

**“2020 Advent Devotional Booklet”  
First Christian Church of Allen, Texas**



These devotional thoughts are intended to enrich our journey of faith through the Advent season as we prepare for Christmas.

May the blessings of Jesus Christ be with us as we receive new gifts of God’s hope, peace, joy, and love during this wonderful season.

Thanks to all who contributed to this year’s devotional book.



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2020 –  
FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT – HOPE

Author: Pastor, Dr. Wyatt E Fenno

*Scripture: 1 Peter 1:3-5*

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Dr. W's Reflections...

### **SURVIVING & THRIVING: "LIVING HOPE"**

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*  
(1 Peter 1:3-5)

Today is the first Sunday of "Advent" and marks the beginning of a new Christian year. The journey of the Advent season leads us to Christmas as we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ in his first "advent." But, the journey of this new season of Advent also fills our hearts with "living hope" as we await the return of Christ the King in his second "advent." Therefore, this new season of "holy days" (or "holidays") reminds us of God's "great mercy," and how we have now been given a "new birth" of salvation because Jesus Christ is the living proof of God's love and faithfulness.

Praise be to God for the "living hope" we now have in Jesus Christ! Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, you and I now have an inheritance with God that can never perish, spoil, or fade. So, despite all the craziness of 2020, you and I can now not only survive—but thrive—as we fix our "living hope" on the coming of our salvation that is ready to be

revealed to us!

So now, as we make our journey together toward Christmas, let our hearts overflow with praise for God. Let us be united by the “living hope” that now joins us together as a church family. And, let us not just survive, but thrive as we thank God for all the ways that he has blessed us to be a blessing!

The Lord be with you...



MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2020

Author: Darby Lee

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:8-9

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*Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:8-9)*

Howdy Hound Dogs and Stray Cats!

Paws Up to our many furry friends that have helped us feel comforted and safe, and provided a sense of purpose during this time of uncertainty and trepidation. We got a new Bichon Frise puppy, Winter, for the family right before quarantine. I have never met a puppy that loves to play more than Winter, so hours upon hours of tug-of-war, fetch, and chase have ensued, and I'm getting really good at it. Our nine-pound security de-"tail" ensures we never have to be concerned about porch pirates getting us, or our deliveries!

For my new mode of hanging out with friends, discussing our pets is one of our favorite topics on our Zoom calls. And let me tell you, all our pets are major camera hogs! Many of my friends have started graduate school or jobs in other cities and are living alone. Most of them have acquired a pet at some point along this quarantine journey to keep them company. Having a little furry buddy around makes people realize they are needed for a walk, a snuggle, or a snack break.

I hope many of you are fortunate enough to have a pet in your life, and if not there are plenty of pets available at local shelters and rescue centers that I am sure would love a home with any of you wonderful scoundrels. Pet owners have better

self-esteem, longer longevity, and bounce back from injury and illness faster. Having a pet provides much of the same benefits of human contact.

It is always good to give thanks to God for all the wonders that He has created, and maybe a special thank you for all of the pets that enrich our lives, give such unconditional love, think we look great in fuzzy slippers, provide warmth, serve as a cheerleader, and are always a captive audience. I want to give a huge thank you Bark and Meow to Clementine, CinnaBun, Jubilee, Jax, Harley, Buster, Louise, Bernie, Queso, and Jaz - my regular meeting attendees!

You know how they say dogs and their owners start looking alike over time, well I'm okay with that because Winter's pretty cute. Taking this theory one step further, she and I already have matching Christmas PJ's. I sure hope to see you all sooner rather than later, and if Winter and I are wearing matching ugly sweaters, no comments are needed!

Have a Tail-Wagging, Ball-Chasing, Cat-Nipping, Feather-Flying Merry Christmas!



TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2020

Author: Mary Margaret Waters

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:13

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*Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. (1 Peter 1:13)*

We still hang a calendar in our kitchen on which we post our appointments and important events. The first events posted on our 2020 calendar were the high school graduations of our youngest three grandchildren. May would be a busy month—May 15, 19, and 22 or so we thought.

Spring Break came and they returned only to online classes. Their senior year became a list of canceled events: spring sports, speech and debate contests, band contests and concerts, award banquets and assemblies, senior trips, prom, and graduation celebrations. Graduations did take place with limited guests on May 22, June 15, and July 17.

Yes, our seniors of 2020 survived their senior year and headed to college in August. In addition to adjusting to their freshman year of college, they had to get accustomed to new online learning, few in person classes, temperature checks, social distancing, wearing a mask, COVID-19 testing, and quarantine. They survived and I think thrived some too as they completed their first semester and headed home for Thanksgiving and Christmas break. I believe that their belief in God, their faith, and looking for the good in people and their surroundings will continue to get them through 2020.

