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## CHRISTMAS 1A

28th December 2025

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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## Opening Prayers

Living, loving God, as we draw close to a New Year and a new season,  
I turn to you in prayer and reflect on all the things for which I am grateful.  
Help me to see you in the centre of the season.

In awe, I stand aware of the mercy and steadfast love you show to us through your  
teachings and ways on heaven and on earth. As you gave your own son Jesus to earth,  
we see how immense your love is for us.

You do not abandon us.  
You see our distress and feel our heartache.  
You stay with us in all walks of life.

You are not a distant God, and for this I am eternally grateful.  
You are with me from my first cry to my very last breath.  
Sharing in my joy and pain in this life.

God of Christmas,  
From the heights of heaven to the depths of earth.  
Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Let me go into this New Year of life more like you.

To live in compassion and love others in light of the truth you showed me.  
I worship you now and always.

Amen.

**You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which  
you are familiar.**

**Readings:** Matthew 2:13-23 – [Click for reading](#)

## Responding to the reading

As one year ends and another begins, we stand in that sacred in-between space, looking  
back on all that has been, and ahead to what may come. And it is not all 'peace on earth  
and goodwill to all', either...

Christmas often brings to mind peaceful images: a sleeping baby, candlelight, joy and  
celebration. But Matthew's Gospel gives us a much harder truth to sit with, especially  
today.

Just after Jesus is born, violence erupts.

Herod, fearing the rumour of a rival king, responds with cruelty. Mary and Joseph are  
forced to flee, carrying their newborn child across borders as refugees. Grief descends on

Bethlehem as innocent lives are lost. And even after Herod dies, fear and uncertainty remain. The holy family doesn't return to Bethlehem—they settle in Nazareth, quietly, cautiously, far from the centre of power.

This is part of the Christmas story too.

It reminds us that God's presence does not erase suffering but enters into it. Emmanuel, God with us, is not born into safety and certainty, but into risk, upheaval, and fear. And this is good news for a world that still knows too much pain.

For Christians on the journey of discipleship, this passage calls us to follow the God who sides with the vulnerable, the displaced, the grieving. You are invited to ask:

- Where are people fleeing today, and how are we responding?
- Who is mourning, and are we willing to listen and stand with them?
- What kind of world are we building: not just with our words, but with our choices?

As one year ends and another begins, this story grounds us in reality: the work of love is often uncomfortable. It may lead us down unexpected roads. It may ask us to let go of control, to listen to dreams,

### **Hymn / Song**

212 STF – O come, all ye faithful - [YouTube](#)

### **Blessing**

May the Spirit of Christmas be awake in you this week.  
May you find places to see God at work,  
May you embody the generosity of the season,  
And the grace of the Christ-child, in our midst.  
Amen.

# Prayers and Prayer Pointers For This Week

## Monday 29<sup>th</sup> December

- During each of the 12 days of Christmas, our prayer prompts here in The Vine at Home are short poems, which we hope will help act as an invitation to prayer. You may like to read them aloud if that helps.

Light breaks in,  
less like the dawn and more like  
a wick, flickering gently into life  
of its own accord.

All the darkness,  
all the loathing,  
the hate-speech and ego music  
swirl and fight,  
and yet: the light.  
The calm, deft presence  
of the light.

## Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> December

Bare branches bring bleakness,  
brokenness, wintering grief  
and in the midst:  
a bud.  
The dim and distant sense that  
that this is not forever,  
that the next is better than the  
now.

## Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> December

The year is tired, its story told,  
The year is weary, its joints feeling old,  
The year is gone, but not forever,  
For we carry its pain and its endeavour,  
All its simplicity and all that's felt complex  
With us into whatever is next,  
That as we tuck this year into bed,  
We sight our sights firmly on the new dawn ahead.

### Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> January 2026

Deep out of sight  
below untold layers of hopeless mud,  
a seed splits deftly down the seam -  
stitched from the beginning –  
to unleash the tentative seedling,  
set to struggle against soil, stone and clay.

The year cracks, just a fraction  
and the weight of loam seems insurmountable  
and yet, the hope of deutro-Isaiah is kindled  
and in the darkness of the still-night,  
a green shoot rises  
and rises again,  
green as distant hills in spring.

### Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2026

Hope and resilience,  
those two old allies,  
entwine trunks like ancient trees  
planted closer than was wise.  
Twisting, holding, through centuries –  
by some daily, ongoing miracle  
they reach for the skies.

### Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2026

As cold breath – *ruach* –  
hits the back of your throat,  
and brisk wind – *ruach* –  
tugs at your winter coat,  
when you feel the life force in you – *ruach* –  
vulnerable and fragile,  
May you know the Spirit of God – *ruach* –  
alive in and around you this day.  
Guide my feet, *ruach Elohim*, I pray.