

The Journey Community Advent Prayer Booklet



...and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means,
"God is with us."

Matthew 1: 23

This year Advent begins on Sunday 29th November and these prayers have been created to help us on our Advent Journey in preparation for Christmas. Within this booklet you will find words and images that invite us to go beyond a sentimental or materialistic understanding of Christmas, to a deeper appreciation of the message of how *God chose to become like us and live amongst us through Jesus his son.*

In amidst all the hype and the profit and in the midst of a global pandemic, Jesus' message of love has never been more urgent and it lies at the heart of Christmas.

Morning Prayer

We begin our day alone,
Honouring this life, with all its potentials and possibilities.

Pause

We begin our day with trust,
Knowing we are created for loving encounter.

Pause

We begin our day with hope,
Knowing the day can hold love, kindness, forgiveness and justice.

A reading followed by a time of silence

We recall our day yesterday,

Pause

May we learn, may we love, may we live on.

Pause

We make room for the unexpected,
May we find wisdom and life in the unexpected.

Pause

Help us to embrace possibility,
respond graciously to disappointment
and hold tenderly those we encounter.
Help us to be fully present to this day.

A short silence

We pray for all those whose day will be difficult.

We name them in our hearts or out loud

May we support, may we listen, may we change.

We resolve to live life in its fullness:

We will welcome the people who'll be a part of this day.

We will greet God in ordinary and hidden moments.

We will live the life we are living.

A short silence

May we find the wisdom we need,

God be with us.

May we hear the needs of those we meet,

God be with us.

May we love the life that we are given,

God be with us.

The Prayer for Courage

Courage comes from the heart
and we are always welcomed by God,
The heart of all being.

We bear witness to our faith,
knowing that we are called
to live lives of courage,
love and reconciliation
in the ordinary and extraordinary
moments of each day.
We bear witness, too, to our failures
and our complicity in the fractures of our world.
May we be courageous today.
May we learn today.
May we love today.
Amen.

Prayer of Reconciliation*

Lord, let our memory provide no shelter, for grievance against each other.
Lord, let our heart provide no harbour for hatred of each other.
Lord, let our tongue be no accomplice in the judgement of each other.
Lord, hear our prayer.
Amen

**from The Northumbria Community*

The Ohana Prayer*

Loving God,
transform all blocks and obstacles around us
and inside our minds, bodies and hearts,
into pathways for your Grace ~
that we may be channels for your love and peace in this place.
Embolden us with courage
to dare to dream of a better life
in which we ALL may flourish.
Break our hearts open
so no one gets forgotten
or left behind.
In Jesus' name.
Amen.

* from The Journey Community

Midday Prayer

We break from the doings of our day
And make space to notice you.
You are always with us
In surprising guises.

Jesus of the flesh, we meet you in
Worker and friend,
Stranger and pilgrim,
The needy and the needed,
The questioner and the questioned.

So when we meet you,
May we deepen life, deepen justice
And deepen joy.
And when you meet us, help us approach our activities
With presence and power,
With love and humility,
With courage and dignity. Amen.

Evening Prayer

At the end of this day let us remember,
God is here. God is there. God is with us. And within us,
And in the spaces between us.

We reflect on the day and ponder these questions:~

Have you been a good memory in anyone's life today?

When did you feel best able to give and receive love today?

What caused in you an increase in love, peace or joy?

What do you feel most grateful for this day?

Let us relish these moments and give thanks to God.

When might you have strayed from God's love this day?

When might you have judged yourself or others harshly?

Without any harsh judgement, just ponder these questions and in the light of God's love – what would you like to say to God about this? Remembering that God never refuses forgiveness, and only longs to love, heal and set us free...

What might God want to say to you?

Just listen and be aware of God's love for you.

For the love shared

we are grateful

For provision and nurture

we are grateful

For kindness given

we are grateful.

For the sorrow we've caused,

we pray for forgiveness

For injustices ignored,

we pray for forgiveness.

For the encounters with God today, in stranger and friend,

we bid you welcome.

For the encounters missed today,

we know that you always see us

even when we don't see you.

