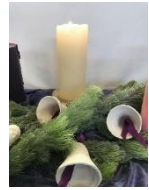




‘Worship at home’ December 28th 2025



After the celebration of Christ’s birth at Christmas, we remember that Christ’s presence remains with us, and we await his coming again, in the fullness of time, to make all things new.

Christ HAS come
as baby in a manger

Christ is risen and IS with us
in our lives today

Christ WILL come again
bringing the fullness of God’s kingdom.

Christmas is a celebration of the Spirit of God
revealed in our world in unexpected ways.

The celebration of Christmas is over. Is your house full of dirty dishes and discarded packaging? Does your fridge overflow with leftover turkey and pudding? It is time for Christmas decorations to be packed away, and boxing day sales to begin. Although, after the flurry of Christmas, many of us take time to sit quietly and relax, waiting for life to “go back to normal”.

However, the story of Christmas does not end with the nativity scene, with shepherds and animals worshiping a cute baby in a manger. For Jesus, his family, and his community, there was no peaceful pause for him to grow up and take on his anointed ministry. Life would never “go back to normal”. The story told in the gospel of Matthew tells of the visit of the magi to see Jesus, probably some time after his birth. On their journey they had visited King Herod to ask for directions to the new baby King. They were warned in a dream to go home by another route to avoid letting Herod know Jesus’s whereabouts. The story tells of Herod’s response to this perceived threat.



#GOD with US

The Escape to Egypt

who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: “A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.”

After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead.”

What emotions or thoughts arise for you as you hear this story in Matthew?

After the joyous celebration of Christmas, singing carols of peace and love, this is a difficult passage to read. We might prefer to skip over it and focus on the hope found in Jesus' birth. Scenes of the family fleeing their country, Herod killing the baby boys and mothers weeping for their children certainly do not make it to the front of our Christmas cards!



<https://digilib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=57109>



However, this story is exactly what Jesus' birth is all about: Immanuel, God with us. We still live in a broken world, where loneliness, pain and suffering prevail, children and vulnerable people continue to suffer at the hands of the powerful, and families are forced to flee their countries in fear of their lives. Life is sometimes difficult, and the world is not yet right!

- Reni, Guido, 1575-1642. *Slaughter of the Innocents*, detail, from *Art in the Christian Tradition*, <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=46515>

"... this story gives me great hope because what it does is remind me that: it is precisely because of the dislocation that occurs within peoples' lives; it is precisely because of the insane abuses of power by those who wield it; it is precisely because innocents suffer and people are left heartbroken and mourning; it is precisely because we are so often left grasping at straws to find meaning; that God enters the world in Jesus."

- Peter Lockhart

<https://revplockhart.blogspot.com/2013/12/after-christmas-we-live.html>

God is not a distant interventionalist being who sits in heaven bemoaning the sins of the world and casting judgement on our brokenness. God, who created the world and all living creatures, who knows and loves us intimately, and whose spirit is the source of all life and love, shows us this love and intimacy by entering into our suffering in a very real and tangible way. God is not separate from the world in which these things happen, rather, God is present in our world, sharing our pain and sorrow.

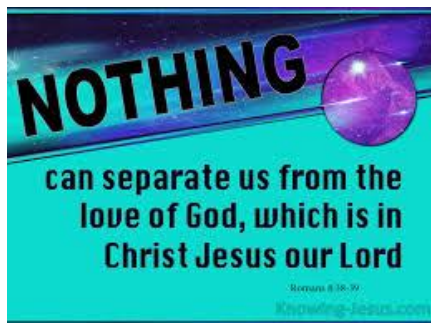
Where do you see people suffering around you?

resentment	hatred	loss	hunger
conflict	domestic violence	fear	illness
war	pain	loneliness	incarceration



You might pause to name these before God in prayer and know that God is working in these situations, even before we acknowledge them.

After Christmas, life goes on. We come to the end of a year and anticipate what the new year might hold for us, and for our world. Some of us may face joys and celebrations, some illness and pain. Our assurance is that God who was revealed so completely in the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus is with us, now and always, whatever we may face and whatever the future holds. In Jesus Christ we know that life and love prevail over death and suffering, and that nothing can separate us from God's love.



"What do we do now that Christmas is over? We go on living. We go on hoping in the God who lived as one of us. We go on yearning to experience God more closely in the midst of all the joy and the suffering we might experience. We go on celebrating God cared enough to be one of us. We go on living. Whatever the days and year ahead may hold for you may you to take heart in the serious business of God's love which reaches beyond the barrier of the divine divide and promises us peace." - Peter Lockhart

<https://revplockhart.blogspot.com/2013/12/after-christmas-we-live.html>

Closing

At Christmas, we remember,

God is with us!

In our joys we remember,

God is with us!

In the world's suffering,
we remember,

God is with us!

So let us share in each other's joys and sufferings.

Go now and seek peace and justice in the world,

in the name of the God who is with us,

Creator, Redeemer, Comforter.

Amen!

- L3 Liturgy Learning and (Purposeful) Life ACE 2025-2026

