

Advent & Christmas  
2019



Daily  
Devotional  
Diary

# Introduction

## Resourcing Our Advent Faith

Ferryhill and South Holburn Parish Churches in Aberdeen offer this Daily Devotional Diary as a resource for members and friends during the season of Advent. This will assist us to find time each day to reflect on the Scriptures and to pray. All of the prayers in this issue have been offered from folks in the congregations following their reflections on the Bible passage.

## How To Use This Book

Each day we offer you a bible reading to focus your thoughts. We have selected in the print **some verses** from the complete reading listed at the top of each page. You may want to use your Bible to read the whole fuller passage. Along the edge of each page are other Bible passages you might want to read for each day.

We encourage you to try to find ten minutes each day to yourself. We have used three different icons to highlight the three stages through this devotional time.

### Bible Reading

Take time to quieten yourself and then read the Scripture offered to get the overview of what these verses say. Then read it again, thinking about words or phrases that particularly make you think.



### Think About It

Use the activity and/or questions as a prompt to help you think about what the passage might help you think about that day. You may have other questions that you want to think about, that is fine. These are just suggestions.



### Prayer

Use the prayer to finish your devotion.



# Psalm 122

## I Was Glad

I was glad when they said to me,  
'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'  
Our feet are standing  
within your gates, O Jerusalem.  
Jerusalem—built as a city  
that is bound firmly together.  
To it the tribes go up,  
the tribes of the Lord,  
as was decreed for Israel,  
to give thanks to the name of the Lord.  
For there the thrones for judgement were set up,  
the thrones of the house of David.  
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:  
'May they prosper who love you.  
Peace be within your walls,  
and security within your towers.'  
For the sake of my relatives and friends  
I will say, 'Peace be within you.'  
For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,  
I will seek your good.

Take a bowl of water, soap and towel.  
Slowly wash your hands as a symbol  
of cleansing your soul. While doing  
this action think of the message in the  
readings and the prayer to be at peace, to  
give praise and thanks to God and ask for God's  
forgiveness.

Lord I give you  
my adoration and thanks.  
Forgive me and help me  
when I struggle to make good choices.  
I pray for peace in the world.  
I long to see tranquillity,  
absence of strife, and well-being.  
I pray for inner peace, peace with God,  
and peace with one another.  
I ask that you make the world  
complete, whole, united. Amen.



# 28

November

Thursday



Psalm 122  
Daniel 9:15-19  
James 4:1-10



29

November

Friday

Hebrews 11:1-7

By Faith



**N**ow faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain's. Through this he received approval as righteous, God himself giving approval to his gifts; he died, but through his faith he still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken so that he did not experience death; and 'he was not found, because God had taken him.' For it was attested before he was taken away that 'he had pleased God.' And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. By faith Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith.

**T**ake a moment to think about what lies behind your faith in God.

- Why do I serve God?
- How would I explain my faith to someone else?



**F**ather God,  
without faith it is impossible to please God.

I pray that,  
like the men and women of faith that have gone before me,  
my trust in you will not falter.

Help me to turn from sin and wickedness and to praise God in faith and peace.

Amen.



Psalms 122  
Genesis 6:1-10  
Hebrews 11:1-7

Genesis 6:11-22

A Covenant



30

November

Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw that the earth was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its ways upon the earth. And God said to Noah, 'I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; now I am going to destroy them along with the earth. Make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch... For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing, of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female.

Take a five pound note and look for the small print "I promise to pay the bearer..." and think about the promises you make and the ramifications of them.



- How much do you trust God's covenant with you as one of his children?
- What tests that trust?

Heavenly Father, you promise us unconditional love and eternal life and for this we glorify your name.



We make promises to ourselves and to each other and set goals which can be unrealistic leading us to fail, and for feelings of betrayal to result. Help us Father to gain strength, hope and wisdom from your promises, to allow us to fulfil our own. Amen.

Saturday

Psalm 122  
Genesis 6:11-22  
Matthew 24:1-22



1  
December

Sunday

Psalms 122  
Isaiah 2:1-5  
Matthew 24:36-44

Isaiah 2:1-5

The Mountain of the Lord



**I**n days to come  
the mountain of the Lord's house  
shall be established as the highest of the  
mountains,

and shall be raised above the hills;  
all the nations shall stream to it.

Many peoples shall come and say,  
'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,  
to the house of the God of Jacob;  
that he may teach us his ways  
and that we may walk in his paths.'

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,  
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

He shall judge between the nations,  
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;  
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,  
and their spears into pruning-hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war any more.

O house of Jacob,  
come, let us walk  
in the light of the Lord!

**T**hink of a hill or mountain you have  
climbed and the view that you gained  
from the top.



- What could you see from the top?
- How important is a wider outlook when we think of politics in our world today?

**F**ather God,  
I thank you for the prophets  
sharing their understanding of your  
outlook for our world.



I pray that I can play my part  
and catch a sense of your vision  
for our world,

where tools of war, division and hatred  
are reformed into tools of life, harvest and good.  
Amen.

