



Daily Devotions for Advent



East Cheshire &
Derbyshire Borders
Missional Partnership

Monday 27 Nov – Sunday 3 Dec

‘Anticipating’

Monday 4 Dec – Sunday 10 Dec

‘Waiting’

Monday 11 Dec – Sunday 17 Dec

‘Seeking’

Monday 18 Dec – Christmas Day 25 Dec

‘Revealing’



Monday 27 Nov 'Anticipating'

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Jeremiah was speaking to a community living as a conquered people after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian invasion. Their sense of security has been violated, in captivity they don't know if they will ever see their home again. And yet Jeremiah speaks to them to give them hope for a life that is possible, an alternative reality to what they are experiencing. It is that same alternative reality that we can hope for as we begin our journey through Advent; a reality of justice, peace and righteousness. We may think there is a wide gap between the reality we are experiencing and what we wish for. Yet the promise of Advent is that the Lord is our righteousness. This promise allows us to proclaim an alternative reality in which all things will be made new.

Prayer

Loving God, as we move through Advent, let us see the hope that the birth of Jesus gives, not just to us but to all whose lives are filled with darkness. Let us share with each other that hope of what is possible through God's love for all humanity. Amen.

An act of kindness

Leave a card for the milkman/postman thanking them for their work in all weathers



Tuesday 28 Nov 'Anticipating'

Isaiah 9:2-7

Our reading finds a nation withering under Assyrian domination. The seemingly endless anguish and despair can find a moment of respite, if not full release, in Isaiah's words. These verses capture a series of hopeful images promising the dawn of a new era in the nation's history. These promises culminate in the birth of a special child who will bring an era of boundless peace, unencumbered justice, and endless joy. We may feel that our world needs similar words, similar promises to lift us out of the doldrums we find ourselves. As we look around are we looking with the right eyes to see the possibilities of a new dawn or do we often concentrate on everything that is wrong? We should be looking for "good news stories" especially at this time of year as we look toward the best news story that has ever been written.

Prayer

Listening God, help us to open our eyes to you in our world. To see where you are at work in peoples lives and to help others see your presence in their lives, to know that you are and always will be the good news that we can celebrate. Amen.

An act of kindness

Buy a sandwich/warm drink and give to the next homeless person you see on street.



Wednesday 29 Nov 'Anticipating'

Luke 1:26-38

This reading from Luke is for many a pivotal moment in the whole nativity story. All our focus is on Mary, the one who is to bear Jesus, and we treat Gabriel as very much a secondary character. And yet, if it wasn't for the Gabriels of the world, none of this story would be of note. Unexpectedly, suddenly, unanticipated — Gabriels appear and alter what seem to be fixed and predictable paths. We can all make a difference to events around us no matter how insignificant we may feel. As we move through Advent in particular, can we be a Gabriel to bring the good news of what this season is all about, to help others see the real significance of such an exciting moment in all our lives.

Prayer

Peace-giving God, give us the courage, to bring your good news to people we meet, to accept our part in the story of Jesus' birth and life, not to make us more important than anyone else, but simply to be the part that you would have us be. Amen.

An act of kindness

Tell a family member you haven't seen for some-time you are thinking and praying for them.



Thursday 30 Nov 'Anticipating'

2 Peter 3:1-10

In our reading Peter is urging his readers to be ready. They know that Jesus will return to their world, the disciples have already seen him following his resurrection. When He will return, they can't know, but in anticipation of the event they need to live their lives as if it could happen tomorrow or even today. As we move through Advent, we know we are to celebrate the birth of Jesus on Christmas day, and we prepare for it. But what would we do if He really did come again? We say we believe He is with us in sharing the events not just this Advent time but throughout our lives, but do we act that way. Are we ready and willing for Him to share every part of our lives?

Prayer

Ever-present God at times we struggle in knowing how we should act or speak. We don't always have the faith to know that You through your Son and the power of the Holy Spirit are with us, we stumble in the face of life's worries and problems. Be with us Lord, help us to be ready for you, not just this Advent-time, but everyday. Amen.

