

**GOOD
NEWS
IS COMING**

**CHARACTERS FROM
THE NATIVITY**

FRONTIER YOUTH TRUST (2018)

Advent 2018 – Characters from the Nativity

 sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-2018-characters-from-the-nativity

November 30, 2018



Join us this advent

Frontier Youth Trust is a home for pioneer youth workers. As part of our shared rhythm of life we have invited pioneers from within our community to contribute a reflection about a character from the nativity story. We will be posting these reflections throughout advent.

We invite you to journey with us and discover the story afresh.

We'll be posting reflections on our website and via Facebook and Twitter two or three times per week over the Advent period. Please feel free to share, but it would be nice if you could point people back to Frontier Youth Trust as the source.

Advent 2018 – Elizabeth

 sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-2018-elizabeth

December 1, 2018



This is the first in our Advent series of reflections, written by pioneering youth workers...

When he didn't believe that I could bear a child
I wasn't surprised
He always was a bloody know-it-all.

Then the days of silence
Of not being told
Of not being able to read his stupid writing tablet;
no wasting an education on a woman back in the day.

Bliss.
The miracle and I.
Curled up in each other.
Quietly gestating. Growing. Glowing.
Into...

The miracle, and my own small miracle
Of knowing, without being told
Of being and becoming my own self and story.

When he popped out, that old fool still had to remain silent.
As I screamed and keened and wailed my truth.

It didn't matter that he chose the name
It didn't matter that he got his voice back
He knew nothing.

I had miracles all over the place
And my voice.

By Debs North (www.lemonjellyyouthwork.org)

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Advent 2018 – The Innkeeper

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-2018-the-innkeeper

December 3, 2018



This is the second in our Advent series of reflections, written by pioneering youth workers...

Oh the innkeeper,
Often thought to be the smallest part in this scene,
But has the biggest heart (Apart from Jesus!)
And I'll tell you what I mean.

He opened the door, saw the look upon their faces,
His heart listened to their needs,
He let them in, no airs, no graces,
Finally a safe space in a stable.

Stable. To be steady and safe before the chaos to come,
A baby soon to be born, then the family on the run,
But let's not jump the gun here, the other reflections will tell the story,
Back to the innkeeper, welcoming Jesus and God's glory.

So Pioneers are like the innkeeper,
Be we meet them in the youth club or in open spaces,
We go with our big hearts,
And meet them where they're at, no airs, no graces,
We do for them with what we have, listen to what's not spoken,
Try our best to be God's love in a world that's mostly broken,

We can't do everything, we are not God ourselves,
But we are God's family, the hands and feet to do God's Will,
To build relationships and journey alongside
Not leave them on the shelves.

So be like the innkeeper, and his open door,
Be all inclusive to them all, and once more,
Listen with your heart, to God and to their faces,
Meet them where they're at, no airs, no graces.

Amen

By Philippa Traynar

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Advent 2018 – Mary

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-2018-mary

December 5, 2018



This is the third in our Advent series of reflections, written by pioneering youth workers...

When we enter into the Christmas period, there is a sense of busyness and preparation in order to see all things come together for such a special time of year. We see the sales coming up, the decorations out in full force and the excitement in the young people (and some of our team mates) for presents and glorious amounts of food. The preparation involved in making it perfect can sometimes be exhausting.

This year will be my first English Christmas. Reigning from Australia (proudly kiwi first), this is all a new experience to me. Coats and a warm fire instead of swimmers and a hot sandy beach, roast turkey instead of prawns and “snags off the barbie”. I would welcome the Christmas period as just some time off, often dismissing the true meaning behind it. If the northern hemisphere does something right, it’s engaging the masses in the “Christmas spirit”. But have we got that spirit right?

