

Dec 1, 2025 – online – Elizabeth monologue

Pre-service music:

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel – StF 180

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRDjVh2uCMw>

In the darkness of the still night – StF 109

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9PacBZH-y0&t=130s>

Into the darkness of this world – StF 173

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXKOxub5obc&t=45s>

==ORDER OF SERVICE==

Call to worship – Luke 1:78-79 – **GMT20241121-093521 – 1.10 to 2.33**

By the tender mercy of our God,

Th dawn from on high will break upon us,

To give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel – StF 180

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRDjVh2uCMw>

Intro to Elizabeth and Zechariah's story -- **GMT20241121-093521 – 2.45 to 12.04**

Monologue – Elizabeth's Silence – **GMT20241116-111244 – 0.06 to 15.21**

In the darkness of the still night – StF 109

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9PacBZH-y0&t=130s>

Reflections on waiting in the silence during Advent –

GMT20241121-093521–12.30 to 22.32

Intercessions

Lord's Prayer

Benediction

Into the darkness of this world – StF 173

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXKOxub5obc&t=45s>

Beginning of Advent – the run-up to Christmas!

How many days on the Advent calendar to eat the chocolates!
How many shopping days to get all the presents bought and wrapped?
Have you got your tree up yet?
Have you decorated the house yet?
Made the Christmas puddings?
Planned the dinners? Ordered the roast? Made the reservations?
Got the party dress? Got the invites out?...

Our eagerness to celebrate the joy and light of Christmas

Mean that we as a society – and also as individuals –
Not only mean we want to race ahead to the celebrations,
But we also exhaust ourselves in the preparations...

The Church has long celebrated Advent, not as a time to get our to-do list done
Or as a time to celebrate ‘the Christmas season’

(The 12 Days of Christmas actually come AFTER the 25th!)

But as a time to prepare ourselves for the coming of the God –

In the form of the Christ Child –
Into our lives again.

A time for reflection on the darkness around us and within us –

A time to reflect on the light and life that God offers us –
Even when we’re too busy to notice.

Our Methodist Church in Britain has put together its Advent recommendations

On the theme of ‘Hush the Noise’ –
Noting the ‘noise’ of wars and unrest and trials and tribulations all around us –
How can we set aside the ‘noise’ so that we can get to the root
Of what can and will bring us peace?

The word ‘Advent’ means waiting with eager expectation of what is to come...

The word ‘Adventure’ has the same root: entering into something somewhat unknown

Sometimes we speak of an ‘Advent Journey’ –

And the root of the word ‘journey’ reminds us
that it is the distance that can be travelled in one day...

In that sense, perhaps we should approach the season of Advent

As a one-day-at-a-time period of reflection:
Where is God in this?
Where is God’s peace in all this noise?
What does God want me to learn in this Advent Journey?
What do I notice about how God has provided for me each day?
What do God’s provisions tell me about what is really needed to follow?

During the Sundays of Advent, we often reflect on Mary and her journey

From the innocence of everyday girlhood in her parents’ home
To a miraculous encounter with an angel
To becoming pregnant with the Son of God
To a journey to Bethlehem where she gave birth...

But there are other parts of the Advent Journey to reflect on as well.

Often we focus on John the Baptist as well –
the one who proclaimed Jesus to be the Messiah
and who baptised him the Jordan.

But today I want to take a further step back from both of these stories
To the ‘prequel’ of Mary’s encounter with Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist.

The story I want to tell is based on the story that is told in the first chapter of Luke’s gospel.
Luke thought it important enough to include,
And so we consider it as well.

The part of Luke 1 that we know well is Mary’s Magnificat –
And indeed, that is a glorious statement of God at work within Mary.

The verses with which I began this service also come from the end of Luke 1 –
The ending of the prophecy of Zechariah, Elizabeth’s husband
After the birth of John the Baptist.

We know that part as well.

But perhaps we’ve too often skipped over Elizabeth’s story.
I want to include it today, because it also speaks of the waiting patiently on God –
Indeed, Elizabeth – who came from a priestly family
And had married a priest –
Had waited many long years to become a mother.
Even as she had waited – along with Jewish people –
For the Messiah.

