today we’ll begin with 20 minutes of silence.”

--Story told by Parker Palmer, educator and author

**In moments of uncertainty, conflict, or fear, may we learn to
pause, Holy One. May we learn to breathe...to rest.
In all things, we place our trust in you. Amen**

Remembering

Dennis Behl

First, a fiddle saws out the familiar carol. Then laughter and cheers as a gaggle of shabby green medieval roustabouts (faces unwashed) bursts into Hennepin's sanctuary. A child perched on her parent's shoulder waves... a juggler tosses balls in the air. A dozen foresters with teens brimming with fun pranks bursts into Hennepin's sanctuary. Some beg coins. One dances a jig and plucks an audience member to his or her feet to join in. Another doffs his hat to reveal the word "HI" inscribed on his bald head. And one with a long feather grins, and tickles chins of unsuspecting spectators. Joy is contagious. Roving the aisles, they in unison belt out:

*Here we come a-wassailing among the leaves so green;
Here we come wand'ring so fair to be seen*

They lead the crowd to join in the refrain:

*Love and Joy come to you and to you your wassail too
And God bless you and send you a Happy New Year
And God send you and a Happy New Year.*

*We are not daily beggars that beg from door to door,
But we are neighbours' children whom you have seen before.*
—Refrain—

*God bless the family Hennepin wherever they may be...
Those who wander...(pause)...those at home...
(pause, hands raised as in prayer)...
the saints that are with Thee.*
—Refrain—

Advent is a time of preparation. That has new meaning for some of us. We remember our friend who played the tickling guy with the feather—that winning smile—the one who laughed with us. Remembering Jim.

**Remind us, O God, of the joy we've had in the past
while making us aware of the joy that's here. Amen**

Psalm 46:10

Curt Oliver

On I-94 a few miles north of our church, a clunker of a car sits perched on a high pedestal. A prominent banner on the side of the car reads: “Psalm 46:10.” Probably like many other passers-by I looked it up and it is the familiar verse, “Be still, and know that I am God.”

That’s good advice on a crowded freeway where so many drivers and traffic jams can get on our nerves. And we’ve all seen lovely pictures and plaques with those words written over scenes of the beauty and majesty of nature.

But some contemporary religious scholars have written that this translation of the original Hebrew might be missing the point. They suggest a more accurate rendering of the idiomatic Hebrew of Psalm 46:10 might well be: “Shut up! I AM the Lord God, and not you!”

That’s a lot less calming, and it certainly puts us in our place. It’s also very good advice. How often we try to assume the role of God in judging others, and insisting that our way is the only way!

Mother Mary’s magical words, “Let it be,” are not an invitation to passively accept whatever comes our way. Rather they are an acknowledgement of our need to submit to God’s unique call to each of us. We need to continue the fight for justice, equality, and a fair distribution of resources. And we need to turn to God for guidance, so God’s will can be at work in us and through us.

**Holy God, may we become utterly dependent upon you—
to ceaselessly listen for your voice,
whether it comes in stillness or in clamor—
and to heed your call of justice-making and service. Amen**

River of God

Dwight Haberman

I did not “let it be” the past few weeks. I knew this reflection was due and my ADD kicked in and I could not let the distractions be. With your permission I will add “Letting Go” to “Let it Be.” I experience the two as very similar. I experience a closeness to the monkeys who are captured by people who put some food in a bottle. When the monkey reaches in to get the food it will not “let go” and it is captured. My inability to relax and let things be as I know they should be is a trap that limits my daily life as an expression of God’s love.

What keeps us holding on to “all that harms us”? Marcus Borg, who authored the book the church is currently reading, says that “letting go can be frightening and unsettling...for it means letting go of certainties.” But it can open us to all that our cosmic God wants to share with us—and there is not enough paper here to describe the “gifts of God waiting for us, the people of God.”

Mary’s willingness to “let it be...to let go” allowed her to experience the wonder of God in her life in the birth of Jesus. It gave us an example. If we share the wonder of our “letting it be...letting go” with others, it may offer them space to also “let it be...let go.”

In our home I have been gifted with the wisdom, “you can’t push the river.” In this Advent season, can we plunge into that life-giving river we call God, go with the flow, and “let it be”?

*Oh river of God, flow down on me. Oh river of God, flow out from me.
Oh river of God, so rich and free, Oh river of God, I come to Thee.*

—Composer Unknown

**God, travel with me as I go with the river of life.
Guide me through each bend. Amen**

An Umbrella and Lifelines

Kris Sopoci

By nature, I am a worrier: an anticipated long road trip or threatening weather...an emergency health crisis, be it mine or those I care about... an approaching severe storm, especially at the cabin...a misfortunate situation...the well-being of my children and grandchildren...world events and world peace. Luckily, through heredity, I am surrounded by strong and positive-minded women. However, the thought, “Will it rain on my parade?” is always there.