At this time of year we can give so much our resources and time to our friends, families and strangers to see the perfect Christmas come to light. When we look at Mary as told in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke, her disbelief as to why God chose her, a virgin pledged to be married, is expressed. In chapter 2, not having the facilities to be warm and comfortable in the birthing process. Now I’m not a mum, but I can only imagine the

emotions of going through an even well-prepared birth. Christmas can be portrayed this way, hoping to be well prepared, serving the best food we can afford and ensuring our loved ones enjoy the gift we've put varying degrees of thought into. But what would happen if we just let God do what he needed to do, using us as mortals to do his good work this holiday season. Jesus had to become man to die for us, mortal flesh and blood. Can we take a step back from our own busyness to appreciate the time and place Mary birthed Jesus into? Can we see new hope birthed for us?

By the team at Clevedon YMCA. "From Clevedon YMCA to wherever you are, we do wish you a restful and peaceful Christmas season. Thank you for your prayer and backing throughout the year. Here's to forevermore!" www.clevedonymca.com

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Advent 2018 – Herod

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-2018-herod

December 6, 2018



This is the fourth in our Advent series of reflections, written by pioneering youth workers...

Now, believe me, I'm not looking for your sympathy.
I know I am the bad guy in the story.
But I don't often get invited to tell you my side of the story.

So thank you for asking....

My name is Herod, and so you don't confuse me with other Herods...
you might as well know that I was known as Herod the Great.
Modesty forbids me going any further down that route.
But just bear in mind that when the Roman Senate appointed me I
knew that ruling this particular kingdom would be pretty tough going.

The Jews are not the easiest of peoples to govern.
They have a love-hate relationship with rulers in general.
They seem to think they have a hot-line to God, the King of Kings.
And so they don't treat anyone else in power with a lot of respect.
This meant I needed to be tough and always on my guard.
For the record, it wasn't just the baby boys of Bethlehem that I killed.

Despite all that I did my very best to spruce the place up with theatres and monuments of all sorts.

And you probably know that it was me who started the building of the great temple in Jerusalem.

It wasn't finished in my life-time, and I hear that it was destroyed by the Romans soon afterwards,

but it was no mean building: I tell you!

Still, I guess it's the baby boys that you really have on your mind.

Well just put yourselves in my shoes for a moment.

I have to watch my back day and night, and then some very well-connected visitors come from miles away telling me and all the court that they are looking for the one who has been born king of the Jews! And what's more that they have come to worship him. There was something about a star too, but I'm too hard-headed to believe that sort of thing.

Listen to me for a moment: they said a new king had been born who was going to rule my kingdom.

I had needed to kill family and lots of others to become king in the first place.

So I wasn't going to relax now. Would you, I wonder?

So I wanted to make sure that I killed this king off right away.

Enough problems with the rabble of this kingdom, without having a rival who was known throughout the world.

The Jews would be sure to take the rebel king's side.

So I ordered the very modest act of killing just the baby boys in Bethlehem.

It was simple and obvious.

I was never sure if I actually got him.

But if not, I wonder what happened to him.

Did he rule the Jews? Did he like my temple?

How did he get on with the Romans.

Now they're a pretty cruel bunch when it comes to it.

Crucifixion is too much even for me.

But I guess that they wouldn't have killed a King of the Jews like that.

What did you say? **That was what it said on his cross when he died?**

So he did survive my murder plot, but then things went badly wrong?

What's that? **God raised him from the dead!**

Stars and astrology are one thing, but resurrection is another.

People still worship and follow him all over the world?

So I was right to try and have him put down as a baby, after all.

I bet he is still causing trouble to those in power.

Sounds like the sort who only attracts rebels and down and outs.

Wonder if he turned the other cheek...

Not my sort of king at all.

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Advent 2018 – The Shepherds

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-2018-the-shepherds

December 7, 2018



This is the fifth in our Advent series of reflections, written by pioneering youth workers...

Using the following imagery, immerse yourself, using all your senses, into the hills outside Bethlehem and become a shepherd:

Move slowly through the sequence, taking time to ‘experience’ each step of the journey.

