Advent Devotional – Day 07

2025 **December 7th**

Scripture: Luke 2:6-7 *Verse: "While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them."*

Reflection:

The image of the King of Glory sleeping in a feeding trough turns our expectations upside down: God doesn't arrive in glory first, but in need. That humility isn't a small detail; it's the gospel's clear message that God's priority is being with the poor, the overlooked, and those pushed to the edges. When God chooses the margins, the church's answer shouldn't be about status or show—it should be about getting close and staying together.

The manger makes us look at our own habits and ask whether we protect comfort more than we welcome people. Buildings, programs, and neat calendars can feel like belonging to those already inside while quietly saying "not for you" to people outside. Mt. Hope needs to ask a direct question: do our spaces and resources really lower barriers and welcome people, or are they mostly preserving comfortable exclusivity?

Winter makes needs we ignore the rest of the year impossible to miss—cold homes, long lonely nights, shorter days that deepen isolation. These are real, physical hurts: people needing a warm room, steady food, or someone to check on them. The incarnation shows that God chooses those very vulnerabilities, so our worship and practice must include making room in a concrete way: open doors, easy-to-access help, and invitations that reach people before they ever cross our threshold.

Practically, changing how we offer hospitality means rethinking stewardship so our resources produce dignity, not just programs. That could mean using space for community warming centers, simplifying policies so neighbors can meet without red tape, scheduling events at times working families can attend, and setting aside money for emergency aid as well as regular programs. True stewardship treats buildings, funds, and volunteer energy as tools to make presence possible, not as goals in themselves.

Following the manger looks like humble presence: listening before telling, offering shelter without conditions, and sharing meals instead of putting on a charity performance. It means training volunteers to welcome people in ways that respect their dignity and privacy, checking in on isolated neighbors regularly, and making hospitality part of our everyday rhythms so caring isn't just seasonal but steady. When presence is consistent, trust grows and real flourishing can begin.

The gospel starts with God reaching into need; our hands should follow. If the King of Glory first came in a place of feeding and shelter, then worship that ignores the hungry or keeps the door narrowly defined misses the point. Mt. Hope's services, budgets, and schedules become true obedience when they make real space—both physical and relational—for the people the manger shows God came to be with.

Prayer: Lord, soften our hearts and open our hands; help us clear space in our homes, our church, and our schedules so those who are cold, lonely, or struggling find shelter, welcome, and dignity. Amen.

Today's Mt Hope Mindful Response Challenge: Donate supplies to a local shelter or warming center or come up with and share an idea of how we can better extend welcome at Mt. Hope.

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