



# Rhythm

by **OneBodyOneFaith**

This **Advent**, find a **Rhythm**

**Rhythm** will create space for LGBT+ community, drawing on monastic tradition by valuing the richness of creating a daily rhythm that encourages us to commune with God, commune with ourselves, and commune with others.

You can find out more information via:  
[www.onebodyonefaith.org.uk/rhythm](http://www.onebodyonefaith.org.uk/rhythm)

Dear friend,

We are delighted that you have come across this Advent material, produced by **OneBodyOneFaith** as we begin our exciting new community: **Rhythm**.

This series is a gift to you, an entirely free selection of reflections and prayers to offer a daily rhythm throughout the season of Advent. Whether you're a member of **OneBodyOneFaith** or not, interested in what **Rhythm** might have to offer or not, this material is for you should you wish to use it.

We have asked LGBT+ voices to contribute to this series, privileging marginalised experience whilst also hearing from some of our valued allies too. We have no set theme or structure – only to reflect on this season of waiting in this year of extended, and perhaps fraying, patience. I am deeply grateful to everyone who has contributed.

It is our hope that you use what works for you, gently set aside that which doesn't, and find time to make a small space for yourself and God this Advent.

With love,

Luke Dowding  
Executive Director, **OneBodyOneFaith**



# This **Advent**, find a **Rhythm**

Welcome to **Advent** and to **Rhythm**!

Those of us who identify as LGBT+ are well used to finding or making communities. Sometimes that is from a place of pain where we have been removed from one community and sometimes that is from a place of welcome and acceptance as we have been included into a new one. Please know that you are welcomed, accepted and celebrated here, whether or not you wish to explore being part of Rhythm long term.

For the season that is Advent we form a community who will use these resources and reflections as a way of navigating this waiting time and preparing to mark the Christmas season in a way we may not have expected. I pray that we may all gain new insights, understandings and joys from the time we spend together as a dispersed Advent community.

With love & Prayers

The Venerable Peter Leonard  
**Chair of Trustees, OneBodyOneFaith**

Advent Reading:

**The Book of Queer Prophets**, edited by Ruth Hunt

**Walking Back to Christmas**, Stephen Cottrell

**Freedom is Coming**, Nick Baines

**Nepantla: An Anthology Dedicated to Queer Poets of Colour**,  
Edited by Christopher Soto

**Tongues of Fire**, Seán Hewitt

**The Peace of Wild Things : And Other Poems**, Wendell Berry

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# This Advent, find a Rhythm

