**Christmas Here and Now**

Precarious - our lives in covid’s wake:

decisions jolt and shake like quaking earth.

We flinch, like Mary who must undertake

a cold and lengthy journey close to birth.

Here work is lost, domestic violence flares,

while changing rules add burdens to our backs,

but think of riding with the weight she bears,

while he leaves work that might have paid the tax.

Here some will lose a business or a home,

while she is homeless when her pains begin:

such consequences do not trouble Rome,

while now the greater good must hedge us in.

It’s here we find God with us, not to take

us out of what we suffer, but to be

beside us in the heedless mess we make,

and in the dark to hold yet set us free.

So Mary who said “Yes” to bearing God

is inspiration as we try to birth the Word

in places where our rituals seem odd,

our depths of meaning treated as absurd.

Perhaps, as faith roams homeless, we are drawn

to find our kinship with each weary beast:

as creatures, see Creator’s presence born

among those burdened, treated as the least.

For Jesus is not cradled like a king,

but sleeps on straw where animals are fed,

and though perhaps he hears the angels sing,

he suffers and is numbered with the dead.

Creation bleeds when humans fail to see

that exploitation brings us to the brink,

and greed and power will never let us be

impervious to loss as we might think.

The one who sets aside all claims to power,

and dares to walk in vulnerability,

as we must too, to face his final hour,

is here and now what transformed lives might be.

 *Barbara Messner 22/12/20*