



Into a world of darkness

God sent light

Into a world of despair

God sent hope

Into a world at war

God sent peace

Into a world gripped by fear

God sent love

May the light, hope, peace and love of Christ

Transform our world today

ADVENT REFLECTIONS

Travelling Light



In this year of pandemic, these reflections, based on the Daily Readings from the Revised Common Lectionary, are offered to accompany you through Advent. As we seek to proclaim the simplicity of God's gift to the world in a time when many are grieving or

fearful, when many are separated from loved ones, when the darkness seems all pervasive, we are called to be the light, to kindle the flame, igniting the divine spark in each until the light of Christ shines brightly.

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it. John 1:5



Liz Crumlish, St Oswald's Maybole
Advent 2020
www.liz-vicarofdibley.blogspot.com

*As church and civic leaders
produce their plans
for an observation of Christmas
that will lift the spirits
of groaning nations
infusing hope into despair
can they even come close
to God's plan?
Sending a needy, vulnerable child
to be born among us
Growing up under an oppressive regime
Challenging the authorities
both civic and religious
Calling for people to wake up
and care for one another and for Creation*

*Is there any plan
that can even hold a candle to
the plan of amazing love
gifted in simplicity
in the birth of a child
whose Advent
would change the world for all time?*

Isaiah 9:2

***The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light***

*We've dressed the story up
Made it cute
with shepherds and angels
and donkeys and camels
Wrapped it in tinsel just like our trees
And we've disguised the reality -
That it was into a world much like
today that God was born
Born not to a serene mother
and doting surrogate father
as painted on our Christmas cards
But into a family forced to travel
to be part of a census
Forced to comply with the whims
of a corrupt and harsh government
A family for whom there was no
room
and no handouts -
Like many of our benefits sanctioned
families today*

*We've cleaned up the harsh reality
of folk living in poverty
suffering from years of austerity
with leaders who were tyrants
who kept peace by violence
The story of Jesus birth
is not for churches
not for those who need things
to be ordered and tidy
It was into chaos
that Christ was born
And it is into chaos
that we welcome him today.
For we are just as desperate
for light
for love
for hope
and for peace
to be born
For all who mourn
For all who yearn to be comforted
For all who long for change
God is born today
into the mess of our lives
and our world*

*God is born
not to clean things up
But to sit with us in the guddle
and to bring us hope
that things will be different
Christmas is not for those
who have everything sorted
Whether we are ready or not
God is born for us.*



Prayer

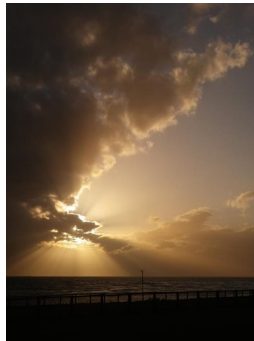
**As we travel through Advent may
we prepare to greet you in all the
mess of the world and of our lives
and come to know you, born for us.**

29th November — Advent Sunday

Isaiah 64:1

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down...

*I wonder...
Do we really want God
invading our spaces
showing up in our mess
stomping all over our carefully contrived routines
that serve us in our complacency?
Wouldn't we rather
that God stayed distant
Because then we can continue
to convince ourselves
that we are engaged in God's work
and that our paltry efforts
are what God requires.*



*And even now - as we prepare to welcome
Emmanuel - God with us
Let's be honest:
We'd far rather have the vulnerable baby version
than the full grown justice demanding God
who calls us from our cosy sentiment
to raw, awakened despair
at the plight of the world
and summons us to get messy
making a difference wherever and however we can.*

Prayer

God, you tore open the heavens to live among us. May we see you, in our everyday, calling us to wake up, beckoning us to inhabit those places where you hang out, bringing the tiniest flicker of light into the darkness of our world.

Monday 30th November (St Andrew's Day)

John 6:8-9

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?"



Andrew, known as "the brother of..."

Living in the shadow of his more famous sibling

Maybe because of that

he saw the potential in others

amplifying what they brought.

And, posing a question often asked:

What's the point?

How will such a small offering

make a difference?

He learned that God's scale of economy

is not like ours.

