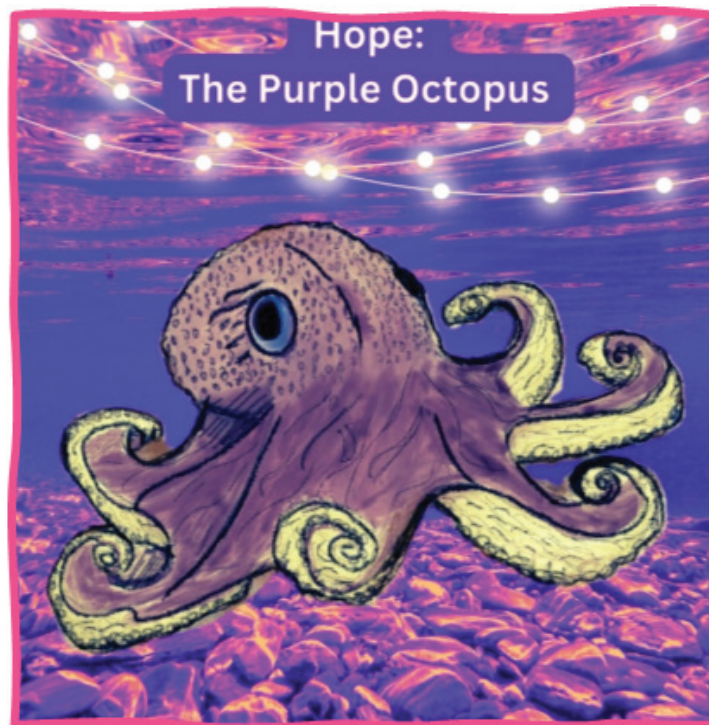


Children's Moment



The first week of Advent is about hope, and 4,600 feet below the surface, we meet the purple octopus (*grandedone boreopacifica*). In March 2007, marine biologists encountered a particularly special purple octopus mother. For fifty-three months, this mama held onto her eggs until she believed they were ready to hatch. It was the longest brooding period on record of any animal on earth. Octopus eggs are extremely vulnerable to being eaten by other creatures, and so the mother octopus must stay with them until they hatch and swim away. This one protected her eggs for four and a half years. In her book, *How Far the Light Reaches*, science writer Sabrina Imbler asks what else we would call this if not “something like hope.” A hope for her babies and their future, hope in herself to know when to give her babies the safest moment to be born, to give them their best chance.

Like the mother octopus, I wonder how Mary might have experienced hope in an unknown future when the angel Gabriel told her about God’s plan—or perhaps, about God’s hope in her. Mary didn’t know what exactly the road ahead would be like, but I wonder if it was hope that helped her say ‘yes’ that day. A hope for a future worth staying steadfast for, day by day, even if we cannot know how it will all turn out. Hope that God will be there no matter what comes. Hope that calls us to show up with love today that is always connected to tomorrow.

Where do you find hope? Who or what has helped you do so? What do you hope for this Advent season?



“...**THE GLORY OF GOD** SHONE AROUND THEM...”
 LUKE 2:9

Spiritual Exercise

Instructions:

This exercise is inspired by a cento poem, which is when a poet writes a new poem from the words of two or more poems written by other authors. For our exercise, we'll use the Hebrew scripture passage and second Christian scripture reading from this Sunday.

First, have one or two people read the readings out loud. As the passages are being read, notice what words or phrases grab your attention, speak to you, draw you in, have energy, etc. You might want to underline, circle, or highlight them.

Then, read through the readings silently on your own, again with the intention to notice what words or phrases speak to you.

Finally, take a look at the words you've underlined or highlighted and use them to compose a poem or a reflective statement. You do not have to use all of the words or phrases you marked or put them in any particular order. Just see what comes out when you put pen to paper! There's no right or wrong way to do this. See how Spirit is still speaking through the words you've been given. Have fun!

Jeremiah 33:14-16

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you?

Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you.

And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you.

And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Example:

The days are surely the promise I made.
 The night to restore whatever is lacking in love for one another.
 Time, justice, and all the joy will cause strength in your hearts.
 Holiness is the name by which we will be called: we feel love.
 Thank God face to face.



"...THE GLORY OF GOD SHONE AROUND THEM..."

LUKE 2:9