

UNSETTLED ADVENT: FOUR SESSIONS ON ZOOM FOR ADVENT: NOTES FOR LEADERS

An accessible, four-week course for home groups and others who want to reflect together on the story of Elizabeth and Zechariah, and on what the future looks like for unsettled Christians at Christmas. Through videos, discussion questions, and 'apprentice pieces' (challenges to work on between sessions), 'Unsettled Advent' helps us to admit our struggles, but also discover that God is in them – and maybe, by disorganising and reorganising us, showing us how to have good conversations and how to dare to lead, God will bring into being a new dawn.

ABOUT THE VIDEOS

Every week there will be a choice of videos to show at the start of the session, most recorded by Caroline Beckett and Andy Griffiths, and some available from other sources. Some will be for those over 11 (not because there is 'adult' material, but because we fear losing children's concentration), some for all-age groupings, but they will cover the same material. You may wish to use both videos some weeks, particularly if you share Andy and Caroline's sense of humour. Full transcripts of the videos are given at the end of these notes, so if you have someone who finds hearing challenging you may wish to share the relevant script with them.

ABOUT THE OPENING GAMES

You may be tempted to drop the opening game if only adults are present. We advise you keep it in, because it sets an appropriately geed-humoured tone and helps people warm up. Obviously, it's up to you whether you use them, though

ABOUT THE QUIZ

This element is entirely optional, but may be particularly useful where there are younger children on the call. You could use the "polls" function on Zoom, just read out the question and let people reply, or get people to race – not "on the buzzer", but the winner is the first one to press "enter" having correctly written an answer on chat.

ABOUT THE DISCUSSIONS

For each session, you will find some suggested discussion questions. Choose the ones that will work best for your group, and listen well to people's responses. Generally we suggest that starting one of the questions in section A, then moving to one of the questions in section B, will work best. We suggest about 25-30 minutes is sufficient for the discussion section. If people aren't used to open discussion – or aren't used to it on Zoom – don't be afraid to let there be a bit of silence on the first couple of occasions as people pluck up courage to speak. In a larger group, you may wish to use breakout rooms for the section A question.

ABOUT THE LITURGY

Some groups will be most comfortable with ex tempore prayer (prayer made up on the spot), while others may appreciate a form of prayer like the ones we suggest. Just cut and paste into the "chat" on Zoom. You'll need volunteers to read the parts labelled "A", "B" and "C" (you may wish to be "C" yourself). The liturgies all start with lighting advent candles, but it doesn't matter if these are different candles from week to week.

ABOUT ZOOM

- A. By whatever means you use to communicate with congregation members, post the following a week in advance: “On [4 days, dates and times] we’ll be meeting to look at the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth in Luke 1 and talk together about our experiences and our hopes for the future. If you’d like to come, e-mail me at [xxx] or call me on [yyy]. Feel free to invite children or young people if they’re in your household. Each session will last an hour.
- B. You’ll then need to generate a zoom link and send it to those who’d like to join in – see the box below for more information about using zoom. Other platforms such as google meet are also available, and may be a better option if you have members who would find live captions useful. Note that free Zoom only gives a 40 minute sessions; however, group members can simply be briefed that when 40 minutes are up they will be ejected from zoom, but can simply click on exactly the same link as they used the first time, and they will be straight back.

How to Zoom

On a Phone/Tablet

(1st time only) Go to your app store, search ‘Zoom’ and download. Click this link: <https://zoom.us/j/945682864?pwd=Q3EyY0l6LzcyYlIDam9yaWk2RXhyQT09>
When prompted, click ‘Join with video’.
Click ‘use Internet Audio’ or ‘Computer Audio’ (NOT telephone audio).
Please follow the information on the screen.

On a PC/Mac (1st time only) Visit <https://zoom.us/download> and download Zoom.
Click this link: <https://zoom.us/j/945682864?pwd=Q3EyY0l6LzcyYlIDam9yaWk2RXhyQT09>
Open Zoom when prompted.
When prompted, click ‘Join with video’.
Click ‘use Internet Audio’ or ‘Computer Audio’ (NOT telephone audio).
Please follow the information on the screen.

For more help and FAQ’s from Zoom, visit: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/200101697>

ABOUT COMMUNITY ORGANISING

Different Christians have different spiritual traditions which they draw on. Andy and Caroline are unashamed about drawing on the tradition of Community Organising. This does not mean that you need to know anything about Community Organising to lead this group; however, if you want to know more,

*you can watch this 7 minute introduction: <https://youtu.be/J2tpKNCKCro>

*or download this free ebook: <http://www.theology-centre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/People-of-Power-.pdf>

ABOUT APPRENTICE PIECES

The leadership specialist Eve Poole owns a beautiful miniature marble font. It’s an antique apprentice piece produced by an apprentice stonemason. By making something perfectly in miniature, he was demonstrating that he was ready to be trusted with the big stuff. It is in this spirit that we suggest a task for each participant to take after sessions 1, 2 and 3. They won’t be shamed or turned away if they haven’t done it; but it will greatly improve their learning if they do it!

SESSION I

OPENING GAME (10 MINS)

Send a private message, via chat, to a volunteer, with a subject such as “Christmas”, “Father Christmas”, “Angel”, “Winter”, “Zoom” or another subject that occurs to you. They should mute themselves and do a “charade”; everyone else guesses. Keep going at a fast pace with new volunteers till time is up.

READING

Pray for God’s help, then read the following Bible Passage or ask someone else to do so (you might want to email it to them in advance). You may wish to share it using “share screen” (at the middle of the bar at the bottom of the screen).

During the time when Herod was king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife's name was Elizabeth; she also belonged to a priestly family. ⁶ They both lived good lives in God's sight and obeyed fully all the Lord's laws and commands. ⁷ They had no children because Elizabeth could not have any, and she and Zechariah were both very old.

One day Zechariah was doing his work as a priest in the Temple, taking his turn in the daily service. ⁹ According to the custom followed by the priests, he was chosen by lot to burn incense on the altar. So he went into the Temple of the Lord, ¹⁰ while the crowd of people outside prayed during the hour when the incense was burned.