- We are unclean – literally and spiritually. People move upwind as we approach.
- We are the lowest of the low. Spending time with the sheep on Bethlehem’s hillsides, we are rarely in town, let alone the synagogue. Yet, El Shaddai honoured us – yes US – one night
- It’s dark. We are cold to the marrow, despite the fire. Our heads are nodding. Sheep are baaing softly.
- Bam! What a brilliant light! We can’t see! We’re scared witless. We hear a loud voice. ‘Don’t be afraid!’ Oh, right! The message is to find a baby! Then, there are voices praising El Shaddai! Just as suddenly, all is darkness and silence and peaceful.
- The excitement is acute! We’re on the move. Without sheep. We’re running, walking swiftly when we’re breathless to avoid a stitch. Now, we’re slowing down. We’re in Bethlehem.
- We’re searching. Finding, just as we’d been told. An inn. Out back. Country smells. Cows chewing. Donkey snoozing. A man. A woman. A new born baby. All looks ordinary. And yet, there’s an atmosphere we can’t quite put our fingers on... We explain why we’re there. The woman looks pensive. The man protective.
- We leave the little family and return to our sheep, singing Psalms. What a night!

Take time to reflect on your journey.

By Sally Bailey

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Advent 2018 – The Magi

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-2018-the-magi

December 10, 2018



This is the sixth in our Advent series of reflections, written by pioneering youth workers...

What do you know about them? We had a think too...

They weren't wise (according to Jewish standards)

There weren't three of them (only three gifts)

They probably weren't all men (I'd definitely ask Helen and Hester to come along with me for a long trip abroad, not to mention any servants they may have had).

Yet they were led to, and found God.

Through their own tradition and expertise, in a way that they understood, they were led to the truth that God is with us.

Other things we wondered...

What did they do after their part in the story ends?

Did they tell others about the baby they found?

Did they listen out for news of what that baby grew up to be and do?

Did they find ways to help others discover that God is with them, in their culture and tradition back in 'the East'?

Finally, perhaps they are more similar to us than we think. They were outsiders visiting, they met a (very) young person who was on the edge, part of a family in disgrace and poverty and danger. In this baby they also met God. And meeting young person and God together must have changed them, inspired and driven them forward.

A friend has a t-shirt saying:

'three wise men – seriously?'
she's right in so many ways.

But if it's rather a journey, meeting, life shifting, an 'encountering the young and God together' story, one powerful enough that we go back to share and invite others to be part of it. Please tell me...

... where do we get our camels?!

By Tadz, Helen and Hester Billam

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Advent 2018 – Glory!

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-2018-glory

December 11, 2018



This is the seventh in our Advent series of reflections, written by pioneering youth workers...

Luke 2

At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic crew, tagging God's praises:

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Submitted by Charis Robertson (www.hotchocolate.org.uk)

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Advent 2018 – Mary

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-2018-mary-2

December 12, 2018



This is the eighth in our Advent series of reflections, written by pioneering youth workers...

Here was a young girl who was possibly about 14 years old. A girl probably from a poor Jewish family, who lived in one room, they possibly ate, slept, cooked and lived in this one tiny room. Mary had her immediate future planned. She was engaged to Joseph and the plan was to marry him. But all of a sudden, her life is turned upside down in fact her life and her future as she knew it were put at risk.

When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.” I wonder if she felt terrified, did she ask, why me? was she confused? Perhaps excited. Maybe she felt special for once in her life. Did she experience all these feelings at once? Did her mind go into a spin thinking about how she would tell Joseph the news, would he believe her? Would he report her? Would that be the end?

In those days if a girl got pregnant while they were engaged, and their fiancée reported them, they could be stoned to death. So, what did Mary do? She said, “I am the Lord’s servant. May your word to me be fulfilled.”

I wonder if we are like Mary sometimes and we plan our future steps and then it all gets turned upside-down by God, how do we feel? What will we do? It seems that Mary trusted God, accepted his words and walked with him. What makes us afraid of saying “yes God” when he asks us to step out to be different and to challenge the “norm” (if there is such a thing)? It feels like it is good to go through all the emotions and feelings Mary may have gone through in order for us to grow in our relationship with God and to equip us for that next step.

By Heidi Carlin

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Advent 2018 – Foetus Jesus

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-2018-foetus-jesus

December 13, 2018



This is the ninth in our Advent series of reflections, written by pioneering youth workers...

