

Peace and Quiet in Troubled Times

January 2026

Welcome to this opportunity to give yourself time and space away from the daily tasks, worries and fears which put our minds in turmoil. You are invited to focus on the music, words and pictures. You may find it helpful to read the poems out loud and then to keep silences in between, entering into an oasis of calm, to engage in 'mindfulness'. Each month we explore a different theme, relevant to our common experiences of life and the world around us. We follow the pattern of the seasons of the Church year.

Please click on the underlined text beneath the images to hear the music via YouTube. Please do skip any adverts that appear.

We are starting a new year which for many people here and all over the world will not seem any different from the old year before Christmas, especially those suffering in war zones. Hopefully most of us in our communities will have been blessed with some precious time with our families. However, Christmas is more than just a season: it is the promise of light in the darkness which surrounds us; it is the hope of the possibility of peace in the world; it is the blessing of God's love in our hearts. It is a love to be shared with others as the season of Epiphany in this new year reminds us that God's love through Jesus was to be revealed to the world.

Epiphany Then and Now



Twelfth Night

It looks much as it did before,
Now that the cards and decorations
Have come down.
The furniture of life is back in place,
The old routine takes over.
But are we the same?
Is there no echo of the angels' song
Lifting our spirits, no stillness
In our hearts, reminding us that
We were there, just for a moment,
At that birth,
Catching a glimpse of glory?
Let's not put that away,
Tangled with tinsel, for another time.
Let's ponder in our hearts, like Mary,
And let the Child grow with us
Through the year.



Ann Lewin - Watching for the Kingfisher

Excerpt from 'For the time being'

.....Once again

As in previous years' we have seen the actual Vision and failed
To do more than entertain it as an agreeable
Possibility, once again we have sent Him away,
Begging though to remain His disobedient servant,
The promising child who cannot keep His word for long.
The Christmas feast is already a fading memory.

W.H. Auden

As Luke tells us in his Gospel two people Simeon and Anna who saw the vision, the child Jesus revealed for who he is, were profoundly affected. Simeon spoke words which were recorded in the Gospel as his 'song' and are still being used as part of the Church's evensong service.

'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,
According to Thy word:

For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;
A light to lighten the Gentiles,
And the glory of thy people Israel.



https://youtu.be/8vtHBGOz_Ns
Geoffrey Burgon – Nunc Dimittis

Senior moment

His parents brought him
In obedience to the Law,
A baby six weeks old,
To offer thanks and
Dedicate their son.
Nothing unusual -
But for Simeon and Anna,
Revelation.

Only mentioned once,
These two had been around
Waiting and watching
Prayerfully for years,
Longing to see salvation.
And patience was rewarded
When they saw the Child.

A moment of recognition,

Matthew tells us in his Gospel that Jesus was revealed to wise men/kings from the East who offered him gifts:

And they spoke about
Fulfilment, theirs and his.
For once old people
Had the best lines.

Age does not have to mean
Diminishment. There may
well be
Constraints, but there is also
Space and time for patient
Prayerful growth to
Wisdom's fruitfulness.

Ann Lewin

The Meeting place

(after Rubens: The Adoration of the Magi, 1634)

It was the arrival of the kings

that caught us unawares;
we'd looked in on the woman in the barn,
curiosity you could call it,
something to do on a cold winter's night;
we'd wished her well -
that was the best we could do, she was in pain,
and the next thing we knew
she was lying on the straw
 - the little there was of it -
and there was this baby in her arms.

It was, as I say, the kings
that caught us unawares. . .
Women have babies every other day,
not that we are there-
let's call it a common occurrence though,
giving birth. But kings
appearing in a stable with a
'Is this the place?' and kneeling,
each with his gift held out towards the child!

They didn't even notice us.
Their robes trailed on the floor,
rich, lined robes that money couldn't buy.
What must this child be
to bring kings from distant lands
with costly incense and gold?
What could a tiny baby make of that?

And what were we to make of
was it angels falling through the air,
entwined and falling as if from the rafters
to where the gaze of the kings met the child's
-assuming the child could see?
What would the mother do with the gift?
What would become of the child?

