

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.

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

If you'd like to share some thoughts about what you've read, head over to the 'chat space' at www.standrewsuc.com

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ST. ANDREW'S HANEY UNITED CHURCH

Daily Scripture and Prayer Time

(December 3rd to 8th, 2007)

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Monday

Scripture:

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

Reflection:

This morning in the Lower Mainland of BC there were flurries of snow. Not the kind of snow that falls at the beginning of winter and stays around until spring. We don't get that kind of snow here. But nevertheless, snow. Many a child, and many of us older children at heart, might have been hoping for it to become a good dump of snow. The kind that means the schools don't open and we can have a day off to play. The weather forecasters soon disabused us of the notion. It was going to disappear quickly. Our hopes were dashed.

I wonder if that is how Noah felt when he sent out the dove to find out if the land was dry enough. When the dove returned, I wonder did Noah feel his hopes were dashed? Eventually, we read in the story, the dove came back with an olive leaf in her mouth. This was taken as proof of dry land. Shortly thereafter, Noah's hopes were realized as he, and everyone, could leave the Ark.

What are you hoping for right now? Do you see signs, like the dove coming back with nothing, of your hope being dashed? Or do you see signs, like the dove having the olive branch in her mouth, of your hope being realized?

Prayer:

Creator God, sometimes we think our hopes are being dashed, that there is nothing to look forward to. And at other times we see signs of our hope being fulfilled. We can so easily swing from delight to despair. Help us to know your loving presence in the good times and the bad. Help us to bring hope to a world of hopelessness.

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:

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

Reflection:

This week in the news I am hearing about enormous floods in Bangladesh. Because of rising sea levels, this is not the first such flood and the loss of life is devastating. I hesitate to quote the death toll I have heard because it seems to be rising with every news broadcast. Is this the kind of event that happened in the flood stories of the Hebrew Bible?

This story of a catastrophic flood is told in many of the more ancient cultures of our world. I wonder in light of global warming and the damage we have done to our planet what the outcome will be. Yet I have hope.

Hope that it is not too late. Hope that the message that even if we can't reverse it, we can at least reduce the damage, will be heard and acted upon.

Hope that the world leaders will finally begin to act together in love for the planet and for each other.

What problems in the world do you have hope for? How do you see God's hand in them?

Prayer:

God of all, when we hear of such devastation like that in Bangladesh we wonder.....
When we hear of deforestation, and melting polar ice caps, we wonder.....
We wonder where you are and how you are working to alleviate the suffering caused by our inaction. And then we have a blinding revelation. It is our action that causes much of the problems in the world, so too it will be our actions that help to solve them. We are your hands and we offer our work for you.

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.

Wednesday

Scripture:

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

Reflection:

In our concern for the planet, and the stories of doom we hear about melting ice caps and rising sea levels, many of us are feeling that it may be too late to reverse the damage. Others are feeling that still we may be able to do something if only we could mobilize public opinion. It is too easy to lose hope that it is not too late.

I don't know how much time is left to us before we reach the point of no return. I don't know enough about the science behind all this. But I do take hope from scripture such as today's. Even if the mountains depart and the hills are removed, still God's love for us remains constant.

This says to me that whatever mess we make of the world, no matter how bad things get, God is there, and God is loving us. Does this give you as much hope as it does me?

Prayer:

God of Love, our Advent Hope, as we consider the ways we can help to right the wrongs of our world, we thank you for your presence and love for each one of us. We ask your blessing on our thinking, our hoping and our loving.

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:

- Isaiah 4:2-6
- Psalm 72: 1-7, 18-19
- Acts 1:12-17, 21-26

Reflection:

This small snapshot of the life of the disciples as they awaited the coming of the promised Holy Spirit, is a picture of religious life as we recognize it today. There is worship – they constantly devoted themselves to prayer. There is leadership – Peter stood up among them and spoke to them.

There is community – there were women and others with them.

There is a vacancy on the board – Judas Iscariot had to be replaced. There is even a discernment committee. We hear for the last time the practice of drawing lots after prayer as a means of discerning God's will for filling the vacancy. It was an ancient way of understanding which person God had chosen. And so Matthias was chosen.

The apostles waited for the Holy Spirit. As they waited they carried on with their corporate life of worship. Perhaps we are in that place as we wait again the coming of the Christ Child into our lives. What do we hope for in this Advent Season? Is it a renewal of our corporate or personal worship lives? Discernment of what God would have us do in a situation? Maybe our hope is for something else. What is it that sustains you as you wait in hope?

Prayer:

God of all, we await your coming as a child into our lives again. As each of us thinks of what it is we hope for, be with us, we pray. Be in our working and our worship, our rest and our play, that we may find our hope fulfilled in you.

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

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

Friday

Scripture:

- Isaiah 30:19-26
- Psalm 72: 1-7, 18-19
- Acts 13:16-25

Reflection:

In my home church in Scotland, this first week of Advent was not devoted to hope, but to the prophets. Isaiah is one of the best known prophets of Scripture. He told it like it was. And he brought a word of hope to the people as he talked about the restoration of Zion.

John the Baptiser told it like it was too. He lived out in the desert and called people to repentance. I'm not sure that John would have been a comfortable person to get too close to, but he too brought hope to the people as he told of the coming of Christ.

I look around the congregation which I serve, and among the people, there are present day prophets. They tell it like it is and I don't always want to hear what they say. They too bring a word of hope. Hope that circumstance cannot squash the love of God within our community.

Who are the people in your community who tell it like it is and bring hope?

How do you feel when you listen to them?

Prayer:

God of the prophets, past and present, I thank you for the people among us who tell it like it is. I thank you for their discernment and their courage. It is often difficult to speak out. Help me to listen to the voices of the prophets in my time and place.

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

Saturday

Scripture:

- Isaiah 40:1-11
- Psalm 72: 1-7, 18-19
- John 1:19-28

Reflection:

Most things in life that are worth having, are worth waiting for. I think of the relationship I have with my adult children. I think of the waiting for them to be born. The waiting for them to walk and talk. The waiting for them to learn the many lessons of life that has brought them to adulthood. In my enjoyment of them, I forget the hard work, the worry, and the hassle of being a working mother.

Isaiah turns the corner and proclaims good news for the people. John the Baptiser gives testimony about Jesus who is already present in the world. Good News abounds in these readings. The waiting will soon be over and the enjoyment of all that awaits us will be with us. The amazing gospel story will be told and remembered. Children will lead worship in many churches as they perform their pageants. The Good News will be proclaimed.

But not yet!

We continue our journey through the Advent Season from Hope to Peace, to Joy to Love. As we journey, we anticipate the birth in our hearts of the Child who transforms our lives into a closer likeness of the God of love. What preparations do we need to make to receive Jesus the Christ?

Prayer:

God, sometimes it is hard to wait. We want to rush right into Christmas without the waiting. It is hard to remain in Advent when Christmas beckons from every store and Christmas tree. Help us to prepare our hearts for the coming of Jesus; and, when the time is right, to welcome him completely into our lives again.

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

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