I've been thinking about the unborn child in this story. All wrapped up warm and safe, and seemingly oblivious to the miracle that's unfolding. And as a new-ish parent, I feel for Mary & Joseph, also completely oblivious to how their new baby is going to turn their lives upside down – as well as millions of others.

In the lead up to Christmas I've been thinking about how this parallels with our work with young people. There is something emergent in the youth work space where we open up ourselves to be transformed, often in ways we can't imagine. But I've been thinking too about how the things of ourselves and our stories that we leave with young people are like the foetus Jesus. Unborn, unseen, surprising. What I mean is, the youth work journey is pregnant – not with hidden agendas – but with hope. The gift we leave is often unformed and unrealised, waiting.

Mary and Joseph had no way of seeing what was coming. But we've done advent so

many times that we know the story. We know what's coming. In the same way we enter advent for the journey; so too, do we enter our relationships with young people, full of hope for what's to come.

By John Wheatley

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Advent 2018 – Shepherd Boy

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-2018-shepherd-boy

December 14, 2018



This is the tenth in our Advent series of reflections, written by pioneering youth workers...

“For once in my life I am special”

These were the words of one of an 11 year old who attended some bike maintenance workshops we organised through our detached project. He could not get over the fact that he was hand-picked and invited to take part. As the small group of young people from our council estate got stuck in to changing tyres and fixing punctures I reflected that this group are a little like the shepherds. Outcast and despised because of where they live and the families they were born into, every day is a struggle for self worth for these young people. Even though we have spent a year working with this particular young man, he still can't believe that we want to spend time with him and would choose him above all the other kids in his class from 'nice' families.

The shepherds were similarly despised, outcast and on the margins of society. Probably they thought very little of themselves. Yet God chose them to meet and connect with his Son first, before the reputable members of Jewish society. I wonder if, as they walked back up the hill after realising they were the only, chosen ones to take part in this amazing encounter, one shepherd boy turned to another and said “For once in my life I am special”?

By Zoe Bell

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Advent 2018 – Mary’s Song

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-2018-marys-song

December 17, 2018



This is the eleventh in our Advent series of reflections, written by pioneering youth workers...

Mary’s song, your song

Luke 1.46-55

I love the idea of a personal theme song – I first saw this in a programme called Ally McBeal

– and what mine is changes a bit over time although Helen Reddy’s I am Woman is hard to

beat! But Mary’s theme song is an essential part of Luke’s telling of the Christmas story.

Mary’s theme song in the Magnificat. It is said or sung all around the world as part of church services every day, not just at Christmas. The Magnificat expresses Mary’s amazement and delight at God’s action’s towards her, a “humble servant girl” and then goes

on to tell of the magnificence of God. It contains a subversive message and is regarded by

some as the oldest Advent hymn. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor executed by the

Nazis, said about the Magnificat in the year Hitler came to power: “It is at once the most

passionate, the wildest, one might even say the most revolutionary Advent hymn ever sung". It tells of a God who challenges the way things have always been done and does them in a different way.

Mary's response to her unique situation was gratitude and joy and her story encourages us that God works in ways we may never expect and God continues to amaze us today.

When I was Mary's age I would have called the Magnificat testimony, and I certainly wouldn't have been singing mine! But we worship the same God as Mary, and our God is also mighty, holy and merciful and we can benefit from expressing our gratitude and telling others about what God has done. Our stories, both communal and individual, are powerful, they encourage, they cause others to be grateful, let's share them and if you have the skills you might even do that through a song!



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/V6fHTyVmYp4>



Watch Video At: https://youtu.be/6_iixWJo-7k

By Sally Nash

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Advent 2018 – Shepherd

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-2018-shepherd

December 18, 2018



This is the twelfth in our Advent series of reflections, written by pioneering youth workers...

This week's scandal come to pass. How do we handle this? – I don't want to condemn, exclude, complain.

If this is the messiah could I disapprove? That's what we were told.

Joy in a birth – none can deny, Got to celebrate a baby – right? Babies are innocent.

