

A Deeper Magic

images of Advent in word and art



words by

Faith Richardson

art by

Vincent James Richardson

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A Deeper Magic: Images of Advent in Word and Art

by Faith Richardson

Illustrated by Vincent James Richardson

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fox@foxsongbooks.com



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Dedications

Faith's Dedication

For my beloved mentors and spiritual directors, especially,

Madeleine L'Engle and Luci Shaw
Father Basil and Father McCloud

Thank you for your gracious impact on my heart, mind, and spirit.

And with deep appreciation to Marlene Kremmer, a true friend of the arts, who encouraged me throughout the years to keep writing poetry.

Finally, this little book is dedicated to my mom, Olga Olivia Lapka, the first poet I ever met and the reason why I love words and Christmas.

Vincent's Dedication

I thank my mother, Emma, for teaching me to appreciate spontaneity;

I thank my sister, Claire, for her effusive appreciation of whatever is my art at the present moment;

And I thank my wife, Faith, for her inspiration and teaching me to walk in the dark by using the light from within.



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Preface



*M*y husband Vincent and I don't have many unique-to-us traditions for the Christmas season. But one that we have kept since we were married, is our custom of creating our own Christmas card. Sometime in November, I write my annual Christmas poem. Vincent creates an illustration from an image that begins to nudge his artistic brain sometime around Thanksgiving. Although we chat vaguely about what we think may be the theme that year, we really rely on serendipity to bring that poem and image into synergy.

Our birth families celebrated Christmas in two different areas of the Americas, and in quite different ways. Vincent grew up in Southern California and Mexico. Christmas cacti sprawled in his mom's garden along with poinsettias that stubbornly bloomed in August. His family Christmas tree was the same small 'fake' tree that was stored, still decorated, in a corner of the basement with a garbage bag over it. It took five minutes to set up Christmas in his household.

I grew up in British Columbia, Canada. Every December, my brother and I would bundle up, head out into the fields and chop down two scrub pine trees; one was the 'good' one for the living room, and the other one was the kids' tree for the basement rec room. Along with my brother, my sisters and I would cut and paste paper chains, cut out snowflakes, paint bells cut from egg crates and fashion a star for 'our' tree. My dad and mom would put the lights on the living room tree and we would haul down from the attic a battered black trunk full of cherished ornaments. We greeted each one like a long-lost friend and carefully placed it on the tree. My mom directed the placing of tinsel on the tree and then we stood back and turned off the room lights to get the magical effect of the decorated and lit up tree. All the while a fire crackled in the brick fireplace and the aroma of cabbage rolls filled the air.

Regardless of the different preparations, both our families had an uproariously fun and meaningful time as each gathered together extended family and close friends around the table. Both our families love music: my family sings, Vincent's family dances. When our families first met, the similarities easily outweighed the differences: both have strong family bonds and both love to laugh.

Vincent and I now live in the Pacific Northwest and currently share our lives with two Dalmatians, one Siamese cat, two horses, and a flock of aging chickens who will never see the inside of a soup pot. Living an outdoor life surrounded by animals is messy and real and fun. We also share a compulsion for authenticity of faith that does not run from the complex mess of life on this planet. Our 'real life' careers in nursing and teaching in various settings with at risk groups have not allowed for a complacent faith. Our art helps us to reflect unflinchingly on our inward condition, and our animals help us to laugh at ourselves when the 'serious writer/artist' thing has us looking ridiculous!

This little volume of Christmas word and art images that we've created over the years is our invitation to you and your family to join us in an Advent walk—as messy and real and fun as only you and your family can be. Thank you for coming along for the journey!

Blessings on your **Adventure**,

Faith & Vincent



Faith's Dove

"For we walk by faith, not by sight ..."

I've seen the circle of high arching wings,
Translucent in the dusk like dragonflies.
Eddies of energy, their tangible field formed
A grounding orbit around my soul.
Dynamically still as the eye of a hurricane,
Those stern portraits dropped diamond tears honest as grief,
Deep as joy, and strong as hope.

Words fall short, but this much is clear:
There was no heavenly chorus;
No 'Do not fear',
No startling vision of apocalypse,
No headline-screaming news the next day.
A retina-free vision,
Those angels manifested not by sight,
But by feather-soft faith gifted from the Dove.

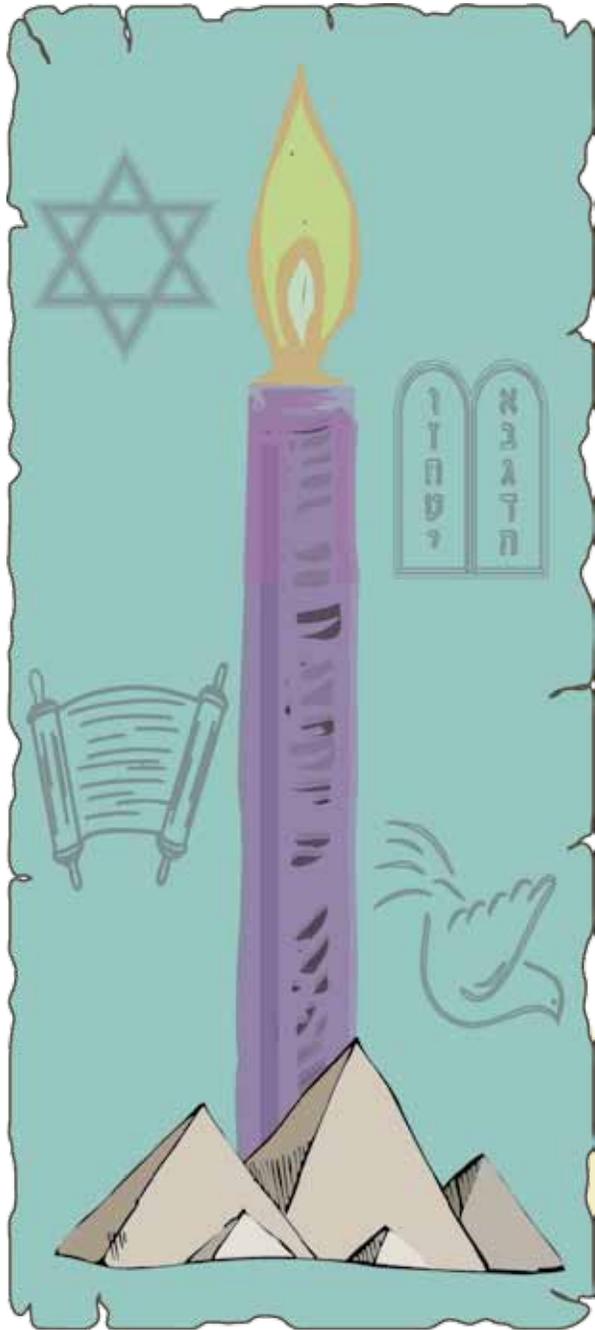
What a contrast.
The hills were alive with angels that first Advent night.
The air grew thick with wings and salutations,
Startling shepherds and shifting stars,
Lighting a path to the Holy One lying in a manger.

Was that the cosmic punch line?
A blatant chorus of angels rousing the countryside?
The planets blazing GPS directions across the sky?
A star shining a landing beacon on a runway for souls instead of jets?
A lighthouse in the desert sand?
A Baby instead of a warrior-king?

Sight becomes faith for that eternal split second earth-night.
The Dove stretched out faith-wings to saturate the globe to the stratosphere.
Faith fired neurons; light leaped and sound vibrated.

The angels sang.





The First Candle of Advent:
Prophets' Hope