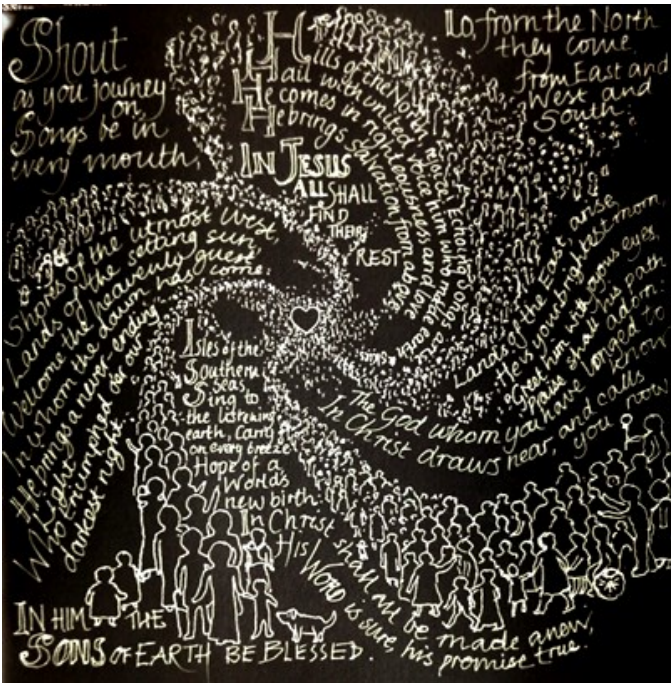


Peace...



Artwork by Ally Barrett



For reflection or discussion

- When we pray for peace, what is it that we are hoping for?
- How does peace relate to joy, hope and love?
- How does peace relate to justice?

The great Advent hymn, *Hills of the North*, on which the first of these images is based, draws on the vision of Isaiah in which the nations are finally united and able to live in peace with one another under God.

*Do not fear, for I am with you;
I will bring your offspring from the east,
and from the west I will gather you;
I will say to the north, 'Give them up',
and to the south, 'Do not withhold';
bring my sons from far away
and my daughters from the end of the earth—
everyone who is called by my name,
whom I created for my glory,
whom I formed and made.'*

Isaiah 43

*Shout, as you journey on,
songs be in every mouth,
lo, from the North they come,
from East and West and South:
in Jesus all shall find their rest,
in him the sons of earth* be blest.*

Charles E Oakley

In the 'O' Antiphons, used in the days leading up to Christmas, we see similar ideas; the image to the left interprets the antiphon 'O Rex Gentium':

*O King of the nations, and their desire,
the cornerstone making both one:
Come and save the human race,
which you fashioned from clay.*

Peace is complex. As the prophets understood well, it cannot be separated from justice. It is hard to imagine what true peace might look like in today's fractured world, a world in which human life is often given little value. The biblical vision of peace is one in which humanity's basic identity as God's beloved is finally recognized and fulfilled. The unity that Isaiah longs for is universal, rooted in creation itself, and so the peace we seek must also take into account the way in which we inhabit the planet. Peace cannot exist without justice, and justice is both social and environmental.

**sometimes sung 'in him the universe be blest'.*