# Genesis 8:1-9

## The Dove



2

December

**A**t the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made and sent out the raven; and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. Then he sent out the dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground; but the dove found no place to set its foot, and it returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took it and brought it into the ark with him. He waited another seven days, and again he sent out the dove from the ark; and the dove came back to him in the evening, and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. Then he waited another seven days, and sent out the dove; and it did not return to him any more.

**T**ake a bowl of water and place it in front of you. It looks so calm, restful, but we know the damage that water can also do when unleashed.



- Where do you go to find a place of peace?
- What are the symbolic storms you see around you in life, and how can you be a sign of God's hope?

**L**ord God,  
When storms darken our life  
and our faith  
we ask for your strength,  
compassion and encouragement  
to gather up the shattered pieces  
and help us rebuild our lives.  
Be merciful unto us, heavenly Father,  
for when we are weak then you are strong.  
Then we too can be a sign of your hope to others.  
In your name we pray.  
Amen.



Monday

Psalm 124  
Genesis 8:1-19  
Romans 6:1-11



3  
December

Tuesday

Psalms 124  
Genesis 9:1-17  
Hebrews 11:32-40

Genesis 9:1-17

A Bow In The Clouds



Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 'As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.' God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.'

This autumn once again there have been many reports of flooding across the country, and we also hear of communities across the world succumbing to rising sea levels.



- What actions have led to our modern day stories of rising sea levels?
- What can you do to change this?

Saving God,  
It is hard to reconcile your rainbows,  
love, and grace,  
with flood and destruction.



Grant me the wisdom to see the message,  
and not just the words, in scripture.  
Let me be like Noah, faithful and sure.  
Help me to be gracious and loving,  
not to condemn what I do not understand,  
and show your love, in all I do.  
Amen.

# Psalm 124

## The Broken Snare



If it had not been the Lord who was on our side—  
—let Israel now say—  
if it had not been the Lord who was on our side,  
when our enemies attacked us,  
then they would have swallowed us up alive,  
when their anger was kindled against us;  
then the flood would have swept us away,  
the torrent would have gone over us;  
then over us would have gone  
the raging waters.

Blessed be the Lord,  
who has not given us  
as prey to their teeth.  
We have escaped like a bird  
from the snare of the fowlers;  
the snare is broken,  
and we have escaped.

Our help is in the name of the Lord,  
who made heaven and earth.

Take a moment to write down some  
times when you have felt God to have  
been silently at your side.



- How often do you think about God being at your side?
- How can you show this kind of support to other people?

Loving God, be at my side.  
In this season,  
when losses and pain  
can feel even more obvious,  
when emptiness cannot be filled  
by tinsel and lights, be at my side.  
When the trials of this world  
seem insurmountable, be at my side.  
When I don't know the way forward,  
be at my side,  
today and every day.  
Amen.



# 4

December

Wednesday

Psalm 124  
Isaiah 54:1-10  
Matthew 24:23-35



5

December

Thursday

Psalms 72:1-7,18-19

The Lord's Justice



**G**ive the king your justice, O God,  
and your righteousness to a king's son.

May he judge your people with  
righteousness,  
and your poor with justice.

May the mountains yield prosperity for the  
people,  
and the hills, in righteousness.

May he defend the cause of the poor of the  
people,  
give deliverance to the needy,  
and crush the oppressor.

May he live while the sun endures,  
and as long as the moon, throughout all  
generations.

May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,  
like showers that water the earth.

In his days may righteousness flourish  
and peace abound, until the moon is no more.

**R**ead the statements on the electoral  
leaflets put through your door.

- Do any of these statements show the love of God?
- Do they suggest tolerance and peace?



**L**ord, at this time of political turmoil,  
guide those who wish to take on  
the leadership of our country.

Help them to step back  
and see the wider picture,  
to consider everyone's needs  
and well being.

Help them to work hard for a society  
that protects and cares for everyone of its citizens.



Lord, I know you love everyone of us,  
help me to be more like you, sharing love,  
peace and tolerance with those I meet.  
Amen

Psalms 72:1-7,18-19

Isaiah 4:2-6

Acts 1:12-17,21-26

Isaiah 30:19-26

This Is The Way



6

December

Friday

**T**ruly, O people in Zion, inhabitants of Jerusalem, you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when he hears it, he will answer you. Though the Lord may give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself any more, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.' Then you will defile your silver-covered idols and your gold-plated images. You will scatter them like filthy rags; you will say to them, 'Away with you!'

He will give rain for the seed with which you sow the ground, and grain, the produce of the ground, which will be rich and plenteous.

**T**hink of a time when you had to make a difficult decision.

- What made you choose the action you took?
- Did you ask for God's help?
- In hindsight, was it the right decision?



**L**ord God,  
We all have difficult decisions to face at different times, but I know you will always guide and support me in the choices I have to make. I do not always find it easy to listen and follow your way. Help me to seek your guidance, listen to your voice and trust in your leadership. Amen.