If this is the messiah, should I have brought gold? I think incense might be appropriate and I'm sure it's cheaper. And, no, I didn't bring a lamb – wrong time of year really.

What sort of man will this boy become? Will he have his father's way with words? If this is the messiah, will I give him my hat?

Wherever I lay my hat, that's my home.

Good news? Great joy? At least they got the town right – David's town, Bethlehem. How still we see thee lie. Sometimes you just know. Who are you to question my religious experience?

Been there, done it, and got the t-shirt 'I was at the virgin birth'.

Got to go now, but if you want the full story, come along. I'm good with stories. I've got the time.

This week's scandal come to pass. How do we handle this? Don't want to condemn, exclude, complain.

If this was Jesus would I disapprove?

Joy in the birth, none can deny, got to celebrate a baby – babies are innocent.

If this was Jesus would I bring gold? Or something practical like nappies and clothes?

What sort of man will this boy become – will he have his father's way with a guitar? He led worship well – well until now.

Wherever I lay my hat, that's my home. In this case an out-of-season holiday caravan park. Ocean close and loneliness closer. Piercing isolation. No car and dad studying hard – got to make something of himself now.

If this was Jesus.

By Nigel Argall

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Advent 2018 – The Manger

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-2018-the-manger

December 19, 2018



This is the thirteenth in our Advent series of reflections, written by pioneering youth workers...

I wonder how grateful Mary and Joseph were to have somewhere to lay their baby? Although the picture perfect Christmas cards show a sanitised manger, I'm sure this was far from the truth. But Jesus' parents must have done their best to create a safe space in which to lay their child.

When was the last time you felt cradled or sheltered, as the baby Christ was cradled in the manger?

To cradle is to support someone, to hold them – and I love that image – that we can cradle one another, not only physically but also figuratively. We need people in our lives who cradle us, who hold and protect us. Whether that's a friend who will sit with us when no words can be said, someone who stands by us in times of difficulty or hardship, a listening ear, or just someone who makes us a great cup of tea.

Take a moment to think about those people who cradle you today, and whom you

cradle. Perhaps you might like to sit for a few minutes in prayer or meditation with hands cupped together in an open gesture, praying for those people. Or you could send someone an encouraging text, or put a positive message or meme on FaceBook or twitter.

Christmas is a time of great joy and celebration, but can also be stressful, bring back painful memories of lost loved ones, or you may feel under pressure to be the perfect host, or to buy the most thoughtful gifts. So during this festive season make time to cradle and support, not only others, but also yourselves.

By Lori Passmore

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Advent 2018 – Herod

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-2018-herod-2

December 20, 2018



This is the fourteenth in our Advent series of reflections, written by pioneering youth workers...

The Perils of Power

When I was a child I never really remember the Slaughter of the Innocents where Herod murdered all of the first born male children he could get hold of. Bit gruesome for our sanitised version of the Christmas story and certainly not suitable for little ones! How could a little baby born in a back water of the Roman Empire cause such a powerful man as Herod into an uncontrollable rage of vengeance?

The story of Herod is the story of whether powerful people and systems, built on control, threat and coercion often layered by false articulation of motives, get to save the world. How often do we work with young people who find themselves in a world where others are seeking that control, threat and coercion over their lives. Not just individuals but systems that they have to interact with on a daily basis. Does it save them?

What about those who come to young people with vulnerability, openness, powerlessness? In what sense does that 'save' them? It gives them choice, agency, relationship that shapes how they respond, indeed puts the choice about how to

respond in their hands. If to be saved is to learn to become more of our true selves, then surely this is the only way to offer salvation as wholeness or peace or rescue or welfare, what the bible sums up as shalom.

Christmas reverses what we understand to be power, which changes how we understand how God acts in the world to rescue us all. Power as control, threat and coercion is not really power at all. It's a house of cards which gets exposed by true power expressed as vulnerability, openness and apparent powerlessness. This power feels threatened and so resorts to more control, threat and coercion. But that doesn't save anyone including those who perpetrate it, in fact it consumes and destroys them and the systems that support them. So if we want to see young people be part of the great story of salvation, to experience wholeness, to find themselves part of the story of God's action in the world, then as youth workers we need to continue to approach young people with the power of not wanting power at all.