And often, when we hang back a bit,

stay close to people

instead of forging ahead

we are better able

to release the gifts of others

and witness the transformation of God.

Prayer

God your gifts are buried in plain sight throughout the communities we serve. May we recognise and release the potential of all that you entrust to your people, offering gifts that you will transform.

Tuesday 1st December

Micah 4:6-7

Restoration Promised after Exile

In that day, says the Lord,

I will assemble the lame

and gather those who have been driven away,

and those whom I have afflicted.

The lame I will make the remnant,

and those who were cast off, a strong nation;

***and the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion
now and forevermore.***

The remnants

Those who have been

Written off

Overlooked

Turned away

Deemed less than

The ones we used to walk past

on the street

Who, because of pandemic

are now hidden

Out of sight

Out of mind

Those are the ones

whom God chooses

to lead

and to build

the present

and the future



Prayer

God make us curious about those who have disappeared from view and interested enough to ensure that these, your chosen ones, know safety and security in this season and beyond.

Wednesday 2nd December

Micah 5:2

***But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.***

*Not in the metropolis
or in the proud places of empire
Not paraded in the corridors of power
or those places where deals are done
and fates are sealed
Not surrounded by security details
or viewed by the judgmental eyes
of the great and the good in the world
but hidden where none would think to look
Revealed to the simple
and to those whose wisdom lay
in reading the signs of the times
and placing their hope in the promises of God*



Prayer

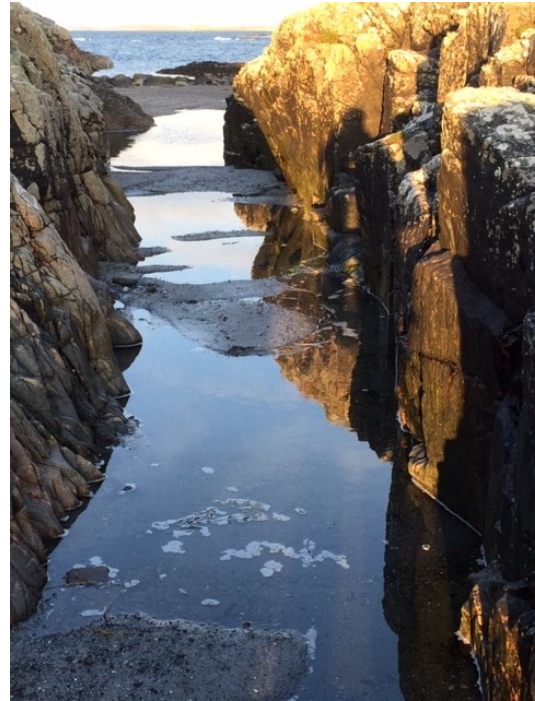
Lord, may we never be too proud to seek you in unexpected places and, finding you, may we humbly kneel and worship.

Thursday 3rd December

Psalms 85:8

***Let me hear what God the Lord will speak,
for he will speak peace to his people,
to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.***

*Oh how we long to hear your words of peace
sounding above the clamour for war.
How we long to discern your voice
amidst the cacophony of the world
How we long to know your truth
that penetrates all the fake news
Yet how will we hear O God
if we do not make time to listen
How will we find your light in this season
of darkness if we turn away from you
You, for whom there was no room,
may we make room for you today
May we turn to you in our hearts
and be attuned to the good news
that you proclaim
For all the world*



Prayer

**God make us attentive to your voice today and,
hearing your words of peace, may we share peace in
our neighbourhood.**

Friday 4th December

Jeremiah 1:7-8

***But the Lord said to me,
“Do not say, ‘I am only a boy’;
for you shall go to all to whom I send you,
and you shall speak whatever I command you.
Do not be afraid of them,
for I am with you to deliver you,
says the Lord.”***

*What are you playing at God?
Revealing your word
in unlikely people?
We have standards
And, time after time,
you mess with those.
Don't you know how long proper
theological training takes?
Don't you know about calling?
And sacrifice?
And solemnity?
And good order?
How dare you cut through all of
those with your maverick ways?
We have standards.*

