



Bearers of the Divine

An Advent Cantata

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY
HANNAH JENSEN-HEITMANN

Liturgy by Damen Jensen-Heitmann

Artwork by Maggie Johnson



A Note from the Composer

When I feel overwhelmed, lost, or in need of some extra strength, I often turn to the people - particularly the women - and the stories of their lives that raised me. I think about the heart and courage, the kindness and vulnerability contained within their stories. And after reflecting, I generally feel resolve and a sense of direction. It was this thought and practice that inspired me to write an Advent Cantata - Bearers of the Divine. Mary, a lowly woman chosen for a divine action, must have felt a mixture of honor, nervousness, and uncertainty. I wondered what stories she heard as a child, and if there were stories of women from the past that offered her inspiration and strength. I searched for the women who may have shown Mary that we can all be a bearer of the divine.

And so, I started on a journey of diving deeper into the stories of women from the Bible. I put myself in their position, wondered how they might have felt, and wove those feelings into songs. It has been a beautiful and meaningful process - imagining thoughts and feelings that are not necessarily written, but are, in my mind, most definitely there.

Though I spent many hours alone writing this cantata, it would not have been possible without the love and support of so many. I share my deepest thanks to my immediate family and friends who listened to me talk about this project and encouraged me to press on, to my husband, Damen, for writing the beautiful liturgy that acts as an invisible string, meaningfully tying everything together, and to the musicians and performers who worked diligently to prepare this music. To First Presbyterian Church of Hastings, NE, specifically the Worship, Arts, and Music Committee and Rev. Greg Allen-Pickett, I offer my thanks for your support, both personally and financially. It is because of your trust and encouragement, generosity and grace that this work is being premiered in this beautiful church. I know my words of gratitude will never be quite enough, but please know that I am incredibly thankful.



Hannah Jensen-Heitmann, Composer

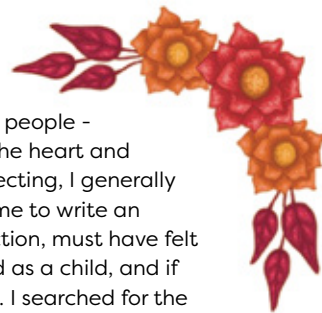
A Note from the Senior Pastor

On behalf of First Presbyterian Church, we are delighted to share the world premiere of the Advent Cantata - Bearers of the Divine, written by Hannah Jensen-Heitmann. Hannah grew up in this church and has gone on to become an accomplished musician. She was selected as our "Artist in Residence" by the Worship, Arts, and Music Committee this year to share her musical gifts with our church through this cantata, teaching classes, and writing original music that will be used during Lent and Easter. This residency was made possible by the Langenberg Music Endowment, established in 2001 following the death of Luella Langenberg. The Endowment is dedicated to the ministry of the church and especially to the power of music in that ministry. It was established to, "be used for special musical events in the Church and for any special needs in the Church's Music Program."

We are grateful to Hannah for sharing her gifts, grateful to the legacy of Luella Langenberg for making this special event possible, and grateful to God for bringing all of this together. We believe this is a fitting and meaningful way to conclude the 150th Anniversary Celebration of First Presbyterian Church of Hastings. Thank you for joining us!



Rev. Greg Allen-Pickett, Senior Pastor



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF HASTINGS
SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT
DECEMBER 10, 2023



PRELUDE

WELCOME

OPENING PRAYER (*Unison*)

Loving and gracious God, we give you thanks for all of those who have born the divine into this world. We thank you for all of those who have made your peace, your hope, your love, and your joy manifest in our lives and in the lives of others. We pray, O God, that the proclamations of this day may bring your truth to us once more. May our hearts be open to receive your word. May we be inspired to carry that word with us into the world once more. Amen.

God & Mary

An angel told me, Lord, I am favored by you.

If I am plain and lowly, what does it mean for me to bear the holy?

1st SCRIPTURE READING – *Genesis 18:9-15*





I'm Here

Sunshine, where's your laughter coming from?
You're mine, it's not time to run.
Come here, forget your fears.
I'm here, no need to shed a tear.