It has been a lifelong practice of mine to alter my “monkey-brain” worry with positive thoughts and prayer. I have learned by experience how much energy and emotion it takes to worry about real or imagined situations—to jump to worst case scenarios—and the negative impact that it has on my physical and mental health. I prefer the word, “concern,” as it evokes a positive action without leaving me feeling crushed as “worry” can do. I have learned to live in the moment, pray for healing possibility, be realistic but fluid in my thoughts, and let the next moment or day unfold in its time, expecting a healing outcome.

Will it rain on my parade through life? Guaranteed! But I will be prepared with an umbrella—and lifelines to strong women like biblical Elizabeth and Mary, and wise mentors who knew rain in their lives.

**God of Peace, in moments of anxiety and uncertainty,
center our minds and still our fears.**

Fill us with hope and surround us with those who bring comfort.

Amen

The Role Model of Mary

Donna Long

When Mary was told she was going to be mother to the son of God, she took a very mature attitude and replied to the Angel, “let it be.” I think in times of great uncertainty many religious people have been able to follow her example and say the same thing. However, non-religious people have their own ways to say the same thing. They say things like, “Que Sera Sera,” or, “It is what it is.”

Within the last month, my son’s family experienced a disturbing incident when his mentally ill daughter had a psychotic break and attacked her brother with butcher knives. He needed 18 stitches to get sewn up. When all was said and done, she went to a hospital for juveniles with mental illness and is now home, had a medication change, and was sentenced to therapy and community service. While all this was happening my son and daughter-in-law stayed calm by saying, “It is what it is,” and “We have to deal with it one day at a time.” They did a remarkable job and repeated, “It is what it is,” many times.

I wish I could have been so calm, but I wasn’t. I kept thinking about how it could have been avoided or how it could have been worse. I asked for prayers from my church family and everyone I knew. It took me days to come to the realization that the best thing I could do was to pray for acceptance of what happened and go from there. In other words, to let it be. It helped a lot that the theme for the Advent Devotional was announced during this time period. Who could be a better role model than Mary?

Tender God, your presence is a balm for all that life can offer.

**When we forget this truth, give us the courage
to open our palms and our hearts to your Breath
that breathes through each glorious moment. Amen**

Let It be... Dreamed

Third Sunday of Advent

Let it be that
I am God's servant

Ingrid Bloom

Herod's cruelty
still happening in new ways
terrorist attacks
women harassed...
violated
silenced
police brutality
assistance to the vulnerable withdrawn

I am the mother of a policeman who tackled a gunman
and died saving others.

I carried my boy like Mary
right from the beginning
telling God let it be with me
this boy of goodness

Let it be
that this sacrifice is not more than I can bear

I am the childless woman who served on a disaster relief team in Puerto Rico
still no electricity...no jobs... no grocery store... no schools..... no
hospital...

no insurance money..... and fallen live electric wires still laying across roads.

Let it be this small act of courage
of being there to dispense medicine
is pregnant with the memory
you are not alone in your grief

I am the representative weary
being undermined, attacked, and libeled,

while standing up for positions that restore justice for the poor,
returning to a dysfunctional work environment day after day
challenging the powerful seeking to become richer and more powerful.
Let it be compassion will carry me forth
when I want to give up.

I am the man who was harassed and violated
hiding my shame.

I never spoke of my wounds that did not heal.
Let it be my prayers are my magnificat
so our voices speak up and our will for justice is strengthened
to end mindless indulgence and selfish destructive entitlement.
no more justification of objectifying others
Love the vulnerable
Let it be I will defend the innocent.

I am the gardener who tilled, planted, weeded, watered, pruned,
and then witnessed the harvest being destroyed.
Let it be I will find new seeds
a renewed will to start again.

I am the soldier who watches the computer nine hours a day,
and pushes the button that activates a drone attack thousands of miles away.
The simple push of a button kills enemies and sometimes families mistaken
as enemies.
Let it be my anguish that strengthens the prayers and will for peace.
Let it be our anguish will birth new initiatives for peace making.

Let it be we each remember
the precious holy vessel
of our bodies
impregnated
with God's unending hope and love

So I am filled
because with Mary I say
Let it be
that I am God's servant

**Justice-making-God, your call is clear to us: do justice,
love kindness, walk humbly with you. Give us the courage of Mary
to stand forth in the face of all that would not lead us toward love.
We pray in hope. Amen**

Botticelli's Annunciation

Julie Sedlak

A few months ago I had the great good fortune to visit the Uffizi Gallery Museum in Florence, Italy. While there were many, many works of art that stopped me in my tracks, the one that left me breathless was Botticelli's Annunciation.

