

Some thoughts to start...

Engaging in the practice of faith is not always easy. For some people, sitting down and having an open, in-depth chat with God is not difficult. For many of us, however, it is.

What we're trying to do here is to give people a resource – to help them in their thinking about scripture, and in the practice of personal prayer.

Everything written here is simply a suggestion. If you find other practices more helpful, please use them!

Find a bible (or go to <http://bible.oremus.org/>) and head to a place you won't be disturbed. Before opening up your bible, take a few moments to sit quietly. In that quiet moment you might want to say to God, "What would you like me to hear today?"

Read each of the scriptures. Some people prefer to read silently, while others find it more helpful to read out loud. Take a few moments to reflect on what you've heard. (If you would like, the 'reflection' section is there to help start you off.)

Finally, take a few moments to talk with God. The printed prayer is there as a guide, but there may be other things you want to share with God. Chat, as openly and honestly as you can. Then, through the day, listen for God's response.

(The suggested scripture readings are based on the Consultation on Common Text's Daily Lectionary.)

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ST. ANDREW'S HANEY UNITED CHURCH

Daily Scripture and Prayer Time

(December 25th to 30th, 2006)

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This resource can be downloaded
weekly from: standrewsuc.com

Monday

Scripture:

- Isaiah 62:6-12
- Psalm 148
- Luke 2:1-20

Reflection:

The angel said to the shepherds, "Unto you is born a son, a Saviour, who is the Messiah." The prophet said to the people, "you shall be called 'Sought Out, a City Not Forgotten'."

A child is born and a world changes. Whenever a child is born a world changes. Whenever a family grows – whether by marriage, birth, adoption or choice - a world changes. Values are realigned and priorities are redistributed. These changes have love at their root. The love of God for the world. The love of two people for each other, the love of parents for children and of anyone that welcomes another into their midst.

We grow in love as individuals, too. Where might you be called to share the love that fills you now? What forgotten ones might you be called to seek out? Who has sought you out to remind you that you, too, are a beloved child of God, always cherished?

Prayer:

God - who finds in seeking
and who receives in giving:
May I find others in my love for you
and seek myself in your love for me.
Bless my celebrations and festivities,
that they may reflect our joy
and show us a way of love and peace
in which I can find hope for the world.

I pray today for Shirley, Helen, Jamie, Nan,
Graham, George and Grace, and _____
friends blessed by your love

For your grace,
with your love,
and in Christ's name, I pray.

Tuesday

Scripture:

- 2 Chronicles 24:17-24
- Psalm 148
- Acts 6:1-7; 7:51-60

Reflection:

What a grizzly collection of tales for the day after Christmas! But it's also the Feast Day of St. Stephen, whose story we read in Acts, the day to remember the first Christian martyr. There has always been resistance, some of it violent, to God's messengers.

It sounds like Zechariah was killed because people didn't like what he was saying. How many people do we shut down, ignore, deride because we don't like what they are saying? With so many voices telling us so many things, many of them equally likely but contradictory, how can we know who to listen to?

One of my ministers said, "the test of the word of God is the spirit of Christ." It's not a big help, but it's something. Where do you hear the voice of God calling? Where is the spirit of Christ evident?

Prayer:

God of prophets and saints, forgive my failure
to listen and my inability to hear.
Remind me of your call to speak your truth.
Help me to hear it in the voices
of today's prophets.

It's hard to know which voices speak for you
and which speak for selfishness,
self-righteousness and the status quo.
Give us the grace to hear what you say,
and to listen with respect and discernment
to those who claim to speak in your name.

I pray today for David, Isabella, Sheila, Fred,
Barb, Dorothy, Sherman, Josephine, and
_____, friends blessed by your love.

For your grace,
with your love,
and in Christ's name, I pray.

Wednesday

Scripture:

- Proverbs 8:32-36
- Psalm 148
- John 21:19b-24

Reflection:

Lady Wisdom offers us life in the place of death. The psalm reminds us to praise. The author of John suggests that one of the disciples might not die, but no one but Jesus knows for sure.

Perhaps the traditional connection is that in choosing Jesus, we gain access to God's promise of eternal life. Even at Christmas, the most secularized, universally celebrated of Christian holidays, we live in a multifaith world. In this world and with a realization that there may be more than One Right Way, these passages can remind us that wisdom takes in many forms and is found in many places. We can't presume to know what is on God's mind. Sometimes we're wrong.