An act of kindness

Take flowers to someone in a care home and sit and chat with them.



Friday 1 Dec 'Anticipating'

Mark 13:33-37

Advent is a time of celebration, but it is also a time to remind ourselves to anticipate the coming of Jesus into our world. He is already here; we share each of our days with him walking by our side. But He wants to come closer to us, and through us closer to those who we hold close in our lives. Can we be the one who opens the doorway for Jesus to enter? In our reading it's understood that Jesus is talking about his second coming. He may have been referring to a time following his resurrection when He did return to His disciples, but I think it more likely that was a mere visit and He will come more fully into our world, whether that is at the end-of-times or before none of us can know.

Prayer

O my God, teach me to be generous to serve you as you deserve to be served, to give without counting the cost, to fight without fear of being wounded, to work without seeking rest and to spend myself without expecting any reward but the knowledge that I am doing your holy will.

Amen.

St Ignatius of Loyola

An act of kindness

Learn basic first aid and make sure you know where a defibrillator is located in your community.



Saturday 2 Dec 'Anticipating'

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

In this letter Paul is reminding the people of Corinth of the spiritual gifts they have been given and that they must continue to be strong in waiting for the coming of Jesus into their lives. Like the community in Corinth, we too need to be reminded that we continue to live in the time in-between. We will soon celebrate the birth of the Word made flesh. We will celebrate God's gracious gift of Jesus. But we must remember to look not only back, but forward as well. What God is doing is not over and done. There are still more truths to be revealed. And we, too, have been given spiritual gifts that will strengthen us for the journey ahead. This is a wonderful "Advent" message for us all as we wait in anticipation.

Prayer

Strengthening God, be with us as we wait for the coming of Jesus. Help us to celebrate his birth into our world as that helpless baby in a manger. Help us to use all the gifts that you have given to us to help build your kingdom in our communities, with Jesus as our guide. Amen.

An act of kindness

Find out more about Church Action on Poverty and see how to promote in your church.



Sunday 3 Dec 'Anticipating'

Romans 13:11-14

In this reading from Paul, he is telling the readers that as Christians we are all morning people. The time is just before dawn, the sky is brightening, the alarm is ringing, day is at hand. It is time to rouse our minds from slumber, to be alert to what God is doing in the world, and to live in accordance with God's coming salvation. Paul tells us to put on the armour of light – put on Jesus Christ to be our light in a dark world. People are stirring from their night-time slumbers, and we must prepare ourselves to be together with Jesus as we celebrate once again His coming into our world. Through the light of Jesus, we will see the sure hope of God's salvation to welcome and embrace one another as Christ embraces us all.

Prayer

Longing for light, we wait in darkness. Longing for truth, we turn to You. Make us Your own, Your holy people; light for the world to see. Christ be our light! Shine in our hearts, shine through the darkness. Christ be our light! Shine in Your church gathered today.

Bernadette Farrell

An act of kindness

Buy a bag of sweets/chocolates and take to local police or fire-station to thank them for all they do.



Monday 4 Dec 'Waiting'

Psalm 1

Advent is about God's coming to his people. God's people waiting for God. So much of our Old Testament, where this week's readings begin, grapples with life's 'ups' and 'downs'. With the decisions which face us as individuals and as a people. Psalm 1 speaks of the big choice we all have: either to ignore God's law and mock God's ways, or to be people whose delight is in the law of the Lord. People who meditate day and night on God's word and way. To be like trees planted by streams of water which yield their fruit in season. One challenge posed by this psalm is to believe, as the psalmist says, that, if we follow God's way, we will not wither, but prosper. It often doesn't seem so. A challenge maybe to wait in faith, for God's time to come?

Prayer

God, thank you for trusting me, for giving me the freedom to choose my own path. As I await your coming each day and then at Christmas, give me the courage and the love to choose well, to be true to you. Amen.

An act of kindness

Call a friend you haven't spoken to recently.



