



A7 Centre of Mission
St Peter's, St John's & St Cuthbert's Scottish Episcopal Churches
20th December, Forth Sunday of Advent Newsletter

Collect for Forth Sunday of Advent

Stir up your power, Lord, and come: and strengthen us by the might of your love; that, although we are hindered by our sins, your abundant grace and mercy may quickly come and save us; for you live and reign with the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. **Amen.**



Advent four

A candle burns, the sign of your love.
God of Mary, come to us again this Advent.
May the light of your love
be born anew in us. Amen

2 Samuel 7:1-16 The Message God's Covenant with David

⁷ ¹⁻² Before long, the king made himself at home and GOD gave him peace from all his enemies. Then one day King David said to Nathan the prophet, "Look at this: Here I am, comfortable in a luxurious house of cedar, and the Chest of God sits in a plain tent."

³ Nathan told the king, "Whatever is on your heart, go and do it. GOD is with you."

⁴⁻⁷ But that night, the word of GOD came to Nathan saying, "Go and tell my servant David: This is GOD's word on the matter: You're going to build a 'house' for me to live in? Why, I haven't lived in a 'house' from the time I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt till now. All that time I've moved about with nothing but a tent. And in all my travels with Israel, did I ever say to any of the leaders I commanded to shepherd Israel, 'Why haven't you built me a house of cedar?'"

⁸⁻¹¹ "So here is what you are to tell my servant David: The GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies has this word for you: I took you from the pasture, tagging along after sheep, and made you prince over my people Israel. I was with you everywhere you went and mowed your enemies down before you. Now I'm making you famous, to be ranked with the great names on earth. And I'm going to set aside a place for my people Israel and plant them there so they'll have their own home and not be knocked around any more. Nor will evil men afflict you as they always have, even during the days I set judges over my people Israel. Finally, I'm going to give you peace from all your enemies.

¹¹⁻¹⁶ "Furthermore, GOD has this message for you: GOD himself will build you a house! When your life is complete and you're buried with your ancestors, then I'll raise up your child, your own flesh and blood, to succeed you, and I'll firmly establish his rule. He will build a house to honor me, and I will guarantee his kingdom's rule permanently. I'll be a father to him, and he'll be a son to me. When he does wrong, I'll discipline him in the usual ways, the pitfalls and obstacles of this mortal life. But I'll never remove my gracious love from him, as I removed it from Saul, who preceded you and whom I most certainly did remove. Your family and your kingdom are permanently secured. I'm keeping my eye on them! And your royal throne will always be there, rock solid."

Romans 16:25-27 The Message

²⁵⁻²⁶ All of our praise rises to the One who is strong enough to make *you* strong, exactly as preached in Jesus Christ, precisely as revealed in the mystery kept secret for so long but now an open book through the prophetic Scriptures. All the nations of the world can now know the truth and be brought into obedient belief, carrying out the orders of God, who got all this started, down to the very last letter.

²⁷ All our praise is focused through Jesus on this incomparably wise God! Yes!

Luke 1:26-38 The Message A Virgin Conceives

²⁶⁻²⁸ In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to the Galilean village of Nazareth to a virgin engaged to be married to a man descended from David. His name was Joseph, and the virgin's name, Mary. Upon entering, Gabriel greeted her:

Good morning! You're beautiful with God's beauty, Beautiful inside and out! God be with you.

²⁹⁻³³ She was thoroughly shaken, wondering what was behind a greeting like that. But the angel assured her, "Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus. He will be great, be called 'Son of the Highest.' The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David; He will rule Jacob's house forever—no end, ever, to his kingdom."

³⁴ Mary said to the angel, "But how? I've never slept with a man."

³⁵ The angel answered, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Highest hover over you; Therefore, the child you bring to birth will be called Holy, Son of God. ³⁶⁻³⁸ "And did you know that your

cousin Elizabeth conceived a son, old as she is? Everyone called her barren, and here she is six months pregnant! Nothing, you see, is impossible with God.”

And Mary said, Yes, I see it all now: I'm the Lord's maid, ready to serve. Let it be with me just as you say. Then the angel left her.

Nancy's homily 20/12/2020 **IMPOSSIBLE PREGNANCES**

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable O Lord our Strength and our Redeemer.

