

Prayer for Autumn Days
Joyce Rupp

God of the seasons, there is a time for everything;
there is a time for dying and a time for rising.
We need courage to enter into the transformation process.

God of autumn, the trees are saying goodbye to their green,
letting go of what has been.

We, too, have our moments of surrender,
with all their insecurity and risk.
Help us to let go when we need to do so.

God of fallen leaves lying in coloured patterns on the ground,
our lives have their own patterns.
As we see the patterns of our own growth,
may we learn from them.

God of misty days and harvest moon nights,
there is always the dimension of mystery and wonder in our lives.
We always need to recognize your power-filled presence.
May we gain strength from this.

God of harvest wagons and fields of ripened grain,
many gifts of growth lie within the season of our surrender.
We must wait for harvest in faith and hope.
Grant us patience when we do not see the blessings.

God of geese going south for another season, your wisdom enables us
to know what needs to be left behind
and what needs to be carried into the future.
We yearn for insight and vision.

God of flowers touched with frost and windows wearing white designs,
may your love keep our hearts from growing cold in the empty seasons.

God of life, you believe in us, you enrich us,
you entrust us with the freedom to choose life.
For all this, we are grateful. Amen.

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Bring Me Sunshine 26

The beginning of December and Advent, and what a journey we have all been on together.

Advent is a time of preparation, and sees us all preparing something it seems - preparing to come out of Lockdown and enter Tier 2, which for us in London means we are still on high alert and cannot meet with any other household indoors (unless you are part of a support bubble). We can however meet with up to six people outdoors; restaurants and some sporting venues can open, as can places of worship, so many of our local churches resume their services this week.

Many of you are preparing Advent/Christmas doors and windows. Give it a go, let's give everyone something to look at and smile at as they walk by. Many of you are also preparing for Christmas perhaps in a different way this year. You are deciding who with and how to spend the festive season - the rules are that three households are able to meet together between the 23rd and 27th December, but we cannot change the configurations of the three households. Of course this comes with increased risk of COVID 19 spreading. Ventilation and *handwashing* are still hugely important. I love the poster that the Salvation Army are using, with the scene of the stable and animals which says: "The First Christmas was pretty simple. It's okay if your is too". I think for many of us this year that is important, as we should be avoiding going to the shops and putting ourselves at risk, and many people are in financial hardship so it's okay to slow things down, be quiet, be thoughtful, be attentive and consider small acts of mercy that can help others.

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ADVENT

29th November – 24th December



An ancient Advent tradition is the O Antiphons: seven responses, or antiphons, that are sung or recited to introduce the canticle of Mary (the Magnificat) at evening prayer from December 17 to December 23, the octave before Christmas. These antiphons are based on Isaiah's prophecies and refer to the different ancient titles given to the Messiah:

- Sapientia (O Wisdom) See Isaiah 11:2–3; 28:29.
- Adonai (O Lord) See Isaiah 11:4–5; 33:22.
- Radix Jesse (O Root of Jesse) See Isaiah 1:1; 11:10.
- Clavis David (O Key of David) See Isaiah 9:6; 22:22.
- Oriens (O Rising Sun) See Isaiah 9:1.
- Rex Gentium (O King of the Nations) See Isaiah 9:5; 2:4.
- Emmanuel (God with us) See Isaiah 7:14.

We could meditate on these titles or bring these responses into our own prayers during Advent, as reminders throughout the day of the one whose coming we are joyfully expecting, or as words of thanksgiving as we prepare to celebrate the coming of Jesus

1st Sunday: STAY AWAKE. Be observant of what is going on around you in the people and events that you experience. Try to read the signs of the time. “See” what is really going on in the lives of family and friends and neighbours. Do not be seduced into a false sense of security and betrayed by trusting what is not real. Be present to those around you. Be aware of what others are going through and feeling.

2nd Sunday: PREPARE A WAY FOR THE LORD. Make time for yourself. Spend a few moments each day seeing what has been going on in your life and your day to day relationships with others. Reflect on what has happened around you, resolve to act. Undertake very small actions you can safely take. In these times of isolation when social interactions are more challenging even thinking of ways to be more welcoming towards others is a great preparation for the coming of Jesus into your heart and your inner being. Reach out in ways that you are able to.

3rd Sunday: BE A WITNESS TO SPEAK FOR THE LIGHT. A witness is someone who is there. Find ways to be a witness for others, to stand by their side and give them your support, your love. Be “alive with verbs” be a doer, be present to those around you, tend to others, be there for them, use your time well. As a witness you really will encounter Christ - in others. Use Social media, the phone, video calls to connect with those around you and reassure them that they are loved.

