

**Cross of Hope Making Faith Connections Small Group Ministry**

**December 22, 2024**

**Advent – The Space Between**

**Space to Sing**

15 Minutes **Gathering, Hospitality, Check-in with Each Other...**

Opening Prayer Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that binds us, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (ELW p20)

45 Minutes **Introduction:** Cradle and cross are inextricably connected on the fourth Sunday of Advent. Between a lovely tribute to the little town of Bethlehem and Mary's magnificent song of praise, the letter to the Hebrews reminds us in no uncertain terms that Christ's advent is for "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." It is the kind of tension in which the church always lives as when in holy communion—with high delight—"we proclaim the Lord's death." (from Sundays and Seasons)

**Discussion Questions:**

Read again Luke 2: 39-55

What do you notice about this story as you read/hear it this time?

What is challenging or confusing as you read/hear it this time?

God's world of forgiveness, love and mercy has come in Jesus, and yet the fullness of this salvation is still not yet here. In this space between this 'both now and not yet,'

How does this passage invite us see this as a space to sing?

What are song favorite Christmas Carols? How do they carry parts of Mary's song?

How is Mary's visit with Elizabeth an act of faith?

Why are we created for relationship and community?

Compare and contrast vv.46-55 with 1 Sam 2:1-10.

What are our songs of faith? Why?

Read again Micah 5:2-5a

What do you notice about this story as you read/hear it this time?

How does this passage further show God's pattern of taking the least and lowly and revealing God's kingdom?

How are these verses hope in a seemingly hopeless situation?

Read again Hebrews 10: 5-10

What do you notice about this story as you read/hear it this time?

How does this passage invite us to know Jesus was the way to know God?

What do you learn about forgiveness, life and salvation here?

20 Minutes **Prayer Requests and Prayer**

10 Minutes **Wrap Up and Get Ready to Leave Session**