

Welcome / Announcements / Land Acknowledgement

*We recognize that the land where we gather for worship belongs to God, as does all of creation. We also know that this is the unceded territory of the Lkwungen and WSÁNEĆ people. As we pray, reflect, and celebrate in this place, we do so as guests lamenting the injustice in our history. We ask that the God of love and justice lead us along the path of reconciliation, bringing accountability and healing. May we be inspired to forge new relationships of respect and solidarity.*

PWS&D Message      *Improving Health Across Generations in Guatemala*

For eight years, Blanca Juárez Tomas has participated in Flor de Tuichmad'il—a women's collective dedicated to promoting health and nutrition among her community in Guatemala. Blanca shares how being involved in this group has allowed her to support her own well-being and that of the next two generations in her family.

"Before I became part of the women's group, Flor de Tuichmad'il, my life was very different. I didn't give as much importance to nutrition for both me and my family. The foods we consumed did not have sources of protein, and we did not take into account the importance of properly washing the food that we ate, which often led to illness.

When I became part of the AMMID association, I learned which foods contain protein and the importance of hygiene at home. Now, my family is healthier, and I am teaching my children to put these things into practice with my grandchildren so that they can enjoy good health."

In Guatemala, PWS&D supports the work of the Maya-Mam Indigenous Association for Development (AMMID).

Thank you for faithfully responding this Advent season to help empower Indigenous women in Guatemala as they lead their communities toward a healthy future.

***Gabriel's Secret Mission #4: Heaven, just before the birth of Christ***

➤ *Hope is a star (verse 4)*

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Call to Worship / Advent Candles

*(Light the candles of Hope, Peace and Joy)*

God names us and claims us.

**God is love.**

God rescues and forgives us.

## **God is love.**

God prepares wonderful things for us.

## **God's love has no end.**

*(Light the candle of Love)*

### Gathering Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

God of Love, help us as we listen to the story of John. Remind us of all that you have done for your people. Help us to trust in your love and show your love to others. We pray together as Jesus taught... ***Our Father, who art in heaven – hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come – thy will be done – on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen***

### ***Meet John***

John, whose name means "God is gracious," was named by God through the angel Gabriel. John was the baby born to Zechariah and Elizabeth in their old age. He was promised to be like the great prophet Elijah. He was to tell people how they could be saved and to make them turn their hearts back to God. His mission was to prepare people for the coming Saviour.

➤ ***Prepare the way of the Lord (round)***

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### Prayer for Understanding

**God of life and love, we turn to your Word to hear your will and your wisdom for our times. Open our hearts and minds by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit so that we might hear what you are saying to the church through Christ, your Love Incarnate. Amen**

Scripture: **Luke 1: 57–80** [NT 57]

Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. But his mother said, *"No; he is to be called John."*

They said to her, *"None of your relatives has this name."*

Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, *"His name is John."* And all of them were amazed.

Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. All who heard them pondered them and said, *"What then will this child become?"* For indeed the hand of the Lord was with him.

Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

*"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his child David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness in his presence all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways to give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins. Because of the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to shine upon those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."*

The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

➤ *There's a voice in the wilderness crying*

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### Questions / Reflection

1. Why was your name chosen for you? What is the significance of your name?  
Do you have a nickname that people call you that has a special meaning?
2. John came into the world to prepare the way for Jesus' coming.  
What ways can we prepare for the coming of Jesus at Christmastime each year?  
I wonder how can we participate in making room for the kingdom of God every day?
3. We celebrate love in the fourth week of advent.  
How can you show the love of Jesus to neighbours in special ways this season?  
What might this look like for your family and friends?

➤ *For all the love*

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### Activity – *creating poetry*

Experiences of love are often remembered and celebrated in songs and other forms of art. Mary sang a song of gratitude to God, expressing her many feelings of joy during her pregnancy and her time spent with Elizabeth. Zechariah also sings a special song celebrating the birth of John and God's promises for the people. Write a song or create a poem about God's love, love you have for others, and/or love others have had for you. An easy way to start writing poetry is to create an acrostic, which uses the letters of one word to create other words. For example:

**L** – longing fulfilled  
**O** – others come together  
**V** – valuable memories  
**E** – everyone in harmony

(If you are at home – share your love poetry with family and friends.)

### Offering and Prayer     *Praise God from whom all blessings flow*     306

This Sunday we celebrate the Advent of Love, embracing us in Jesus Christ. Think of your gifts as seeds of that love which we can plant in the world God loves for Christ's sake.

**God, our Love and our Life, receive our gifts as seeds of gratitude for your gift to us in Christ Jesus. Bless these seeds with growth so that love will embrace people who feel lost and alone in this season, fearing they will be overlooked among so much need. Be their love and their life, through Christ our Lord. Amen**

➤ *Hark the glad sound*

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### Closing Prayer

God of Love, you bring people to love into our lives. Thank you for families, neighbours and friends. Thank you for asking us to share your love, even when it's not easy. May we bring more and more love to people who need it. Amen

### Blessing

Go in love this day, to greet friend or enemy, neighbour or stranger with the warmth and wonder of Christ Jesus in your smile. And may the all-forgiving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the all-inspiring love of God, and the all-embracing communion of the Holy Spirit be yours this day and in each day to come, now and evermore. Amen.

➤ *Emmanuel soon will appear*

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<sup>1</sup>Service idea from Journey to Christmas Advent Devotional (PCC) and Conversations with Gabriella by Patricia Souder ([skitguys.com](http://skitguys.com))