



God became flesh and moved into the neighbourhood

ADVENT REFLECTIONS,
FRONTIER YOUTH TRUST (2019)

Advent | Raise a glass...

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-raise-a-glass

December 2, 2019



“The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood” (John 1:14)

Raise a Glass

Here's to neighbours and friends
To the stranger
To the early morning risers
And late night revivers
Here's to laughter and joy
And tables laden with food

Here's to conversations
Had over cups of tea and gin
Here's to back street celebrations
Parties in garages
cake in kitchens
And making new friends

Here's to walking side by side
To preparations and unravellings
bubble blowing shenanigans
And insights profound
From children's mouths
To protest and integrity

Here's to prayers and vulnerability
To invites and possibilities
To frank discussions
And lives shared
And the prospect of
New Adventures

Here's to innovation and creativity
And the best of our humanity
To hope in dark times
And a glimmer of the Divine
Seen in you and me and them and us

Here's to everyone!

*This reflection was written by Lori Passmore from Mountain Pilgrims
www.mountainpilgrims.org.uk for our Advent Series on John 1:14 from the message
('The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.').*

Advent | The word became flesh and...

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-the-word-became-flesh-and

December 4, 2019



“The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood” (John 1:14)

The Word became flesh and...

The word became flesh and made tea

The word became flesh and prepared a feast

The word became flesh and gave warm welcome

The word became flesh and made a fresh clean bed

The word became flesh and handed out toothbrushes

The word became flesh and listened

The word became flesh and noticed detail

The word became flesh and provided breathing space

The word became flesh and treated with dignity

The word became flesh and remembered names

The word became flesh and celebrated uniqueness

The word became flesh and offered community

The word became flesh and loved

This reflection was written by Nikky Mungeam at the Bristol Wing YMCA thebristolwing.co.uk for our Advent Series on John 1:14 from the message ('The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.').

Advent | The Christ in Christmas

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-the-christ-in-christmas

December 6, 2019



“The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood” (John 1:14)

The Christ in Christmas

Mill Grove is the name of a family home where for 120 years children and families have lived and been cared for in the name of Jesus. It's near the East End of London.

One of the traditions that has developed over this time is how we celebrate Christmas. Family, friends and neighbours join with us over a period of three days with everything thrown in from singing carols to neighbours on Christmas Day and a Boxing Day pantomime, to strange and silly games with exotic names such as Bigamy, Where art thou, brother? And Bomber coming Over.

Having been born here 72 years ago, I have never celebrated Christmas anywhere else. A few years ago, in conversation with some of the youngsters living here I commented that I thought Jesus would enjoy being with us as we celebrated his birthday. “Why do you say that?”, they asked. “Because everyone is welcome, and it's such a big and mixed group of people from such different backgrounds and cultures”, I replied.

“I think you’re wrong”, said one of them. Intrigued, I asked, “Why’s that?” “I think we have such a good time because Jesus is already with us at Christmas” came the unhesitating reply.

Could it possibly be, I wondered, that Jesus had indeed slipped in to our home and celebrations, so quietly and unobtrusively that no one noticed? And that our enjoyment was a reflection of the warmth of his presence and his smile?

No Christmas since has been the same knowing that this young person had brought me to the very heart of the nature and person of Jesus: **God in Christ coming among us and making His home among us, in our ordinary neighbourhood, without any noise, warning or fuss.**

This reflection was written by Keith White from Mill Grove www.millgrove.org.uk for our Advent Series on John 1:14 from the message (‘The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.’).

Advent | Keep Going

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-keep-going

December 9, 2019



“The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood” (John 1:14)

Keep Going

Keep Going, child of God
In frost and in sweat
It can seem the hope lies dormant
But it's not over yet

The leaves of change have fallen
Fruit seems nowhere to be found
But see the trees in winter
Note the leaves on the ground

The branches are bare, but living
The leaves ferment, but aren't lost
They prepare the ground for new life
All growth requires a cost

Our hands may be tired and dry
Our hopes may have slowed and waned
But we count on our timely Father
To rejuvenate us again

What a wonder it is to represent
God on earth, with man
His eyes, His mouth, His heart, His limbs
The workings of His plan

We might feel weak and be slow to speak
The wonders of His love
But God gave us His Son, who gave us His Spirit

