

8th December 2024

The eight day – and second Sunday – of Advent

People

“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.”

Bible, *Isaiah 9:2*

Once again, as we enter the second week of Advent, I’m choosing a much-loved book as a companion on my Advent journey. But first, a story.

Years ago, I was invited to conduct evening worship in a local church. “Small and informal,” I was told, “in a side-chapel, with Communion.” So I turned to a publication from the Iona Community, *The Wee Worship Book*. (My edition is “The fourth incarnation”. I’ve used *The Wee Worship Book* from its first publication. They are now on the fifth!) I offered this invitation to the Sacrament, from *Liturgy for Holy Communion A*:

He was always the guest. In the homes of Peter and Jairus, Martha and Mary ... at the meal tables of the wealthy where he pled the case for the poor ... upsetting polite company, befriending isolated people, welcoming the stranger ... he was always the guest. But here, at this table, he is the host. Those who wish to serve him must first be served by him; those who want to follow him must first be fed by him; those who would wash his feet must first let him make them clean. For this is the table where God intends us to be nourished; this is the time when Christ can make us new. So come, you who hunger and thirst for a deeper faith, for a better life, for a fairer world. Jesus Christ, who sat at our tables, now invites us to be guests at his.

The Eucharist continued to use the same accessible language. When worship was over, an elderly man took me aside. He’d been in tears. His voice was gentle. “I’ve never been invited to Communion like that before,” he told me. “I felt included, as if it was just for me. This was real, me and my Lord, together at the table.” *The Wee Worship Book* had done its job!

The book’s introduction offers us this insight into its purpose:

Because the word *liturgy* originally meant “the work of the people”, this is a people’s rather than a priest’s or minister’s book ... to share forms of prayer which are not bound to the canons or sensitivities of one Christian tradition.

“The work of the people.” An elderly man at Communion may not have been walking in darkness, and it may not have been a great light that shone that night. But *The Wee Worship Book* had given God’s people more than enough light for the next few steps on our journey of faith.

A prayer for today

Lord, take me beyond conventions, so that a new light can shine. Amen