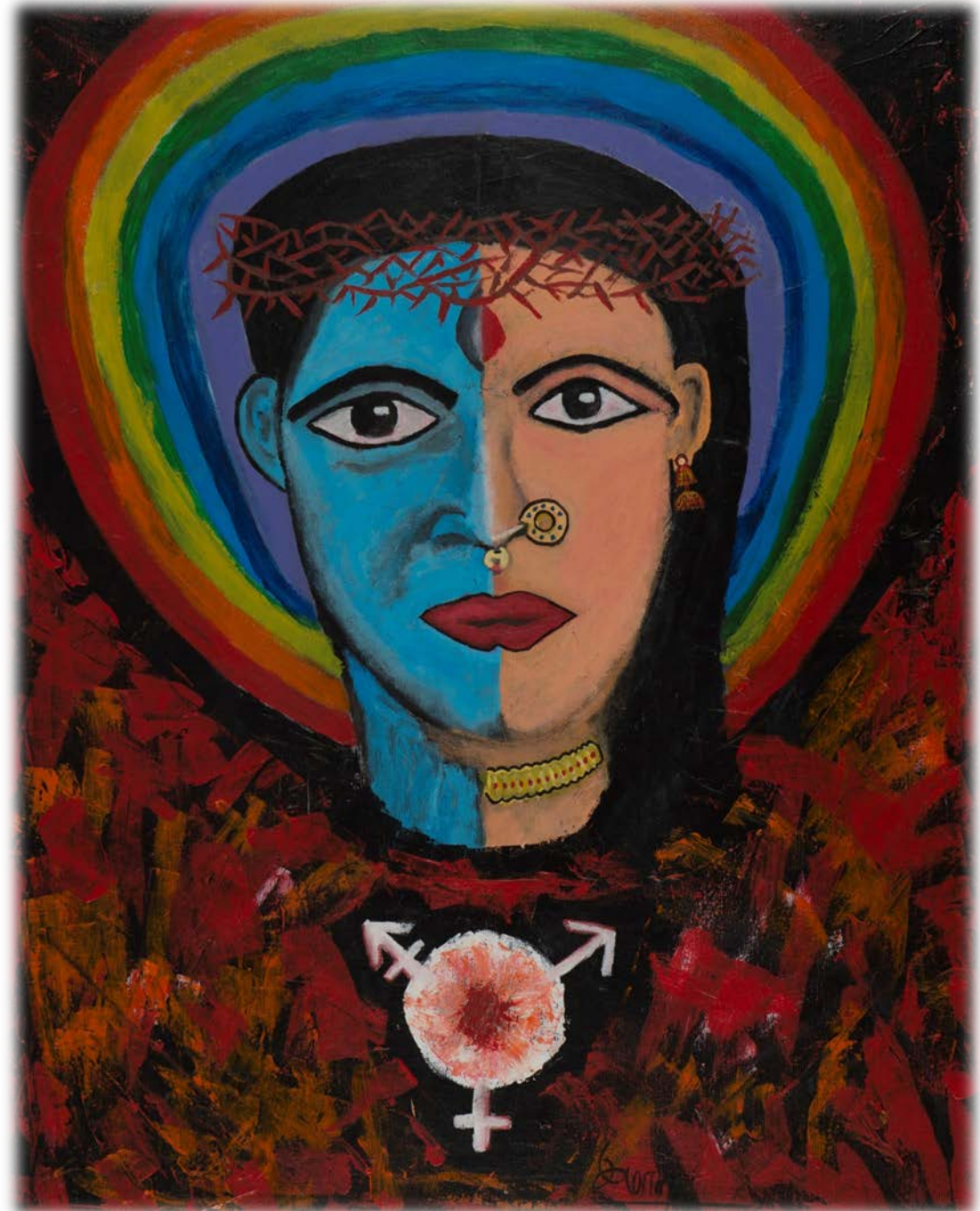




**1977-2017**  
Celebrating 40 years of Partnership  
of 32 Churches in Mission

# ANTICIPATING THE COMING OF CHRIST

**CWM MARKS ADVENT**



# CWM Advent Greetings

Advent describes the time in the Church's calendar when we prepare ourselves for Christ's coming at Christmas. For many countries preparations for Christmas seem to begin in September.