Psalms 72:1-7, 118-119  
Isaiah 30:19-26  
Acts 13:16-25



7

December

Saturday

Psalms 72:1-7, 18-19

Isaiah 40:1-11

John 1:19-28

Isaiah 40:1-11

Prepare The Way



**C**omfort, O comfort my people, says your God.  
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her  
that she has served her term,  
that her penalty is paid,  
that she has received from the Lord's hand  
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:

'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.

Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'

**T**hink of an occasion when you stood  
alone against the crowd or the  
opinion of those around you.



- How did that feel?
- When have you given way to the pressure of others, and how did that feel?

**D**ear Lord, give those who seek high  
office matching high ideals,  
let them lead with modesty  
and strive for social justice,  
let them bring comfort and prosperity to all,  
while protecting the weak  
and vulnerable in our society.



Do not let power and self interest  
sway them from their duty to others.  
They may feel alone, crying in the wilderness  
to uphold Christian values.  
At these times, Lord, give them the courage  
and strength to stand alone,  
with you beside them giving encouragement,  
love and support.  
Amen.

Isaiah 11:1-10

## A Vision Of Harmony



8

December

Sunday

**A** shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse,  
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.  
The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might,  
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.  
His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.  
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,  
or decide by what his ears hear;  
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
and decide with equity  
for the meek of the earth;  
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips  
he shall kill the wicked.  
Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,  
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.  
The wolf shall live with the lamb,  
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,  
and a little child shall lead them.

**R**ecall a time when you have been in  
the company of a child who positively  
surprised you with what they said or did.



- What surprised you and why do you think you reacted that way?
- Where else should we follow the lead of our children?

**G**od of creativity,  
I recognise young people  
all around me who are desperate for me  
to hear their voices and follow their lead.  
I give thanks for young people like  
Greta Thunberg who have inspired  
young and old to imagine a world  
transformed, harmonious  
and working towards a sustainable future.  
Amen.



Psalms 72:1-7, 118-119  
Isaiah 11:1-10  
Matthew 3:1-12



9  
December

Monday

Psalms 21  
Isaiah 24:1-16a  
1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

## Psalms 21

### The Lord's Strength



**I**n your strength the king rejoices, O Lord,  
and in your help how greatly he exults!  
You have given him his heart's desire,  
and have not withheld the request of his lips.  
For you meet him with rich blessings;  
you set a crown of fine gold on his head.  
He asked you for life; you gave it to him—  
length of days for ever and ever.  
His glory is great through your help;  
splendour and majesty you bestow on him.  
You bestow on him blessings for ever;  
you make him glad with the joy of your  
presence.

For the king trusts in the Lord,  
and through the steadfast love of the Most High  
he shall not be moved.

**O**n a sheet of paper draw three  
concentric circles. In the inner circle  
write the things that are most dear to  
you, in the next wider circle the things  
which are important to you, and in the widest  
circle the things that matter, but are not as  
important as those inner things.



- What emphasis do you put on material things?
- How might you re-evaluate what is most important to you?

**L**ord, hard work and honest endeavour  
are good values to have,  
but never let me forget that my focus is you,  
and that we are all equal before you,  
that what I do is as valuable  
as the next person's endeavour  
if I do it to please you.



May false idols of money, possessions  
and technology never lead me astray.  
May I know your love and forgiveness  
is always waiting for me  
in order to help me return to you. Amen.

Isaiah 41:14-20

The Lord's Priorities



10

December

Tuesday

**D**o not fear, you worm Jacob,  
you insect Israel!

I will help you, says the Lord;  
your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.  
Now, I will make of you a threshing-sledge,  
sharp, new, and having teeth;  
you shall thresh the mountains and crush them,  
and you shall make the hills like chaff.

You shall winnow them  
and the wind shall carry them away,  
and the tempest shall scatter them.

Then you shall rejoice in the Lord;  
in the Holy One of Israel you shall glory.

When the poor and needy seek water,  
and there is none,  
and their tongue is parched with thirst,  
I the Lord will answer them,  
I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

**L**ook for the tallest tree you can find  
today and take some time to admire  
the pattern of its bare branches and the  
strength of its central trunk, keeping it  
firmly fixed to the ground.



- What values form the core of my life?
- What makes me fearful for the future?

**G**od of hope,  
when something happens  
to make me scared,  
I break out in a cold sweat!  
It's not a good feeling  
and I pray to you, God, for help.  
I know that you can give me strength to cope, to  
reassure me that I'm not dealing with fear alone.  
So never let me forget  
that you are always with me,  
showing me every day  
your presence and your mighty power.  
Amen.



Psalm 21  
Isaiah 41:14-20  
Romans 15:14-21



11

December

Wednesday

Psalms 21

Genesis 15:1-18

Matthew 12:33-37

Genesis 15:1-18

Look Towards Heaven



**A**fter these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, 'Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.' But Abram said, 'O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?' And Abram said, 'You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir.' But the word of the Lord came to him, 'This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir.' He brought him outside and said, 'Look towards heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.