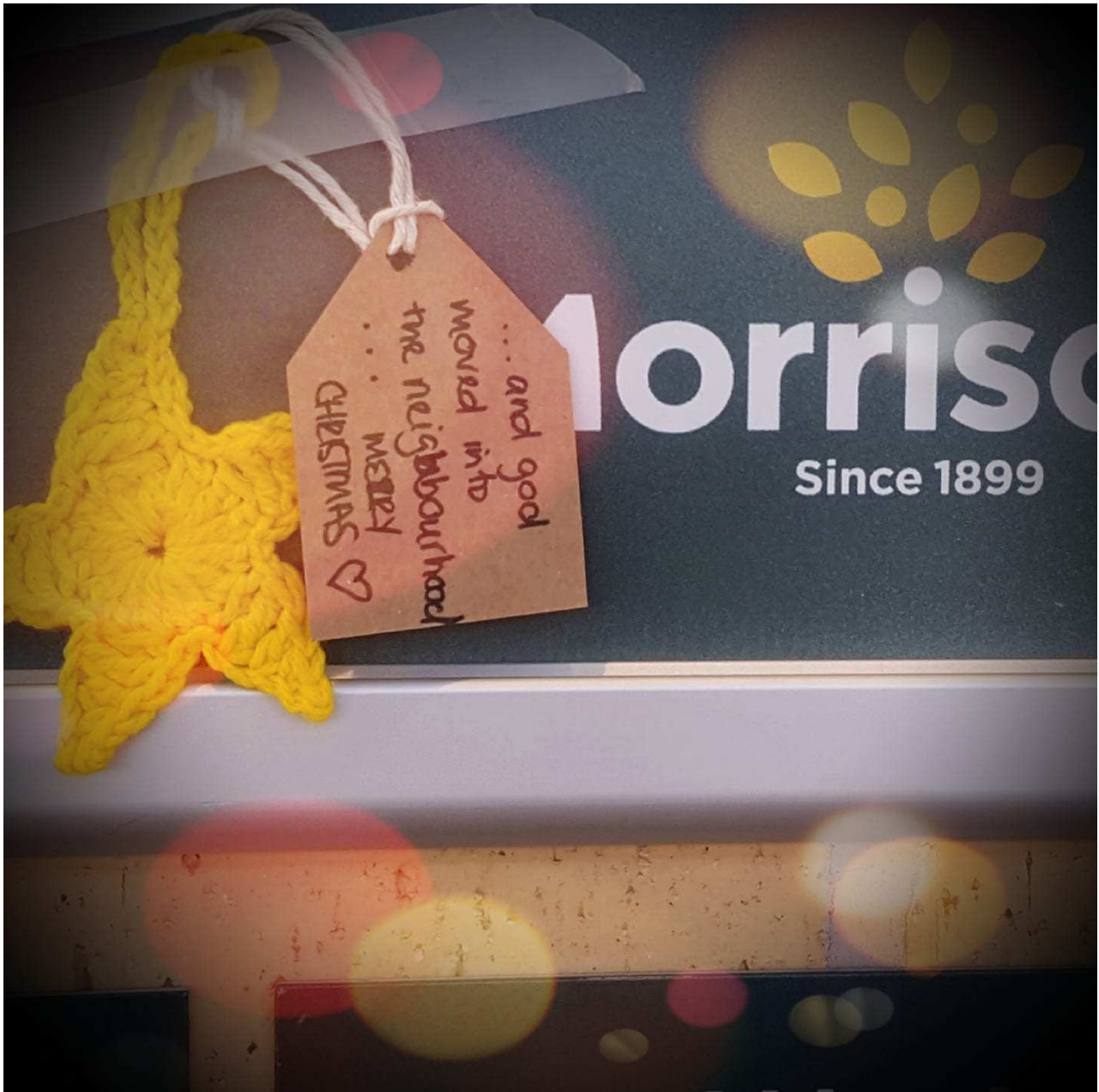
And He gives us hope from above

*This reflection was written by Laila Rizvi from Clevedon YMCA
www.clevedonymca.org.uk for our Advent Series on John 1:14 from the message ('The
Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.').*

Advent | God moved into the Neighbourhood

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-god-moved-into-the-neighbourhood

December 11, 2019



God moved into the Neighbourhood

The morning God moved into the neighbourhood, Doris saw him. He slipped past her window and left a leaflet at Mr Deane's next-door. "Idiot," thought Doris, "like that old goat's going to be interested in God, He'd be much better off visiting the old folks' home down by the school. "They're all closer to meeting Him after all!" She cackled. But she couldn't help feeling hurt that He hadn't popped in to see her.