*Yet you turn our square meals into
cartwheels.
You plough through our religious
speak with everyday,
no nonsense practicality.
You draw our eyes away
from the great and the good
from the upright (and uptight)
messengers of the gospel
You distract us with frivolity and joy
that comes across as much more
sense making in our everyday
than any three point
theological treatise.*



*God, no matter how
indignant we get.
No matter how incensed.
Keep on challenging us to look for
you in the ordinary things
and to hear your word
where we'd least expect it.
Keep on surprising us
O God of the everyday.*

Prayer

**Make your word known to us
today, O Lord, in the unexpected,
helping us to hear you clearly and
to do your will.**

Saturday 5th December

Ezekiel 36:26

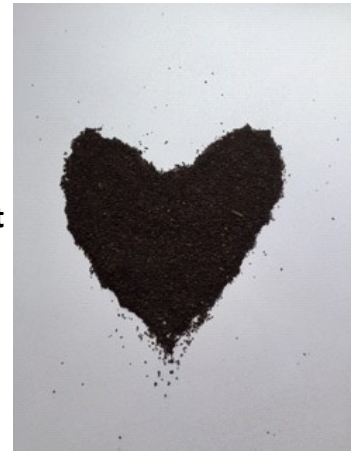
A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

*In these days of social distancing
when, in love, we give one another space
When donning a mask signals care
for friend and stranger
When staying home reduces pressure on our NHS
and other key services
May we find new ways to connect
New ways to reach out to one another
New ways to feed the hungry
to clothe the naked
to shelter the homeless
New ways to witness and to worship
that deepen our faith
and bear witness to the hope that is within us
and to the light that came into the world
that has never been extinguished*

*May we find new ways to be close
to the beating heart of God in the world
that compels us to care for all God's children*

Prayer

**Fill us, O God, with your
compassion, melt our cold
hearts with the warmth of
your love so that we might
love and serve you by
loving and serving one
another.**



6th December—2nd Sunday of Advent

Mark 1:2

***As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,
“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;***

*Messengers prepare the way
Scanning the horizon
Interpreting the signs
Warning
Announcing
Guiding
What are they announcing today?
Of what are they warning?
It is worth listening carefully
for that one voice
that pierces deeply
through all our defences
signalling for us
a way forward.
Not built on whim
or voyeurism
or fancy*

*but on a solid foundation
of grace that inhabits
and love that transforms
Pay attention
to the messenger
who is preparing the way
For then we might know
the path we must follow
And discover,
along the way
the gift of holy anger
that sustains and equips
for the new work
to which we are being called*

Prayer

We give thanks for those who forge a way for us to follow, a way that is built on hope and on peace and that leads to abundant life.



Monday 7th December

Acts 2:42

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

*When hugs became fist bumps (briefly)
When passing the peace became a nod in our places
When bread and wine became virtual
When Sunday worship
became web surfing in our jammies
it might have reasonably been assumed
that we'd find new ways to worship
new ways to be your people in the world
new ways to love and to serve
And yet, here we are
Trying to work out
How long?
How long
Until we can go back to normal?
How long
Until we can put all this behind us?
How long before we can sweep
disruption out of the door
and get things back to the way they were?*



*For years you have been calling us out of our buildings
out of our neatly ordered routines and rituals
back to you, God of simplicity.
A God who never minds a bit of chaos
Who finds a way through the mess
Who turns crisis on its head
So here we are, O God,
Without all our usual props
Without all the barriers that turn people away
and blind us to the needs of the world
Open our eyes O God to see you
And our ears to hear you calling us
To find new ways to love and serve you
as we love and serve your world.*

Prayer

**How long O Lord? God of this and every age, lead us
into new ways to break bread with all the world.**

Tuesday 8th December

Psalms 27:1

***The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?***

***The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?***

*When fear threatens to overwhelm
and anxiety steals any vestige of hope
May our flight take us
to the one who holds all life in love.
When the darkness closes in
and the shadows overwhelm
may we flee to the Lord of light
so that our spark may be rekindled.
And when all is crazy around and within
may we find rest in the God of all peace
who calmly commands the waves
and bids the storm cease
Guiding us ever onward to eternal light.*



Prayer

**Be our light and our salvation, O God, our
stronghold in every storm. Rekindle our flame
that we may become beacons of hope in the
world.**

Wednesday 9th December

Psalms 27:13-14

***I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.***

***Wait for the Lord;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the Lord!***

I believe

Just two words

I believe

Offered even tentatively

I believe

Two words are enough

To incite the beginnings

of courage

and of strength

I believe

Enough to enable us to see

the goodness of God all around

even through the clouds

of gloom and darkness



I believe

*Enough to encourage us
to continue to wait on the Lord*

I believe

*All we need to be involved
in bringing about God's will for good
in all the world*

I believe.

