

Angels Among Us:

“Do Not Be Afraid”

Do not be Afraid: More Joy

December 14, 2025

WE GATHER

MUSIC FOR GATHERING

“How Great Our Joy”

Traditional German Carol

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

THRESHOLD MOMENT

Every angel seems to use “do not be afraid” as an opening line. But perhaps no one needed to hear it more than Joseph. What was happening to him was the stuff that ruins lives. As a man in that time, he had all the rights to abandon Mary and preserve his dignity when he learned of her pregnancy. The stakes were high. But the angel’s message of encouragement was to see a difficult circumstance not with dread, but with joy.

CHORAL PROCESSION

“Angels Among Us”

McFee and Bell

PRAYER

Holy Living God, Blessed Jesus, Guiding Spirit, light within us your flame of joy this day. Grant us openness to hear your message. Grant us courage to be your messengers in the world, creating more joy in the midst of fear.

Pastor: And with the angel messengers above us, among us and within us, we sing...

* OPENING HYMN

“Lift up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates”

UM Hymnal 213

PASSING THE PEACE

THE THIRD CANDLE OF ADVENT - Lynn and Nate O’Brien

Today we light **the Candle of Joy**. In the story we hear this morning, Joseph faces a moment that could have unraveled his life. Fear could have guided his next steps, but into that fear came an angel, a messenger who spoke God’s words saying: *“Do not be afraid.”* This was an invitation to trust that God was already working within a situation he did not fully understand. As we light this candle, we remember that joy is the quiet confidence that God is present, steady, and faithful, even in uncertain seasons. (*Light the candle.*)

RESPONSE:

“Angels We Have Heard on High.” (v.1) UMH 238

Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o’er the plains,

and the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains.

Gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

MISSION MOMENT:

Dr. Bella Doumbia

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD’S PRAYER

Pastor: In this moment we pray for all those who are in need of joy. (*The congregation is invited to call out names and places*) We respond...

Response: “We hear the message of God, Do not be afraid.”

Pastor: In this moment we give thanks for all the ways we have experienced God’s presence among us, in the words and actions that bring joy in the midst of fear. (*The congregation is invited to call out ways*) We respond...

Response: For all who proclaim your reign on earth, we join their refrain, Do not be afraid.

WE PROCLAIM GOD’S WORD

Young Messenger of the Church

(*After Children’s Moment we sing: “Away in a Manger” UMH 217*)

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 1: 18-25

adapted from The Voice translation

ANTHEM

“Come to Us This Christmas”

M. F. Smith

SERMON

Making Room for Joy

WE RESPOND

INVITATION TO OFFERING and OFFERING

In this season of watching and waiting, we look for *angels among us*, those moments and messengers that remind us God is near. As we give today, may our offerings become part of that good news: signs of joy, compassion, and new beginnings. Let us offer what we have with joy and expectation.

OFFERING MUSIC

“Mary’s Boy Child”

J. Hairston

Vocalist: Daniel Almy

DOXOLOGY

Tune: O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Praise God from whom all blessings flow

Praise God, all Spirit messengers below.

Praise God, the source of all our gifts!

Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

WE GO FORTH

When this Christmas song comes across your path this week, as it most probably will, stop for a moment and remember the reason for the season...Jesus. We can know joy right now, even in the midst of fear. For God desires so much to be with and for humanity that God sent Jesus, Emmanuel, and this Spirit continues with us, always and forevermore.

* CLOSING HYMN

“Joy to the World”

UM Hymnal 246

THE MISSION TO THE MESSENGERS

Pastor: Every week I will give you a mission with a message. I’m inviting you to be “MESSENGER OF JOY” and to share on social media our quote for the week “*Worry never robs tomorrow of its sorrow, it only saps today of its joy*” (Leo Buscaglia). If you are not into social media, I invite you to take the worship program and insert and give it to someone or send it in a message. Now, I invite you to turn to your neighbor and share the message we must take to the world: *Do not be Afraid.*

BENEDICTION

CHORAL RESPONSE

“Do Not Be Afraid”