A prayer for 2020: Make sure you test positive for FAITH. Keep your distance from DOUBT. Isolate yourself from FEAR. TRUST in God through it all. Amen



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2020

**Author: Betsy Durnin**

**Scripture: 1 Peter 1:14-16**

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*As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy".*  
(1 Peter 1:14-16)

There was an article in Psychology Today towards the end of last year about the topic of thriving vs. surviving. The author defined these two states as follows:

"Surviving is a grim struggle – you're white-knuckling life, just barely getting by. Thriving is living and thinking abundantly."

There have been many times in my life where I felt like I was just surviving. Going through the motions, hanging on by a thread, and wondering when the struggle would end and I could move on to a more fulfilling and happy life. In the last couple of years, I have learned that perhaps surviving is a mindset – your thoughts about your situation determine how you feel about it. Do you view setbacks as challenges or struggles? Thoughts can change. It isn't necessarily easy, but it can happen, one thought at a time. Choose your attitude.

As a church family, it has been a challenging year, but we have come through it better than some. It would be easy to complain about what is going on with life right now, but we have chosen not to do that. We have chosen to be positive, try to stay connected, and carry on with the mission of the church.

The Psychology Today article also stated: "Surviving is a drag, a daily slog to stay alive. Thriving is joyful and infectious." Which one sounds better to you?



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2020

Author: Pastor, Dr. Wyatt E Fenno

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:17-19

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Dr. W's Reflections...

## **SOME GIFTS ARE MORE PRECIOUS THAN OTHERS**

*Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 1 Peter 1:17-19)*

Some gifts are more precious than others. I'm sure most of us have some cherished Christmas memories of getting exactly what we wanted for Christmas. We got just what we picked out of the Sears Wish Book! And, the perfect gift we found under our Christmas Tree and unwrapped gave us a very Merry Christmas indeed. And while most of the gifts we received on Christmas's past have perished, the memories of those gifts remain precious to us.

One thing for sure: The good memories I have of receiving some precious gifts prompted a desire in me to give "precious" gifts to my children as well. They all—just like I did when I was a child—wanted certain toys or games for Christmas. And, Thu and I did what we could to give them at least some of what they wanted so that they could enjoy a very Merry Christmas.

Some gifts are more precious than others. But, all gifts are precious when they are given in love. I know now that my parents and others gave me gifts because they loved me. And



Thu and I gave gifts to our children because we love them.

Love is what makes the gifts we give “precious.” And so, as we give gifts to those we love this year, let us remember the most “precious” gift of all—a forever gift from our Heavenly Father: You and I have been redeemed by the “precious blood of Christ.”

So, despite the troubles of 2020, you and I can do more than just survive this Christmas season; we can thrive! We can thrive because we have been redeemed by an imperishable gift—a gift that can never perish, spoil, or fade. Merry Christmas!



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2020

Author: Ashton Tinney Westerman

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:22

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*Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. (1 Peter 1:22)*

During this time of the Coronavirus Pandemic, it has really tested what people's "limits" are. When Texas was originally placed under the Stay-at-Home order, it was required that if people had to go out, then they needed to wear a mask as well as refrain from gathering in groups. There was an uproar that it was an "infringement of our rights" and people pushed aside all logic and were not thinking about how their actions affected others. We are now 8 months into a Pandemic and some days it seems like there isn't an end in sight. We have to trust in the Lord that he will help bring an end to this.

The scripture reminded me of the second commandment "love thy neighbor". As Mark 12: 30-31 states, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." During a time of uncertainty, it is crucial to continue to genuinely love each other and be there for each other. During this stressful and scary time of not knowing when this pandemic will end, we have to think about how our behavior has consequences. I have been teaching children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) what social distancing means and that by respecting other's space and wearing a mask, it will keep them and others safe. Never in a million years would I have thought I would teach children to follow those kinds of rules. By being selfless we can bring an end to this pandemic and be able to hug our loved ones, friends and neighbors. I love you all!



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2020

Author: Dacey Lee

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:23-25

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*For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, "All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever." And this is the word that was preached to you.*

(1 Peter 1:23-25)

My "QUARANTEAM" calls me the zoom queen. I have kinda figured out how to have my "normal" life or at least most of it with the help of zoom. I have virtual school, dance classes, church, Girl Scouts, art class, robotics team, yearbook committee, and real life regular golf. I have attended some "drive by" birthday parties and family driveway visits. I have even managed to host a virtual Halloween and scavenger hunt party that my friends thought were really fun. So overall, my life and activities have continued on—Surviving and Thriving!