Just know wherever you go,
I'm in the wind that blows and swirls around you,
And nothing's impossible for you.
And my dear, whenever you hear
A songbird's lullaby or a baby cry,
I'm here, I'm here, I'm here.

Slow down, we need you now.
Don't drown inside your fears right now.

Just know wherever you go,
I am the pull inside your heart that guides you,
And nothing's impossible for you.
And my dear, whenever you hear
The sound of the thunder crash
Or a raindrop splash,
I'm here, I'm here, I'm here.

You'll stay young forever,
In my eyes you'll never fall.
You can climb a mountain,
Have a babe, do it all.
You are right where I need you.
Breathe in the air, and I'll use you.

Sunshine, where's your laughter coming from?
You're mine, it's not time to run.

Just know wherever you go,
I'm in the sky, the earth, and everything around you.
And nothing's impossible for you.
And my dear, whenever you hear
Someone take a breath or another step,
I'm here, I'm here, I'm here.



ADVENT CANDLE AND CALL TO WORSHIP

This morning we do as so many of our own ancestors have done. We light a little candle to remind us of God's presence in our lives, that God is here. Today we light the candle of hope and celebrate all that it has done and all that it will do.

It was hope that danced in the heart of Sarah. It was hope that compelled Shiphrah and Puah.

Hope was a basket in a river and hope sustained words of commitment and love.

Hope called Hannah to share her blessing with the world. Hope asked Esther to speak for those who had no voice.

It was hope that sparked joy in Elizabeth. And it was hope that carried Mary forward beyond her confusion, beyond her ponderings, and through her doubts.

The hope that the world could be made right. The hope that she too could bear the divine.

May the flicker of this flame call us to the work of hope this day. May it remind us of our own calling to bear God in the world.

Thanks be to God for the gift of hope.

2nd SCRIPTURE READING – Exodus 1:15-21

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (*Unison*)

The world, O God, is so full of screaming and shouting It is overflowing with voices calling us to fear, to be suspicious, to take care of ourselves and leave the rest in the dust. We confess, O God, that we find their cries to be tempting. We struggle to hear your voice over the cacophony and in the moments when it does cut through, we do not cling to it, we do not hold it, we do not tuck it into our hearts and allow it to guide us. Forgive us, O God, the moments when we listen to fear instead of curiosity, hate instead of love, and darkness instead of light. Open us to hear your voice once again.





Listen

Hear the rise of words meant to scare.
Hold onto the cries in a desperate
prayer.
Listen to the voice that points
To the light.
Be the light,
And listen.

Heed the signs that call out to you.
Feel the truth in all
The ways you move to
Free those who are small,
Those who lose the light.
Be their light.

Darkness finds (be the light)
It can't survive (be the light)
When moved aside
By the ones who try
To be the light
And listen.

Listen to the sound of your
Heart pounding,
Drowning out their hollow shouts.
Listen closely knowing
You can always count
On your light.
Be the light.

Darkness finds (be the light)
It can't survive (be the light)
When moved aside
By the ones who try
To be the light
And listen.

Listen when the earth feels shaken.
Listen now, stay awake and
Listen to the voice that's saying,
"Be the light, be the light."

Darkness finds (be the light)
It can't survive (be the light)
When moved aside
By the ones who strive
To be the light
And listen.

*HYMN

“Bearers of the Divine”

1. For - giv - er of our ever - y sin, heal - er, guid - er, pa - tient friend,
2. Through your sa - ving Word, im - part Your great love in ev - ery heart.
3. High and ho - ly God a - bove, when the world feels swa - llowed up,

5
hear our tha - nks for the grace you give when we don't live
And when ou - r li - ves fall a - part, guide our feet to
and the sad - dened shad - ows hide Your love, we will be to a

9
for oth - ers by your light. Lend to us your stea - dy
start walk - ing tow - ard your light. We'll get lost from time to
source of Your brill - i - ant light, help - ful, true, and kind. We will

13
sight so we live our lives be - ing bear - ers of the di - vine.
time, but with You as our guide, still we're bear - ers of the di - vine.
live till the day - we die as bear - ers of the di - vine.

