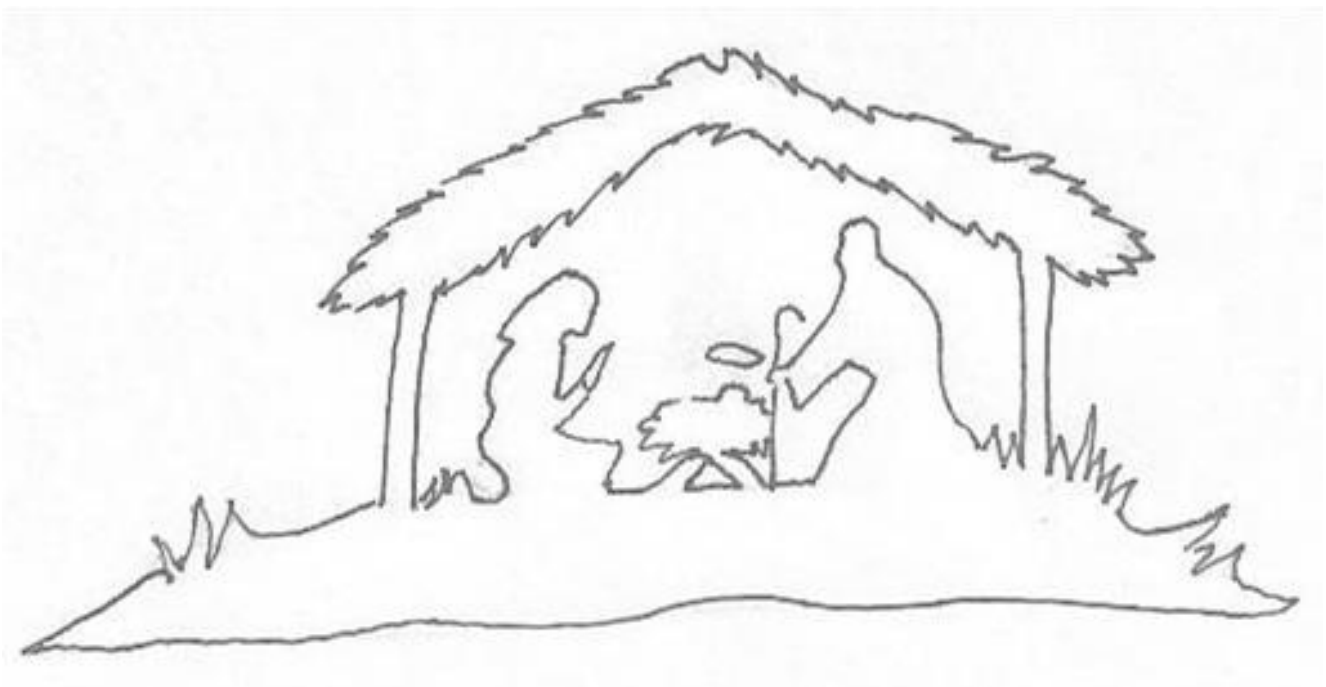


ADVENT AND BEYOND

REFLECTIONS FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER



Written by Eleanor Hamilton and Sarah Ross

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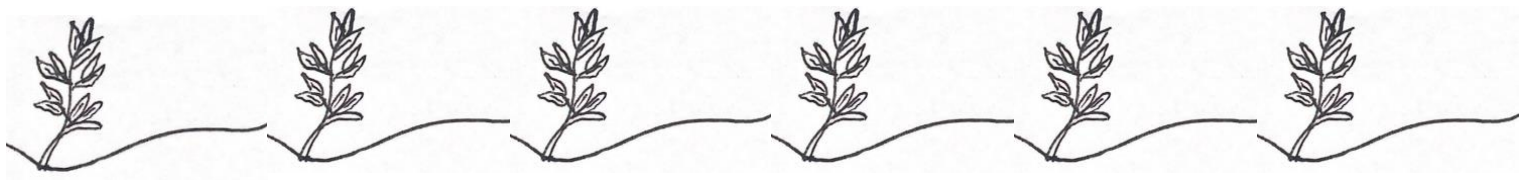
Online version available at:
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All bible texts are taken from the New International Version of the Bible.

Colouring page taken from <https://ministry-to-children.com/advent-coloring-book/>

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Hello and welcome!

As Advent begins, it's easy to get caught up in the rush, with little time left for the peace this season is meant to bring. So, we wanted to create something simple—a moment each day to pause, breathe, and find a bit of stillness. In a world that often feels anything but peaceful, these small breaks can make all the difference.

With Sarah joining me in sharing these reflections, we hope our different voices will bring you closer to the calm and warmth of Advent and Christmas. A daily moment to encourage, to challenge, to pray for others or just to step back from the overwhelming urge to make it all perfect.

Each week starts with poetry written by Eleanor around the theme of that Advent week - peace, hope, joy and love. Then each day there is a short scripture reading, a reflection based on the passage, and a prayer.

You will also find space to doodle or write notes, some colouring spaces, as well as a thread design across the top of the pages. This is your wee booklet so use it as you wish, letting out your creative side too. Thank you to Sheena Oo for all designs and editing work.

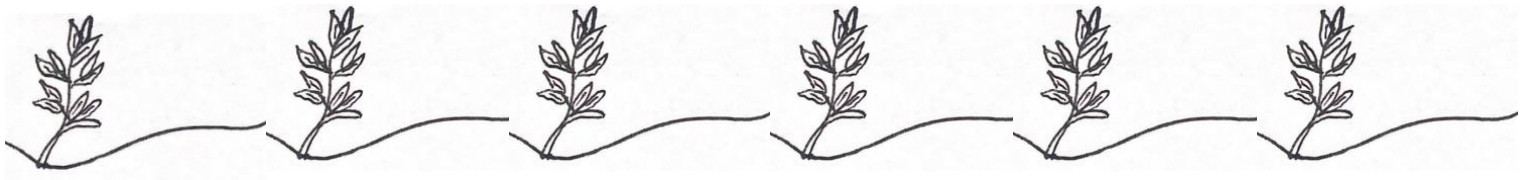
Advent is a season of preparation - for the coming of the Messiah 2000 years ago and looking forward to his return. We pray this booklet will form part of your preparations this year. No-one will judge you whether you manage a day now and again or faithfully each day. It is a gift not a chore, but we suggest keeping it handy. Put it next to the bed, the tea caddy or on the coffee table, and may it be a source of great joy, peace, love and hope.

Much love and blessings.

Happy Advent and Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Eleanor

Sarah



Peace of Advent - The Beginning

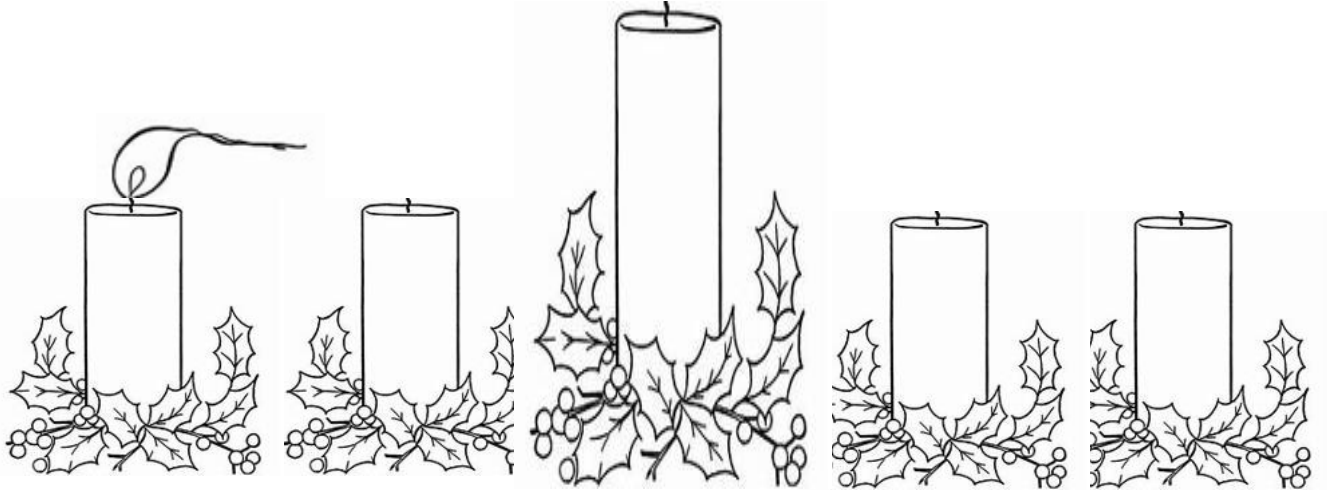
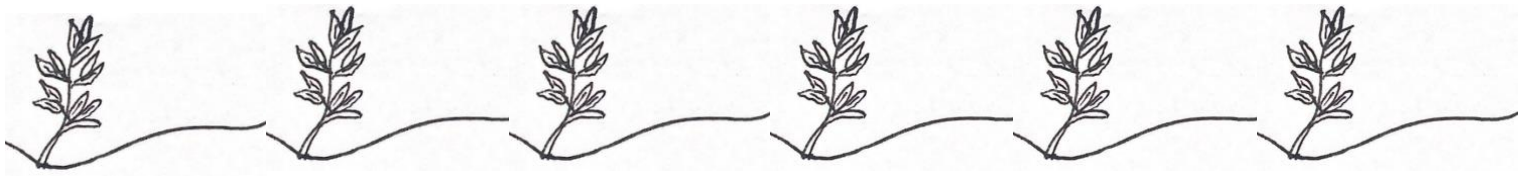
In the quiet dawn of Advent's early light,
We kindle the first flame, gentle and bright.
The season's promise begins to unfold,
With peace as a gift, both tender and bold.