But for the Church it is during the four Sundays before Christmas Day that we reflect with anticipation on the promises of Christ's coming and face the doubts which make us fear God does not care for his world. Then on Christmas we can gather in joy to discover again the good news at the heart of our faith, good news we can share daily in word and action in our communities



Traditionally the Advent Sundays are marked by lighting a candle each week to awaken our hope in Jesus, the light who is coming into the world. As the light grows so does our anticipation and we see in it our common calling with Christ to be light to the world. Often the four candles for the Advent Sundays are one colour and the one for Christmas Day another.



CWM has produced these Advent reflections which could be used in church or at home. If they are used in public worship as a part of Sunday service we have suggested that a song could be sung after the candle lighting. This would be for the worship leader to choose.

Often these words are led by different groups or families in the church and they have been set out with words in bold print which the whole congregation can say. But, in any case people should feel free to adapt to use these words as they see fit in their context.

All around the world the Christian family celebrates the hope of Jesus' birth. But, the Angel's global vision of peace is sorely tested in our days, and the tender dawn of mercy that Zechariah anticipated (Luke 1: 78) seems a long way off. In such difficult times we need words and symbols of hope rooted in our story and calling. We hope that these prayers will stir up again hope in difficult times and contexts and help us see again the coming of Christ to bring fullness of life for all creation and understand that there is place for us at the manger as partners in the mission God sends Jesus to embody.

# CWM Advent Reflections

## The decree went out ...

*‘In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered’ Luke 2:1*



*The Priene Inscription. Dated 9BCE. This contains the Royal Proclamation announcing the good news of the birth of a Saviour, a son to Caesar Augustus*

This is how Luke introduces the birth story of Jesus. As a result of this decree Mary and Joseph move from Nazareth to Bethlehem, the birth place of the shepherd boy King, David. Thus the Messiah is born in the proper place, in a borrowed room in the midst of forced migration. In so doing the Roman Empire inadvertently brings about the fulfilment of a prophecy which will ultimately bring about its own subversion. Empire declares in such decrees its power to control and exploit at will. We counter them in these advent reflections with the contra-decrees of God’s upside down order, that send Jesus up against Empire, and his followers with him bringing Good News of Jesus and the change he brings.

# Advent 1 Nov 27<sup>th</sup> 2016

Let us seek a moment  
of quiet amongst many voices.

**Voices which tell us  
Of our world:**

Profit is everything

**Politics is pointless**

Shopping is redemption.