My friends and I stay in touch via zoom, facetime, and text. We share our favorite music, delivery orders, how our day went, treats, books, movies, art projects, funny pajamas and Tshirts, and complain about WiFi. Sometimes friends share that they are lonely or would like to see someone in person so I try to be available for facetime and maybe drop off a surprise at their door just so they know they are not forgotten. I also appreciate my in-person school friends sharing stories and updates on what is happening at school.

Even though I have been able to carry on, I look forward to the new Covid task force team at Inauguration Day and think that it will become safer to get back to my in-person life. Faith and

science make a good team for Surviving and Thriving!

Reading 1 Peter 1:23-25, it reminds me that this pandemic will one day pass and I know that most things are not everlasting but the word of God is always there. God is always there for us. We have a cross in our family room that Mrs. Lynn Odle made. It is white and blue and it stands on the corner of our mantle. It says, "The Lord takes broken pieces and by his love makes us whole." I think of it as the anchor of my home. It stays there all year round and never moves. It is the first thing I look at each morning to start my day and remind me that God is always with me. Covid may break us down but it will not tear us apart. God will put us back together again!

Zoom Queen, Dacey Lee



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2020 –  
SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT – PEACE

**Author: Pam Wagoner**

**Scripture: 1 Peter 2:1-3**

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*Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. (1 Peter 2:1-3)*

And this is the word that was preached to you. Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like a newborn baby, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord in good.

There is a very strong message in these 3 verses, Peter is telling us to cast off these things that erode our faith they are downright harmful to us. By being wicked, deceitful, hypocritical, envious and slanderous Peter is saying that these things are aimed at hurting us and the people around us as opposed to loving them. If we are carrying these things in our hearts we can't call ourselves children of God! This does sound rather grim doesn't it? But thank the Lord Peter doesn't leave us there. He reminds us in the second verse that there are healthy habits that should distinguish believers from the world so they will know us as Christians.

As we have entered the season of Advent and are thinking about Jesus birth Peter uses a metaphor of a newborn infants craving for PURE mothers milk to tell us that as Christians we need to crave the Word of God just like the infant craves its mothers milk, our growth depends on it! If we fail we will become spiritually malnourished.

Prayer: Dear Lord, as we have had challenges of all types this year we want to thank you for being the one constant in our lives and giving us the hope to carry on. Amen



MONDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2020

Author: Jim Hogan

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:4-5

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*As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him – you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:4-5)*

As we ponder this scripture, I will always remember December 7 in 1941 as the “date which will live in infamy when Japanese forces suddenly and deliberately attacked the United States of America Naval and Air forces at Pearl Harbor.” The USA reacted from the surprise attack as a “sleeping giant” and rose from the ashes to overcome tyranny in a turbulent world. FDR stated, “With confidence in our armed forces, with the unbounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph – so help us God.”

We are being challenged again in 2020 with an evil presence, that of the Covid virus pandemic. Our country has faced such major disasters in the past. And, we have survived and thrived after much effort, diligence and prayer. We can win this battle – so help us God.

The term “living stones” is used as a metaphor to illustrate the secure and intimate relationship believers have with Jesus. The foundation of God’s building is his Son, Jesus Christ, the “Living Stone.” As living stones, we have new life in Christ. As integral parts of the building of God, we have security in Christ. As the Master Builder, God places His living stones just where he wants them to be. As living stones, we are connected to one another in the body of Christ.

Pray with me,

Gracious and Loving God, you are our strength and our foundation. You are immovable, unshakable, faithful, and our fortress in the storm. Help us be more like you. Lead and guide us to be living stones relying on your shield of comfort and security. Help us help ourselves to overcome all that is confronting us. With your stronghold behind us, we can survive and thrive this ordeal. In the name of Jesus, our Rock and our Redeemer, we pray. Amen



TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2020



**Author: Jim Waters**

**Scripture: 1 Peter 2:9-10**

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*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10)*

I remember when I was coaching football and we would lose a game, my dad would always tell me, "Son, the sun will come up tomorrow in the east just like always." He was right, but a few mornings it was very cloudy. Our world is having a difficult time seeing the sun come up each day in the east during this pandemic.

While other churches are really struggling during this pandemic our church is thriving compared to past years. Our church family is focusing on God, our faith, prayer, and believing that God will end this pandemic. We continue to help others during these troubling times. We are held together by Pastor Wyatt, the important Maryse, our Elders, and most importantly by each other. What a wonderful family! First Christian Church, Allen, Texas, is truly BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING!

Our sun will continue to rise in the east even on those cloudy days! Thanks be to God.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2020

**Author: Pat Conner**

***Scripture: 1 Peter 2:11-12***

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*Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*  
(1 Peter 2:11-12)

My family moved to east McKinney when I was 11 years old. It was a great place to grow up then. There were a lot of families with school age children. I met Irene, who became my best friend, and I started attending East McKinney Christian Church with her and her younger sister Sharon. Our families didn't attend with us, but over time we became regulars. As I look back now, I realize it was because we were warmly welcomed by the members. I can't remember all the names, but I do remember some, Velma Enloe, our Sunday school teacher, and Brud Vier, our group sponsor. There were many others over the years and they all gave us their love, time, and patience while teaching us about the love of God.

I especially remember when it came time for church camp, the ones who loaded up their pick-up trucks with our luggage and us, then drove us to Lake Murray Church Camp in Oklahoma.

These people made a lasting impression on me over the years, as I realized they were living their lives according to God's will. They showed God's love and his teachings to us and others on a daily basis.

I remained a member of East McKinney Christian until I married and moved away, and have remained a member of the Christian Church to this day where I have met many who embody the love

of Jesus and share it by their everyday life.

**Prayer:**

Dear Lord,

I pray that we could all live our lives that others might see You through us.

Amen



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2020

Author: Pam Wagoner

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:13-14

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*Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. (1 Peter 2:13-14)*

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.

This year's advent theme of "Surviving and Thriving" couldn't come at a better time. For the last 8 months living with a pandemic, going through a very nasty election process, worrying about our children's education the loss of loved ones, racial injustice etc. etc..... I don't know about you but I've found myself angry, sad, hurt, and yes even sick at times, not knowing what I should do or say.

In the verses above Peter talks about submission to authorities. He says Christians give a good testimony of their commitment to the Lord by their submission to government authorities. Now we may not always agree with all of the policies of our government but God nevertheless calls us to be submissive – just as the apostles were submissive to the pagan Roman emperors.

As we are in this time of advent let's pray for a submissive heart so that Gods love will show through to make our world a better place.



**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2020**

**Author: Gina Gomez**

***Scripture: 1 Peter 2:15-16***

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*For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. (1 Peter 2:15-16)*

This has been a very hard week. Still feeling the fatigue from last week's COVID19 flu, I reluctantly returned to work during what may turn out to be some of the darkest and most intense weeks of the pandemic in Dallas area. It was a nightmare. To give some perspective let me start by saying that 10 to 14 patients is a typical workload for a nursing home nurse. A new admission adds about an hour and a half of "work" to each shift, a death or discharge that happens on one's shift will add about a half an hour of "work." So on Monday I had 19 patients 2 death/discharges and 2 admissions. I worked 2 hours of overtime, went home and vomited for about 3 hours, sent text messages to my bosses and told them I'm never coming back. I felt so angry and abused and taken advantage of, unappreciated and spent, I couldn't even cry. But I went back. My administrator called me into his office to basically beg me to not to quit. He explained that some of the other area nursing homes are soon to be opening COVID units and our influx of admissions should soon be tapering off. So I went back to work and Tuesday I had 21 patients and 3 admissions. Still so angry I can barely see straight but now that I don't care about the administrative tasks I just took care of my patients and left a great deal of work undone. So many little things go undone when we work understaffed like this, broken TV's neglected, water mugs stay empty too long, showers get missed, teeth don't get brushed. So much and so many people being neglected. Three long term patients who I knew well and loved

died that day. So angry and upset about the inferior work I was forced to do and the friends I have lost forever, I just gritted my teeth and did not cry. I promised my husband I wouldn't quit but I didn't say anything about not getting fired! Ha! This morning when I went to work the facility, the maintenance man, a man with whom I have never shared my faith, stopped at the nurses station and told me the story about how several of the TV's on my hall were not working and that God had given him a dream that morning and in that dream he gave him specific instructions about how to fix/rewire these machines to get them working properly. He got to work and followed the instructions he was given and it worked, they all worked! I couldn't even respond but I think he could tell I was smiling behind my mask. In fact I was crying behind my mask.



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2020

Author: Ann Sparks

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:17

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*Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor. (1 Peter 2:17)*

*Honor all men – Love the Brotherhood – Fear God*

Our lives have changed in a way none of us could have imagined with this horrific Pandemic-COVID-19. We are all trying to survive and avoid being infected with the virus by wearing masks, avoiding our friends, co-workers, some distant family members and even our closest neighbors. Many persons have lost their job due to the closing of a business, temporary or permanently and some need assistance. First Christian Church of Allen is not a large church but a mighty one when someone is in need.

In my case, I was very lucky as my company offered me a severance package during the pandemic. Since I was planning on retiring in January 2021, it came as a true blessing.