For tomorrow,

May we see you in ways expected and unexpected.

We welcome the dark of the night.

We make space for it, and we mark our place in it.

We remember that you, Jesus of Nazareth,

Lived through nights of consolation and desolation.

And you walked into the nights of those people you met,
inviting them to justice and truth, love and life.

We welcome the night,
and we welcome you into all our nights.
We pray for those whose nights are desolate,
**that they may have the consolation of prayer,
peaceful solitude and community.**

For a peaceful night,
we pray.
For a hopeful day,
we pray.
For a deeper generosity,
we pray.

A Prayer for The Night

It is night after a long day.
What has been done
has been done;
what has not been done
has not been done:
Let it be.
Amen



Day Two of Advent: 30th November



The angel said, “Don’t fear, Zachariah. Your prayer has been heard. Elizabeth, your wife, will bear a son by you. You are to name him John. You’re going to leap like a gazelle for joy, and not only you—many will delight in his birth. He’ll achieve great stature with God.... Zachariah said to the angel, “Do you expect me to believe this? I’m an old man and my wife is an old woman.”

Luke 1:13,18

God as we begin this Advent journey together we remember you as the God of the ordinary and extra ordinary moments in our lives. In the darkness of this season we know there are times when we can limit ourselves, our hope fades, our candles are blown out and our belief is stretched to breaking point. Help us to cling on to our hopes and dreams, to lift our heads, and to recognise that in you all things are possible. We raise our hands upwards towards your light.
Amen

Day Three of Advent: 1st December



Photograph by Cath Hollywell: 'Morning light St Oran's chapel, Iona.'

An angel visited Mary. Upon entering, Gabriel greeted her: Good morning! You're beautiful with God's beauty, Beautiful inside and out! God be with you.

Mary was thoroughly shaken, wondering what was behind a greeting like that. But the angel assured her, "Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus."

Luke 1:26-29

God of the morning greeting, we welcome you. We thank you for shaking us up that you see the beauty within each of us, both inside and out. Like Mary we don't always see ourselves this way. May we too see the beauty of those we meet, to greet them as we greet you in the ordinary and hidden moments of this day so that we can truly live this life we are living. For this is how seeds are planted and grow. Amen

Day Three of Advent: 2nd December



And did you know that your cousin Elizabeth conceived a son, old as she is? Everyone called her barren, and here she is six months pregnant! Nothing, you see, is impossible with God.” And Mary said, Yes, I see it all now: I’m the Lord’s maid, ready to serve. Let it be with me just as you say. Then the angel left her.

Luke 1:36

God of possibilities, the most unlikely people are the most perfect bearers of your love. As we look at ourselves may we see our potential, the potential that you see in each of us. As we look at those around us may we see their potential too. For too often just as Elizabeth was, we write others off as incapable of growing and in limiting others we limit ourselves. Instead may we dare to dream.... dream of a better life where all may flourish.

Amen

Day Four of Advent: 3rd December



Mary didn't waste a minute. She got up and traveled to a town in Judah in the hill country, straight to Zachariah's house, and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby in her womb leaped. She was filled with the Holy Spirit, and sang out exuberantly, You're so blessed among women, and the babe in your womb, also blessed! The babe in my womb skipped like a lamb for sheer joy.

Luke 1:39

God of encouragement and unlikely blessing, as Elizabeth and Mary encouraged and blessed each other amid the challenges of their lives, may we during this Advent continue to encourage and bless each other in our lives. Help us find creative ways to offer an exuberance of encouragement so that all may skip with joy. Help us spread infectious wonderment in the name of the child who was born in Bethlehem.

Amen

Day Five of Advent: 4th December



And Mary said, I'm bursting with God-news; I'm dancing the song of my Saviour God. God took one good look at me, and look what happened— I'm the most fortunate woman on earth!

Luke 1:46

God of the dancing moment, you asked a teenage, unmarried girl to be the mother of your son. She should have run for the hills, but she didn't. She said, "Yes" and she danced! We give heartfelt thanks for Mary's "Yes" that changed the world. May we take a moment this Advent to see where the "Yes" is in our lives. For these are the moments where our treasure can be found. These are the times when we can dare to say like Mary, we are the most fortunate on this earth.