**Mexicans are criminals**

Migrants are scum

**Muslims are extremists**

Black lives don't matter

**Women are toys**

Queers are abnormal

**The Earth is to be exploited**

Resistance is futile

**There is no alternative**





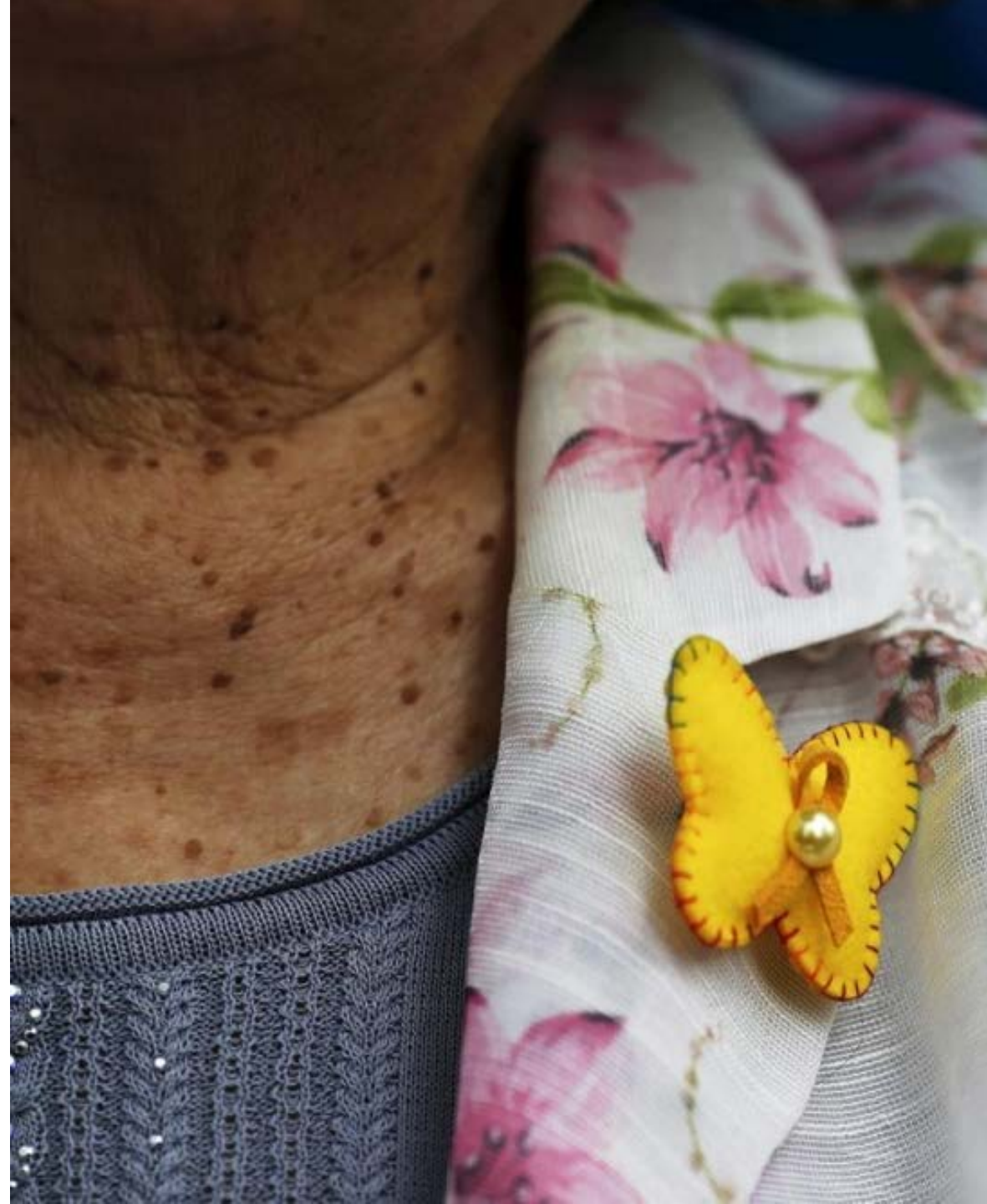
Let us make room  
for the broken reed to speak,  
the rock to cry out,  
the unspoken text to find its counter voice:

*Comfort, O comfort my people  
Says your God*

*Encourage the people of Jerusalem.  
Tell them they have suffered long enough  
and their sins are now forgiven*

Isa 40: 1 – 2

CWM's Assembly in Jeju in June 2016 heard about the 'Halmoni' movements of North East Asia. During the Japanese Occupations of countries like Korea, the Philippines and Taiwan women were forced to work as 'Comfort Women', as sex slaves for the Imperial Japanese Army. They gave 'comfort' in the form of habitual rape and torture. An estimated 400,000 women and girls across Asia were abducted and forced to serve in so-called "comfort stations" by the Japanese military during World War II. A majority of these victims were taken hostage in South Korea and China, but women were captured in virtually every territory occupied by the Japanese, including Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. Two Korean 'Comfort Women' survivors, Kim Bok-dong and Gil Won-ok launched the Butterfly Fund in 2012. The fund aims to help women whose lives were suddenly torn apart after becoming war rape victims and who have since been living with the effects of their traumatic experiences. The Butterfly embodies, decrees bodily and spiritual transformation and broods over our text like the Spirit to hear the counter will of God to Empire; Comfort, comfort my people:





We light the first Advent candle  
for the Comfort Women  
and all who are the victims  
of sexual violence and war

*The first candle is lit*

[A song may be sung here or a moment of quiet kept]

Come Lord  
**Decree of Love**  
**Grow louder in light**  
**And summon us to your side**  
**That we too may bring hope and change and comfort**



# Advent 2 Dec 4<sup>th</sup> 2016

Let us seek a moment  
of quiet amongst many voices.