¹¹ An angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar where the incense was burned. ¹² When Zechariah saw him, he was alarmed and felt afraid. ¹³ But the angel said to him, “Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son. You are to name him John. ¹⁴ How glad and happy you will be, and how happy many others will be when he is born! ¹⁵ John will be great in the Lord's sight. He must not drink any wine or strong drink. From his very birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶ and he will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ He will go ahead of the Lord, strong and mighty like the prophet Elijah. He will bring fathers and children together again; he will turn disobedient people back to the way of thinking of the righteous; he will get the Lord's people ready for him.”

¹⁸ Zechariah said to the angel, “How shall I know if this is so? I am an old man, and my wife is old also.”

¹⁹ “I am Gabriel,” the angel answered. “I stand in the presence of God, who sent me to speak to you and tell you this good news. ²⁰ But you have not believed my message, which will come true at the right time. Because you have not believed, you will be unable to speak; you will remain silent until the day my promise to you comes true.”

²¹ In the meantime the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he was spending such a long time in the Temple. ²² When he came out, he could not speak to them,

and so they knew that he had seen a vision in the Temple. Unable to say a word, he made signs to them with his hands.

²³ When his period of service in the Temple was over, Zechariah went back home. ²⁴ Some time later his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and did not leave the house for five months. ²⁵ “Now at last the Lord has helped me,” she said. “He has taken away my public disgrace!”

Luke 1:5-25, “Good News Bible”

Invite participants to be still for a minute.

QUIZ

1. What’s the name of the snowman in Frozen?
a) Olaf b) Ronald c) Henry d) Snivel
2. Where was the Temple?
a) Bethlehem b) Rome c) Basildon d) Jerusalem
3. What other people in the New Testament was Elizabeth related to?
a) James and John b) Mary and Jesus c) Paul and Barnabas d) Martha and Lazarus
4. What does ‘advent’ mean?
a) An old word for winter b) an online platform like Zoom c) a period of about four weeks before Christmas d) an unusual sort of mammal, a bit like a platypus

VIDEO

Select ‘share screen’ and tick the box at the bottom saying ‘use computer audio’. Play one the two following videos:

*If children under 11 are present: <https://youtu.be/r3oqvHTI5IU>

*If children are not present: we suggest both <https://youtu.be/r3oqvHTI5IU> and <https://youtu.be/fCall7bxQbs>

DISCUSSION

Then ask: what particularly struck you in the passage or in the video? Listen without judgement to people’s responses. You may need to intervene occasionally to close a conversation on one issue, simply in order to make sure everyone is heard.

- A. Then ask one of the following questions, and give people space to answer:
 1. Caroline suggests that silence might be a blessing. How do you think Zechariah would respond if she told him that?
 2. The video suggests that our experience of ‘disorganising and reorganising’ might be like the experience of Zechariah and Elizabeth in some ways. Can we list the similarities and differences?
- B. Then ask one of the following questions, and give people space to answer:
 1. What place might silence have in our Advent? How different will it be this year?
 2. What has God disorganized in your life, or our life together, and have you seen any signs that the reorganizing is starting to happen?

LITURGY

A: Lord, it is night.

B: What has been done has been done – let it be.

C: What has not been done has not been done – let it be.

A candle is lit

A: This is our first advent candle

B: I hope it doesn't feel isolated, all alone

C: In Christ, there is no 'all alone'; in Spirit we are interconnected households, encouraging one another and making sure that when the flame flickers it is kept alight, or relit in hope.

A: Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit

B: For you have redeemed me, Lord God of truth.

C: Keep me as the apple of your eye

ALL: Hide me under the shadow of your wings.

A: My heart praises the Lord;
my soul is glad because of God my Saviour,
for he has remembered me, his lowly servant!

**ALL: From now on all people will call me happy,
because of the great things the Mighty God has done for me.**

B: His name is holy; from one generation to another
he shows mercy to those who honour him.

**ALL: He has stretched out his mighty arm
and scattered the proud with all their plans.**

C: He has brought down mighty kings from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly.

**ALL: He has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away with empty hands.**

**He has kept the promise he made to our ancestors,
and has come to the help of his servant Israel.**

**He has remembered to show mercy to Abraham
and to all his descendants forever.**

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory**

are yours, now and forever. Amen

**Lighten our darkness, Lord, we pray,
and in your great mercy defend us
from all perils and dangers of this night,
for the love of your only Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

A: Keep watch, dear Lord,
with those who wake, or watch, or weep.

B: Tend the sick, give rest to the weary,

C: sustain the dying and calm the suffering;

ALL: all for your love's sake, O Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

A: Lord, it is night.

B: We rest in you. We pray for deep sleep, and joy in the morning.

C: And may Christ, and him crucified, remain our confession of faith.

APPRENTICE PIECES

Thank everyone for their participation, and challenge them by the next meeting to do one of the following things (share them by copying and pasting into the “chat”):

1. To think of a time when your life was unsettled and prepare to share it with fellow-participants next time, or
2. To think of an area where you wish some unsettling would take place and prepare to share it at the start of our next session, or
3. To learn the British Sign Language for “unsettled” or create your own sign, ready to perform at the beginning of the next session, or
4. To make a picture called “unsettled Christmas” to share at the next session

SESSION 2

OPENING GAME (10 MINS)

A volunteer thinks of a person or thing related to Christmas to pretend to be (such as Rudolph or the Angel Gabriel). Others have 10 questions to work out who they are; the volunteer can only answer “yes” or “no”. Keep going with other volunteers till the time is up.

LAST WEEK’S APPRENTICE PIECES

Pray for God’s help.

Remind everyone (via the “chat”) of their choice of “apprentice pieces.” Go round the participants, one by one, asking them which of these “pieces” they chose. Stress that saying “pass” is fine!

1. To think of a time when your life was unsettled and prepare to share it with fellow-participants next time, or
2. To think of an area where you wish some unsettling would take place and prepare to share it at the start of our next session, or
3. To learn the British Sign Language for “unsettled” or create your own sign, ready to perform at the beginning of the next session, or
4. To make a picture called “unsettled Christmas” to share at the next session

Express appreciation at each piece.

