

# The GATHERING

*"Do not be afraid, for I am with you, I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west"*

—Isaiah 43:5-7

## Migration Patterns

"Do not be afraid, for I am with you... I will gather you." These words from Isaiah 43 echo through this season when the nights grow long and the distances between loved ones feel even longer. Advent reminds us that God's heart is turned toward the scattered—toward those who wait by the phone for news from a detained spouse, toward children who set a place at the table for a parent who will not come home, toward communities fractured by systems designed to divide rather than embrace.



The Advent story begins with Mary and Joseph, far from home, seeking refuge and safety as they awaited the birth of their child. Their journey mirrors the plight of countless families today, who face a life without the support and presence of loved ones due to conflict, economic necessity, or unjust policies. The trauma of such separation—whether in detention centers, across borders, or within communities—leaves deep psychological and emotional wounds that persist for years.

Monarch butterflies.  
Photo: Erika Lowe /  
Unsplash

This is a season of expectant waiting and hope for the coming of Christ, a time when our hearts yearn for the peace and wholeness that only God can bring. Like monarch butterflies scattered by unexpected winds, carried far beyond where they ever expected to be and yet, even in separation, having an internal compass with a pull toward home and toward one another.

Advent is that God-given instinct: a quiet, persistent orientation toward reunion, following a hope that refuses to disappear. Just as the butterflies navigate thousands of miles by a sun they cannot always see, we listen as Advent whispers that the winds will shift, even when they feel stronger than one's own wings. We wait for God to gather every heart – every fragile, beautiful wing, back into the warmth of community and belonging.

## Prayer

God, this season let us hold the pain of separated families in our prayers and in our advocacy, working as an Epiphany light to guide all toward hope and safety.

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