

CLAREMONT UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
2020 Nativity Theological Statement
#ClaremontNativity

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a young Jewish woman, who lived in a remote part of the Roman Empire. As a Jew, Mary was marginalized with few personal rights and significant obligations to the Roman ruling class. As a woman, Mary was powerless in the face of those who ruled, both the Roman authorities and the Temple leaders who conspired with them.

Still, in this beloved passage from the first chapter of Luke's Gospel, Mary claims a power that comes, not from the emperor or from other earthly authorities, but from God. Mary claims the power of God's love and grace that would be born into the world in her son, Jesus. This is a force stronger than earth's armies, a force Mary claims for the well-being of the poor and oppressed:

“My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for You have looked with favor on your lowly servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is God's name.
Your mercy is for those who fear you from generation to generation.
You have shown strength with your arm;
You have scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
You have brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
You have filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.”
(Luke 1:46-53)

As one who held little power or esteem in her culture, Mary wondered why God chose her to bear this Holy Child. Through the Angel Gabriel, God assured Mary, and all people, especially the poor and the marginalized, that each one is God's beloved. Mary raises her voice and her spirit to affirm that God stands with those who are oppressed, and that we who follow Mary's son are called to do the same.

The brutal killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers in the summer of 2020, along with so many other unjustified killings of unarmed Black Americans, galvanized a wide coalition of Americans to seek equal justice under the law and equal treatment in our society for people of color. We affirm and join the call for justice and equity by the Black Lives Matter movement to ensure that Black lives matter as much as any other life. Our faith in Christ challenges us to stand with Mary in her call for justice for the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed.