

Poems and Reflections used at the Candlelight Carol Service on 17 December 2017

These four poems and reflections were used within our Carol Service.

Each of the poems/reflections is based on names given to Jesus in the prophetic and nativity narratives used within a service of lessons and carols.

All were written for the service by Paul Martin.

[These poems/reflections can be used and adapted in the context of Christian worship as long as they are attributed to the author. They should not be published in any medium without the author's consent.]

Wonderful Counsellor

Our first poem reflects on the four titles given to the promised Messiah by the prophet Isaiah of Jerusalem – Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace

In manger enfolded, God's folly unfolded
love's wisdom-sharing, God's truth-declaring;
parable-spinning, hypocrisy-pinning
voice for the voiceless, choice for the choiceless,
unsettling winners, welcoming sinners,
Wonderful Counsellor

Depths of humility, starkest fragility
Babe in the manger, child put in danger,
Cuddled not coddled, Servanthood modelled,
Alongside the poorest, not here as a tourist,
Washing dust off our feet, facing personal defeat,
Our hatred defying, in suffering love dying,
Mighty God.

Infant breastfeeding, uncertain breeding,
Wholly dependent, displaying contentment,
Learning to trust, through trial and dust,
Son of man labelled, forgiveness enabled,
To Abba appealing, God's heart revealing,
way of cross taken, Son, God-forsaken,
Everlasting Father

Shepherds come praising, wise men come gazing
One with the homeless, light for the hopeless,
friend of the lost, not counting the cost,
lepers embraced, love for the disgraced,
turning the cheek, uplifting the meek,
Dying forgiving, rising and living
Prince of Peace

Immanuel – God with us

God with us
in hazardous journey
from the warmth of the womb
into a waiting and hostile world
where a manger awaits for makeshift cot,
where boisterous shepherds honour his birth,
where from the first he has nowhere to lay his head
with us in adventure and adversity
Immanuel - God with us.

God with us
held in the nervous arms of the first-time mother,
uncertain of what she has let herself in for,
watched over by the loyal carpenter
wondering whose this baby is,
into a fragile human family
that will yet offer
welcome and warmth,
protection and prayer -
with us in hope and hesitation
Immanuel - God with us.

God with us
vulnerable, dependent,
threatened and at risk -
placing himself into the midst of it all -
into the thick and thin of it all,
into the ups and downs of it all,
into the flesh of it all,
into the raw emotion of it all
Into the heartache and the splendour of it all -
Immanuel - God with us.

God with us
deeply embedded.
Knowing humanity from the inside,
the trivial and the mundane,
the significant and the resplendent,
unrestricted access to the grimness and the greatness,
no special pleading,
no safeguards in place,
nowhere to hide,
Immanuel - God with us.

God with us
significantly with us,
wholeheartedly with us,
heart-on-sleeve with us,
at-risk-to-self with us,
from womb-to-tomb with us,
dying God-forsaken with us,
alive-beyond-life with us
Immanuel - God with us.

When Iesous was a baby

Jesus was a fairly popular name in 1st Century Palestine. The Jewish historian Josephus records at least 20 people at that time with the name Jesus.

The name Jesus has come to us from the Greek (the language of the New Testament) – Iesous.

Jesus and his family would have spoken Aramaic – in Aramaic the name would have almost certainly have been Yeshua.

The Hebrew background for this name was Yehoshua – or Joshua.

I have been playing around with these names in my mind – Iesous, Yeshua, Yehoshuah, Jesus – and wondered what they might have been shortened to when Jesus was growing up ...

When Iesous was a baby,
Needing warmth of human touch
Perhaps when picked up from the hay,
His mother whispered, 'Yeh'.

When Yeshua was a tiny tot,
About on hands and knees,
With scrapes and bumps on soft young flesh
Did Joseph comfort him, "Yesh."?

When Yehoshua was a toddler
Playing games with village friends,
Among the poor and far from posh,
Did they shout out, 'Here comes Josh'?

When Jesus was a youngster
Hanging round with fellow teens
Playing ball and climbing sycamore trees
They could have called him, 'Jees'?

We hold the name in honour now,
And rightly so, we judge
But I like to think when he was young,
when he was one among the crowd,
in an all so very human way
he was known as Jees, or perhaps as Yeh,
And because the Word was truly flesh
friends might have called him Josh or Yesh.

The Word

In the beginning was the Word ... and the Word became flesh

*The 'word' – 'reason or meaning', 'wisdom', 'self-expression',
'conversation'*

In the beginning was the reason,
the meaning of it all,
and everything was made only because God had reason to,
and all existed only because God gave it meaning.

And we missed the meaning of it all;
we ignored the reason at the heart of all things.

But now in Jesus the reason/the meaning has become flesh
and he has lived out among us,
the reason and meaning of it all
full of grace and truth.

In the beginning was the wisdom of God,
and wisdom was God's partner in creation,
leaving echoes of herself in the order and the openness of creation.

God's wisdom was deep in the heart of all things, calling us, enticing
us ...
but we have ignored the call of wisdom
and settled for knowledge.

But now in Jesus, wisdom has become flesh -
the strange wisdom of a God who allows himself to be rejected and
crucified,
full of grace and truth.

In the beginning God expressed himself -
In uttering his word of creation he said something deeply about
himself

God creates in order to reveal himself -
He cannot contain himself
He speaks his heart,
and in speaking his heart he brings worlds into being.

And he goes on speaking, though we have stopped listening.

But now in Jesus, God has expressed himself in the fully human life
of his Son.
His heart has been revealed in the beating of a human heart
and in the living of a human life ...
full of grace and truth.

In the beginning God started the conversation.
He spoke ... and awaited creation's reply.
Creation came about from God's longing for a conversation partner
- a partner to respond to his approach of love.

And God has worked at keeping the conversation alive ...
but we have preferred our own company.

But now the conversation has become flesh in Jesus -
the Son responding freely to the Father,
and inviting us all to join the conversation ...
full of grace and truth.