

"From Worry to Wonder"

A Christmas Message from Bishop Laurie

On June 19, 2020 our granddaughter was born. She was born three months into the pandemic. Her parents were worried. Her grandparents were worried. It is challenging enough to be pregnant and give birth in the best of times but to give birth in the middle of a worldwide pandemic is an even greater worry. We worried about the unknown dangers this virus might present to the mother, the unborn baby, and the new born baby. Our worries kept us up at night. Our worries were relieved when she was finally born, perfect in every way. Our worry gave way to wonder-filled joy. Worry transformed to wonder as we looked back to see how God was holding and carrying them through the unavoidable worry. Our worry transformed to gratitude and wonder watching for what God would be up to next in her tiny life.

It's December 2022. We prepare to celebrate the birth our Lord Jesus. This Advent we come with our fears and worries too. We are living in the midst of challenging times in our country. The very foundation of our nation seems less stable. We each come with our own personal set of worries and fears about our families, health, finances, work, safety, the future...What is it that keeps you up at night? What are you worried about today?

Folks across our church are experiencing doubts and uneasiness about the future of their church. Does it keep you up at night? What are the threats to your church's future? How can the conversation move from fear and worry to wonder? As the miracle of Christ's birth is celebrated this season, we can move from worry to wonder. We wonder what God is up to now in this day and age. Together we wonder what God's will is for the future of our church. Together we wonder; how can we use the abundance and blessings, (what we do have and opportunities in front of us), to make a difference in Jesus' name.

Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. Luke 2:8-10a

Shepherds living in the fields watched over their sheep to keep them safe. There were dangers that kept the shepherds up at night and plenty of things for the shepherd's to worry about in the cold night like wild animals, predators, thieves, & bad weather. There was so much to worry about, but one night an angel of the Lord, all shiny and bright appeared and transformed their fears and worldly worry to divine wonder.

To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" Luke 2:11-14

Friends, you are precious, beloved, baptized children of God. We know that the antidote to worry is to trust in God.

During this Advent, Christmas and Epiphany season I pray that your worries will be transformed to wonder at what God is doing and promises to do in your lives and in our churches. May the miracle of Christ's birth transform your worries to wonder! I am grateful for your partnership in ministry.

Peace be with you,

