

Advent and Christmas Prayer Leaflet 2022

This year, which is my last as National Prayer and Spirituality Coordinator, I will use prayers written by Janet Morley. They are in a book of prayers Janet wrote in what she called a year of great creativity. Some of the language you may find confronting as often our prayers are quite coy. We tend to shy away from strong thoughts and words. Perhaps we don't want God to really know how intense, even fierce, our emotions can be. It does take a lot of courage to name life as it is but that is just what happened on that first Christmas. The most basic of human experience – birth, is front and centre of our faith. God become Man!

I suggest you take a week to contemplate each prayer. Make a special time and/or place for it. Light a candle, sit in the sun, lie down on the couch or in bed, kneel, learn it off by heart and repeat it during the day, each day until the next Sunday.

Here is a short note, to use or not. So here we go:

The Collects in the Book of Common Prayer are famous for their theological and biblical strength. They are (mostly) written to a formula. The prayer is addressed to God the First Person of the Holy Trinity, describing attributes/qualities. Then comes the substance/intention. The prayer finishes, praying "through" the Son, "by" the Holy Spirit: a thoroughly Trinitarian theology. Janet has not included the Holy Spirit in her prayers. They are intentionally shorter. You may add it if you wish.

ADVENT SUNDAY

*God our deliverer,
whose approaching birth
still shakes the foundations of our world:
may we so wait for your coming
with eagerness and hope
that we embrace without terror
the labour pangs of the new age,
through Jesus Christ, Amen*

With three short words, Janet names God, 'deliverer' and so has come to the nub of Christmas. Let us be delivered. Think carefully about what you need to break free from. Perhaps it is endless shopping. Or having to be right all the time? Being too submissive?

Bible Readings: 1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11; (optional Mark 13:8 to end; Romans 8: 18-25)

Advent 2

*O God our disturber,
whose speech is pregnant with power
and whose word will be fulfilled:
may we know ourselves unsatisfied
with all that distorts your truth,*

*and make our hearts attentive
to your liberating voice,
in Jesus Christ, Amen.*

Do not disturb!! Perhaps you want the quiet life. Take special note to the words here that disturb you. And the positive ones, to work with, pray with.

Bible Readings Isaiah 55: 1-11; Luke 4: 14-21; 1Timothy 3: 14 - 4:5
Advent 3

*God our healer,
whose mercy is like a refining fire:
touch us with your judgement,
and confront us with your tenderness;
that, being comforted by you,
we may reach out to a troubled world,
through Jesus Christ, Amen.*

Do you believe God IS our healer? The 't' words here are worth your thoughtful consideration: touch, tenderness, troubled.

Bible Readings Isaiah 40: 1-11; Malachi 3: 1-5

Advent 4 Annunciation

*O unknown God,
whose presence is announced
not among the impressive
but in obscurity:
come, overshadow us now,
and speak to our hidden places;
that, entering your darkness with joy,
we may choose to cooperate with you,
through Jesus Christ, Amen.*

Bible Readings Luke 1: 26-38; 1 Corinthians 1:26 to end.

Christianity has taken a tumble in the polls – so to a large extent we are back to the beginning - obscurity.

We can choose to love being part of the Jesus' style of salvation.

*Christmas Eve Christmas Day
God our beloved,
born of a woman's body,
you came that we might look upon you,
and handle you with our own hands.
May we so cherish one another in our bodies
that we may also be touched by you;
through the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, Amen.*

Touch is important in Anglicanism. We touch the sacrament, each other. We receive the sign of the cross at baptism and the laying on of hands at confirmation.

Bible Reading John 1: 1-14 (1John1: 1-4)

Remember, Christianity is a contact before it is a message. God is at work, communicating himself in flesh and blood, from the first moment Mary embraces hr child. God is at work in this presence even when Jesus is saying nothing in particular and doing nothing in particular.
Rowan Williams *Tokens of Trust* 2010 Westminster Knox Press p. 92-3.