**Voices which tell us**

**Of our world:**

Profit is everything

**Politics is pointless**

Shopping is redemption.

**Mexicans are criminals**

Migrants are scum

**Muslims are extremists**

Black lives don't matter

**Women are toys**

Queers are abnormal

**The Earth is to be exploited**

Resistance is futile

**There is no alternative**





Let us make room  
for the broken reed to speak,  
the rock to cry out,  
the unspoken text to find its counter voice:

*Though the fig tree doesn't bloom,  
though the olive crop withers,  
though the sheep are cut off from the flock,  
I will rejoice in the Lord.  
I will rejoice in the God  
of my deliverance. Habakkuk 3: 17 – 18*

Empires like road and walls. They like to feel in control of space and territory. Empires like roads to be able to move goods around easily, and especially their military. And they like walls to keep people out and in. There is a whole chapter of human history that could be devoted to the walls of Empires. The Great Wall of China, the Walls of Great Zimbabwe, the Walls of Babylon, Hadrian's Wall, The Berlin Wall, and now Trump plans to complete the wall Bush began and Obama extended between the US and Mexico.

Israel suffered in slavery in Egypt building bricks with less and less straw for the Pharaohs' walls, pyramids and roads, (Exodus 5). The security wall that now separates much of the Israeli and Palestinian territory excludes many Palestinians from their ancestral land and pasture, from their olive and lemon groves. The checkpoints like Erez herd, harass and hold up people and goods, so that Palestinian harvests rot in transit. CWM has recently begun to engage with the issues of the Palestinian people and to understand from their perspective that salvation needs to be understood as deliverance, as it was for the Israelite slaves in Egypt.





We light the first and second Advent candles  
for the Palestinian people  
For an exodus movement to bring deliverance  
To all whose dignity, history and land is denied  
them.

*The first and second Advent candles are lit*

[A song may be sung here or a moment of  
quiet kept]

Come Lord  
**Decree of Love**  
**Grow louder in light**  
**And summon us to your side**  
**That we too may tear down walls**  
**And open the way to peace and life.**

# Advent 3 Dec 11<sup>th</sup> 2016

Let us seek a moment  
of quiet amongst many voices.

**Voices which tell us  
Of our world:**

Profit is everything

**Politics is pointless**

Shopping is redemption.

**Mexicans are criminals**

Migrants are scum

**Muslims are extremists**

Black lives don't matter

**Women are toys**

Queers are abnormal

**The Earth is to be exploited**

Resistance is futile

**There is no alternative**





Let us make room  
for the broken reed to speak,  
the rock to cry out,  
the unspoken text to find its counter voice:

*The end has come upon my people Israel;  
Hear this, you who trample on the needy and destroy  
the poor of the land, saying,  
“When will the new moon  
be over so that we may sell grain,  
and the Sabbath  
so that we may offer wheat for sale,  
make the ephah smaller, enlarge the shekel,  
and deceive with false balances,  
in order to buy the needy for silver  
and the helpless for sandals,  
and sell garbage as grain? Amos 8: 3 - 6*

Our economy is marked by runaway inequality. Over half of the world's wealth lies in the hands of 1% of the world population. In fact in 2015 Credit Suisse demonstrated that the 62 richest people owned more than 50% of the world's population combined. The pursuit of profit for this 1%, or these 62, drives most of our economies and the global corporations central to them. The consequences of these global inequalities fall heaviest on women, children and people with disabilities. Empire now is fundamentally a global economic system which seeks its own reward and does not provide for the life of the communities and nations at its command. Regulation is resisted, laws which protect the earth or the employee are dismantled and nations North and South fall prey to its unholy demands. Everything and everyone is commodified. The International Labour Organisation estimates at least 20.9 million people are victims of forced labour and trafficking worldwide. CWM, with other partners in the churches and social movements, calls on this to end and be replaced with new economic systems and values. And we must confess that the Church has so often been complicit in exploiting peoples' poverty and silent at its injustice.





