

Retreat in Daily Life

A journey to Bethlehem - during Advent



Anglican Parish of Warracknabeal

8-15 December 2024



A Project REGENRATE Initiative

Explore. Rejoice. Give.

The Retreat in Daily Life is an invitation to simply say, 'Yes'.

'Yes' - to God.

'Yes' - to something new.

'Yes' - to openness and renewal.

*In this booklet, (similar to our Lenten custom)
I am offering a simple way to 'enter' an intentional time with God
– whoever that may be for you -
each day during this particular week in Advent.*

*So much of the Christmas Season rhetoric is one of 'Peace'
and tranquility in the stable with stars shining
and angels singing (or shepherds) and the baby is not crying.
This is not how our real lives normally go.
Anxiety about getting the 'right' gifts,
the violence we see on the telly from around the world
and increasingly nearer to home, the confusion of privilege and power.*

*All the reality of our daily lives is not foreign to God.
However, we can often feel so alone, and it may seem from time to time
that God has abandoned us. This is NOT so.
In fact, this is when God is more present - if only
we had the time and space to know that.*

Enjoy your journey.



"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness - on them light has shined. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders, and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Great will be his authority, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this."

Isaiah 9:2,6-7

Day One - The Call to 'YES'!

"In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary." [Luke 1:26,27]

Is there a time when you felt really 'called' to do something?

Called out of the ordinary into the extraordinary?

Called 'deeper into the ordinary'?

At the very beginning of our Christmas story, not all was calm. Imagining that in Nazareth, Mary was the 'talk of the town' as a young unmarried pregnant teenager - she caught refuge by visiting her cousin Elizabeth who had also become pregnant.

Her response to Elizabeth's joy –

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowly state of his servant. Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name; indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. He has come to the aid of his child Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever." [Luke 1:46-55]

What does your soul 'wait' for?

What does your 'spirit' need to 'rejoice'?

This Christmas Season - expect 'the Lord' to visit you!

Once encountered - we are changed.

Action

Draw/trace your hand on the next page.

What are 5 things you are looking forward to about Christmas this year?

Who are 5 people you will contact or pray for this Christmas Season?

What are 5 goals to set yourself this Christmas Season -

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| a) Give to Charity | b) To Learn | c) That Surprises you |
| d) Task you would like to achieve | e) To Refresh your soul | |

Day Two - The Promise.

"But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see - I am bringing good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord.'" [Luke 2:10-11]

What seems impossible to us - is POSSIBLE for God!

Healing from God is not just a hope - it is a promise.

Is there a pain that needs healing?

Is there a darkness that needs light?

Is there a judgement that needs abolishing?

Is there a weakness that needs strengthening?

Is there a song that needs to be sung?

Is there a loved one that needs connection?

Is there a fear that needs confronting?

Is there love that needs nurturing?

Action

Find a rock. (From your garden or from a walk)

Draw on it. Write on it. Wrap it in paper ...

... anything you like or maybe answers to the questions above.

Then:

- a) Crush it or smash it = get rid of it!
- b) Plant it in a pot with a seed = watch the plant grow.
- c) Pray with it during the week = take it with you wherever you go.

See:

- d) If something within you can be transformed.
- e) Maybe get a friend or neighbour to join you in this exercise.
- f) Hear God's voice speak to you - clearly and confidently.

Give thanks!

Day Three - Awkward Righteousness

Joseph found himself in a predicament!

"Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus." [Matthew 1:19-25]

What is the right course of action for our own circumstances and situations?

How do we maintain our dignity and nurture 'right relationship' when confronted with 'out of the ordinary' aspects of our lives?

Is there a difficulty brewing this Christmas Season?

Is there an awkwardness with anyone you know?

Is life clear - or is there uncertainty and misunderstanding?

Action

The bull's eye dart board on [next page] is divided into four areas of living that are important in people's lives:

- 1. Work/Education** refers to your career aims, your values about improving your education and knowledge, and generally feeling of use to those close to you or to your community (i.e., volunteering, overseeing your household).
- 2. Leisure** refers to how you play in your life, how you enjoy yourself, your hobbies or other activities that you spend your free time doing (i.e., gardening, sewing, coaching a children's soccer team, fishing, playing sports).
- 3. Relationships** refers to intimacy in your life, relationships with your children, your family of origin, your friends and social contacts in the community.
- 4. Personal growth/health** refers to your spiritual life, either in organized religion or personal expressions of spirituality, exercise, nutrition, and addressing health risk factors like drinking, drug use, smoking, weight.

