

Transformation – NOW!
ADVENT

Opening Prayer

Advent God, we journey with you,
to Bethlehem's stable
and a new-born King,
ears attuned to the song of angels,
eyes alert for Bethlehem's star.
Forgive us if on our journey
we are distracted
by the tempting offers of this world.
Keep our hearts aflame
with the hope of Christmas,
and the promise of a Saviour.

Amen

John Birch

Hymn: Come, Thou long-expected Jesus

sung by St Martin's Voices

Come, thou long-expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free,
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.

Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a king,
born to reign in us for ever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.

By thine own eternal Spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all-sufficient merit
raise us to thy glorious throne.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Bible Reading: Luke 1: 46-55

Good News

Mary's Song of Praise

Mary said,
"My heart praises the Lord;
my soul is glad because of God my Saviour,
for he has remembered me, his lowly servant!
From now on all people will call me happy,
because of the great things the Mighty God has done for me.
His name is holy;
from one generation to another
he shows mercy to those who honour him.
He has stretched out his mighty arm
and scattered the proud with all their plans.
He has brought down mighty kings from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away with empty hands.
He has kept the promise he made to our ancestors,
and has come to the help of his servant Israel.
He has remembered to show mercy to Abraham
and to all his descendants forever!"

Reflection: Blessed

Blessed?

They call me blessed?

Well, I'd like to know what part of blessed
I'm failing to understand.

Is it blessed to have pregnancy sickness all day every day?

Is it blessed to have fingers so swollen

I couldn't wear my ring – even if I had one?

Is it blessed to be gossiped about on street corners

and have folk turn their backs on me

when I walk down the street?

Is it blessed to be so bone wearying tired?

Is it blessed to have no one believe me

when I tell them about the angel?

Is it blessed to want so much to do God's will

when it causes so much grief?

Blessed – so this is what it feels like!

written by Rev Liz Crumlish <http://www.churchofscotland>

Hymn: For Mary, Mother of our Lord

sung by St Martin's Voices

For Mary, Mother of our Lord

God's holy name be praised,

who first the Son of God adored,

as on her child she gazed.

Brave, holy Virgin, she believe,

though hard the task assigned,

and by the Holy Ghost conceived

the Saviour of mankind.

She gave her body as God's shrine,
her heart to piercing pain;
she knew the cost of love divine,
when Jesus Christ was slain.

Dear Mary, from your lowliness
and home in Galilee
there comes a joy and holiness
to every family.

Hail, Mary, you are full of grace,
above all women blest;
and blest your Son, whom your embrace
in birth and death confessed.

John Raphael Peacey (1896-1971)
© Revd Mary J Hancock

Prayers: God of waiting

God of birth,
we watch in fear for your coming;
scared of the pain and risk,
the struggle of new life emerging
and our own capacity to bear it.
God of waiting,
wait with us.

God of the future,
we watch in hope for your coming;
anticipating an unknown future,
uncertain of the unnamed reality,
not sure of the form it will take.
God of waiting,
wait with us.

God of celebration,
we watch in joy for your coming;
expectant with promises of freedom,
eager for new possibilities,
delighting in the gift of birth.
God of waiting,
Wait with us.
Amen

Jan Berry, Wild Goose Publications

The Mothers' Union prayer

Loving Lord,
We thank you for your love so freely given to us all.
We pray for families around the world.
Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love
through the encouragement, strengthening and support
of marriage and family life.
Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship,
and in love and service reach out as your hands across the world.
In Jesus' name.
Amen.

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Hymn: Longing for light, we wait in darkness

sung by St Martin's Voices

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.
*Christ be our light! Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.*

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has pow'r to save us.
Make us your living voice.

Chorus

Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.

Chorus

Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stones.

Chorus

Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.

Chorus

Bernadette Farrell (born 1957)

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Final prayer and Blessing

May God the Father,
who loved the world so much that he sent his only Son,
give you grace to prepare for life eternal.

Amen.

May God the Son,
who comes to us as redeemer and judge,
reveal to you the path from darkness to light.

Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit,
by whose working the Virgin Mary conceived the Christ,
help you bear the fruits of holiness.

Amen.

And the blessing of God Almighty,
who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be among you and remain with you
this day and always.

Amen.

Our Lord says, 'I am coming soon.'

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

May the Lord, when he comes,
find us watching and waiting.

Amen.

*From Times and Seasons
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Prayers next month will be on 11th January 2024 – Epiphany