I hope that you will take a moment to view this painting online or in color print form so you too can see how the artist captured the graceful dance of the moment Mary is visited by the angel.

See the image at: <https://www.virtualuffizi.com/the-cestello-annunciation-by-sandro-botticelli.html>

The Cestello Annunciation

Andrew Hudgins

The angel has already said, Be not afraid.

He's said, The power of the Most High will darken you. Her eyes are downcast and half closed.

And there's a long pause—a pause here of forever—

as the angel crowds her. She backs away, her left side pressed against the picture frame.

He kneels. He's come in all unearthly innocence

to tell her of a glory —not knowing, not remembering

how terrible it is. And Botticelli gives her eternity to turn, look out the doorway, where

on a far hill floats a castle, and halfway across

the river towards it juts a bridge, not completed—

and neither is the touch, angel to virgin, both her hands held up, both elegant, one raised

as if to say stop, while the other hand, the right one,

reaches toward his; and, as it does, it parts her blue robe

and reveals the concealed red of her inner garment

to the red tiles of the floor and the red folds

of the angel's robe. But her whole body pulls away.

Only her head, already haloed, bows, acquiescing. And though she will, she's not yet said,

Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, as Botticelli, in his great pity,

lets her refuse, accept, refuse, and think again.

God of Visitation, you come to us and we are surprised and sometimes frightened. Help us to hear your voice in the silence and in the noise. Give us the courage to answer the call you offer to us. Help us in our accepting and our refusing until we see you face to face. Amen

Surrounded by Love

Jerry Gale

When I saw that the title of this year's Advent Devotional is "Let It Be," I wondered why Sally Johnson would want us to write about a Beatles song. When I read further and found that that the topic of the advent devotional was about moments in our life when we needed to let go and rely on the presence of God, I realized that my submission would include the Beatles.

The most significant moment in my life of "letting go" happened on March 17 this year when my wife, Nancy, passed away. Our son, Kevin, was home with me and we knew that there was not much time left. We had hoped that Nancy would stay alive until our daughter, Kimberly, could join us at the end of her day of teaching.

In the morning at around 10:00 A.M., Sally joined us for an anointing ceremony. She used oil to bless Nancy's head, heart, hands and feet. It was very moving for Kevin and me.

At about 11:00 A.M., Kevin decided to get his guitar and play Beatles songs for Nancy and me since the Beatles were one of our favorite groups. It was a few minutes before noon when Nancy took her last breath and Kevin was playing one of our favorite songs, "Blackbird." She passed away in our house surrounded by love, music, and—thanks to Sally's anointment—the blessing of God. At that moment, I knew that I would need support from friends, family, Hennepin Church and God to recover from my loss and move ahead with my life.

**O Christ, guide our lives with your presence,
your reminder that we are never alone. Amen**

Speaking Words of Wisdom

Carol Michalicek

In her book, *A Star-Filled Grace*, Rachel Mann reimagines what it might have been like for some key biblical characters of Advent and Christmas. I was drawn to the voice she gave to Elisabeth (Luke 1: 39-56): “To be old is one thing. To be old and pregnant is another. I’ve learnt to live with the first. I’m trying to get used to the second. I think I’m becoming adept at the impossible.”

Such a proclamation of acceptance of the circumstances the aging Elisabeth found herself in, as she was able to find the courage to “LET IT BE.”

When thinking about the changes which come with aging, my mind trends first to the physical decline, the nicks and cracks in health and well-being. LET IT BE. As I accept new responsibilities for self-care, this may expand my connection to, and compassion for others.

When beauty fades and energy diminishes, the rhythms of life can slow down. LET IT BE. I may learn to more fully see the beauty around and recognize the depth of beauty within others, and pace to listen to different sounds.

Having retired and experiencing a significant decline in income, anxious thoughts can arise about means for my future. LET IT BE. I learn that I already have enough, more than enough, and my gratitude expands, and I value more what is often inexpressible.

Where I have previously worked with a well-understood purpose and meaning, my days may no longer be so explicitly defined. LET IT BE. I may finally learn to be more curious rather than anxious, to playfully explore rather than attempt to control, and to live in harmony with the mystery that each day brings.

Elisabeth reminds me that even with all the above elements of aging I experience, the ‘unexpected’ might also happen. The ‘unexpected’ for Elisabeth was profound, yet she awoke to this new life as a blessing, and she shared this with Mary, in friendship and in spirit. And so may we also accept what lies ahead, and LET IT BE, as they did.