In a world that's often restless and fast,
Peace is a sanctuary where calmness can last.
It's the hush of the evening, the still of the night,
A soothing balm in the midst of the fight.

As we step into this sacred time,
We seek peace in the rhythm and the rhyme.
It's found in the spaces where silence resides,
A soft embrace where our spirit abides.

In the rush of preparations, the clamour of cheer,
Peace is the quiet we hold dear.
It's a gentle reminder to slow our pace,
To find serenity in the holy space.

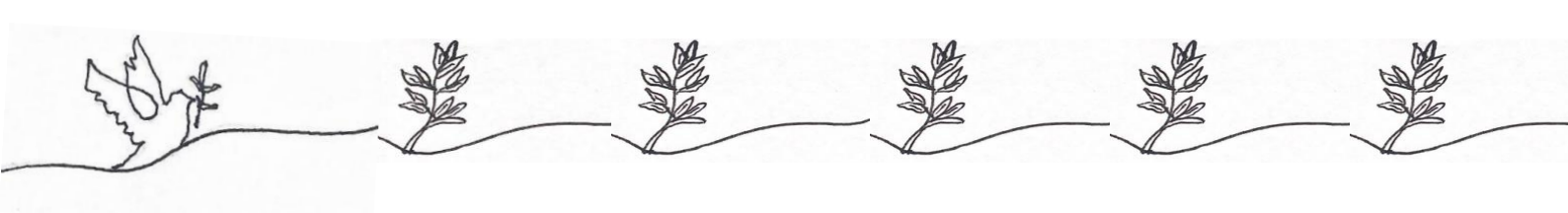
So as the first candle's glow starts to gleam,
Let peace infuse our Advent dream.
May its calmness guide us through each day,
And find a home where our hearts can stay.



THE PEACE OF ADVENT

WHO? WHAT? WHERE? WHY? WHEN?

A large empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for writing answers to the questions above.



1 December

John 14:26-27

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

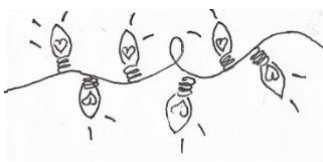
Reflection

As Advent 2024 dawns and begins again for us the Christian year, we pause and ponder how we are here again. We look back in amazement at a year so quickly gone, with high times and low times, with celebrations and sadness and we look forward caught between excitement and bewilderment. What might have been is past and what could be lies ahead. Yet, in the emotional turmoil of being here again there is also comfort and familiarity, a safe place to remember, a place of refuge, a place of peace.

We believe that Jesus came as one of us (looking back) but also that he will return in all his glory (looking forward). Therefore, no matter how many times we have been here before, God is with us then, now and forever.

Prayer

Advent has arrived again
the anticipation of what will be hangs heavy in the air
and from somewhere buried within us a deep sigh is released.
God of eternal promise,
we pause here on the first day of Advent,
a Sunday no less and just breathe.
Thank you for all that has been ours since we last welcomed the Christ-child.
For the joy and for the sorrow, for the achievements and for the lessons.
But most of all thank you that you have been present then and now,
and we look forward with peace,
trusting in the promise of peace that removes all fear. Amen.



2 December

Isaiah 26:3

You will keep in perfect peace, those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.

Reflection

The coloured lights of the neighbours twinkle merrily but I am not ready for this.

Christmas is screaming its presence from every corner, and I can't just face it. To top it off, it's Monday again and the false cheer of the office hides the stress of getting it all done before the big day.

Now this might not be you but for many, Christmas has become a burden rather than a gift, a chore rather than a joy. For others, Christmas can't come fast enough. They are rushing headlong into it, tripping over themselves to get everything in order, desperately trying to squeeze in as much as possible.

However you find this season, take this time to stop and reflect on what is the true purpose of Advent. It is a season of preparation, to prepare for the coming of our Lord. So, focus your mind on that for a moment, and let everything you feel you must do or must avoid slip away. As you focus on God's love, on God's faithfulness, on God's mercy, let your mind settle, and sense the peace of God steady you. Then as you arise from this time of prayer, set out resolute in his peace, trusting God with whatever comes your way today.

Prayer

God of all time,
who has seen generations come and go,
give me the space to be in this moment,
laying my burdens down
and focussing on your love, your faithfulness, your mercy,
allowing your Spirit to still the swirling thoughts.
And as the mind clears, the thoughts settle
and the day is ours to bless with kindness,
trusting in all that you have for me. Amen.



3 December

John 16:33

‘I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.’

Reflection

Where to look for peace in our time? The news media breaks our heart and wears down our compassion as troubles abound. People are persecuted for being different, for not fitting the stereotype, for not following the right religion or loving the ‘correct’ person. Others find the pinch of the debt collectors whilst yet more run from abuse, addiction or war, wondering if there will ever be peace in their home, community or land.

In a season where the messages of advertisers and retail speaks of peace found in purchases and painted pictures, we are reminded that this world is full of trouble. This is reality and God knows it. You are not alone. God knows you will have trouble, especially for believing in the Christ-child. But take heart! Jesus has overcome the world. God will have the last word. In that assurance you can find peace.

Prayer

Lord, you never promised us an easy time. If anything, you said believing in you, that following you could be more difficult, more troublesome. And though we might not face the persecution of the early Church, we know that we can feel unsettled and discontented when following you seems more effort than it is worth.

Remind us, that you said it was a trouble-filled world, but that you have already overcome all that stands between us and you. Keep our eyes fixed firmly on you, ready to face all that this world can throw at us. And yet Lord, be gracious to those who truly know trouble and bring them healing, hope, and peace through your people. Amen.



4 December

Psalm 46:10

He says, 'Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.'

Reflection

Who rules the world? The biggest nation? The one with the most nuclear weapons? The influencer with millions of followers? The top 1% of the wealthy who hold more than 95% of humanity. Maybe it is a football team? Maybe it feels like your boss or even just culture that seems to push you in a certain direction. Let me invite you to be still and sit with God, asking for nothing, just sitting. As you breathe in and out, allow his sovereignty to help you find perspective. Let the peace of God settle you.

God is God and there is no-one greater. Though we might find the strain of this world hard to bear at times it is a wonderful season to remember that God is God, and we are not. There is freedom in that especially when we remember that Advent is a season of love and hope and joy and peace, all gifts from God. Take time today to be still and to worship our Holy God, especially when you feel overwhelmed. I promise it will centre you again.

Prayer

Thank you, God, that you are God, and we are not. Forgive us when we think we must do everything, run everything, control everything. Forgive us when we try to be You. Help us to step down and step back and give you your place as God, exalted among the nations and in the earth. We are grateful that you are a God who loves us dearly, and that this season reminds us how much as we celebrate the gift of your child.

When the day gets busy and the demands come at us, let your Spirit whisper those words 'Be still and know that I am God' that we might know peace in the reassurance. So, be exalted by us and we await the time when you will be truly worshipped by all, for God you are our God. Amen.



5 December

Galatians 1:3–5

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Reflection

The letter writers of the New Testament often started with this kind of greeting and indeed many letters finish in a similar fashion. And at this time of year, we share greetings with one another either verbally with a ‘Merry Christmas’ or through sending cards, wanting loved ones and friends, distant as they might be, to know they are remembered and wished well for the season and even the year ahead.

Just as they did nothing to earn your blessing but simply be themselves, we don’t either with God. He wants to bless us with grace and peace because, well, he wants to. He doesn’t have to, he just does. Paul reminds us here that God the Father and Jesus both gave of themselves for us. The gift of Christmas that we share with others isn’t bought and wrapped. Rather it is experienced through grace and peace because of God’s love, seen in the life and death of Jesus. As we think of others and send messages of blessings, take a moment to receive God’s message to you today and step out blessed.

Prayer

God, full of blessings,
pour them out on us today,
that we might journey through this day with a lightness of spirit
that blesses others with grace and peace,
that we might bring light into the darkness,
peace into the busyness,
grace to the stressed and anxious,
trusting that with you all will be well. Amen.



6 December

Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Reflection

As we continue our preparations for Christmas we pause to wonder today about Mary and Joseph as their special day drew closer as well. Perhaps not with an advent calendar or apps telling us all how many days til Christmas. But they had to prepare for the arrival of a child, a baby, given to them by God. Yet, their world was not safe. They were under Roman rule and the call came to go and be registered. We dress up the nativity in the sentimental or comedic but actually it was traumatic and dramatic. A heavily pregnant woman, a gentle loving young man, with a long journey lay ahead. Nevertheless, time and time again we read that Mary treasured up everything in her heart.

As we find ourselves swept up in the chaos of finding that perfect Christmas, or perhaps, you want to avoid it all costs, this wee verse reminds us that at the heart of Christmas is hope. Mary hoped her child was the fulfilment of great prophecies. Joseph hoped they got to Bethlehem in one piece. Many a child hopes that Santa will be good to them. Yet the true source of hope is found in God. Do your hopes this season find their root in God or in culture, in truth or in myth? For if our hope is truly found in God, then we truly can know peace and comfort and live hope-filled lives.

Prayer

God of hope,
we thank you for the wonder of hope that gives us the willingness to live another day. The hope that one day all will be well. The hope that humanity will learn to live in peace. The hope that pushes and cajoles, inspires and conspires to bring about light, love and faith.

We pray for all those hoping that this Christmas will be different, be better, be happier, be healthier. Lord, we pray that the hopeful anticipation of Christmas would open hearts and minds to look for the God of hope, and bring about joy and peace as we trust you with our present and our future.