Start by describing your values within each of the four values areas. Think about each area in terms of your dreams, like you had the possibility to get your wishes completely fulfilled. What are the qualities that you would like to get out of each area and what are your expectations from these areas of your life?

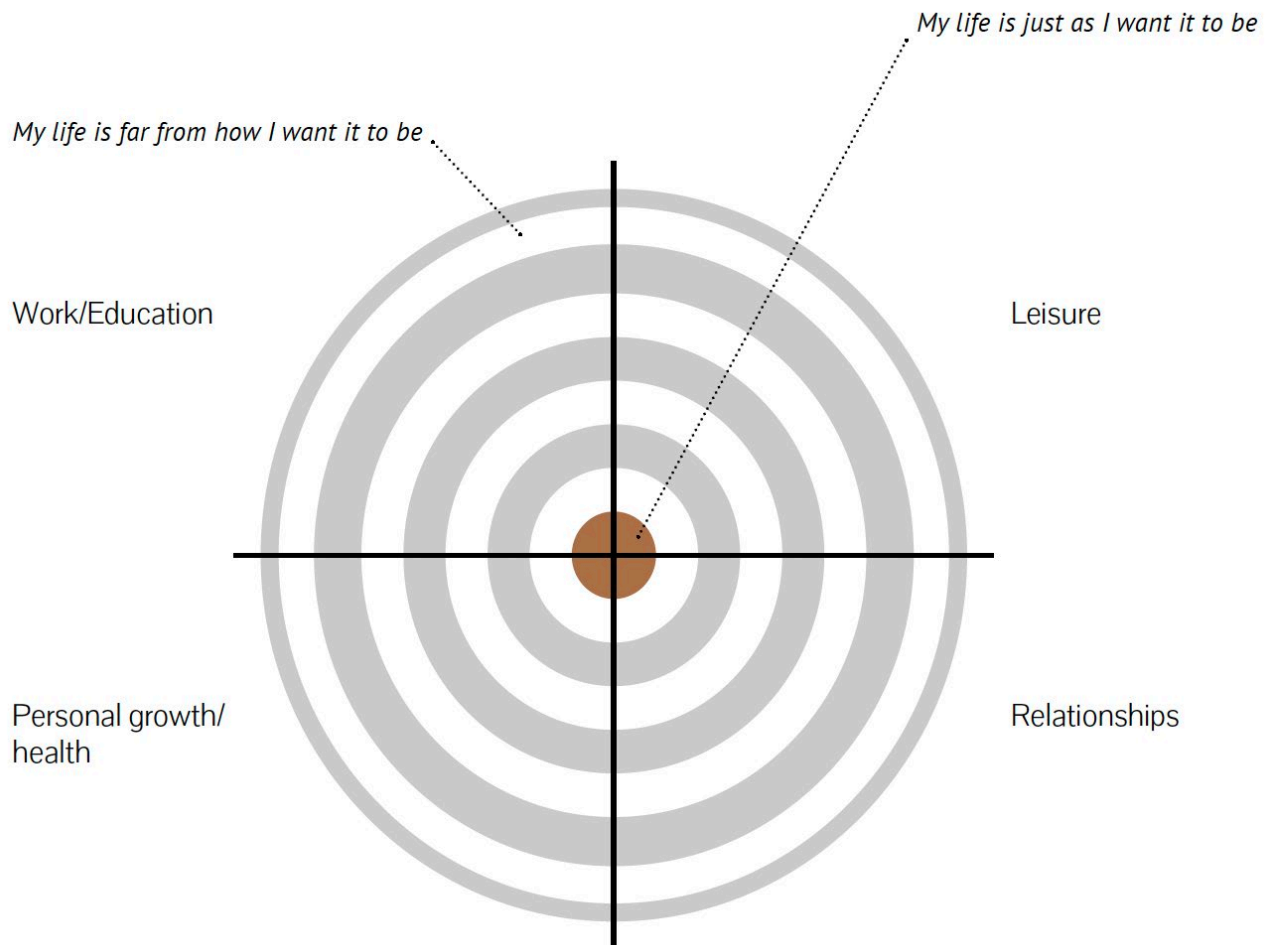
Work/education:

Relationships:

Leisure:

Personal growth/health:

Now, look again at the values you have written above. Think of your value as “bull’s eye” (the middle of the dart board). “Bull’s eye” is exactly how you want your life to be, a direct hit, where you are living your life in a way that is consistent you’re your values. Now, make



an X on the dartboard in each area that best represents where you stand today.

Day Four - Pack it on a donkey.

"All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem." [Luke 2:3,4]

Return to your 'Dart Board' from yesterday.