Prayer

**May courage and strength be ours to believe in and
to work for God's goodness for all God's people.**

Thursday 10th December

Psalms 126:5-6

***May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.***

***Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.***

*For all the large and small losses
We have endured
so that we might survive a pandemic
The rites of passage
denied and postponed
The opportunities
that will not return
and that cannot be recovered
The goodbyes that went unspoken
and words of love and gratitude
that remained locked inside
The rituals of mourning
that could not be undertaken
The tasks of celebrating life*



*that could not be performed
The tears shed that were shed in solitude
The comforting arms that were not around
The hands-on support of family and friends
that could not be offered or taken up.
We bring these seeds in mourning
offering them to God to be transformed
Into shouts of joy
And , in the waiting, we resolve
to be kind to one another*

Prayer

So many losses, O God, some known only to you. As we grieve, awaiting your transformation, may we be gentle with one another, channeling your love and compassion.

Friday 11th December

Habakkuk 3:2

The Prophet's Prayer

***O Lord, I have heard of your renown,
and I stand in awe, O Lord, of your work.
In our own time revive it;
in our own time make it known;
in wrath may you remember mercy.***

*What do we yearn to see?
What do we long to hear?
Who are the tyrants
and the scoffers
whom we allow
to get under our skin?
And where are those barren places
in our souls
that might be made fertile?
What might it be like
to imagine dreams fulfilled?
To know hope
that is grounded in possibility?*



*It was into darkness
that God was born
with the promise
of fertility
bringing a new way of seeing
heralding a different kind of hearing
delivering the oppressed
and the hopeless
and, in the morning hush
just before the light of dawn
breaking out the good news of peace.
Dare we exult in this God?*

Prayer

God, when all the odds seem stacked against us, show us how to rejoice in you the God of salvation.

Saturday 12th December

Habakkuk 3:17-18

***Trust and Joy in the Midst of Trouble
Though the fig tree does not blossom,
and no fruit is on the vines;
though the produce of the olive fails,
and the fields yield no food;
though the flock is cut off from the fold,
and there is no herd in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the Lord;
I will exult in the God of my salvation.***

*This is faith:
To look around
and see light in the darkness
To listen carefully
for sounds of laughter in the tears
To keep watch
for signs of hope amidst despair
To sit with grief
knowing resurrection is promised
For we know how the story ends*

So

Even when...

*We can't see the wood
for the trees
and the clouds obscure the sun
When we can't see God
through the mist of confusion
and we can't hear God
for the cacophony around
This we know
God is present
in the midst of deafening silence
God is present
and emerging from the darkness
God is present
when everything else conspires
to convince us otherwise
God is present
And that is enough.*



Prayer

In faith, O God, help us see beyond the visible to your invisible love in action.

13th December—3rd Sunday in Advent

Luke 1: 52-53

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

This is what hope looks like...

*Not squeezing our eyes tightly shut
and believing everything will work out
But persisting in the face
of all the signs to the contrary
that God's promise holds true
That a glimmer of light will persist
in the darkness
That the proud will be scattered
The lowly lifted up
The rich sent away empty handed
and the hungry will be fed
How?*

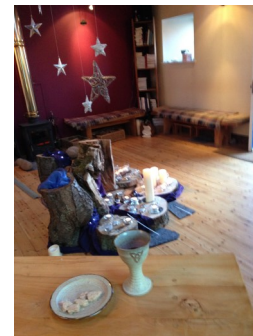
By the work of those whose hope is in God

*In God, who strengthens us
for the fight that lies before us
In God, who gives us courage
to never give up
but to keep on reaching for the impossible
In God, who lives among us
and walks beside us
as we work
to make a difference
where we can
however we can
because we can!*

*My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour*

Prayer

Lord may we sing a Magnificat as powerful as Mary's, believing in your promise of healing for all nations.



