



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND



Comfort
and Joy

Countdown to Christmas – Daily reflections and prayers for Advent 2020

The birth of Jesus, God's Son, on earth, is the long-anticipated event in the Christian faith; the Messiah was born in a manger to a virgin mother, fulfilling ancient prophesy and setting off a chain of events to save the world from sin. During this special Advent season, students and staff at Becket Keys will be pausing at the end of each day for a short time of reflection and prayer. So, why not join us (in heart and spirit) from your home or place of work! Dim the lights, light a candle, reflect and pray. There are 25 short Advent reflections and prayers, so let us connect each day to the reason we have joy this Advent and Christmas season, and find comfort as well as hope for the age to come. God is with us always. We are never alone.

Bible verses are hyperlinked to encourage you to explore further. The words of Meg Butcher were adapted for these reflections and prayers.

<p>1</p>	<p>Light of the World <i>'The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.'</i> Isaiah 9:2</p> <p>'Light' represents the presence of God. God spoke through Isaiah, hundreds of years before Jesus' birth, to tell His people Jesus would be "light" for everyone.</p> <p>Father, During Advent, help us to understand your light, and what it means to be in your presence. We want to live in your light, Father, and we want to be a reflection of the light of Christ to others. Jesus came to be a light for us all, not just a select few. He came to brighten up <i>all</i> of our days. Help us to discover this light in us, Father, and shine brightly for your kingdom! In Jesus' name, Amen.</p>
<p>2</p>	<p>Our Wonderful Counsellor <i>For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'</i> Isaiah 9:6</p> <p>Ancient names and titles have rich and deep meanings. The four names given to the Messiah in this reading (<i>Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace</i>) specifically describe His character.</p> <p>Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace, Thank you for being the one who works all things out for our good and your glory. Help us have a better glimpse and understanding of your magnificent power and miraculous nature. In Jesus' name, Amen.</p>

3

The Root of Jesse

'In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.' [Isaiah 11:1](#)

'I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.' [Revelation 22:16](#)

Only a small remnant of God's people remained during Isaiah's time, but out of a seemingly impossible situation would come the Saviour of the world.

Father,

Thank you for our Root of Jesse, our bright Morning Star. Thank you that out of the smallest remnant you brought your son, and that he has ushered the way for all tribes, tongues and nations to know you and rejoice with you one day in Eternity. As we look to the past to see how you have fulfilled your promises to us, let us look to the future with hope and certainty that we will one day be in your presence.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

4

The Spirit of the Lord

'The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord.' [Isaiah 11:2](#)

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Father,

Advent is a time to prepare our hearts for Christmas. Let your Holy Spirit be with us and direct us during this special season of celebration. Help us listen and be attentive to the presence of the Holy Spirit in us.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

5

The prophetic Word of truth

'...I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning ...'

[Luke 1:3](#)

Luke, a doctor, was familiar with investigating facts. His account, and many others, reveal that Jesus' life not only fulfilled over [300 Biblical prophecies](#), but is historical fact.

Father,

The Bible is not just a collection of stories. It is the truth. Help us to embrace the historical significance of Scripture, and strengthen our trust in you to explain the parts we do not understand, in your perfect timing.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

6

Praise for the life of Jesus

'Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John.'

[Luke 1:13](#)

In [Luke 1:41](#), we read that when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Father,

	<p>It is a joy to discover the way You pieced together Jesus' earthly family. He had brothers, sisters, and cousins, just like we do! He experienced life on earth as we do. Due to this, we can relate to Jesus in a special way. He truly knows how we feel and understands both the best and hardest parts of living on Earth. We are thankful that Jesus' calls us friends, and that he has grafted us into his family. He is always with us. We are never alone.</p> <p>In Jesus' name, Amen.</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>Believe</p> <p><i>'I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time.'</i> Luke 1:19-20</p> <p>When do we doubt our Lord?</p> <p>Father, Forgive us for our unbelief. We, like Zechariah, have a hard time believing things we cannot see or do not seem to make sense. Jesus said he came so that we would live life to the full (John 10:10), but we cannot experience that fullness when we doubt you and your ways. Teach us, as we prepare our hearts this Advent season, how to embrace the truth of Christ.</p> <p>In Jesus' name, Amen.</p>
<p>8</p>	<p>Have faith</p> <p><i>'Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father, David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.'</i> Luke 1:30-33</p> <p>The angel's news fulfilled the prophecy in Isaiah: <i>'Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and, will call him Emmanuel.'</i> Isaiah 7:14</p> <p>Father, Today we remember the earthly mother of Jesus and thank you for her example of great faith and trust in you. Let our response to impossible situations be like that of Mary; inquisitive, but not doubtful of what our great God is capable of. Lord, help us take hold of the same hopeful faith Mary had. For you have great things in store for those who say 'yes' to you!</p> <p>In Jesus' name, Amen.</p>
<p>9</p>	<p>God has prepared a way for us</p> <p><i>'This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David.'</i> Matthew 1:1</p> <p>Father, Only you could orchestrate forty-two generations of storied history and fulfilled prophesy leading up to the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ. We are in awe of your great plan for us. This Advent season, grow in our hearts a love and appreciation for your story. Thank you for preparing the way for us, and sending your only Son, Jesus, to save us. We give praise to you Oh Lord.</p> <p>In Jesus' name, Amen.</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>Leap for joy</p> <p><i>'When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice, she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!"'</i> Luke 1:41-42</p>