All of creation praises God and all in different ways. What's your way?

Prayer:

Praise God – the God of reindeer and mice,
of angels and rocks!

Praise God - for all the ways we know you
and for all the ways others do.

Praise God - that we don't understand you
totally.

Praise God for the mystery
and the certainty of faith.

Praise God – everyone, everywhere!

Praise God – me, here!

I pray today for Brian, Linda, Maxine, and
_____, friends blessed by your love.

For your grace,
with your love,
and in Christ's name, I pray.

Thursday

Scripture:

- Isaiah 54:1-13
- Psalm 147:12-20
- Revelation 21:1-7

Reflection:

As someone who lives with infertility, I regularly find myself with passages about barrenness to reflect upon in public fora. I can't say that there is no bitterness of the soul that is worse, but I can say that it's a place of despair that erodes self-worth and destroys faith. It is used to describe the situation of an Israel that feels itself deserted by God.

Today is the 'Feast of the Holy Innocents', the day when the church commemorates the slaughter of the children killed in Bethlehem because of Herod's bloody insecurity. So we can also remember the despair and grief of parents whose small children were killed before their eyes.

Horrible, horrible images and recollections in the midst of the joy of Christmas. And yet the passage from Revelation reminds us: despair, grief, pain – these are not the last words. All will be remade. All will be bright and beautiful and love-filled. The last word is 'Joy!'

Prayer:

God of grief, I give you my hurts.

I give you my grief.

I give you my doubt and pain and fear.

Take them away and transform them.

Wipe away my tears

and the tears of those I know

who are suffering.

Make me new. Make them new.

I pray today for John, Lonnie, Fred, Tina, and
_____, friends blessed by your love.

For your grace,
with your love,
and in Christ's name, I pray.

Friday

Scripture:

- 1 Chronicles 28:1-13
- Psalm 147:12-20
- 1 Corinthians 3:10-17

Reflection:

Building the place where God dwells. If it's a metaphorical building that has been being built since the time of Solomon – or even before – where are we now? Or... are we still trying to get the plans right? There's such a contrast between the majesty of the Temple, the poverty of the stable, the simplicity of the early house churches and all the different types of church we can find today. There's truth and beauty in all of them.

As well, God lives in us: we are the new temple, so we need to treat ourselves with respect and reverence, extending the same to others. We can't all be God's temple, can we? Sure we can! There's no one best model. What does that have to say to all the people who hate their bodies or just want to change a few things so that they can love themselves? I hear the passage saying: you are God's dwelling place. You are beautiful!

How do you hear that good news? With joy and awe? Or with derision and disbelief?

Prayer:

God, for all the times I've hated myself
and my body, I'm sorry.

Because you made me and you made my
body. Bless you. Bless me.

May I find hope and peace in knowing that
this is the me I was created to be. Help me to
take care of myself, to cherish this body you
gave me and in which you dwell.

I pray today for Margaret, Doug, Nadine, and
_____, friends blessed by your love.

For your grace,
with your love,
and in Christ's name, I pray.

Saturday

Scripture:

- 2 Chronicles 1:7-13
- Psalm 147:12-20
- Mark 13:32-37

Reflection:

One of the quotes in the puzzles I love doing in the Saturday paper said something along the lines of: Wisdom is the recognition of your own ignorance.

Solomon prayed for wisdom and he's certainly legendary for it. But Mark's gospel reminds us that there's a lot we don't know and some of it's the important stuff. New Year's Eve 1999 had a lot of people waiting and watching for the end of the world. It didn't come.

Perhaps the true sign of wisdom is to be aware that there are a lot of things that I don't know for sure. To look for signs of God at work in the world, like the servants wait for signs that the master is returning.

Where do you see God's presence? Where do you think you can bring Christ's hands and feet to work and walk?

Prayer:

God of wisdom, I'm watching for you.

Open my eyes to see you at work.

Open my hands to show your love.

Open my heart to recognize your call.

Open my lips to praise you.

I pray today for Bernice, Sally, Peggy, Barbara, Doris, Rens, Tineke, Russel, Iris, Kathleen, Margaret, and _____, friends blessed by your love.

For your grace,
with your love,
and in Christ's name, I pray.