



# The Lord is in our midst



*A theme reflection for the 2021 Advent Offering*

*“The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm.”  
~Zephaniah 3:15b, NIV*

Hope. Peace. Love. Joy.

These are the thoughtful liturgical themes of the Advent season. They are signposts that can guide us from Thanksgiving to Christmas, and serve as gateways that usher us toward the humble manger of Jesus. Whether your congregation follows this rotation of topics or not, each of us is invited in this season to draw nearer to Immanuel—the God who is with us.

In the age of the prophet Zephaniah, the people of Israel were indeed in need of these reminders. His three-chapter book is primarily weighted with words of judgement: for the people, for their adversaries, and for the land itself because of how it had been used for evil. It seems that God’s patience had run out, even for Israel, and that the consequences for their self-serving, idolatrous actions were finally catching up to them. It is into this heavy situation that Zephaniah spoke.

Have hope: the Lord is with you.

Find peace: God will end our affliction.

Feel love: the Lord will soothe you.

Sing with joy: God is rejoicing over you.

Though our circumstances may be a far-cry from what Israel was facing, these ancient words of truth still echo into our brokenness, struggle, and pain. We don’t need to be far from God to benefit from the reminder that God is near to us through all that we endure. Though very real conditions of violence, disaster, and disease in our world can trouble us, we can find comfort and confidence in knowing that the Lord is in our midst.

Even in the face of challenges, the ministries of the Church of the Brethren move forward for the glory of God and our neighbor’s good. Together we share words of hope for the future of the church, reveal the peace of Christ and the love of God, and in all things, find joy in the work of the Holy Spirit that is restoring all things.

May we find inspiration and strength on the journey through Advent and experience anew that the Lord, indeed, is in our midst.