During this pandemic, so many high level elected officials had a solution to stop the spread of the virus. They were from the Office of the President, from State Governors, Judges and City Officials. Each had very differing ideas as to how to manage and/or stop the pandemic. These officials today have been dishonored in many ways and are still wavering as to how to manage the COVID-19 pandemic.

*“He who properly fears God will not dishonor any man”.*

I would like to share my favorite daily prayer: Author

## Unknown

*Dear God help me to see Jesus Christ in all men; not just those who are the same as I am, but those whose skin is a different color, whose nationality or race are different, whose status in life is different. Help me to see Jesus Christ in all men, not just those who love me, but those who despise me; not just those who help me but those who hurt me. And Dear Father, help me to live this day in a way that will not put too many obstacles in the path of those trying to see Jesus Christ in me. Amen*





SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2020—  
THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT—JOY

**Author: Andy Jones**

**Scripture: 1 Peter 2:21-23**

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*To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.*

(1 Peter 2:21-23)

As I read these three verses, a couple of thoughts came to mind. Verse 21 says “because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps”. As Christians, we have been taught since we were young that we should follow Jesus. This past year has been a challenge for us all. During the pandemic, the lockdowns we have endured, the political season, and the violence we have seen on television, it is worth remembering the example that Jesus gave us. Strive to follow in his footsteps.

The next verse “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth” is pretty straightforward – Jesus didn’t sin and he didn’t lie. But the word “deceit” triggered a memory of the saying, “Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive”. I realized that I didn’t know where that adage came from, so I googled it. Well, technically, I didn’t google it since I don’t use that search engine, but you get the idea. That saying comes from “Marmion”, a poem by Sir Walter Scott, written in 1808. That is a tale of forged documents, lies, a dishonest nun, abandonment, duels, a nun being walled up alive in the convent, revenge, and finally atonement for a discredited knight. The moral of this is the destructive

consequences of lies and the impact of those lies on people's lives.

Read the 23rd verse and you will find words to live by - "When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly." In other words, do not return insults with insults, nor abuse with abuse (that usually leads to a further escalation of conflict). As you read further into 1 Peter, you will find the way to respond to insults and wrongs. 1 Peter 3:9 says "Do not repay wrong with wrong, or abuse with abuse; on the contrary, retaliate with blessing, for a blessing is the inheritance to which you yourselves have been called".

As we pray for our loved ones during this pandemic, as we endure the lockdowns and social isolation, and as we look forward to the end of these hardships, it is useful to remind ourselves that we can help others to "thrive and survive" by being a blessing to them.

And, as we are reminded in our church services each week - "We have been blessed to be a blessing".

Thank you, Pastor Wyatt.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2020



Author: Sue White  
Original Date: December 4, 2007

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:24-25

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*"He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

(1 Peter 2:24-25)

### **"A Prayer of Protection from the Wickedness"**

"Not now and then, not only in peril... always". That's how we can feel the closeness of our heavenly Father. Remember how wonderful it is to get your mail out of the mailbox, and quickly scan through for a hand addressed envelope with a familiar return address of a loved one? That's what I think God does when God hears our prayers. He must just toss the advertisements, the many unwanted credit card offers out and pick out our personal earnest prayers. That's what we do with our mail. Toss the ads, and read with love and anticipation those letters from family and friends.

How many "narrow escapes" does each one of us experience daily? Probably have no idea and we'll probably never know. I read once that when we meet an oncoming car and/or pass another, we are within about 18-24 inches of death!

One time, our RV group each painted a "plaque" that showed a little house with hearts for windows, and the statement said "A day hemmed in prayer" and every time I looked at it I would ponder if I had prayed the day before or even that morning. Psalms 5: 11 advises us: "To take refuge in you, be glad".

When we pray, we feel “glad”. Doesn’t it just lift our hearts and make us smile? The comfort of it! “For it is you who blesses the righteous man, O Lord, you surround Him with favor as with a shield”.

It speaks to each one “Take refuge, sing for joy, be sheltered, all who love me be blessed”. You surround us with your light, your care.

Can I go one day with so many blessings and not pray my earnest gratitude? We should pray:

A “Thank You” prayer for our joyously blessed life

A prayer for others

A prayer for protection

A prayer for healing

A prayer of thankfulness

A prayer of gratitude

A prayer for communication

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for my maladies, they have helped me accept the death of my loved one. Thank you for your daily blessings. Remembering the good and forgiving our faults and sins. Bless your servants’ work, so others will view their blessings as your loving care and their pain as the assurance of your love. How can one live and survive without your promises of everlasting life? Bless your church and all those who enter, I pray... Amen!



TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2020

**Author: Martha Hogan**

*Scripture: 1 Peter 3:8-9*

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*Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. (1 Peter 3:8-9)*

The reason I often choose this date for the Advent Devotional is because December 15, 1936 was the day my parents were married. It is a good day to remember them and all the lessons they shared.

Reading today's scripture shouts FACEBOOK, TWITTER, and other forms of social media behavior during this election season. I have seen too many instances of repaying insult with insult. One of my Facebook "friends" posted yesterday that she was going through her list of many friends and deleting those who had insulted her posted opinions. It is sad that in today's world people feel free to criticize, insult, or in other ways demean acquaintances and strangers without consideration for one another.

This advent season is like no other that I can remember. Because of the pandemic we are encouraged to stay safe by not being in large gatherings. Hopefully, that means there are fewer distractions this year to take our attention away from preparing for the arrival of the Light of the World. Advent sets aside four weeks for spiritual preparation for Christ's coming. In this quiet time of preparation let us "be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble." "Christmas gift suggestions: To your enemy, forgiveness. To an opponent, tolerance. To a friend, your heart. To a customer, service. To all, charity. To every child, a good example. To yourself, respect."  
-Oren Arnold



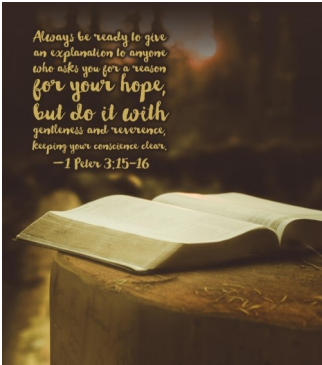
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2020

Author: Dorothy Clark

Scripture: 1 Peter 3:15-16

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*But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.*  
(1 Peter 3:15-16)



At this time of the year, let us remember what a difficult year this has been for each of us and the world.

All of us sometime during this difficult year, have wondered if there was HOPE for us/world but I say with certainty that God will always give you HOPE. We live our lives in such a way that God will somehow give us the Hope that we need in our daily lives.

This year each of us has had to HOPE and PRAY that this problem with the virus and turmoil in our country/world will be resolved soon.

Being isolated and alone for so many weeks have us wondering what God wants from us but never has he not given us HOPE.

For some reason God has given me Hope several times during my life even though I did not really deserve the Hope but for some reason he always believed in me and for that I will be forever thankful.



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2020

Author: Pastor, Dr. Wyatt E Fenno

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:7

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Dr. W's Reflections...

## A MOMENTOUS DAY IN HISTORY

*The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. (1 Peter 4:7)*

December 17th is a momentous day in history...at least, for me. My mom and dad got married on this date seventy years ago today. And so, December 17, 1950, is a date which will live—not in infamy—but one that will always inspire gratitude for me. After all, I wouldn't be here if they had not gotten married!



I know things were not always easy for my mom and dad. Through the 58 years of their marriage, they faced many challenges. And, I'm sure I was one of their biggest! But, they worked hard at making a life together. We never had much, but I never went hungry. And when it comes to my faith today, I'm

especially thankful to my mom for all the ways she lived and shared her faith in Jesus with me.

As I reflect upon this new Christmas season, I remember the Christmases of my past. The passing of time also alerts me to

the reality that the “end” of all things is near. And so, I encourage you to join with me on this momentous day in my history by being “alert” and of “sober mind.” Let us “pray” and stay focused on those things that should matter the most to us during this holy season...things like faith, hope, and love. If we do so, then we will not only survive, but we will thrive!

Thanks be to God!





FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2020

Author: Thu Fenno

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:8

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### Love is the Way

*Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)*

What the world needs now is love, sweet love  
It's the only thing that there's just too little of  
What the world needs now is love, sweet love,  
No not just for some but for everyone.

This 1965 song is appropriate and timely! Love should be unconditional and unlimited. 2020 deserves extra portions of it! Our personal world is chaotic; it has been torn apart by COVID-19, rioting, and politics. We have allowed the bad behavior of others to determine our thoughts and actions...resulting in longstanding friendships being broken, heated arguments occurring, and profanity being spewed toward strangers. Social media is now, unfortunately, our source for right and wrong. It is the idol for most and the idle of many. Is what happening now any worse than what was going on in Biblical times? The Bible continually admonishes Christians then, and now, to love one another, to put others first, to turn the other cheek, and to pray. We are in this world, but we are not of this world.

We who claim to follow Jesus Christ must allow His love to be the dominant testimony in our lives. Who would know the amazing grace and divine love of our Lord and Savior better than us? Who can know the tranquility of having our sins covered by Jesus Christ, the Lover of our souls better than us?