Tuesday 5 Dec 'Waiting'

Psalm 42

'As the deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God'. So today's reading begins. Flowing water sounds inviting, but in Israel, the psalmist's homeland, there were months of dryness, when rain was sparse and streams ran dry. And times when God seemed far away. The psalm speaks of remembering good times. But now: my soul is cast down within me. Was the writer crying out of depression? Life can be tough. God can seem far away, even – or especially – when we really want to be faithful and to follow. Yet, through it all (verse 8), God gives us the strength to keep going. Gives us words in which we may cry out, be it in anguish or in praise. And, finally, we can hope in God. For I shall again praise him.

Prayer

God, thank you for being with me even in the hard times. For being faithful to me, even when I feel you're far away. Help me hang on to you. Keep me caring for those whose lives I touch. Amen.

An act of kindness

Tell someone you know why you're thankful for them.



Wednesday 6 Dec 'Waiting'

1 Samuel 2:1-10

Long before Jesus, there was a man in the hill country of Judea. He had two wives, one of whom, Hannah, remained childless. She prayed and longed to become a mother. Years on, a child, Samuel, was born at last. Once weaned, he was taken by Hannah to a priest of the Lord and, as Hannah had vowed, offered in lifelong service of God – the son she had longed for (see chapter 1). Chapter 2 begins with a long hymn of praise to the Lord, the Holy One. My heart exults in the Lord, my God makes me strong, sings Hannah. She speaks of the Lord as a God of knowledge, a God who makes mothers of the barren. A God who raises up the poor and brings down the powerful. Who brings back to life those who are as good as dead. And Samuel would be one of Israel's greatest leaders, anointing David as King of Israel.

Prayer

Holy God, help me to keep praying and believing, as Hannah did. Challenge me, too, to work and pray for true, uncorrupted leaders, bringing justice to the poor. Amen.

An act of kindness

Send someone a handwritten note or letter.



Thursday 7 Dec 'Waiting'

Psalm 85

Unlike those we met earlier in the week, this psalm speaks of God as the God of nations. Here God has withdrawn his favour from his people because of their sin. The psalmist recalls how God has raised God's people up in former times after they rebelled against God's ways, but then returned to God. He prays that God may once again smile upon God's people. As we ponder our own country here and now, let us turn back to God. Let us pray for God to restore justice. To restore the Earth. To restore us. Let us pray for faithfulness to spring up from the ground, justice to look down from the sky. And for God to give what is good.

Prayer

Lord, through all our challenges, may I, as a believer and a citizen, pray and act faithfully. Give me the courage to challenge the careless or oppressive use of power.

Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.

Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.

Forgive me. Forgive us.

Give us your peace. Amen.

An act of kindness

Thank the next person see maintaining local paths or waterways.



Friday 8 Dec 'Waiting'

Isaiah 42:1-9

The Book of Isaiah brings us prophecies from the 7th and 6th centuries BC. Many of them sharply criticised the kings and religious leaders in Jerusalem for their neglect of widows and orphans. Warning of a day of disaster to come upon Israel. Babylon's laying waste of Judea and Jerusalem is seen as the result of Israel's disobedience. Eventually the Jewish people – many deported to Babylon – are allowed to return to their homeland. Now there are other prophecies, many promising restoration and forgiveness. Among these are songs of a Servant of God, who has God's spirit upon him, who will bring justice to the nations. He will not break the bruised or faint-hearted; neither will he be crushed himself. He will open the eyes of the blind and bring light to the nations. And, centuries after Isaiah, came Jesus, the Son of God.

Prayer

God, we praise you for the hope of new life you bring. We thank you for Jesus, who finally fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy. We remember in silence some of the world's sharpest agonies: forgotten victims of war and intolerance everywhere. Amen.

An act of kindness

Let someone go ahead of you in a queue.