This monologue comes from a collection of monologues that I have recently published
Under the title, *Voices Re-Sounding: Creative Monologues on Biblical Females*.

It speaks particularly of the silence that was precious to Elizabeth

In her time of waiting –

The silence and the waiting that prepared her to raise a son who would be the one
‘To prepare the way of the Lord’ – to prepare for Jesus’ coming.

In the midst of all the ‘noise’ of the world and its demands,

Perhaps Elizabeth’s Silence can help us better understand our own need
For listening carefully and patiently to God’s voice in our midst.

Elizabeth's Silence

Welcome to the silence.
Is there a part of you that knows silence?
That knows barren-ness?
That can hear in the speechlessness of it all?
They used to call me the Silent One –
And a priestly house is often silent
Especially when there are no children around.
A priestly house knows reverence.
Sacred space.

Sometimes I would go to the wilderness
Just to hear the wind rushing.
Other days I would go into town,
Into the bazaar – full of noise:
Sellers shouting their wares.
Buyers arguing over prices.
Camels snorting.
Goats bleating.
Children laughing and crying.
Alive with noise,
Alive with life.
Sometimes I would just stand,
Fascinated by the noise,
The confusion,
The turmoil.

I would wonder:
Is there a quiet centre for these people?
What noise do they go home to?

Where is their silence?

Sometimes I ached for the noise, too,
My silent womb so stubbornly refusing
To add to the hubbub of life.
But a barren womb
Does not mean a barren soul.

In the beginning it was painful,
Especially during the festival times
When all the family would come to our house
To celebrate in Jerusalem.
So painful,
To be the one with the silent womb
Amid the celebration of life.
After a while,
The silence became my shield,
My protection from the onslaught of
The outside noise.

In my silence
I could walk among the others
But still hear into the silence,
My barren womb
Giving space for the voice of God
Showing me which one needed help,
Which one was hurting inside,
Which one was unable to say
What was inside her heart.

I began to understand God had birthed in me
An understanding of silence,
And I held that creation of silence
Carefully in my arms,
In my heart,
And nurtured it
As the gift from God that it was.

Elizabeth, you call me,
Elisheba, my original name:
Oath of God, God's Promise,
An oath to revere silence.
Elisheba was the name of Aaron's wife as well,
And so I inherited a priestly function, too.
Sometimes I thought that my gift of silence
Was ordination for fulfilling the duties of
Wife of the Priest.
I had time and space for listening to
The Holy One of Israel,
For hearing the joys and troubles of Zechariah,
My husband, the priest.

I think we shared more than the other couples,
Zechariah and me;
We shared because we only had each other.
He did not try to throw me out
Because I was barren.
Perhaps he knew, too,
The pregnant silence within me
And knew the hallowed meaning
Of that sacred space.
It was a space that accommodated his speech.
How he loved to talk!
He talked enough for both of us!

So we cared together for each other
And for our larger families.
When they came to celebrate the festivals,
They knew our home was always open,

Our hearts always ready to absorb their lives.

And so it was quite a shock
The day that Zechariah came home
Silent.

It had been his day to burn the incense!
The holiest of days in a priest's life!
Day after day, he would dress in his robes
And go to the temple to wait for the day
When the Lord would appoint him
Through the tossing of the sacred stones:
Appoint him to commune with the Lord God of Israel Himself!

And then the blessed day came...
And Zechariah was struck dumb!
The people outside the Temple had waited and waited
For him to show himself after the sacrifice,
To tell if there were any word from the Lord.
But when he finally emerged,
There was only the glow on his face,
Awe in his eyes,
And silence on his lips,
So the people knew he had seen a vision,
Only no-one was sure what it had been!

Having a silent husband was strange indeed.
The house seemed to echo the silence from all sides.
I found myself speaking just to remind myself
That speech was possible!
I took to reciting the scriptures
That Zechariah had repeated for us both
Day after day
Year after year.

One day I was reciting the story of the Maccabees,
Those fearless freedom fighters
Who had restored Jerusalem the last time.
When my lips recited the name of John,
Grandfather of the Maccabees,
John's eyes met mine with a wild determination.
No more was spoken,
Only a knowledge between us
That Silence was birthing a new John.