McFee and Bell

POSTLUDE

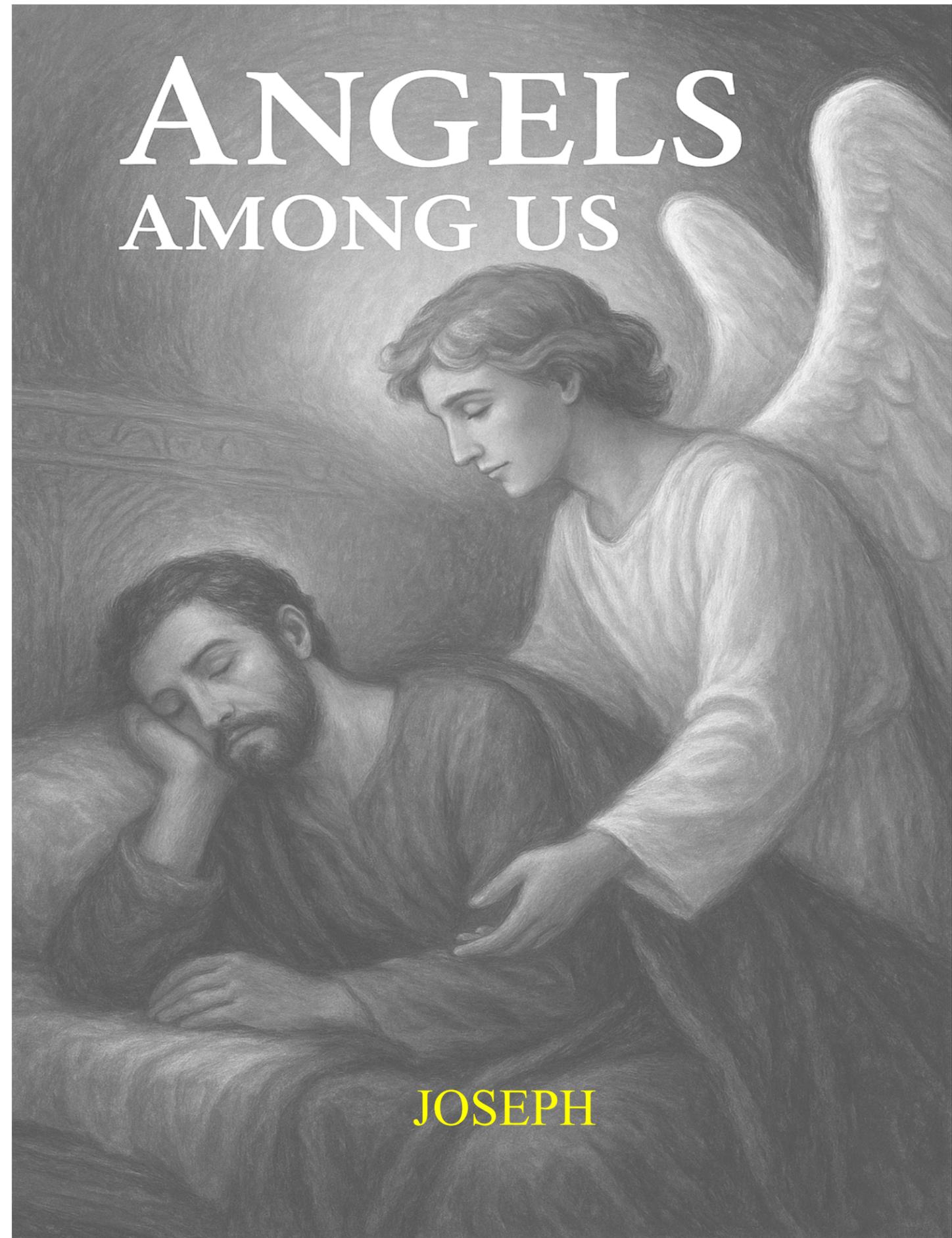
All the liturgy has been designed by Worship Studies and it is used with permission.

The flowers adorning our altar today were given by Lisa Asendorf in honor of Edward Peterson

Today’s Mission Moment: Dr. Bella Doumbia is the mother of two young men. She is a mental-health educator, researcher, and trauma-healing practitioner whose life and calling are rooted in a profound journey from adversity to hope. Dr. Doumbia holds a Doctorate in Education from Northcentral University, a master’s in education from Cambridge College, and a Graduate Certificate in Biblical Studies from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Professionally, she has served for 25 years at McLean Hospital, where she developed therapeutic groups, facilitated psychoeducation, and contributed to the creation of the hospital’s residential treatment program for women suffering from trauma. Presently, she is a missionary; her heart is to see broken lives restored, captives set free, and the unreached to discover the redeeming love of Christ.