Our Lord's love is sacrificial, broad, merciful, and holy. Since we have received the fullness of His love and forgiveness, we then must demonstrate the graciousness of our Lord toward others. Such love applauds, encourages, and elevates others. Such love allows us to be patient, forgiving, and understanding toward one another. May the love of Christ dwell in us and may we reflect that love.



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2020

Author: Richard Conner

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:9

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*Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. (1 Peter 4:9)*

The dictionary defines hospitality as cordial or gracious. And the word is derived from Latin as “to put up as a guest, or give lodging to.”

As Peter tells us, to be hospitable to others is following up on Jesus’ commandment to love our neighbors. Examples of hospitality in the bible include the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son returning, and Jesus welcoming the woman at the well.

Growing up in the Panhandle, hospitality was assumed. People waved at passing cars or spoke to others on the street. Our home was usually the destination of my friends because my mother always made them welcome. We often lived close to a railroad and what was then known as ‘hoboes’ would occasionally come by for a handout and Mother would give them cookies or sandwiches and something to drink.

However in today’s environment we are often leery of strangers and answer our doorbells through electronic means, with good reason. With COVID we distance ourselves from others.

But we can still be hospitable by sharing the joy and love of Jesus Christ with our words and actions. Showing kindness and caring reflects our love for others. Showing the love of God and the happiness it brings spreads joy and comfort to all it reaches. God’s hospitality welcomes all so we should show that

same hospitality without grumbling.

Prayer:

“ Precious Lord, help us to be accepting of others and show kindness and compassion that we may be spreading the likeness of Jesus by our actions. Amen”



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2020 –  
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT – LOVE

Author: Lana Lee

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:10-11

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*Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*  
(1 Peter 4:10-11)

2020 has certainly been an interesting and “unprecedented” year. Dacey has decided that “unprecedented” is her new least favorite word. Whenever she hears someone utter that word, she immediately reacts with an UGH and braces for something that she is not going to like to hear.

So, with so many “unprecedented” unexpected and unplanned events this calendar year, it is comforting to know that there are still many foundations of life that we may count on and wrap ourselves in the comfort of to keep surviving and thriving.

I have been amazed at people's ingenuity and creativeness in these “unprecedented” times. At a certain point, most determined that we were going to have to rethink our usual ways of conducting business, everyday life, and life's special events. In addition to working remotely and virtually as much as possible, we have attended a zoom bar mitzvah, a bridal shower at a park, several drive by birthday parties, a virtual wedding, a zoom memorial service, and other festivities. It is encouraging that people have found ways to keep living and celebrating.

In 1 Peter 4: 10-11, we are reminded that each of us has received a special gift, talent, or skill from God and God wants us to share our gifts with others. Sometimes the bleakest of times brings out the best in people. I know we have received some of the nicest of calls, notes, and texts from friends, family and even strangers during the pandemic. One of my favorites occurred when a person from several streets away stopped by and we were not home so she wrote us a beautiful note thanking us for our yard décor and words of encouragement to the community. Kerry bought us a set of letters with four of each letter to stake in the yard and display a message. Each week, we think of something to share with our neighbors and have been told by neighbors and friends that they cannot wait to read our message for the week. Some are inspirational, some are directional, some are just downright “punny” and many have a musical twist.

Our FCC family seems to be embracing God’s directive in 1 Peter 4: 10-11. I appreciate Wyatt’s prayer for the day and his extra services and check ins with church friends and family. Maryse, as always, has expanded her skill set and keeps all connected and up to date on events and happenings. (The late Andy Rooney used to say that everyone needs a wife. I think everyone needs a Maryse.) I like that in this time of need, more people have stepped up to assist people, deliver goods, and sometimes just brighten someone’s day. Additionally, our church outreach, programming, and tithing have grown with these challenging times. Imagine what we may do when we are able to resume a more normal congregation! Please know that God did not say the talents and gifts to share had to be huge or newsworthy. Sometimes it is the tiniest of gestures and acts that mean the most.

“Don’t just get older, get better.

Live realistically. Give generously. Adapt willingly.

Trust fearlessly. Rejoice daily.” ~Charles Swindoll

Wishing you a “joy-filled” Christmas! With Christmas Love!



MONDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2020—

Author: Dorothy Clark

*Scripture: 1 Peter 5:6*

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*Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. (1 Peter 5:6)*



As a child, I cannot remember going to church except when we moved to McKinney, Texas. My Uncle took us to the church they attended which was a Pentecostal Church in Dallas, Texas. When I was 15 years old, my family moved to Allen, Texas.

My last year of High School, I lived with Alvis and Roberta Story and they attended the First Christian Church of Allen and so did Lilburn and Bonnie Speight my boyfriend's parents. I cannot remember when I was baptized or joined the First Christian Church of Allen, but it had to be in 1957 or 1958 as I was married in the church August 15, 1958.

