

## IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

---

The Reverend Anne H.K. Apple  
Sunday, December 20, 2020

---

### **Luke 1:26-38**

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. **37** 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.

### **The Word of the Lord.**

Over the years, life has unfolded in our kitchen.

In some ways, it's been mystical. Coffee brewing at 5:00 am, chicken noodle soup simmering on the stove, an apple pie baking in the oven. Heavenly scents if you will. Later, backpacks were thrown down and kids settled into homework. After dinner, with a pile of dishes across the counter, we'd linger together pulling out a board game. Perfect Imperfection. The magical smells and sounds of family.

But - it wasn't always sunshine and roses in our kitchen.

## IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

---

The Reverend Anne H.K. Apple  
Sunday, December 20, 2020

---

Some days, it was apocalyptic. There was probably a reason the paint color on the walls was called “Banshee.” The kitchen heard plenty of shouting and witnessed wrestling matches as teenage hormones and middle-aged angst got worked out on the cold tile floor.

Somewhere in between, occasionally, a dance party would erupt. Impromptu and involving some of the most rhythmically challenged people, those parties were the best.

Uncorrupted joy.  
Unbounded humility.  
Surrounded by Love.

A haiku can't fully describe the imperfect perfection.

We used wooden spoons as microphones, and grapevined while holding plastic containers and spilling cherry tomatoes. Our dance moves were all G rated, and messy, ... and real. Less-than-rhythmic box steps led to attempts at drinking orange juice while ‘flossing’. There was nothing quite like a kitchen dance party. Perfect imperfection. Freed to dance, surrounded by love.

This Wednesday, the Session met by Zoom. We didn't have a dance party - but we were reminded of a particular dance. The dance of God's call upon one's life. We shared today's biblical text and Stephanie Rodda reminded us of Kate Wolfkill's Advent reflection, and especially of Kate's profound last line.

*“God has a song for each of us to sing, and while we might know the melody, we cannot dance with it until we rejoice in the lyrics.”*

Our elders know that song and dance of spiritual leadership as they have guided us this year through great staff transitions *and* a pandemic. Our leaders have graciously served and rejoiced with the lyrics of Christ's claim upon their lives.

In an Advent reflection, Eric Wall, a musician friend and faculty member at Austin seminary says of Christ's call and claim on our lives, “it plays out in real time, among real people and in real places. But the reverse is also true: the

## IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

---

The Reverend Anne H.K. Apple  
Sunday, December 20, 2020

---

workplace, the nuts-and-bolts, the finances, the job tasks will never flourish if the idea, the call, is sidelined or forgotten.” The ministries of the church have flourished, though perfectly imperfect.

To flourish, to dance, to live fully into God’s call is rooted in rejoicing in the lyrics - the lyrics of the Good News - the lyrics of God’s arrival in flesh into the world - the lyrics of Mary’s song.

Jennifer Henry has rewritten the lyrics to the popular Advent hymn, “Mary did you know?” And in one stanza the lyrics read, “Mary did you know that your Spirit song would echo through the ages?”

Each of us is to carry Mary’s song forward, with imperfect perfection, as we are made new in Christ. We as the church are invited to rejoice and to dance with perfect imperfection.

As Kate reminded us in her Advent devotion - like Mary, we dance, and move in faith, when we rejoice in God’s message to us. I’d describe that dance as a call.

I can get lost in an overactive imagination. Thinking about the Angel Gabriel’s appearance to Mary. The angel invites a perplexed Mary to not be afraid; communicates a grand purpose and convicts her that the Spirit would overshadow her making all the things possible. And something in all of that was convincing enough to have Mary say, “OK. I trust. Let it be with me.”

Mary knew, when the angel departed, God had claimed her life with a purpose and the holy dance of call began.

Uncorrupted joy.  
Unbounded humility.  
Surrounded by Love.

That is Mary’s song that echoes through the ages.

Called as a pastor, I learned that song in community. The angels didn’t descend in heavenly lights - they were ordinary people who saw Christ in me and encouraged me to look more deeply, to trust in the Spirit’s work. Clear was the

## IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

---

The Reverend Anne H.K. Apple  
Sunday, December 20, 2020

---

communal nature of call and how perfectly imperfect, our stories are woven together.

Jesus invites rejoicing.  
God's new purpose pulls us to the dance floor.  
And, we dance with Perfect imperfection.

The Chicago journalist, Sydney Harris said of the work of education, or I would suggest, Christian formation, ... "Is to turn mirrors into windows. When you gaze into a mirror, the only things you see are your reflection and a limited area around you. However, when you look out a window, the view can be almost endless."

We have had some intense looking into the mirror - the work of reflection - and as a new Season begins at Idlewild in this new church year, and as we welcome David, whom God has called, we are being drawn towards the window to await God's call as a congregation - to God's new thing.

With Mary's song echoing through the ages, we are being called to rejoice in these new lyrics and to dance.

Uncorrupted joy.  
Unbounded humility.  
Surrounded by Love.

Might it be so, for each of us, and for all.  
To God, dawning among us, be all glory, now and forever, Amen.

**Benediction!**