We light the first, second and third candle for  
Economic justice  
For those whose poverty makes them vulnerable  
And for those whose wealth makes them indifferent

*The first, second and third Advent candles are lit*

[A song may be sung here or a moment of quiet kept]

Come Lord  
**Decree of Love**  
**Grow louder in light**  
**And summon us to your side**  
**That we too may raise up the pressure for change**  
**And the value of all you have created**



# Advent 4 Dec 18<sup>th</sup> 2016

Let us seek a moment  
of quiet amongst many voices.

**Voices which tell us  
Of our world:**

Profit is everything

**Politics is pointless**

Shopping is redemption.

**Mexicans are criminals**

Migrants are scum

**Muslims are extremists**

Black lives don't matter

**Women are toys**

Queers are abnormal

**The Earth is to be exploited**

Resistance is futile

**There is no alternative**



P:09  
CH:05  
HI:16



Let us make room for the broken reed to speak,  
the rock to cry out,  
the unspoken text to find its counter voice:

*Mary said:*

*With all my heart I glorify the Lord!  
In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my saviour.  
He has looked with favour  
on the low status of his servant.  
Look! From now on, everyone will  
consider me highly favoured  
because the mighty one has done great things for me.  
Holy is his name.*

*He shows mercy to everyone,  
from one generation to the next,  
who honours him as God.  
He has shown strength with his arm.  
He has scattered those with arrogant  
thoughts and proud inclinations.  
He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones  
and lifted up the lowly.  
He has filled the hungry with good things  
and sent the rich away empty-handed.*

Luke 1: 46 - 53

Mary reveals here why she is just the person to raise the Messiah, why her arms and heart are the safest place for Heaven's high treasure, and not Herod. Why she is the one to keep this God child true to the mission the Spirit empowers her first in.

As Christmas comes close in cost and splendour we sit ourselves at the feet of a young village girl hoping to be convicted by her deep charisma and calling. We do so knowing there are still churches and communities refusing to honour the calling of women. We do so knowing there are also those who would limit women only to bearing children and not to bearing witness to the new worlds children bring.

Mary reminds us and represents to us the gift and courage that excluded people bring to the community of change Jesus leads, because they are the community of change.





We light the first, second, third and fourth candles  
For those who makes themselves  
partners in God's mission.  
People of all identities  
Who witness in their lives, bodies and gifts  
to all that empire oppresses  
and all that God would liberate.

*The first, second, third and fourth  
Advent candles are lit*

[A song may be sung here or a moment of quiet kept]

**Come Lord  
Decree of Love  
Grow louder in light  
And summon us to your side  
That we too may be mothered by Mary  
Into radical love and action**

# Christmas Day

Let us seek a moment  
of rejoicing amongst  
the many voices.

