

## AUDIO RETREAT

# The end is where we start from | Week One

Advent – in its starkness - is a time to be in touch with inner emptiness and need. It is a season of longing and expectation directed towards Christ, revealed as God-with-us, *Emmanuel*. It reminds us that the beginning is the meeting of our longing and God's generous giving. For we do not make ourselves: we create the space for our making. Advent reminds us that everything is gift and that God goes on creating – if we only allow the room. Tiredness, restlessness, the inability to bring about meaningful change become the open door to God if we turn that way.

### Advent landscape:

Take a walk through the Advent landscape. Be alive in your senses to what you are passing: leaf fall; see-through trees allowing views that before were hidden; the slow disintegration of plants as they return to the earth from which they came; colours awoken in the low light of the sun; the quiet of mist and dampness...

Your sensual awareness will begin to quieten you. Without trying too hard, a conversation may begin between this Advent landscape and your own 'soulscapes', with or without words. Perhaps you will be aware of some invitation God seems to give you. Or, it may be enough to simply receive the experience of being alive to what is around you, knowing God is in this too.



## How are you?

- How are you physically?
- What are you feeling?
- What do you long for?
- What do you desire to let go of?
- What do you need from God at this time?
- Where is God for you, just now?

## Some starting points for prayer

- God is already with you
- At the heart of prayer is 'being with'
- We don't always need words
- In prayer we find our place of rest

Our good Lord revealed it that is very greatly pleasing to him that a simple soul should come naked, open and familiarly. For this is the loving yearning of the soul through the touch of the Holy Spirit

*[Julian of Norwich, Showings, Chapter 5 of the Long Text]*

What we can bring to God as our Advent offering is our humility – our earthiness – for that is the root of the word. Like the trees with their open leafless hands stretched out to the sky or the lowly earth, ploughed and broken. We rest all pretence; we let go our exhausting efforts to be good enough through our own efforts. We let go into relationship, into love expressed in choosing to come into where and how we are.

God's Advent gift to us is hope. If we seem to fall apart it is so that we can gathered together, formed by loving hands, breathed upon like that Genesis clay from which humankind is formed.

## Some Bible passages for prayer and reflection:

Isaiah 64.1-8 / Mark 1.1-8 / Isaiah 40.1-11 / Psalm 131