

Pastoral Prayer 11-27-11, 1st Sunday of Advent, Year B
By Rev. Dr. Casey G. Baggott
Based on Luke 1:26-35, 3 ~ the Annunciation

Eternal God, a season of wonder and watching and waiting is upon us. Receive our thankful gifts. We hear the haunting words of prophets, and we *wonder* at the long, rich history of promises made and fulfilled. We *watch* the symbols of your incarnation begin to appear among us in wreath, tree, and crèche, and we are reminded of your tender coming. We know that earth's redemption is your plan, and so we *wait*. We grow heavy with expectation.

Help us to prepare a place for Christ's presence among us as we wait. As we decorate, remind us that our faith must be more than decorative. As the season's cheer builds and grows, let our care for one another build even more strongly. Let our appreciation for the spirit of this season be demonstrated by what we give of *ourselves* – and let our giving be guided by the pattern you offered – simple, humble, self-giving. And when our minds turn to the bustle of celebration, remind us to keep our hearts turned to your holiness.

We pray for those whose needs are in our hearts and on our minds – those near to us, and those whose needs we only know by report. We hold our hopes for those in need up to you now, in silence

And God, as we prepare to leave here today, we pray for your help for *our* lives. If we have heard from the world that the humble seem weak, the pure seem naïve, and the openhearted seem gullible, then strip away our pretensions to worldly wisdom. Urge us to attend most closely to your voice, to accept your word to us, and to learn from the wisdom you offer. Help us listen for annunciations you may make to us about the possibilities for your spirit to grow and flourish in us.

Remind us that Jesus encouraged watchful waiting for his followers – and expectancy that your work among them was not done – that soon, perhaps, you would be among them. Help us to be expectant for you, God, alert to what you may need *our* help to bring about. We *have* learned to trust in your timing God, for you sustain us day by day with gifts, large and small, and especially with the gift of love, come to the world as Christ, the one who taught us to pray together, saying ...
The Lord's Prayer ...