After my marriage of nine and half years, things began to happen in my life that caused me to become very unhappy with church life and in January, 1968, I left the state of Texas and moved to California. I attended one of our Christian Churches in Los Angeles for a couple of time but was still dissatisfied with myself and the church.

I know that I believed in something all those years but at that

time my life was so out of sorts that it was hard to remember that Christ was there for me.

My life became incredibly happy and content in 1980. Why I did not return to Church earlier, I do not have an excuse. It could be because I moved to Canada and there were no Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the city where I lived, at least I can use that as my excuse as I have none other.

I did not attend Church again until I returned to Allen in 2019. The First Christian Church of Allen accepted me with all the LOVE and HOPE I needed after moving back to Allen after 51 years.

One thing I do know now is that Christ must not have ever left or disowned me as I have turned out to be a person who now believes in His forgiveness and powers.





TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2020 —

Author: Mary Green

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:7

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*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7)*

I've been anxious more this year than I can ever remember I've been anxious in my life. This Covid 19 virus has been very difficult to live with. As many of you know I have a low immune system which means I can easily get that virus and get very sick. So...when I read this verse I said this one is for me.

There are many things in our lives that we all are anxious about at one time or another. If we can just remember to cast our anxieties on him, he will make things better for us. So when I'm anxious about not seeing you all at church because I can't come, I will have to remember that HE CARES FOR ME AND YOU.

As we are in the Advent season and Christmas seasons, remember to cast your anxieties on him and remember that he cares for you.

Please have a safe Christmas Season and remember that we are blessed to be a blessing.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2020 —

Author: Dorothy Clark

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:8-9

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*Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. (1 Peter 5:8-9)*



Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your

brothers and your sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kind of suffering.

This has been an exceedingly difficult year for each one of us in Allen and the world.

The isolation alone has been exceedingly difficult as humans, we are a community of people who are not accustomed to being shut up in our homes alone.

The first three months of the pandemic was exceedingly difficult as I only saw someone when I went to get my mail. To those of us who were without a spouse or children it became a life of reading and TV.

One bright spot resulted in my isolation was I began reading the Bible from the beginning. I must admit I am only about halfway through the book. I do hope to finish someday.

All of us had to find some way to keep our faith in Christ as we wondered how Christ could let all of us suffer this crisis alone.

One saving grace for me was the way our minister kept us all informed on a daily basis with what was happening. Online church every Sunday, daily prayer, mid-week word of encouragement, updates on our parishioners, and pandemic updates. Without his emails, we would all still be wondering what was happening with our church family.

So, let us all give a great many thanks to all the ministers in the world who kept parishioners informed and made them feel needed. This was one way we were able to keep our faith in Christ.

Another way that kept me believing was that I lived in the same apartment building that my brother and sister-in-law live. In the beginning we did not see one another but as things improved, we were able to see each other at least once a day. That also helped me keep my faith in Christ.



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2020 –  
CHRISTMAS EVE

Author: Rolin Green

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:10-11

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*And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 5:10-11)*

Peter challenged the elders to be good shepherds of their churches, just as Christ was a good shepherd with his disciples. Peter urged elders to look out for struggling Christians as shepherds would lost sheep. The attitude Christ modeled for us is one that should typify every Christian whether leader of a vast organization or a solitary person. Not puffed up with self importance, but poured out for others.

Such is the spirit of Christmas. We seek to humble ourselves and do good for all mankind. And also throughout the year we should be humble and kind, showing our concern for others so that all will feel the effects of being mutually uplifted. That is the best gift that keeps on giving – compassion.

Merry Christmas!



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2020 –  
MERRY CHRISTMAS!!

Author: Carol Henry

Scripture: 2 Peter 1:3-4

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### **“The gift that keeps on giving”**

*His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. (2 Peter 1:3-4)*

The last ten months have been full of challenges and changes, but the one thing that hasn't change is Jesus.

He is the gift that we received over 2000 years ago that “keeps on giving”. He is the one solid thing in our lives that we can cling to in the midst of the storms that we are experiencing.

He gives us HOPE for the present and the future.

I love acronyms—Here are a few to cling to as we move forward with Jesus at our side!

I'm	HOPE
<u>H</u> olding	is the little voice you
<u>O</u> n to your	hear whisper “maybe”
<u>P</u> romises	when it seems the entire
<u>E</u> ach Day	world is shouting “No!”

Prayer: Jesus, help us to learn how to lay our burdens down at the foot of the cross and follow you. Amen. Merry Christmas!



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Merry Christmas!

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