I wasn't really surprised soon after that
When my body began to tell me
That it wasn't Silent any more.
Life had begun again.
There was a new hope beginning,

A new freedom to be claimed.
My body, yes, was old for child-bearing,
But it managed.
It stretched and gurgled
And moved and ached
In new and amazing ways,
And Silent Zechariah
Seemed to have absorbed in his silence
A new understanding of
What was needed.

I think it's fair to say
That we 'talked' more in those days
Than we had in all the years before.
Eye contact.
Smiles and frowns
Conveyed scrolls of meaning.

It was one of those silent-alive days some months later
When my cousin Mary arrived on our threshold.
Mary was much younger,
And I had known her all through her childhood.
Though she lived in Nazareth,
She came with her family to Jerusalem for the festivals.

Mary was young, yes,
But she had always been wise.
She, too, knew Silence.
Intuitively, we spent our festival times together
In quietness,
Away from the noise of the others,
Cooking or cleaning,
Caring for others,
Sharing a silence.

When she arrived that evening,
She called out.
The silence of the house shattered
Like a sudden clap of thunder
Heralding the end of drought.

The baby within me jolted,
And I knew that moment
That the Holy One was among us.
Like the gentle rains that begin the storm,
We wept and held each other.
One glance at that dear face
Now shining beneath its aura of weariness and question:
I knew at once,
The child within me knew!

That the Holy One was among us:
God's Oath fulfilled in our midst.

In that holy moment,
My silence was completely broken
With the shouts and laughter and sobs
Of the Holy Spirit.
I greeted and held this most blessed woman.
The Lord's Promise was with us,
In my very house!
Alive and well
Inside the womb of my kinswoman.

And inside my womb with the messenger,
The one to tell all: the Lord is Near!

Mary stayed with me those last months.
We laughed and cried and loved together.
We dreamed and wrestled with our fears.
We prayed and recited scripture to each other
And even dared to sing a little.

She left shortly before my time came.
I hardly had time to mourn her leaving,
When my womb could no longer contain
The bundle of wild promise it held.
I called him John from the very first moment,
Even before the priests and neighbours
Came to offer the prayers and blessings on the eighth day.
They thought me strange,
Bestowing such a revolutionary name
On a baby born into quiet respectability.
They were not used to hearing my voice,
And so they did not know how to hear it.

So they turned to Zechariah.
"His name is John," he said,
And they all left, wagging their heads,
Not knowing whether to be amazed at the name
Or the break in Zechariah's silence.

Well, we weren't a very silent household after that.
All three of us seemed to have found our tongues!
The walls often seemed to creak more in relief of the night—
Echoing their responses to the noise days!

I knew my John was a holy one,
So I taught him the holy ways of the priestly house,
And I taught him the holy ways of the wilderness.
I knew that the holy ones

Needed to know the Silence, too.
Sometimes I would take him out to the wilderness
Where he could hear the wind
And the Ruah Spirit
Rushing through the sand and brush,
Rushing against his skin,
Pressing to enter his own breath,
Enter his own spirit,
And unite it to the Holy One of Israel.

He has been gone many months now.
He chose the desert as his temple.
He chose the sands as his sanctuary,
The Jordan as his pulpit.
He proclaims loudly
When I knew most keenly
In my Silence:

That the Holy One of Israel is near;
That we must listen with our whole bodies,
Cleanse ourselves to hear and prepare
The Way of the Lord
In our very midst.

I wonder what silence you are able to find in your own daily life –
Perhaps you live alone, and there is much silence in your life.
Do you try to fill the silence?
Or is there time and space for God to be speaking to you?
When and where do you find yourself listening most carefully to God?
How does God speak to you?

Perhaps you live in a household where there is much noise,
Many demands on you and your attention, your energy, your presence –
Where can you find a few moments of silence?
Where can you hear God speaking to you?

Prayers

For those who struggle to find silence

For those who struggle with too much silence
And long for companionship

For those who struggle to hear God's voice

For those whose lives feel empty

For those who are waiting....

For those who are not sure what they are waiting for....

For those who know how to welcome a guest

For those who need a place to get away

For those who are struggling with difficult secrets

For those who need someone to share with...

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Sending out to seek the silence
To see the wilderness – the wildness
The places where God is not confined or boxed in
But can speak to and with us freely...