

Heavenly Father, whose children suffered at the hands of Herod, though they had done no wrong:

by the suffering of your Son and by the innocence of our lives frustrate all evil designs and establish your reign of justice and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen

God in Trinity, eternal unity of perfect love: gather the nations to be one family, and draw us into your holy life through the birth of Emmanuel, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen

BIBLE READINGS

Jeremiah 31.15–17

Thus says the Lord:

A voice is heard in Ramah,
lamentation and bitter weeping.

Rachel is weeping for her children;
she refuses to be comforted for her children,
because they are no more.

¹⁶ Thus says the Lord:

Keep your voice from weeping,
and your eyes from tears;
for there is a reward for your work,
says the Lord:

they shall come back from the land of the enemy;

¹⁷ there is hope for your future,
says the Lord:

your children shall come back to their own country.

1 Corinthians 1.26–29

Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, ²⁹so that no one might boast in the presence of God.

Matthew 2.13–18

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.'¹⁴ Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt,¹⁵ and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.'

16 When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men.¹⁷ Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

¹⁸ 'A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.'

THE POST COMMUNION PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, in your humility you have stooped to share our human life with the most defenceless of your children: may we who have received these gifts of your passion rejoice in celebrating the witness of the Holy Innocents to the purity of your sacrifice made once for all upon the cross; for you are alive and reign, now and for ever.

Amen.

FOR YOUR PRAYERS:

Let us pray to God, who chose to dwell among us, sharing our humanity and drawing us together in love.

God of light and love, we pray for your Church throughout the world. In this season of Christmas, renew us in the joy of the Incarnation. Help us to be a welcoming community, where all are known, valued, and loved. May we bear witness to Christ not only in words, but in lives shaped by kindness, humility, and hope.

God of peace, we pray for our world and for all communities marked by division, conflict, or fear.

At the close of this year, we ask for healing where there has been harm, and for courage to build understanding where there is mistrust. Guide those in positions of leadership, that they may seek justice, protect the vulnerable, and work for the common good.

God of compassion, we pray for our local community: for our families, neighbours, schools, and workplaces. Bless all who have welcomed others this Christmas, and those who have felt isolated or overlooked. Help us to notice one another, to offer friendship, and to share the warmth and generosity we have received.

God who knows our hearts, we pray for all who find this season difficult: those who are grieving, those who are unwell, those facing uncertainty, loneliness, or exhaustion. May they know your presence close beside them, and may we, as a community, be gentle signs of your care.

God of new beginnings, as this year draws towards its end, we offer to you all that has been, and all that lies ahead. Help us to carry the light of Christ into the ordinary days to come, that our homes and our lives may reflect your love.

Amen

Views from the Pews: Jen's Lens

Merry Christmas!

I hope everyone has had the most joyous couple of days celebrating Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Whether church or home, a huge amount of work goes into making those two days wonderfully special. It's exhausting but happy work, and I hope that everyone has been able to savour the joy of it all.

We are now in that strange, in-between stretch of time between Christmas and New Year, when the whole country seems to exhale a collectively held breath. Christmas is done, the offices are still shut, and no one quite knows what day it is. I like to think of this as the *reset* - a brief pause when my brain doesn't need to plan the next thing, and I'm allowed simply to enjoy being at home with the family. I spend a lot of time in pyjamas.

Spiritually, this in-between time matters more than we often realise. The Church, too, resists rushing on. Christmas doesn't end on the 25th; it lingers. We are invited to sit with the miracle of God-with-us a little longer, to let it settle. The Word has become flesh and now we live with that truth, slowly, gently, day by ordinary day.

There's a lovely line in *About Time* where the father says, "We're all travelling through time together, every day of our lives. All we can do is do our best to relish this remarkable ride." That feels very fitting for this week. Nothing dramatic is required. No resolutions yet. Just presence. Just gratitude. Just noticing the gift of being here, now.

This quieter space also gives us room to glance ahead, not with anxiety, but with hope. As the calendar edges towards a new year, and even towards the longer horizon of 2026 and beyond, we do so carrying the promise of Christmas with us. God has chosen to dwell among us, not just for a holy night, but for all our days. Whatever lies ahead - change, challenge, joy, uncertainty - we do not step into it alone.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote, "What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us." As we look ahead, my hope is that what lies within us is joy, love, and hope - the quiet strength that carries us forward. Scripture echoes that reassurance. Proverbs reminds us, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart... and he will make your paths straight." There is something deeply comforting in that promise: that whatever the year ahead may hold, we do not walk it alone, but are guided and held as we go.

So perhaps this week, before life gears up again, we allow ourselves to rest a little. To relish the ride. To trust that the same God who came to us in vulnerability and love will continue to guide us into the future - into a new year, and all the years beyond - with faithfulness and grace.

May this gentle pause be a blessing and may the hope of Christmas quietly shape whatever comes next.

I wish you all a wonderful week ahead!

Jen