<p>Sunday 29<sup>th</sup></p> <p>1st Sunday of Advent</p> <p>Reflection: Fr Lee Taylor</p>	<p>Monday 30<sup>th</sup></p> <p>St Andrew</p> <p>Reflection: Andrea King</p>	<p>Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> December</p> <p>World Aids Day</p> <p>Reflection: Fr Arnold Ngulube</p>	<p>Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup></p> <p>Reflection: John Bell</p>	<p>Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup></p> <p>Francis Xavier Disability day</p> <p>Reflection: Revd. Pam Davies</p>	<p>Friday 4<sup>th</sup></p> <p>John of Damascus Pray for religious communities</p> <p>Reflection: Molly Boot</p>	<p>Saturday 5<sup>th</sup></p> <p>Reflection: Sarah Hobbs</p>
<p>Sunday 6<sup>th</sup></p> <p>2nd Sunday of Advent</p> <p>Reflection: Revd. Sue Hammersley</p>	<p>Monday 7<sup>th</sup></p> <p>Ambrose Make honey cakes and find out their link to Ambrose.</p> <p>Reflection: The Venerable Peter Leonard</p>	<p>Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup></p> <p>Conception of the BVM Clear out one bin bag worth of clothes, books or toys for a charity shop.</p> <p>Reflection: Lisa-Jayne Lewis</p>	<p>Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup></p> <p>Reflection: David Owen</p>	<p>Thursday 10<sup>th</sup></p> <p>Reflection: Revd. Jide Macaulay</p>	<p>Friday 11<sup>th</sup></p> <p>Get in touch with someone you've not spoken to for a while, perhaps they're on your Christmas card list?</p> <p>Reflection: Revd. Jo Winn-Smith</p>	<p>Saturday 12<sup>th</sup></p> <p>If you haven't got a Poinsettia go and buy one, and research why they're a part of Christmas.</p> <p>Reflection: The Very Revd. Andrew Nunn</p>
<p>Sunday 13<sup>th</sup></p> <p>Gaudette Sunday On the third Sunday of Advent... we wear pink!</p> <p>Reflection: Revd. Jarel Robinson-Brown</p>	<p>Monday 14<sup>th</sup></p> <p>John of the Cross</p> <p>Reflection: Revd. Alex Clare-Young</p>	<p>Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup></p> <p>What is your favourite carol? Find the words, what does it tell us about who Jesus is?</p> <p>Reflection: Revd. Bingo Allison</p>	<p>Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup></p> <p>Reconciliation</p> <p>Reflection: Grey Collier</p>	<p>Thursday 17<sup>th</sup></p> <p>O Wisdom Re-consider your charitable giving and your church giving.</p> <p>Reflection: The Revd. Canon Rachel Mann</p>	<p>Friday 18<sup>th</sup></p> <p>O Lord Christmas jumper day!</p> <p>Reflection: Revd. Mark Rowland</p>	<p>Saturday 19<sup>th</sup></p> <p>O Root of Jesse</p> <p>Reflection: Lu Skerratt</p>
<p>Sunday 20<sup>th</sup></p> <p>4th Sunday of Advent O Key of David</p> <p>Reflection: Ric Stott</p>	<p>Monday 21<sup>st</sup></p> <p>O Dayspring If it's a clear night wrap up warm, grab a hot drink and do some star gazing!</p> <p>Reflection: Rachel Humphrey</p>	<p>Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup></p> <p>O King of the Nations</p> <p>Reflection: The Revd. Canon Mark Oakley</p>	<p>Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup></p> <p>O Emmanuel Reflect on where you have felt God with you on your journey.</p> <p>Reflection: Nigel Nash</p>	<p>Christmas Eve</p> <p>Put your Christmas Tree up! If it's already up take some time to look at the decorations and be thankful for the memories they carry.</p> <p>Reflection: Revd. Dawn Cole-Savidge</p>	<p>Christmas Day</p> <p>FEAST! When you say grace remember those who will not enjoy today.</p>	<p>Boxing Day</p> <p>St Stephen FEAST! Pray for those persecuted and martyred for their faith.</p>



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

Sunday 29th  
1st Sunday of Advent

Reflection: Fr Lee Taylor

Advent: Tuning Up

There's a special kind of noise to the waiting period for a show or an opera to start. The low hum of chatter while people chat excitedly or apologise profusely for having to try to squeeze past you without stepping on your feet. And beneath it all is the sound of the orchestra tuning up. You might catch some familiar refrain in the midst of it all, but generally it is all background, until the lights dim and the first note is played resoundingly into the auditorium.

Christmas, for me, and in my tradition, starts when the first notes of the Proclamation of the Birth of Christ are sounded at Midnight Mass, or if that's not part of the liturgy, when the Gloria is sung for the first time since the beginning of Advent. Christmas starts with a song.

But to get there we need some tuning up. Advent is the season we tune up. Advent comes from the Latin *Adventus*, which means coming, and as we wait to celebrate the coming of Christ in the incarnation, so we also await the coming of Christ as king and judge at the end of time.

As we wait we need to retune ourselves to joyful expectation and hope, even more so this year. That retuning isn't a stubborn refusal to see the world as it is or to make believe that everything is ok with false hope.

Advent meets us in the midst of the chaos and complexity and invites us to rediscover a deep hope, even as we might lament some of our experiences of loss, of isolation, of rejection, even of fear. It is the long clearing of the throat before we kneel at "a world of joys held in a manger" and sing out the joy filled song of Christmas: God with us.



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

**Monday 30th**

St Andrew

Reflection: Andrea King

John 14:16 'I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever'

These words are often heard around Easter time, but in light of the extraordinary year 2020 has been and the particular pressures it has offered to us all, I thought we might well benefit from focussing on these words in the period of Advent.

As we reflect on the tremendous gift offered freely to us all, I wonder if we might all draw a little closer to the limitless Divine relationship with God, recognising that the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, walks step by step beside us. We often hear the Holy Spirit referred to as the 'breath of God' and in a year where it has been so hard for our siblings of colour and those suffering from COVID-19 to breathe – perhaps focussing on breathing in, and breathing out, the Spirit of God is particularly poignant.

Here are some words, written as a prayer, offered to everyone to help focus on breathing in the breath of God, which walks step by step beside you. May these words give you peace, as we look forward to 2021:

Dear Lord

We lift our eyes to you. In the midst of the complexities and challenges we each hold; we stop and focus on You.

We take notice of each breath, breathing in and breathing out – noticing the things around us that we can see.