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

The cries of those who fear God are heard,

They are saved.

Forgiven of our sins, may our hearts return to God.

Alleluia. Amen.

*PEACE OF CHRIST

The peace of Christ be with you!

And also with you!



Out of the Water

Moses's Mother

I pray that you're on your way to
A new place where you can taste
The daylight, and not hide.
I pray that you will stay safe
In the arms of the river
Sweet babe of mine.

I don't know who will find
This precious cargo I'm leaving behind.
Lord, please be kind.
Keep him wrapped up inside
The woven home that I had to design.
Lord, hear my cry.
Clear the clouds from the sky,
Help the rolling water be his lullaby.
And let my love soothe his cry
So he can hear me when I say,
I pray that you're on your way to
A new place where you can taste
The daylight, and not hide.
I pray that you will stay safe

In the arms of the river
Sweet babe of mine.

You will never leave my mind,
No matter where you go our hearts are
intertwined.
And if the path is unkind,
Remember that I love you.

Pharaoh's Daughter

You came my way,
Somehow placed in the river deep and
wide.
You'll stay here safe in my arms.
Little babe, you're mine.

I drew you out of the water,
A beautiful traveler
Who needed a mother
To help you grow stronger.
And I can't help but wonder
Why God let me discover

This gift that was covered.
I hope I can offer love.
Offer guidance and a home that you're
safe in.
I give my thanks for when

You came my way,
Somehow placed in the river deep and
wide.
You'll stay here safe in my arms.
Little babe, you're mine.

So when you need to cry,
Or when you want to describe the
colors in the sky
I'll be there every time.

Where You Go

I know that you feel lost,
You feel like you've exhausted every option.
You feel that there is no one to give a thought to who
you are, to what you want.
You think you'll never be caught again.
But my friend, there is hope
Because in the end;

Where you go, you'll know where to find me.
Where you go, I'll be there.
Where you go, I'm marching beside you.
Where you go, the load we will share.

I know that you'd be fine.
I know that you are strong in your faith and heart, in
your body and mind.
But we were not made to walk alone.
We lend a hand, we help our own.
There's no use fighting it.
No, I was not put on this earth to leave you.
I hope you heard;

That where you go, you'll know where to find me.
Where you go, I'll be there.
Where you go, I'm marching beside you.
Where you go, the load we will share.



No, we were not made to walk alone.
We make a home in each other's homeland.
And when our story ends, it's comforting to know
That we walked hand in hand.

So where you go, you'll know where to find me.
Where you go, I'll be there.
Where you go, I'm marching beside you.
Where you go, the load we will share.
And I'll be there.
Yes I'll be there yes, I'll be there.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (Unison)

We thank you, O God, that in the midst of her perplexities Mary was not left to herself. She had your wisdom and your guidance to rely upon. Revealed through the stories and memories of her communities Mary could encounter your Spirit time and time again. We too, O God, find ourselves lost amid our perplexities and our own vexations. We often times find ourselves not knowing how to navigate the challenges we face. We don't always know what to say. We find ourselves lost in the midst of doubt, worry, and anxiety. In the midst of such things, grant that your star may guide us. Reveal to us a candle of your peace, your hope, your love, or your joy. Remind us that we are not alone and that you will be with us even, and perhaps especially, when the path seems dark. Amen.

“A Gift From You”

1. All my days, I pon-der the un-known. All my
 2. Through the noise, I try to hear your call, but my own
 3. With your love, you soft-en what was stone, and I

4 nights, I hope I'm not a-lone. When the lights go dark, be my
 voice can shout ov-er it all. When you're a dis-tant light, grant me
 want to love the way you've shown; to let a strang-er in, be a

7 fire, be my star, guide me to a new light for my heart. I be-
 still-ness grant me sight, grant me grace for wh-en I fall. I be-
 help-er, be a friend, show a light that shines from with-in. I be-

10 lieve in your truth and the won-ders you do, and my path is a gift from you.
 lieve in your truth and the won-ders you do, and my strength is a gift from you.
 lieve in your truth and the won-ders you do, and my heart is a gift from

15 you.
 4. This I pray with all my strength and

20 soul, so when I stray, I know where I must go. And I will al-ways sing of the

24 joy your spir-it brings, of your light that made me whole. I be-lieve in your truth and the

28 won-ders you do, and my life is a gift from you.