By Tim Evans, Worth Unlimited

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Advent 2018 – Anna

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-2018-anna-2

December 21, 2018



This is the fifteenth in our Advent series of reflections, written by pioneering youth workers...

As the nativity narrative draws to a close Luke brings in two new characters to the story, Simeon and Anna. Luke who is normally very detailed in his description of events seems to leave gaps in Anna's story. He gives a brief description of who Anna is and her job description but unlike Simeon leaves gaps in her encounter with the Christ child.

The story of Anna challenges me personally in a couple of ways. Firstly she is easy to overlook and yet plays an important role along with Simeon she is the first to see and really understand the significance of who this child is. Mary was obedient but "perplexed" Luke 1:29 and "pondering" Luke 2:19 even later on when Jesus was aged twelve Mary and Joseph didn't fully understand. Luke 2:50.

It is not only the brief mention that leaves Anna in danger of being overlooked, it is that she is old, she is a woman in a patriarchal society and from the Tribe of Asher one of the dispersed Tribes of the Northern Territories. The role she is given, or adopts, is one of quiet worship.

In re-visiting this story having just moved to a new community I recognise that I am in danger of overlooking or dismissing those with a calling different to mine. I confess I have dismissed the local churches as ageing congregations who are inward looking. Am I missing a Simeon or Anna? I have certainly not always given much thought and respect to the wisdom of years. There is also a Catholic community in a rural hamlet close to our town who dedicate their lives to prayer. As an activist I know that I can be cynical about such a calling and yet I need to learn from them how to be more attentive.

My second challenge is that unlike Simeon who is happy just to die safe in the knowledge that he has seen the Messiah, Anna springs into action as an evangelist speaking to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. Luke 2:38. Perhaps like me you are wary of evangelism because of the inappropriate and at times abusive way that the Church has gone about it. Yet I am challenged again by Anna not to throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater. We have a radical, life changing story of liberty to share let's not be afraid to share the story of the Incarnate God with sensitivity and respect.

