



 St James's
PICCADILLY

Lent Contemplative Space

A regular space for prayer, readings,
and silence throughout Lent

Friday 16 February - Friday 22 March
2024

Lent Contemplative Space 2024

What? Each session will be facilitated by a member of the St James's Church community and will include a welcome, guided silence, a scripture reading, a poem, a prayer and time to share reflections.

Where? Live streamed on Zoom [here](#)

Who? Everyone is welcome to attend for all or part of the time each evening.

Schedule		
Week One	Fri 16 February	6pm - 7pm
Week Two	Mon 19 February Wed 21 February Fri 23 February	6pm - 7pm 6pm - 7pm 6pm - 7pm
Week Three	Mon 26 February Wed 28 February Fri 1 March	6pm - 7pm 6pm - 7pm 6pm - 7pm
Week Four	Mon 4 March Wed 6 March Fri 8 March	6pm - 7pm 6pm - 7pm 6pm - 7pm
Week Five	Mon 11 March Wed 13 March Fri 15 March	6pm - 7pm 6pm - 7pm 6pm - 7pm
Week Six	Mon 18 March Wed 20 March Fri 22 March	6pm - 7pm 6pm - 7pm 6pm - 7pm

Week One: Let the Journey Begin

FRIDAY 16 FEBRUARY

Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But he answered, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." '

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you", and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone." Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." '

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.' Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him." Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

For Lent by Madeleine L'Engle

It is my Lent to break my Lent,
To eat when I would fast,
To know when slender strength is spent,
Take shelter from the blast
When I would run with wind and rain,
To sleep when I would watch.
It is my Lent to smile at pain
But not ignore its touch.

It is my Lent to listen well
When I would be alone,
To talk when I would rather dwell
In silence, turn from none
Who call on me, to try to see
That what is truly meant

Is not my choice. If Christ's I'd be
It's thus I'll keep my Lent.

Prayer

Dear God help us to embrace this Lenten period with an open and trusting heart which tries to embrace the beauty and the suffering in the world and in ourselves without fear and apprehension.

Week Two: To Stop - To Listen - To Trust

MONDAY 19 FEBRUARY

Luke 12: 22-31

Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life[a]? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?"

"Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well."

Zero Circle by Rumi

Be helpless, dumbfounded,
Unable to say yes or no.
Then a stretcher will come from grace
to gather us up.

We are too dull-eyed to see that beauty.
If we say we can, we're lying.
If we say No, we don't see it,
That No will behead us
And shut tight our window onto spirit.

So let us rather not be sure of anything,
 Beside ourselves, and only that, so
 Miraculous beings come running to help.
 Crazy, lying in a zero circle, mute,
 We shall be saying finally,
 With tremendous eloquence, lead us.
 When we have totally surrendered to that beauty,
 We shall be a mighty kindness.

Prayer

Holy one, help me to overcome my fear of the unknown and trust that you are directing my whole being to your loving embrace.

WEDNESDAY 21 FEBRUARY

Luke 18: 9-14

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

I'm Nobody! Who are you? By Emily Dickinson

I'm Nobody! Who are you?
 Are you - Nobody - too?
 Then there's a pair of us!
 Don't tell! they'd advertise - you know!

How dreary - to be - Somebody!
 How public - like a Frog -
 To tell one's name - the livelong June -
 To an admiring Bog!

Prayer

Dear God, Help us to accept ourselves and others with love and humour and to always remember that your love for us is not dependent on our worthiness but on your unconditional and everlasting love.
Let us be bound together as we go our diverse ways united in love.

FRIDAY 23 FEBRUARY

Matthew 11:25-28

At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

"All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Love by George Herbert

Love bade me welcome. Yet my soul drew me back
 Guilty of dust and sin.
 But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance in,
 Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
 If I lacked any thing.

A guest, I answered, worthy to be here:
 Love said, You shall be he.
 I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear,
 I cannot look on thee.
 Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
 Who made the eyes but I?

Truth Lord, but I have marred them: let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve.
 And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?
 My dear, then I will serve.
 You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:
 So I did sit and eat.

Prayer

O God, you love me with your whole being.
Please heal my wounded heart and allow me to feel the depth of your desire and love.

Week Three: To Fight the Good Fight

MONDAY 26 FEBRUARY

Psalm 82. To fight the good fight

God presides in the great assembly;
he renders judgment among the "gods":

"How long will you defend the unjust
and show partiality to the wicked?

Defend the weak and the fatherless;
uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.

