



**CHRISTIAN
LIFE COMMUNITY
SOUTH AFRICA**

November 2019

MASITHETHE

WAITING ON GOD, LIVING WITH HOPE – AN ADVENT REFLECTION by Colleen Callahan

Life is hard and requires much patience. Each day, reports of suffering flood our lives through our media and social-media platforms. “What is the world coming to?” we lament. “Surely, life in earlier days was better than this?!” we ponder, as the negativity threatens to drown our hope in the goodness of life.

Life, though, has always had its challenges. The writer of James (in James 5:7-10) encourages his audience to wait on the Lord with patience, just as the prophets once did:

Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸ You too must be patient. Make your hearts firm, because the coming of the Lord is at hand. ⁹ Do not complain, brothers and sisters, about one another, that you may not be judged. Behold, the Judge is standing before the gates. ¹⁰ Take as an example of hardship and patience the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.



Waiting patiently on God does not negate the hardship of our times. And life, indeed, is difficult. Much of South Africa thirsts literally as we endure the ravages of a drought from which there seems little relief. Our farmlands need rain as crops fail, livestock dies, and fodder and water need to be transported to our farmlands in order to bring some respite. “Please, Lord, grant us the gift of rain,” we pray, and when the rains do not come we wonder why God seems deaf to our pleading.

The literal drought pervades the very values that inspire our lives. Violence, corruption, abuse, and increasing poverty seem to be the order of the day, both here in South Africa and across the world. Humanity, it seems, thirsts for justice and for servant leaders whose only motivation is to make our world a better place for all. We thirst for an outpouring of love from our hearts so that peace, compassion, justice, forgiveness, reconciliation and respect will flow back into to our homes, our schools, our towns, our governments, our places of worship, and our hearts.

During this Advent season, may we take heart from the words of James that “the coming of the Lord is at hand”. May we remember, too, through the miracle of the Incarnation and the promise of the Second Coming, that we are never alone in the throes of our suffering and the fullness of the good times. God walks with us through the literal and figurative droughts of everyday life. Each time we share with God about our joys and sorrows, God rejoices that we trust more in God’s love, hope, and provision. Every time our thoughts and our actions honour the life of creation, God smiles. Whenever we lean on God in our weakness, and remain steadfast in our faith despite life’s hardships, God celebrates. When we see God’s presence in our brothers and sisters, and act with love and compassion towards one another, God is glad for it is then that hope flows and brings relief to our thirsty lives.

CLC East London hosted an evening of prayer in preparation for Advent on the 20th November. All together 11 people attended: four from our regular group and seven from the local community. It was a short but grace-filled evening, below is the imaginative exercise that we used to lead us to contemplate welcoming Love in this Advent.



Welcoming Love in

Consider first the reality that Jesus was born in a stable and his first crib was a feeding trough (Luke 2. v 1-7). Consider the ways in which Mary & Joseph might have felt that this wasn't a good, safe, or worthy space to welcome Jesus.

Now imagine your own life as a stable, and gently draw to mind aspects of your life right now that make you feel not ready or not worthy to welcome Jesus. Perhaps you are not yet where you hope to be or you don't have time to create mental or physical space; Perhaps your stable feels messy or broken or too filled with pain or grief. Try to symbolise this with words or drawings in your stable (we used the above image).

Next consider St Ignatius's invitation to imagine yourself at the birth of Christ, but try to imagine the birth of Jesus in the stable of your own life. You might want to imagine a room in your own house or workplace or a version of the nativity stable that represents the features of your own life reflected on above. Perhaps you are there as a quiet witness, perhaps you are assisting with practical tasks, or perhaps you are holding Mary's hand, being present to her in this beautiful and painful moment in her life.

Once the scene has unfolded, take a moment to hold the baby Jesus in your arms. Consider the kind of love we experience for newly born babies: the simplicity and intensity of it, the joy and the hope. Ask God for the grace to truly recognise that it is this Love that Christ brings to the world, has for us, and is asking us to welcome into our hearts.

Now that you are holding baby Jesus, take some time to look around your stable and to notice if anything feels different for you, and start to notice those things that make it possible for you to welcome Love in, those things that make you more loving, generous, open, compassionate... and add them to your stable.

Finally take time to talk through this experience, as with a friend, with Jesus, Mary or Joseph. Take time to notice now that which you might want to thank Jesus for, or express sorrow for, or ask for.

End with a review, noticing how the spirit has moved during this time of prayer and making a note of things you might wish to remember or return to, to deepen at another time. In particular as we move toward Advent you might want to choose a grace or an action to focus on this Advent in light of this reflection

We have updated our website!

Over the last few months we have slowly been updating our CLC SA website with the aim of making it more reflective of our current community, and a good space to send interested people for more information. You can also find each month's Masithethe there as well as other documents that have been sent around.

The website address remains www.clc-sa.org.za. Let us know what you think!

Community Banking Details

National Account

CLC National Secretaries
Standard Bank, Newton Park.
Branch Code: 050017
Acc No: 004874625

Education Project Account

CLC National Secretaries
Standard Bank, Newton Park.
Branch Code: 050017
Acc No: 044323921

Eastern Cape

Christian Life Community EC
Nedbank, Savings Account
Acc No: 2447009798

Gauteng

Christian Life Communities
ABSA, Savings Account
Acc No: 630465901

Western Cape

CLC Western Cape
Nedbank, Savings Account
Acc No: 2250025088