

# Searching for the Crib in our Streets

An Advent liturgy  
resource for young people

from the

Young Christian Workers

**YCW**  
*The Difference  
is You*

**Impact!**

As people enter the church they should be given a candle, candle holder and service sheet. The church itself is in darkness, only the advent wreath is lit. When a number are gathered the team situated at the front of the altar should light their candles from the wreath and in silence pass this light onto the people gathered and continue to do this as and when more people arrive. Throughout this service the church should remain in darkness with the candles providing the only light. At a point during the service people will be invited to place their candles at the foot of the altar so you will have to practically plan how to make this as safe as possible – for example you could use a deep tray filled with sand.

*Suggestion: Matt Maher – Alive Again ‘Flesh and Bone’ playing on a low-ish volume on a loop to be played until the start of the service.*

*At the designated time the service begins with whoever is leading:*

## **Leader**

Advent is a season of hope and expectation, of preparation and of waiting but all too often we end up hoping, expecting and preparing in the all the places but those that Jesus teaches us to look.

## **Opening prayer:**

Lord, we come together today to make some time for you in this busy season. Grant us the grace to be present and mindful of your truth that surrounds us. We pray that we will be inspired to rediscover the places where you want us to be and for you to help us find ‘the crib in our street’. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

## **Hymn: Longing For Light**

1. Longing for light, we wait in darkness.

Longing for truth, we turn to you.

Make us your own, your holy people,

Light for the world to see.

2. Longing for peace, our world is troubled.

Longing for hope, many despair.

Your word alone has pow’r to save us.

Make us your living voice.

## **Refrain**

**Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.**

**Shine through the darkness.**

**Christ, be our light!**

**Shine in your church gathered today.**

3. Longing for food, many are hungry.

Longing for water, many still thirst.

Make us your bread, broken for others,  
shared until all are fed.

4. Longing for shelter, many are homeless.

Longing for warmth, many are cold.

Make us your building, sheltering others, walls made of living stone.

5. Many the gifts, many the people,  
many the hearts that yearn to belong.

Let us be servants to one another,  
making your kingdom come.

### **Reader 1:**

**Reading:** Isaiah 11:1- 4

A shoot will spring from the stock of Jesse,  
a new shoot will grow from his roots.

On him will rest the spirit of Yahweh,  
the spirit of wisdom and insight,  
the spirit of counsel and power,

the spirit of knowledge and fear of Yahweh:  
his inspiration will lie in fearing Yahweh.

His judgement will not be by appearances,  
his verdict not given on hearsay.

He will judge the weak with integrity  
and give fair sentence  
for the humblest in the land.

*A few moments of silence before the poem is read.*

**Poem - Into this World** - taken from Thomas Merton, The promise of Peace—A Pax Christi anthology for advent and Christmas.

#### **Voice 1**

Into this world,

This demented inn,

In which there is no room

For him at all.

#### **Voice 2**

Christ has come uninvited.

But because he cannot

Be at home in it...

His place is with those

Who do not belong,

#### **Voice 1**

Who are rejected by power

Because they are regarded as  
weak,

Those who are discredited,

Who are denied

The status of persons,

Tortured and exterminated.

#### **Voice 2**

With those for whom

There is no room,

Christ is present in this world.

#### **Voice 1**

He is mysteriously present

In those for whom

There seems to be nothing

But the world at its worst.

*A few moments of silence before the Gospel is read:*

**Reader 2:**

**Gospel:** Matthew 25:35-40

For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me." Then the virtuous will say to him in reply, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you; or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome; naked and clothe you; sick or in prison and go to see you?" And the King will answer, "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me".

*A few moments of silence before the reflection is read:*

**Reflection: Room for Christ**

It is no use saying that we are born two thousand years too late to give room to Christ. Nor will those who live at the end of the world have been born too late. Christ is always with us, always asking for room in our hearts.

But now it is with the voice of our contemporaries that He speaks, with the eyes of shop assistants, factory workers, and children that He gazes; with the hands of office workers, slum dwellers, and suburban housewives that He gives.

We can do now what those who knew Him in the days of His earthly life did. I am sure that the shepherds did not adore and then go away to leave Mary and her Child in the stable, but somehow found them room, even though what they had to offer might have been primitive enough. All that the friends of Christ did for Him in His lifetime, we can do. Peter's mother-in-law hastened to cook a meal for Him, and if anything in the Gospels can be inferred, it surely is that she gave the very best she had, with no thought of extravagance. Matthew made a feast for Him, inviting the whole town, so that the house was in an uproar of enjoyment, and the strait-laced Pharisees – the good people – were scandalised.