4th Sunday: DO NOT BE AFRAID TO LISTEN! It really is up to you to MAKE time for the benefit of yourself, get to know yourself so that you can grow the timeless relationship with Jesus, and we can do this through our interactions with those around us, often those very close to us in our own family and friendship circle. Mary's life was transformed at the Annunciation. Yours too will be transformed if you give time to LISTENING to what God wants of you. And don't be afraid what he asks of you; he is with you at all times and will welcome you home at the end of your final journey.

What real joy you will feel this Christmas Day as the angels announce the birth of our Saviour - you too will be able to rejoice in that renewed and deeper relationship with Jesus that has no time limitations.



Finally; whenever I am tempted to say “I'm too busy” I always remember that lovely simple truth my mother used to say ‘When God made time he made plenty of It’. Never say I don't have time to do something, fit it in! You will feel better for it, the person you give that time to will also have received the best gift, your time, an authentic gift from the heart.

Yesterday is history, Tomorrow is mystery that is why **NOW** is the present!

- 10 Many thanks to Ossie from Holy Cross for this Advent preparation. Although Advent has already started, we hope you can make use of all the suggestions

A Few Signs for Christmas

As we begin to prepare for Christmas and all that that entails, accept the opportunity this TIME offers us personally to recover from the knocks and scares these last long months have inflicted on us, and try to find our real selves under it all.

The Church, in its wisdom, offers us this time of Advent to prepare for the coming of Jesus at his birth and also to get ourselves ready to greet him at the end of TIME. It invites us to take a journey to a holy place, a pilgrimage if you like, over the four weeks of Advent. It is a special journey that we undertake, a journey in Love. We will travel towards the first Christmas and will marvel at God's wonderful gift of his son; and at the same time we anticipate the Second Coming by making ourselves really worthy to receive him again.

As with many journeys the route is often precarious, with challenges and dangers all around. It is a time-bound journey lasting 4 weeks, each with a milestone or signpost to encourage us, to help us on our way and point out the right direction. The four pointers or signposts are contained within the gospel message for each of the four weeks.

Before examining the pointers, be aware that this TIME is to be used well. There are many sayings about TIME all of them are most pertinent during this period.

Use your time well

Don't run out of time

Don't waste your time

"Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin."

Mother Teresa

So, if you are courageous enough to start this journey and you can resist the many false calls on your time, let us set off and travel hopefully.



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The God We Hardly Knew

Oscar Romero

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No one can celebrate
a genuine Christmas
without being truly poor.
The self-sufficient, the proud,
those who, because they have
everything, look down on others,
those who have no need
even of God - for them there
will be no Christmas.

Only the poor, the hungry,
those who need someone
to come on their behalf,
will have that someone.
That someone is God.
Emmanuel. God-with-us.
Without poverty of spirit
there can be no abundance
of God.

The celebration of Advent is possible only to those who are troubled in soul, who know themselves to be poor and imperfect, and who look forward to something greater to come.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer



Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, God of our ancestors:
to you be praise and glory for ever.

You called the patriarchs to live by the light of faith
and to journey in the hope of your promised fulfilment.

May we be obedient to your call
and be ready and watchful to receive your Christ,
a lamp to our feet and a light to our path;
for you are our light and our salvation.

Church of England



Thanks to Sandra
for making these for
our Activity Bags

A contribution from Denis...

Finnegan's courtship was steady and slow, and Bridget was close nearing forty
So her father one night had a whiskey or two, and explained in a manner most hearty:
'It's not your intentions I wish to discuss, nor the hand of my daughter I offer,
But the matter that I'm mostly worried about is the wear and the tear of the sofa'.

So Finnegan instead left Bridget and fell in love with a Mountaineer's daughter
- not much to look at, but had a lovely Pyrenees .

Finnegan didn't do too well on the The Chase quiz show. When asked what was
the name of the Dutch boy who plugged the hole in the dam, he answered Dick
Van Dyke, and asked to finish the words of the fifties song 'what do you get if
you load 16 tons...?' he answered that you get a double hernia

Thanks to Jenita for this:

*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how
you ought to answer each one."* (Colossians 4:6)

One summer while staying in a holiday cottage a believer in Christ noticed the rubbish
collector making his rounds. This man showed up at precisely 6.30am once a week,
moving from cottage to cottage so as not to wake people. The man was graceful in
how he put the rubbish in his vehicle and kept the neighbourhood tidy.

One morning, the believer in Christ went out and told him: 'You are doing a great job.
I came out to tell you that I really appreciate the good job you are doing'. The man
replied that in twelve years of collecting rubbish no-one had ever said a kind word to
him, including his boss.

Great communicators don't just give speeches or deliver sermons. They know how
to say a kind word to those they meet along the way. We can say a kind word to
someone who hasn't heard one for a while. A kind word is never wasted.



