

## 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 and head to a place you won't be disturbed. 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. Chat, as openly and honestly as you can. Then, through the day, listen for God's response.

**This resource was initiated by St. Andrew's Haney United Church, Maple Ridge, BC and their minister, the Rev. Richard Bott.**

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 24<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>, 2007)

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## Monday

### Scripture:

- Isaiah 60.1-6
- Luke 1.46b-55
- Luke 1.67-80

### Reflection:

Mary's Magnificat. The Song of Praise, sung by a young woman at a time when it must have seemed like her world was, suddenly, a very strange place. This passage reminds me of the different kinds of reactions we have when things are not going according to our own plans. Sometimes, we pull away from God and from the people in our lives. Sometimes, however, like Mary does here, we 'go with haste' to find comfort in one another. Even when things might seem frightening and the road ahead is unsure, Mary is filled with the desire to sing praises to God.

On this very special day and night, may you be filled with a sense of wonder and awe, too, singing praises to God, who is always with us and always coming - wherever you might be and however you are spending it...

### Prayer:

Holy Mystery...Come to us again tonight, we pray. We've spent the past four weeks preparing for your Advent in our hearts, in our lives and in the world. Come now. As we remember our Sacred Story once again, fill us with the Joy of knowing that you are Emmanuel. On this Holy Night, remind us that you are with us; we are not alone.

Today, I remember and pray for \_\_\_\_\_,  
friends blessed by your love and compassion.

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

## Tuesday

### Scripture:

- Isaiah 52.7-10
- Psalm 98
- Hebrews 1.1-12
- John 1.1-14

### Reflection:

We sometimes talk about, hear about and perhaps even find ourselves as Christians, wondering about the 'true meaning of Christmas.' The Prologue to The Fourth Gospel sets it apart from at least two of the other three in this regard. The 'Christology' - the way we speak of and live out Christ Jesus - of these opening 14 verses, gives us a unique glimpse of the 'true meaning' of what we celebrate today. John understands the Christ Event as something much more than a holy Babe born in a lowly manger in a particular place and time. John doesn't even tell this Story. (I don't think you'll find this Evangelist's version portrayed on a single Christmas card anywhere!) These verses give us a different kind of 'window' into Christmas and what it means for us. Here, we remember that what we celebrate today, in the traditions we observe and the gifts we exchange, is something timeless - eternal. It goes beyond the historical event of the Nativity and rushes into our souls. It has to do with God and Creation and with God and us throughout time. May the Word become flesh today...in you. Have a blessed and joyful Christmas Day.

### Prayer:

God of Christmas, hear my prayer today...I remember the scene at Jesus' birth. I struggle to realize and live the significance of it for me as a Christian. Come into the empty stable of my heart, I pray. Fill me with the eternal Light of Christ - that which was with God and was God from the very beginning. Let the Word be made flesh in me, I pray.

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friends blessed by your love and compassion.

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## Wednesday

### Scripture:

- Wisdom 4.7-15
- Psalm 148
- Acts 7.59-8.8

### Reflection:

'Boxing Day' is the busiest 'shopping day' in Canada...these sales are a staple of the commercialization that seems to have 'taken over' our little (but powerful) part of the world. For me, this passage of scripture is well-timed; it makes me think about sin - and how sin is so much a part of our privileged culture - whether we talk about it like this, or not. "And Saul approved of their killing him." How often, do you think, do we take part in the 'sins of our North American culture' - in the 'sins of our times?' How often do we take part, by our silence, or in what we buy, in the many crimes that are taking place against those who don't have the power or resources to find a voice to be able to speak for themselves? Against those who have no choice but to 'go along?' Will the things I buy today, I wonder, contribute to the forces of globalization - even in spite of the fact that we've been warned by many about the consequences of their effects on the well-being of Creation? The 'cheap' and 'expendable' sources of raw materials and human labour that provides the 'stuff' we want to buy? Materials that are convenient, but toxic? How we buy contributes, in a very powerful way, to how the world will be for us and for the generations that follows us...