We take notice of each breath, breathing in and breathing out – noticing the things we can hear.

We take notice of each breath, breathing in and breathing out – noticing the things we feel.

As we breathe, we sense your walk alongside us and find rest in the depth of extraordinary love that You offer

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

**Tuesday 1st December**

World Aids Day

Reflection: Fr Arnold Ngulube

Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland, Zimbabwe

A message from Fr Arnold on World AIDS Day: <https://youtu.be/41M-kf4kibA>

The season of Advent is a period of joyous anticipation for the birth of Jesus. My faith is centred around Jesus: my model for living, my teacher, my Lord. His words and actions compel me to love like him, to embody the Beatitudes, to seek communion with him and with one another.

In the approach to Advent, we are reminded of our common humanity, there is too much hate and hurt towards marginalized communities. Many all over the world are reminded of the Advent message "God is with us". God is not partial, does not subscribe to societal norms but God loves the world and gave Jesus to reveal the full embodiment of God's love for us all, including lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender and queers. Jesus Christ came for all, regardless of our sexual orientation and gender identity.

In the approach to Advent, we are called to glorify and praise God; to worship God, this requires a consciousness of the transcendent, an eternal realm that ensures, reassures and affirms.

In this knowledge, may we all celebrate our humanity in all its diversity, welcome the birth of our saviour, be proud to serve and be encouraged in God's promise.



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

## Wednesday 2nd

Reflection: John Bell

Advent: more than a run-up to the babyfest

For many people, if they think about Advent, they regard it is a time of waiting, maybe even of preparing, and certainly focussed on Christmas. I tend not to go along with that. It's a bit like a couple looking forward to the birth of their first child, but being unprepared for life after the new arrival has appeared.

The root of my dissent stems from lines contained in some Christmas carols suggesting that the child has been born to die, and that Mary could not delight in her baby without also contemplating his death. This endorses the excision of thirty-three years of Jesus' lived life in the Apostle's Creed. For in it the only thing which separates 'born of the Virgin Mary' and 'suffered under Pontius Pilate' is a comma.

If Advent is a time of preparation, it is not just preparing for a birth on 25th December at which we marvel, but more for a life of public ministry in which the adult Jesus exhibits the priorities of God's kingdom and invites us to follow him.

So I see Advent, a season which I love, as a time to make decisions about how I will take the Gospel seriously for the next twelve months. And I feel this very keenly in 2020 when for me, as for others, the routines of daily life have been shattered and what is dismal has been more in profile than what is life-enhancing. We cannot help what we feel whether by way of discouragement, depression, boredom, doubt or disorientation. And to some extent, as long as we live under the shadow of the pandemic, we cannot change what we feel. But we can change what we do.

So here are the kind of questions I will be asking myself in Advent to make decisions about the year ahead. They come in no particular order.

1. What am I going to do with my money in the next year which indicates that I believe in generosity rather than avarice?
2. What humanitarian cause(s) am I going to actively support?
3. What am I going to read in the Bible and elsewhere which will nourish my spirituality?
4. What am I going to do to make my prayer life more fulfilling?
5. Who, in my circle of friends, do I need to see or make contact with more often?
6. What personal skills can I learn or upgrade?
7. What can I do to ensure that I am not shackled to staring at screens of whatever size for the majority of my waking time each day?

Before Advent ends, the answers will be written down and kept in sight to be reviewed from time to time. These are not new year resolutions to be broke but expressions of discipleship to be practised.



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

## Thursday 3rd

Francis Xavier

Disability day

Reflection: Revd. Pam Davies

People tend to fall into one of two groups at this time of year:

1. The first type (a couple of boxes open on the Advent calendar),
2. The second type (all the boxes open on the Advent calendar).

Advent, the season of waiting, is much easier if you know which of those you fall into. (I am unashamedly in the second).

This is a season of expectation, but even as we set out on our yearly journey of reflection, anticipation and hope, we already know how the story ends. Since we already know what's going to happen, those of us who happen to be in the second Advent calendar grouping might be asking, "what's the point of waiting?"

Those who waited for Jesus to be born were active in their expectation. We read of Mary, of Joseph, of Gabriel, of the shepherds (to name just a few). Waiting, for all of them, meant doing something. If you struggle to 'be still' in your waiting, this might be welcome news. Similarly, we wait in the present for God's promises about the future to be fulfilled.

I wonder how God is calling us to prepare as we wait for the world that we live in now to be made new?