Now write down what stands between you and living your current life as you want to, from what you have written in your areas of value. When you think of the life you want to live and the values that you would like to put in play, what gets in the way of you living that kind of life? Describe any obstacle/s below.

Obstacle 1:

Obstacle 2:

Obstacle 3:

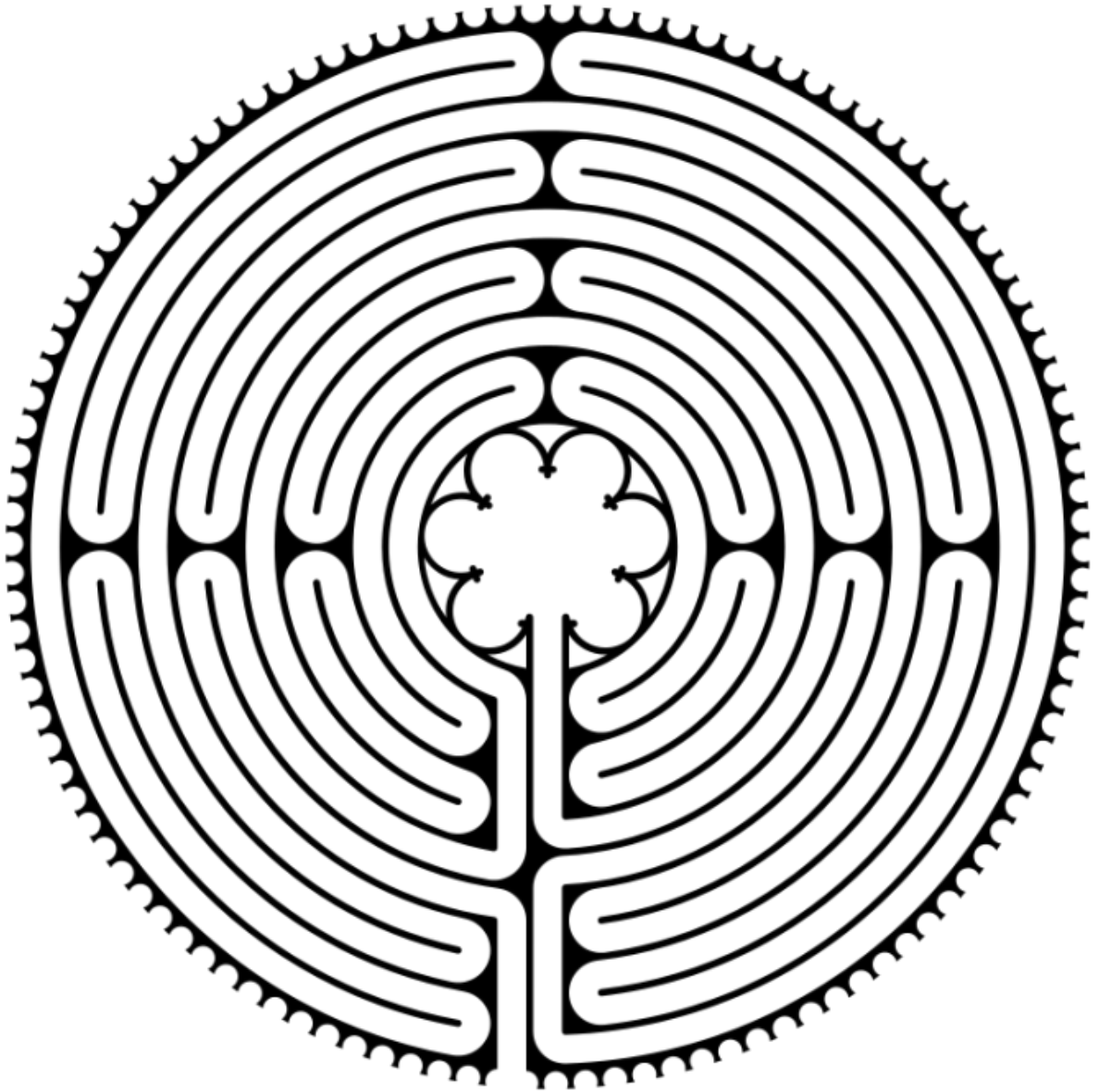
Obstacle 4:

Think about actions you can take in your daily life that would tell you that you are zeroing in on the bull's-eye in each important area of your life. These actions could be small steps toward a particular goal or they could just be actions that reflect what you want to be about as a person. Usually, taking a valued step includes being willing to encounter the obstacle(s) and to take the action anyway. Try to identify at least one value based action you are willing to take in each of the four areas.

Action:

Walking the labyrinth.

You may have access to a labyrinth to walk. If not, trace the path on the drawing imagining that you are walking.



