Advent Prayer
Waiting in Hope

**Leader:** God of light

**All:** We await your presence

**Leader:** God of hope

**All:** We await your presence

**Leader:** God of Peace

**All:** We await your presence

*I will listen to the voice of our God*
Psalm 85: *from Rejoice, Beloved Woman! by Barbara J. Monda*

God, you loved the earth and restored the past fortunes of the innocent. You forgave the errors of your people.

You held your anger and calmed your rage. Now return to us for we are waiting. Today we need reviving. Show us mercy and nourish our joy. Come and give us what we need.

I will listen to your words of peace. Peace for those who have changed their ways. Peace for the redeemed offender.

Peace for the generous millionaire. Peace for the honest politician. Peace for the protector of forests.

Peace for the defending soldier. Peace for the caring leaders and the responsible citizens.

Love and faithfulness have met in you. Justice and peace have embraced in you. Faithfulness appears from the earth and justice from wisdom. Follow wisdom and receive the milk of life everlasting.

Glory to you Three in One. Your Mercy endures forever.

**Scripture: Luke 1: 41-45**

When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.”
Reading: *from Advent, Merton, and Mary* by Andy Otto

Thomas Merton is known for his prayer which begins, “My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end.” This uncertainty about our vocation, our path, our life, is comforted in the hope we find in Advent. Merton trusted that though he didn’t have all the answers, God would not leave him to face his journey alone. This is the meaning of Advent.

Advent reminds us that such darkness will be quenched with the light of Emmanuel and the hope for a God who will indeed be with us. Through Mary’s experience of the Annunciation, she rediscovered that God was concerned with humanity all along. The coming of Jesus would incarnate this reality, creating for us a visible sign of hope and redemption.

Discernment in the midst of uncertainty sometimes has those Advent characteristics of darkness, waiting, and hope. We know God is there but for some reason the light hasn’t yet shone through. First we must cease clinging to one path or another. And then, the tiniest of flickers illumines a flame that sets our hearts ablaze with the certain knowledge that God-with-us is guiding us and has always been guiding us.

Thomas Merton knew God’s lead and company. Mary did too. Our lives are an ongoing Advent of patient waiting and trust, discerning God’s presence and call. But they are also an ongoing Christmas, incarnating God’s light and glory through our actions and choices. We can trust that despite any murky darkness the light will grow stronger, revealing that God has already been with us from the beginning.

Reflection and Sharing
Where are you on your journey of faith? Where have you found God on your journey? Where have you been in darkness? Where have you seen God’s presence? What has led you to trust in God in discerning your path? What are your hopes for the future? What are you waiting for patiently?
**Prayers of Petition**
Let us pray for hope and peace in our lives and the lives of others.

*Response:* God, help us to trust in your presence.

We pray for those who are surrounding by war and violence.
We pray for those who are confused and feel alone.
We pray for those who are without hope.
We pray for those who are grieving a loss.
We pray for those who are ill and in pain.

**Closing Prayer**
God of light, we await your coming again into our world. Help us to share the spark of your love in this time as we wait. May our faith and hope lead others to knowledge of your presence. May we always live our lives in your love. Amen

**Song Suggestions**
From the CD *Candled Seasons:* “I Will Listen to the Voice of the Lord (Psalm 85)” (Use instead of the psalm.)

“Blessed is She”: Colleen Fulmer