

# Countryside Community Church WORSHIP



*Mary's Yes*, © Lisle Gwynn Garrity Inspired by Luke 1:26-39  
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**December 14, 2025**  
**Third Sunday of Advent**

† Indicates those places where those who are able are invited to stand.  
Text in **bold** indicates places where the congregation is invited to join in response.

## Gathering

**COMMUNITY TIME (9:55)**

Adam Witte

**PRELUDE**

*As Lately We Watched*

Sondra K. Tucker

Countryside Handbell Choir

**WELCOME**

Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas

**†CALL TO WORSHIP & LIGHTING OF ADVENT CANDLE**

Georges Family

One: Today we light the candle of Joy, not because everything is easy,  
but because God meets us in our fear with a daring invitation: "Do not be afraid."

**Many: Like Mary, we are called forward into uncertain places,  
trusting that God's promises are enough.**

-candle is lit-

One: Joy is not the absence of fear – it is the courage to sing anyway.

**Many: So we lift our voices, joining the song of all creation:**

**"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!"**

**†PASSING OF THE PEACE**

One: The Peace of God be with you.

**Many: And also with you.**

**†HYMN OF RESPONSE**

Hymn #128 *One Candle Is Lit* (vs. 3)

**CHILDREN'S TIME**

Heather Moran

Children are invited to join Heather for a lesson at the chancel and then head to Discovery Kids classes. Nursery is available for children 0-4 years.

**SUNG RESPONSE**

***Go Now in Peace X 2***

**Go now in peace, go now in peace,  
may the love of God surround you  
everywhere, everywhere, you may go.**

# Hearing the Word

## FIRST LESSON: Jeremiah 1:4-10

Reader: Molly Anderson

Now the word of the Lord came to me saying,

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

Then I said, “Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.” But the Lord said to me,

“Do not say, ‘I am only a boy,’ for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you.

Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.”

Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me,

“Now I have put my words in your mouth.

See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.”

## MUSICAL REFLECTION

*Listen to the Joyful Sound*  
Countryside Choir

Joel Raney

## SECOND LESSON: Luke 1:26-39

Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.” Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her. In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country,

## MESSAGE

*Let it be: Message in a Bottle*

Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas

# Responding to the Word

## PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

## SHARING OUR GIFTS & CHRISTMAS OFFERING (CIRA)

Adam Witte

This morning, we invite you to use the QR code on the back of your bulletin—or visit the Spotlight table in the narthex—to learn more about our December community partner, CIRA, the Center for Immigrant and Refugee Advancement. That same link also takes you to Countryside's giving page, where you can support our annual mission spending plan. Countryside is fully supported by the generous gifts of our members. Thank you for all the ways you help sustain our vibrant and welcoming community!

## PRAYER OF DEDICATION (unison)

Receive these gifts, O God, and shape them into love made visible.  
May our giving join Mary's yes in bringing your hope to life. Amen.

## Sending

## †SENDING HYMN

Hymn #119 *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* (vs. 1-3)

## †BENEDICTION

Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas

## POSTLUDE

*Toccata on "Veni Emmanuel"*

Andrew Carter

Countryside Choir and Handbell Choir - Adam Witte, director  
Alex Ritter, organ and piano

## Sunday Flowers This Week

Flowers were given today by Kathy Menke,  
in memory of her husband John.

# Joys & Concerns

Join us as we pray for our congregation members and their loved ones who are on our Joys and Concerns list every week on Thursdays at 9 am in the Sanctuary. If you have someone who would benefit from prayer, want to share a joy or be included on the bulletin list, and /or be included on Countryside's Prayer Chain, contact the church office at 402.391.0350 or email [office@countrysideucc.org](mailto:office@countrysideucc.org).

## **Prayers of Gratitude for the following Joys:**

We give thanks for the beauty of this season and the many small moments of grace that meet us along the way. For gatherings that lift our spirits, for kindness shared in ordinary places, and for the steady presence of love in our lives. May these glimpses of goodness remind us that hope still takes root and grows among us.