As we prepare for Christmas may our preparations tell your story and share the hope that kept Mary and Joseph faithful and fulfilled the promise that all would be welcomed into your kingdom. Amen.



7 December

Philippians 4:6-7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Reflection

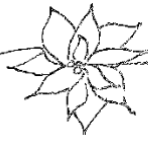
Who are you kidding? Don't be anxious about anything...have you any idea how much there is to do, to buy, to organise, to order and there are the family commitments, the office party and the endless Christmas cheer to find? 'Peace on earth and goodwill to all people' sang the angels. Oh, what I'd do for a little peace.

Right then. Take a moment. If possible, grab yourself a cuppa. Put out a cuppa for the Lord. Are you anxious about anything? Be honest. It might not be about Christmas. It could be about anything. Your health, someone else's health, the state of the world, the do list before you add Christmas into the mix. Now pray. No fancy words. No worrying about the right order of situations. Pray out loud if you can, write or draw, and off load onto God. This is between you and the Lord. There is no right or wrong. Just be real.

As you share with God, notice how you feel. As your words fall do you feel your spirit lighten within? The old saying 'a problem shared is a problem halved.' The anxieties might still be there but you are not carrying it alone. You remember as the anxiety fades that God was there with you last time and God is with you now. Thankful for his goodness, kindness, mercy, generosity that you know, gratitude puts anxiety to bed and peace ensues. Allow yourself to feel peace. Don't fight it. And as the peace descends, you will face the day, the challenges, the worries with more grace, clarity and contentedness.

Prayer

Thank you, most gracious God, that you want to share a cuppa with us and hear our anxieties. You don't call us to carry them alone but to share them with you. Yet so often we persist with it weighing ourselves down, as if it is a necessity of faith. We offer to you our anxieties for ourselves, for loved ones, for our economy, for our world, for those who know you not and for those we struggle to love. May we be encouraged in our memories of your faithfulness and step into the day filled with your peace, protected by your Spirit from all that would wear down our faith and break our spirit. Amen.

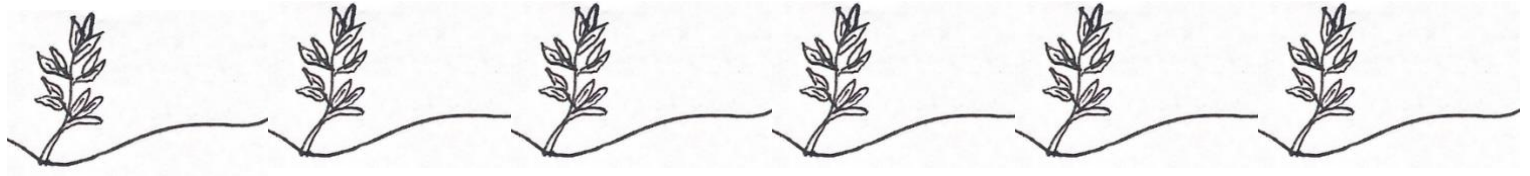


GOD IS GREATER

than any problem I have.

'Pray, write or draw, and off load onto God' in the space below'...





The Peace of Advent – Embracing Calm

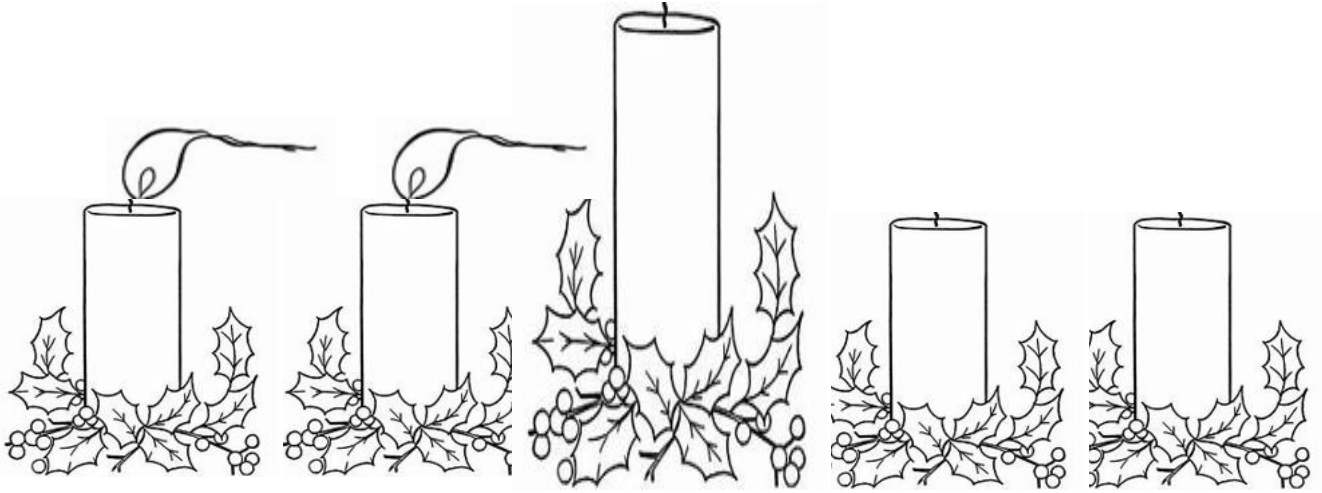
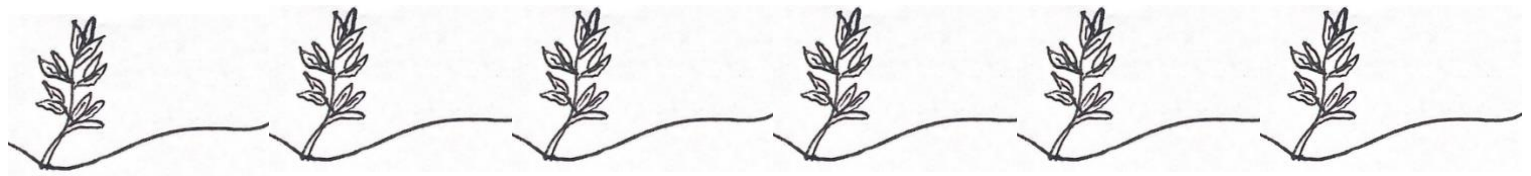
As Advent progresses and the days grow short,
We light the second candle, a symbol of support.
Peace is the promise that this season brings,
A soothing hymn that softly sings.

It's not just a moment but a state of grace,
A presence that fills every quiet place.
Peace is the calm amidst the seasonal whirl,
A gentle touch on the soul's inner pearl.

In our interactions and our daily lives,
Let peace be the guide as each day arrives.
It's in the patience we offer, the kindness we show,
A quiet strength that helps us to grow.

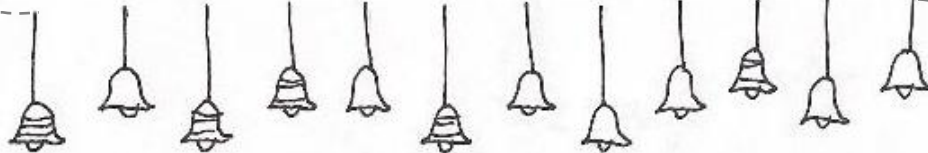
Amidst the flurry of festive cheer,
Peace is the pause that draws us near.
To ourselves, to each other, to the holy night,
Where peace wraps around us, soft and light.

Let the second candle's flame remind us to see,
The peace that we seek is within you and me.
In the spaces between, in the moments we find,
Peace is the treasure we hold in our mind.



THE PEACE OF ADVENT

WHO? WHAT? WHERE? WHY? WHEN?



8 December

Matthew 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

Reflection

In a world that's often divided and where peace feels out of reach, being a peacemaker can seem tough, but it's so important. It's not just about avoiding conflict, but about fixing what's broken, building bridges, and bringing a bit of harmony to places of tension.

Jesus shows us that peace isn't something passive. It takes love, courage, and effort—reflecting God's heart for His creation. As we get ready for the coming of Christ, we're invited to live out that peace, bringing a little bit of God's kingdom into our everyday lives.

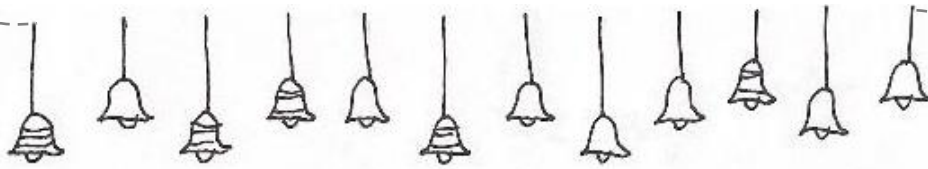
This Advent, let's commit to being peacemakers, spreading hope and reconciliation wherever we go, especially in a world that really needs it.

Prayer

Loving Father,

In this season of Advent, we come before You with hearts longing for Your peace. Help us to be true peacemakers, reflecting Your love in all we do. Grant us the courage to heal divisions, the wisdom to bring reconciliation, and the grace to build bridges of understanding.

As we await the coming of Your Son, the Prince of Peace, may we be instruments of Your peace in our homes, communities, and the world around us. Teach us to live as Your children, spreading the light of Your love wherever we go. Amen.



9 December

Romans 12:18

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Reflection

As we continue our Advent journey, today's reading challenges us to do our best to live in peace with everyone, as much as it's within our control.

Paul's words remind us that peace is both a gift and a responsibility. While we can't control the actions of others, we're called to do what we can to create peace in our own lives. It's a choice—approaching each situation with patience, understanding, and a heart ready to forgive.