**W**hether or not you are putting up Christmas decorations in full, put up a star (either a decoration or cut one out of paper) somewhere where you will see it, on your tree or by a window.



- What promise would you love God to make with you for the future?
- What could you do to help make that dream come true?

**W**hat a universe has been created by you, Lord God!

Millions of millions of stars and planets. It's too great for me to understand.

But it tells me that in your power and greatness, you can deal with anything, even my smallest worry!

I pray to know the promise of your reassuring presence in all of life's challenges.  
Amen.



Psalm 146:5-10

## A Divine Manifesto



12

December

**H**appy are those whose help  
is the God of Jacob,  
whose hope is in the Lord their God,  
who made heaven and earth,  
the sea, and all that is in them;  
who keeps faith for ever;  
who executes justice for the oppressed;  
who gives food to the hungry.  
The Lord sets the prisoners free;  
the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.  
The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;  
the Lord loves the righteous.  
The Lord watches over the strangers;  
he upholds the orphan and the widow,  
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.  
The Lord will reign for ever,  
your God, O Zion, for all generations.  
Praise the Lord!

**D**uring the election campaign  
candidates have tried to persuade you  
that their vision for the country is best.



- What would be your vision for a country that placed Jesus' values at its heart?
- How would you persuade people to vote for you
- How confident would you be?

**C**reator God, who cares  
for the hungry and oppressed,  
the refugee and the stranger,  
and those whom society shuns,  
help us, on this Election Day,  
to use our vote wisely.



We pray our new government  
will strive to create a country of equality  
where all are treated with compassion,  
with fairness, and justice prevails for all. Amen.

Thursday

Psalm 146:5-10  
Ruth 1:6-18  
2 Peter 3:1-10



13

December

Friday

2 Peter 3:11-18

An Exhortation



Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

The Quaker Stephen Grellet wrote in the nineteenth century these oft-quoted words:



*I will pass through this world but once.  
If, therefore, there can be any good thing I can do,  
or any kindness I can show, let me do it now.  
Let me not neglect or defer it,  
for I shall never pass this way again.*

- Reflecting on the last 24 hours, how would you assess your behaviour?
- What would you change?

Patient, loving God,  
let this be the day  
when I examine my behaviour  
honestly before you.



Forgive me when my good intentions  
come to naught,  
for the sins I continually recommit,  
and for the many times my actions fall short  
of what my behaviour should be.  
Help me to be ready now  
for I may meet you tomorrow  
in a stranger's guise.  
Amen.

Psalms 146:5-10

Ruth 4:13-17

2 Peter 3:11-18

Luke 3:1-18

Preparing For The Lord



14  
December

**T**he word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

‘The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
“Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.

Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth;  
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

**I**t is the middle of Advent, with only eleven days until Christmas. Take a few moments to think about what this means to you and how you might prepare yourself to celebrate the birth of God’s son, our Saviour.



- What preparations still need to be made?
- How will you prioritise between the outward and inward preparations?

**B**lessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; and blessed too are those like Isaiah and John who prepared the way for the Lord’s coming. Yet when he came, he chose the rough road that led to a crooked cross on a barren hill top, so that all might witness God’s salvation. Help me to follow in his footsteps. Amen.



Saturday

Psalms 146:5-10  
1 Samuel 2:1-8  
Luke 3:1-18



15

December

Sunday

Psalms 146:5-10  
Isaiah 35:1-10  
Matthew 11:2-11

Isaiah 35:1-10

The Holy Way



**T**he wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,  
and rejoice with joy and singing...

A highway shall be there,  
and it shall be called the Holy Way;  
the unclean shall not travel on it,  
but it shall be for God's people;  
no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray.

No lion shall be there,  
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;  
they shall not be found there,  
but the redeemed shall walk there.

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,  
and come to Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;  
they shall obtain joy and gladness,  
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

**F**ind a map of the local area (paper or  
online) and trace on it with your finger  
some of the routes you regularly travel.



- What do these routes symbolise for you?
- What journey do you feel you are on at this time, and what highlights have appeared along the way?

**G**od of the Holy Way,  
we recognise the ancient practice  
of pilgrimage and holy journey,  
but we also know that your Holy Way  
is for us all, every day.



Amidst the busy-ness of this season,  
the plans and preparations,  
the shopping lists and Christmas cards,  
help us remember that we are called  
to follow your Holy Way.

Let us rejoice in that invitation.  
Amen.

# Psalm 42

## Hope In God



16  
December

**W**hy are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you disquieted within me?  
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,  
my help and my God. ...

By day the Lord commands his steadfast love,  
and at night his song is with me,  
a prayer to the God of my life.

I say to God, my rock,  
'Why have you forgotten me?  
Why must I walk about mournfully  
because the enemy oppresses me?'  
As with a deadly wound in my body,  
my adversaries taunt me,  
while they say to me continually,  
'Where is your God?'

Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you disquieted within me?  
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,  
my help and my God.