A Blessing

Under the starlight,
I sit quietly.
And thank God for listening,
For bringing you to me.
And each time we part,
With all my heart
I pray you will always be
A blessing to others
Like you are to me.

You are;
A walking miracle
Covered in a robe of love,
More than enough.
You are;
Strong and gentle,
Made of the moon and the sun

A child of God,
My love.

Under the sunlight
I see beauty, harmony
In all things, with all life
I'm not lonely
There is light in me.
So if the world feels dark,
Ignite your spark
Then you will always be
A blessing to others
Like you are to me.

You are;
A walking miracle
Covered in a robe of love,
More than enough.
You are;
Bold and peaceful
Always and forever one
Great child of God,
My love.

Walking miracle
You are, you are
Strong and gentle, moon and sun
Bold and peaceful, my love
More than enough
A child of God

6th SCRIPTURE READING – *Esther 4:14b-16*

OFFERING



For Such a Time

For such a time as this has come, I'm told.
And I must be bold.
But I was just chosen to don silver and gold,
Not to hold the lives of innocent beings
That will be struck down by the king.
There's no mercy in his actions, I know.
Was I just chosen to don silver and gold?
For such a time as this has come, it

seems.
And all that I need is courage
And the words to rewrite what would be a tragedy
To a song we all sing.
For every human being is made of the same thing.
We should believe if one bleeds, we all bleed.
For such a time as this has come, it seems.

For such a time as this has come.
For such a time as this has come.

Lives of innocent beings will be struck down by the king.
No mercy in his actions, I know.
Every human being is made of the same thing.
We should believe if one bleeds, we all bleed.

For such a time.

*DOXOLOGY

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION (*Unison*)

To each, O God, you give a task and a time. To each, O God, you call, asking that they love you with their whole being and their neighbors as themselves. To your great work we give these gifts and our very selves. May they be used for such a time as this. Amen.

"Dear One"

Dear One, no need to cry. Know that you have God's light with you so at all
 Dear One, your voice may tire. You may lose the de-sire to do the will that
 Dear One, in all you do, kind-ness should car-ry you. Keep heart for ev-ery

times you have a friend. Dear One, the hows and whys may cloud your mind some-times.
 you were born for. Dear One, bor-row my voice to speak a-bove the noise.
 be-ing on this earth. Dear One, with all your might, hold fast to love and light.

An-swers will come if you're still and let them in.
 I am with you, as are those who came be-fore.
 With-in you lies the power to heal or hurt.

When you look back, I hope you see your

good, and your spir-it moved the ground where-ev-er you stood.



My Love

Take it in, take it in slowly
All you need to do is believe.
Take a breath, breathe in deeply
And know that I am here endlessly.

I'm your God, you're my Love.
You are not alone,
I have not forgotten
What you want, what you long for.
Oh my Love, my love is greater than you can imagine
Imagine.

Can you imagine, and hold on tightly
To what you believe?
It's all that you need.
Sing a song, sing it loudly.
Your voice will connect you to me.

I'm your God, you're my Love.
You are not alone,

Your light will shine brighter
Than the sun, and you'll have a son.
See my Love, my love is greater than you can imagine
Imagine.

Can you imagine that the joy you prayed for
Will lay a path for the Lord,
And speak of peace forevermore?
Can you imagine because of one little child,
That a nation will smile and live in hope for a while?
For a while, can you imagine?

Can you imagine crowds will come to rejoice,
A voice will quiet the noise and all the world can enjoy
What they imagine love and kindness to be?
All will see what you see
When they trust in me, in me.
Can you imagine?



God & Mary

My soul is steady, Lord.
My spirit praises You.
What you must use me for is merciful and true.
And though I'm plain and lowly,
You say I'm worthy of something holy.
I give my thanks to You,
And pray that through me, Lord,
All peace will be restored.

***BENEDICTION**



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