During Advent, as we prepare for the coming of Christ, we're encouraged to look at our relationships and ask: where can we bring peace? Whether it's mending a broken relationship, letting go of an old hurt, or simply offering kindness, each act of peace brings us closer to God's heart. Let's do our best to live at peace with everyone, showing the love and grace that Christ brings to the world.

Prayer

Loving God,

In this holy season of Advent, we seek Your peace in our hearts and our world. Help us to live at peace with everyone, doing all that we can to reflect Your love and grace.

Grant us the strength to forgive, the patience to understand, and the wisdom to choose peace, even in difficult situations. As we prepare for the coming of Your Son, fill our hearts with Your peace, that we may be instruments of Your love in all that we do. Amen.



10 December

John 20:21

Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.'

Reflection

After Jesus' resurrection, He appears to His disciples, and this moment is packed with meaning as we reflect during Advent.

The peace Jesus brings isn't just comforting; it's a call to action with purpose. After completing His mission, He now hands that mission to us. Just as the Father sent Him to shine light in a dark world, we're invited to carry on that work.

Advent is a time for waiting and preparing, but it also reminds us of our calling. We're sent out to spread Christ's peace, shining His light in dark places and offering hope where it's needed. This peace isn't just passive; it encourages us to make a difference.

As we look forward to celebrating Christ's birth, let's be ready to share His peace in every part of our lives and with everyone we meet.

Prayer

Lord Jesus,

You have given us Your peace, a gift that both comforts and empowers us. As we reflect on Your words today, help us to embrace the mission You have set before us.

Strengthen our hearts to be Your messengers of peace in a world that longs for Your light. Guide our actions, fill our words with love, and help us to live out the purpose You have given us.

In this season of Advent, may we prepare not only for Your coming but also for the work You call us to do in Your name. Amen.



11 December

Isaiah 9: 6-7

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and for ever.

The zeal of the Lord Almighty
will accomplish this.

Reflection

Here we find one of the most cherished prophecies about the Messiah: 'For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.' These words, spoken long before Christ's birth, offer a beautiful vision of hope and peace that resonates during Advent.

The titles given to this child—Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace—highlight different aspects of His divine nature. This child isn't just born into humble beginnings; He embodies God's wisdom, power, love, and peace. His reign will be marked by justice and righteousness, forming a kingdom without end.

As we prepare to celebrate His birth, let's reflect on what these titles mean for us. How does knowing Jesus as our Wonderful Counsellor guide us in confusion? How does He become our Mighty God in weakness, our Everlasting Father in loss, and our Prince of Peace amidst chaos?

This prophecy reminds us that Jesus' arrival wasn't just a historical moment but the start of an ongoing reign of justice, righteousness, and peace—a kingdom we're invited to help build.



As Christmas approaches, let's take time to consider the greatness of His reign and the endless peace He offers, filling our hearts with hope for the fulfilment of God's promises.

Prayer

Almighty God,

As we reflect on the words of Isaiah, we thank You for the gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ. He is our Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

Help us to embrace these truths in our lives, trusting in Your wisdom, strength, and love. As we prepare to celebrate His birth, may we also commit to living as citizens of His kingdom, working for justice and righteousness in our world.

Fill our hearts with the hope and peace that only Christ can bring and let us carry that light into every corner of our lives. Amen.



Pray, write or draw where the Christ-light is shining today...



blessings

12 December

John 1:1–5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Reflection

In the opening verses of John's Gospel, we dive into the incredible mystery of the Incarnation: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' These words take us back to the dawn of creation, showing us that Christ, the Word, was with God from the start. Through Him, everything came to be; He's the source of life and the light for all humanity.

As we journey through Advent, we remember that Christ's arrival isn't just about a baby born in Bethlehem; it's about the eternal Word stepping into our world. Jesus, the Word made flesh, is the light shining in the darkness, and no darkness can ever overcome it. This light isn't just a faint glimmer of hope; it's a powerful force that breaks through even the deepest shadows. In a world that often feels dark and confusing, His light will never go out, and we are called to shine that light wherever we are.

We all face moments of darkness – times of uncertainty, fear, or sorrow. But in Christ, we find a light that can't be extinguished, a source of hope for everyone. His presence reassures us that no matter how daunting the darkness may seem, it will never overpower the light he brings.

As we prepare for Christmas, let's reflect on the Word becoming flesh. Jesus is our Creator and Redeemer, the source of life and light. May we open our hearts to His light and let it shine in our lives, pushing back the darkness around us.



Prayer

Eternal God, In the beginning, You spoke the Word, and through Him, all things were made. As we meditate on this profound mystery, we thank You for sending Jesus, the Word made flesh, to be the light in our darkness.

Help us to embrace His light in our lives, trusting in the life and hope He brings. As we draw closer to the celebration of His birth, may we allow His light to shine through us, reflecting His love to those around us.

In the face of any darkness, remind us that Your light has overcome the world. Fill us with the peace and joy that only Your presence can provide.
Amen.

'Pray, write or draw, and offload onto God' in the space below'...



grateful

13 December

Numbers 6: 24-26

““The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face towards you
and give you peace.””

Reflection

This is one of the most beautiful and enduring blessings in Scripture. These words, spoken by Moses to bless the people of Israel, offer a profound sense of God's love, protection, and peace.

This blessing takes on special significance as we journey through Advent, towards the birth of Christ. It reminds us that, during our preparation and anticipation, God’s desire is to bless us, to keep us safe, and to shine His light upon us. The image of God’s face shining on us is one of deep intimacy and favour, a reminder that we are seen and loved by our Creator.

In a season often filled with busyness and distractions, this blessing invites us to pause and receive God’s grace and peace. It encourages us to reflect on the many ways God has blessed us and to trust in His continued care and protection. The peace that God offers is not merely the absence of conflict but a deep, abiding sense of wholeness and well-being that comes from being in His presence.

As we prepare our hearts for the celebration of Christ’s birth, let’s receive this blessing with open hearts. May it be a reminder that God is with us, His face shining upon us, guiding us with His grace, and filling us with His peace.

Prayer

Gracious God,

We thank You for Your blessings, for the ways You keep us and shine Your face upon us. In this Advent season, help us to feel Your presence more deeply, to know Your grace, and to experience the peace that only You can give.

As we prepare for the coming of Your Son, may this blessing guide us and remind us of Your unwavering love. Turn Your face towards us, Lord, and fill our hearts with Your peace, that we may reflect Your light and love to those around us. Amen.



14 December

Colossians 1:19-20

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Reflection

In this season of Advent, it's a great time to reflect on what Christ's coming truly means. Jesus, who holds the fullness of God within Him, offers us a deep, cosmic peace—a peace that mends the divide between humanity and God, made possible through His sacrifice. This isn't just about stopping conflict; it's about restoring harmony and relationship.

Advent invites us to think about this amazing act of reconciliation. It shows us the depth of God's love and His desire to heal and restore. The peace that Christ offers is all-encompassing, touching every part of creation and bringing hope and renewal.

As we prepare to celebrate Christ's birth, let's open our hearts to this transformative peace. May it guide our actions and interactions, helping us to be instruments of reconciliation and bearers of the profound peace that only Christ can bring.

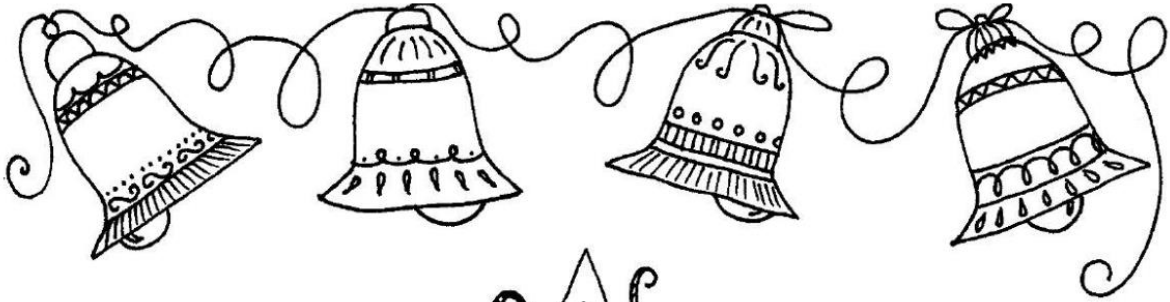
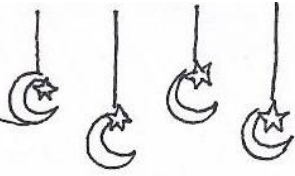
Prayer

Merciful God,

In this season of Advent, we thank You for the gift of Your Son, in whom all Your fullness dwells. We are deeply moved by the reconciliation He has brought through His sacrifice on the cross, making peace between heaven and earth.

Help us to embrace this peace in our lives, to be reconciled with You and with those around us. As we prepare for Christmas, may the peace of Christ dwell richly in our hearts, guiding our actions and inspiring us to be peacemakers in a world that so desperately needs Your healing touch.

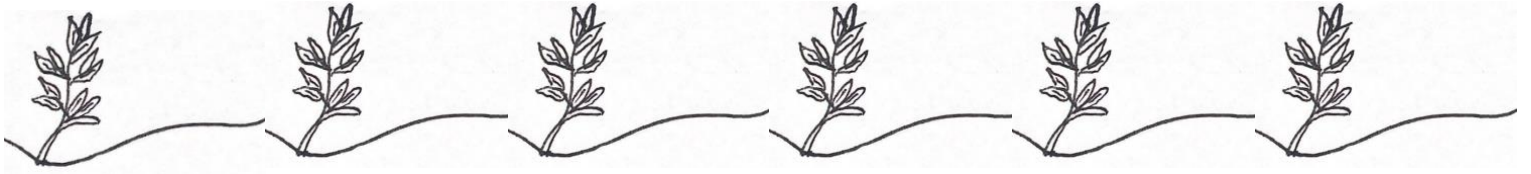
We pray that Your peace, which surpasses all understanding, would guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.