READING

Then read the following Bible Passage or ask someone else to do so (you might want to email it to them in advance). You may wish to share it using “share screen” (at the middle of the bar at the bottom of the screen).

Soon afterward Mary got ready and hurried off to a town in the hill country of Judea. ⁴⁰ She went into Zechariah’s house and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby moved within her. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴² and said in a loud voice, “You are the most blessed of all women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³ Why should this great thing happen to me, that my Lord’s mother comes to visit me? ⁴⁴ For as soon as I heard your greeting, the baby within me jumped with gladness. ⁴⁵ How happy you are to believe that the Lord’s message to you will come true!”

⁴⁶ Mary said,

“My heart praises the Lord;

⁴⁷ my soul is glad because of God my Saviour,

⁴⁸ for he has remembered me, his lowly servant!

From now on all people will call me happy,

49 because of the great things the Mighty God has done for me.

His name is holy;

50 from one generation to another

he shows mercy to those who honour him.

51 He has stretched out his mighty arm

and scattered the proud with all their plans.

52 He has brought down mighty kings from their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly.

53 He has filled the hungry with good things,

and sent the rich away with empty hands.

54 He has kept the promise he made to our ancestors,

and has come to the help of his servant Israel.

55 He has remembered to show mercy to Abraham

and to all his descendants forever!"

56 Mary stayed about three months with Elizabeth and then went back home.

(Luke 1:39-56 GNB)

Invite participants to be still for a minute.

QUIZ

1. Which of the following odd thing has NOT happened to Elizabeth?
 - a) She got pregnant, so she's going to have a baby, even though she's old
 - b) Her husband stopped talking, even though he's a priest
 - c) Her relative is going to have a baby and it will be God
 - d) Her family are giving her a play station for Christmas even though there's no electricity yet
2. How many days is it till Christmas?
3. Why did the baby inside Elizabeth jump?
 - a) She's been eating cheese
 - b) Her baby smelt wild honey
 - c) Her baby was glad because Jesus was close
 - d) She had a big shock

VIDEO

Select 'share screen' and tick the box at the bottom saying 'use computer audio'. Play one the two following videos:

*If children are present: https://youtu.be/s_lxtrrA2Ks followed by https://youtu.be/lp0mjlRg_EY

*If children are not present: <https://youtu.be/OEd81xRIN10>

DISCUSSION

Then ask: what particularly struck you in the passage or in the video? Listen without judgement to people's responses. You may need to intervene occasionally to close a conversation on one issue, simply in order to make sure everyone is heard.

- A. Then ask one of the following questions, and give people space to answer:
1. One of the videos suggests about Mary and Elizabeth that 'What they lack in power, they make up for in passion.' Can you think of others that description might fit? How do you respond to people like this?
 2. Andy says in the video that the Magnificat is, 'nothing less than a revolutionary anthem'. How far do you agree with that? Which bits seem most radical to you and why? (to help: Can you imagine places or contexts where it might feel uncomfortable to read the Magnificat out loud? Why would that be?)
 3. Have you ever felt 'righteously angry' about something? What was it? Did you tell anyone else?
- B. Then ask one of the following questions, and give people space to answer:
1. Caroline suggests that, 'while we pass through chaos we are not called upon to live there.' Give your own life an honest 'chaos rating' out of 10 at the moment: 1= very settled, calm and running well, 10= utterly in chaos with everything in flux or even falling apart and nothing stable. Do the same for your church's life (with some sensitivity!) Talk about what next steps God might be calling you to, depending on where you are.
 2. What makes a good friend in unsettled times - can you list some characteristics? How many of those characteristics do you have? Do you have friends or supporters who are like this?

LITURGY

A: Lord, it is night.

B: What has been done has been done – let it be.

C: What has not been done has not been done – let it be.

Two candles are lit

A: This our second advent candle

B: It is itself, individual and different

C: And yet it finds its full meaning in relationship to the other candle, just as we get to know ourselves best in conversation

A: Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit

B: For you have redeemed me, Lord God of truth.

C: Keep me as the apple of your eye

ALL: Hide me under the shadow of your wings.

A: My heart praises the Lord;

my soul is glad because of God my Saviour,

for he has remembered me, his lowly servant!

**ALL: From now on all people will call me happy,
because of the great things the Mighty God has done for me.**

B: His name is holy; from one generation to another
he shows mercy to those who honour him.

**ALL: He has stretched out his mighty arm
and scattered the proud with all their plans.**

C: He has brought down mighty kings from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly.

**ALL: He has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away with empty hands.
He has kept the promise he made to our ancestors,
and has come to the help of his servant Israel.
He has remembered to show mercy to Abraham
and to all his descendants forever.**

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory
are yours, now and forever. Amen**

**Lighten our darkness, Lord, we pray,
and in your great mercy defend us
from all perils and dangers of this night,
for the love of your only Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

A: Keep watch, dear Lord,

with those who wake, or watch, or weep.

B: Tend the sick, give rest to the weary,

C: sustain the dying and calm the suffering;

ALL: all for your love's sake, O Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

A: Lord, it is night.

B: We rest in you. We pray for deep sleep, and joy in the morning.

C: And may Christ, and him crucified, remain our confession of faith.

APPRENTICE PIECES

Thank everyone for their participation, and challenge them by the next meeting to do one of the following things:

1. (For children) Have a conversation with a parent or carer about what makes you angry, how that feels, and what good things come out of it
2. Make an honest list of the things that make you angry, or create a collage of images and/or articles to represent them. Compare your 'list' with someone else in the group and talk about it.
3. Write your own extra verses for the Magnificat. What kind of justice or 'putting right' or intervention do you long for?

4. Mary goes to Elizabeth because they have a connection and something in common and Elizabeth is just a little further on the journey. Identify someone in your life who is a little ahead of you in something and make time for a 1-2-1 conversation with them.

5. Read the Magnificat aloud once each day and pay attention to which parts energise you and which parts make you feel less than comfortable. Be prepared to share your thoughts with others in the group.

6. Arrange a 45 minute 121 conversation with someone and talk about things that matter - things you care about.

SESSION 3

OPENING GAME (10 MINS)

A first volunteer says “all I want for Christmas is a…” (they should feel free to be as silly, as factual or as profound as they wish).

