



December 18 / Advent 4

### Isaiah 7:10, 14

The LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, . . . “the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.”

### To ponder

I need a God who is with us always, everywhere, in the deepest depths as well as the highest heights.—Madeleine L’Engle,  
*Two-Part Invention*

### Show us a sign

Signs serve one of four purposes: *direction*, pointing to destinations; *safety*, teaching rules and warning of potential dangers;

*information*, posting instructions; and *identification*, labeling where things are.

Signs are meant for strangers. When we know a place, we stop looking at signs. They move into the background and we begin to navigate subconsciously. Nothing makes this phenomenon more obvious than when a new traffic sign is installed in the neighborhood. The tendency to not see what is now there means new traffic lights must blink for a period of days before beginning operation. New stop signs must be new labeled “new” so residents are jolted off autopilot and into a new reality.

In Ahaz’s day, things were changing. God promised a sign, a kind of new blinking traffic light for all to see. A young woman would have a child called “Immanuel,” marking a transformational shift. God, it seems, would be with the people forevermore. Can you imagine Ahaz’s response? He must have developed a heightened awareness as he began to anticipate the coming and nearness of God.

Can we anticipate God in the same way? Can we look for clues in the changes around us, both large and small? Perhaps God is making a way and creating a home in the things that seem unfamiliar to us. There are new signs all around us. They have the potential to change us, just as they must have changed Ahaz.

### Prayer

From your nearness, O God, show us a sign. Amen.