Arise, shine, for your light has come!

Mandy Groce '12

ministry-to-children.com



The Peace of Advent - Joyful Stillness

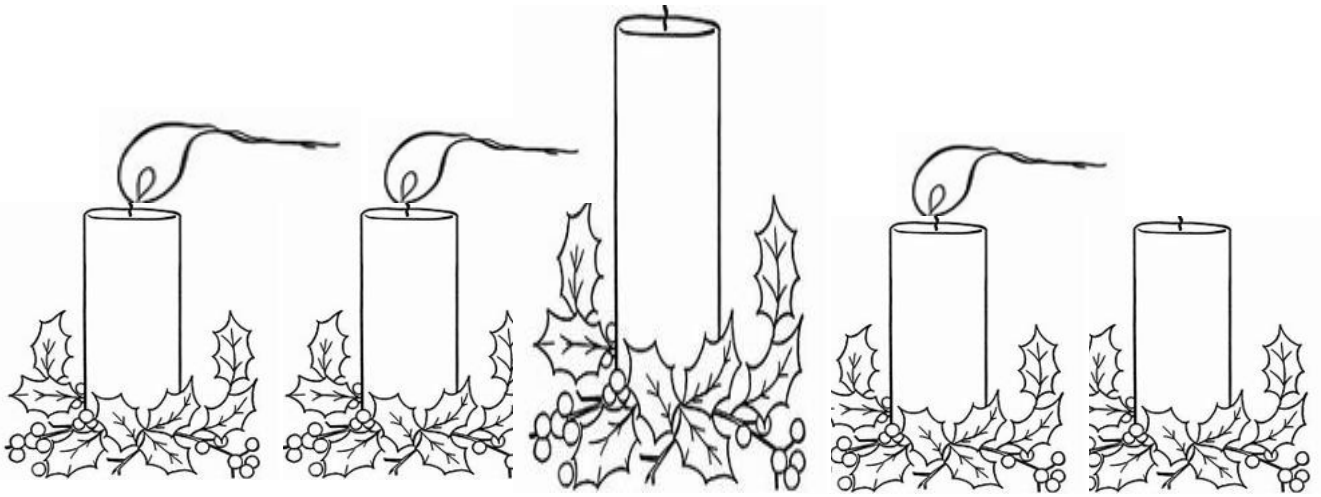
In the third week of Advent, as the light grows near,
We celebrate peace with a heart sincere.
It's the joy of the season, but also a rest,
A peaceful spirit that feels truly blessed.

Peace is not just the absence of noise,
But the presence of calm in our choices and poise.
It's the quiet joy that fills the night air,
A serenity found in the moments we share.

As the holiday lights sparkle, let peace also shine,
In the small acts of kindness, in the love we entwine.
It's in the laughter, the love, and the gentle embrace,
A peaceful rhythm that sets the pace.

With each joyful carol and every shared meal,
Peace is the warmth that we truly feel.
In the simple gifts and the tender embrace,
Peace is the gift that time cannot erase.

So as we light the third candle and bask in its glow,
Let peace fill our hearts and help us to grow.
May its presence guide us through the festive time,
A serene melody in a world so sublime.



THE PEACE OF ADVENT

WHO? WHAT? WHERE? WHY? WHEN?



15 December

Ephesians 2:14

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.

Reflection

Jesus Himself is our peace, having removed the barriers of division and hostility. This passage challenges us to see Christ as the ultimate unifier, breaking down the walls that separate us from one another and from God.

As we move through Advent, this truth invites us to reflect on how Jesus brings people together. His arrival on earth wasn't just about personal salvation but about creating a new community where former divisions are overcome. The peace He offers is both personal and communal, mending broken relationships and fostering unity.

Advent is a time to consider how we can live out this peace in our own lives. It's a chance to examine where we might be holding on to divisions or walls of hostility, and to ask how we can reflect Christ's reconciling love. By embracing His peace, we are called to be agents of unity and understanding in a fractured world.

May the peace of Christ inspire us to break down barriers and build connections, embodying His love and reconciliation in our daily lives.

Prayer

Lord Jesus,

You are our peace, having removed the barriers that divide us. As we reflect on this truth during Advent, help us to embody Your peace in our lives.

Guide us to overcome divisions and foster unity in our relationships and communities. May Your reconciling love inspire us to break down walls and build bridges, reflecting Your grace and harmony.

Fill our hearts with Your peace, and let it flow through us to those around us as we prepare for Your coming. Amen.



16 December

Hebrews 12:14

Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

Reflection

In this season of Advent, we're reminded of the call to pursue peace with everyone. The idea of striving for peace can feel a bit daunting, especially in our busy lives, but it's also a beautiful invitation. It encourages us to be intentional in how we relate to those around us, fostering harmony and understanding, even when it's challenging.

As we look around, it's hard to ignore that peace seems to be lacking in our world today. In a society where holiness often feels absent, our actions can make a real difference. As we prepare our hearts for the celebration of Christ's birth, let's reflect on how we can be peacemakers in our daily lives. This could be as simple as reaching out to someone we've had a disagreement with or offering a kind word to a stranger. Every small action adds up and helps create a ripple effect of peace.

Advent is not just about waiting; it's about actively engaging in the world around us. By seeking peace, we reflect the love of Christ, who came to bring reconciliation. Let's embrace this season as an opportunity to mend relationships and spread goodwill, reminding ourselves that peace is a journey, not a destination.

So, as we count down to Christmas, let's commit to pursuing peace, allowing it to shape our hearts and interactions. In a world that often feels chaotic, may our efforts to cultivate peace in our lives bring us closer to the heart of God and shine His light in a world that truly needs it.

Prayer

Dear God,

As we reflect on Your call to live in peace and pursue holiness, help us to embrace both in our lives. Guide us to be peacemakers in our relationships and to seek Your holiness in all we do.

Give us the strength to overcome conflicts and the grace to live according to Your will. As we prepare for Christmas, may Your peace and holiness be evident in our hearts and actions. Amen.



Draw, doodle or put together a list of 'peace opportunities' where you can recentre and help others recentre this Advent.





Blessings

17 December

Colossians 3:15

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Reflection

As we enter the Advent season, we are reminded to let Christ's peace govern our hearts. Amid holiday chaos, it's easy to get overwhelmed by shopping, decorating, and planning. Yet, we are called to pause and focus on embracing a deeper peace that comes from our relationship with Him.

Imagine choosing calm over chaos and gratitude over grumbling this Advent. Allowing Christ's peace to fill us helps us view the world through grace and compassion, making us more patient and loving toward others.

We are part of a larger community, and our actions impact those around us. As we cultivate inner peace, we contribute to a harmonious environment. This season, let's share that peace through kindness, listening, and support.

Each day, reflect on how you can invite Christ's peace into your heart and extend it to others, transforming Advent into a celebration of peace and gratitude.

Prayer

Lord Jesus,

Help us to let Your peace rule in our hearts, especially during this Advent season. Guide us to live in harmony with others and to let Your peace influence our actions and thoughts.

Grant us a spirit of thankfulness, enabling us to focus on the blessings You provide. As we prepare for Christmas, may Your peace and gratitude fill our hearts and reflect in our lives.

Amen.



18 December

Luke 1:30–31, 38

But the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.

Reflection

The angel reassures Mary and these words mark the beginning of an extraordinary promise and a pivotal moment in history.

Mary’s response to this divine message is remarkable. She embraces the angel’s announcement with faith and openness, despite the uncertainty and challenges it presents. Her willingness to accept this incredible call demonstrates profound trust and courage.

During Advent, Mary's story invites us to reflect on how we respond to God's call in our own lives. It’s a time to consider how we might embrace the unexpected and trust in God’s plans, even when they stretch us beyond our comfort zones. Her example encourages us to be open to God's work in our lives and to trust in His promises.

As we prepare for Christmas, let us seek to cultivate the same openness and faith that Mary exhibited. May we find courage in her example to embrace the calling God has for us and to trust in His good plans, however they might unfold.

Prayer

Gracious God,

As we reflect on the angel’s message to Mary, we thank You for the incredible promise of Jesus’ birth. Help us to embrace Your call in our lives with the same faith and openness that Mary showed.

Give us the courage to trust in Your plans, even when they are unexpected or challenging. As we prepare for Christmas, may we be open to Your work in our lives and follow Your guidance with trust and faith.

Amen.



19 December

Luke 1:39–45

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her!'

Reflection

In Luke 1:39–45, we read about Mary's visit to Elizabeth. As soon as Mary arrives and greets her, Elizabeth's baby leaps in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, praises Mary and the child she carries.

Elizabeth's reaction is full of joy and awe. Her words highlight Mary's faith and the extraordinary nature of the child she is expecting. This encounter is a powerful moment of recognition and celebration, where two women, both touched by God's promise, come together in shared joy and wonder.

This story is a beautiful reminder of the importance of support and affirmation in our faith journeys. Elizabeth's response encourages us to celebrate the work of God in others' lives and to recognise the significance of His promises being fulfilled.

As we approach Christmas, let's take time to reflect on the joy that comes from seeing God's promises come to life. It's also an opportunity to be like Elizabeth, acknowledging and supporting the faith and blessings in those around us, and rejoicing in the goodness of God.