# This Advent, find a Rhythm

## Friday 4th

John of Damascus

Pray for religious communities

Reflection: Molly Boot

## Mothers and Shepherds

This song is a far cry from a little town sleeping peacefully under silent stars. It speaks of the indwelling of God in grief; of the discovery of prophecy amidst pain; and of that moment where heaven and earth held their breath, as God chose to live with and liberate all God's children. We watch, and we wait, for the one who was, and is, and is to come.

[commonhymnal.com/songs/mothers-and-shepherds](http://commonhymnal.com/songs/mothers-and-shepherds)

"A Christmas song that forces hope, disaster and pursuit to meet on a painful, yet dauntingly beautiful path that exposes how much we've always needed a saviour." — Brittney Spencer



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

Saturday 5th

Reflection: Sarah Hobbs

I love Advent. For me, the great theme of Advent is hope. Hope is one of the things that I cling to the most. Hope that things could be different. Hope that the world will one day see that us, the other, belongs.

But sometimes I worry. Is hope, bordering on blind optimism, not just self-delusion?

When I was 23, I fell in love with a film. One Friday morning, by the power of VHS, I discovered a discourse on hope in the form of *The Shawshank Redemption*. It tells the story of the 19-year incarceration of a wrongly imprisoned man who had every right to consider that hope had deserted him. He wrestled with hope. He is told that "hope is a dangerous thing." And instead he chooses to believe that, "hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and that no good thing ever dies."

There is so much today that would tempt us to give up. To choose despair rather than hope. To believe lies rather than the Truth. But as you ready yourself for Christmas, remember Jesus. The child in the stable came into the world against all the odds. He defied a murderous party sent to kill him, he grew up and fought against every prevailing prejudice. And he succeeded in his life's mission to become hope.

Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things. This Christmas, perhaps it's crazy, but I'm sticking with hope and am looking forward to celebrating the birth of its source.



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup>  
2nd Sunday of Advent

Reflection: Revd. Sue Hammersley

There's a Chinese proverb which says, it's better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.

It's OK to rage against those who claim to know the mind of God and question our faith... how dare they claim authority with such a lack of love?

But even one fragile, flickering candle can cut through the darkness.

Lighting a candle of hope can help us remember all those who have shown us what it means to love, who've shown us that love is stronger than all that threatens to overwhelm it.

Light a candle of hope this Advent and perhaps your fragile light will be a beacon of hope to others who are trying to find their way.



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

## Monday 7th

Ambrose

Make honey cakes and find out their link to Ambrose.

Reflection: The Venerable Peter Leonard

A Prayer as we go Adventing...

Come Lord Jesus and meet us in our God given,  
beautiful, creative, and diverse humanity.  
Come, and as we wait, give us wisdom to use the waiting time well.

To fight for justice,  
to lift up the fallen,  
to feed the hungry,  
to clothe the naked,  
to sit with the lonely,  
to walk alongside the excluded.

Delight us in discovering that you already here amongst us  
in those we serve and those who serve us.

Draw us deeper into you, that your love, your joy, and your peace may so fill our lives  
that it overflows into those around us  
and your kingdom comes through each one of us.

Amen.



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

## Tuesday 8th

Conception of the BVM

Clear out one bin bag worth of clothes, books or toys for a charity shop.

Reflection: Lisa-Jayne Lewis

Advent: A time for decluttering.

I know in Advent we tend to think of expectation and waiting as the buzz words of the season, but I'd like to suggest there is another element we can bring to this time of year.

I'm sure those of you who know me know that I am currently writing a book all about decluttering becoming a spiritual discipline, rather than a voyeuristic show on Netflix with a certain Ms Kondo. However this got me thinking that Advent is a good season for letting things go, in order to make space for what is to come. You see if we are expecting and waiting for good things to happen (and I realize that I am writing this in 2020, which has taught us that expectations may have to be quickly adapted!) then we need to make the room for them.

Getting rid of what we don't need in order to make room for things we do is all around us at this time of year. We've just been through autumn, a season where nature naturally declutters itself. The trees shed their leaves, these have been useful to them for a given time, but now they are no longer needed. If the tree were to hang on to its old leaves it would not be able to grow; the old leaves have done their job and are no longer able to sustain the life of the tree, in order to live, and to bloom again next year, the tree needs to make space for new leaves to grow. A God-ordained natural declutter happens.

