

7. Closing Prayer

A poem of thanksgiving for the Visitation.

Here is a meeting made of hidden joys
of lightnings cloistered in a narrow place
From quiet hearts the sudden flame of
praise
and in the womb the quickening kick
of grace.

Two women on the very edge of things
unnoticed and unknown to men of power
but in their flesh the hidden Spirit sings
and in their lives the buds of blessing flower,
and Mary stands with all we call 'too young',
Elizabeth with all called 'past their prime'
They sing today for all the great unsung women
who turned eternity to time
favoured of heaven, outcast on the earth:
prophets who bring the best to birth.

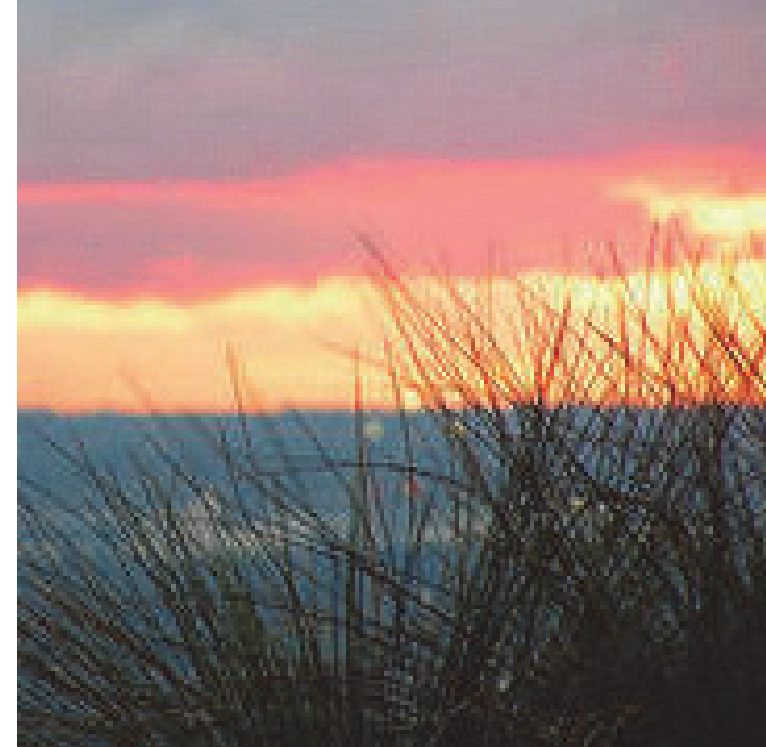
Malcolm Guite

**End your time together with a
favourite carol.**



*My people will live in a peaceful home,
in safe houses,
in quiet dwellings.*

Isaiah 32:18



**Making Space for Grace
Fourth Sunday of Advent 2018**



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1. Welcome and Opening Prayer

May the Spirit touch our lives
May we open ourselves to God's breathing
May we honour the flame of love
that burns inside us.

May our voices this day
be voices of encouragement
May our lives be an answer to
someone's prayer
May we own grateful hearts.

May we have enough joy to give us hope
Enough pain to make us wise
May there be no room in our hearts for
hatred
May we search every day for peace.

When we look into the window of our souls
May we see the face of God.
May the lamps of our lives shine on all
we meet this day.
May our lives become a song for the
Beloved.

Adapted from Seven Sacred Pauses –
Macrina Wiederkehr

2. Gospel text: Luke 1:39-45

At that time Mary got ready and hurried into a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the

sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"

3. Quiet moment

People can read over the text for themselves and pick out words or short phrases that strike them and say them out loud. When everyone has had a chance to say their word or phrase, they can then reflect silently for a moment or two and then briefly say why such a word/phrase struck them – in relation to themselves or their community or the world.

4. Reflection questions for Luke 1: 39-45

1. Read the poem at the end; think of one younger or one older person who has been an inspiration to you.
2. This story is followed by the 'Magnificat' a song of praise and gratitude. What do you want to give heartfelt thanks for?
3. 'Coming home for Christmas': what or who comes to mind when you think about this?

5. Prayers

Mentioning the people and situations we want to pray for.



6. Background Notes for Luke 1: 39-45

Ain Karim was a small village about 5 miles west of Jerusalem, in hilly country between the flat coastal plain and the Jordan valley. Mary sets off to do an ordinary thing, one of the many ordinary things that hold society together – helping a pregnant woman by fetching water, washing, cooking, comforting, cooling, chatting. In that she is a grace to Elizabeth in a difficult time. Elizabeth acknowledges Mary as already blessed by God. The phrase 'jump for joy' in the O.T. often signalled that something prophetic was about to be spoken.

Luke refers to Zechariah, Elizabeth and Mary – presenting two elderly people and a young woman as key players in the fulfilling of God's dream.