The second player repeats the first’s words, and adds their own choice.

The third repeats the first’s and second’s words, and adds their own choice

And so on – possibly in several circuits of all the players – until time is up.

LAST WEEK’S APPRENTICE PIECES

Pray for God’s help.

Remind everyone (via the “chat”) of their choice of “apprentice pieces.” Go round the participants, one by one, asking them which of these “pieces” they chose. Stress that saying “pass” is fine!

1. (For children) Have a conversation with a parent or carer about what makes you angry, how that feels, and what good things come out of it
2. Make an honest list of the things that make you angry, or create a collage of images and/or articles to represent them. Compare your ‘list’ with someone else in the group and talk about it.
3. Write your own extra verses for the Magnificat. What kind of justice or ‘putting right’ or intervention do you long for?
4. Mary goes to Elizabeth because they have a connection and something in common and Elizabeth is just a little further on the journey. Identify someone in your life who is a little ahead of you in something and make time for a 1-2-1 conversation with them.
5. Read the Magnificat aloud once each day and pay attention to which parts energise you and which parts make you feel less than comfortable. Be prepared to share your thoughts with others in the group.
6. Arrange a 45 minute 121 conversation with someone and talk about things that matter - things you care about.

Express appreciation at each piece.

READING

Then read the following Bible Passage or ask someone else to do so (you might want to email it to them in advance). You may wish to share it using “share screen” (at the middle of the bar at the bottom of the screen).

The time came for Elizabeth to have her baby, and she gave birth to a son. ⁵⁸ Her neighbours and relatives heard how wonderfully good the Lord had been to her, and they all rejoiced with her.

⁵⁹ When the baby was a week old, they came to circumcise him, and they were going to name him Zechariah, after his father. ⁶⁰ But his mother said, “No! His name is to be John.”

⁶¹ They said to her, “But you don't have any relative with that name!” ⁶² Then they made signs to his father, asking him what name he would like the boy to have.

⁶³ Zechariah asked for a writing pad and wrote, “His name is John.” How surprised they all were! ⁶⁴ At that moment Zechariah was able to speak again, and he started praising God.

(Luke 1:57-64, GNB)

Invite participants to be still for a minute.

QUIZ

1. What can the tellytubbies say?
 - a) Basically just e-o and their names
 - b) Their favourite colours
 - c) The names of their favourite animals
 - d) The names of the CBBC presenters
2. What could Zechariah say while Elizabeth was pregnant?
 - a) Only prayers
 - b) Only Bible verses
 - c) Only that his child would be named John
 - d) Nothing
3. Why was Zechariah mute?
 - a) Because he didn't believe the angel
 - b) Because he came too close to God
 - c) Because he had spoken God's secret name
 - d) Men used to be mute in those days when their wives were pregnant

VIDEO

Select 'share screen' and tick the box at the bottom saying 'use computer audio'. Play one the two following videos:

*If children under 11 are present: <https://youtu.be/ILiXKslnVQ> and <https://vimeo.com/244963347>

*If children under 11 are not present: <https://youtu.be/6hAc30WIR4I>

DISCUSSION

Then ask: what particularly struck you in the passage or in the video? Listen without judgement to people's responses. You may need to intervene occasionally to close a conversation on one issue, simply in order to make sure everyone is heard.

A. Then ask one of the following questions, and give people space to answer:

1. 'strange, ridiculous, tenuous, messy' - what do you think about those words being used about the plans and methods of God? How far do you agree, from your own experience, that this is how it can be?
2. What's your favourite Christmas tradition? How are you going to do it this year?

3. God mutes Zechariah and empowers Elizabeth: why do you think this is? Since God often has several reasons for things, how many reasons can you think of?

B Then ask one of the following questions, and give people space to answer:

1. Have you ever experienced being silenced so others could speak up? Have you ever needed to speak up when others around you seemed more qualified or experienced than you? How did that feel/what did you think of those experiences and what did you learn from them?
2. How far do you consider yourself traditional – especially with regard to Christmas, but perhaps more widely too? Give yourself a number 1=not at all, 10=almost completely? Can you think if the benefits of a) learning, keeping and following traditions and b) challenging, reinterpreting or breaking traditions?

LITURGY

Three candles are lit

A: This our third advent candle

B: More lights shining in the darkness as Christmas gets closer

C: And however dark the night gets, the light of Christ in us will never be extinguished

A: Glory to Christ, Son of Mary;
born a child, you are one with us.

ALL: Glory to God in the highest.

B: Glory to Christ, Son of David;
born to rule, you reign in our hearts.

ALL: Glory to God in the highest.

C: Glory to Christ, Son of man;
born to save, you are the light of the world.

ALL: Glory to God in the highest.

A: Blessed are you, God our Father,
through your Son the Christ. His name is Jesus.

ALL: God is with us. Praise the Lord.

B: Jesus came and shared our life.

ALL: God is with us. Praise the Lord.

C: Jesus is our King on high.

ALL: God is with us. Praise the Lord.

A: Let us praise the Lord, the God of Israel!

He has come to the help of his people and has set them free.

B: He has provided for us a mighty Saviour,
a descendant of his servant David.

C: He promised through his holy prophets long ago
that he would save us from our enemies,
from the power of all those who hate us.

**ALL: God said he would show mercy to our ancestors
and remember his sacred covenant.**

A: With a solemn oath to our ancestor Abraham
he promised to rescue us from our enemies

and allow us to serve him without fear,

**ALL: that we might be holy and righteous before him
all the days of our life.**

B: “You, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High God.

You will go ahead of the Lord to prepare his road for him,
to tell his people that they will be saved by having their sins forgiven”.

ALL: Our God is merciful and tender.

**He will cause the bright dawn of salvation to rise on us
and to shine from heaven on all those who live in the dark shadow of death,
to guide our steps into the path of peace.** (Luke 1:68-79, GNB)

C: Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory
are yours, now and forever. Amen

**ALL: Lighten our darkness, Lord, we pray,
and in your great mercy defend us
from all perils and dangers of this night,
for the love of your only Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

A: Lord, it is night.

B: We rest in you. We pray for deep sleep, and joy in the morning.