**F**rom a newspaper or online news source  
look out for a story that speaks of a  
situation of loneliness, anxiety or sense of  
being defeated by life.



- Can you remember a time when you felt a similar way?
- The Psalmist speaks into just such situations. What brought you through?

**M**y Saviour and my God,  
how easily I become downcast  
in the face of life's troubles;  
how quickly I forget the blessings promised  
to those who put their trust in you.  
Draw near to me when my faith is shaken  
and you seem far away;  
when all seems hopeless,  
draw near me with your grace.  
Amen.



Monday

Isaiah 29:17-24  
Acts 5:12-16  
Psalm 42



17

December

Tuesday

Jude 1:17-25

Build Yourselfs Up



**B**ut you, beloved, must remember the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; for they said to you, 'In the last time there will be scoffers, indulging their own ungodly lusts.' It is these worldly people, devoid of the Spirit, who are causing divisions. But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on some who are wavering; save others by snatching them out of the fire; and have mercy on still others with fear, hating even the tunic defiled by their bodies.

Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and for ever. Amen.

**A** Fishy Music song we sometimes sing goes "Build up one another, build up your sister and brother..." it could be the theme song for this passage.



- What has it felt like for you when life seems to be full of getting knocked down?
- What do you do to build resilience in your life?

**C**reative God,  
life is complicated,  
sometimes good and productive,  
at other times a struggle with repeated failure,  
may I never whitewash over those challenges.  
Let me learn and grow  
from my own experience  
so that I can help others  
in their own experiences of life,  
may I build my own sense of trust in you,  
that I can then share that trust with others.  
Amen.



Psalms 42  
Ezekiel 47:1-12  
Jude 1:17-25

Zechariah 8:1-17

The Impossible?



18

December

Thus says the Lord of hosts: Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of their great age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets. Thus says the Lord of hosts: Even though it seems impossible to the remnant of this people in these days, should it also seem impossible to me, says the Lord of hosts? Thus says the Lord of hosts: I will save my people from the east country and from the west country; and I will bring them to live in Jerusalem. They shall be my people and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness.

This passage comes from a time when Jews who had been exiled were returning home to Jerusalem, a time when the Temple was being rebuilt after its destruction. It was a time when what had seemed hopelessly lost was getting remade, albeit not the same as it had been.



- What do you lament from the past that no longer exists?
- What fills you with hope for the future today?

God of the impossible, when my mind fails to envision what the future holds, and when all I see around me is what once was but is now lost, may I grasp a sense of the excitement that building a new thing can bring, and a spirit of adventure that journeying into an unknown future can unleash. May I be an advocate for your vision, impossible though it sometimes feels, that we can build communities of respect, love and compassion. Amen.



Wednesday

Matthew 8:1-17, 28-34

Zechariah 8:1-17

Psalms 42



19

December

Thursday

Psalm 80:1-7,17-19  
2 Samuel 7:1-17  
Galatians 3:23-29

Psalm 80:1-7,17-19

Restore Us



**G**ive ear, O Shepherd of Israel,  
you who lead Joseph like a flock!  
You who are enthroned upon the cherubim,  
shine forth

before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh.  
Stir up your might, and come to save us!

Restore us, O God;  
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

O Lord God of hosts,  
how long will you be angry  
with your people's prayers?  
You have fed them with the bread of tears,  
and given them tears to drink in full measure.  
You make us the scorn of our neighbours;  
our enemies laugh among themselves.

Restore us, O God of hosts;  
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

**R**ecall a time when you felt utterly  
helpless. Perhaps because of  
something that happened to you, or to  
someone you know, and leaving a feeling  
that there was nothing you could do to make  
things better.



- What words would you use to describe how you felt?
- What was it that helped you come out of that circumstance?

**L**ord God, why do we get sad?  
Why do we feel lost?  
Why is life so painful sometimes?  
I don't know the answers,  
but I know that it gets worse  
when I lose contact with you my loving Saviour.  
So in times of distress, help me to trust you, Lord.  
In the times when life feels darkest  
shine the light of your love all around  
and help me to see hope. Amen.



2 Samuel 7:18-22

Who Am I?



20

December

Friday

Then King David went in and sat before the Lord, and said, 'Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far? And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O Lord God; you have spoken also of your servant's house for a great while to come. May this be instruction for the people, O Lord God! And what more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O Lord God! Because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have wrought all this greatness, so that your servant may know it. Therefore you are great, O Lord God; for there is no one like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears.'

Look out some of your Christmas wrapping paper and gift tags. It will help you to think about presents!



- How has God gifted you over the last weeks, months and year?
- If you had to write a gift tag to God what would you write?

Thank you, Lord, that you are forever at work in my life. Thank you that, even though I don't always recognise you, you are always there, living out your promises of care and love. Forgive me when I get angry or bitter because I don't get what I want, and help me to see more clearly your purposes and live more truly in your way. Amen.



Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19  
2 Samuel 7:18-22  
Galatians 4:1-7



21

December

Saturday

Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19  
2 Samuel 7:23-39  
John 3:31-36

John 3:31-36

Restore Us



**T**he one who comes from above is above all; the one who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks about earthly things. The one who comes from heaven is above all. He testifies to what he has seen and heard, yet no one accepts his testimony. Whoever has accepted his testimony has certified this, that God is true. He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God's wrath.

**F**ind the guarantee that has come with an item you have bought. We all have a drawer or a box that we put these things into! Have a look at the guarantee and what it promises.



- Do you trust the promises in the guarantee? Why?
- Think about what God promises us. Do we trust in God's guarantee of his presence in our lives?

**L**ord God, thank you for the guarantee of your love, thank for the evidence of that love in Jesus. Remind me today of the surety that you are with me. Help me to trust you in all the things I have to do and all the things I have to think about this day. May the decisions I make, the words I speak and the actions I undertake give evidence of your love in my life. Amen.



Isaiah 7:10-16

A Sign



22

December

Sunday

**A**gain the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test. Then Isaiah said: 'Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

**I**t is the last Sunday before Christmas. This is traditionally a time of nativity plays, of children taking on the roles of adults, of unexpected costume malfunctions, and a bewildered baby thrust into the spotlight.



- What are the most memorable moments you can recall from nativity plays?
- What effect does a tradition of nativity show have on our understanding of the kingdom-quaking event of incarnation (God coming to us)?

**D**ear God of young and old, may we enjoy the spirit of fun and joy that this season brings, with its anticipation and excitement, and hold that together with a sense of the awesome expectation with which your coming, Immanuel, God with us, was held for those who had long been waiting. In these last days of Advent raise our expectation of change and wonder. Amen.



Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19  
Isaiah 7:10-16  
Matthew 1:18-25



23

December

Monday

Luke 1:46-55  
2 Samuel 7:18,23-29  
Galatians 3:6-14

Luke 1:46-55

Mary's Song



**M**y soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,  
for he has looked with favour on the  
lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations  
will call me blessed;

for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud  
in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their  
thrones, and lifted up the lowly;  
he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
according to the promise he made  
to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.

**T**hink of your favourite song and, if you  
can, have a listen to it, sing along if  
you wish.



- Why is this song your favourite and what makes it special to you?
- Mary's Song is full of praise. What words would you use to describe your experience of God?

**L**ord God, I am sorry that so often I  
forget to praise you, or to say  
thank you for your place in my life.  
I just assume you will be there  
and that you will work things out.  
But Lord, even though I don't often say it,  
I praise you... [USE YOUR WORDS OF PRAISE].  
Accept the praise of my mouth and heart.  
Amen.



Isaiah 9:2-7

## A Great Light



24

December

The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
on them light has shined.  
You have multiplied the nation,  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest,  
as people exult when dividing plunder.  
For the yoke of their burden,  
and the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of Midian.  
For all the boots of the tramping warriors  
and all the garments rolled in blood  
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.  
For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is  
named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Christmas Eve is such a busy day with so much to do. Find a quiet moment and stop all the activity and be still. If you can, switch off the lights in the room except the ones on the Christmas tree. Take a moment to look at those lights.



- How would you describe your feelings as you look at the Christmas Tree lights?
- What are your hopes and fears today?

You send the child, your child,  
your son Jesus.



He is the light, he is the hope,  
he is the promise fulfilled,  
he is the guarantee of all your promises.  
Thank you for the gift of the child.  
In the midst of the 'busy-ness' of Christmas,  
help me to remember that you send Jesus  
and that means everything.  
Amen.

Tuesday

Psalms 96  
Isaiah 9:2-7  
Titus 2:11-14



25  
December

# Wednesday

Have a wonderful Christmas Day!  
'To you is born this day in the city of David  
a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord.'

Luke 2:1-20  
A Child Is Born



In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Today is full of things to do and people to please. But stop for a moment and have a look at your Christmas cards, looking for one that depicts the Christmas story, the stable, the manger, the shepherds and the star. Have a good look at it.



- What would it be like to be there in that stable?
- What would you have said and done if you had been there?

Lord, my Saviour,  
Thank you for this day,  
a day of celebration.  
Thank you for family and friends  
and for chatter and laughter,  
for the presents and the pleasure  
and the preparations completed.  
And thank you for the child in the manger,  
for what the coming of your son  
means in my life and in my faith.  
Help me to live out those promises I make  
to the child in the manger.  
Amen.



# Psalm 148

## Praise The Lord



26

December

**P**raise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights!

Praise him, all his angels;  
praise him, all his host!

Praise him, sun and moon;  
praise him, all you shining stars!

Praise him, you highest heavens,  
and you waters above the heavens!

Let them praise the name of the Lord,  
for he commanded and they were created.  
He established them for ever and ever;  
he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.

**D**raw a line on a piece of blank paper. Above the line write down the highlights of your year. Below the line write down the low points of the year.



- What was your happiest experience and what are you most grateful for?
- What do you wish you could change?