Amen

Day Six of Advent: 5th December



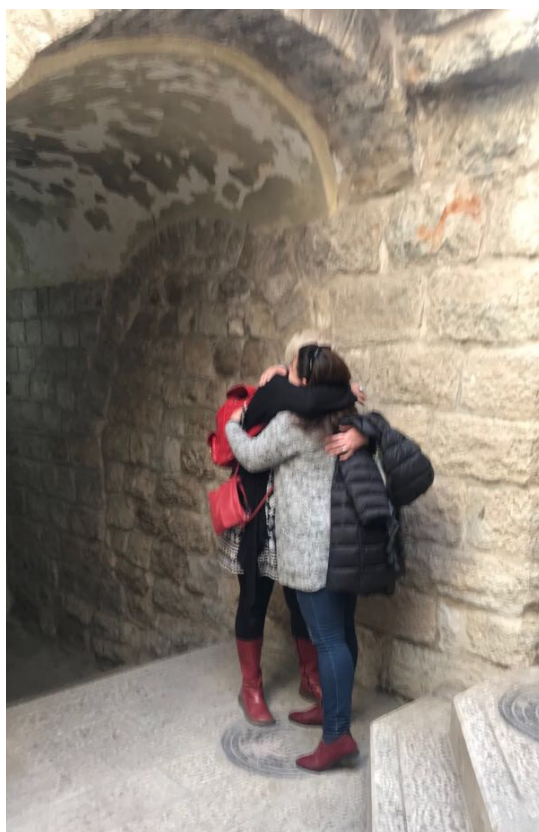
Mary said: What God has done for me will never be forgotten, the God whose very name is holy, set apart from all others.

His mercy flows in wave after wave on those who are in awe before him. He bared his arm and showed his strength, scattered the bluffing braggarts. He knocked tyrants off their high horses, pulled victims out of the mud. The starving poor sat down to a banquet; the callous rich were left out in the cold. He embraced his chosen child, Israel; he remembered and piled on the mercies, piled them high. It's exactly what he promised, beginning with Abraham and right up to now.

Luke 1:46

God of muddy feet, as you pulled victims out of the mud, scattered the bluffing braggarts and knocked tyrants off their high horses, may we too seek to do the same. May we be courageous today, reaching out to those around us to pull them out of the mud. May we act to speak truth in workplaces, organisations, churches and families where power is used to repress others. Give us courage to speak out, to roll our sleeves up and be prepared to get stuck in and dirty in your name. Amen

Day Seven of Advent: 6th December



Photograph by Jess Foster: 'Cath being hugged by an angel in Bethlehem'

While Joseph was trying to figure a way out, he had a dream. God's angel spoke in the dream: "Joseph, son of David, don't hesitate to get married. Mary's pregnancy is Spirit-conceived. God's Holy Spirit has made Mary pregnant. She will bring a son to birth, and when she does, you, Joseph, will name him Jesus—'God saves'—because he will save his people from their sins."

Matthew 1:20

God of ways ahead, there are times when like Joseph we are anxious and uncertain and we don't know what to do. In those times may we meet Angels. Not the ones with white sheets, tinfoil wings and wire coat-hanger halos, but the real ones. The ones that are among us in our cities and friendships, in our villages and forests, waiting for us on benches, coming to us in our dreams, over the brim of our mugs and in our time online. For here they are; the bungled, the botched and the beautiful. Amen

Day Eight of Advent: 7th December



Then Joseph woke up. He did exactly what God's angel commanded in the dream: He married Mary. But he did not consummate the marriage until she had the baby. He named the baby Jesus.