Rescue the weak and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

"The 'gods' know nothing, they understand nothing.
They walk about in darkness;
all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

"I said, 'You are "gods";
you are all sons of the Most High.'

But you will die like mere mortals;
you will fall like every other ruler."

Rise up, O God, judge the earth,
for all the nations are your inheritance.

Zulu personal declaration 1825 South Africa (extract)

My neighbour and I have the same origins
We have the same life-experiences and a common destiny
We are the obverse and reverse sides of one entity
We are unchanging equals
We are faces which see themselves in each other
We are mutually fulfilling complements
We are simultaneously legitimate values
My neighbour's sorrow is my sorrow
His joy is my joy

She and I are mutually fulfilled when we stand by each other in moments of need
 Their survival is a precondition of my survival

Prayer

Holy one,
 May we pray for the healing of possessions, control and superiority.
 Help us to create systems and societies that encourage and foster
 Your kingdom on earth where justice and love prevail.

WEDNESDAY 28 FEBRUARY

Luke 13: 31-34

At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."

He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' 33 In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.

To a Freedom Fighter by Maya Angelou

You drink a bitter draught.
 I sip the tears your eyes fight to hold
 A cup of lees, of henbane steeped in chaff.
 Your breast is hot,
 Your anger black and cold,
 Through evening's rest, you dream
 I hear the moans, you die a thousands' death.
 When cane straps flog the body
 dark and lean, you feel the blow,
 I hear it in your breath.

Prayer

Dear God, Your son showed us what it is to stand up for truth and justice.
 May we always be thankful and honour those people throughout history
 who also gave their lives in the pursuit of justice and freedom for all humankind.

FRIDAY 1 MARCH

Psalm 49, from *Rejoice Beloved Women. The Psalms Revisioned* by **Barbara J. Monda**.

Listen carefully everyone. I have wisdom to give you. I can see into the heart and my ear is turned to truth.

My insight is in harmony with God's music. Rich and poor, simple and perplexed pay attention! Do not be afraid. Power and wealth cannot save us. No one is smart enough or rich enough to fool Providence.

We cannot buy our way to wholeness nor can we trick death. Wise and stupid alike die and leave their possessions to others.

Neither can we entirely control our progress towards goodness. What has been set before us is what we have to work with.

Trusting in the fairness of Chokmah is all we can do. She sees our efforts and our failures as no one else does.

Do not envy or judge the rich since you are not living behind their eyes nor can you read their souls.

The poor and the powerful all pass on together, naked and empty handed. It is only the riches of the spirit that move with them.

How well have they loved? Have they honoured truth? Have they used well what they were given. Were they humble?

Wise Mother, Chokmah, knows the gifts that were offered them and what now fills their souls. Only this wealth will win a place with her.

Rosa Parks

I learned to put my trust in God and to see him as my strength. Long ago I set my mind to be a free person and not to give in to fear. I always felt it was my right to defend myself if I could. I have learned over the years that when one's mind is made up this diminishes fear knowing what must be done does away with fear.

Prayer

Holy one
Help us to see what must be done and give us the courage to act on this insight with courage and determination.

Week Four: In Praise of God's Wisdom and Love

MONDAY 4 MARCH

Proverbs 8:22-31

"The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works
 before his deeds of old;
 I was formed long ages ago,
 at the very beginning, when the world came to be.
 When there were no watery depths, I was given birth,
 when there were no springs overflowing with water;
 before the mountains were settled in place,
 before the hills, I was given birth,
 before he made the world or its fields
 or any of the dust of the earth.
 I was there when he set the heavens in place,
 when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep,
 when he established the clouds above
 and fixed securely the fountains of the deep,
 when he gave the sea its boundary
 so the waters would not overstep his command,
 and when he marked out the foundations of the earth.
 Then I was constantly at his side.
 I was filled with delight day after day,
 rejoicing always in his presence,
 rejoicing in his whole world
 and delighting in humankind.

Ibn Al Arabi

You thought yourself a part small:
 Witness in you there is a universe
 The greatest
 That is to say think of yourself a small thing whereas in you
 There is hidden the biggest of the universes
 The meaning of the Quaranic verse
 Becomes clear to the Gnostics
 Wherever you turn there is the face of God.

Prayer

May your dark light of wisdom penetrate my soul and help me to long for you each day.
 It is for you, God, that my parched soul thirsts.

WEDNESDAY 6 MARCH

Psalm 1 from **Rejoice Beloved Women. The Psalms Revised** by Barbara J. Monda.

Happy are those who trust in the counsel of wise women
They guide you to a right heart.