When Michelle came later to tidy up and sort out Doris' pills, Doris was ratty, moaning about God. "God," thought Michelle, "she do go on," and texted her neighbour to check if they needed anything at Morrisons.

Michelle emptied the basket onto the conveyer belt, and looked up, She started at the till lady who was beeping the shopping through; “Oh God, What are you doing here?” “I moved into the neighbourhood; Didn’t Doris tell you?” Michelle blushed, “Um, probably. She was banging on about you. I wasn’t listening properly... I think she’s cross that you haven’t popped in.” “I know. I’ll get to her. That’s £26.34 Michelle.” Michelle searched in her purse, “Doris was saying you left a leaflet in Mr Deane’s, she thinks you’re mad, he’ll never come to church no matter what you’re advertising.” God smiled, “It wasn’t a church leaflet, it was a pizza menu. He loves pizza and his home-help only gets him the cheap ones that you cook at home.” “Oh right,” Michelle paid and said goodbye.

“I’m so glad you’ve moved in; it’ll make such a difference to everyone.” God brushed her hand, “It really won’t. Any difference is going to be down to you Michelle.” Michelle laughed, “Me?!” “You. And everyone.” God turned away and greeted the next customer.

Michelle texted Doris:

GOD SAYS SHE’LL GET TO YOU SOON. SEE YOU TOMORROW XXX

Doris replied:

WHAT DO YOU MEAN SHE?

This reflection was written by Debs North from Lemon Jelly

www.lemonjellyyouthwork.org for our Advent Series on John 1:14 from the message ('The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.').

Advent | God dwells amongst us

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-god-dwells-amongst-us

December 13, 2019



“The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood” (John 1:14)

God dwells amongst us

Holly grows down the middle of the street on a verge. A few months back the Council came along and decimated the holly trees. I imagine someone complained about their vehicle being scratched. They don't look beautiful anymore, cut off to a precise height decreed from on high I suppose!

I always think of Christmas when I see holly so all through the year the trees that adorn our neighbourhood remind me of Christmas. Christmas is when we celebrate Jesus

coming into the world, moving into the neighbourhood.

My picture is of an FYT bauble hung on one of the holly trees. I did that because as well as bringing God into the neighbourhood I bring FYT too because they are part of who I am, I share their passion for young people and their desire to take God's love into the world in so many different ways. However, it's not really about what I bring to the neighbourhood, it's about what God is already doing there, God dwells among us and we encounter God in unexpected places and people.

One of my contributions to Christmas at church is a Blue Christmas service, that's about remembering that God became flesh and lived among us and gets what it's like to be human today and wants to love and comfort us on those days in this Christmas season when life is tough and the last thing we feel like doing is rejoicing. I am grateful for the FYT movement which is out there in their neighbourhoods offering the love of Jesus, seeking out those who are having a tough time and enabling them to be real rather than having to put on a fake happy smile because it's Christmas and we are supposed to be happy. **God is at work in and through us but we can also encounter God in and through those we meet.**

This reflection was written by Sally Nash from the Institute for Children, Youth and Mission www.cym.ac.uk for our Advent Series on John 1:14 from the message ('The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.').

Advent | The Tent

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-the-tent

December 16, 2019



“The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood” (John 1:14)

The Tent

Our neighbourhood is not always our own, as many come to visit this pretty seaside town. The parking is crazy and often we can't get space outside our front door. Visitors are attracted to the beach and the surf or a walk on the pier – the Cleveland Way cuts right through here. Thank goodness for the winter months and a time to recover.

For our young people who do venture out, they find space in the back streets and Valley Gardens; sometimes we wonder where they all are? We cannot presume to know what young people want, our purpose is to wait and to listen – to be available, to be the open door and a welcome for all.