Surprise us, God, with the gifts of newness and unexpected opportunities. Empower us to let go of what we think should be done and, instead, to embrace what is the beauty of the present moment...full and rich...enough. Amen

Winter Solstice

Finding Our Way

Kathleen McDowell

As we are in the darkest part of the year, we may miss the long days of sunshine. God created the darkness as well as the light. It is in that darkness when we birth an idea, bring an old painful history to the surface or a baby. In that stillness, it is an opportunity to bring it into light.

Not necessarily in our time; it is in God's divine order, time and plan. We can get impatient and push for these to come to fruition, or see it as an inconvenience and we want what we want when we want it...NOW!!

When we wait with patience, we can let opportunities unfold—those unseen elements that can impact the outcome and likely be better than we can imagine. Let God do God's work. The light does come, out of the pain or the earth or the transition to heaven or the baby's first cries. Instead of a flashlight, maybe the way is led by candlelight; a soft glow instead of a glaring light. Not someone telling us where to go, but to help us find our way.

While we are in our own darkness, people come to us offering solutions and sunshine. "Just smile, it can't be that bad." "Others have it way worse than you do." "Get over it." "Ooh, maybe you did something in the past and are paying for it now." Do we try to lift spirits and walk away? How do we know what is happening in their lives? Can we let it be for a moment and offer to sit with them? With an open heart, and if they are okay with it, take their hand and ask, "What can I do to help?" One of important offerings is to love someone through this.

When Mary found out she was pregnant, can you hear the whispers and side comments about her condition—not even married? Can you imagine the loneliness and confusion? Being told what to do? Mary went to see her cousin, Elizabeth, who was also pregnant. I can see Elizabeth reaching out her hand for Mary's and they were able to find comfort and support through these advent days with each other, hearts full of love. There was no judgment and condemnation. May we extend this offer to others whose hearts can use a cup of warmth.

Instead of trying to fix it or offer your own solution as to how it became what it is, maybe just Let It Be and ask, "What can I do to help?"

**May we become healers, not curers, O God,
and learn to walk with others in their pain. Amen**

According to God's Word

Nancy Gunderson

“Let it be” is often taken as an invitation to relax—to disengage momentarily from overburdened lives. To let go of action, accept things as they are, don't get involved, “it's not your problem.” This can be a relief...or it can send us down the wrong path.

It's easy to forget that Mary's full response to the angel's invitation was “let it be to me according to your word.” According to God's word. Despite whatever her plans had been, despite how she expected to live out her days, despite how Joseph might react, despite what people would say, she agreed to divine intention.

Instead of an invitation sit back and watch life happen, “let it be” was an invitation to join with God in action. World-changing action. Generation-changing action.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan the priest and the Levite went so far as to cross the road in order to avoid action (Luke 10:25-37). Being important people, they had places to go, people to see, a schedule to keep. The victim of a robbery—beaten, left for dead on the road—and they just let him be. They embodied Matthew 25:45: “...whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.”

The Samaritan must also have had obligations, people waiting for his arrival, things to get done that day. Yet he provided aid. He was the one whose actions “let it be” according to God's word.

Let it be: The same words as a cop-out or a buy-in.

Somewhere in an inbox crammed with e-vites, along a street with a Christmas tree lot on the corner, at a deli counter with seasonal treats on display, we may find a different sort of invitation. One that holds hope and expectation for joint action with the Creator. Maybe no ribbons. Maybe no trumpet. Maybe no angel bearing the request. Probably just a bit of a nudge. Let it be.

Our faith says:
 Let it be as God has said.
 An invitation
 To join with God in action
 Here and now in this world.
 May it be so.
 Amen.

**O God, as we discern what to “let be” and which ways to act,
 nudge us to live in ways that make a difference. Amen**

You are Accepted

David Smith

In the Beatles song, Paul McCartney sang the words: “And when the night is cloudy, there is still a light that shines on me. Shine until tomorrow. Let it Be.” Those words remind me of other words that were and are of comfort on my cloudy nights:

Sometimes at that moment a wave of light breaks into our darkness, and it is as though a voice were saying: ‘You are accepted. You are accepted, accepted by that which is greater than you, and the name of which you do not know. Do not ask for the name now; perhaps you will find it later. Do not try to do anything now; perhaps later you will do much. Do not seek for anything now; do not perform anything; do not intend anything. Simply accept the fact that you are accepted!’ If that happens to us, we experience grace. After such an experience we may not be better than before, and we may not believe more than before. But everything is transformed. In that moment, grace conquers sin, and reconciliation bridges the gulf of estrangement. And nothing is demanded of this experience, no religious or moral or intellectual presupposition, nothing but acceptance.¹

And so in these days of Advent, may we Let it Be so.

¹ “You are Accepted,” Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1948), p. 162.