Monday 14th December

Ephesians 6:15

As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace.

*Proclaiming the gospel of peace
is not an easy call.
It's a call to get caught up with a baby
born into a messy world
A baby who grew up
and who called out
the incongruity
he saw around him
Who challenged
dearly held traditions
and pompous pronouncements
made without foundation
Who questioned religious certainties
and lifted up those excluded
by institutional posturing.
If only we would be offended today
Instead, we've side lined God among us
reduced the impact of the gospel*



*diluted the call to radical discipleship
conveniently forgotten
God's bias for the poor and the marginalised
We've tamed Jesus' call to action
and made following Christ safe.
And God continues
to be born among us
in vulnerability
trusting us to welcome
and be changed by
God with us
in our everyday*

Prayer

God make us willing to get caught up in the messiness of the good news of peace so that we can allow you to grow up in our midst.

Tuesday 15th December

Psalms 33:20-22

Our soul waits for the Lord;

he is our help and shield.

Our heart is glad in him,

because we trust in his holy name.

***Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us,
even as we hope in you.***

This I know:

*The steadfast love of the Lord
endures forever*

*For those laughing
and for those weeping*

For those who revel in a new challenge

And for those who need time to ponder

For those who are paralysed by fear

And for those whose creativity is stirred

For those who have been this way before

And for those who are charting new territory

For those who are comfortable in isolation

and for those who crave community



For those drinking deep from the well

And for those who have no thirst

For those who are lost in the darkness

And for those who are glimpsing the light

May we hold one another reverently

in that steadfast love of the Lord

that endures forever

Prayer

**God may we honour all the different ages and stages
of life and of faith as we seek to welcome you, the
steadfast one into our midst in all the uncertainty of
our world today.**

Wednesday 16th December

Psalms 147:3-6

***He heals the brokenhearted,
and binds up their wounds.
He determines the number of the stars;
he gives to all of them their names.
Great is our Lord, and abundant in power;
his understanding is beyond measure.
The Lord lifts up the downtrodden;
he casts the wicked to the ground.***

*When tears come unbidden,
rarely far away
What if,
rather than dismiss
or sweep away
or rush to be done with them
we saw them as the gentle nudge
of the Spirit at work
urging us to notice
inviting us to awareness
of the compassionate heart of God.*

*What if we saw them
not as a sign of weakness
but of the strength of the Lord
who draws us in
to love fiercely
all that God loves
and, with God's attention to detail,
to notice the sorrow
and to soar with the joy
and to live
precariously balanced
between the two
fully reliant on God
who knows our name
who meets us
and holds us there .*



Prayer

Lord, with your heart of compassion may we meet the world around attuned to sorrow and joy and responding with love and with care.

Thursday 17th December

Hebrews 1:1-3

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.

*Faith is often found
in the least expected places
In those who are mostly overlooked
or written off
Or those about whom
certain assumptions are made
Jesus hunted down
and called out
that air of entitlement
that was as rife then
as it is now*

*And he brought to the fore
those consigned to the margins
He held them up as examples
for others to follow
much to the chagrin
of the in crowd
who suddenly got to taste
what exclusion feels like.
And still Christ searches out
those who are lost
and those who are seeking
and, with a fanfare
ushers them in
to the Kingdom of God.*

Prayer

God may we always leave room for the unexpected messenger who brings your word today.



Friday 18th December

Psalms 89:14

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;

steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.