**And sing out to the world:**

**God is with us!**

**In straw and thorn**

**Blood and water**

**God comes**

**In change and transformation**

**To lift up the lowly**

**Set free the oppressed**

**Renew the earth**

**Bind the broken**

**Bring sight to the blind**

**And declare the**

**day of God's favour**

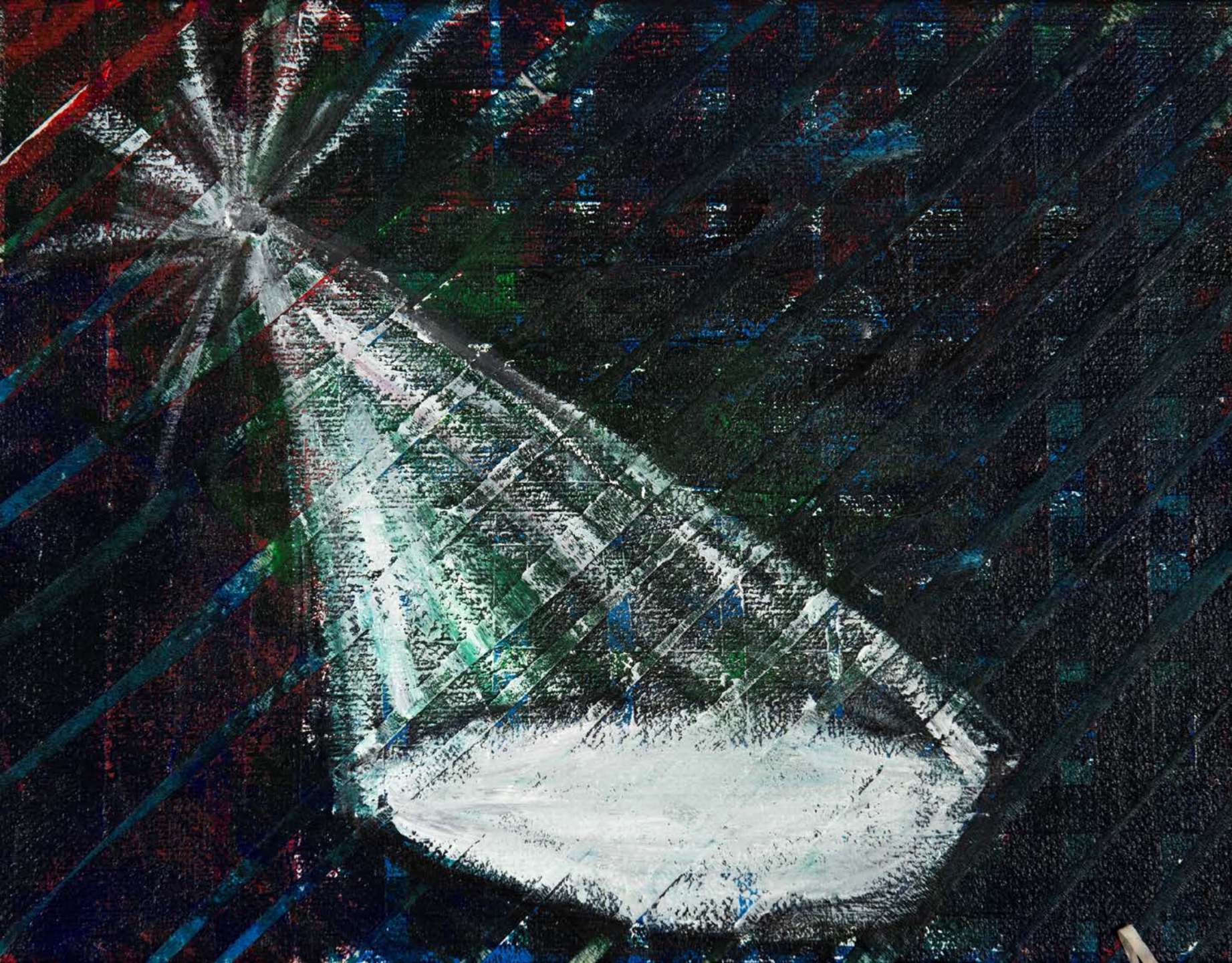
**So that Empire might fall**

**Kings might worship**

**And those who know poverty**

**Live in hope and justice.**





Let us make room  
for the broken reed to speak,  
the rock to cry out,  
the unspoken text  
to find its counter voice:

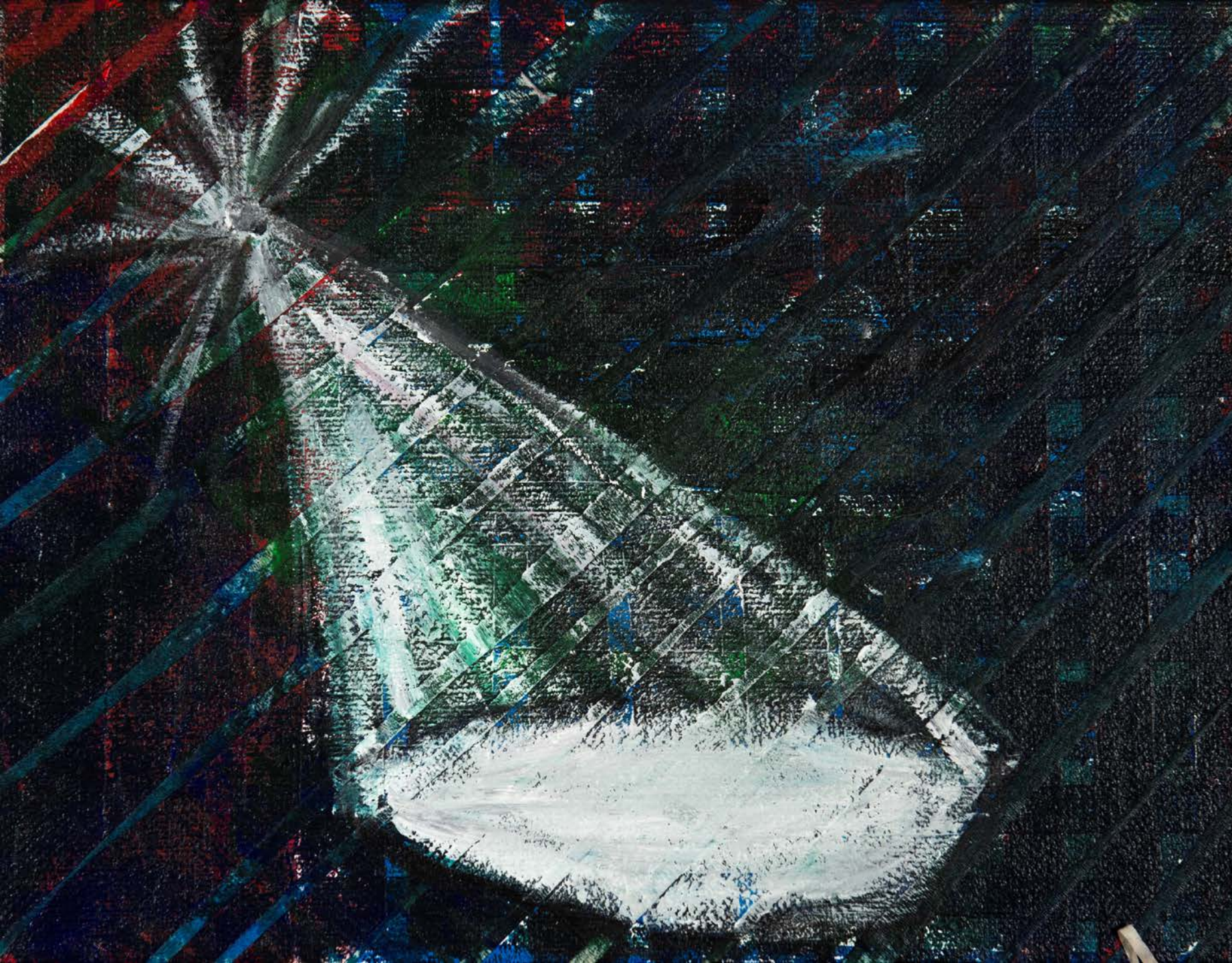
*The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!*

Luke 2: 10 – 14

Empires and Emperors imagine that the centre of power is at their capital cities, housed in their institutions and constrained by their will. Eternal Rome's splendour is overshadowed today by the shepherds fields in Palestine at night. Caesar's throne is cast aside by a manger and a stable. Augustus and Quirinius may dream of the glory of Rome, but Magi and shepherd come face to face with the full breadth of God's redeeming grace.

And in this beginning is all that is to come: The counter creation of hope in the face of power. The counter-naming of love in the face of power. The counter-living of life in the face of power. And the cry of this child is our summons to mission in the context of empire: God's mission which seeks to protect and heal the victims of sexual violence, stands with those whose land and dignity is denied them, works for a just economy that does not harm the earth and builds communities of grace and resistance to counter Empire with hope and peace. What good news there is to share on this Day.





We light all the candles  
For the light of the world  
has come  
In grace and truth he comes  
amongst us  
Unwelcome in his challenge  
Yet vital in the hope he brings  
So we declare in light and life  
Jesus is Lord,  
We testify to his new world  
Born amongst us anew and  
again.

*All the candles are lit*

[A song may be sung here or a  
moment of quiet kept]

Come Lord  
**Decree of Love**  
**Grow louder in light**  
**That we may shine with**  
**Hope and love and healing.**