We rest in the awareness of your endless grace, O God. Amen

Let It Be... Forever

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Believing
Sally Howell Johnson

Letting go of all fear
Emptying my soul of what grips,
Time is shattered into a million beautiful pieces.

Inspired by what promises to be born
To become a force in healing the world,

Believing in the Mystery that is always present,
Everything becomes possibility, looks like miracle.

**Holy One, may we awaken to hope—
to the promise of new life, and of new life being born in us.
And may we then use this hope to participate with you
in giving birth to love, healing, and justice in our world. Amen**

Let It Be... NOW

Christmas Eve

Let Me Be a Mother of God – What??!

Steven Blons

“We are all meant to be mothers of God. God is always needing to be born.”

These words of Meister Eckhart, 14th century Christian mystic, have always challenged me. It's hard enough to imagine giving birth as a man, let alone to God. It's easy to dismiss this as preposterous hyperbole.

But what happens if I don't? What happens if I sit with the Eckhart quote and let it be? Let it be provocative. Let it be challenging. Let it be nurturing.

I'm imagining these words settling within me, finding their way to a dark, sacred interior place that's hidden from my conscious awareness. I'm seeing these words being planted into rich soil and beginning to take root and grow. Into what? Into the very thing I am to birth!

This is both odd and amazing. The outrageous idea itself creates its own labor pains. But only if I don't dismiss it. Only if I let it be.

This reminds me of another favorite quotation of mine from Toni Morrison's novel, *Beloved*. Her character, Baby Suggs, is proclaiming and preaching to the people when she tells them “the only grace they could have was the grace they could imagine...that if they could not see it, they would not have it.”

So imagination comes first. To be able to “give birth to God,” we have to be able to see it happening. We have to let it be alive in our imagination.

My plan for Advent this year is to meditate on Meister Eckhart's words as a daily practice. To let them be planted in my imagination where grace can bring them to full term so that I might give birth to . . .

**Christ, help us discern how to live a life of imagination
and ways to give birth to something new. Amen**

Christmas Day

Unexpected

Bill Mate

One snowy Christmas Eve, with wind and temperature bone chilling, we sat in a church's lower level with florescent lights glaring, tables at one end and some beds and rollout pads around the rest of the room. The room smelled of homelessness and cold. I was with two other volunteers to "host" a room full of homeless men together in the basement until morning. We'd had a special supper that looked a lot like Thanksgiving warmed over—turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy and some vegetables cooked until there was no fiber. And we had some homemade Christmas cookies with weak coffee.

Meal done, people started to settle in—beds made, packs unloaded of essentials and then carefully closed in a very protective way. Everywhere there was coughing, grunting, and sighs. I've never forgotten the sighs. And there was some quiet small talk and a couple of minor arguments thrown into this resigned atmosphere of tension. This was our Christmas Eve together.

Shortly before "lights out" at 10:00, a hard and fast rule of this shelter, one of the men sat down at the broken down piano shoved in a corner and started to play Christmas Carols. The quiet ones about hillsides, angels, light, and hope. He had trained as a pianist and played professionally years before. Soon a few of the glaring lights were turned off, 10:00 came and went, and a few men gathered closer to the piano listening, then singing, then listening some more. More joined us until everyone was around the piano. All together we quietly sang until tiredness over took every other effort. The pianist quietly said, "Merry Christmas guys, I need some shut eye," to which there was murmured agreement and a sporadic "Merry Christmas to you" around the room as everyone went to bed.

**Giver of all life, we offer our thanks for the joy of Christmas
and the sacred moments that it brings. Amen**

God in Heaven

Kristin Zinsmaster

God in Heaven:

The breath of life that you sent into the world and made flesh in your Son, Jesus, connects me to my family; to my friends; to my congregation; and to every person and to every situation that I encounter.

Infused with this very special connection—allow me the space to reflect upon the following during the busy days of the holiday season: There Is No ‘They.’

Permit this knowledge and understanding to embed itself deep in my heart, that as I seek peace in “letting it be,” so also I seek to connect with love and kindness to all your children.

There is no ‘they.’

Only love.

Amen.