The line which you have drawn represents God, for our Lord is constant in our lives, running through the highs and the lows. God is always there.

- How would you talk to God about the highs and the lows you have experienced?

**O** Lord my God, I praise you because you are with me always.

It doesn't matter how I feel,  
you never stop your love for me.

So much has happened to me.  
Some of it makes me happy,  
some of it makes me want to scream,  
but you remind me, Lord, that you are with me.  
You have sent Jesus and you have promised that,  
no matter what, I can rely on you.

So may I praise you in my good days  
and in my bad days. Amen.



Thursday

Psalm 148  
Wisdom 4:7-15  
Acts 7:59-8:8



27

December

Friday

1 John 5:1-12

Spirit, Water & Blood



**E**veryone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth. There are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree.

**T**urn on the TV, but mute the sound. Watch for a few moments and see if you can work out what is happening, it can be quite challenging.



- What would someone be able to tell about the Christian faith by watching your life?
- What would someone learn about God if all they had to go on was your actions?

**G**racious God, thank you for all that your forgiveness and love mean in my life.

Thank you that when I feel uncertain and unsure, I need only look at my own experiences to see your care and kindness, then I know that you are with me and that your promises are reliable. Enable me to live my faith in such a way that my actions share your love without a word being said.

Amen.



Psalms 148

Proverbs 8:22-31

1 John 5:1-12

Isaiah 49:13-23

Praise The Lord



28

December

**S**ing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth;  
break forth, O mountains, into singing!  
For the Lord has comforted his people,  
and will have compassion on his suffering ones.

But Zion said, 'The Lord has forsaken me,  
my Lord has forgotten me.'

Can a woman forget her nursing-child, or show no  
compassion for the child of her womb?

Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.  
See, I have inscribed you

on the palms of my hands;

your walls are continually before me.

Your builders outdo your destroyers,  
and those who laid you waste go away from you.

Lift up your eyes all around and see;  
they all gather, they come to you.

As I live, says the Lord,

you shall put all of them on like an ornament,  
and like a bride you shall bind them on.

**M**ost of us have a kitchen utensil that  
we have had for years and use all the  
time. Dig out that utensil now and have a  
look at it. It might be a bit faded or bashed  
or been repaired a few times, but it's still as  
reliable as the day you got it.



- Did you ever consider that God's promises to his people are like that utensil?
- What failures and defeats have you come through, with God's presence?

**L**ord, my God, in a world where so much  
seems temporary and of the moment,  
your love is unending, and your  
commitment to us is eternal.



Thank you for reminding me of the value you  
have in my life, and for reminding me of the  
strength and the hope that you give to me every  
day. Help me to rely on you today and every day.  
Amen.

Saturday

Psalm 148  
Isaiah 49:13-23  
Matthew 18:1-14



29

December

Sunday

Psalms 148  
Isaiah 63:7-9  
Matthew 2:13-23

Matthew 2:13-23

Refugees



**N**ow after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.'

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men.

**S**ince 2015 over 10,000 people have lost their lives trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea in search of refuge or a new life away from the threat of violence.



- What do you think was in the minds and hearts of those seeking a new home?
- How would you feel in that position?

**L**ord Jesus, child of Bethlehem, for whom there was no room at the inn, refugee fleeing from the wrath of Herod, we think of all who are homeless refugees today. We pray for all who live in danger of persecution as a result of speaking the truth to oppressive regimes— for the rejected in our world today, lost or alone, and those who are persecuted for speaking the truth in the face of oppression. Holy Child of Bethlehem help us to see your divine image alive in people everywhere. Amen.



# Psalm 20

## Not For Any Reward



30

December

**T**he Lord answer you in the day of trouble!  
The name of the God of Jacob protect you!  
May he send you help from the sanctuary,  
and give you support from Zion.  
May he remember all your offerings,  
and regard with favour your burnt sacrifices.  
May he grant you your heart's desire,  
and fulfil all your plans.  
May we shout for joy over your victory,  
and in the name of our God set up our banners.  
May the Lord fulfil all your petitions.

Now I know that the Lord will help his anointed;  
he will answer him from his holy heaven  
with mighty victories by his right hand.  
Some take pride in chariots, and some in horses,  
but our pride is in the name of the Lord  
our God.

They will collapse and fall,  
but we shall rise and stand upright.

Give victory to the king, O Lord;  
answer us when we call.

**T**hink about a time when you had to  
sacrifice something or when you had a  
difficult choice to do the right thing.



- What reward did you receive for your efforts?
- How much value do you give to doing the right thing when there is no reward?

**E**ternal God be my guide,  
my hope, and my protector.  
When life is difficult,  
it can be hard to hear your answer to my calls.  
Help me to see those times  
you have granted my requests,  
especially when it seems that my prayers  
remain unanswered.  
Help me to be ever closer to you  
and your desires for me. Amen.



