Women on the Way to Christmas - 2018 - Eve and Sarah, Rachel and Rahab, Hannah and Elizabeth and Mary.

During our time together and beyond, we will see, hear, and walk with these women in a new way. We will discover new ways these women prepare us for the birth of Jesus in 2018.

God was creating the beginning of something new in and through each of these women. God’s new creation is living in God’s promise - the promise fulfilled in Jesus. All of us now live permanently in the fulfillment of God’s promise - Jesus. Eve. Sarah, Rachel, Rahab, Hannah, Elizabeth and Mary are not only agents, but God’s models for us. This is God at work then and now.

We begin with two remarkable mothers - Eve, the mother of all the living; Sarah, the mother of God’s Covenant people. Our central question for discovery is, “How do Eve and Sarah prepare us for the birth of Jesus today, in our lives and in our world?”

EVE

In the beginning, God, who always is, decided to create …. What do you hear, see, feel, imagine as we read Genesis 1: 26-31? Note a second creation story in Genesis 2:1-9 & 21-22

Describe Eve - her appearance, what is Eve doing - what are her relationships with God, Adam, the Garden of Eden? - What are her abilities, responsibilities? What makes Eve happy? What is Eve figuring out? What is her reason for being?

Challenge - How was Eve challenged by the Serpent? Genesis 3:1-7 What was central to this challenge?

How did God respond to the Serpent and to Eve and Adam? How did God protect them and give them a promise.

Describe God’s relationship with Eve and Eve’s response? Eve and God acknowledge brokenness. The relationships are broken, but God’s love and promise bring healing and restoration.

Eve (and Adam) are expelled from the garden because it is a dangerous place. Where was God and what was God doing during Eve’s life in the Garden and after in the world outside the Garden?

God promised to be with Eve and to be faithfully blessing and protecting her. God gave Eve the promise and reality of a new life in this world and in God. What is Eve’s place in God’s Christmas story?

Now in this new real world outside the Garden, what is Eve’s reason for being? Describe her abilities, responsibilities, hopes, and relationships? What is Eve’s calling from God now?

In what ways is Eve the Mother of All? In what way is her failure to follow God in the Garden part of her being the Mother of All and living in God’s promises? In what ways does Eve show us the way to live into the promises and blessings of God, particularly the promises of Jesus, Savior, Healer, Light, Resurrection and Life, Shepherd?

What are Eve’s gifts to us today? What is God doing today?

SARAI/SARAH

Genesis 11:27-31 and 12:1-9

Sarai - Homeland was Iraq, childless and the difficulty of barrenness, life as a stranger, newcomer, and alien, wanderer, uprooted and reestablishing a home many times. Living in the blessing and promise of God to be the mother of a great people.

Where is Sarai now? - Genesis 11:31; 12:1-5; 8-10; 13:1, 12, 18. What are the challenges and blessings of this life of wandering and settling? Where is God in all of this moving around? What is God doing?

God’s blessings are for Sarai. Genesis 12:2, 7 & 8; 13:16; 15:1-6; 17:1-8, 15-17; 18:1-14 and 21:1-7

Describe Sarai - appearance, abilities, challenges, meaning of barrenness for her…What is Sarai doing? What is Sarah’s calling from God. How does she deal with challenges and live out this calling? What is Sarah’s reason for being? Describe Sarah’s relationships - with Abraham, wider family, neighbors, God.

How does Sarai live through human failures, most prominently for her, barrenness, even when God has promised a child? In what ways are the failures and challenges part of her being the Mother of God’s Covenant People? How does Sarai live with the seeming inaction and delays from God? Where was Sarah’s focus? What was the long view?

What is Sarah’s place in God’s Christmas story? What are the ways Sarah shows us and strengthens us for living in God’s promises, blessings and calling? What are Sarah’s gifts to us today?

How do we live through challenges and seeming inaction by God? Where is our focus? What is our place in God’s Christmas story? What is God doing now and how shall we respond?

During this coming week, look for God’s promises, blessings and calling for your life - in big ways and in small ways.