The people of Samaria, despised and isolated, were overjoyed to give Him hospitality, for days He walked and ate and slept among them. And the loveliest of all relationships in Christ's life, after His relationship with His Mother, is His friendship with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus and the continual hospitality He found with them. It is a staggering thought that there were once two sisters and a brother whom Jesus looked on almost as His family and where He found a second home, where Martha got on with her work, bustling around in her house-proud way, and Mary simply sat in silence with Him.

If we hadn't got Christ's own words for it, it would seem raving lunacy to believe that if I offer a bed and food and hospitality to some man or woman or child I am replaying the part of Lazarus or Martha or Mary, and that my guest is Christ. There is nothing to show it, perhaps. There are no halos already glowing round their heads – at least none that human eyes can see. It is not likely that I shall be affirmed with the vision of Elizabeth of Hungary, who put the leper in her bed and later, going to tend him, saw no longer the leper's stricken face, but the face of Christ.

Some time ago I saw the death notice of a sergeant-pilot who had been killed on active service. After the usual information, a message was added which, I imagine, is likely to be imitated. It said that anyone who had ever known the dead boy would always be sure of a welcome at his parents' home. So, even now that the war is over, the father and mother will go on taking in strangers for the simple reason that they will be reminded of their dead son by the friends he made.

That is rather like the custom that existed among the first generations of Christians, when faith was a bright fire that warmed more than those who kept it burning. In every house then, a room was kept ready for any stranger who might ask for shelter; it was even called "the stranger's room," and this not because these people, like the parents of the dead airman, thought they could trace something of someone they loved in the stranger who used it, not because the man or woman to whom they gave shelter reminded them of Christ, but because – plain and simple and stupendous fact – he was Christ.

Taken from Dorothy Day. A promise of Peace - a Pax Christi publication

## **Hymn: God's Spirit is in my heart**

1. God's Spirit is in my heart.  
He has called me and set me apart.  
This is what I have to do,  
what I have to do.

*He sent me to give  
the Good News to the poor,  
tell pris'ners that they are pris'ners  
no more,  
tell blind people that they can see,  
and set the down trodden free,  
an go tell ev'ryone the news*

**Leader:** Maybe we have begun to ask ourselves questions about the way we choose to live. Maybe we have begun to ask whether we understand truly and follow the message and example Christ lived for us. Perhaps we now have to make some difficult decisions in the light of our answers to these questions so we must now ask for the courage to make a welcome room for you.

**Voice 1:** For all the times we did not always listen to people's stories, dreams and hopes because we have been too preoccupied with our own worries and concerns.

**All: Lord, grant us the courage to transform our lives and follow your example.**

**Voice 2:** For all times we walk past you in the streets and refuse to see you

2. Just as he Father sent me,  
so I'm sending you out to be  
my witnesses throughout the  
world,  
the whole of the world.

3. Don't carry a load in your pack,  
you don't need two shirts on your  
back.

A workman can earn his own keep,  
can earn his own keep.

4. Don't worry what you have to  
say,  
don't worry because on that day  
God's Spirit will speak in your heart,

**All: Lord, grant us the courage to transform our lives and follow your example.**

**Voice 3:** For all the times we listened to what the world said was right and ignored your simple loving message.

**All: Lord, grant us the courage to transform our lives and follow your example.**

**Voice 4:** For all the times that we don't speak out about the injustices suffered by the weak, discredited, tortured and exterminated people in our world.

**All:** Lord, grant us the courage to transform our lives and follow your example.

**Leader:** I would like to invite everyone to think about the places where you may look for Christ this Advent. Maybe you would like to name those out loud before coming forward to place your candle in the sand-box at the foot of the altar. Even if you don't want to say anything out loud I invite everyone to come forward and place their candles at the front and to remain standing near the light at the front.

*If your church space allows you to, encourage people to gather together near the candles as the service draws to a close.*

*After everyone has placed their candles at the foot of the Altar and when the time feels right...*

**Leader:** Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, so let us now say together in confidence the '**Our Father...**

**Leader:** May the faith that burned like a bright warming fire in the first generations of Christians, be shared by us and through us touch everyone we come into contact with.

We know that Christ does not just patiently wait for us to see him. He is already present in all those who are uninvited, who do not belong, who are rejected by power because they are regarded as weak, those who are discredited, who are denied the status of persons, tortured and exterminated and with those for whom there is no room.

Christ is present in this world so let us now leave this place with hearts full of confidence and hope that our renewed commitment will....

**ALL: Renew the face of the earth!**

*Suggestion: Matt Maher – Alive Again 'Flesh and Bone' playing on a low-ish volume on a loop to be played until everyone has left the space.*



**Young Christian Workers, St Joseph's Off St Joseph's Grove, London  
NW4 4TY**

**Tel: 020 8203 6290.**

**Website: [www.ycwimpact.com](http://www.ycwimpact.com)**