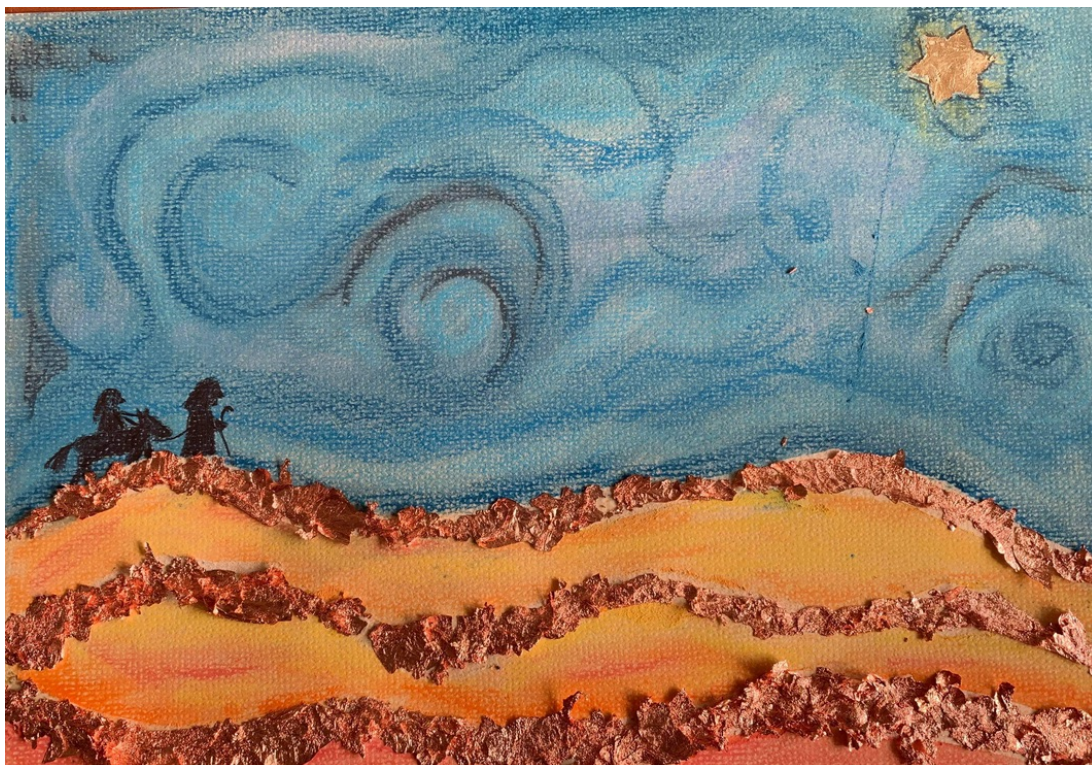
Matthew 1:24

God of Today, help us to wake up to you. Wake us up to your call on our lives. Wake us up to hear what you are asking of us. Wake us to receive your unconditional Love. Wake us up to see the injustices and fractures around us in the world to act in your name.

May we be courageous today to live the life that we are living, fully awake.

Amen.

Day Nine of Advent: 8th December



Art work by Sarah Johnson

Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken. Everyone had to travel to his own ancestral hometown to be accounted for. So Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David's town, for the census. As a descendant of David, he had to go there. He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant.

Luke 2:1-5

God of the journey, we thank you for traveling with us along familiar well-worn trails as well as through difficult thorn-thickets and tracks that seem to disappear. There are those near and far who are victimised, exploited, abused and rejected as they travel through Life and travel to safety. Enlarge our hearts to make room for those who bear the scars of their journey. May we be a community defined by the excess of our love, not the walls along its borders.

Amen

Day Ten of Advent: 9th December



While they were there, the time came for Mary to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the hostel.

Luke 2:6

God of the rejected, your earthly family experienced the anguish of rejection. They knew what it felt like to be rejected at a time when they were most in need. You know what it feels like for doors to be closed, pleas unanswered and to be met by silence. Be with us in those times. May we be the ones that find a way to provide for those who others have rejected. May we be the ones to make room, to make space at the table. May we be the ones to say all are welcome in this place.

