

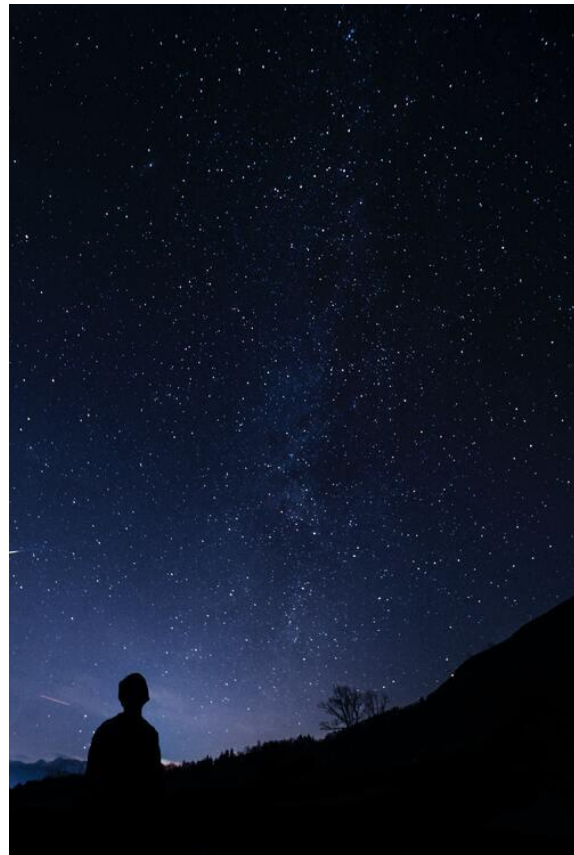


Alive in Darkness

by Rev. Dr. Robin Hawley Gorsline

“Then a shoot will sprout from the stump of Jesse, from Jesse’s roots, a branch will blossom.” ~Isaiah 11:1 The Inclusive Bible

On a recent morning, in the darkness before dawn, as I dressed to take LoLo our puppy outside and he wiggled with delight at what was coming, I thought of Mary with Jesus in her womb. Like any baby, especially in the month or two before birth, he probably wiggled and rolled over just as LoLo did in anticipation. Later, as I ruminated on that observation, I began thinking of Advent as the womb for us each year as we wait eagerly for the birth of Jesus. We light candles for each of the four weeks to mark our anticipation but does not the lighting also signal the darkness all around, as they proclaim life in that darkness?



I understand why we light the Christ Candle marking the birth of the one we often call the Light of the World, but I also want to celebrate the life that is in the dark. Not only the child coming to be inside Mary but also the life that forms and grows in the long winter nights, the time of gestation and consolidation as well as the hidden movements of unseen creatures—mycorrhizae and roots—underground, preparing Earth for the burst of Spring and beyond.

I admit to not really enjoying cold weather—although when bundled properly it can be a delight to wander outside among the trees, both the green ones and the bare ones, seeing a landscape changed from warmer months. So is not this time, with its longer nights and shorter daylight also a womb?

I I have no idea if Jesus was actually born in what we call December, let alone on the 25th, but it does seem right to me that the ancients chose this time of year to celebrate his birth. I like to think that they knew that divine life, which I believe is all life human and more than human, is created in darkness. Jesus' gestation was in Mary's womb and he came to us in the dark of night, as our art shows the shepherds being greeting by angels in the night sky and of course the Three Kings saw the star at night.

May you, may we all, feel the burgeoning life coming our way again, confirming Isaiah's prophecy about the sprout and the blossoming branch coming from the stump and the roots. Let us celebrate all life, in light and dark.

Advent Scripture Reference Lectionary
[Psalm 124](#); [Genesis 8:1-19](#); [Romans 6:1-11](#)

Advent Hymn Reflection
[“Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus”](#)
Music by Rowland H. Prichard; Lyrics by Charles Wesley



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