1 Corinthians 4:16-18

Isaiah 26:1-9

Psalm 20

Monday



31  
December

Tuesday

John 8:12-19

The Light Of The World



**A**gain Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.' Then the Pharisees said to him, 'You are testifying on your own behalf; your testimony is not valid.' Jesus answered, 'Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid because I know where I have come from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge by human standards; I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgement is valid; for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. In your law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is valid. I testify on my own behalf, and the Father who sent me testifies on my behalf.' Then they said to him, 'Where is your Father?' Jesus answered, 'You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.'

**O**n this last day of the year, light a candle and take a moment to still your soul as you reflect on the past year.



- Where have you seen the Light of God at work?
- Where do you yearn for God's Light to shine?

**F**ather God, as we walk in the shadow of all that is wrong in our world today, we ask that the light of Jesus, your Son, may fall upon us.



Let us remember that a little child came into our world as the Light, not just for the Christmas season, but for all time and in all places, seeking out the lost and the lonely, the downtrodden and the oppressed, the rejected and the desperate, and help us to strive constantly to spread the news of that Christ Light. Amen.

Psalms 20  
1 Kings 3:5-14  
John 8:12-19

Matthew 25:13-46

## The Least Of These



“I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

Today is day one of a new year, an opportunity to wipe the slate clean and start afresh. Take a fresh sheet of paper and write at the top: ‘This year I will...’



- What good resolutions have you made, and how for how long will you keep them?
- What do the words of the king in Jesus’ story say to you?

God, if I’m honest, I know I don’t live up to Jesus’ words. Maybe I give to Christian Aid or Shelter or the Leprosy Mission but is this really what he means? You bless me with plenty to eat and drink, a warm home and clothing, reasonable health and my liberty—for which I thank you. Now show me other ways to respond to Jesus’ challenge. May this New Year be one of action. Amen.



1

January  
2020

Wednesday

Psalms 8  
Ecclesiastes 3:1-13  
Matthew 25:31-46

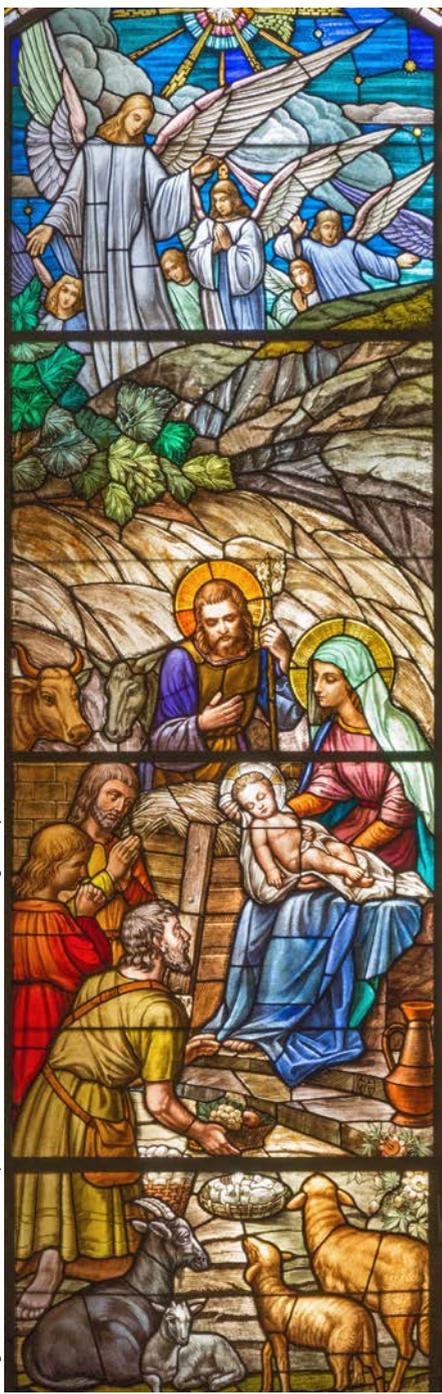


# A Christmas Disrupted



Terrified shepherds.  
A new mum.  
Ancient promises.  
Journey to an ancestral home.  
Angels singing.  
An Emperor's decree.  
Wonderful Counsellor.  
No room at the inn.  
Flocks of sheep in the fields.  
A baby in a manger.  
All the world should be registered.  
Prince of Peace.  
An engaged couple.  
Descendant of David.  
Quirinius, Governor of Syria.  
Mighty God.  
Do not be afraid.  
Treasuring all she heard.  
Bethlehem, city of David.  
Peace on earth among all God loves.  
Wrapping him in strips of cloth.  
Good news of great joy.  
Let's go now to Bethlehem.  
The time came.  
All who heard were amazed.  
This will be the sign.  
She gave birth to her firstborn.  
Glory to God in the highest heaven.  
The time came.  
She gave birth.  
Glory to God.  
All who heard were amazed.  
Prince of Peace.  
The time came.  
Strips of cloth.  
A son is given.  
Her firstborn.  
The time came.

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Image: The Adoration of Shepherds in Chiesa di San Massimo designed by Mario Barbieris



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## A Resource From Ferryhill & South Holburn Parish Churches

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