C: For Christ, God with us, has come to us and remains with us forever.

APPRENTICE PIECES

Thank everyone for their participation, and challenge them by the next meeting to do one of the following things (share them by copying and pasting into the “chat”):

1. Practice being 'mute' in one conversation: listen to what the other person is saying, ask follow-up questions and let them hear themselves think. Avoid the temptation of story ping pong (responding to a story they tell you with a story of your own) or giving your opinion..
2. Think about the traditions you take for granted. If someone asked you to explain them and their meaning, could you? Imagine you bring someone to your church who has never been before and think about what might feel strange to them that is unwritten code to you. Can you imagine changing any of these things?
3. Make a list, spider diagram or drawing of all the people you hear from in church (or your school or workplace or another group you belong to) then another of all those you don't. Do you see a pattern? Who talks most and why? What might happen if that changed? Choose someone you'd like to hear more from and start a conversation with them.

4. Find out what your name(s) mean and why you were given it/them and be prepared to share this with the group. Do you like or dislike your name(s)? Is there a name you would prefer?
5. Make a list of the following: things I really care about, things I would love to be chosen to do, things I long to change or transform. Now compare your list to how you actually spend your time, energy and money. What do you discover? Is there one change you could make to ensure more of your energy goes towards what you really care about?

SESSION 4

OPENING GAME (10 MINS)

If sensitive to the group, write the following words in “chat” –

“In the year 2020 corona gave to me: persistent coughing in a pear tree.

In the year 2020 corona gave to me:”

Challenge people to compose the whole song, and then sing it, up to whatever point in the 12 days you’ve reached.

LAST WEEK’S APPRENTICE PIECES

Pray for God’s help.

Remind everyone (via the “chat”) of their choice of “apprentice pieces.” Go round the participants, one by one, asking them which of these “pieces” they chose. Stress that saying “pass” is fine!

1. Practice being 'mute' in one conversation: listen to what the other person is saying, ask follow-up questions and let them hear themselves think. Avoid the temptation of story ping pong (responding to a story they tell you with a story of your own) or giving your opinion..
2. Think about the traditions you take for granted. If someone asked you to explain them and their meaning, could you? Imagine you bring someone to your church who has never been before and think about what might feel strange to them that is unwritten code to you. Can you imagine changing any of these things?
3. Make a list, spider diagram or drawing of all the people you hear from in church (or your school or workplace or another group you belong to) then another of all those you don't. Do you see a pattern? Who talks most and why? What might happen if that changed? Choose someone you'd like to hear more from and start a conversation with them.
4. Find out what your name(s) mean and why you were given it/them and be prepared to share this with the group. Do you like or dislike your name(s)? Is there a name you would prefer?
5. Make a list of the following: things I really care about, things I would love to be chosen to do, things I long to change or transform. Now compare your list to how you actually spend your time, energy and money. What do you discover? Is there one change you could make to ensure more of your energy goes towards what you really care about?

Express appreciation at each piece.

READING

Then read the following Bible Passage or ask someone else to do so (you might want to email it to them in advance). You may wish to share it using “share screen” (at the middle of the bar at the bottom of the screen).

At that moment Zechariah was able to speak again, and he started praising God. ⁶⁵ The neighbours were all filled with fear, and the news about these things spread through all the hill country of Judea. ⁶⁶ Everyone who heard of it thought about it and asked, “What is this child going to be?” For it was plain that the Lord's power was upon him.

67 John's father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he spoke God's word:

68 "Let us praise the Lord, the God of Israel!

He has come to the help of his people and has set them free.

69 He has provided for us a mighty Saviour,

a descendant of his servant David.

70 He promised through his holy prophets long ago

71 that he would save us from our enemies, from the power of all those who hate us.

God said he would show mercy to our ancestors and remember his sacred covenant.

73-74 With a solemn oath to our ancestor Abraham

he promised to rescue us from our enemies

and allow us to serve him without fear,

75 so that we might be holy and righteous before him all the days of our life.

76 And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High God.

You will go ahead of the Lord to prepare his road for him,

77 to tell his people that they will be saved by having their sins forgiven.

Our God is merciful and tender.

He will cause the bright dawn of salvation to rise on us

79 and to shine from heaven on all those who live in the dark shadow of death,

to guide our steps into the path of peace." (Luke 1:64-79, GNB)

Invite participants to be still for a minute.

QUIZ

1. How many days are there till Christmas?
2. Zechariah says Jesus will be like dawn. Which of these ISN'T Dawn?
 - a. A rapper whose single 'money' reached number 1 in 2019
 - b. The name of a sheep in Wallace and Grommit
 - c. The first light of the sun when night is first turning to morning
 - d. The actor who played the Vicar of Dibley
3. Zechariah includes his son as a character in his song. What does he say about him?
 - a. That he'd prepare the way for a bulldozer
 - b. That he'd prepare the people to read the Bible
 - c. That he'd prepare the way of the Lord
 - d. That he'd save the people by forgiving their sins

VIDEO

Select 'share screen' and tick the box at the bottom saying 'use computer audio'. Play one the two following videos:

*If children under 11 are present: https://youtu.be/J2BG0p3nc_U

*If children under 11 are not present: we suggest both https://youtu.be/J2BG0p3nc_U and <https://youtu.be/0NqBI3zp-7k>

DISCUSSION

Then ask: what particularly struck you in the passage or in the video? Listen without judgement to people's responses. You may need to intervene occasionally to close a conversation on one issue, simply in order to make sure everyone is heard.

- A. Then ask one of the following questions, and give people space to answer:
1. Did anyone ever tell you a bedtime story that changed the way you see the world? What was it?
 2. If there's one encouraging thing you would want to say to those of younger generations than your own, what would it be?
- B. Then ask one of the following questions, and give people space to answer:
1. Is there anything about what we've looked at over Advent that will change what you do in the New Year?
 2. How is 2021 going to turn out, do you think? Are you part of a community that will change things for the better, and if so, how will you do it?

LITURGY

Four candles are lit

A: This our fourth advent candle

B: Advent is now complete

C: But the light that really matters is the light of Christ, in our midst, God with us.

