

peace be with you

# weekly devotional

from the desk of Rev. Marta Wheeler

SAINT PAUL BENSON

## Listen to the Whispers

Besides the sturdy oak trees  
most of the leaves have fallen.  
Although we've walked these paths  
hundreds of times  
everything looks strange and new.

Without the foliage I dream up  
angels perched upon the limbs  
protecting passers-by and  
whispering quiet  
messages of God's love.

This time I am more intensely  
aware of this public land which  
anyone is welcome to walk  
with a companion  
or contemplate life.

I'm feeling grateful that these trees,  
grasses, and shrubs, as well as the  
earth and the sky above,  
are for the pleasure  
of all who pass through.

Not just for a few who lay claim.

**November 23, 2022**

## Isaiah 2:1-5

**2** This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

**2** In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.

**3** Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

**4** He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

**5** Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

## Sermon-By-Phone

**402-210-2091**

Each week, a timely message and scripture are available simply by making a phone call!

This text from Isaiah helps us imagine how humans might live if truly walking in the light of God. I had that sense last Sunday evening upon attending the 27th annual Interfaith Thanksgiving service at First UMC. Under the direction of Rev. Jerry Brabec, the Saint Paul and Temple Israel choirs participated in the unified chorus. Hearing the music and the readings from the Jewish, Islam, and Christian traditions energized us. This was the first time I'd heard the call to prayer being chanted live. It transported me to a different time and place, yet realizing their prayers are also part of our city and country. All of us are going up the mountain of the Lord to listen so that we may walk in his paths.

While reading *Holy Envy* by Barbara Brown Taylor my heart was exposed a little more. In this book she shares experiences of teaching Religion of the World 101 to classes at a private liberal arts college in the foothills of the Appalachians. Most students were raised evangelical Christian. Learning basics of the Jewish and Muslim faiths could be quite jolting in contrast to previous understandings. It was in personal encounters with faithful people on field trips to various worship centers that they were able to open their minds to new ideas. They were reminded not to lay claim to God as theirs alone.

With open hearts the Season of Advent scriptures and music have the potential to nourish us to see beyond old understandings. Being unafraid to connect with people outside our usual circles and ask wondering questions of them soften our hearts as well.

We pray for you and give thanks for adding your faith story to the whole of humanity.

*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, guide us to walk in the Light of Christ.*

*Marta*

Rev. Marta Wheeler