## **Please join in praying for the following new and ongoing concerns:**

**Heather Karstens** asks for prayers for Patty, a recent widow who is struggling with grief and depression during this time of transition. Her family is concerned that winter in Minnesota may make it more difficult for her to access her support system.

Prayers for **Tim Ekberg and Margaret Hayford**. Tim this week is having the first of three deep brain stimulator surgeries. Margaret is having a cervical spinal fusion next week.

Please keep **Dave and Jeri Lundblad** in your prayers after the recent, unexpected death of Dave's younger brother in California. He will be greatly missed, and long-distance arrangements have been complicated and frustrating.

Prayers for safe travels for **Alyssa Silhacek** as she and her mom travel to Thailand December to meet her adopted daughter (5-year-old, Rama). They will return with Rama on December 24.

Prayers of comfort and sympathy for **Shirley Brown** whose sister passed away on December 2.

Please continue to pray for strength for **Gloria (Rich) Mannel** as she recovers in a rehab center after hospitalization.

**Renee Besancon** asks for prayers for her friend Suzie's stepdad and mom, Gib has been up and walking for the first time in several weeks and will be going to a rehab facility soon.



## Mary's Yes

by Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by Luke 1:26-39

*Photography with digital drawing*



The Second Sunday of Advent **What do you fear?**

WHEN WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF HOPE, GOD IS AT WORK

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, the angel goes to Nazareth to find Mary. I was six months pregnant with my second daughter when I reread this scripture and began this image, so at first, this detail seemed like a happy coincidence. But as I pondered it, I wondered if Elizabeth's pregnancy might have everything to do with Mary's willingness to say yes to this wild, wonderful—but risky and terrifying—undertaking.

Elizabeth's pregnancy provides reassurance that Mary can trust the angel's impossible news. By the sixth month, Mary will be able to see for herself that Elizabeth is truly pregnant. By the sixth month, Mary can place her hands on Elizabeth's belly and giggle as the baby leaps and kicks. By the sixth month, the risk of miscarriage has significantly decreased. By the sixth month, Elizabeth will be emotionally, mentally, and physically preparing for birth. Her miracle is real, even as it is yet to be born. Therefore, Mary can rest her hope in an emerging—not empty—promise.

Mary's willingness to say "yes" is also fortified by the assurance that she is not stepping forward alone. Even as fears surely surround her, Mary will go to Elizabeth for protection and comfort. She won't fulfill her calling without support. Her hope will be strengthened in solidarity.

In this image, we see the angel greeting Mary in the form of dappled light.<sup>6</sup> Mary's back is turned to the angel, but we see her in the process of pivoting toward the warmth of the cascading light. I imagine this is the moment after the angel responds to her initial question, "How can this be?" After hearing the angel's response, Mary closes her eyes, imagining her cousin Elizabeth and perhaps her many ancestors holding her up as she prepares to step forward. The wrap around her head carries the angel's good news, anointing her with the promise that fear won't stop her. Embroidered along her neckline is Mary's willing response: "Here I am." Her lantern earring is a sign to each of us, to anyone who is fearful. It's as if Mary herself becomes a lantern, emanating courage in the face of a fearful calling, lighting a way forward. **REV. LISLE GWYNN GARRITY**

<sup>6</sup> I captured these textures by photographing the shadows cast by a lantern

## Countryside Giving

### 2025 Contribution Deadline

Give a little, help a lot! Scan the QR code to support CIRA and Countryside's mission. Your generosity keeps our community warm, welcoming, and full of life!



Thank you for your generosity this year! To make sure your 2025 gifts are tax-deductible, please have your contributions postmarked or received at the church office by **December 31, 2025**.

Remember, the date on your check isn't enough—timing matters for IRS purposes. We appreciate your thoughtfulness in planning ahead!