The good thing about a Labyrinth is that there is one way in and one way out. There are no tricks, no wrong path.

The Labyrinth is an ACTIVE Prayer.

I invite you to experience the journey to the 'centre' - as the journey to God, to the most important thing/s and values in your life - whatever this may mean for you.

I invite you to learn something from God.

I invite you to see something from a new perspective.

I invite you to leave your stone in the centre.

Labyrinths are ancient patterns found all over the world. They are of many types sharing a single overall design. Their origin is as mysterious and their uses are as varied as their patterns are.

For this retreat, the Labyrinth is a 'Meander,' with a single, undivided path and no choices to make other than traveling into the centre. The 'centre' can represent many things - the centre of our heart, the goals we have set for ourselves, the loving centre of God's Grace.

In the Middle Ages, walking a cathedral labyrinth was a substitute for going on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Not everyone could make the long and arduous journey to the Holy Land, so walking a labyrinth in a church was a devotional activity. Today meandering labyrinths are often used as walking meditations, to focus the mind and put the walker in tune with the greater reality metaphorically represented by the labyrinth.

Trace it once! Trace it twice! (Have some fun)

Day Five - Coping with the Unexpected

"While they were there, the time came for Mary to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." [Luke 2:6-7]

What happens when things don't go quite to plan?

They say that when one door shuts - another opens.

What are the factors or signs that you know it will be okay?

What skills are required to embrace a completely new situation?

Is a stable enough? Were you hoping for the penthouse?

How comfortable are you IN YOUR OWN SKIN?

What does this look like?

Action

Today, I invite you to visit a neighbour.

You can take a gift.

You can take a beer.

You can have a Christmas chat.

Maybe you really care for them.

Seek hospitality - for a moment or a while.

It might be terrifying. It might be surprising.

See what happens!

Day Six - Acceptance and Gratitude

"Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." [Luke 2:6-7]

Whether we feel as though we're in control or not - accepting our current circumstances - genuinely - is a sure path towards PEACE within.

What are you grateful for?

What are the things or circumstances that you ARE 'in control of'?

Give yourself a pat on the back!

What are the things or circumstances that you feel you are NOT in control of?

How much energy will you give them?

Can they be abolished or discarded?

Today, it is important to 'make room' in your heart and mind for something 'new' from God.

Today, it is important to 'make room' in your life that is exciting and worth waiting for.

Today, it is important to 'make room' for the wonder of Christmas

Action

Write a letter:

a) to God.

b) to Your best self.

Write a letter of:

a) Gratitude

b) Reconciliation

c) Hope

... of things that you are in control of, that you can influence.

Then light a candle. *"Be still and know that I am God."*

Day Seven - Giving Birth

"While they were there, the time came for Mary to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger. [Luke 2:6-7]

It is TIME - to birth something new this Christmas Season.

- A new circumstance - Courage.
- A new attitude - Virtue
- A new goal - Opportunity.
- A new vision - Clarity
- A new hobby - Skill
- A new ...

The fear of failure can be very strong.

We might hear ourselves say, "I am not worthy." Actually, YOU ARE!

What is God inviting you to do that is new?

I invite you to develop some steps or ways forward to 'make it happen.'

Action

Today - is a day to 'treat' yourself.

Do something FUN.

Go out to dinner.

Take a trip somewhere.

Have a quiet (or noisy) celebration.

What are the three things that bring you JOY at the moment?

Over the Christmas Season - how can you do or continue or improve the ability to achieve JOY before the end of the year?

Day Eight - Receive

"The shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in a manger." *Luke 2. 15,16.*

"On entering the house, the wise men saw the child with Mary, his mother, and they knelt, and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. " *Matt 2.11*

There can be as much joy in receiving as there is in giving.

What kind of gifts will the shepherds bring?

What kind of gifts will the wise strangers bring?

Imagine it.

Embrace it.

Receive it.

Recall the 'Gifts of the Spirit' - found in 1 Corinthians 12.

What is your new insight or revelation of God for you this week?

What will you give to another:

- a) Family
- b) Neighbour
- c) Friend
- d) Community
- e) Church
- f) Those less fortunate.

Action

Which character/s in the Christmas Story would you like to concentrate on this Christmas Season?

Go back to the story.

Go to the characters you are unfamiliar with.

What are you curious about?

What do you think their challenges are in the Christmas Story?

What do you think THEIR Christmas message would be for you! this Christmas Season?

**Emmanuel - God with us - stoops to earth.
God is here - are you ready to say: "YES!"**



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Project REGENERATE: Explore. Rejoice. Give.

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