So if God has ordained that the tree needs to declutter in order to grow, then surely that is true for us too. If we are able to declutter things in our lives, it will ultimately lead to growth as we've made room for that to happen. Now I'm not saying that we should all start rummaging through our cupboards and throwing things out, but equally I'm not going to stop you doing that either, I think that maybe Advent is a good season to think about what (or who) is cluttering up our lives and whether this might be the time we devote to shedding that which is inhibiting our growth. Maybe it is physical 'stuff', maybe it is digital clutter, maybe it is mental clutter, old thoughts, old stories that we cling to, maybe it's people who hold us back. It all weighs heavy on us, more than we sometimes realize.

Take a little time to think about what is preventing you from growing and flourishing in to the beloved child of God that you are, and maybe think about ways you might take steps to decluttering this Advent, in order to prepare for the things to come.



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

Wednesday 9th

Reflection: David Owen

Advent is usually the season we start to talk of peace on earth, or the Prince of Peace. There is though, another side, the peace that the Christ child offers is seen in conflict with the 'World', however we understand that. Advent speaks to our internal conflicts as well to the external ones we are, unfortunately, all too familiar with and battered and bruised by.

If the British Army was going into battle for the future of this country, would they ignore the Marines; the SAS; the SBS i.e., its most experienced, battle hardened troops? No, it would bring the best.

The Church is in such a battle every day and not for one country, but for the soul of the world. The Adversary, the Tempter, the Prince of this world are roaming the world each day bringing human souls to hell and they are winning: just glance at any headline or tweet.

And the Church ties at least one hand behind its back by ignoring the crack troops of the LGBTQ community, a community which has fought for every inch of respect, peace and space in Christ's church which it has slowly gained over decades and centuries.

The discrimination; the disdain; the outright hatred and exclusion has made this community tougher than any Christian should need to be. This community has thrown itself against the Church's walls of indifference for the cycle of history and, bruised and battered in spirit and, more often than merited, in body, it has continued to exemplify the love that Jesus demanded in Matthew 25.

So, stop treating us as the enemy – the enemy is out there, and it's apparently winning. But Advent challenges us that those often overlooked and marginalised, are exactly the ones who bring down the powerful.



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

Thursday 10th

Reflection: Revd. Jide Macaulay

When you have been in captivity, held in chains metaphorically for so long, and called an abomination because of who you are, you are likely to become accustomed to the pain and hardship. But there comes a time that you will hear the announcement of a saviour who comes with authority to free those in captivity.

For me as a Black African Gay man, this announcement comes in many ways, from the coming of Jesus Christ to Harriet Tubman's lamentation. Prophet Isaiah declared, "For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace..." Isaiah 9:6-7.

This is what many Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgender Christians live for, a life of hope that connects us to the saviour, that breaks the chains of abuse. Harriet Tubman reminded us when she lamented, "I freed a thousand slaves I could have freed a thousand more if only they knew they were slaves".

The coming of Jesus is about the freedom for queer people of faith, with endless peace and love of God this Advent.



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

Friday 11th

Get in touch with someone you've not spoken to for a while, perhaps they're on your Christmas card list?

Reflection: Revd. Jo Winn-Smith

God came to us in a baby. I wonder if we are sometimes too quick to turn that child into the adult? Babies do not see colour, nor race, gender, sexuality or disability. But babies do smile at loving kind eyes, and often cry when they sense someone is also sad.

May the hope of the love and compassion in the Christ-child be with you this Advent as you prepare for Christmas this year.





# This Advent, find a Rhythm

## Saturday 12th

If you haven't got a Poinsettia go and buy one, and research why they're a part of Christmas.

Reflection: The Very Revd. Andrew Nunn

The thing about the virus is that it makes no distinctions; it doesn't mind if you're a woman or a man, whether you are black or white, whether you are gay, lesbian, trans, rich or poor, from the UK or sub-Saharan Africa.

In a strange way the virus is much more egalitarian than we are. But the lockdown and the restrictions have not been like the virus, they have affected us in very different ways. It's one thing to be in a nice house with a garden, with a partner, with a dog – it's another to be in a bedsit, alone, no one to touch, no one to love, nowhere to breath.

It's one thing to be at home, Zooming for work, on full pay, pyjamas all day, fresh coffee on tap; it's another to be laid off, going into debt, unsure about today let alone tomorrow. LGBT+ people have shared equally in the experience of this lockdown but for communities that often need to be together, need to dance, need to sing, need to gather, need to group, need to hold and love, need proximity, distance has been part of the hardship.

But the God who we love, who makes no distinctions, is as close to you now as ever, as intimate with you as your breath, as warm and holding as the arms you might miss.