Saturday 9 Dec 'Waiting'

Mark 1:1-11

Several centuries after Isaiah, we meet the prophet, John, in the Judean desert. Quoting Isaiah, he cries out to all who will listen, that he is smoothing the path for another, much greater than he: "I am not fit to stoop down and unbuckle his sandals". John proclaims a baptism for the forgiveness of sins. He challenges all who come to repent of their sins, to turn about. To do justice, show mercy, seek the Lord's coming. When Jesus comes from Galilee and is baptised by John in the Jordan, John sees the heavens torn apart and the Spirit of God descend like a dove. He realises that the moment has come, that his work is almost done. The One he has spoken of is come.

Prayer

Jesus, you are the one foreseen by John. We thank you for John's courage in waiting faithfully for you. We praise you for being a God of mercy. You call on us to pray and work for justice, but you still offer us the chance of a new way. Give us the courage to take it. Amen.

An act of kindness

Visit a library and donate a book to their second-hand stock.



Sunday 10 Dec 'Waiting'

2 Peter 3:8-13

By the time these words – in a letter to the first century church – were written, Jesus had fulfilled his earthly ministry. He had died and had risen. The Holy Spirit had given Jesus' first followers the courage and the power to carry on his work. To speak of how Jesus would be with them for ever. And they were to speak of how Jesus would one day return. The letter writer pointed out that there would be scoffers who denied the work of Jesus or that the world would see him again. He warned: God's time is not ours; like a thief, his day will come suddenly. A vision is painted of creation's dissolution and its fulfilment. As wonderful as it is terrifying. But in the meantime? Live holy and godly lives, waiting and longing for the coming of the day of God.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you came first in human frailty, came in power in your Spirit at Pentecost. We stand in awe. You created all at the first and, one day, will bring all to completion. We worship you. Amen.

An act of kindness

Plant some wildflower seeds in an open space.



Monday 11 Dec 'Seeking'

Deuteronomy 4: 27-31

How easy it is, today, to feel 'scattered among the peoples'. But this passage reminds us that these are the peoples to whom the Lord has 'driven us'. We are to be IN the world, we are to know that it is God's world and we are to seek God at all times and in all places. For if we do God will be found.

Prayer

Heavenly father and mother of us all, with heart and soul and body we seek you, knowing that you will be found in joy and in sorrow, at ease and in distress, within us and within our neighbour. Teach us to see YOU wherever love, generosity, forgiveness and hope are seen. Teach us to offer these gifts as freely as we have received them. Amen.

An act of kindness

Today as you go about your business in the world, instead of 'excuse me' or 'thank you', 'hello or goodbye', say 'bless you!' and in your heart thank God for each one.



Tuesday 12 Dec 'Seeking'

Matthew 6:25-31

Seeking the Kingdom of justice, righteousness and peace is to be our primary task as individuals and as church. Without a doubt we are encouraged to seek these things for ourselves and for our fellowship but in a world where we must admit that we are... in the main... quite well served, our challenge is to seek justice, righteousness and peace for those whose voice is silenced or scorned, whose lives are not valued, or for whom 'choice' is a luxury they cannot access.

Prayer

Let us pray for the governments and civil services of the world that they may hear and value the voice of the dispossessed and the marginalised. Let us pray for ourselves that we may listen carefully to the needs of our neighbour and find the generosity to respond and the courage to add our voice to the call for a fairer world whatever the personal cost. Amen.

An act of kindness

Buy some pet food for the local food bank collection or build a bug hotel to shelter local wildlife.



Wednesday 13 Dec 'Seeking'

1 Chronicles 16: 8-15

Remembering and giving thanks are key aspects of the Christian life, the Holy life, remembering that everything good comes from God the source of all goodness, source of all wonders and miracles. Yet we must admit that although our lives are showered in such blessings, so often we allow them to pass unnoticed, because we are too busy, or too worried, or too self-absorbed. Look out today with new eyes, grateful eyes and seek God's goodness everywhere, then take part in 'telling of his wonderful acts' by bringing that thanksgiving into every conversation today.

Prayer

Offer an alphabet prayer – a sentence of gratitude for something starting with each letter of the alphabet.

Creator God I thank you for A.....

I praise you for B.....

I remember that you created C.....