Glory to Christ, Son of Mary;

A: born a child, you are one with us.

ALL: Glory to God in the highest.

B: Glory to Christ, Son of David;

born to rule, you reign in our hearts.

ALL: Glory to God in the highest.

C: Glory to Christ, Son of man;

born to save, you are the light of the world.

ALL: Glory to God in the highest.

A: Blessed are you, God our Father,
through your Son the Christ. His name is Jesus.

ALL: God is with us. Praise the Lord.

B: Jesus came and shared our life.

ALL: God is with us. Praise the Lord.

C: Jesus is our King on high.

ALL: God is with us. Praise the Lord.

A: Let us praise the Lord, the God of Israel!

He has come to the help of his people and has set them free.

B: He has provided for us a mighty Saviour,

a descendant of his servant David.

C: He promised through his holy prophets long ago
that he would save us from our enemies,
from the power of all those who hate us.

**ALL: God said he would show mercy to our ancestors
and remember his sacred covenant.**

A: With a solemn oath to our ancestor Abraham
he promised to rescue us from our enemies
and allow us to serve him without fear,

**ALL: that we might be holy and righteous before him
all the days of our life.**

B: "You, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High God.
You will go ahead of the Lord to prepare his road for him,
to tell his people that they will be saved by having their sins forgiven".

ALL: Our God is merciful and tender.

**He will cause the bright dawn of salvation to rise on us
and to shine from heaven on all those who live in the dark shadow of death,
to guide our steps into the path of peace.**

(Luke 1:68-79, GNB)

C: Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory
are yours, now and forever. Amen

**ALL: Lighten our darkness, Lord, we pray,
and in your great mercy defend us
from all perils and dangers of this night,
for the love of your only Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

A: Lord, it is night.

B: We rest in you. We pray for deep sleep, and joy in the morning.

C: For Christ, God with us, has come to us and remains with us forever.

APPENDIX: SCRIPTS

UNSETTLED ADVENT, SCRIPT 1A

CB: My name's Caroline Beckett, and I'm pleased to say that I've secured an interview on Zoom with Zechariah Levi, a priest from the Jerusalem temple presently living in the hill country of Judaea. Zechariah, I gather you recently had the honour of entering the holy of holies – can you tell us about that experience?

AG: *Waves hands*

CB: Zechariah, I think you're on mute. YOU'RE ON MUTE!

AG *Bangs saucepans together*

CB: O, sorry, you're not on mute. You... a bird? A bird with a bun on its head? Slit your throat? I'm sorry, this isn't working for me, could you use the whiteboard feature?

AG: *(shares whiteboard. Writes angel...wife pregnant...I didn't believe...God muted me)*

CB: Ah, I understand! You were going about your life happily – well, routinely anyway, doing what you were on a rota for, and suddenly God has disrupted your life. In community organising, we speak about disorganising and reorganising as the only way change for the better happens – disorganise, reorganise, disorganise, reorganise. I can see this is the start of something new and wonderful, for you and your wife and the whole of Israel. And God has given you the great blessing of silence. I almost envy you!

AG: *Clearly not feeling blessed, bangs saucepans together*

CB: Rude!

UNSETTLED ADVENT, SCRIPT 1B

CB: Hi. My name's Caroline Beckett, and I've been reading Zechariah's story and seeing how God blessed him.

AG: My name's Andy Griffiths, and yes, I've been reading that story too, I'm just not as sure as you are that it would have felt like blessing for him.

CB: O, I agree, it probably didn't feel like blessing. It felt like isolation and redundancy.

AG: Exactly. He's a priest – like both of us, he talks for a living, he's on all the rotas, he's got a routine. And suddenly he's dumb and off the rotas.

CB: But the silence might actually be a bit of a sabbath, a gift. Here's a poem by the Nigerian writer Enuma Okoro:

***What if the silence God bestowed
was not fully punishment but also odd blessing
offering nine months to sit with the news
to ponder God's words
to process stupified awe?***

But it's deeper than that. Though Zechariah may not have realised it, what was happening in his day was the beginning of a whole new chapter – actually a whole New Testament, and the pattern of disorganisation and reorganisation is one that goes back to the earliest days of God's plans. The tower of Babel topples as languages divide. The earth floods and then is repopulated. Abraham must leave his home. Joseph is dislocated into slavery in order to make Egypt a safe haven for God's people. Moses leads God's people in exodus from Egypt to the wilderness. Joshua relocates them in the Promised Land. Destruction and exile then return and rebuilding or gathering and scattering and regathering mark the life of the people of God.

Jesus spends years in one place in Nazareth, then his ministry constantly in transit, shaking his society to its foundations. The early church is just for Jews and Jewish converts, until it's suddenly not and the Gentile church gets underway with Peter's vision and the dramatic conversion of St. Paul. Disorganisation and reorganisation are like breathing out and breathing in to the people of God. They are a thread throughout the Bible yet we overlook it. This is because of a simple truth that applies to all histories: **other people's disorganising narratives become our bedtime stories.**

AG: I love that – other people's disorganising narratives become our bedtime stories. Like Rosa Parks and the dismantling of segregation. It has become a story that we just accept as right: she did the right thing, the godly thing, the courageous thing. But was it like that at the time, or was it more messy, more risky, more controversial than that? Did good people tell her she was risking generating a lot of harm, that there would be riots, that innocents would be hurt and society destabilised, that these were reasons to stop? You and I are both involved with community organising as an approach for the whole of ministerial life, so we're committed to disorganising and reorganising. And when we tell stories of change looking back, the early stages are usually smoothed and made glossy by the light of the end result. So we know Zechariah's story is in Luke 1, but he just knew something weird was going on and his life had been put on hold.

CH: Lord, open my eyes when my world is being disorganized. Help me to see the new starts in the inconvenient stops, and when silence is in my life, help me to make the most of it.

AG: Give me the hope that out of disorganization, you can reorganize something new and fresh and better. Amen.

UNSETTLED ADVENT, SCRIPT 2A

AG: Hi, my name's Andy and I'm talking to Elizabeth, wife of Zechariah. If you don't mind me saying, you're glowing.

CB: I bet you say that to all the pregnant ladies.

