

Christmas Eve – December 24<sup>th</sup>

Luke 2:8-15

Susan Gilbert Zencka

The angel stood before them. The word 'angel' comes from both Latin and Greek words that meant 'messenger.' Angels bring messages from God. How do we receive messages from God? Where does revelation happen? We believe that the Bible is the revealed Word of God, that God inspired the writers and assemblers of the Bible—even if there are contradictions among its texts, and even when we find the Bible challenging.

As Presbyterians, we believe that we can sometimes receive revelation in community—ours is a conversational polity.

Many places in the Bible tell us that creation reveals God to us, too. We get messages from God through the world that God has made. Heaven and nature sing—every day—not just when Jesus is born. Sometimes nature is singing songs of joy—as bees suckle from wildflowers, as creeks gurgle in the woods, as the snow crunches under our feet. Other times, nature is lamenting—as storm surges crash onto shore, as winds break or uproot trees, as species face extinction—leaving creation forever.

We can all experience God's loving energy mediated through the particular community of creation where we live. Just as the shepherds experienced God's messengers coming to them as they watched their flocks by night, and the magi experience God's guidance as they watched the stars, we may experience God's nurture in nature—and we can participate in that nurture.

Let us pray: God, help us to hear your voice throughout creation, and give us hearts willing to welcome the smallest creatures around us—just as the shepherds welcome the helpless infant Jesus so long ago.

Action item: By planting native plants in your yard, or encouraging native plants at your church, in neighborhood schoolyards, and local parks, you can provide food and habitat for a variety of insects, birds, and small mammals whose needs are met by native plants.