**Reflections on Lessons and Carols – The Mothers of Jesus**:

(The Rev. David Derrick - St. Philip, Roanoke)

**Tamar** – The temptation of the story of Tamar is to focus exclusively on the deceptiveness of Tamar and the references to intercourse. At the heart of the story, though, is Judah’s ongoing attention to his own self interests. Judah is the first to discount the lawful expectation of Tamar marrying his next oldest son. Judah eventually recognizes this oversight in verse 26 – “she is more righteous than I”

**Rahab** – Rahab is spared in the destruction of Jericho. Is it possible she was an accomplice to spies of Israel? No matter, Rahab and her whole family survive to serve the Lord.

**Ruth** – The complications of no heir, no social status, no future are very real and very frightening for both Ruth and her Mother-in-law Naomi. Their faithful care for one another is only eclipsed by the faithfulness of God as Boaz and Ruth marry and conceive a son. Most importantly, this birth is a testament to the power of the Lord.

**Bathsheba** – King David’s sin has consequences. Bathsheba in many ways is collateral damage. Yet God is merciful and even in grief a son, an heir is born in Solomon. Later in 1 Kings, as David is dying, Bathsheba helps to ensure that Solomon assumes the throne of King David.

**Elizabeth** – The gospel of Luke’s “orderly” account begins by identifying Elizabeth and her lineage tracing back to Aaron the brother of Moses! Her faith and obedience to God is lifted up and emphasized even as she is unable to have children prior to the arrival of the angel Gabriel. As Mary visits Elizabeth, Elizabeth is truly the first witness to the wonder of the coming of Christ.

**Mary** – As angels appear, as the brutality of the law is questioned, as social structures are challenged, as worldly orders are inverted, Mary over and over responds to God’s holy call with “Here am I”. We are privileged to know how the story unfolds – Mary lives faithfully always without that benefit.

**Mother of the Innocents** – Starting with the tears of Rachel for Israel in the book of Jeremiah and extending to Herod’s rage and vengeful murders in and around Bethlehem, mothers have long shed tears in the face of senseless violence and tyranny. Those tears are both a sign of deep love and deep pain. The church particularly celebrates both that love and pain on the Feast Day of the Holy Innocents on December 28th.

**Anna** – As Jesus is brought for presentation to the temple, the prophet Anna is the source of confirmation that Jesus indeed will be the one to redeem God’s people. She, alongside others in Luke’s gospel, places women as central in the story of God’s salvation.