

# Waiting for Hope

When Jesus was born in the village of Bethlehem in Judea, |  
Herod was king. 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.”

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 worshipped him. They took out  
their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and gave them to him

Matthew 2:1-2,11

For the wise men, the star was a sign of hope  
They travelled far and waited long  
before seeing the Christ child  
The people of Israel had waited  
hundreds of years for a promised Messiah

I wonder who waits in hope today  
A lonely person longing for a friend  
A hungry person hoping for a meal  
A sad child waiting for forgiveness  
A sick person longing for healing  
A prisoner hoping to be free

What are you hoping for this Christmas?  
Apart from the presents and the fine food  
What are you truly hoping for?

May light be a sign of hope in the darkness.  
Light a candle in prayer  
For someone you know who needs hope.

Remember the stars as a sign of hope  
A sign that points to Jesus  
who is our hope from God.

# Waiting for Joy

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 Savior 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."

Luke 2:8-12

The angel brought the good news of Jesus' birth  
not to King Herod,  
not to the Roman governor  
not to the High Priest  
but to humble shepherds  
saying, I have good news  
that will bring great joy!

Who is waiting for joy?  
the humble  
the poor  
those grieving  
those struggling

What colour is joy?  
What colour makes you happy?  
What are you glad about at Christmas?  
Tell the person who is with you.

Take some black card and a piece of cellophane  
Cut out a colour and add a piece of each  
to help make a stained glass window  
that shows the joy of Christmas.

Let the window be a prayer for joy -  
a gift from God  
for those who need it this Christmas.

# Waiting for Peace

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

“Praise God in heaven!  
Peace on earth to everyone who pleases God.”

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.”

Luke 2:13-16

Heavenly voices sang “Peace on earth”  
Announcing the birth of the One  
called Prince of Peace

To a country occupied by a foreign empire  
They sang “Peace!”  
To cultures divided by religion  
They sang “Peace!”  
To a people divided into  
clean and unclean  
They sang “Peace!”  
To households divided into  
masters and servants  
They sang “Peace!”

Peace from God  
is not just an idea or an ideology  
not just a value or a virtue  
not just a want or a wish.

Peace is a person - Jesus, God-with-us  
who brings forgiveness, mercy  
healing, reconciliation and justice for all.

Who waits for peace this Christmas?  
Take a card. Colour it. Write or draw in it.  
Give it to someone as a surprise  
to remind them that Jesus is God’s gift of peace.

# Waiting for Love

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 travelled with him to Bethlehem. She was soon going to have a baby, and while they were there, she gave birth to her first-born son. She dressed him in baby clothes and laid him on a bed of hay, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Luke 2:3-6

At the heart of the story is Love.  
Love between parent and child.  
But more than this.  
We love because God first loves us.  
At the heart of the story  
is God's gift of unconditional love  
that does not require or demand  
that does not accept wrong  
but makes things right  
a cradle that leads to a Cross

It's easy to love a child in a cradle  
Much harder to love a teacher  
who questions religion  
A healer who cleans the unclean  
A master who washes dirty feet  
A Saviour who dies an unjust death

All for love  
All for love

In baptism we celebrate God's unconditional love  
We call it the gift of grace.  
Dip your finger in the water  
Make the sign of the Cross on your forehead  
and say "I am a child of God. I am loved."

Take a chocolate.  
It's a reminder that God's love is a gift  
And it is good.