Prayer

Lord,

As we reflect on Mary's visit to Elizabeth, we thank You for the joy and affirmation found in recognising Your promises. Help us to celebrate the ways You work in our lives and the lives of others.

Fill our hearts with the same joy and wonder that Elizabeth felt. May we support and encourage one another, rejoicing in Your goodness and faithfulness as we prepare for the coming of Your Son. Amen.



20 December

Luke 1:46–50

And Mary said:

‘My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me –
holy is his name.

His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.

Reflection

In Luke 1:46–50, Mary’s song of praise, the Magnificat, is a heartfelt declaration of joy and gratitude. She exclaims how her soul glorifies the Lord and her spirit rejoices in God her Saviour. Mary reflects on how God has taken note of her humble state and done great things for her, declaring that His mercy extends through all generations.

Mary’s response is a profound example of how to approach Advent with a spirit of thanksgiving. Her praise not only celebrates her personal experience but also acknowledges God’s broader, enduring impact on humanity. It’s a reminder that Advent is a time to recognise and honour God’s work in our lives, embracing the joy and wonder of His promises.

As we approach Christmas, Mary’s Magnificat encourages us to pause and reflect on the many ways God has blessed us. It invites us to lift our voices in gratitude and praise, acknowledging the mercy and greatness of God. This season offers a chance to deepen our appreciation for His work in our lives and to share that joy with others.

Prayer

Lord God, as we meditate on Mary’s song of praise, we are reminded of Your incredible mercy and the many blessings You have poured into our lives. Help us to follow Mary’s example by lifting our hearts in gratitude and praise.

Fill us with a spirit of joy as we prepare for Christmas, recognising and celebrating Your faithfulness and great deeds. May we carry the essence of Mary’s Magnificat into our daily lives, honouring You and spreading Your love and mercy to those around us. Amen.



21 December

Luke 1: 51-56

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.
He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
to Abraham and his descendants forever,
just as he promised our ancestors.”

Reflection

In Luke 1:51–56, Mary’s song continues with a celebration of God’s mighty deeds and His justice. She reflects on how God has scattered the proud, brought down rulers, lifted up the humble, filled the hungry, and shown mercy to Israel. Mary’s words highlight a profound truth: God’s actions often overturn human expectations and societal norms.

Mary’s reflection is a powerful reminder of God’s justice and mercy. His ways are not always aligned with worldly values; He upends the status quo to uplift the humble and provide for those in need. As we move through Advent, her song challenges us to consider how we align ourselves with God’s values of humility, justice, and compassion.

This season is a time to reflect on how we can participate in God’s work of justice and mercy in our own lives. It invites us to embrace humility, care for those who are less fortunate, and remember God’s promises. Mary’s song encourages us to see beyond worldly measures of success and to focus on the values of the Kingdom of God.

Prayer

Lord God, as we meditate on Mary’s words, we are reminded of Your mighty deeds and Your commitment to justice and mercy. Help us to align our hearts with Your values, embracing humility and compassion as we prepare for Christmas.

Guide us to act with justice and kindness, reflecting Your love and mercy in our interactions with others. May we remember Your promises and be inspired by Your example to serve and uplift those in need. Amen.



The Peace of Advent - The Awaited Gift

In the fourth week of Advent, as Christmas draws near,
We light the final candle with a heart sincere.
Peace is the gift we've been longing to see,
A promise fulfilled in humility.

The days are shorter, the nights are long,
Yet in this quiet, a gentle song.
It's the peace that comes with a humble birth,
The serene promise of a new birth on Earth.

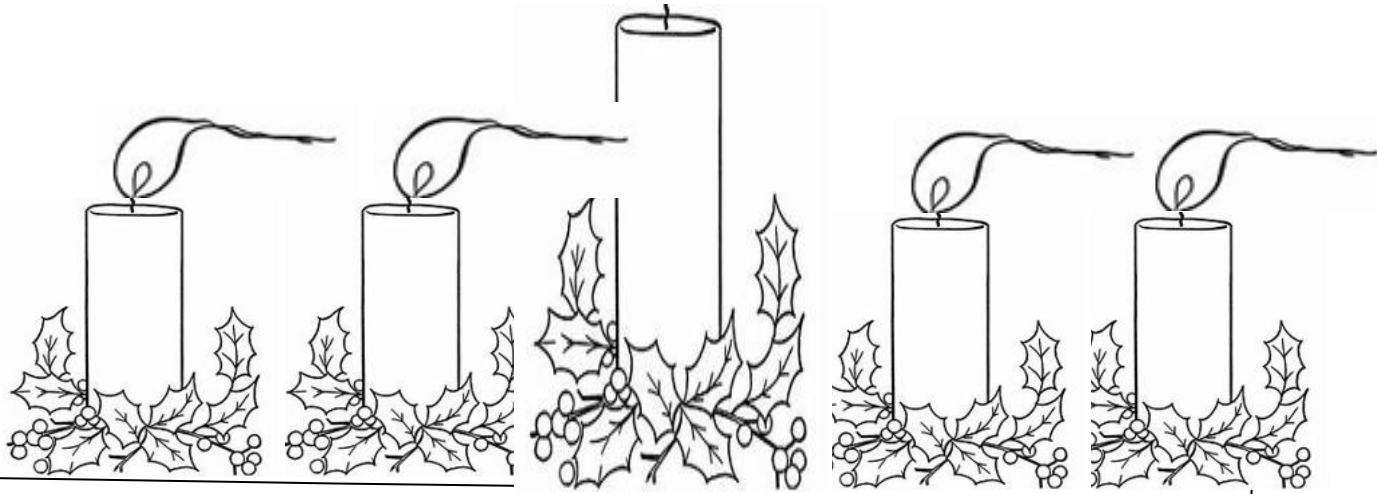
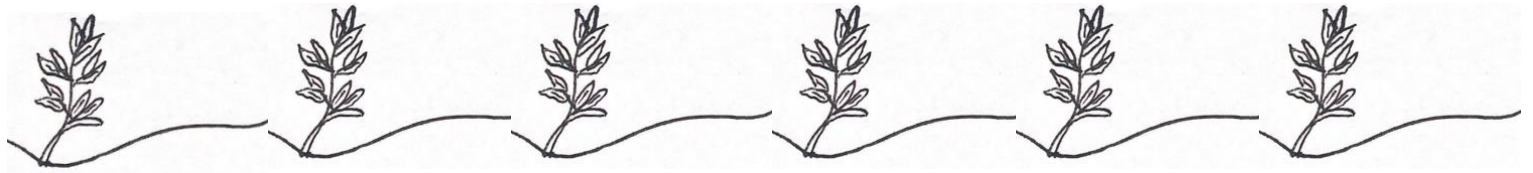
In the still of the night, where stars softly gleam,
We find peace in the heart of the holy dream.
It's the calm of the manger, the hush of the stall,
The whisper of love that envelopes us all.

As we reflect on the coming of Christ's light,
Peace is the beacon that pierces the night.
It's in the love that binds us, the grace that we share,
A tranquil assurance that banishes despair.

The fourth candle's glow, a symbol so bright,
Reminds us of peace in the midst of the night.
It's a gentle embrace that soothes and restores,
A sacred calm that forever endures.

Let this final week be a time of deep rest,
To hold peace in our hearts and feel truly blessed.
In the preparations, in the moments we find,
Peace is the gift we leave behind.

As Christmas approaches with its tender cheer,
May the peace we've sought be ever near.
In every gesture, in every embrace,
Let peace be the essence of this holy place.



THE PEACE OF ADVENT

WHO? WHAT? WHERE? WHY? WHEN?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for writing or drawing. It occupies the lower two-thirds of the page.



22 December

Luke 1: 23-25

When Zechariah's time of service was completed, he returned home. After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. 'The Lord has done this for me,' she said. 'In these days he has shown his favour and taken away my disgrace among the people.'

Reflection

Excitement levels are building, the schools have finished up and many have stopped for the holidays. The hope and joy of the season helps bring light to the dark days. But there are those people worrying, full of anxiety about promises made, bills to be paid and wondering if miracles still happen. Elizabeth had long since given up ever being pregnant. And to be childless then was seen as a punishment, that somehow God was displeased with you. So, Elizabeth was on top of the world if a little concerned about pregnancy at her stage of life.

Elizabeth and Zechariah were a God-fearing couple. They were not being punished. Their child would one day baptise the Son of God – Jesus. It was just a question of timing. Remaining faithful can be hard when there seems to be no way out. But God has you and to God, you are important and unique. It might just be you can't see quite yet what he is up to or the timing is off.

Prayer

Loving God, sometimes we just can't see the wood for the trees. We are so busy trying to meet the expectations of others that we don't truly know what you are up to in our lives.

May we be open to your call on our lives and look for where you are working with us and through us. Whether it is a miracle we need or some reassurance or guidance, we pray that we would be open to all you have for us. Indeed, let us expect you to work in our lives. In your name we pray. Amen.



23 December

Luke 2: 1-3

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

Reflection

Now what Lord? I mean I have been working my socks off to get ready for Christmas, and now there is as much to do as there ever was. All I wanted was a perfect Christmas. Is that too much to ask? Many of us hanker after that perfect Christmas and as it nears, we worry about the details. Poor Mary would have been getting ready for the birth of her child, her birthing plan in place, the bed made, everything prepared and then news comes that they must take a road trip, with a donkey... Off you trot Mary!