Amen

Day Eleven of Advent: 10th December



There were shepherds camping in the neighbourhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Saviour has just been born in David's town, a Saviour who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

Luke 2:8

God of Good News, your angels first appeared to startled and terrified shepherds, minding their own business carrying out a job that no one really wanted to do, a job with low pay, low status and high risk ~ yet you chose them and turned their lives upside down. They were the ones you entrusted to share the wonderful news of Jesus' birth. They were the ones who saw the baby first. May we value people the way you value people ~ not as world does.

Amen

Day Twelve of Advent: 11th December



As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherds talked it over. “Let’s get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us.” They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. Then they told everyone they met what the angels had said about the child. All who heard the shepherds were impressed.

Luke 2:15

God of Seeing and Believing, may we like the shepherds run to find you in unexpected places. May we not become distracted by the glitz and the outward show that obscures our view of you. Instead may we see for ourselves the real nature of love this Christmas, may we see it and believe in it ~ then share what we know to be true.

Amen

Day Thirteen of Advent: 12th December



Art work by Sarah Johnson

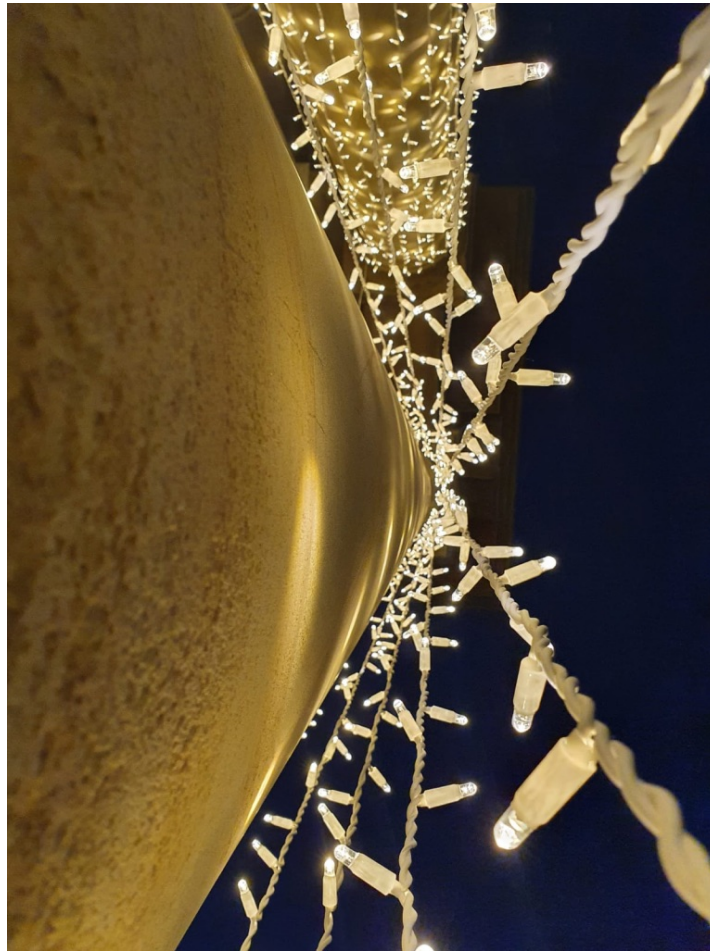
Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself.

Luke 2:18

God of Deep Within, you know all of our secret spaces inside. You know all our cherished moments and all our cherished memories. We pray this day for those who are hurting inside, whose memories are painful and for who this time of year is difficult. Amidst the joy and noise of this season's celebrations, may your quiet comforting presence be present to all who seek you. May we be channels for your comfort in our desire to just listen.

Amen

Day Fourteen of Advent: 13th December



Photograph by Mikey

The shepherds returned to the hillsides and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they'd been told!

Luke 2:19

God of Returning, we thank you for the joy of the shepherds as they glorified you in the wonder of Jesus' birth. We thank you for how these outsiders became inside the story of your birth and the bearers of your good news. May we "let loose" to glorify you! May we light up the room! May we become bearers of your good news in which no one gets forgotten or left behind, in your name.

