

## Quiet Advent

It is a time of whispers  
of rumours and echoes  
angels are unfurling their wings  
stars are dancing new steps  
and the universe is drawing breath  
for now we live in the waiting time

Let the darkness gather  
let the seasons change  
let the nights draw in  
to their darkest moment

the light is on it's way

so come now  
be a blessing to the frantic and worried world  
come now  
and find space  
silence  
stillness

for God is slipping into skin  
and restless in the womb

It is advent

rgh  
27<sup>th</sup> November 2008  
Advent 1B

Waiting, Space, Reflection  
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

## Advent 1

let us go out  
with quiet boldness,  
tender daring,  
simmering anger,  
impatient justice.

let us go out with provocative peacemaking  
into advent,  
enough to crack open the moribund and dry faith of the world  
in it's spent and necrotic cravings.

let us go out with a message  
that disturbs the world with restless whispers  
about god and incarnation,  
goosepumps and justice.

let us go out  
and muffle our laughter  
behind an unnerving truth  
heaven-shaped  
sharp-edged  
waiting to crack it all open  
and let the glory through  
with a living word:  
jesus

rgh  
27<sup>th</sup> November 2008  
Advent 1B

Sending, World, Advent  
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

## Restore us, O God

This is in the form of a lament, as Psalm 80 is, but uses more contemporary issues, wondering why God has gone silent. During the reading cloth is ripped as a symbolic gesture of our lament and our worry that heaven has lost her voice just when we need it most. The pieces are then tied together again, however, making a different shape, for we believe in incarnation, the arrival of God in flesh, silence doesn't mean absence. This is renewal. We have a triptych in the worship space that has stars on it for Advent. The cloth is then hung among the stars, for the promise is gathering throughout the universe, God is slipping into skin, the light will soon be here.

Restore us O God  
May your face shine upon us  
that we might be saved

*Cloth is held up with dollar sign on it. It is then ripped slowly into three pieces and then tied together again and left on the communion table*

Why have the gates of heaven been closed  
O God?  
(Hold up cloth)

Why, when we need you  
To challenge the world  
To rebalance it's kiltered economies (*rip cloth*)  
To redistribute it's biased wealth  
To renew it's spent principles  
You have gone silent

What is to happen to us?  
What is o happen to us?

(Tie together again)  
Restore us O God  
May your face shine upon us  
That we might be saved.

*Cloth is held up with armament symbol on it. It is then ripped slowly into three pieces and then tied together again and left on the communion table*

Why has heaven closed her doors  
O God?  
(Hold up cloth)

Why, when the war goes on  
When gunmen find morality in terrorism (*rip cloth*)  
When nations make war for oil  
When power is understood are arms  
Why when we need you, Prince of peace,  
You have gone silent

What is to happen to us?  
What is to happen to us?

(Tie together again)  
Restore us O God  
May your face shine upon us  
That we might be saved

*Cloth is held up with environmental symbol on it. It is then ripped slowly into three pieces and then tied together again and left on the communion table*

Why is heaven playing hide-and-seek  
O God?  
*(Hold up cloth)*

Why are you not there to hear creations groans *(rip cloth)*  
To pull back a rebellious climate change  
To rebalance the covenant between humanity and planet  
To untangle stewardship and greed  
Why have you gone silent?

What is to happen to us?  
What is to happen to us?

*(Tie together again)*  
Restore us O God  
May your face shine upon us  
That we might be saved

*The tied together pieces of cloth are now hung through the stars on the triptych.*

But we find our presence in the silence  
In the movement of the stars  
In the tying of despair to hope  
In the journey of God-s Dream among the starfields  
The binding of promise to the present  
In the slipping of time towards birth  
In the anxious waiting for labour  
In the worry of fatherhood for God  
In the silent vision of the future  
There God's face shines  
In the silent gathering of the light

rg  
29<sup>th</sup> November 2008  
Advent 1B

Hope, Silence, Renewal, Advent  
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

## If only

A reading for two voices, each taking different verses. One speaks as if preparing for Christmas Day with presents etc when really about the advent of God. The other speaks the words of Mary into this time.

If only there was time  
If only there was enough time to prepare  
to get ready  
to organise  
to plan...  
...for a world where all were fed  
but time is running out

My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.  
For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden:  
for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

If only there was time  
time enough to send greetings  
to compose messages  
to sign cards...  
...that tell of the arrival of God  
but time is all too short

For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.  
And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.