You will delight in their words and you will see wonder in all things that image them.

In both night and day there is light that gives vision and there is light that blinds.
Be cautious of people who claim too much

They may be thieves eager to steal attention and feast on the unsuspecting who have eagerly revealed themselves.

Filled they go off and leave behind the empty shells of those too willing to be open expecting more than an ordinary day offers.

The holy among you appear as any other. Their counsel however comes from truth aligned to all there is. They exaggerate nothing.

It is by the gift the giver is known. See what you have when a woman leaves your presence.
Are you empty or connected to goodness?

A good woman tuned to herself speaks the truth and no more. She believes God made her in her own image, with no regrets.

Planned in the presence of these wise ones, you are like trees nourished by the fruit that falls on you and yet sheltered from a burning sun.

Of their bounty you benefit, yet there is no cost to you in their giving. A holy women rooted in God creates harmony from noise.

Wild Geese by **Mary Oliver**

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,

calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

Mother God

Continue to show us where we can find you, and delight in the world and the many gifts you have bestowed on all of your children.

FRIDAY 8 MARCH

Luke 15:1-7 The Lost Sheep

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

The Hound of Heaven by Francis Thompson (extract)

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
'All things betray thee, who betrayest Me.'

I pleaded, outlaw-wise,
By many a hearted casement, curtained red,

Trellised with intertwining charities;
 (For, though I knew His love Who followèd,
 Yet was I sore adread
 Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside).

Prayer

Dear God,
 I know you are with me in my strength and weakness.
 Show me how to celebrate weakness as a sign of growth into your heart.

Week Five: A time for guidance and support

MONDAY 11 MARCH

Ode to the United Nations by Maya Angelou (1995)

A Brave and Startling Truth

We, this people, on a small and lonely planet
 Traveling through casual space
 Past aloof stars, across the way of indifferent suns
 To a destination where all signs tell us
 It is possible and imperative that we learn
 A brave and startling truth

And when we come to it
 To the day of peacemaking
 When we release our fingers
 From fists of hostility
 And allow the pure air to cool our palms

When we come to it
 When the curtain falls on the minstrel show of hate
 And faces sooted with scorn are scrubbed clean
 When battlefields and coliseum
 No longer rake our unique and particular sons and daughters
 Up with the bruised and bloody grass
 To lie in identical plots in foreign soil

When the rapacious storming of the churches
 The screaming racket in the temples have ceased
 When the pennants are waving gaily
 When the banners of the world tremble
 Stoutly in the good, clean breeze

When we come to it
 When we let the rifles fall from our shoulders
 And children dress their dolls in flags of truce
 When land mines of death have been removed
 And the aged can walk into evenings of peace
 When religious ritual is not perfumed
 By the incense of burning flesh
 And childhood dreams are not kicked awake
 By nightmares of abuse

When we come to it
 Then we will confess that not the Pyramids
 With their stones set in mysterious perfection
 Nor the Gardens of Babylon
 Hanging as eternal beauty
 In our collective memory
 Not the Grand Canyon
 Kindled into delicious color
 By Western sunsets

Nor the Danube, flowing its blue soul into Europe
 Not the sacred peak of Mount Fuji
 Stretching to the Rising Sun
 Neither Father Amazon nor Mother Mississippi who, without favor,
 Nurture all creatures in the depths and on the shores
 These are not the only wonders of the world

When we come to it
 We, this people, on this minuscule and kithless globe
 Who reach daily for the bomb, the blade and the dagger
 Yet who petition in the dark for tokens of peace
 We, this people on this mote of matter
 In whose mouths abide cankerous words
 Which challenge our very existence
 Yet out of those same mouths
 Come songs of such exquisite sweetness
 That the heart falters in its labor
 And the body is quieted into awe

We, this people, on this small and drifting planet
 Whose hands can strike with such abandon
 That in a twinkling, life is sapped from the living
 Yet those same hands can touch with such healing, irresistible tenderness
 That the haughty neck is happy to bow
 And the proud back is glad to bend

Out of such chaos, of such contradiction
 We learn that we are neither devils nor divines

When we come to it
 We, this people, on this wayward, floating body
 Created on this earth, of this earth
 Have the power to fashion for this earth
 A climate where every man and every woman
 Can live freely without sanctimonious piety
 Without crippling fear

When we come to it
 We must confess that we are the possible
 We are the miraculous, the true wonder of this world
 That is when, and only when
 We come to it.

Martin Luther King

We must accept
 Finite disappointment
 But never lose infinite Hope.

