

Waiting

When all has gone quiet
and the world begins to sleep
tucked in and snug
beneath a blanket of calm

When the universe holds its breath
and angels begin to stretch their wings
and stars begin to slide
into constellations of hope

When music seems to hang in the air
and creation hums its own carol
about the longing for light
and birth again from night time

Then the waiting ones gather
to listen to these rumours
and whisper about the birth
of a child made all of light

And together pass the word
that soon and very soon
advent will slip into sign
and waiting into birth

So let us gather with ever beating hearts
staying with Mary and Joseph
wondering, labouring, longing, expecting
the promise to break through the night

1. His Name will be Jesus

Light box, beeswax
Black cloth
Power board, extension lead
Data pro - Qumi
Laptop – ROL clip
iPhone – Magnificent songs
Belkin hub, 2 headphones
Wooden skewers
Wooden mannequin

2. Go to Bethlehem

Laptop - Nativity Story video, REM “Everybody Hurts”
Black plastic, shovel
Belkin hub, 2 headphones
Sand
Sandals
Stones.

3. Peace on earth

Dark blue cloth
Laptop + speaker - Lights Video loop, iTunes songs
Star lights
Sparklers
Magnetic poetry

4. Flight to Egypt

Pics of children
Barbed wire
Candles
Matches
iPhone + speaker - Little Drummer Boy

5. They brought him gifts

Gold cloth
Gold, frankincense, myrrh
ARS SACRA book
Bowl of gold baubles

His name will be Jesus

One month later God sent the angel Gabriel to the town of Nazareth in Galilee with a message for a young woman named Mary. She was engaged to Joseph from the family of King David. The angel greeted Mary and said, "You are truly blessed! The Lord is with you."

Mary was confused by the angel's words and wondered what they meant. Then the angel told Mary, "Don't be afraid! God is pleased with you, and you will have a son."

His name will be Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of God Most High. The Lord God will make him king, as his ancestor David was. He will rule the people of Israel forever, and his kingdom will never end."

Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant! Let it happen as you have said." And the angel left her.

I wonder what it would be like to hear or see an angel...

I wonder how Mary felt that day....

Surprised?

Scared?

Uncertain?

Lonely?

Amazed?

Hopeful?

Honoured?

Grateful?

Imagine hearing these words:

Don't be afraid. God is pleased with you.

God is with you. God's love grows in you.

So live with the hope that our world may be better because of God's love in you.

After the angel came, Mary sang a song which we call "The Magnificat". Many people have written and recorded music based on her song. Here are two versions, one by John Michael Talbot and one by U2. Listen to either or both of them. Then, on the light box, use a skewer write a word expressing how you might have felt if you were Mary.

Go to Bethlehem!

About that time Emperor Augustus gave orders for the names of all the people to be listed in record books. These first records were made when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

Everyone had to go to their own hometown to be listed. So Joseph had to leave Nazareth in Galilee and go to Bethlehem in Judea. Long ago Bethlehem had been King David's hometown, and Joseph went there because he was from David's family.

Mary was engaged to Joseph and traveled with him to Bethlehem. She was soon going to have a baby,

*If your journey feels too long, if your load feels too heavy
Hold on, hold on*

*If your back feels like breaking, if your heart feels like bursting
Hold on, hold on*

*If home is far behind you, if shelter is far beyond
Hold on, hold on*

*If your friend is beside you, if warm strength carries you
Hold on, hold on*

Take a stone and hold it in your hand. Listen to the song. What feels heavy or difficult for you at this time? Write it in the sand with your finger.

Think about who might help you carry this load and share your journey.

Take with you a stone as a symbol of what is difficult for you to carry at this time. Know that you do not carry it alone.

Take it to a person who might help you bear your load.
Let this be an opportunity to talk with them.

Peace on earth!

That night in the fields near Bethlehem some shepherds were guarding their sheep. All at once an angel came down to them from the Lord, and the brightness of the Lord's glory flashed around them. The shepherds were frightened. But the angel said, "Don't be afraid! I have good news for you, which will make everyone happy. This very day in King David's hometown a Saviour was born for you. He is Christ the Lord. You will know who he is, because you will find him dressed in baby clothes and lying on a bed of hay."