Sometimes, no matter how much we plan, or prepare, a curve ball comes our way. But Jesus was born, Christmas happened...(spoiler alert). How ready you are, in a way, is irrelevant! Take a moment and ask yourself – what is Christmas? A celebration of faith or a festival that makes you broke, bad tempered and stressed! What about those who find their Christmas truly overturn by war, by poverty, by natural disasters that took their homes and livelihoods? It can be helpful to look out and see the troubles other face. Or to know that you are seen by others who want to help and support. Even the mother of Jesus knew hardship and great inconvenience. You are not alone.

Prayer

Loving God, if our Christmas plans seem to be thwarted by situations outside our control, help us pause and reflect. Remind us that Christmas is a celebration of faith, celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. Remind us it is good news for all. Forgive us when we make it all about ourselves rather than you.

We pray for all those preparing for Christmas with a sense of loneliness missing loved ones. Or for those praying for the Christ-light to shine brightly because the darkness is overwhelming. For those who dislike Christmas because it has broken their heart too many times and for those wishing they could afford the Christmas their children deserve but can't receive. In all our planning, may we look out from our colour co-ordinated decorations and find the heart to help those crushed by the political and economic rulers. Open our hearts to look for the real Christmas celebration. Amen.



24 December

Luke 2:4–5

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

Reflection

Tick, tick, tick - have we got everything? The car is packed, and the children are squeezed in amongst presents as the journey begins heading off to see family, perhaps spending Christmas with the in-laws. Mild panic sets in after half hour on the road about what has been forgotten, and somewhere around an hour the children are fractious, the traffic slow and the twinkle of the Christmas lights in homes are admired with a tinge of envy that says we aren't there yet. I wonder if any of that sounds familiar...well think of poor Mary and Joseph, wondering if the world is really against them as the call comes that they must travel to Bethlehem to prove their existence for their cruel overseer, whilst the baby's arrival comes ever closer.

As your final preparations are undertaken, pause and ask yourself – if all the Christmas paraphernalia was taken away, would it still be Christmas? Interesting how that first Christmas couldn't have been simpler. As excitement builds and you perhaps gather in worship with others, take a moment today to pray for the people you love. The ones you will spend Christmas with, the ones a bit further afield and for your colleagues, or church, or club. May the true meaning Christmas be found within in each heart. Pray over them and let them be gifts to you and to each other. As Mary loved Joseph and Joseph loved Mary, share your love for others in prayer today.

Prayer

Oh Lord, it is so exciting. One more sleep until we celebrate the birth of Jesus again. We know that there are children too excited to sleep, parents too stressed. Yet for a moment, we stop doing and pray for our loved ones. We pray for those we will share the festivities with and for those further afield.

We pray for those really needing to meet God with us. We pray for our other people, those we work or study with, people we care for or socialise with, or those we gather with in worship. May something make them pause and experience the touch of your Spirit, and sense the love shared in prayer. Amen.



25 December

Luke 2:6–7

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Reflection

The birth of Jesus in a captive country, away from home, in a borrowed space, a shelter for animals, should really strike a chord, surrounded as many of us are by great opulence. And to be fair, we don't need a lot to actually have a lot. I don't begrudge the festivities but I feel challenged every year by the fact my place is like a 5* hotel compared to the birth place. The gift of Jesus, God with us, should be beyond comprehension. Why would God risk his child in human form, to two teenagers, during a census in a country ruled by others? I think we celebrate because the gift is beyond comprehension, we don't deserve him and yet we receive him. And we know what comes next...

As you celebrate today, I hope you have an amazing day and don't compare it to anyone else's. Simply rejoice in the fact that Christ is born in Bethlehem for you and for me.

Merry Christmas!

Prayer

God almighty,

it is peace on earth and goodwill to all people.

And honestly, our minds boggle at the thought that you would send your Son to be a tiny, wriggly baby, lying in a manger and surrounded not by comfort but hay. Thank you for the birth of your Son. Thank you for this great gift of love freely given.

As we celebrate by sharing gifts of love, we pause here to show our gratitude to you. Thank you for this love that came down at Christmas. Thank you for the faith of Mary and Joseph. Thank you that I am welcome too at the celebrations. Amen.



26 December

Luke 2: 8-12

And there were shepherds living out in the fields near by, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.'

Reflection

Lying on the sofa, in comfy clothes that don't squeeze, you stare at the wrapping paper scrunched in the corner; scattered presents that haven't found a home yet; the glass that got missed during the clear up sitting proudly on the shelf; and the chocolate tin that is more wrappers than sweets, resting within easy reach. Suddenly the doorbell goes and panic stations hit. Who on earth visits unannounced on Boxing Day?

If that sounds at all familiar and yes, maybe just me, think of those poor shepherds doing their nightly job of watching sheep for minimal wage, unappreciated as well, meeting angels in all their glory. They were terrified. Like the doorbell going off unexpectedly the amount of thoughts that went through their heads. Though I might have died of embarrassment, they might have thought they would die. The angel of the Lord told them the best news that the Messiah had been born. God the Father was literally shouting the good news from the heavens. And he told people like you and me, ordinary folks, arguably some of the poorest folks going. Personally, I love that fact! God wants you to know Christ is born, the Messiah has come.

Prayer

Awesome God, as this day dawns, perhaps with a sigh of relief that Christmas has passed, help us to rejoice in the Good News that the Messiah has come. May we be like the angels, spreading this message of peace, joy, love and hope with all whom we meet. Let us resist the urge to rush away from the manger, for here there is an opportunity to reflect now the busyness has passed. As we go visiting, as we eat leftovers, as we play with the toys, compete round the board games, spending time with family and friends, may we not lose sight of you. Indeed, may great joy be evident in all our actions, no matter how many times we have gathered at the tree. In your name we pray. Amen.



'Write and/or draw your Christmas blessings and share your gratitude with God'



27 December

Luke 2: 13-15

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,
'Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.'

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.'

Reflection

Can you imagine the conversations in that field after the angels have left? 'What just happened? Was it real? What will the neighbours say? Why us? That singing was amazing. What about the baby?' I imagine a cacophony of voices and then the leader calls order and says 'Let's go and see'.

For many, Christmas has got lost in a medley of traditions and practices, yet it is still a season that turns many people to consider the faith, if only through carols or attending a service. As we head towards a new year, pray for those who followed the footsteps of the shepherds in these past days. Those people who went to see this thing that has happened for whatever reason...and pray that they met the Christ-child and heard the angels with the saints sing 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests'.

Prayer

God of the lost, lonely and left-out we thank you that you shared the message of hope, of life, of love with people who others would have dismissed as unworthy. This gives us great encouragement for often we feel unworthy of your love and mercy. Yet you welcome each one of us into your celebrations, into your holy space, into your family as your children. We might not understand. We might have to go look for ourselves. But we pray we would be open to your Spirit.

We pray for those people who gazed into the manger this Christmas, perhaps from afar reluctant to look too hard, or those who looked hopefully wondering if there was a place for them. We pray for the light that shines for them, pulling them, encouraging them to look and see. No matter who we are, where we have been or what we have done we are encouraged by You to look and see. Give us the courage to accept the invitation. Amen.

28 December

Luke 2: 16-20

So, they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Reflection

As you look back over these past few days, ask yourself what has truly amazed you and what will you treasure in your heart. Often, we are so busy meeting the needs and expectations of others, or dare I say, become blasé about it all that we do need to stop and remember. So, what amazed you and what have you treasured from this season?

The shepherds told everyone what they had seen and heard and everyone who heard it was amazed. Does the fact that the Son of God once looked just like you (ignoring gender) absolutely amaze you still? A baby, a child, a young adult, holding down a job, having friends and following his heart (call). The people prayed for God to show up and God did. That is amazing news.

Mary gave birth to the Son of God. She knew who he was, and that he was unique. Hers, and yet not hers. She always knew that he would be different, that his arms would embrace the world, not just her. And that the time she had with him was precious. What treasures of faith have you stored up?

Prayer

Sometimes, loving God, we get so used to Christmas we lose the amazement and forget to treasure up precious moments.

Help us today to reflect on the message the shepherds gave, that a child is born in Bethlehem who is the Saviour of the world. As we picture the Son of God as a baby in the arms of his mother Mary, may we treasure the beauty and the love of that moment. We are amazed that you would become God with us, Immanuel in such a magnificent way. And we rejoice in your great goodness. We thank you for the moments that amazed us anew. We thank you for the moments that we treasure. Thank you for the strength, the courage, the peace these treasures give us.

Help us to share the message that others will be amazed and more will treasure the good news. Amen.



