

# **Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone**



**Prayers and Reflections  
for use at home**

**Sunday 28 December 2025  
Christmas 1**

Welcome to this week's Prayers and Reflections. On this first Sunday after Christmas, we explore what happens after the shepherds have gone back to their fields and the wise men returned home by a safe route. Jesus and his parents experience life as refugees. Yet another sign that he understands what it is like to be the poorest of the earth.

Enjoy pondering how God cares for his Son and his earthly parents.

Every blessing,

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*As you prepare to explore the "what next" of the Christmas story, pause to contemplate the stable scene on Christmas morn.*



It came upon the midnight clear,  
that glorious song of old,  
from angels bending near the earth  
to touch their hearts of gold:  
'Through all the earth, goodwill and peace  
from heaven's all-gracious king!'  
The world in solemn stillness lay  
to hear the angels sing.

*Edmund Hamilton Sears (1810-1876)*

**Prayers and Reflections**  
**for use at home on Christmas 1**  
**God protects**

**PREPARING OURSELVES**

*Take a moment to be still in God's presence and feel his love. If you are indoors, you may wish to light a candle as a sign of God's love - here, in your room. You may also wish to have a bowl of water ready for the time of letting go. When you are ready, say this opening prayer.*

Lord, as I sit and wait in silence,  
I place my hopes and dreams,  
my fears and concerns,  
into your safe and loving hands.  
Enfold me with your love,  
make my heart beat in time with yours;  
in Jesus' name,  
I pray. **Amen.**

**LETTING GO**

*If you come to this time of prayer and reflection with any regrets, with things that you wish you had not said, done or been, offer them to God in the silence of your heart. And then, when you are ready, reflect on the angels' song of peace.*

With sorrow brought by sin and strife  
the world has suffered long  
and, since the angels sang, have passed  
two thousand years of wrong:  
the nations, still at war, hear not  
the love-song which they bring:  
O hush the noise and cease the strife,  
to hear the angels sing!

*Edmund Hamilton Sears (1810-1876)*



*If you wish, dip your finger into a bowl of water and make the sign of the cross on your palm.*

*Our verse takes us on a journey through time. A journey back to the stable where the shepherds arrive breathless. Their hearts are full of the great, great news that the angel gave to them and of the song the angels sang high above their Bethlehem hillside.*

But the angel said to the shepherds,  
‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news  
that will cause great joy for all the people.  
Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you;  
he is the Messiah, the Lord.  
This will be a sign to you:  
you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel,  
praising God and saying,  
‘Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on  
whom his favour rests.’

*Luke 2:10-14*

*Our Lord came to bring peace to God’s people and to all the earth. Travel forward in time to today and we see a world that is still being torn apart by conflicts and civil wars, by persecution and oppression, by hate and hate crimes. We yearn for peace for those living in fear for their lives. We yearn for the angels’ song to come true for everyone.*

*Pray for the noise to cease so that world and local leaders can hear God’s angels singing their song of peace. May this inspire peace in those places where lives are in danger this day.*

*Pray for the noise to cease in your own life so that you too can hear God’s angels sing their song of peace. May you begin 2026 filled with hope.*

## PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER

### (The Collect)

*Today, this prayer is being said across our villages and the worldwide Church. Add your voice to the earthly circle of prayer to our God on high.*

God in Trinity,  
eternal unity of perfect love,  
gather the nations to be one family,  
and draw us into your holy life  
through the birth of Emmanuel,  
our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

*Our prayer invites us to picture God as a family of three persons. All three are united in their love for their creation and in their desire for peace across the globe. If God was to re-draw our world's map or globe, gone would be the borders and barriers that separate nations. We would be as one as the Holy Trinity are one – a family of love and peace. What a beautiful dream to carry into 2026!*

*Pray for all peoples to be drawn into the circle of God's love through Jesus – his Son and our King. Pray for the healing of the divisions which will be 2025's gift to 2026. Pray for those whose journey through life is pictured in this penultimate verse.*



And those whose journey now is hard,  
whose hope is burning low,  
who tread the rocky path of life  
with painful steps and slow:  
O listen to the news of love  
which makes the heavens ring!  
O rest beside the weary road  
and hear the angels sing!

*Edmund Hamilton Sears (1810-1876)*

## LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

### After Christmas...

When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. 'Get up,' he said, 'take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.'

So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'

When Herod realised that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

'A voice is heard in Ramah,  
weeping and great mourning,  
Rachel weeping for her children  
and refusing to be comforted,  
because they are no more.'

After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead.'

So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.



## God protects...

*After the wise men go home by a safe route filled with joy and hope, reality sets in. Herod and the Romans are not ready to accept God's King – the Messiah. Families in the Bethlehem area lose their precious sons. The holy family become refugees. It is a bitter start to our Prince of Peace's life on earth. It also foretells of the rejection, torture and death that is to come. The leaders in Jerusalem will not calm their own views so that they can hear the song of the angels and accept the peace Jesus brings.*

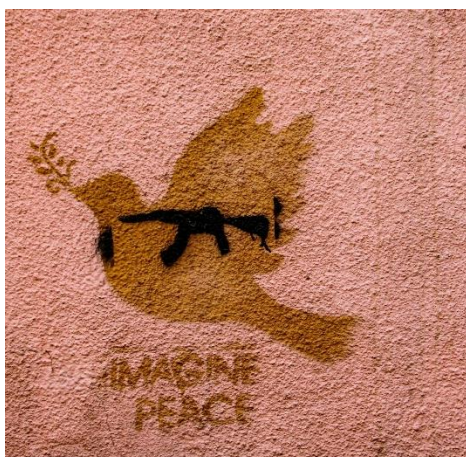
*God's overseeing of the Christmas story does not end with the exit of the wise men. We see his fatherly care for Mary and Joseph and baby Jesus. He guides their journeys. First, there is the flight into Egypt – a reversal of the first Exodus. Second, there is the return to the promised land – to Nazareth in Galilee. It will be a safe place for Jesus to grow up with Mary and Joseph, and his heavenly Father too, watching over him.*

*What stands out is God's protection. During Herod's rampage and the exile in Egypt, God is monitoring events and sending his angels to keep this precious family safe. God is one who protects.*

*How have you experienced this in your own life?*

*Who needs to experience God's protection today?*

*Pray for yourself. Pray for others. Give thanks that God is one who sees – acts – protects. He will be with you as 2026 begins.*



And still the days are hastening on –  
by prophets seen of old –  
towards the fulness of the time  
when comes the age foretold:  
then earth and heaven renewed shall see  
the prince of peace, their king;  
and all the world repeat the song  
which now the angels sing.

*Edmund Hamilton Sears (1810-1876)*

## OUR PRAYERS

*Feel free to use one or more of these prayers and to add your own.*

Lord Jesus, your early life was full of dangers. You had to flee your home in Bethlehem, live as a refugee and settle in a new place. You know God protects. Lord, help me to trust in his fatherly care...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, you understand the plight of the world's refugees, you know what it is like to be homeless and stateless. You have compassion for them. Lord, help the world to have compassion too...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, Joseph had the huge responsibility of keeping you safe, of caring for you as his own son. He did a great job. Caring for the ones we love is not always easy. Lord, help those who are struggling...

Lord, hear my prayer.

*Offer your own heartfelt prayers and yearnings, praise and thanksgivings.*

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

## PRAYER OF BLESSING

*A closing prayer of blessing for this week.*

O God, you search me and you know me,  
all my thoughts and feelings are open to your gaze,  
you see the paths I will take before I take them. Guide my daily living.  
Bless me and keep my loved ones safe, I pray. **Amen.**