AG: I mean, you seem so happy. Did you have a good time with your cousin Mary?

CB: Yes. Sometimes you don't see how far you've come down a new path till you meet someone at the start of it.

AG: So she came to you for your help and expertise?

CB: Hardly! I don't know much more of what's happening than Mary does. It's a mystery. But I can feel things changing and it's so good to have someone to share it with. It was so kind of God to let Mary know I was having my miracle baby too: it connected us so she was less alone, also to talk to someone else who's had their life turned upside down. It's tougher for her though: she's got to explain it all to Joseph. At least Zechariah and I are in this together.

AG: It seems unfair to me. Why Mary and not someone with more money, better support? Why you, when you're er...

CB: When I'm almost past it? Hey, it's never too late, you know. I'm younger than Abraham's Sarah! Anyway, Mary and I were the ones who wanted this: wanted change, wanted a child, said yes. Change isn't made by the perfect people: it's made by people who live in the imperfect and are restless and unhappy. People who want more. People who say yes.

UNSETTLED ADVENT, SCRIPT 2B

CB: Hi, I'm Caroline and I've always been fascinated by the story of this meeting between Mary and Elizabeth, both agents of massive change and both ordinary women. They have some things in common: same faith, same culture, same society, under Roman oppression, same inherited prophecies and longings. They are different too, though: one an unmarried young girl at the start of her life and about to be married, living in an obscure Northern town and the other an older woman, in a priestly family with some status, married and with years of crushed hopes behind her. We only get a small snippet of their months of conversation, but it's a profound moment.

AG: The base unit of all Community Organising is the 121 conversation: a scheduled, uninterrupted conversation of around 45 minutes between 2 people who share parts of themselves. It is not counselling or an interview, but an equal and public conversation that is personal, but not private. We talk about things like what we are passionate about: events that have shaped us, important relationships, issues we care about, interests and priorities.

CB: Each time I have a 121, I find out new things about myself as well as the other person: with each new person, I connect in different ways. Different parts of our stories, opinions and wishes touch.

AG: And often I discover that we both want at least some of the same things, dream some of the same dreams or have interests and issues in common, just like Mary and Elizabeth. And in Community Organising the conversation turns often towards the changes we want to see. The organising cycle starts with proper listening: not assuming we know the changes people long for, and not steering the conversation into calmer waters if our conversation partner gets angry or sad, but sitting in the discomfort of someone else's honest, lived experience and response; making time to get to know them and their stories; listening to them with one ear and God with the other..

CB: That's like Mary and Elizabeth too. They bond over their shared experience of miracles, over both being pregnant and over the prophecies of God saving Israel - the big story that they have both realised their stories are part of. They really hear each other's story but they hear God's story too. The right companions are vital to changemaking because while we pass through chaos we are not called upon to live there. After disorganising comes reorganising: building new relationships, listening, planning, sharing. Think about the changes you are going through, or the changes you long for. Can you find someone who is a little further along that road than you?

AG: And listen to Mary's song, the Magnificat: it's nothing less than a revolutionary anthem, a cry for justice. It has an uncomfortable edge, it feels challenging, even angry. As Christians we are often taught not to be angry, but the Bible does not say that anywhere, only 'IN your anger, do not sin' and 'be SLOW to anger'. Righteous anger, anger against injustice, is a positive thing if harnessed and offered to God: Community organisers often talk about anger as fuel for change. And here is Mary, powerfully calling out the issues in her society and their solutions.

CB: But then, mothers always do want their children to be born into a better world. Love is a powerful motivating force. The most powerful in fact. Perhaps that makes these two mothers seem a better choice as God's agent of change than they first appeared. What they lack in power, they make up for in passion.

AG: God, fill me with the love that burns for justice and the discomfort that is hungry for a better world - the world as it should be.

CB: And help me to connect with those who will partner with me in bringing it to birth. Amen.

UNSETTLED ADVENT, SCRIPT 3A

AG: Hi, my name's Andy and I am with Elizabeth, having just witnessed the naming of baby John. It was a little strange.

CB: A little? I think we scandalised our family.

AG: Why John? Why not name him after his father the way it's supposed to be?

CB: Because sometimes you just know things have to be different. Tradition, the way things have always been done, following on – even from people you respect – it's not enough.

AG: So the name is symbolic?

CB: I think it will be. I don't think this will be the last change this little one will cause. None of us knows how this will turn out. But at least Zechariah and I are on the same page so I'm not alone in this and God knows the reasons why. That's enough for now.

UNSETTLED ADVENT, SCRIPT 3B

CB: Hi, I'm Caroline and I do so enjoy God's comedy in the Bible. The Bible as comic sketch seems an underdeveloped area of theology...or is it just me? In fact, some of the funniest, most groan-worthy moments in Scripture come because people are not listening or taking God seriously or properly paying attention, to each other or to God. Like Balaam and his donkey, or the Emmaus disciples, or Jonah, or St. Paul en route to Damascus. Here, though, the main characters are listening and it's the side characters who aren't. They just want to follow tradition.

AG: And with Zechariah still on mute, it's up to Elizabeth to speak up.

CB: Yes, but they don't believe her. I can imagine the next bit going a bit like a game of charades: one syllable....rhymes with go....going,,,running...gone? Rhymes with gone! Oh, get the writing tablet, someone!

AG: It seems a very strange, ridiculous, tenuous, messy way of getting to where God wants to be. This is the moment the story goes public: the transformation, the miracle is shared in the form of this healthy 8 day old baby boy. But God lets its power be transmitted through a mute priest and a woman whose word isn't trusted or valued by her society. In community organising, after disorganising and reorganising and listening and planning comes taking action through public storytelling and this is where it can get a bit hair-raising as people who have never done it before speak up, tell their stories and speak truth to power. Hair-raising for those who speak up and hair-raising for those who help to carve out the opportunity for them to do so.

Invariably, the team we get are not the team that are the slickest, most capable and most naturally powerful - we get the team that care, that bother to show up, that have free time and energy. Stories of changemaking often start with oddballs, or with people who are undervalued or not taken seriously. Look at the sheer power of Greta Thunberg....but she probably looked and felt rather foolish on her first protest - just a young girl with a sign all alone.