An act of kindness

Give thanks for the one who checks in on you when you can't see the light. Is there someone you should check on?



Thursday 14 Dec 'Seeking'

Luke 15: 8-10

We belong to a God who seeks us. A God who does not sit far off waiting for us to do the work to climb out of the mess we sometimes find ourselves in, but gets down on God's hands and knees sweeping brush in hand searching the dark corners to find us. Finding us lodged in a crack in the floor boards or buried in the dust under the dresser. In our reading the coin makes no effort to be found but is so precious that the woman will not stop until it is restored. So much does God seek you.

Prayer

Searching God we thank you for all the ways in which we find ourselves loved and cared for by you. Teach us to search out goodness with that same dedication and to rejoice in it wherever it is found. Help us to recognise that climbing out of dark places in our own power is often beyond us and beyond our neighbours, we need to recognise and accept that light when it comes to us through friend or stranger, we need to be ready to offer that light to friend or stranger in Jesus name. Amen.

An act of kindness

Give someone a reason to feel good about themselves today.



Friday 15 Dec 'Seeking'

Psalm 27:7-14

“Seek his face’ your face, Lord I will seek.” It is easy at this time of year to read that passage and see immediately the face of the baby in the manger; gentle Jesus meek and mild. And that is appropriate and a part of the story but it cannot be the whole story. Seek also the face of the laughing Lord, the angry Lord, the tired and disappointed Lord, the suffering and forgiving Lord, the grieving and the saddened Lord. The one who knows our every season of joy and of pain and lives it with us. The one whose face we are called to see in the face of every friend and stranger.

Prayer

Loving Lord, we seek your face in the mirror and on the street. Help us to see through the makeup and the grime and to encourage those glimpses of God wherever we spot them. When life is hard, when those we love are suffering, help us to know that you are never far from us, that in your humanity you know our hearts and so we are never alone.

An act of kindness

Add a ‘Christlike’ comment into a conversation that has become one sided or hostile.



Saturday 16 Dec 'Seeking'

Matthew 7:7-12

Ask, seek and knock. It sounds so simple, and in many ways it is. If you knock, the door will be opened, you don't need a password or passport of good behaviour, you don't need a key or a code. Just be brave enough to knock. If you seek and you will find; if you turn your heart and mind towards God you will find God who has already found you, waiting to be better known and understood. But then there is 'ASK and you will receive' and it has always worried me that it is the first action to be mentioned in this passage, because that is what gets us in trouble when the childish part of ourselves says 'I asked God for XX but it never came'. But if we knock and seek before we ask perhaps we will find that sometimes we go asking for snakes when God wishes to give us a fish.

Prayer

Provident, Prodigal God source of all goodness and all that is needed to live life in fullness within your coming Kingdom teach us to ask first for our neighbours' needs to be fulfilled before seeking for ourselves. Encourage us to seek your will for friend and stranger and to do our part in being the answer to our neighbours prayer.

An act of kindness

Visit your local foodbank and ask what their top three needs are, then do your best to provide.



Sunday 17 Dec 'Seeking'

Acts 17:24-28

As we gather today in temples built by human hands we are challenged to remember that God is no more present there than anywhere else on earth. But we gather, to seek God in company, to learn from each other and to be reminded that God made us, God knows us, God loves us, and God wants us to love our brothers and sisters with that same inclusive unconditional love that God offers to all God's children.

Prayer

Let us pray for God's world, for the beauty and wonder of creation, for the responsibility we bear to steward the earth's resources wisely not just for the coming human generations but for the sake of all that lives. Pray for our brothers and sisters around the world, those who struggle because of climate change, those who are caught up in conflict and those who create conflict, pray for peace with justice and a deeper understanding of all that we allow to divide us from each other and from God. Pray for family, friends and immediate neighbours that they may know the Grace of God that 'is not far from each one of us'. Amen.

An act of kindness

Make a bird cake or fill a bird feeder, take time to appreciate their joy as they feed.



