

Session 4: Going home by another way

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Stillness

As you come into this time of prayer, allow your senses to lead you into stillness. What can you hear beyond the music? Can you hear the sounds outside and inside where you are? Perhaps there is a scent from a candle, the freshness of the cool air, or of rain, the feel of warmth against the cold outside. Let your senses draw you into the present moment and the presence of our Creator. The reading for today's session is from the Gospel of Matthew.

Reading (Matthew 2: 9-12)

Reflect

We talk of 'seeing stars' when we've had a knock on the head that makes us dizzy. That kind of experience leaves us feeling out of kilter, knocked off our balance. Perhaps this is how the wise men felt. They were used to controlling what they saw and felt – the stars were a source of wisdom, guiding them by well-known rules. Yet suddenly here is a star that doesn't behave in the normal way, and here is an experience which confounds all their expectations. The mysterious, all-powerful God is born in poverty, far from royal palaces and the corridors of power. They bring with them treasures, symbols of the power of wealth and status, knowledge and wisdom, life and death. Yet they lay them at the feet of a newborn baby, born of a humble mother, watched over by a carpenter and some wandering shepherds. Nothing is as predictable.

What they meet in Bethlehem is the God of surprises, the wild and unpredictable God who can never be tamed or domesticated. This is God who calls us to go home 'by another way'. Maybe we've got used to the well-worn path. Not everyone likes surprises, and we may have let ourselves get comfortable and complacent, hanging on to our safety belts. And here is God calling us out of ourselves – step out of your comfort zone, take a walk on the wild side...

As he grew older Jesus called many people to step off the familiar path. He called Samaritans and Jews, priest and prostitutes, Levites and lepers to become members of one family, united in love and service of one another. This is what it means to accept him into our lives and become children of God. We come home to God by God's path, not our own. We make the path by walking in faith and trust, with open minds and hearts.

Talk to God

What is the star by which I have navigated my life's journey? What are the things that I have relied on to help me feel safe and secure, well settled in my own place? Perhaps this year has made me hold on even tighter to my securities – it's been a precarious year with danger all

around us. But perhaps there has been another call, a still, small voice inviting me to live other choices and different relationships. Can I listen to that voice now, in the silence?

What are the treasures of my life? Jesus says, 'where your treasure is, there will your heart be also'. What gives me a sense of power and status? What makes me feel fragile and vulnerable? As I take time to be still, can I share with God my desires and anxieties, my dreads and my dreams? Do I have a sense of God offering me gifts right now?

I sit quietly with Jesus, sleeping in his mother's arms. What do I want to say to him, to her? Perhaps I want to hold him, the child of promise, my guiding star. Or perhaps I don't feel worthy to touch him. Can I allow God, the Word made Flesh, to touch me?