CB: We often want to wait till we have the dream team, but that's not how God operates. It can be unhelpful to think of being chosen by God as being like picking teams in school: all lined up and hopeful but pretty passive in the process. Choosing by God is much more of a two-way thing: God's caring meets ours, God's desire for justice meets ours. Of course, God, being God, does most of the work, but us being

made in God's image means us being active, creative agents of transformation in the world.

AG: And the Bible has quite a bit to say about God choosing the foolish to shame the wise and the weak to shame the strong so perhaps being the chosen isn't always the compliment we think it is.

CB: You're probably right: that's a thought that ought to cut us down to size! But it's comforting too, to think we can't be too young and inexperienced or too old and washed up or too insignificant or too quiet for God to shake us loose and work with us.

AG: God, give me the passion to tell my story at the right time and the humility to see it as a small part of your greater story.

CB: God, give me the faith to get out of the way so that unlikely speakers of uncomfortable truths have chance to be heard. Amen.

UNSETTLED ADVENT, SCRIPT 4A

CB: (*normal voice*) Hi. My name's Caroline, and I'm tiptoe-ing into Zechariah Levi's bedroom with his permission, to hear him putting his baby son to bed.

AG: (*whispering*) Shhh! I'm just telling him a story as he drops off!

CB: (*whispering*) Sorry! Can we eavesdrop on the story?

AG: Of course! It's kind of a story crossed with a lullaby crossed with a prayer of blessing. I call it my very different Benedictus. I'm going to do this every evening till he's a teenager, so he knows who he is

CB: If you give him a goodnight story every night till he's a teenager, he'll probably run off and become a hermit.

AG: (*like a croaked lullaby*): Blessed be God, because God's on the move, coming for justice, here for forgiveness, remembering his promise, coming in power. What he did then for Abraham, did then for David, spoke through his prophets, now he will do again, do again through you, for you are a prophet, you are loved, you are a voice preparing his way. Blessed be God, coming like dawn, rising like sunlight, scattering darkness, the light of the world. Shhh – he's asleep (*turn monitor to show sleeping baby*).

UNSETTLED ADVENT, SCRIPT 4B

CB: Hi. My name's Caroline Beckett, and I've been reading Zechariah's story and thinking my goodness, he's come a long way. At the beginning of the story he was what you might call a settled leader (he was on a rota, he was 'blameless' in keeping the law, but he was a bit lacking in faith - in Gabriel's view at least!). Now, 9 months

after his lockdown started, he's learned to let God disorganise and reorganise, learned to listen, learned to allow Elizabeth to take the lead, and found some faith from somewhere. Now the long silence is over – the long silence of 400 years in which prophecy has been muted, and the long silence of nine months for this priest - and he speaks praise with power.

AG: My name's Andy Griffiths. I've been reading Zechariah's hymn, traditionally called the Benedictus, and I'm struck that it's a great model of storytelling. I mean, basically he's telling the story of Israel, as I expect priests were supposed to do, but he's telling it to his son John, as a story that John will have a part in.

Now obviously at eight days old, John is not taking much of it in. But let's assume that day after day, bedtime story after bedtime story, Zechariah and Elizabeth spoke similar words, retelling God's story in a way that made sense of John's story. By the time he left home (to go and live in a desert and eat wild honey – he was too unsettled to eat domesticated honey, he followed wild bees homes and stuck his head in the hive and ate wild honey) John will have heard a version of this story literally hundreds of times.

Abraham is there in the story, and Exodus, and David, and the prophets. The story-line is that God has acted in his people's past to bring justice, mercy, right worship and an absence of fear; and is about to act again to bring forgiveness of sins. And you, John, you will be part of the story, you will be the bridge between the past of Abraham, Moses, David and the prophets and 'the Lord' whose way you will prepare.

CB: It's an interesting approach isn't it: raising a rebel prophet who will shake things up by teaching him history and tradition. That might seem like an unlikely means of preparation but the history of God's people contains everything John will need to locate himself, and his burning desire for righteousness and holiness and justice and transformation, within the bigger story of God.

We've been talking about community organising in these sessions. God is constantly disorganising and reorganising, disorganising and reorganising, and as we cooperate with him there are stages to go through: organising, then listening, then planning, then action through public story-telling, then ensuring everyone gets a seat at the table. This advent, we want to declare over you: You are a child of God. You can be used by God to bring real change that will allow your community to find its place at the seats of power and the table of God.

AG: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he will cause the Advent dawn to rise on us and shine from heaven. Decisively in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and one day completely when the world is put right and there is no longer any gap between the world as it is and the world as it should be. And between the dawn of a new age in Jesus and the dawn of a new age when heaven and earth are made new, there are lots of little dawns, lots of little new ages beginning, dawn glimmering through the cracks whenever the world is shaken and unsettled.

CB: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he will shine upon those who live in the dark shadow of death. The dark shadow of death is not to be seen on a map, but

at times of plague and unsettling its contours show themselves in the beam of our wavering torchlight. And we – the unsettled, hope-filled People of God, living between the dawns – have the task of living as a different kind of community, without the hierarchies and violence which so mar our darkened world, as if we were already in tomorrow's light. Small, unsettled, not overambitious communities, in every neighbourhood; small unsettled communities marked by hope, justice, disorganising and reorganising, action and boldness. Creative minorities in partnership with other creative minorities.

AG: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he will guide our steps into the path of peace, of shalom, of the world as it should be. He will take our faltering, unsettled, hopeful feet and direct them to love the world towards which, shadows notwithstanding, he feels a tenderness and mercy he will recreate in us. He will use our organising and our listening and our planning and our action, and from them provoke the question 'why do you live with this hope in you?' in the sure knowledge that our living and learning and suffering has equipped us to answer the question by telling the story of Jesus the dawn who rose as Zechariah promised, was raised on the cross, rose from the dead, has risen to the right hand of God, has risen in our hearts and given meaning to our own stories and will come again in a blaze of glory.

CB: Thank you for listening to us over the course of this unsettled Advent. I hope you've seen that we're realistic about the task God's given us. But we are not hopeless. We are waiting not for Godot, but for another—doubtless very different—Benedictus.