JOHN WESLEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Corner of Jones Rd & Gifford St. Falmouth MA 02540
www.johnwesleyumc.org





WELCOME TO JOHN WESLEY U. M. CHURCH

We are a welcoming and active congregation which seeks to **“LOVE GOD...LOVE OTHERS...SERVE THE WORLD.”**

We invite you to experience meaningful worship services, engaging Bible studies, Sunday school, fellowship, preaching, life-changing local and global mission opportunities and more. We are an active congregation. At John Wesley, there is always room for everyone to become a part of something greater than ourselves.

WE ARE GLAD YOU ARE HERE!

WEEK AT A GLANCE:

Worship Every Sunday: 9:30 am

Monday 15th

- Advent Study – *Come Thou Long Expected Jesus* – 6:00 PM (Library)

Tuesday 16th

- Advent Study – *Calling All Angels* – 10:30 AM (Fitzgerald)
- Social Justice Team Meeting 1 PM (Fitzgerald)
- SPRMT 6:30PM (Library)

Wednesday 17th

- Advent Study – *Calling All Angels* – 9 AM (The Reynolds’ House, See for Carolyn for address)
- Prayer Meeting 11 AM (Youth Room)
- Missions Team Meeting 2 PM (Fitzgerald)
- Handbell Rehearsal 4 PM
- Ecumenical Blue Christmas Service 6 PM (Sanctuary)
- Chancel Choir Rehearsal 7:30 PM

Thursday 18th

- Worship Team Meeting 1 PM (Fitzgerald)

Our treasurer, Eli Harmon, will be on vacation this week.

Our team for the “Come to the Table” breakfast for our unhoused neighbors **needs people to help in the kitchen with light prep, coffee, setting up chairs, and offering a warm welcome. No heavy lifting.** *If you can help any Monday, or want to learn more, please see Bonnie V. or Jennifer L. Your presence really does make a difference.*

It’s Staff Appreciation Time! We have an outstanding staff that ensures John Wesley functions flawlessly on a daily basis. You can contribute by using the red envelopes in the pews, mail or drop off your donation at the church office or click “Give Online” on the John Wesley's website using the Select Fund drop down menu select Staff Appreciation Fund.

CHANGING OUR WORLD for December is for The Pastor’s Discretionary Fund.

2026 Pledge Envelopes are Ready for Pick-Up: If you requested a book of pledge envelopes for 2026, please pick it up at the table in the narthex. It has your name written on the cover of the book. If you have any questions, Please contact Matt O’Connor at oconnorscapecod@gmail.com.



Angels Among Us... Fear Not

Celebrate the Christmas Season at John Wesley!

This Christmas, we invite you to experience the hope, comfort, and wonder of the season through a series of special worship gatherings.

Inspired by the theme “Angels Among Us... Fear Not,” Each service offers an opportunity to reflect, rejoice, and find peace amid the holiday bustle.

Ecumenical Blue Christmas Service Dec 17 | 6 PM

A gentle candlelit service of comfort and hope, with music, readings, and quiet reflection.

BTEO/Interfaith Candlelight Service Dec 21 | 6 PM

National Homeless Persons’ Memorial Day

@ *First Congregational Church, Falmouth*

Donations of shelf-stable food welcomed.

Experience! Christmas Dec 24 | 4–6 PM

A festive evening for the whole family, filled with music,

stories, games, and s’mores

Let us celebrate the messengers of hope all around us!

Traditional Christmas Eve Service Dec 24 | 7 PM

A joyful candlelight service for all generations as we celebrate the birth of Christ

Join the angels in songs of joy, hope, love and peace on earth.

Experience! Christmas Planning Session

Want to help create a Christmas celebration full of joy? Join us after church on December 14 from 10:45–11:15 in the Fitzgerald Room. Anyone who’s interested is welcome! Questions? Contact Amy at

amyclatanoffbrown@gmail.com

Experience! Christmas Crafts — We Need Your Help! A craft table will be set up in the back of the Fellowship Hall starting December 14. Everyone is invited to stop by and make something meaningful!

Angels Are Calling! Turn our old hymnals into beautiful Hymnal Angels. Folding the pages is all you need to do—Amy will paint them and the children will help assemble. These angels will be given to visitors during our Experience! Christmas event.

Light the Path! Create a Christmas luminary to line the church entrance for our Christmas Eve service. Write a Christmas wish or prayer and help us “Light the Path” to our front door.



Hold tight- more exciting instructions and information is on the way at the end of service.