*Where, today, might we see
your steadfast love and faithfulness
and know that you are truly in our midst?
And where might we discern your calling to build on
your foundations of righteousness and justice
When our community gathers around
to support and cheer
and make room for one another
There is your presence
In mask wearing
In hand washing
In myriad small acts of kindness
There is your calling.
You go before us shining a light Into the places
and people that cry out for justice
calling us to be faithful
in following you there*

*You lead us in calling out
all that diminishes your children
all that discriminates on the basis
of race,
or creed
or colour
or gender identity
or sexual orientation
and all that ravages
and exploits creation
We follow your light
and build on your foundation,
faithful,
steadfast,
loving God.*

Prayer

**God may we follow the trail that you blaze going
before us into all the places, near and far, that yearn
for your righteousness and justice.**



Saturday 19th December

Psalms 80:4-7

***O Lord God of hosts,
how long will you be angry with your people's
prayers?***

***You have fed them with the bread of tears,
and given them tears to drink in full measure.
You make us the scorn of our neighbours;
our enemies laugh among themselves.
Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.***

*Still, O Lord God of hosts
you feed us the bread of tears
Your call today
is every bit as uncompromising
unpalatable
bad for digestion
as it has been
in every generation.
With your law of love
tattooed boldly on our hearts
you call us to vomit love*



*and belch compassion
to exude justice from every pore
And, when we are empty,
in need of sustenance,
to return to you, sustainer of our being
to humbly seek replenishment
so that your word becomes life
as we live in the light
of the God whose name is love
whose food is the bread of life
broken and shared
for all the world*

Prayer

**Lord as you gave yourself for us, may we give
ourselves for you. Fill us and then pour us out for the
life of the world.**

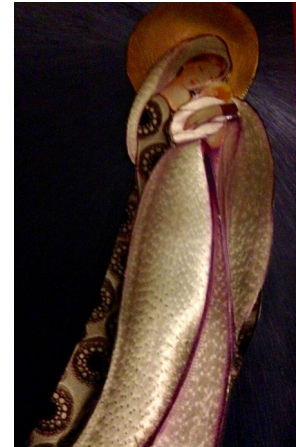
20th December—4th Sunday in Advent

Luke 1:38

Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

*In the midst of fear
Swamped by powerful emotions
Mary,
who became mother of God
took courage in both hands
and offered:
Here I am
Mary acceded
not out of meekness
or naïveté
but in boldness
and the fierceness of love
As we approach the Incarnation
in the midst of pandemic
with fear all around
and emotions overwhelming
how can we offer our: Here I am?*

*Offering
not by repressing our fear
or denying our emotion
but, in the midst of those
dredging up a vestige of faith
Faith that acknowledges
wherever we are
whoever we are
God’s invitation to us
is generous
and grace filled:
to be midwives of God
for this day
In the midst of the trauma
in which we live
may we muster
Courage
Boldness
Grace
and
Fierce love
offering to God:
Here I am.*



Prayer
**Here I am. Let it be to me
according to your word.**

Monday 21st December

Luke 1:46-48

Mary's Song of Praise

And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,

for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

*Lighting candles on this the longest night
thinking of loved ones*

who won't be with us this Christmas

Some have died

some are far away

some are lost

some are estranged

we only know they are not here

and we miss them.

Lighting candles

taking some time

to remember those we love.



Lighting candles

placing them on the cross

remembering Mary

whose heart was pierced with sorrow

even as she cradled her newborn son.

Lighting candles,

the flames flicker

their reflection

spreads light

through our darkness.

Lighting candles

to remember that we are not alone

and that even the longest night

holds the promise of dawn

Prayer

**Lord may each flickering light signal hope and bring
our loved ones close this day.**

Tuesday 22nd December

Luke 1:41

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit

*Two women
One older
One younger
Sharing the moment
and the miracle of life.
Bearing within them
joy and delight
dread and foreboding
the heights and depths
of mothering.*



*And sensing, in their joy and wonder
the portent of grief and despair
as the child each is carefully nurturing
escapes the confines of the protective womb
and grows to adulthood
released into a world
that is cruel and uncaring
harsh and unfeeling*

*to be used and abused
by those whose cause needs evil
for its fulfilment.*

*Two mothers
who stand with all mothers
who witness the wounding of their children
and who bear those wounds
deep in their souls.*

*Wounds that will never be healed
never be eased
because they strike at the heart
of the essence of love
they cut to the core
of what gives life
they leave a gaping hole
that will never be filled.*

*Two women
Sharing the joy of the moment
Anticipating the grief that is to come.*

Prayer

God we pray for all mothers, especially those who grieve for their children. Be their comfort today and always.