### Prayer:

Hear my prayer, O God...we have just celebrated the Incarnation - the 'becoming flesh' of the Holy. Be with us anew today as we go out into a world in a different way - with hearts that are 'lit up' and 'lighted' by the coming of Christ. May we be signs of a birth in a most humble and unexpected place...

Today I remember and pray for \_\_\_\_\_,  
friends blessed by your love.

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

## Thursday

### Scripture:

- Proverbs 8.22-31
- Psalm 148
- 1 John 5.1-12

### Reflection:

The first six verses of this 'Halleluia (Praise the Lord!) Psalm' remind us of the Creation Story found in Genesis 1. The cultures of the Mediterranean gave great importance to the role of the celestial bodies; people worshipped them, feared them, revered them. They were thought to have a bearing on human events. The firmament, the heavens and all that was in them were looked upon with a great sense of awe. As in the opening chapter of scripture, the explanation for this awesome nature of Creation is left aside. What is of utmost importance is that there is one Creator God - whose glorious, mysterious acts of creation must be praised! There's no choice! In fact, these six verses sound a bit like roll call for a 'heavenly choir,' don't they? First the highest heavens themselves, then the angels. Following these, enter the bodies of the heavens. This choir is one established by God; one that shall never pass away...

### Prayer:

There are times, Great Spirit of Creation, that I think I can take over the universe - that I can exchange your Good for mine. There are other times when I feel as though I'm trapped and can't change anything in my little, tiny corner of the universe. Open my ears; clear my eyes. Change my channel. Tune me in to the song of the heavens that never ceases and let me see your glory all around. Awaken me to my place in your great Creation and remind me of what a beautiful miracle I am within it...

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## Friday

### Scripture:

- Isaiah 49.13-23
- Psalm 148
- Matthew 18.1-14

### Reflection:

Our 'alleluia chorus' continues. The call of praise to the God of Israel, put out by the heavens and celestial bodies themselves along with the voices of the angels, is now answered in this second part. It's a strange, earthly chorus that includes sea creatures, the forces of nature on earth, a host of animals of all kinds and then...finally, the fugue gives way for human voices to join in the counterpoint. Two points strike me at this point. First, there's the significance of the fact that humanity joins in the song long after it had already begun. This, it seems, unmistakably echoes our great responsibility toward God's Creation and the nature of our custodianship towards it. Secondly, the make up of the human choir is wonderfully (and strangely) complete! It's one that, although last to join, is 'close to God.' Alleluia indeed!

### Prayer:

Hear my prayer of praise, O God. Remind me of the many other voices to which I add my own. Instill in me the commitment to care for those around me in whatever ways I'm able. Renew my desire to be responsible for my actions and their effects to the environment. Remind me of what a close, tightly-knit world you have designed...

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## Saturday

### Scripture:

- Jeremiah 31.15-22
- Psalm 20
- Luke 19.41-44

### Reflection:

These passages ring with the bitter sounds of human weeping. As we count down the days to the New Year, I'm reflecting on the tears and regrets of the past year in two ways. First, the two passages here, I notice, talk about tears that are primarily shed for others - and not for the one 'doing' the lamenting. That's interesting. How often do I cry for someone else? For the hurts of others? Are they 'suffering with' tears, or ones that contain a drop or two of 'I told you so,' or 'if only they'd listened?' Secondly, I recognize my own sorrow over my actions, my regrets and my own pain that results. As we prepare for the new calendar to go up on the wall - the beginning of a new year - may we spend a moment reflecting on our tears...

### Prayer:

God of joy and sorrow...be with me in my moments of sadness. Hold me in my times of pain. Guide me as I reflect on my regrets. It's good to acknowledge these parts of my life. Tomorrow, however, is a new day. Soon, it will be a new year. Give me the strength to move on - holding out my hand to someone else along the way...

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In Christ's name I pray.