And we'll never admit there are angels
or that somewhere between
one man's eyes and another's
is a holy place, a space where a king could be
at one with a naked child,
at one with an astonished soldier.

Christopher Pilling



Suitable Presents

If it's the thought that counts,
What were they thinking of
To give him these, Gold
Frankincense and Myrrh?
Extraordinary gifts to give a child.



When Mary pondered, later, on these things,
I wonder if she thought that
These are given to all -
Gold: our potential, gifts that make us
Royal, each in our own domain;
Incense: our aspirations, prayers
And dreams, calling us on;
Myrrh: soothing healing for our pain.
Not gifts for children,
But, like him, we'll grow.

Ann Lewin

Incarnatus Est (He has been made flesh)

Glory to God on earth peace
Let this song never cease.

As I arise this morn
Christ in me be born

When I wash my face
Bless me with your grace

When I comb my hair
Keep me from despair

When I put on my clothes
Your presence Lord disclose

This is the day that you are born
Let every day be a Christmas morn

Glory to God on earth peace
Let this song never cease.

David Adam - The Edge of Glory



<https://youtu.be/AZfD5KrH5d8>

Be thou my vision



From 'Christmas begins' (Fellowship of Reconciliation NY)

When the song of the angels is stilled
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,
To heal the broken
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To make peace among the people,
To make music in the heart.

Howard Thurman

Love reaches out

What was God doing
as he studied the victims
of the latest Extreme
Weather Event?

What was God doing
for the carefree child
running into the road
just as the car accelerated?

What was God doing
while the fittest worked out
their next brutal plan
of survival?

These questions will not be answered today
or any other day.
But something happens
when love reaches out.

A hand stretches down
from the rescue craft.
Tears sting
behind the eyes.

Something breaks
when love reaches out.
It might be a heart,
or a burst dam of pride.

Love overthrows
the government of fear.
If your hands are full
what can you reach for?

Your trophies and pride
will be scattered about
when you reach out for love,
or when love reaches out.

Godfrey Rust - Welcome to the
Real World



<https://youtu.be/mKECLKZAw6k>

The Hollies – He ain't heavy

*If I'm laden at all
I'm laden with sadness
That everyone's heart
Isn't filled with the gladness
Of love for one another
It's a long, long road
From which there is no return
While we're on the way to there
Why not share
And the load
Doesn't weigh me down at all
He ain't heavy, he's my brother*

Gifts

Gifts come in strange ways -
when we least expect them;
when they're hardly needed;
when we're unprepared...

Gifts of hope
in the midst of sadness;
gift of healing
in the face of brokenness;
gifts of love
in the depths of despair.

Help me to expect the gift of hope
even when I didn't think there'd be one;
make me ready for the gift of healing
even when I didn't know I needed one;
prepare me now for the gift of love
even when I didn't believe love would be enough.

Tom Gordon - A blessing to follow



<https://youtu.be/GNeAbvwmwxI>

Vivaldi – The Four Seasons



From the chapter "Shock waves of Bethlehem"

God's secrets are strewn extravagantly around us. God's finger prints are everywhere. Nothing has ever been written by theologians about God's beautiful presence that hasn't been better traced in the crystal calligraphy of a frosty morning. Nothing has ever been preached by saints about divine intimacy that hasn't been better sung by the summer wind in the roadside trees. And nothing has ever been created by artists about incarnate love that hasn't been more poignantly revealed in the sleepy eye of a new baby.

Daniel J. O'Leary - Unmasking God

Out of the Ordinary

out of the ordinary comes love
big enough to build a house that's open
to those who yearn that God might enter in,
and breathe light through the dark that we have made

out of the ordinary love that spreads
wide her arms, embracing those
left by the side of the road, who've heard
time after time they are not good enough

out of the ordinary God that comes
into life not to kill joy but to kindle it, a God
who's crossed out all our wrongs and welcomes us
back home with happiness,
bigger than we ever could believe



Kenneth Steven



<https://youtu.be/S6kQW17zBWg>

Mozart Clarinet Concerto