Prayer

Dear God
 Help us to continue to live with infinite hope
 and to thank everyone who has inspired and strengthened us
 on this often difficult journey towards justice
 and a realisation of your Kingdom on Earth.

WEDNESDAY 13 MARCH

Matthew 16:13-16

Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

Bede Griffiths

To discover God
 is not to discover an idea
 but to discover oneself
 It is to awaken
 to that part of one's existence
 which has been hidden from sight
 and which one has refused to recognise.
 The discovery may be very painful.
 It is like going through
 a kind of death.

But it is the one thing
 which makes life
 worth living.

Prayer by Ghandi

My imperfections and failures are as much a blessing from God as my successes and my talents
 and I lay them both at your feet.

FRIDAY 15 MARCH**Thomas Merton Psalm**

Let this be my only consolation - that, wherever I am,
 You my Lord are loved and praised.
 The trees indeed love You without knowing You
 Without being aware of Your Presence.
 The tiger lilies and cornflowers proclaim that they love You.
 The beautiful dark clouds ride slowly across the sky musing on You
 Like children who do not know what they are dreaming of as they play.

In the midst of them all, I know You and I know of Your Presence
 In them and in me I know of the love that they do not know,
 And what is greater. I am abashed by the presence of Your love in me.

O kind and terrible love which you have given me
 and which could never be in my heart if you did not love me!

In the midst of these beings that have never offended You
 I am loved by You, most of all as one who has offended You.
 I am seen by You under the sky and my offenses have been forgotten by You.

Pierre Teilhard De Chardin

I stepped down into the most hidden depth of my being, lamp in hand and ears alert, to discover whether in the deepest recesses of the blackness within me I might see the glint of the waters of the current that flows on, whether I might not hear the murmur of the mysterious waters that rise from the uttermost depth, and will burst forth no one knows where. With terror and intoxicating emotion I realised my poor trifling existence was one with the immensity of all that is and all that is in the process of becoming.

Prayer

Dear God,

In response to this dawning realisation I can only echo Walt Whitman's famous statement 'As for me I know of nothing else but miracles'.

Amen.

Week Six: To Suffer - To Love - To be Forgiven

MONDAY 18 MARCH

Mark 14:32-42

They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."

Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

Go to the Limits of Your Longing by Rainer Maria Rilke

God speaks to each of us as he makes us,
then walks with us silently out of the night.

These are the words we dimly hear:
You, sent out beyond your recall,
go to the limits of your longing.
Embody me.

Flare up like a flame
and make big shadows I can move in.

Let everything happen to you: beauty and terror.
Just keep going. No feeling is final.
Don't let yourself lose me.

Nearby is the country they call life.

You will know it by its seriousness.

Give me your hand.

Prayer

Dear God,
Give us the courage to go to the limits of our longing. To embrace the beauty and the terror
And to trust as Christ did that our father and mother in heaven will take our hand and lead us
where we need to be.

WEDNESDAY 20 MARCH

Philippians: 4.4-8

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all.
The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and
petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which
transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is
pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think
about such things.

God's Bucket by **Hafiz** (extract)

Your existence my friend, O love my dear
 Has been sealed and marked
 "Too sacred," "too sacred" by the Beloved
 To ever end!

Indeed God
 Has written a thousand promises
 All over your heart

That say,
 Life, life, life
 Is far too sacred to ever end.

Prayer

Holy One,
 Let us always remember how precious we are in the sight of God. We ask for the grace to honour that preciousness in ourselves and all those we meet in our daily lives.

FRIDAY 22 MARCH**Luke 23:32-34**

Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

Veneration of the Cross by **Nicola Slee** (extract)

As I take the cross in my hand and kiss it,
 I am committing myself,
 not to sacrificial suffering, but to the struggle for life
 which nevertheless has to wrestle
 with the forces of death and destruction and hostility.
 I am saying I am willing to be engaged in that struggle and to pay its cost.

I am choosing life with open eyes,
 I am cognisant of the cost such a choice may demand.
 I am aligning myself with all who work for justice, peace and liberation.

I am placing myself on the side of life.

Christ whose cross has been used and abused
to justify slavery, the abuse of women, the misery of the poor:
Make us strong to resist every exploitation of another
and ready to pay the cost of the struggle for life

Prayer

Dear God,

Let us never forget those precious words that Christ uttered by with his dying breath 'Father forgive them for they know not what they do'. In our struggle for justice for the poor and oppressed let us honour the true meaning of the Cross that all are equally loved by God and deserve equal respect and dignity.

St James's Church, Piccadilly

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