By Barney Baron

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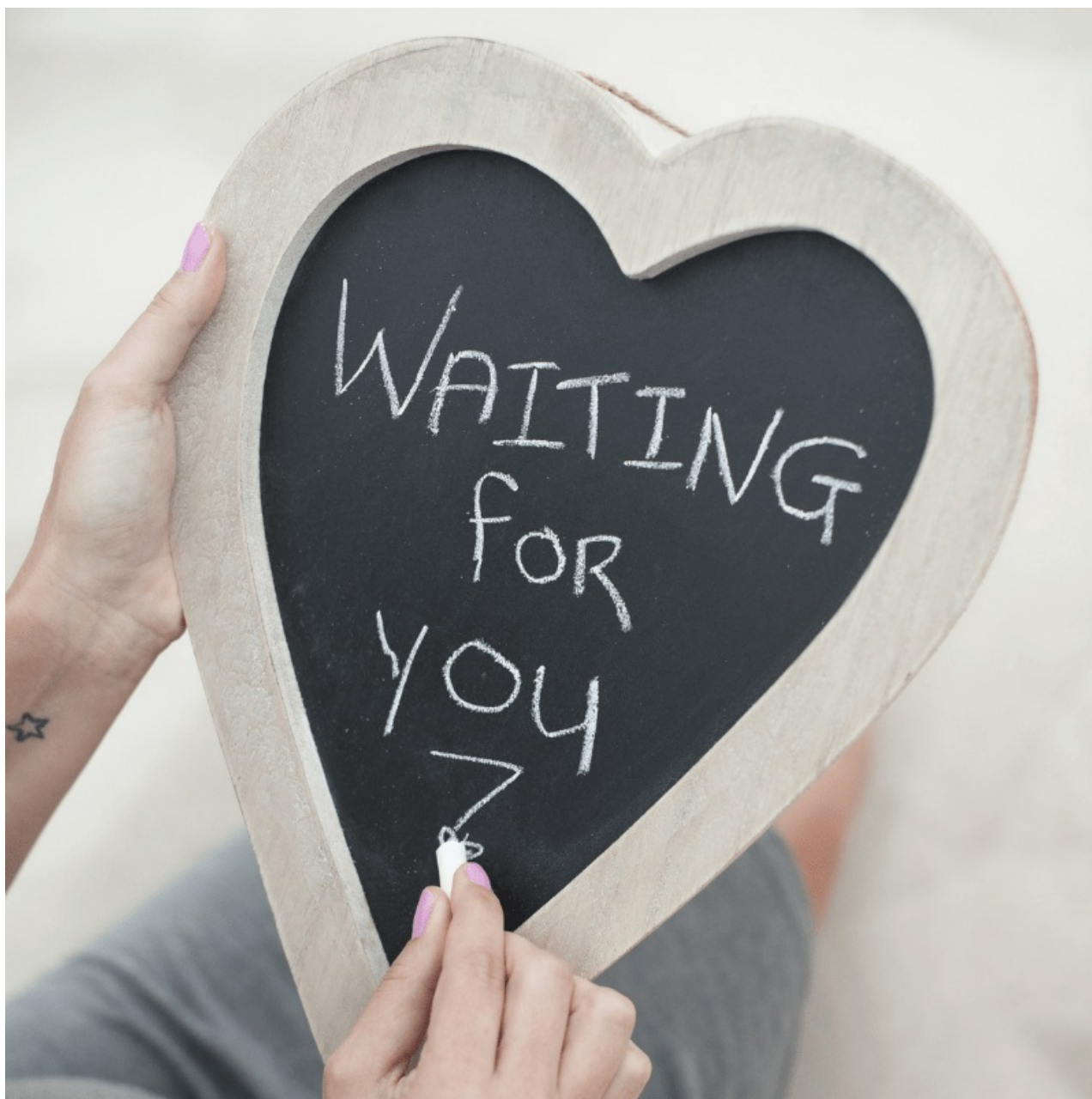
We invite you to journey with us and discover the story afresh.



Advent 2018 – Mary

sd-web.uk/fyt/blog/advent-2018-mary-3-2

December 24, 2018



This is the final part in our Advent series of reflections, written by pioneering youth workers...

I'm bursting with God-news;
I'm dancing the song of my Savior God.

For those around me this is far from good news, 'How can this be God news!' they
scream at me.

Yet here I am, waiting for you.

God took one good look at me, and look what happened—
I'm the most fortunate woman on earth!

I have nothing of worth, I am nothing of note. Was born into nothing and will die with
little more.

Yet here I am, waiting for you.

What God has done for me will never be forgotten,
the God whose very name is holy, set apart from all others.

All of history will know you, the bundle growing deep inside. I wonder though will they
ever really understand the gift you are?

Yet here I am, waiting for you.

His mercy flows in wave after wave
on those who are in awe before him.

To hold you, gaze at your face, to touch your tiny fingers. These are the things that keep
me going as the gossip swirls around me. When they see you will they finally
understand?

Yet here I am, waiting for you.

He bared his arm and showed his strength,
scattered the bluffing braggarts.

For all the singing underneath sits grief somehow in this weakness God sees strength.

Can I love him only to lose him, surly my heart will break?

Yet here I am, waiting for you.

He knocked tyrants off their high horses,
pulled victims out of the mud.

When will it come? God knows we need change, the horses grow and the vulnerable are
trodden on, day by day.

Yet here I am, waiting for you.

The starving poor sat down to a banquet;
the callous rich were left out in the cold.

The vision keeps me going, I hold on that the day will come. Yet wonder as the vision
unfolds will I get to be your mother?

Yet here I am, waiting for you.

He embraced his chosen child, Israel;
he remembered and piled on the mercies, piled them high.

Despite how we have messed up, destroyed each other, rejected his ways and ignored his pleas to changes. Still God has held us, still the one I cradle within will hold us. Yet here I am, waiting for you.

It's exactly what he promised,
beginning with Abraham and right up to now.

Yet here I am, waiting for you.

By Rev Gemma Dunning

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