Advent Contemplative Space

St James's Church Piccadilly

Waiting for God's Word

An online space for prayer, readings and silence throughout Advent

Fridays 4, 11 and 18 December
Monday 21 December 2026
6.00 -7.00 pm



Waiting for God's Word

Advent Contemplative Space 2026

A space for prayer, readings and silence, on Fridays throughout Advent, ending with a session on Monday 21 December. All sessions 6.00 – 7.00pm on Zoom.

Please join us for this series of Advent reflections. Each session will be facilitated by a member of the St James's community and will include a welcome, reading from Scripture, a second reading (usually a poem), guided silence with opportunities to reflect in whatever way is meaningful for you, time to share reflections, and a closing prayer. Everyone is welcome to attend for all or part of the time each session.

Zoom link

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84557691455?pwd=uGRjx07BGcX2U68Yqbv7d9LOB3NlfL.1

Friday 4 December - Waiting

Mary Visits Elizabeth
Luke 39:45

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea where she entered Zachariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed 'Blessed are you among women and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favoured that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her.'



'The Visitation' Jacopo Pontormo
Parish Church of San Michele e San Francesco, Carmignano

Hidden Joys: A sonnet for the Visitation
Malcolm Guite

Here is a meeting made of hidden joys
Of lightenings cloistered in a narrow place
From quiet hearts the sudden flame of praise
And in the womb the quickening kick of grace.
Two women on the very edge of things
Unnoticed and unknown to men of power
But in their flesh the hidden spirit sings
And in their lives the buds of blossom flower.
And Mary stands with all we call 'too young'
Elizabeth with all called 'past their prime'.
They sing today for all the great unsung
Women who turned eternity to time
Favoured of heaven, outcasts on earth,
Prophets who bring the best in us to birth.

Prayer

Dear God,
During this season of advent help us to pay particular attention to the hidden joys in our lives and to embrace them with grace and gratitude.
Amen.

Friday 11 December - Newness Stirs

Isaiah 7:10-14

10 Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz,
11 “Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.”
12 But Ahaz said, “I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test.”
13 Then Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also?
14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

‘God’s Grandeur’
Gerard Manley Hopkins

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Overleaf:
'The Woman Clothed with the Sun' by Charles L Madden
Photo by Deborah Colvin

From the descriptive plaque: 'Mary is the expression in multi-faceted splendour that "The grandeur of God will flame out like shining from shook foil"'. This is one of many images of Mary at the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth. One tradition holds that the basilica is built on the site of the Annunciation. Another tradition says that the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary while she was drawing water from a well in Nazareth. The well, though currently dry, still exists.



Prayer
by Janet Morley

God our deliverer,
whose approaching birth
still shakes the foundations of our world:
May we so wait for your coming
with eagerness and hope
that we embrace without terror
the labour pangs of the new age,
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Friday 18 December - Newness unfolding



Christmas Rose – photo by Julia Chalkley

Isaiah 11: 1-10

1 And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a twig shall grow forth out of his roots. 2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. 3 And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither decide after the hearing of his ears; 4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the land; and he shall smite the land with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. 5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. 6 And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. 7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the basilisk's den. 9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. 10 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the root of Jesse, that standeth for an ensign of the peoples, unto him shall the nations seek; and his resting-place shall be glorious.

‘Look up, your redemption is drawing near’
From ‘God is in the Manger’, reflections on Advent and Christmas by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Let’s not deceive ourselves. ‘’Your redemption is drawing near’’ (Luke 21:8), whether we know it or not, the only question is: Are we going to let it come to us too, or are we going to resist it? Are we going to join in this movement that comes down from heaven to earth, or are we going to close ourselves off? Christmas is coming – whether it is with us or without us depends on each and every one of us.

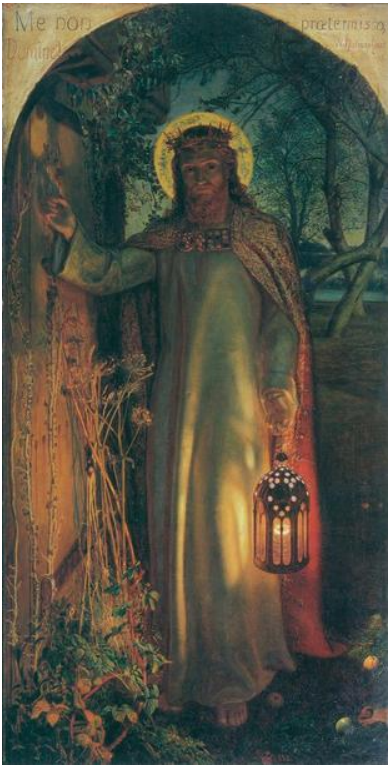
Prayer
by Janet Morley

O God our disturber,
whose speech is pregnant with power
and whose word will be fulfilled:
may we know ourselves unsatisfied
with all that distorts your truth,
and make our hearts attentive
to your liberating voice,
in Jesus Christ.
Amen

Monday 21 December - The Light of the World

John 8:12

When Jesus spoke again to the people he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life'.



'I am the light of the world' by Holman Hunt

The Grace and the Impatience to Wait
by Walter Brueggemann

In our secret yearnings
We wait for your coming,
And in our grinding despair
We doubt that you will.
And in this privileged place
We are surrounded by witnesses who
Yearn more than do we
And by those who despair more deeply than do we.
Look upon your church and its pastors
in this season of hope
Which runs so quickly to fatigue,
And in this season of yearning
Which becomes so easily quarrelsome.
Give us grace and the impatience
To wait for your coming to the bottom of our toes
To the edges of our fingertips.
We do not want our several worlds to end
Come in your power
And come in your weakness
In any case
And make all things new .
Amen

Prayer

Gracious God,
Let the light of your love shine in our hearts and may we see it reflected in the hearts of all we meet.
Amen.