Blue

1. Only one ancient civilisation is known to have a word for blue – which?
2. The charity which helps sick, injured and homeless animals in England is the Blue?
3. Which precious blue stone was used to colour paints in the middle ages?
4. Which country started the fashion for blue and white porcelain?
5. Which blue dye (now in a synthetic form) is used to colour blue denim?
6. Which two colours does blue come between on the spectrum?
7. Which political party in USA do Blue States vote for?
8. Which emotion is described by the word blue in the English-speaking world?
9. In Chinese opera, what kind of character has a blue face?
10. The flag flown on a ship before it leaves port is known as the Blue?
11. Who was the subject of the film Lady Sings the Blues?
12. A rare event is sometimes described as happening once in a blue?
13. The United Nations emblem is what colour on a blue background on its flag?
14. Which well-known US singer named her daughter Blue Ivy?
15. What is the name of David Attenborough's series about Earth's marine environment?

1. Egyptian; 2. cross; 3. Lapis lazuli (produced ultramarine); 4. China; 5. indigo; 6. green and indigo; 7. Democrat; 8. sadness; 9. villain; 10. Peter; 11. Billie Holiday; 12. moon; 13. white; 14. Beyonce; 15. Blue Planet

Your Bingo

Numbers

3 8 12 17 19 22 26 30 33 38

this week

41 45 50 52 57 61 66 73 78 84

are:

Musical Instruments

T	R	O	M	B	O	N	E	O	O	T	S	T	N
T	B	R	A	V	O	B	E	F	E	Z	N	R	A
E	T	A	N	I	E	L	A	C	A	R	I	E	E
N	R	T	I	O	R	E	O	G	B	E	D	D	C
R	N	I	R	L	A	A	L	C	P	R	N	R	E
O	O	U	A	A	N	L	F	D	C	I	O	O	P
C	R	G	C	H	S	F	N	L	D	I	P	C	I
S	A	X	O	P	H	O	N	E	U	I	P	E	P
N	N	O	I	D	R	O	C	C	A	T	F	R	N
O	H	A	R	M	O	N	I	C	A	C	E	S	A
R	T	T	E	P	M	U	R	T	D	E	O	E	P
N	I	A	O	B	A	Z	O	O	K	A	B	P	O
R	E	H	T	I	Z	T	D	T	G	U	O	P	S
N	C	C	L	A	R	I	N	E	T	P	E	I	C

FLUTE
HARMONICA
RECORDER
OBOE
TROMBONE
GUITAR
VIOLA
CORNET
SAXOPHONE
BAZOOKA
ACCORDION
TRUMPET
PAN PIPE
CLARINET
BAGPIPE
ZITHER
PICCOLO
OCARINA
FIDDLE
SNARE

M	I	O
P	C	A
N	N	O

How many words of three or more letters, each including the letter in the middle, can you make from this diagram? There are up to 19, including one nine letter word

Companion, anomic, cam, camp, can, canon, cap, capo, ciao, coin, coma, con, coo, coop, icon, manic, mica, panic, pica

Pope Francis says: "God's Mercy is a caress of love"; he prays that we do not waste these difficult days, but instead discover the importance of small concrete gestures expressing closeness, tenderness, affection and compassion. If we do this these days won't be wasted. One small act of mercy I believe to be hugely important is contacting people by phone, or when you are writing your cards write a few extra lines in them. This week I have enclosed a stamped envelope with some bits in to make a card if you choose - send a card to someone you care about or you haven't contacted for a while, or you can write a card to your Bring Me Sunshine volunteer, it's up to you. (If you send them to me I will pass them on)

More preparations as part of Bring Me Sunshine is our Christmas bag deliveries (depending on where you live) which will take place from the 19th December to the 23rd December. This will involve many of you receiving a song on your doorstep as well as gift bags of small treats. Please also send back any squares or crafting samples you've made so we can turn them into a Bring Me Sunshine display.

I would appreciate any of the postcards back from the imperial war museum that were sent out with A DVD a few weeks ago, or any of your war time memories please on a separate piece of paper. We would also like you to write down your Christmas traditions, stories, poems or greetings or even a favourite cracker joke to be used in the next Bring Me Sunshine Magazine. Also in your pack is a Seasonal Cheer flier about Christmas arrangements in Lewisham, and how you can get a meal delivered to you.

We had several winners of the Bingo last week and £25 of winnings was sent out, so I now include a new ticket with your first 20 numbers to start again.

Wishing you well in this special season of Advent. Lesley

Success is liking yourself,
liking what you do,
and liking how you do it
Maya Angelou



Thanks to keen birder Nicole for sharing her experience of birding this year

As many of us know, Mother Nature has been a solace to us during this strange year. Many of us observed much more closely what was going on in our gardens with the wildlife. Andrew and I loved watching the honey bees come to the water bath to get a drink and to take water back to their hive to cool it down. Our record was 24 bees all drinking at one time! One other great joy was to have Great Tits nesting in our nest box. We'd had the box for a few years but no bird had ever used it, but this year we decided to move it, and success – not just one brood but two. Clearly it had been in the wrong place.

