

**Transformation – NOW!  
ARE WE READY?**

**Hymn: Hills of the North, rejoice**

*Sung by St Martin's Voices*

Hills of the North, rejoice,  
echoing songs arise,  
hail with united voice  
him who made earth and skies;  
he comes in righteousness and love,  
he brings salvation from above.

Isles of the Southern seas,  
sing to the listening earth,  
carry on every breeze  
hope of a world's new birth:  
in Christ shall all be made anew,  
his word is sure, his promise true.

Lands of the East, arise,  
he is your brightest morn,  
greet him with joyous eyes,  
praise shall his path adorn:  
the God whom you have longed to know  
in Christ draws near, and calls you now.

Shores of the utmost West,  
lands of the setting sun,  
welcome the heavenly guest  
in whom the dawn has come:  
he brings a never-ending light  
who triumphed o'er our darkest night.

Shout, as you journey on,  
songs be in every mouth,  
lo, from the North they come,  
from East and West and South:  
in Jesus all shall find their rest,  
in him the sons of earth be blest.

*Editors of English Praise (1975)*  
*based on Charles E Oakley (1832-1865)*  
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## **Opening prayer**

He did not wait till the world was ready,  
till men and nations were at peace.  
He came when the Heavens were unsteady,  
and prisoners cried out for release.

He did not wait for the perfect time.  
He came when the need was deep and great.  
He dined with sinners in all their grime,  
turned water into wine.

He did not wait till hearts were pure.  
In joy he came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.  
To a world like ours, of anguished shame  
he came, and his Light would not go out.

He came to a world which did not mesh,  
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.  
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh  
the Maker of the stars was born.

We cannot wait till the world is sane  
to raise our songs with joyful voice,  
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,  
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

*by Madeleine L'Engle*

### **Bible Reading: Psalm 30**

Sing to the Lord, all you godly ones!

Praise his holy name.

For his anger lasts only a moment,

but his favour lasts a lifetime!

Weeping may last through the night,

but joy comes with the morning.

When I was prosperous, I said,

“Nothing can stop me now!”

Your favour, O Lord, made me as secure as a mountain.

Then you turned away from me, and I was shattered.

I cried out to you, O Lord.

I begged the Lord for mercy, saying,

“What will you gain if I die,

if I sink into the grave?

Can my dust praise you?

Can it tell of your faithfulness?

Hear me, Lord, and have mercy on me.

Help me, O Lord.”

You have turned my mourning into joyful dancing.

You have taken away my clothes of mourning and clothed me with joy,

that I might sing praises to you and not be silent.

O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever!

## **Reflection**

*by Ian Butterworth*

Are you ready? How many times have we said that to children and got the answer 'In a minute.' and the minute has become two or three or even five and we've been almost out of the door before they've started putting their shoes on.

But it's not just children who put off getting ready. We might not take so long to get ready to go out but there are other things we're never ready for, however long we have to prepare, and God's coming is one of them.

All through Advent we hear the question 'Are you ready?' - ready to meet God, to sit at his table, to see him face to face and know his love in all its glory and wonder. And if we're honest we have to answer 'No'. We aren't ready to look all that love in the face. We talk about God's love and sing about it with gusto but when it comes to getting up close and personal to that love it's a different matter. We realise our love has been a very pale shadow of God's love and we're ashamed at how poor our loving has been.

So when we hear about God coming again we just push away the thought of meeting God who sees through us and all our excuses and deceptions, who sees us as we really are – eager to talk about love but reluctant to let it shape our lives.

But the really good news is that God knows exactly what we're like and still loves us. He knows we want the Second Coming to be postponed indefinitely but it makes no difference to how much he loves us. And loving us as he does he wants to help us know his love, to feel it in our bones, to want it filling our lives – he wants us to be partners in his dance of love. He's not bothered that we can't dance at the level of Strictly – his dance is different, there aren't any complicated steps, we just have to hold his hand and step out in time to the music.

There's no point in saying 'We're not ready.' We'll never be ready, never feel good enough, loving enough to meet God on our terms. But he's happy with us as we are, he wants us, needs us to be his partners in his dance of love. We may fumble our way through the dance to begin with but holding his hand we'll get better and in time we'll want to reach out to other people who don't feel ready to meet God and taking their hands draw them into the dance of love.

## **Hymn: I danced in the morning**

*sung by St Martin's Voices*

*Sydney Carter (1915-2004)*

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I danced in the morning when the world was begun,  
and I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun,  
and I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth,  
at Bethlehem I had my birth.

*Dance, then, wherever you may be,  
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,  
and I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,  
and I'll lead you all in the Dance, said he.*

I danced for the scribe and the pharisee,  
but they would not dance and they wouldn't follow me.  
I danced for the fishermen, for James and John -  
they came with me and the Dance went on.

*Chorus*

I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame;  
the holy people said it was a shame.  
They whipped and they stripped and they hung me on high,  
and they left me there on a Cross to die.

*Chorus*

I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black -  
It's hard to dance with the devil on your back.  
They buried my body and they thought I'd gone,  
but I am the Dance, and I still go on.

*Chorus*

They cut me down and I leapt up high;  
I am the life that'll never, never die;  
I'll live in you if you'll live in me -  
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he.

*Chorus*

## **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, which art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
in earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive them that trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.

**Amen**

## **Chant: Wait for the Lord**

*sung by St Martin's Voices*

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.  
Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart!

*Taizé Community*  
© *Ateliers et Presses de Taizé*

## **Prayers**

This Advent, as we wait for  
the Hope of the World  
we pray for God's hope to overcome  
the despair of loss and loneliness.

God of light and hope,

**Hear our prayer**

This Advent, as we wait for  
the Light of the World  
we pray that the love of God would bring light  
in the lives of our family and friends.

God of light and hope,

**Hear our prayer**

This Advent, as we wait for  
the Hope of the World  
we pray that the love of God would fill  
us all with sure and certain hope.

God of light and hope,

**Hear our prayer**

**Amen**

*From Mothers' Union  
Advent and Christmas prayers*

## **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**

©Mother' Union

## **Hymn: O come, O come Emmanuel**

*sung by St Martin's Voices*

O come, O come Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here,  
Until the Son of God appear.

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free  
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;  
From depths of hell Thy people save,  
And give them victory o'er the grave.

*Refrain*

O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by Thine advent here;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

*Refrain*

O come, Thou Key of David, come,  
And open wide our heavenly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,  
And close the path to misery.

*Refrain*

O come, O come, Thou Lord of might,  
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,  
In ancient times didst give the law  
In cloud and majesty and awe.

*Refrain*

*Latin 13th century translated by John M Neale (1818-1866)*

**Sending out**

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Gracious God  
just as you came to our world in Christ,  
help us now to go out for you,  
to proclaim his word,  
share his love  
and work for his kingdom.  
Help us to live in him  
and for him  
and through him,  
until that day when he comes again  
and you are all in all.

**Amen**

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**Thursday Prayers next month will be on  
12<sup>th</sup> January 2023 – Epiphany**