**God of All, when we want to separate ourselves
and call it ‘us’ and ‘them’, stop us, we pray.**

**Instead, allow our hearts to soften
with your love which will not let us go.
In the hope of Advent, we pray. Amen**

The Blues

Evelyn Ahlberg

The blues, the blues, carry me, carry me
To the other side of a mountain
There I hang my head down and weep
Then slowly, by some unseen force
I rise up, rise up and begin to dance
At first my steps are heavy and slow
The weight of all that is
As advancing years pass through mind and body
Then little by little I begin to feel lighter
And suddenly, as if my spirit takes flight, has wings
I dance my blues away.....away



God grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference

—Reinhold Niebuhr

**In the midst of great discernment,
may we find serenity in our next steps. Amen**

Waiting for a New Baby

Ingrid Bloom

Did God know
that during a time of oppression
terrorist threats
ruthless indifference of the suffering
devastating losses

we need healing balm
of new babies
of newness within us

babies that draw out the best of us
our instinct to protect reawakened
our hope for the future turned into
commitment
a future of benevolence
pulling us together
making community that is supportive
in service
patient and deep listening with each
other
urgently bringing us together to love
beyond our comfort zone
supporting each other in griefs and
sorrows
inspiring each other amidst
weariness, challenges, and jolting
disappointments

this vigil to await a new baby, new life,
awaiting new hope, the fulfillment of
God with us
rejuvenates us
inspires us to get things ready for
celebration
bring out our wisdom
laugh
love

celebrate family, friendship, and our
commitments to each other

so our new babies, will know we are all
part of each other
nurturing body, spirit, soul, earth, as
they grow and mature

We dig deep and find so much love
that we cannot leave anyone out

rich and poor, young and old, educated
and uneducated, every color, every
inclination, talented and simple, wise
and foolish, delightful and obnoxious,
neat and messy, those who have hurt
others and those who have been hurt,
healthy and unhealthy, the conscious
and unconscious, the proud and
the humble, the thoughtless and the
thoughtful,

we cannot afford to leave anyone out
or leave out any part of us
Because we already love this new life
waiting to be born
we will join together to integrate the
dark shadows within us and around us
into the light and love of Christmas
God is with us as we tackle this
mystery
God has not stopped sending us new
babies to help us love

**Awaken in me a new spirit as I embrace what's new around me.
Amen**

Let Mystery Have its Place

Submitted by Deb Green

Let mystery have its place in you; do not be always turning up your whole soil with the plowshare of self-examination, but leave a little fallow corner in your heart ready for any seed the winds may bring.... Keep a place in your heart for the unexpected guests, an altar for the unknown God.

—Henri Frederic Amiel,
from *Prayers for Hope and Comfort*,
Maggie Oman Shannon

When We Have Waited Long

*When your promises seem empty,
When faith has grown tired and old,
dazzle us with your darkness and light,
illuminate the Way of Faith and Hope,
Restore us through your love,
and when our work is done,
gather us to yourself and grant us peace. Amen*

—Rachel Mann,
from *A Star-Filled Grace*,
www.ionabooks.com

God, illuminate our way with faith, hope, and grace. Amen

Protecting the Earth

Susan Dunlop

Let It Be

... that I give thanks for heartfelt peace and joy so that I may offer these gifts to others.

... that I think carefully, about the use of water, food, and energy, so they are preserved for the future.

... that I express gratitude to my family, friends, and colleagues for all they give me.

... that I appreciate time, a precious commodity to be used wisely to achieve my mission in life.

... that my love for others be not hindered by worries and concerns about which I can do nothing.

**Dear Lord, if the age of the earth was equal to one year,
humans appeared on December 26.**

**Help us do everything in our power
to preserve and protect the earth for the future.**

Let it be.

Amen

New Year's Eve

New Eyes

Jolene Roehlkepartain

*Resist, and the tide
will sweep you off your feet.
Allow, and grace will carry
you to higher ground....
In the choice to let go of your
known way of being, the whole
world is revealed to your new eyes.*

—Poet Donna Faulds

Over the past year, I haven't liked a lot of what I've been seeing in the world. I could start my long list of concerns, but that would fill a 5,000-page book. And that's not the point. The point is: How do I live in this world with new eyes?

As my vision has adjusted, I've discovered new insights, new steps, and new ways of being.

My biggest adjustment has been to slow down and react less. This isn't easy when I can easily spot five more horrible things in the news today than I could the day before. (And on that previous day I had thought it couldn't get any worse.)

With my new eyes, I've been re-reading the Christmas story. It's a familiar story, one filled with hope and light. But I now see the story differently. The reason hope and light stand out is because the context of the story is hopeless and dark. It's a chaotic story where most people are displaced, having to "return to their own homes," which meant traveling to the headquarters of their tribe, which typically was a different place than where they lived and worked. Yet, in the midst of all that craziness, an amazing thing happened. And that miracle was witnessed only by those who had eyes to see.

So today I'm seeing the world that used to be so familiar to me, yet is becoming something new. I don't know what's ahead, but I'm trusting my eyes...and my steps.

New eyes. New steps. New ways of being.

A new vision.

**Keep our eyes open and our minds clear,
O God of the Universe,
as we move forward with hope. Amen**

New Year's Day

Dissatisfied Saints

Jeff Smith

I'm not of a generation that has "let it be" all that well. Coming from "the 60s," we often expressed our dissatisfaction with the status quo. That's why I relate to the front pages as I peruse my morning paper: women who are sick of being sexually harassed and objectified, black cabbies who want a fair shake.

