

The background of the page is an abstract painting. It features a light pinkish-purple wash at the top, which transitions into a large, swirling, U-shaped form in the lower half. This form is composed of various shades of purple, from light lavender to deep, dark indigo and black. There are also streaks of blue and orange, particularly on the right side and within the swirls. The overall effect is one of dynamic movement and depth.

A STABLE ADVENT

“SHELTER FOR YOUR SOUL”

WEEK 1: MARY & JOSEPH

~ OPEN DOORS



PERSONAL PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE^[1]

Today, with this gathered community, I sit.
I wait for you, O God:
for your presence, though you are always near;
for your peace, through the distractions of the week.
I wait to hear your word,
to see the light of your face in Jesus Christ,
to be renewed by your Spirit.

I sit, I wait in faith with your people.
Accept our praise, forgive our sin, send us out refreshed;
in the name of Christ. Amen.

¹ UiW2, pg. 144

CALL TO WORSHIP AND CANDLE-LIGHTING

In a world of rush and restless change,
step into the hush of this sanctuary,
with these hearts beside you—
ready to seek God here and now,
to breathe in gentle rhythm,
to listen quietly and wait with hope,
to find what's holy in simple acts of love,
and to welcome the Christ
who makes a home in each of us.

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

Through the Word, all things came to be:
Jesus is the life, the light, of all people.
Even now, the light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness cannot put it out.

DAY STAR^[2]

May the hope of Christ rise up.
May it guide from near and far.
May the light of Christ shine out,
shine like a day-star.

² Music and lyrics by Trisha Watts

POEM/PRAYER: BLESSING THE DOOR^[3]

First let us say
a blessing
upon all who have
entered here before
us.

You can see the sign
of their passage
by the worn place
where their hand rested
on the doorframe
as they walked through,
the smooth sill
of the threshold
where they crossed.

Press your ear
to the door
for a moment before
you enter,

and you will hear
their voices murmuring
words you cannot
quite make out
but know
are full of welcome.

On the other side,
these ones who wait -
for you,
if you do not
know by now -
understand what
a blessing can do:

how it appears like
nothing you expected;

how it arrives as
visitor,
outrageous invitation,
child;

how it takes the form
of angel
or dream;

how it comes
in words like
How can this be?

and
lifted up the lowly;

³ By Jan Richardson in "Circle of Grace"

how it sounds like
in the wilderness
prepare the way.

Those who wait
for you know
how the mark of
a true blessing
is that it will take you
where you did not
think to go.

Once through this door,
there will be more:
more doors,
more blessings,
more who watch and
wait for you.

But here
at this door of
beginning,
the blessing cannot
be said without you.

So lay your palm
against the frame
that those before you
touched.

Place your feet
where others paused:
in this entryway.

**Say the thing that
you most need,
and the door
will open wide.**

And by this word
the door is blessed,
and by this word
the blessing is begun
from which,
door by door,
all the rest
will come.

SACRED SCRIPTURE: LUKE 2:1-7 (NIVUK)

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.

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.

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.

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS (ADVENT CANDLES)

God of welcome and refuge,
as we remember Mary and Joseph, young and afraid,
searching for shelter in an unfamiliar place,
on an uncertain night,
we light this candle for all who yearn for an open door.

We pray for those without safety and shelter,
for families displaced by conflict,
for refugees and wanderers,
for who travel unknown roads,
and for anyone who feels forgotten or unseen.

TIS 286 VERSE 1

Light one candle for hope,
one bright candle for hope.
He brings hope to every heart.
He comes! He comes! He comes!

LIVING SERMON: OPEN DOORS

- I wonder what it was like for Jesus to be laid in a manger, surrounded by strangers and animals instead of family or friends.
- I wonder how the people of Bethlehem responded when they saw a young family in need of help and a place to stay.
- I wonder what hopes and dreams Mary and Joseph had for their newborn child as they welcomed him into the world.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH^[4]

We believe, and proclaim with joy,
that Jesus Christ gave himself for all:
for all who have lived since the world's first day
and for all who will live until the end of time,
for the seething city crowds
and the lonely outback homestead,
for each newborn child who enters this world
and for each, who in old age,
stands on the edge of eternity.

We believe that Christ gave himself:
for our friends and for our enemies,
for the faithful and the doubtful,
for the rich and the poor,
for martyrs and their murderers.

⁴ Oratoire du Louvre, baptismal creed, translated by Graham Perry, 2012

Yes, for everyone: for you and for me,
Jesus Christ has come, has lived, has suffered;
has endured the agony of Gethsemane and the darkness of
Calvary,
all for you and for me.

Yet he has triumphed over death
and opens before us the doors of an irrepressible hope:
'nothing, from this day onwards –
neither past nor future, nor pleasure nor pain,
not height nor depth, nor life nor death –
nothing will separate us from the love
which God has revealed in Christ.' Amen.

BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

Go now as people who have found shelter in God's love.
Step out into the world with open doors and open hearts,
ready to welcome Christ in every neighbour and stranger.
May you carry hope to those who wait,
kindness to those who wander,
and courage to those who seek shelter.

And may the Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace. Amen.