This is the God who in Advent we look for and know, the one with us and yet to come, the God who is never absent yet whose arrival is always anticipated. This is the God who loves us through the present and into the future. This is God. God, come to me, hold me, stay with me. Amen.



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

Sunday 13th

Gaudette Sunday

On the third Sunday of Advent... we wear pink!

Reflection: Revd. Jarel Robinson-Brown

God of all truth and grace,  
to whom the darkness and the light are one,  
bless us in this time of waiting,  
of suffering, and of struggle -  
as we look to you - the risen one,  
fill us with your life and peace.  
Walk with us today and always,  
in all the places and situations  
in which we find ourselves.  
Guide us in your love and power,  
our Shepherd, Friend and King -  
that as we go more deeply into the mystery of your life, death and resurrection,  
we may furnish our hearts,  
to be your home.  
Be born in us, today -  
that in life we may seek you,  
and in death have found you.  
Now and forever.

Amen.



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

## Monday 14th

John of the Cross

Reflection: Revd. Alex Clare-Young

The Wound and the Light

- with apologies to Rumi and the writer of the Gospel of John!

'The Wound is where the Light enters you',  
And the Light is the Word.  
But our words are being silenced,  
So why are we waiting?

'The Wound is where the Light enters you',  
And the Light is God.  
But God is being used to harm,  
So why are we not healing?

'The Wound is where the Light enters you',  
And the Light is the Life of all people.  
But Life is being squandered,  
So why are we not taking it back?

'The Wound is where the Light enters you',  
And the Light shines in the darkness.  
So shine, for God's sake.

'The Wound is where the Light enters you',  
And the Wound has not overcome the Light.  
So shine, for Christ's sake.

'The Wound is where the Light enters you',  
And we are here to testify to the Light -  
Refracted...



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

## Tuesday 15th

What is your favourite carol? Find the words, what does it tell us about who Jesus is?

Reflection: Revd. Bingo Allison

A Reflection on John 1:1-18

This is utterly revolutionary stuff. The Word of God became flesh and lived among us. Jesus, who was there at the beginning of the world, who was with God the Father in the beginning, lived among us. Jesus, through whom all things came into being, was born into our fleshy existence. The indignity of it! Jesus, The Word of God born surrounded by cattle dung, The Word of God born to an unwed mother, The Word of God feeling pain, The Word of God pooing, The Word of God weeing, this is not how the universe is supposed to work. Pete Rollins calls the Incarnation a pickaxe to eternity, the cracks spread throughout everything. Nothing is ever the same. In Jesus, God breaks all the rules, lowers Himself into the indignity of human existence. And not just straight, cis existence, but all humanity. Jesus embraced everything that it was to be human including the life and loves of trans folk. And he does it all because he loves us. He loves you. He did it all for you.

Jesus did it all for you because he was there when you were made, and through him you were made (verse 3). Through him you were made trans, through him you were made bi, through him you were made lesbian, through him you were made intersex, pansexual, asexual, queer, and things you don't even know you are yet. Jesus embraced the indignity of the Incarnation because He loves everything that was made, because he is the way it was made. You are made in God's image and he delights in you.

But other people don't always see that, do they? Here we are, my trans brothers, sisters, and siblings: children of God (verse 13), made through Jesus, the Word, the Light of the World, that Light shines in each and every one of our hearts. But people don't see it. They scorn us, they mock us, deny the beauty of our loves and our lives. And as this year's Transgender Day of Remembrance heartrendingly showed, they take our lives.

Just like us, the world did not look at Jesus and see God. Part of the tragedy, and the ultimate victory of Jesus' life with us is that many saw Him and few knew him. Although he was full to the brim of grace and truth (verse 14), light shining in every mote of darkness (verse 5), they didn't see it. And they killed him.

But, although the light of Jesus Christ shone in the darkness (verse 5), and the darkness did not recognise it. The darkness did not overcome it. Although the light of Jesus Christ shines through the darkness of the prejudice and rejection we experience in our lives. The darkness will not overcome it.

For we have received the light of Christ, the Word of God made flesh in our flesh, making us, LGBT Christians, children of God, made in the image of God, bearers of the light of the whole world. Unknown, misunderstood, rejected. We will not be overcome. Amen.