Monday 18 Dec 'Revealing'

Exodus 3:1-6

Every encounter with another has the potential and power to change us. I wonder how open we are to being changed by those we encounter. And what of our encounters with God, are we open to being changed by those? We may not meet God in a burning bush as Moses did, but God's presence infuses all of reality, and we are never truly apart from God. Perhaps we struggle to encounter God, or perhaps it's that we don't want to risk encountering God lest it require us to change (something which we humans often find hard). Yet transformation is the Christian story – our transformation ever more into the likeness of Christ and the transformation of our world through God's coming kingdom. Will you risk being changed by an encounter with God today?

Prayer

God, your loving nature is unchanging and yet you are the dynamic power that drives change throughout the universe. As you continually reveal yourself to us, help us not to become stuck in our ways. And if we already are, shake us gently but firmly that we might be become unstuck and ready to live as Christ lives, kingdom bearers in your service. Amen.

An act of kindness

Have a clear out and donate things to charity shop.



Tuesday 19 Dec 'Revealing'

Psalm 24:1-2

In these opening verses, the Psalmist surveys the world all around and cannot help but see the glory of God revealed. Do you see the glory of God when you look around? The busyness of this season can make 'seeing' much harder, can't it? In fact, life in general these days is so demanding that often it can make 'seeing' near impossible. And yet as people of faith who live in the world, isn't it for us to help point towards God and make God known? Can we do that if we've not trained our own eyes to see? Perhaps 'seeing' God is something we need to cultivate, to practise even. I wonder how might you practise 'seeing' God today?

Prayer

God, you continually reveal yourself in myriad ways and places. Help us to still ourselves just long enough to catch a glimpse of your glorious, loving presence this day, and give us courage to point others to you. Amen.

An act of kindness

Buy a Fairtrade product when out Christmas shopping (look out for clothes as well as food).



Wednesday 20 Dec 'Revealing'

Ruth 1:16-19

God is revealed in the lives of all sorts of people. If we think of those in whom we encounter God, I wonder who springs to mind? A saint, a holy person, someone Christian perhaps? What about a foreigner, an asylum seeker, someone of another faith? Ruth was a foreigner, and though she had married into Naomi's family, her husband had died. She could have remarried in her own land, but such was her love for her mother-in-law, Ruth stuck with Naomi leaving all she knew and journeyed to Naomi's homeland. Is God revealed in Ruth's loving and self-sacrificial actions? I think so. But too often we assume God is only in those most like us – and yet the example of Ruth I think reveals surprising truth – very often God is revealed in those who are not like us at all. Keep your eyes peeled today for glimpses of God in people and places you might least expect.

Prayer

God, you delight in the diversity of all you have made. Help us to be like you, relishing difference and delighting in variety. May we always seek to be open to expressions of love whatever their source, for the sake of your son in whom you revealed your love most fully. Amen.

An act of kindness

Offer to shop for an elderly neighbour.



Thursday 21 Dec 'Revealing'

Luke 1:39-45

The history of our world, so far as it is recorded, has taken place in a patriarchal context. This explains why most of our bible stories give account of the lives of men. Is God revealed to men any more than to women? Of course not. So, let's be thankful that women have played such a central role in God's revelation to the world that even the forces of patriarchy could not subdue stories such as that of Mary the mother of Jesus and Ruth who we read about yesterday. God chose Mary a seemingly insignificant peasant girl to be God-bearer one who was "blessed among women". God's revelation to the world confounded expectations then and God is still confounding expectations today. Those that the world has deemed lowly are the ones who God lifts up. Praise God for all women of faith, especially Mary who "believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her".

Prayer

God who confounds our expectations and who esteems equally all people, help us to resist all forces which seek to diminish one group over another. Grant us eyes to see you revealed in women of great faith everywhere. Amen.

An act of kindness

Engage in conversation with a retail worker and thank them for their work.



