

Undeterred, Mary is at the foot of the cross,  
where Simeon's prophecy  
became stark reality.  
But it was there she was assured,  
if she needed to be, that Jesus  
had not rejected his family,  
but broadened the scope of what family  
will mean in the days of resurrection community.

Mary was present among the 120  
when Judas was replaced,  
as the twelfth apostle,  
and we have no reason to think  
she was absent on the Day of Pentecost,  
once again to be filled with the Spirit...  
A strong, resourceful, spiritual woman of God.

### Intercessions

Compassionate, all-embracing God, we pray again for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants across the world. We forget that Mary and Joseph sought asylum for themselves and Jesus and were given refuge in Egypt. The sense of dislocation, lost identity, misery and fear that present-day asylum seekers experience is immense and we ask forgiveness for our own country for not being a welcoming place as once it was, and maybe our own caution when we think of these things. For all who show compassion in any way, thank you; for all who suffer for showing compassion, we ask the fulness of your blessing.

**HYMN StF 193 Born in the night, Mary's Child**

Blessing: We share in saying The Grace together

## **Darlington District** **Worship at Home Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2020** **Mary says 'Yes'**

*Thank you to Revd Jean Hudson for preparing our worship this week.*

### Opening Responses

Leader: Into our longing and dreaming, God comes

**ALL: As he did for Elizabeth and Zechariah**

Leader: Into our lives when least expected, God comes

**ALL: As he did for Mary and Joseph**

Leader: Into the dark corners of the world, God comes

**ALL: As light and life for all**

Leader: God comes, not fleetingly, but to make his home  
with us in Jesus

**ALL: Immanuel, God with us**

Hymn StF 186 **Tell out my soul**

### Prayer

Ever-present God, a short time now until Christmas Day, a day that does not diminish in significance because we can't celebrate in the ways we normally do. Many have said that Christmas is cancelled for this year, but how wrong they are. Jesus was born, you entered our world in a new way, full of love and grace and truth. That is the reality that can never be cancelled or taken away.

We praise you and worship you from the depths of our being for your coming and being and remaining one with us. **Amen**

### Readings

Our focus today is Mary. Listed here are all the Gospel references to Mary – you are invited to select the ones you would like to read.

[Matthew 1: 16-25](#); [Luke 1: 26-56](#); [Luke 2: 1-40](#); [Luke 2: 41-52](#); [John 2: 1-5](#); [John 19: 25-27](#); [Mark 3: 31-35](#); [Acts 1: 14](#)

## Reflection

Many would say Mary was a teenager when Gabriel erupted into her life, the first of many shocks and surprises, but unflustered, she absorbed the angel's respectful message, and said **Yes.**

She belonged in the tradition of Rachel, Esther, Hannah, strong women caught up in God's purposes; of prophets and of John, strong, with her feet on the ground, aware of her nation's history, its dealings with God, familiar with the scriptures. And yes, she would conceive, carry, give birth to - God.

She wasn't left alone.

Betrothed to Joseph, God gave him a dream, telling him, not Mary, to name the baby 'Jesus', drawing him in to nurture and protect her son. Luke chapter 1 overflows with the Holy Spirit as Mary, Elizabeth and Zechariah give praise to God.

Towards the end of her pregnancy, the census interrupts her preparations. Disruptive, its significance lies in rooting these events in history. Mary's child is born at one moment in real time.

So much already for Mary to ponder. But other things come thick and fast - the manger, their first visitors, outcast shepherds..

In the Temple, dedicating their first-born to God, prophecies about Jesus from Simeon and Anna, a stark warning of suffering ahead for Jesus and for Mary.

Meanwhile, Magi were coming, bearing gifts profoundly symbolic of kingship, priesthood – and death.

Time for God to talk to Joseph in another dream – escape the murderous menace of Herod, to find asylum in Egypt, refuge until Herod died.

Years then to watch Jesus grow, until he stayed behind in the Temple after a family pilgrimage, causing anxiety while Mary and Joseph sought him, only to tell them he had to be about his Father's business.

When Jesus, at 30, left again for Jerusalem, alone, did he say anything to Mary, now a widow, about never returning home again to stay? Maybe he didn't need to...

At the wedding in Cana Mary, with implicit trust, paved the way for Jesus' first miracle. It was Mary alone with her sons who came to see Jesus on one disturbing occasion when it appeared he was rejecting them as his family.