Nature has always played a big part in my life, and it is the place where I feel closest to God. As a child my love of nature was nurtured by my Mum and Dad who were always keen to take us to the country, and our holidays each year took us deep into the countryside. Dad was a keen birdwatcher, and this was something that he encouraged me to do too. He helped me learn birdsong, and to this day I can't hear a Yellowhammer without thinking of him, as this was the first complicated song that he taught me to listen out for. Sadly, this stunning yellow bird isn't seen as much in hedgerows these days. I didn't really do much birding in my teens, but picked it up again in my early 20s and was thrilled to see my first Avocet at Minsmere. It was a bird I had always wanted to see, mainly I think because it was the symbol of the RSPB. This was another moment I shared with Dad, and I remember hugging his arm with a big smile on my face as I was just so excited. When I got married to Andrew in 1988 he wasn't a birdwatcher but he soon took to it – maybe you could say like a duck to water! We have spent many happy hours, and frustrating ones too, visiting some wonderful places to watch them. Birding, however, isn't always about seeking out beautiful places – rubbish tips can be a haunt of rare birds, although mainly gulls.



Yellowhammer

We have a pager which alerts us to what rare birds are around, but we only go seeking them out if they are close by. This means that we are not twitchers. This is a word that often gets used for anyone who is a birdwatcher, or birder as we usually say. It's a wrong use of the word – twitchers are those who go straight away to see a rare bird, sometimes chartering boats or planes to get them on to an island. They literally twitch to see it!

Andrew and I enjoy our birding, and set ourselves a target of 200 species seen in Britain. This year proved interesting!

We were doing quite well at the beginning of year and had enjoyed our annual January trip to Norfolk. February took us to Slimbridge where I celebrated my 60th birthday, staying in Sir Peter Scott's former house which was such a joy as he is one of my conservation heroes. At Slimbridge we enjoyed having Bewick's Swans waking us up each morning. As we had use of our own viewing tower we could watch the 80+ swans have their morning feed with no one else around. Very special.



Red-backed Shrike

By the time of the first lockdown we had already seen 137 species but that still left 63 to see, and we began to think that we would not reach the target as we could no longer birdwatch. We did our nature watching in the garden and in Forster Park, but so wanted to go further afield.

When the lockdown eased we went to Bridlington to get our fix of seabirds at Bempton Cliffs. This is a wonderful reserve on the east coast of Yorkshire, and we had the most beautiful day watching the Gannets, Fulmars, Guillemots, Razorbills and Puffins, many of whom had young. We always love a seabird colony - the sight, sound and smell are a heady mix. You marvel at how God created birds that just know exactly where to land on a packed cliff. Our second trip took us to Lowestoft and down to the wonderful reserve of Minsmere. This is one of my top three RSPB reserves. It has such a wondrous mix of habitat – lagoons, coastal, woodland, reedbed and open fields, but it is threatened by the building of a new nuclear power station, Sizewell C. We spent a wonderful day there and added some more birds to our annual list including some lovely Little Gulls.



Gannet

Our list grew gradually, and was added to when we spent a week in Devon, then Norfolk again. We were quietly confident that at the end of this we would have our 200 species. However, the birds had other ideas! We spend hours waiting for a Pallas' Warbler and a Yellow-browed Warbler to appear - nothing! Hopefully a Little Auk or a Great Northern Diver would appear on the sea – no! However, we were rewarded with a Red-flanked Bluetail which showed right in front of where we were standing in a socially distanced line of birders. This was a lifer for us (a bird we'd never seen before).

We left Norfolk with our year total at 198 species. Two more to find. Could we do it? We heard that a Black-necked Grebe was showing at Walthamstow Wetlands (a London nature reserve gem) so we diverted from our normal route home and were fortunate to see the bird – species 199. Could we get our 200? The pressure was on as we felt another lockdown may come at any time. On 19th October we decided make a trip to Minnis Bay on the north coast of Kent to try to see a Masked Shrike. We were a little sceptical because the previous evening it was seen flying away, but you never know. It could just come back. Sadly this wasn't the case, and after an hour of searching and speaking to other birders we gave up. But all was not lost - a Red-backed Shrike had been showing that day at St. Mary's Bay, an hour and a quarter away on the south coast of Kent! As we arrived we could see birders who clearly weren't watching a bird – oh dear! Other birders assured us it was around, and as we finished our lunch and made our way nearer to where the bird had last been seen we were called over and there it was.

I thank God for the Red-backed Shrike – our target was reached. We were so pleased, and could relax. Back in March who'd have thought we would have reached our target? 2020 has certainly proved to be an interesting birding year.

Minsmere has a campaign called #Love Minsmere. If you're interested you can find details here:

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/campaigning/love-minsmere-sizewell-c/>