Amen

Day Fifteen of Advent: 14th December



Art work by Sarah Johnson

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem village, Judah territory— this was during Herod's kingship—a band of scholars arrived in Jerusalem from the East. They asked around, "Where can we find and pay homage to the newborn King of the Jews? We observed a star in the eastern sky that signalled his birth. We're on pilgrimage to worship him."

Matthew 2:1

God of the pilgrimage, we might not come on camels, nor from desert lands afar but we are all on a journey, a pilgrimage which draws us down different pathways towards a deeper knowledge of you. There are times when we stumble, when we go down dead-ends and need to perform a U-turn. When that happens come; come through friend and stranger that we may continue our pilgrimage towards you.

Amen

Day Sixteen of Advent: 15th December



Art work by Sarah Johnson

When word of their inquiry reached Herod, he was terrified—and not Herod alone, but most of Jerusalem as well. Herod lost no time. He gathered all the high priests and religion scholars in the city together and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?”

Matthew 2:3

God of Justice, people panic when their power and status is threatened. May we leave self-serving schemes and controlling plans behind. May we be secure in you. May we remember that earthly power never lasts. In the name of the One, the Most High, born in a stable.

Amen

Day Seventeen of Advent: 16th December



Herod then arranged a secret meeting with the scholars from the East. Pretending to be as devout as they were, he got them to tell him exactly when the birth-announcement star appeared. Then he told them the prophecy about Bethlehem, and said, “Go find this child. Leave no stone unturned. As soon as you find him, send word and I’ll join you at once in your worship.”

Matthew 2:7

God of Power, we acknowledge our power to influence others through our thoughts, words and actions. We know what it is to be manipulated and we know what it is to manipulate. We know when we are pretending to be what we are not.

Peel away our desire for an image concealing who we really are. Peel away our desire for power over others. Transform our desires that we can be the people you want us to be. Humbly in your name.

Amen

Day Eighteen of Advent: 17th December



Art work by Sarah Johnson

Instructed by the king, they set off. Then the star appeared again, the same star they had seen in the eastern skies. It led them on until it hovered over the place of the child. They could hardly contain themselves: They were in the right place! They had arrived at the right time!

Matthew 2:9

God of Right Time and the Right Place, we entrust our journey to you. May you direct our thoughts and actions along our journey today. May we keep giving 'The Map' to you. Break our hearts open to greet those we will encounter this day, so that we may meet you in those ordinary and hidden moments.

Amen

Day Nineteen of Advent: 18th December



They entered the house and saw the child in the arms of Mary, his mother. Overcome, they kneeled and worshiped him. Then they opened their luggage and presented gifts: gold, frankincense, myrrh.

Matthew 2:11

God of Gifts, you provided your Son with all he needed for the journey ahead through the kindness and the phenomenal generosity of strangers. Gold for the journey, to provide for his needs as the family prepared to flee to save Jesus' life. Frankincense for the journey, to heal and to provide aromatic perfume which was fit for a king. Myrrh for the journey, a key ingredient of the preparation of the dead. May we be prepared to receive as well as to give as you prepare each of us for our journey.

Amen

Day Twenty of Advent: 19th December



This photo was taken out of my window at 6am. It's out the back of my house towards the hostels where refugees & asylum seekers are being 'temporarily housed' in Derby & I thought about the sun rising the morning after Jesus was born with his parents facing so much uncertainty & how the people in the hostel don't know when or where they'll be sent to... But the same sun that rose over the barn/stable/ hut whatever it was, is the same sun rising over this hostel...

Jo Howie

After the wise men were gone, God's angel showed up again in Joseph's dream and commanded, "Get up. Take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Stay until further notice. Herod is on the hunt for this child, and wants to kill him."

Matthew 2:13

God of the refugee, you lived life in exile away from all that you were familiar with as your earthly parents did all they could to keep you safe. In your early years you relied on the generosity of others in a foreign land. May we have compassionate hearts and minds and open arms to welcome those who are fleeing from situations that are life-threatening. May we provide communities that offer places of safety and belonging, of generous welcome where the stranger can become a friend. Amen

Day Twenty One of Advent: 20th December



Joseph obeyed. He got up, took the child and his mother under cover of darkness. They were out of town and well on their way by daylight. They lived in Egypt waiting until Herod's death.

