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OUTSIDERS INSIDE OUT

Mary and Joseph could find no room when they came to Bethlehem because a census had been called by Caesar Augustus.

They could not find a place to stay because the demands of the loudest ruling voices in their society outstripped the human provision of warmth and comfort.

On that night they could only find the light outside.
In our experience too we have had to look for the light outside.

We have knocked on the door of the Church
but found no room for us
among the unquestioned dogma, the triumphal trappings,
the family services, and the patronising platitudes...
So we can only find the light outside

And sometimes our pride has kept us outside
We have erected barriers where there were none
Or we simply haven't had the energy
to be the ones to break the barriers down
And we found ourselves outside, looking for the light

We knock on the door of the community created this Advent around our tables.
This door opens wide to greet us.

This strange child born this season, who has meant so much –
what is his coming to us now?
Did he come from a star of god?
Did he come from blood and earth?
Did he come as an outsider, to the outhouse?
Did he come out from under the heavy stone of the Christmases we now bear?

**We could only find the light outside,
but now we stand on the threshold
and the light has come within us.**

For this day, and this Advent,
we belong here:
we belong with each other,
and we belong to each other.
**We hold each other gently
and the light has come within us
and all around us.**

(Adapted from *Doing December Differently*)

LEARNING TO WAIT

May we learn how to wait
And not run away

May we discover in the darkness
The uncontrollable truth at the heart of all things

May we let go of our ideas of God
And our ideas about ourselves

May we let go of our precious wounds
And be open to unexpected healing

May we let go of our desire to matter
And stay with ourselves

May we let go of our compulsive desire to describe God
And stay with the mysterious presence of Christ

May we not be afraid
When nothing is happening

May we not be ground to zero
By the empty ache

May we not be too proud
To receive love when it comes

Like a child's tears falling
On the lonely dryness of a prayer that seems to be going nowhere