If only there was time  
to avoid the rush  
to prevent the urgency  
to lower the stakes...  
...of God's plan  
but time is slipping away

He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.  
He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.  
He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

If only there was time to get ready...  
But time is running out  
The child is restless  
the word is hesitating  
the light is gathering  
the plan is coming together  
There is little time left  
And what shall we prepare for  
in these last days  
before incarnation

rg  
12<sup>th</sup> December 2008  
Advent 3B

Time, preparing, Magnificat  
Luke 1:47-55

## Darkness

On the longest night of the year  
when it can't get any darker  
in the deepest night  
when the stars grow small against the length of gloom  
the coldest moment of the year  
causes the slightest crack  
but it is not big enough to let the promise through

when the day is as short as it ever will be  
and the night longer than most  
and your skin crawls for warmth  
and your eyes dim against the shadows  
in the chill of the hour  
there is a sliver of a crack  
but not big enough to let the word through

just a hairline  
a sliver  
a hesitation  
enough to miss

when the nights draw in  
and the minutes take their time  
and life huddles together  
worrying that the darkness may not pass  
in the ache of winter  
there is hairline crack  
and even that is big enough  
to let the light through

*(light candle)*

rg  
16<sup>th</sup> December 2008  
Carol Service/Christmas Eve

Light, winter solstice,  
Luke 1:47-55

## Nearly

Is there stardust among the hay?  
Are there angels singing in the corners of the sky?  
Is there a glint of polished halos in the sunlight?

Not yet  
Not yet

Are the hungry seated round the tables of the rich?  
Are the homeless settled in a stable with others?  
Are the powerful pacing their corridors of power worried?

Nearly  
Nearly

Is the journey joined  
Is heaven preparing  
Is Incarnation ready

Just about  
Just about

Welcome to the fading minutes of the waiting time  
the last of the darkening nights  
and know the light will begin to stretch the days once more  
for God is on the way

It's time to hold your breath  
and start the rumour

Soon  
and very soon  
God is here  
"Emmanuel"

rg  
18<sup>th</sup> December 2008  
Advent 4B

Christmas Eve, waiting, impatience, winter solstice  
Luke 1:26-38

## All-Age Prayer

When the time is shortening  
the light shrinking  
the waiting lessening  
you are getting ready

When the anxiety is growing  
the excitement building  
the wondering lengthening  
you are preparing

When our thoughts are focusing  
our longing deepening  
our hopes heightening  
you are quickening

When the star is sliding  
the angels gathering  
the parents journeying  
you are waiting

Jesus  
we wait for you  
may it not be too long now  
as the world needs your presence

rg  
19<sup>th</sup> December 2008  
Advent 4B

Waiting, business, Incarnation  
Luke 1:26-38

## We believe

Not a great doctrinal statement. For fun, but contains just as much truth possibly...

L: We believe in light

A: cascading

B: swirling

A: moving

B: dancing

A: proclaiming

B: announcing

A: lighting

B: the truth

L: We believe in angels

A: singing

B: praising

A: foretelling

B: flying

A: spinning

B: diving

A: proclaiming

B: the truth

L: We believe in Good News

A: crying

B: gurgling

A: sleeping

B: feeding

A: watching

B: staring

A: proclaiming

B: the truth

L: We believe in Jesus

A: emmanuel

B: redeemer

A: saviour

B: incarnation

A: human

B: God

A: proclaiming

B: the truth

L: We believe in Christmas

A: day

B: pudding

A: crackers

B: carols

A: story

B: nativity

A: proclaiming

B: the truth

L: We believe in the truth

A: light

B: angels

A: Good News

B: Jesus

A: Christmas

B: we believe

A: in proclaiming

B: the truth

rgh

19<sup>th</sup> December 2008

Advent 4B

Waiting, business, Incarnation

Luke 1:26-38

## Christmas Spelling Test

Voice 1:

How do you spell hope?

Voice 2:

The same way you spell incarnation:

In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. The word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Voice 1:

How do you spell love?

Voice 2:

The same way you spell Immanuel

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

Voice 1:

How do you spell Jesus?

Voice 2:

The same way you spell baby

For unto us a child is born,  
unto us a son is given;  
and the government  
shall be upon his shoulders;  
and his name shall be called  
Wonderful, Counsellor,  
the Mighty God,  
the everlasting Father,  
the Prince of Peace.