	<p>Leaping was and is an expression of joy. Imagine, John in his mother’s womb divinely experiencing joy in the presence of Jesus!</p> <p>Father, The Advent season causes us to anticipate the joy of Christmas morning. Our prayer today is that the joy we feel at Christmas will last throughout the year! Please bless our minds and hearts to remember and celebrate Christmas joy all year-round. In Jesus’ name, Amen.</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Rejoice - Mary’s song <i>“My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.” Luke 1:47-48</i></p> <p>‘Mary’s Song’ or the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-56) begins with her sheer joy over the fact that God had noticed her. He is a personal God, and notices all of His children.</p> <p>Father, On this day of Advent, we thank you for noticing us! Like Mary, we are amazed by the way you see all of us so personally. Jesus being born on Christmas Day means that our relationship with you can be personal through prayer, and your Word, and the Holy Spirit in us. Like Mary, we praise you Father and rejoice in who you are. In Jesus’ name, Amen.</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>Preparing for Jesus’ arrival – Zachariah’s Song <i>“And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, and to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.” Luke 1:76-79</i></p> <p>‘Zechariah’s Song’ (Luke 1:68-80) is recorded after John the Baptist’s birth. When Zechariah obediently agreed his name should be John, and not a family name, his trust in God restored his speech!</p> <p>Father, Advent is a special time in which we prepare for Jesus’ birth. Even the birth of John, the one who would prepare the way for Jesus, was special. How compassionate was your heart to restore Zechariah’s speech, giving him another chance to be faithful! Nothing you do, Father, is a coincidence. We love discovering you in the Christmas story of Jesus. Help us to remember that your work in our lives is just as special and specific. In Jesus’ name, Amen.</p>
<p>13</p>	<p>The truth of the Good News <i>“Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:20-21</i></p> <p>Joseph did not want to embarrass Mary, but he did not believe her at first and was still planning on divorcing her quietly before the angel visited him.</p> <p>Father, We remember Joseph today, and realise in a new way what courage it must have taken him to marry Mary! He did not believe her at first, Father, and nor do we believe people who are speaking truth to us sometimes. As the angel visited Joseph to clarify the truth and assure him</p>

	<p>the child was from the Holy Spirit, we pray to be able to hear Your voice clearly through whomever You choose to speak through in our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.</p>
14	<p>Obedience even when it is hard <i>'So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.'</i> Luke 2:4</p> <p>Joseph and Mary travelled to Bethlehem for a census decreed by Caesar for the entire Roman Empire. This meant that their location for Jesus' birth fulfilled Isaiah 9:7, 'He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom ...'</p> <p>Father, Every part of Christ's birth story reflects a prophecy fulfilled. The faithfulness of Joseph and Mary is inspiring, and we pray to be obedient as they were. God, your purposes were greater, then and now. Help us to remember, when life is unfair and hard, you are still at work in our lives. Nothing can stop the work You have started. In Jesus' name, Amen.</p>
15	<p>God with us <i>While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloth and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.'</i> Luke 2: 6-7</p> <p>The simplicity of Jesus' birth circumstances tells us a lot about Him. He did not come into the world in a palace, but in a stable or, some say, a cave used as a stable.</p> <p>Father, We praise and glorify you for the birth of Christ our King! Help us to learn from the humble circumstances which Jesus was born into on earth. The lack of room for Mary and Joseph did not delay You from coming to earth to be with us. Emmanuel means, "God with us." You are a God of purpose, intention and perfect timing. Allow us to discover who you are through the birth of your Son. In Jesus' name, Amen.</p>
16	<p>The awe of the shepherds <i>'And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.'</i> Luke 2:8-9</p> <p>'Shepherd' was not a glamorous job in society at that time, yet the angel appeared to them. They were chosen to receive the glorious Good nNews.</p> <p>Father, The care and compassion to allow shepherds, to witness an angel and Your glory, teaches us You value all of us no matter what we do. This Advent season, open our eyes to see the "shepherds" in our lives and communities, and to love them as we would any other. Create in us hearts of compassion and, like the shepherds, hearts filled with awe of who you are. In Jesus' name, Amen.</p>
17	<p>He came down from heaven <i>'But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid."'</i> Luke 2:10</p> <p>The fear the shepherds felt was the same fear that struck Zechariah when the angel visited him. God's holiness creates a reaction of awe when we are in the presence of His glory.</p> <p>Father,</p>