Suddenly many other angels came down from heaven and joined in praising God. They said:

"Praise God in heaven! Peace on earth to everyone."

After the angels had left and gone back to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see what the Lord has told us about." They hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and they saw the baby lying on a bed of hay.

*A light illuminates the sky
Humble shepherds asking why?
Heaven's chorus sings of peace
Saviour born to bring release
To the babe they rushed in awe
Found him in a bed of straw*

*Jesus' living, dying, rising
All for love, all for peace
Peace with neighbor, peace with stranger
Peace with God and peace within*

Make a sentence prayer about peace. Take a sparkler with you. When you get home and it is dark. Go outside and light the sparkler. Wave it and shout "Peace on earth!" as a prayer of hope.

They fled to Egypt

After the wise men had gone, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Hurry and take the child and his mother to Egypt! Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is looking for the child and wants to kill him."

That night, Joseph got up and took his wife and the child to Egypt, where they stayed until Herod died.

After King Herod died, an angel from the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph while he was still in Egypt. The angel said, "Get up and take the child and his mother back to Israel. The people who wanted to kill him are now dead."

Joseph got up and left with them for Israel. But when he heard that Herod's son Archelaus was now ruler of Judea, he was afraid to go there. Then in a dream he was told to go to Galilee, and they went to live there in the town of Nazareth.

Read the poem of Jesus the refugee.

Imagine having to pack up all your things in the middle of the night and flee your home to escape the soldiers.

Imagine running away to another country to be safe, a place where people spoke another language, where the food and customs were strange.

What if you found it difficult to find food and shelter there?

What if it was hard to make friends?

What if refugees were treated with suspicion or feared?

What if you were imprisoned, just for being a refugee?

Think of the many children in our world who are refugees today, just as Jesus was back then. Light a candle and say a prayer for them.

The Little Refugee Drummer-Boy

Song from Colomcagua Refugee Camp, Honduras.

This can be sung to the tune of "The Little Drummer Boy"

*Here in this camp now we are refugees,
Heavy with sadness, hearts full of fear
You know us, Jesus, Lord, you know who we are,
Homesick and lonely we have travelled far.
Ropo-pom-pom, Ropo-pom-pom*

*Another Christmas time is drawing near
It brings us hope to face the future year
We ask you now to give us lasting peace,
And still our beating hearts which tremble with fear
Ropo-pom-pom, Ropo-pom-pom*

*Happy then sad, the children sing,
Beautiful songs that tell the Christmas tale
Joseph and Mary, too, fled Bethlehem,
Refugees poor and homeless as we are now
Ropo-pom-pom, Ropo-pom-pom*

*The child Jesus is a refugee
He walks with us on the long road to a home
For we are children of the same Creator
We who have fled in fear El Salvador
Ropo-pom-pom, Ropo-pom-pom*

They brought him gifts

During this time some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem and said, "Where is the child born to be king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

Herod secretly called in the wise men and asked them when they had first seen the star. He told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, let me know. I want to go and worship him too." The wise men listened to what the king said and then left.

And the star they had seen in the east went on ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. They were thrilled and excited to see the star.

When the men went into the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother, they knelt down and worshiped him. They took out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and gave them to him. Later they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, and they went back home by another road.

What to give a new-born Messiah?

... gold to symbolise his kingship

... frankincense to show him as God's high priest

... myrrh, for the anointing of the dead

These gifts declare his future

They honour his coming

What would you have given

to the One who is God's gift to us?

Perhaps all we can truly give

is open hands, open minds, open hearts

to receive the gift of God's love in our lives

Hold open your hands with your palms upward
Let yourself be open to God's love
the love shown in Jesus
Know that God is with you always
And nothing can separate us from that love.

Take one of the golden baubles, as a reminder that God is the giver of all
life and love and hope and joy and peace. Place it on your Christmas tree
or some other special place to remind you of God's goodness.