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

Wednesday 16th

Reconciliation

Reflection: Grey Collier

Each year through Advent we wait for Jesus, with hope and certainty, that Christmas will come. We pray and, despite the pre-Christmas worldly noise and bling, try to keep a sense of quiet expectation. This year is different. 2020 has been a challenge for many of us, much worse than that for some. Minoritised and marginalised communities have suffered the impacts of the pandemic more than most. So this year my prayer for us all, and my trans and queer siblings most especially, is simply this:

May we feel held in God's loving arms

May we be surrounded by people whose eyes shine

May God bring us peace in our hearts and in our lives, and

May our hearts be so filled with hope that it spills out on all whom we encounter

Lord Jesus, we humbly ask you to fill us with your love.

Amen.



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

Thursday 17th

O Wisdom

Re-consider your charitable giving and your church giving.

Reflection: The Revd. Canon Rachel Mann

O God With Us,  
bringer of joy and delight,  
come dwell with us soon;  
save us, renew us,  
remake us according to your Love.

I've long loved the 'O' Antiphons, those responses used after the Magnificat at Vespers during the final seven days of Advent. The prayer above is my version of the final 'O' Antiphon, 'O Emmanuel', included in my book *A Star-Filled Grace*. I share it here because I think we could all do with a bit of encouragement. It has been such an eviscerating year. Covid has impacted LGBT+ people significantly, not least those of us who have been most excluded from our usual support networks. Equally, the publication of the Church of England's *Living in Love and Faith* resources has not been received with universal acclaim. It has, for many, been a site of trauma, and a reminder of how very far we are from the full, celebratory inclusion of LGBT+ people in the life of the Church. Yet, let none of us think that we are cut off from God's abiding love. He hears our longing and desire, and into this time of profound challenge 'God With Us' longs to come. I want us to hold on to this truth, even in the midst of fear and strain and anxiety. Whatever anyone says about any of us and however frosty and nasty this world may seem to be, I want to remind us that this is God's world, and God adores each and every one of us. We show forth his love when we are steadfast and generous in our fellowship and friendship, in our solidarity and our in-dwelling. God is known among us, and he is the bringer of joy and delight. Jesus Christ is 'yesterday, tomorrow and today'. Emmanuel, God-With-Us, come dwell with us soon!



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

**Friday 18th**

O Lord

Christmas jumper day!

Reflection: Revd. Mark Rowland

We long for your justice, O God.  
When will it come? When?  
When will your judgement build us up  
not human judgement tear us down?

When will everyone have what they need  
When will oppression end?  
When will the poor be fed and the needy have enough?

Bring us righteousness, justice and peace.  
Now and to the end of time.  
As long as the sun rises and sets,  
as long as the moon waxes and wanes.

Refresh us and renew us like rain on dry ground.  
Let it be so in every place, for all people.  
May your whole beloved community - queer and straight - flourish.  
May hate and violence and repression crumble to dust.  
May your rule of justice and peace be real in our days.

Even so, blessed be God. Blessed be God's name.  
May the light of God's justice shine on us all.

[after Psalm 72]



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

**Saturday 19th**

O Root of Jesse

Reflection: Lu Skerratt

There Is a Redeemer And It Isn't Me

It is both humbling and haunting to be in a position where my voice is listened to. I don't particularly enjoy the vulnerability that comes with being called to speak out, but it is exists within my very being. Sometimes this voice feels like it's coming up from my gut, it's loud, it's defiant, and it can jar.

In the Church of England, the denomination I belong to, I often feel like I'm shouting into a dark dank cave where the echo of my own voice comes back to hit me again and again; 'God WHERE are you? God, WHY can't they understand? God I'm tired! God, I HATE this!'. When this voice in my gut needs to speak, I feel burdened with the hefty weight of responsibility to proclaim God's message and to cut the chains of injustice all at once. When I'm in that cave it can sometimes feel like I'm doing it all on my own.

However, this isn't about me, of course it isn't. It's about a Redeemer who came to take this burden of responsibility and set us free.

This Advent, as we watch and wait, expectant for change; please know that you don't need to carry the weight of the world on your shoulders. You are just one person, probably like me feeling pretty flawed and tired and weary by the events of this year. We can't fix 'this' on our own. Sometimes the most powerful thing can be accepting our own vulnerability, accepting that there is a Redeemer and it isn't you or me.

There is a Redeemer and it isn't me

There is a Redeemer

There is

There

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# This Advent, find a Rhythm

Sunday 20th  
4th Sunday of Advent  
O Key of David

Reflection: Ric Stott

You do not end at the boundary of your skin, and neither do I.