Wednesday 23rd December

Luke 1:57-58

The Birth of John the Baptist

Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. Her neighbours and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

*Mothering is not easy
And it's messy
Be it the physical exhaustion
of pushing a fragile life
into the world
through blood, sweat and tears
Or the emotional investment
in nurturing the wellbeing
of another
It is costly
and compelling
and often happens
unexpectedly
unpredictably
when we can do no other*

*but respond to
the call presented to us
The opportunity
to present good news
of great joy
even in dire straits
That is the miracle
of birthing God.
And it's a call
that rings out clearly
all over the world today
in the obvious
and in the hidden places
A call to all
and for all*

We are all meant to be mothers of God... for God is always needing to be born Meister Eckhart



*The world is filled
with angels
and shepherds
announcing good news
highlighting
every place that
God needs to be born today.*

Prayer

**God show us where and when and how
to birth your light in the darkness of
the world today.**

Thursday 24th December

Luke 2:1-5

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

*Origins matter
Who we are
Where we've come from
How we came to be
The stories that shaped us
The influences that formed us
The gifts we embraced
The challenges we faced
They matter
But they do not have the last word*



*We are not defined
by our place or our stories of origin
Each of us is called
to a new identity
as beloved of God
The one who knows from where we have come
Who calls us forth to all that we can be
And who loves us every step of the way*
Prayer
**Expand our vision O God... to know ourselves beloved
and called, with you, to change the world.**

Christmas Day

Luke 2:15-18

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

*Who are the angels today?
Those with a story to tell
A story of love and goodness
and glimpses of God at work.
A story that takes cognisance
of all the darkness
yet draws out the hope
that is buried within
And who are the shepherds?
The ones going about their business
who were singled out
to witness the miracle of Incarnation*



*Charged with spreading the good news
that God dwells among us
Angels still pierce our darkness
Still bring us stories of love in action
Still point us beyond the gloom
to see the light
While shepherds still carry on
tenderly caring
witnessing everyday miracles
as they forge on
with the work that is theirs to do
Treasuring, amidst their hard graft
the presence of God
hallowing their work
And these are the ones
to whom the good news is still proclaimed today*

Prayer

Lord, heighten our awareness of the angels and shepherds to whom you draw near today and from whom we can hear good news.