	<p>Many times, you tell us not to be afraid. Help us to understand the difference between fear of the things of this world and fear in respectful awe of you. This Advent, let us be in awe of the plan you put in place to save us from our sin. A baby, born in a manger. Your precious Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.</p>
<p>18</p>	<p>Jesus took on human likeness <i>"I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."</i> Luke 2:10-11</p> <p>The angel echoed Isaiah 43:11: "I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no saviour."</p> <p>Father, Fill our hearts with the truth of the angel's words. The birth of Jesus in human likeness means that we will never have to be apart from you again. Thank You for giving us the gift of your Son. Jesus, thank You for taking on all of our sin by way of the cross. Thank you for walking the earth so you could understand how we feel and comfort us the way no one else can. In Jesus' name, Amen.</p>
<p>19</p>	<p>The signs and wonders of Christmas <i>"This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."</i> Luke 2:12</p> <p>In Luke 2:20, the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.</p> <p>Father, We praise You for giving us signs and wonders! Help us to see your hand in this world, Father. You are always with us, guiding us, providing for us, and embracing us in your perfect love. Help us see the everyday miracles of your presence and provision in our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.</p>
<p>20</p>	<p>Glory to God in the Highest <i>'And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."'</i> Luke 2:13-14</p> <p>The angels sang praise to God in heaven, and of the unique peace Christians experience in mind, body and soul.</p> <p>Father, Glory to God in the highest! Nothing on earth, no person or accomplishment can satisfy our souls completely. Today we declare your glory! We see it in all the beautiful decorations of the season and the cheerful faces around us. We see your glory in all You have created. Help us glorify You today! In Jesus' name, Amen.</p>
<p>21</p>	<p>Courage to go and tell of Jesus <i>"Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."</i> Luke 2:15</p> <p>In their travels to see Jesus, the shepherds spread the word of what had happened.</p> <p>Father,</p>

	<p>Just like the shepherds on the night of our Saviour's birth, we are called to shine light in dark places by speaking of Jesus and living in such a way that our lives reflect his glory at work in us. Give us a boost of bravery when we need it, to remember the shepherds awe and how they could not help but spread the Good News of Christ's birth.</p> <p>In Jesus' name, Amen.</p>
22	<p>Treasure the Good News in our hearts <i>'But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.'</i> Luke 2:19</p> <p>The observance about Mary in this verse is repeated in Luke 2:51 after Jesus is found at the temple.</p> <p>Father, The way You have created us is complex and wonderful. We are full of thoughts and brimming with emotion. Help us to remember the special moments when we experience You in our lives. Like Mary preserved certain moments in her heart (as she had the privilege of raising Jesus as her earthly son) let us not take for granted any of things or opportunities we are blessed with in our lives.</p> <p>In Jesus' name, Amen.</p>
23	<p>Created in love <i>'He was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.'</i> Luke 2:21 God knew all of us before the day we were born. The Bible says, <i>'For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.'</i> Psalm 139:13</p> <p>Father, Just as Jesus was with You in the beginning, so You knew us before we breathed in our first breath of earthly air. Help us to remember that we are known to You, special to You and our purpose comes from You. Through Jesus, we can live the full life You designed for us. You know and love us Father. Thank You for creating us in love.</p> <p>In Jesus' name, Amen.</p>
24	<p>Fixing our eyes on Jesus <i>'When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.'</i> Matthew 2:10-11</p> <p>The wise men studied and followed the star that led them to Jesus. Along the way, they encounter King Herod, who told them to report the child's location back to him. Warned in a dream to return home, they did not inform the king.</p> <p>Father, The wise men followed the star faithfully, not knowing where it would lead them. Help us to follow You faithfully, not knowing what we will have to go through in this life. Help us to fix our eyes on You, Jesus. Let us offer the best of ourselves, as they presented you with precious gifts. This Christmas, as we exchange presents with each other, help us to remember that You, Jesus, are the greatest gift of all time.</p> <p>In Jesus' name, Amen.</p>
25	<p>The gift of for all time <i>'Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift.'</i> 2 Corinthians 9:15</p> <p>Emmanuel means 'God with us.' It is a word we sing about at Christmas time. It is a loving reminder that He remains 'with us' always.</p>

Father,

Today we are taking the time to prayerfully thank you for the gift of Jesus Christ. He is the reason we celebrate Christmas. May we remember Christ in a special way throughout the day. You love us so much, God, that You made a way for us to be close to You, and eventually with You in heaven, forever. It is hard to understand Your great love for us, but that will not stop us from being grateful for it each and every day. Thank you, God, for the gift of Jesus. Jesus is the way, the truth and the light.

In Jesus' name, Amen.