The Tent is a meeting place, it just happens to be in the shelter of a Church. An old gazebo, some cushions, light and heat. Hot chocolate and a Bluetooth sound box – that's as far as we go with technology. A safe space to just chill and relax, come in with friends or just by yourself. Whatever is happening, it's all about people – all interested to know whatever you are thinking. Building trust and learning from each other is how we grow – some quick some slow.

So how do we know God has moved in? **No judgements, no rebuff, all are accepted right here where they are. Listening to opinions, ideas and desires, all are given space for growth.** No real programme, just driven by whoever turns up and their skateboards parked neatly in the Church porch.

This reflection was written by John Pearson from Doorways Project, Saltburn www.door-ways.co.uk for our Advent Series on John 1:14 from the message ('The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.').

Advent | Illuminate

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-illuminate

December 18, 2019



“The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood” (John 1:14)

Illuminate

Jesus said “I am the light of the world”
He said “no-one puts a light under a bowl”

He introduced His Kingdom, the Kingdom of God
Not a wide expanse
Not an army of thousands
Small
Small as a mustard seed, like yeast
Small, but with the power to change
Corrupt a broken generation
Disrupt a world hell-bent on destruction
A culture more interested in what's in the palm of its hand
Than what's staring it in the face
A light that never goes out
A light from which darkness cannot hide
That drives out fear
That brings hope, purpose, meaning, life
Life in all its fullness
A single light
And another
And another
And another
Until darkness shakes, breaks
Loses its grip and disappears
A single light
But not alone
Shining with Him
The Light of the World
With Him
Through Him
In Him
Breaking out, breaking through
A flicker. Bold. Brave
Small, but with the power to change
Change the person on the left
Or on the right
Shine into their darkness
Be the light
Don't wait
illuminate

*This reflection was written by Barrie Voyce from The Door, Stroud
www.thedoor.org.uk for our Advent Series on John 1:14 from the message ('The Word
became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.').*

Advent | Good News for the Whole World

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-good-news-for-the-whole-world

December 20, 2019



“The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood” (John 1:14)

Good News for the Whole World

Over in the East End the word is alive
In tower blocks and coffee shops the message survives
That Jesus is good news so the WHOLE world can thrive.

For the Word is in flesh
He’s a saviour to confess
Yet our buildings we often over dress

The Word isn’t in tinsel or shiny new plastic
No matter how much our Instagram looks fantastic
Working together we are dreaming new tactics

No baubles to hang, or tinsel to tack
Working together we are stripping it back
Recalling the reason, not getting side tracked

Hidden amongst the normal and plain
In the ordinary things thrown out in disdain
The light of the world we will seek to explain

Born of blood and real flesh
Amongst the pain and the mess
Bringing hope and freedom to those held oppressed

Over in the East End the word is alive
In reducing and reusing our planet can survive

For Jesus is good news for the WHOLE world to thrive.

This reflection was written by Gemma Dunning, Movement Advocate at Frontier Youth Trust for our Advent Series on John 1:14 from the message ('The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.').

Advent | Keeping the Beautiful Way beautiful

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-keeping-the-beautiful-way-beautiful

December 23, 2019



“The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood” (John 1:14)

Since becoming a full-time dad, my community is now little toddlers and parents, meeting together disparately across the city each day.

We’ve also chosen to be a car-free family – so I walk, quite a lot. I like walking the fresh, green, wild paths. Here I see miracles.

Like my daughter almost falling out her pram with excitement, seeing a bird up high, trying to smell any plant I wheel her past.

Miracles like the nervous jays, bobbing wrens, speckled thrushes and bullfinches. The family of deer we’re getting to know, the cheeky weasel that leaps out of sight, the barn owls standing sentinel in the gloom.

My favourite path is one I cycled along to my first church youth worker job. It turns out my friend used to do the same to her work too. She calls it the ‘Beautiful Way’.

I start walking slowly, as baby is asleep.

I'm not fighting time or racing anyone to my destination.

These are the moments. Sometimes pausing, it emerges slowly, sometimes with shock and surprise. I am astounded by beauty.

Jolting beauty through which I encounter G-D. Beauty that relaxes and opens me enough to enjoy chance encounters with others on the path.

As I write, dry leaves roar up on the wind through dead branches, as if the trees are on fire. This is holy ground.