John 1:14

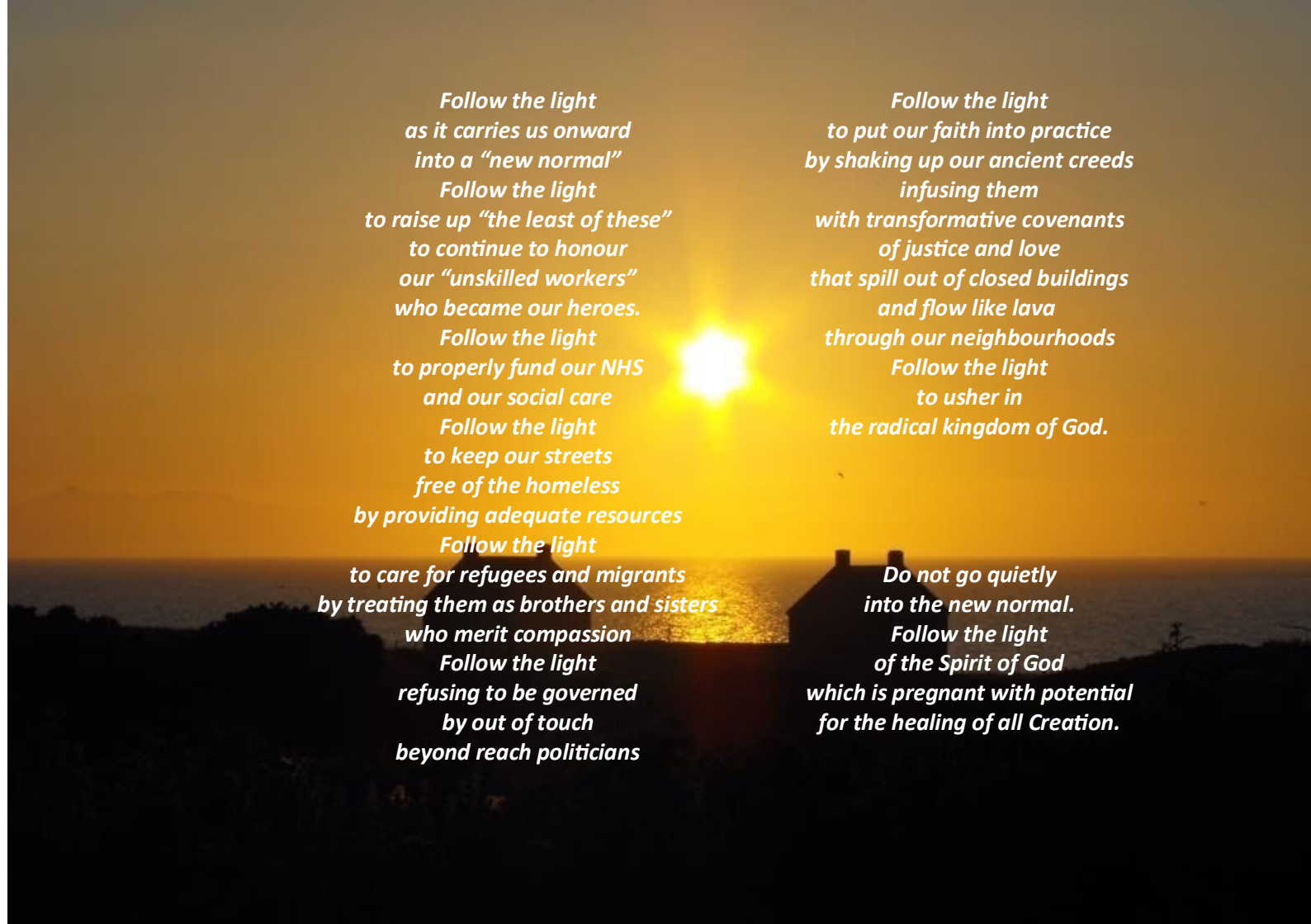
***And the Word became flesh and
lived among us, and we have seen
his glory, the glory as of a father's
only son, full of grace and truth.***

*The conductor raises his hands
and, for a moment,
all is silent
Until, lowering them,
the orchestra bursts into sound.
But, in that moment,
just there
is the pregnancy
of potential.
The score is
but black and white markings
on a page
until the conductor's baton
Signals the first cries of life
and the cacophony gushes forth.
Not as a chaotic
rushing mass
but as a carefully controlled*

*symphony of beauty
in which each
has a unique
and vital
part to play.
As the baton falls
there, in that moment,
weeks and months of rehearsal
come to fruition
Unfolding bit by bit.
And, suddenly,
it all makes sense
as parts
oft rehearsed separately
fit together
in a joyous harmony.
Angels
And shepherds*



*Magi
And Rulers
Mary
Joseph
Anna
Simeon
Elizabeth
Zechariah
All did their thing
All contributed uniquely
to the birthing
of a whole new melody
filled with grace notes
of love
and love notes
of Grace
as God
was birthed
in a song—Glory to God on high*

A sunset over the ocean with a silhouette of a house in the foreground. The sun is a bright, glowing orb in the center, casting a warm orange and yellow light across the sky and water. The silhouette of a house with two chimneys is visible in the lower right foreground. The text is arranged in two columns, with the left column being longer.

*Follow the light
as it carries us onward
into a "new normal"*
*Follow the light
to raise up "the least of these"*
*to continue to honour
our "unskilled workers"*
who became our heroes.
*Follow the light
to properly fund our NHS
and our social care*
*Follow the light
to keep our streets
free of the homeless
by providing adequate resources*
*Follow the light
to care for refugees and migrants
by treating them as brothers and sisters
who merit compassion*
*Follow the light
refusing to be governed
by out of touch
beyond reach politicians*

*Follow the light
to put our faith into practice
by shaking up our ancient creeds
infusing them
with transformative covenants
of justice and love
that spill out of closed buildings
and flow like lava
through our neighbourhoods*
*Follow the light
to usher in
the radical kingdom of God.*

*Do not go quietly
into the new normal.
Follow the light
of the Spirit of God
which is pregnant with potential
for the healing of all Creation.*