



## Wednesday Prayer

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Advent ~ Christmas Eve

**In that 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; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 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 2:8-14**

Many of you may have witnessed this scene play out in Christmas pageants with adorable little shepherds and angels bringing us this good news of great joy. And you may have experienced both the urgency of getting children ready with their lines and in their costumes while also busily finishing your own Christmas shopping list. It's hard this time of year to pause and recognize the abundance and blessings all around us.

Cherish All Children coordinated the Youth Holiday Gifts program this year for our LSS Metro Homeless Youth sites – and this urgency was present! Working with dozens of churches, businesses, and over 40 families and individuals to provide gifts for 75 youth and four program sites brought both urgency and great joy. The youth we serve have often been living in unsafe conditions, couch-hopping, or living outside. Providing them with *new gifts they have selected for themselves* offers some joy at this difficult time in their lives. Offering dignity in our connections with all the young people we encounter is a sign of God's love and peace.

**This will be a sign for you...**

In the rush of the season, what are the signs we will notice, the symbols of protection, comfort and peace? How might we provide protection and comfort for those in our communities? Baby Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes symbolizes the protection given at his humble birth. Reaching out to youth programs provides comfort through your gifts, donations and support of the caring professionals providing direct service. Praying for the safety of all children and youth is a sign of our trust in God's promise for peace. Thank you for your dedication to Cherish All Children's mission ~ Glory to God in the highest heaven!

**As we prepare to welcome you, Jesus, help us to pause and recognize the signs of your love all around us. May we share your protection, comfort and peace with the young people in our lives and communities, dispelling fear and providing safety. Bless all children with tender care, dignity and grace. Amen.**

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Written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director.