



Advent Reflection for Friday, December 24
Alice Avouris

You can listen to the reading and reflection by clicking [here](#).

Isaiah 2:1-5

The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

I love imagining this scene, especially as it makes me think of the United Nations, and the inspiration and hopes that went with the birth of that organization. Peace is the theme now as we wait again for Christ's birth. Peace on earth, peace to all men of good will. Isaiah's prophecy is confident and strong, and dizzyingly hopeful.

In the world we live in, the 'real' world, peace does not seem to be achievable without weapons to back it up; an oxymoron if ever there was one, but one that we live with and swallow every day with our morning coffee. Yet Isaiah did foretell a civilization without weapons, by turning swords into plows and spears into gardening equipment. Can we imagine melting down the guns and bombs, maybe using what's left to help fight climate change? As way out as that sounds, I'll bet Isaiah's prophecy in his time was just as startling. Sadly, it was just as unrealistic. (But something inside me says "don't give up the dream!")

A 1950's baby, I was brought up in a New Jersey suburb, where the ideals of the U.N. were a big part of our elementary education. I remember making posters celebrating the U.N. There was definitely an effort to teach us about other cultures, and that we are all special, and all the different countries and customs are interesting and beautiful and important. The Disney song "It's a Small World," (first heard at the 1964 World's Fair), sums it up. Now, living in culturally diverse Brooklyn, it seems unnecessary: of course we are all brothers and sisters, with similar hopes, dreams, and values. I sometimes wonder, did we need to be taught to love our neighbor on the other side of the world? Why?

Tonight is Christmas Eve, and Isaiah's vision of peoples trudging up a mountain to end division and bring peace, resonates with the journey of the three kings (or three wise men) crossing the desert to Bethlehem. They went to seek a child whose birth promised – what? “Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” Peace.

We have faith that this dream will be fulfilled. Christ is the light that gives us hope and strength to climb that mountain and survive the desert, to speak for peace and harmony among all nations. With a prayer for peace in our hearts, in each step we take, we follow the path of the three wise men. With each breath, we harmonize with each other, and with the angels at Jesus's birth. We sing the carols with our strongest voice. Every word connects us, every breath is a gift, every moment together a blessing. So much light!

Alice Avouris lives with her husband around the corner from Church of the Holy Apostles. They retired and moved to Brooklyn when their granddaughter was born. She started attending in January 2019, after a fun time caroling in December. She loves jogging around the park and birdwatching there in the spring. Recently she started performing music by phone to hospice patients through the Visiting Nurse Association of NY.