Matthew 2:14

God of waiting, sometimes we only know the beginning and not the end, the path and not the destination. That can be difficult and highlight feelings that bring discomfort and uncertainty. In the discomfort may we seek patience, leaning in to seek you so that we are not alone in the waiting.

Amen

Day Twenty Two of Advent: 21st December



Herod, when he realised that the scholars had tricked him, flew into a rage. He commanded the murder of every little boy two years old and under who lived in Bethlehem and its surrounding hills. (He determined that age from information he'd gotten from the scholars.)

Matthew 2:16

God of Peace, our world is divided by war and conflict and the most vulnerable pay the highest price. We turn away from the news, finding it too hard to bare. May we turn back to you and see your face in those who suffer ~ for there is no 'Them' there is only Us. Wherever we may be this Christmas, may we remember that Peacemaking is what it is to follow you.

Amen

Day Twenty Three of Advent: 22nd December



Artwork by Sarah Johnson

Later, when Herod died, God's angel appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt: "Up, take the child and his mother and return to Israel. All those out to murder the child are dead."

Matthew 2:19

God of Homecoming, when we find ourselves in exile, separated and alone, may we return to your presence. May we listen for your voice calling us home. May we find where we belong and in familiar things stay open to your presence in the unexpected.
Amen

Day Twenty Four of Advent: 23rd December



Photograph by Mikey

Joseph obeyed. He got up, took the child and his mother and returned to Israel.

Matthew 2:21

God of Calling, we thank you for calling each of us with different bodies and desires, different ways of thinking and speaking, for different ways of belonging and believing. We thank you that you have called each of us to be part of your family. As Joseph obeyed your calling, may we obey your calling in our lives as we journey with you through Life.

Amen

Day Twenty Fifth of Advent: Christmas Eve



Photograph by Cath: In the Hills of Galilee

Joseph was directed in a dream to go to the hills of Galilee. On arrival, he settled in the village of Nazareth. This move was a fulfilment of the prophetic words, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

Matthew 2: 23

God of Nazareth, Bethlehem and Derby, on this day we call to mind your story from long ago. A story of courage and doubt, dreams and journeys beginning and ending with you. As we wait for your coming again, may you show yourself to us in the kindness of friends and strangers. In this time of pandemic, may it be our care that's contagious. May we receive the Christ child once again with open arms. Amen

The Journey Community grew from out of a group of 'misfits, outcasts and tree dwellers' who were preparing for baptism and confirmation on the YMCA and community allotments in Wilmorton, October 2018. As a result of this we decided to continue our journey together with God welcoming our questions and differences and our dreams of a better life. The Journey Community officially became a Church of England 'Fresh Expression' of Church on March 1st 2020, but to be honest we are not new or 'fresh' at all ~ because people have been meeting like this from the earliest days of Jesus and before church buildings ever existed!

We are just an ordinary group of different people journeying together and supporting each other along The Way who meet online and in person to break bread as Jesus asked his disciples to do; to think about life and learn about God through sharing food, cups of tea and our stories; discovering how God through the Bible can challenge, help, heal and transform us. In the middle of it all we want to understand and practise what it means to *be* Peacemakers and Reconcilers. This doesn't mean we don't disagree - far from it! We just want to try to put into practise how to love God and how to love others as ourselves.

We want to welcome people of all ages from different places and from all walks of life who have a faith or none or are somewhere in between. People who have been on this journey a while or who have only just begun or haven't even started, (especially if you haven't felt welcome in other places.)

In The Journey Community we want to welcome people who are willing to question, as well as those willing to listen to different points of view.

We welcome all LGBTQ+ people.

- We gather every week to share bread either online via Zoom **or** in person (observing safe Covid aware protocols) at St Osmund's Hall, London Rd, Wilmorton.
- We meet every morning online via Zoom to say the morning prayers together from this booklet
- For any further info and for a Zoom link, contact either :- Rev. Cath: 07745 735060 / chollywell@btinternet.com or Sharna Smith on 07706 619303