Voice 1:

How do you spell faith?

Voice 2:

The same way you spell revolution

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.

Voice 1:

How do you spell belief?

Voice 2:

The same way you spell Christ

I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

Voice 1:

How do you spell promise?

Voice 2:

The same way you spell salvation

Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

Voice 1:  
How do you spell longing?

Voice 2:  
The same way you spell peace:  
Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,  
“Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests.”

rg  
19<sup>th</sup> December 2008  
Advent 4B

Christmas, Faith, Theology  
Luke 1:26-38

## Prayer

Call the angels, O God  
to clear their throats  
the time is coming

And prepare the stars  
to shine for all they're worth  
making a path for the travellers to follow  
the time is coming

Ready the stable  
with innkeeper rehearsed  
and hay and cattle  
to lo a lullaby  
the time is coming

assemble the heavens  
arrange the hour  
the incarnation is about to begin  
the time is coming

or quietly slip on skin  
and find yourself in our world  
vulnerable and cold

with hesitation  
may heaven let you fall  
into the lap of a fragile girl  
who has never mothered before  
and call you God

May we find ourselves, O God  
not waiting for a story  
but listening for the promise  
not longing for nativity  
but urgent for incarnation  
not rehearsing a legend  
but immersed in emmanuel

May we find ourselves here  
because we expect you among us  
in flesh  
in promise  
in Good News  
with the rumour of revolution  
and the hint of renewal  
and the spilling of justice

So be it

rg  
22<sup>nd</sup> December 2008  
Watchnight

Incarnation, transformation  
Luke 1:26-38

## The Annunciation

Angels dance... did you know that...? Well I'm not sure Gabriel knew it... and I'm not sure you could strictly call it a dance... but he did some very fancy footwork as he materialised at the front door just as Mary opened it and threw the dust from the floor out into it... and over Gabriel...

Mind the linens he cried before he could stop himself... This is my whiter than white outfit... It's new and for a special occasion...

Then he hesitated and put his hand to his mouth... and went very red... Even his halo singed a little... "Mary?" he asked...?

Mary hadn't said anything yet and wasn't really intending to... She was always brought up never to talk to strangers... and if anyone was strange... this Persil Automatic salesman was the best of them...

"Mary... blessed... most beautiful in the sight of God... maiden... child of God..."

Gabriel hesitated... looked at Mary... Mary looked back... "Okay I'll get on with it... You are going to be with child and it will be the child of the most high God... and you will name him Jesus... he will be the saviour of the world..."

There was silence...

Lot's of it...

Angel's don't particularly like silence... So Gabriel spoke... "Are you okay...?" Silence... Apparently there are no women among the heavenly host but Gabriel had had enough experience of humanity to know this kind of silence had to be handled delicately...

Let's get you inside... and we'll go over that again shall we... Gabriel led Mary inside... and closed the door behind him...

rg  
19<sup>th</sup> December 2008  
Advent 4B

Annunciation, Nativity, Angels  
Luke 1:26-38

## Prayer of Anna & Simeon

Open our eyes  
open our hearts  
open our minds  
that we can see you Jesus

Open our mouths  
open our throats  
open our alleluias  
that we may praise you Jesus

Open our hands  
open our spirits  
open our arms  
that we may receive you Jesus

Help us find you in the world  
in all that goes on  
give us the eyes and the hopes  
like Simeon and Anna  
to recognise where you are among us  
alive and real

Open our longings  
open our hopes  
open our yearning  
that we may recognise you in us

rg  
27<sup>th</sup> December 2008  
Christmas 1B

Seeing, promise  
Luke 2:22-40

## Blessings

Everyone was given a narrow sheet of paper on which to write a longing for the coming year. These were collected and supposedly hung on the christmas tree. But instead we hung verses from the following blessing and at the end of the service people were invited to come forward and collect a blessing: their longing turned into a way of living - this is what incarnations does.

May the light draw us into life  
and stir a longing into our souls

May the stars shine along our pathway  
and lighten the way with prophecy

May the words of ancient promise  
echo in every word we speak

May the sound of a baby crying  
haunt every silence born of apathy

May incarnation be more than godly flesh  
but a fresh way of godly living

May the Spirit of Christ be born in us  
and God make a home among us

rg  
27<sup>th</sup> December 2008  
Christmas 1B

Blessing, end of year  
Luke 2:22-40