End of the Year: Reflecting on Peace

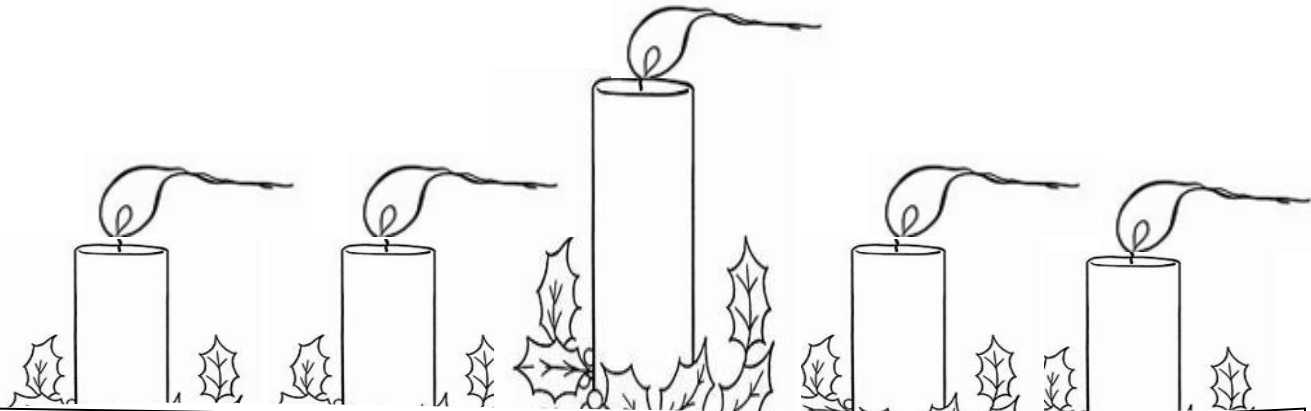
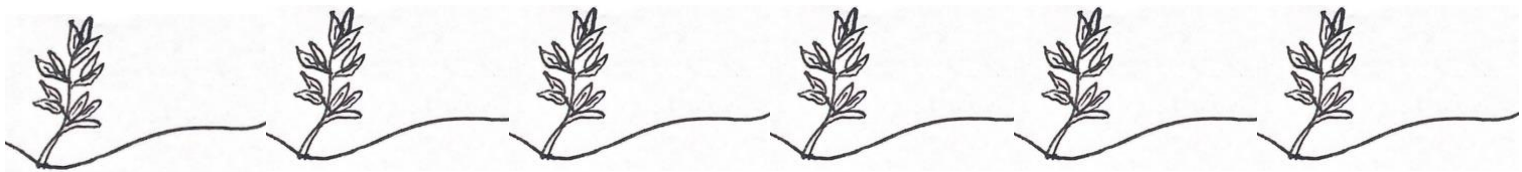
As the old year bows to the new year's start,
We pause to reflect on peace within our heart.
The journey through Advent, the candles that burned,
Have shown us the peace that we've earnestly yearned.

Peace is the thread that ties the year's end,
A quiet moment to reflect and mend.
It's the gentle reminder of all that's been,
And the hopeful embrace of what's to begin.

In the still of the night, as the year turns around,
Peace is the echo, the soft, steady sound.
It's the promise of renewal, the calm of the new,
A reminder of all that we've been through.

With gratitude for the past and hope for the days,
Peace is the light that softly stays.
As we step into the new year's embrace,
May peace be our guide, our calm, our grace.

In every moment, both quiet and loud,
Let peace be our anchor amidst the crowd.
As we turn the page and welcome the new,
May peace dwell within us and guide us through.



THE PEACE OF ADVENT

WHO? WHAT? WHERE? WHY? WHEN?

29 December

Luke 2:22-24

When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord'), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: 'a pair of doves or two young pigeons.'

Reflection

Life goes on, doesn't it? After all the excitement of travelling to Bethlehem, the birth of a baby, visit from the shepherds there was still the requirements of the law to be met. Yet, I bet the visit to the Temple was looked forward to. It meant freedom for Mary that she was 'clean' after the mess of giving birth. It meant their child would be officially recognised by their people. Like coming home with a birth certificate, Jesus was officially welcomed into the world. I wonder if Mary felt the moment most because here was the Son of God being presented to his holy Father...quite a thought.

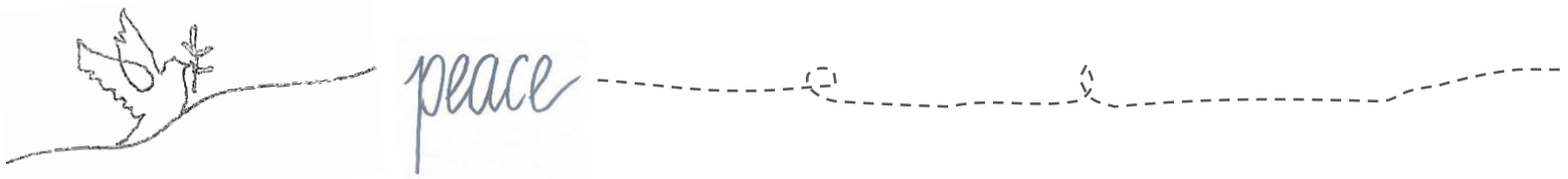
As the excitement of Christmas passes and the reality of another year draws closer what are you looking forward to? What would you like to bring before your holy Father or to present to the Lord? Maybe you want to present yourself before the Lord and seek his blessing.

Perhaps, you might just want to take time to thank God for sending us his Son Jesus to be one of us and welcome him. After all, Jesus came right into the midst of our messy lives and 'cleans' them!

Prayer

Loving Father God,
we thank you for your Son Jesus, and the faith of Mary and Joseph.
They must have felt the uniqueness of the moment of presenting your Son back to you.
We are just in awe of their faithfulness.

Thank you that you are in our midst, loving us through the mundane and the exciting. We offer you, in prayer, those things that feel messy and ask that through your Spirit we would be restored and set free. We present ourselves before you and ask that you meet us in the moment that we might sense your holy presence and your love. Bless all those who have met you this Christmas season for the first time or in a season of renewal. In your name we pray. Amen.



30 December

Luke 2:25-32

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

'Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.'

Reflection

Waiting and waiting, hoping and praying. It takes great patience, endless hope and deep wells of faith sometimes to wait for the Lord. Not something we like doing in this day and age. Everything is at our fingertips, and we seem to be able to control everything except time and weather. But sometimes, we must wait upon the Lord. What are you waiting for? Are you good at waiting? Could you have waited into your old age for the Lord to keep his promise and still be able to rejoice without being petty? I suspect in our current culture, patience is a rare gift. But we all know good things come to those who wait!

Simeon received the Messiah in his arms and was swept up in the wonder of God's faithfulness. As you look back over life, where have you seen God's faithfulness in your life or the life of others? Ask God to help you be patient and to trust in his timing, especially when it is a long time coming. May his light shine for you today.

Prayer

Lord God, I don't like waiting. It feels like time wasted, frustrating and annoying. Yet in the waiting there are opportunities to grow, to learn, and to develop deep seated trust in You. Help me to have faith like Simeon, believing that you are always true to your Word even when I can't see it now.

And as he believed he would see the Messiah, we look forward to your return, recognising that it may not happen in our lifetime. May we be patient in the meantime and continue to worship and work in your Kingdom. Amen.



31 December

Luke 2:33-35

The child's father and mother marvelled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

Reflection

What a word to end the year on yet it is a timely reminder that the Christmas message of a child born in Bethlehem is much more powerful than our sentimental celebrations might suggest. Whatever this coming year brings for you, for your church, for your community, know that God is ahead of you and with you. Simeon spoke prophetic words to Mary that we know came true. Jesus was just a baby and yet on that fragile form lay the hope of the world, even if the world couldn't accept it. Simeon knows it. Yet he recognises the love Mary has for Jesus and sees her as a person, as mother and acknowledges that what happens to the Messiah will hurt her. A prophetic word from God acknowledges the reality of the suffering that lies ahead. We are not used by God but loved by God. Just as he saw Mary, God sees you.

God knows what lies ahead and we are never promised it will be easy. But we know that Jesus is more than a baby in a manger. He is the Messiah, and his life, death and resurrection has changed the future for us all. Please go into the New Year knowing that God loves you, he knows you and he will never leave you nor abandon you. Whatever the skirmishes or the challenges that lie ahead, God has already won.

Prayer

You see me, Lord.
You know me, Lord.
From the hairs on my head (or not),
to the fears and hopes hidden in my soul,
nothing is a secret from you.
And you love me as I am.
Whether I am like
Simeon full of faith and hope, or
Mary willing and courageous, or
Joseph quiet and faithful, or

just me up and down,
inside out and turned around
you speak to my spirit
words of hope, of encouragement,
giving me my place, my identity.
Give the grace of Mary to store up all the treasures of this past year
and help me carry only them into the New Year
that I might face all this world throws at me
with faith, with hope and with love. Amen.

'Share your hopes and concerns for 2025 with God. Ask God what plans He has for you...'



Happy New Year

Thank you for journeying through December with us. May your 2025 be blessed richly with God's hope, peace, joy and love. Love Sarah, Eleanor, and Sheena.

Origami Dove of Peace



1 - Use a square of paper.



2 - Fold bottom point to top point.



3 - Fold right point to left point.



4 - Unfold previous step.



5 - Fold bottom left & right points diagonally to top point.



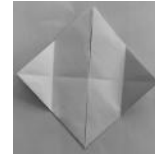
6 - Fold top point of both flaps down to bottom point.



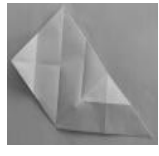
7 - Unfold previous step.



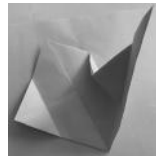
8 - Fold left & right points to meet central vertical line.



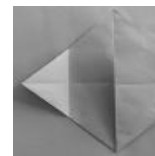
9 - Unfold previous step.



10 - Unfold right section.



11 - Using creases, bring right side in.



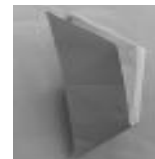
12 - Fold right back up. Squash folds underneath.



13 - Repeat steps 10-12 on the left side.



14. Flip paper over from left to right.



15 - Fold left edge to right edge. Ensure open end at top.



16 - Bring top layer diagonally down to left.



17 - Flip paper over. Bring top layer diagonally down to right.



18 - Fold flap diagonally over and down to left.



19 - Bring other flap down from behind to match.



20 - Fold top point diagonally over to left. Use creases as guide.



21 - Open up to this position.



22 - Bring two sides inwards.



23 - Flatten again and rotate.



24 - Fold bottom left diagonally to right.



25 - Bring flap on left up also to match.



26 - Rotate paper. Inside reverse fold head.



27 - Flatten head. Dove is complete.