Further along, I part the waters of a large puddle with the pram's wheels, stepping closely and quickly behind the wheel, as if on dry land. My second Moshe moment makes me grin.

This delights dog walkers ahead, who took five minutes to make their crossing. We share the absurdity of the moment – with a hushed laugh (don't wake the bairn!)

So naturally, Durham County Council plans to build a big road right through Eden.

A 'relief' road.

Which will quickly fill up, as people are encouraged to make even more short, unnecessary journeys.

Misguided fostering of laziness, poor fitness and health, pollution and ecocide.

This is why, right now, I'm anti-Advent. I'm fearful for this special place.

I 'get' looking forward to the birth of Yeshua in the near future, but I'm scared for what else the future holds.

Does my fear have a place in Advent?

I think of Yosef's angst, taking a dream at face value, going against what his family, culture and laws told him was right, embodying G -D's gentle justice for the downtrodden.

Of young Miryam, risking her very life to give birth to Love.

The thing about fear is that it's bigger in the moment than the re-telling. The familiarity of the Advent story can blind us to the reality and risk this young family faced.

Can we hold this present-fear and future-hope together? Can we walk in the way that Miryam and Yosef did?

Those who first followed Yeshua were called followers of The Way.

I am looking forwards, in my life, and for the wilds to try and keep the Beautiful Way beautiful.

If you want to follow the campaign against new road building in Durham's green spaces, or to pray for those fighting it, follow 'Durham Road Block' on Facebook.

This reflection was written by Tadz Billam, F.Y.T Trustee, for our Advent Series on John 1:14 from the message ('The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.').

Advent | Dear Santa

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-dear-santa

December 24, 2019



"The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood" (John 1:14)

Dear Santa,

This Christmas I have been thinking about the words of Teresa of Avila, 'Christ has no body now but yours'

...and wondering about the picture this paints of Father Christmas, Saint Nicolas:

Santa has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world... Santa has no body now on earth but yours.

I know! This is horrible; I am degrading a beautiful piece of writing.

Nevertheless I have been pondering this parallel, thinking about the roles we play with our children, and the roles we play in communities. The magic, the hope, the opportunity, we try to curate in our contexts. I live in Bournville, Weston-super-Mare. It's a really beautiful place. At our Halloween party the prizes went missing, word got out, and within half an hour people from around the estate were showing up with replacements. We had more than we started with.

So, with my tongue firmly in my cheek, I have written a letter to Santa, to my community, to this movement, to Christ, to YOU... to be opened on Christmas morning:

***Dear Santa,
Thank you for all your gifts this year,
Thank you for the hope you bring.
Thank you that you care so much for this humble place;
You don't know the half of it: of what happened when you showed up
Today is a day to tell that magical story, to celebrate the unbelievable:
A story of bighearted sacrifice for the sake of the little ones
This year I have seen you give generously.
I have seen the difference you make to others.
I have seen how your presence lights up the world around you.
Thank you for being the Santa here,
for being you in this place.
I hope you have a wonderful Christmas.
xx***

This reflection was written by John Wheatley, F.Y.T Movement Leader and Youth Worker in Bournville, Weston-super-Mare, for our Advent Series on John 1:14 from the message ("The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.').

Advent | Christmas Advent Thought

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-christmas-advent-thought

December 25, 2019



“The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood” (John 1:14)

Advent thought

Sometimes,
a prophet looks less like
a bearded old man foretelling God’s plans
and more like
a braided schoolgirl,
Awake and angry,
with no compulsion to people-please.

One time,
the Creator of everything
hacked her own work
and became something,
so we could know what it means
to be loved and to love,

to bear light and to share light,
to flip the whole order of things
to show how
the written off are the ones who get to write the script.

This time,
this crazy tumultuous time
when the worst of things fear, division, exploitation, destruction,
is the m.o. of those few wielding power.
is there room
for another possible world
where the Christ mass declares
the abundance in less,
the strength in loving kindness,
the healing in brokenness,
the light of hope
within the darkness of despair?

**Can it be
that we time bound fools,
walking on concrete,
bewildered by Boris and Brexit and biocide
can hold eternity
within us
now
in this moment
in this place?**

This reflection was written by Anna Hembury, F.Y.T Trustee, for our Advent Series on John 1:14 from the message ('The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.').