This year we said goodbye to some dissatisfied saints: Reverend Jeanne Audrey Powers on September 29, at age 85; and more recently a dear friend, Jim Stegner, who died on November 10, at age 83. Jeanne Audrey and Jim generously shared their love and values with many communities. They also struggled their whole lives for the things that are right and good.

I pray that God will help us discern the times to join today's struggles for justice and fairness, to be impatient with the way things are. This path also takes the commitment that Jeanne Audrey and Jim demonstrated when they replied, "let it be"—to acknowledge the effort and sacrifice that the struggle would require.

I think Hennepin is a great place to listen for the small voices that guide our path, through today's activists as well as elders like Jeanne Audrey and Jim.

**Help us to listen to the small voices that guide our path
as we struggle for justice and fairness. Amen**

Coming Home

Art Michalicek

I was a child in a very large family of ten. A family who had out-of-town relatives with very large families visit—creating an enormous gathering for the dining room table, and not enough seats. Fortunately, we lived in a small town that had public parks with many tables that offered a place to have a meal. The children could go play while the adults reminisced.

One day, when we were told, “the bus is leaving,” I yelled: “I have to go to the restroom,” and ran as fast as I could to the park facilities. As I returned to the departure place, there was no bus. I was alone. I was 4 years old.

This was very traumatic. I didn’t know what to do. I was very angry at myself as I sat on the curb for what seemed like a lifetime thinking they would come back and get me. That didn’t happen in that ‘lifetime.’

My best friend appeared in my head—a friend who had been with me all of my life and shared all of my dreams. This friend gave me guidance that it was time to move on. My friend’s forgiveness was a new beginning of courage, to face up to that challenging moment in time, and made my fear and anger vanish.

My salvation was to journey 2 miles and make an appearance before I was missed. On that long walk (for a 4-year-old), where every step carried an uncertainty, I keep thinking to my family, “I am coming home.” The friend inside of me was right. Elation appeared as I moved closer to the destination and landmarks became recognizable. I learned that day to move on, to let it be, and trust the friend that has been with me all of my life.

You, God, are our contact companion. Thank you for the ways in which you love and protect us each and every day. Help us to be the kind of friend that looks out for those who might be lost.

Amen

Acceptance

Lorelei Larson

"We want to be in control. We want our life to follow the mental master plan we've devised that ultimately leads to Real Happiness. But circumstances change—loss, illness, unresolvable problems, addictions, etc. often foil our plan."

This quote is from the foreword inspired by Vincent P. Collins (1992) made into a small "Little Elf" book that I have referred to many times during my life since then—when I need a jog to remember what I know deep inside.

I have picked out a few reminders for our inspirational theme of "Let it Be."

Acceptance doesn't mean giving in or giving up; it means giving all—your hopes, sorrows, worries—to God.

An attitude of acceptance is constant prayer. Turn your life over to God with every beat of your heart. Acceptance is the only real source of serenity. You can live with your brokenness and in spite of it. Accept your humanity; you're allowed to stumble.

Accept your divinity; the God within you empowers you to pick yourself up again.

Don't force your good intentions on others. You can't help them unless they want you to. Set the compass of your soul toward forgiveness. It will help you to find your way out of bitterness.

Give others freedom. When you hold them captive to your own wishes, you destroy them. When evil seems to be winning over good, remember that creation is not yet finished. You can help to shape creation for good.

Don't disown any part of yourself. What you may consider "garbage" can be the ground of new life. Trust in the future. Recall the times you've seen good emerge from tragedy, new life rise out of dying.

When darkness surrounds you and distinguishes all hope, trust that God will rekindle your spirit. You cannot change circumstances or other people. If you don't like the way your life looks, try changing the way you look at life.

Step away from your life to look at it. Life is like a painting—messy close up, but blending into a harmonious whole from a distance.

Accept suffering. It can stretch your heart to make room for greater love and joy.

Be open to growth. The hard seeds of misfortune blossom into the flowers of courage and compassion.

Retreat from the world's noise and the clamor of your own worries. In silence you can hear the whisper of the Infinite.

Relax and breathe. Breathe in the love instilled into this speck of time and creation. Breathe out fear.

Immerse yourself in nature. When you can't be outdoors, feel deep within you the cleansing breeze, the lake's calm, the bud's promise.

Place yourself in the arms of God. God will cradle you and sing you a lullaby of love.

Give thanks for everything; a grateful heart yields a harvest of acceptance.