Friday 22 Dec 'Revealing'

Luke 2:25-33

Simeon was an old man by the time he encountered the infant Jesus at the Temple. You see, God had promised Simeon that he would not die before seeing God's promised Messiah. Moved by the revelation of the Messiah before him, Simeon swooped the infant Jesus into his arms and burst into song. Mary and Joseph already knew their son was special, but they marvelled at all Simeon said about Jesus. The truth is – words spoken over any human life have power. And these, and many other words spoken over Jesus surely influenced his growing understanding of himself as special and a beloved child of God. We may not always have had positive words spoken over our own lives by those closest to us, but we can always be sure that God speaks words of love and blessing over us, for like Jesus, we too are beloved children of God.

Prayer

God, we remember people who have had damaging words spoken over their lives. Seek them out, with our help, that they may know how precious they are in your sight. Amen.

An act of kindness

Look out for anyone who seems lonely and offer some time for conversation.



Saturday 23 Dec 'Revealing'

Matthew 11:2-10

Have you ever found yourself wondering just who Jesus is? Well, if you have, you're in good company because Jesus' cousin John the Baptist, the one who came to 'prepare the way of the Lord' had his doubts too. Sending word from prison, he asks of Jesus "are you the one we're waiting for, or should we expect someone else?" Perhaps he was weary from his time in jail, longing for the promised Messiah to overthrow the authorities as the people had expected. But Jesus' response is not one of a military leader but that of a healer. Jesus didn't come to seek power, he came to serve, to bring life and healing to those who have need. Even now, with all that's going on in the world, we too might long for a God who would come and deal forcefully with those who abuse power, but that is not who we see God to be in the person of Jesus. God's power is love, and though it may not seem like it, ultimately love will always win.

Prayer

God, help us to believe that love truly is the greatest power, that we would not collude with the wielding of power through force, but seek always to serve in love. Amen.

An act of kindness

Offer to walk a friend's dog or another act of loving service.



Christmas Eve Sunday 24 Dec 'Revealing'

Philippians 2:5-11

Though perhaps not a traditional reading for Christmas Eve, this passage offers a clear picture of the kind of saviour Jesus came to be. He was not to be another in a long line of power wielders or a broker of empirical might. Rather he was one, who though equal with God, was willing to humble himself – not just in taking on human form with all its inherent fragility, but to become a servant – the Creator serving the created. The Apostle Paul offers this picture of Christ in the context of teaching on humility, emphasising God's humility and suggesting that we too must become humble in our discipleship, "let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus". At this time of year, we emphasise Jesus' birth, and yet we know that the story ends in the death of an innocent. Both Christ's birth and death reveal to us the depth of God's love for all of creation and that there are no lengths God will not go to so that we may be reconciled to God.

Prayer

God, it seems incomprehensible that the God who is creator of all would give up so much to become one of us. Help us to discern your great love for us in the generosity and humility of the Christmas story and to experience it deep in the core of our beings. Amen.

An act of kindness

Smile and say hello to a stranger or two.



Christmas Day 25 Dec 'Revealing'

John 1:1-5

The opening verses of John's Gospel are a stunningly beautiful and poetic attempt to describe the mystery of the incarnation – the God of the whole universe coming to live among humankind in Jesus. John's Gospel does not follow Matthew and Luke's lead in offering a story of nativity, rather John speaks of Christ's coming in its cosmic and eternal context. I wonder if on this Christmas Day amongst all our usual images of baby Jesus in the manger, we might find a small space, whether while peeling the potatoes or easing back with a glass of something cold, to simply let these profoundest of words sit with us and to nourish us in our faith. "What has come into being [in Christ] was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."

Prayer

God of Christmas Day, creator of galaxies and atoms, you who came to earth as a human baby. Help us to look deep within the Christmas story to see and experience the profound mysteries of faith, that we may be nourished and fortified to live as your people, following your example of self-sacrificial love, today and in the new year to come. Amen.

An act of kindness

Call someone who might be on their own today and remind them they are loved.



Happy Christmas to you and all whom you love.
May you be blessed by the love of God revealed in
Christ Jesus this Adventide and Christmas.

With thanks to our contributors; Mr Michael Brueck and
Revds Alison Termie, Mike Aspinall and Jonnie Hill.