When I lean in for a kiss his dilating pupil is a void that contains all things. The longer we hold each other's gaze (and what terror to hold someone's gaze) then deeper ripples of our mutual perception entwine. The fabric of our bodies are waves of force and possibility. Scent and moisture of his breath fill my lungs; what was in him is now in me and as I exhale, he breathes me in. Molecules that emerged from processes in my brain, my liver, my prostate, flow into his lungs and then into the deepest recess of his body. I feel warmth of his hand before it touches the side of my face. When I press my forehead against his then every experience, memory and emotion in our brains is close as bone and skin and electromagnetic waves from our myriad cells jostle and flow amongst each other.

Then lips and tongue, a shared sacred space formed by open mouths pressed together. A space where breath and saliva and sensory neurones are ablaze that is truly a place where both he and I exist at the same time. A sacramental space that could never come into being if we didn't each risk that moment of connection beyond ourselves.

So now, in this time of waiting, have courage to slip free of your edge as you reach for the others and realise that the boundaries of selves are an illusion.

We are infinite.



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

## Monday 21st

O Dayspring

If it's a clear night wrap up warm, grab a hot drink and do some star gazing!

Reflection: Rachel Humphrey

This morning I found myself waiting for the dawn, watching the sky bleed slowly from shadow through indigo to a dull metallic blue-grey. Even though its coming is certain, it takes its time, and the waiting, it fills the space with the weight of its silence, insistently dragging its feet. We who wait, we fill the silence with activities, holding patterns: prayer beads and candles; major seventh chords and repeated last lines; sourdough and jigsaws; bread and wine. Always the bread and wine, because in the remembering is the hope of re-remembering, that one day the body will be joined together again, and one day the tears will be wiped away, and one day, things will not be as they are now.

But for now the repetitions turn into minutes and the minutes turn into hours and the hours into groundhog days after days that pass so excruciatingly slowly, yet in retrospect seem to have suddenly eaten up an entire year.

Until, maybe suddenly, one day it will end.

Christ is born. A vaccine. A hug from a friend. A new heaven and a new earth.

Because we are not without hope; we trust that in the darkness is not death but the seeds of a new day; the depths of winter hold the sap in the roots ready to explode back into life when spring comes. In our end is our beginning; whether the beginning to come is a whole new world or to see the familiar with new and grateful eyes, its coming is certain.

And in that certainty, the prayer beads and the sourdough, the repeated choruses and the remembering, they remind me that even here, now, God is with us.



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

**Tuesday 22nd**

O King of the Nations

Reflection: The Revd. Canon Mark Oakley

'There is no greater agony', wrote Maya Angelou, 'than bearing an untold story within you'. LGBT+ folk know the truth of this only too well. We are often afraid to say who we are in case people don't like who we are - and it's all we have. We can't change anything. We love as we love and we become silent because of fear, because we become the problem, because although they smile as they speak, we know we are not quite what some want to be the case. We long for friendships built on truth. We hope for a Church where we are not made to live in the twilight but can be, and offer, all we really are and all we could yet be. The season of Advent is in the vocative. Let's befriend it. It speaks for us. It longs as we long. Come, Lord! Come and stop us from self-destruction, come and heal the things we can't do by ourselves, come and touch us into life, tell us, show us, we are wanted and for always. Come, Lord! Please. Don't delay.



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

Wednesday 23rd

O Emmanuel

Reflect on where you have felt God with you on your journey.

Reflection: Nigel Nash

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Advent is a time of reflection, of awakening, also of longing and waiting

What are we longing for? What do we really want?

Do we long for recognition, or for a perfect relationship, to be loved and valued? Do we seek a sense of wellbeing and happiness in being ourselves, freedom from worry and anxiety, freedom from catching the virus, a life lived in fulfilment?

The theologian, Paul Tillich, talked about our 'ultimate concern.' He said that whatever is our ultimate concern, is what we really worship. This is a period to take stock, and consider what we care about above everything else, to ask ourselves what is really important to us.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.



# This Advent, find a Rhythm

## Christmas Eve

Put your Christmas Tree up! If it's already up take some time to look at the decorations and be thankful for the memories they carry.

Reflection: Revd. Dawn Cole-Savidge

In 2017, Dawn created a sermon-art experience as a form of creative meditation on the coming of the Light of the world, from the prologue to John's gospel.

The full length sermon can be found here: <https://youtu.be/SPgMcYUkQIY>.

The speed-drawing edit, accompanied by the choir of Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, can be found here: <https://youtu.be/oEXcGallHj0>.



All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. **Luke 2:3-7**

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. **John 1:14**

# Merry Christmas