**God help me to accept it all: the joy, the pain,
the loneliness, the community. Amen**

Changing my Perspective

Ann Carlson

In the past year, I have experienced many situations in which our elected officials have made decisions for the good of our country that I think are "plain wrong." In my personal life, my brother had an extremely challenging form of dementia which caused him to be violent at times, very agitated, and experience hallucinations. He had a hard time dying. In these instances, I cried out, "It shouldn't be like this!!!" For a while, I stressed and fumed and felt powerless to change any of the situations that I felt were "plain wrong."

I've been reading Michael Dowd's book, *Thank God for Evolution*, in which he discusses how one can view life's problems and difficulties. One can either see problems as something "I did wrong" or something "somebody else did wrong." If I view difficulties in this way, I feel frustrated and powerless. Dowd offers an alternative way of viewing life's problems as "gifts for my and our evolution, evidence that we're alive and growing and evidence that our species is maturing." This second way of viewing problems and difficulties helped me see that I would feel so much better if I could let go of railing against the various problems and difficulties that seem "plain wrong" and to just relax and "let them be."

In thinking about my brother's terrible dementia and dying process as gifts for our family's growth, I could identify many positive benefits for the whole family:

1. The family was able to gather, support one another and affirm the ties of love that bind us together.
2. My sister-in law got fired up about working to pass the "right to die" legislation that is pending in the Maryland legislature, where she lives. She wants to do this so other people don't have to experience a terrible dying process, like her husband did.
3. I got to support my brother, his wife and children during my brother's dying process. This was emotionally difficult but yielded me a sense of gratefulness that I was able to be part of my brother's transition to the "life beyond."

I am comforted by Michael Dowd's idea that "the universe can be trusted and that all things work together for the good of the universe for those who love Reality and are called to serve a higher purpose." (p.58, *Thank God for Evolution*)

Holy One, you ask us to open our eyes and our hearts to see your movement in new ways. Remind us that we are a part of your ever-evolving story of love and justice for the world. Amen

She Let Go

submitted by Cheryl Hauser

She let go. Without a thought or a word, she let go.
She let go of her fear. She let go of the judgements.
She let go of the confluence of opinions swarming around her head.

She let go of the committee of her indecision within her.
She let go of all the “right” reasons.

Wholly and completely, without hesitation or worry, she just let go.
She didn’t ask anyone for advice. She didn’t read a book as to how to let go.
She didn’t search the scriptures. She just let go.

She let go of all the memoires that held her back.
She let go of all the anxiety that kept her from moving forward.
She let go of the planning and all the calculations about how to do it just right.

She didn’t journal about it. She didn’t write the projected date in her Day Timer.

She made no public announcement and put no ad in the paper. She didn’t check the weather report or read her daily horoscope. She just let go.
She didn’t analyze whether she should let go. She didn’t do a five-step Spiritual Mind Treatment.

She didn’t call the prayer line. She didn’t utter one word. She just let go.

No one was around when it happened. There was no applause or congratulations.

No one thanked her or praised her. No one noticed a thing.

Like a leaf falling from a tree, she just let go. There was no effort. There was no struggle. It wasn’t good and it wasn’t bad. It was what it was and it is just that.

In the space of letting go, she let it all be and a small smile came across her face.

—Reverend Safire Rose

This moment, right now, we let it go, we let it be. Amen

Epiphany

Let it Be, Let it Be, Let it Be

Robert Brinkley

And God said, “Let It Be,” and the birthing of the Universe began!

And when Abraham and his family left their home country, becoming refugees, to create a nation that would be a blessing to all nations, they were saying, “Let It Be.”

Mary, to the angel’s announcement that she was to birth a son, said, “Let It Be.”

Jesus, in the Garden, late at night before they came to arrest him, and when he drew his last breath on the cross, said, “Let It Be.”

And whether in worship, private contemplation or life choices, when at last we surrender our small selves to the Divine Love of God, we are declaring, “Let It Be.”

And when we draw our last breath at life’s end, submitting to the care of the Eternal One, we can say, “Let It Be.”

And when you and I devote our energies to wishing things were not as they are, until we live in a state of exhaustion, finally letting go and instead trusting God’s ways and guidance for us, we are saying, “Let It Be.”

And when Jesus pronounced, “I am the Way, follow me,” and we surrender to that way of living and being, we are saying, “Let It Be.”

And when Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. and others, at the risk of their lives, practiced peaceful and nonviolent means of resisting the cruelties of authoritarian systems, their cry was, “Let It Be!”

“Let It Be.” Like Mary, we are called to be birthers of Christ in our time.

**Holy One, we participate in your unfolding work in the Universe
as we unite our hearts, our actions, and our Spirits with yours.**

Empower us to be co-creators of your Kin-dom in our time.

Let it be so. Let it be. Amen



Mandala by: Carol Michalicek