I have called this homily, Impossible pregnancies. Luke starts his Gospel with Elizabeth's pregnancy. She and Zachariah were old, way past the time for procreating. It is reminiscent of Sarah and Abraham in the Old Testament. Sarah actually laughed at the suggestion that she could get pregnant. But with God all things are possible. Sarah had her son, Isaac, and so began the start of the Jewish race. Elizabeth had her son, John, commonly known now as John the Baptist, who was to precede Jesus and prepare the way for Jesus.

I find it interesting that throughout the Scriptures, when an angel appears, the human is frightened and the angel tells them not to be afraid. I haven't had an encounter with one of God's divine messengers, but I am sure that my reaction would be the same. The angel greets Mary with the words: "Good morning! You're beautiful with God's beauty. Beautiful on the inside and out: God be with you."

In the tradition in which I was brought up, Mary was mentioned as Jesus' mother—God being the Father. Not a lot was made of her and yet she must have been an exceptional person for God to choose her as the mother of His Son, the Messiah. The angel has said that she is beautiful inside and out. (Could that describe you or me?!!!) Also remember she was probably only 14 or 15. Mary is scared of the angel, but the angel reassures her she has nothing to fear. "God has a surprise for you" What an understatement. She is going to become pregnant. "Slight problem here, God. I haven't had sex!" The angel explains who her child will be and what he will do. "He will be called great, be called the Son of the Highest. The Lord will give him the throne of David. He will rule Jacob's house for ever- no end ever to his kingdom. Imagine hearing that. I suppose she was amazed and excited that she was to be this baby's mother. The angel brushes aside her status as a virgin as of no consequence. He says the Holy Spirit will impregnate her. The angel tells her of Elizabeth's pregnancy to convince her of God's power.

I wonder how long Mary had to think about the implications of being an unmarried mother in a society where that was such a disgrace. What would her parents say and do? What would Joseph say? However long or short a time she had to think about it, Mary said "OK" "I see it all now: I am the lord's maid, ready to serve. Let it be with me just as you say." Not only did Mary have the pregnancy to get through, but she had to bring up this very special child. God chose her because she was a very special girl.

Years ago, the BBC put on a series of plays about the Nativity. One thing that struck me, was Joseph's attitude to Mary. He shunned her. He obviously didn't believe that she was still a Virgin- she hadn't slept with any other human. He thought that she had betrayed their betrothal vow. Her parents, I think, believed what Mary told them about the angel and his message. If they hadn't, they would have sent her packing. Unfortunately, the rest of Nazareth didn't believe her story. Would we? Her parents asked Joseph to look after her as they made their way to Bethlehem. She must have been scared, knowing that she could give birth any time soon and no friendly face around. She must have drawn strength from her encounter with the angel- this is God's will, not hers.

What can Mary teach us today? She can teach us to be open and alert, listening to what God has to say to us. God often speaks to me through studying the Bible or Christian literature. Very rarely have I heard God or an angel speak to me (Could that be because my ears are closed to Him?) Mary was obedient. She didn't prevaricate. God told her what was going to happen and she accepted it, regardless of what it would cost her. Do we do what God wants. We can listen and know what he wants us to do. Then we either do it wholeheartedly, do it half-heartedly or walk away. Mary lived a beautiful life – she was clean inside as well as out. As we examine our lives, have we got some junk that needs to be tossed out to make way for the Coming of this precious Child?

I would like to finish by listening to the singing of Mary's song "The Magnificat"

Here are the words that we are all familiar with from the Authorised version of the Bible.

My soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden; for behold from henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He that is mighty hath done to me great things and holy is His Name. And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation. He hath showed strength with His arm; He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and hath exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich He hath sent empty away. He hath holpen His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy. As He spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

Loving Father, as we approach a Christmas season that looks very different from normal, we thank you, that while we may not be able to be with our families and loved ones in person, we know that You are always with them. Where there is weariness, would you bring Your rest; where there is hopelessness, would you bring fresh encouragement; where there is despair, would you bring hope.

Intercessions for 4th Sunday of Advent



Lord God, we join our prayers to those of Mary, your faithful servant and mother of our Lord, to proclaim your greatness, and sing in gratitude for all your wonderful gifts bestowed on us, your lowly servants. Lord, we pray, look down with love upon our Churches on the A7 as day by day we struggle to be worthy of Jesus' name. Be with us as we focus on the coming of your kingdom and the gift of your son this Christmas.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Mary prayed that the mighty be cast down from their thrones, we pray that those in power would use that power wisely and compassionately so that the lowly would be lifted up, the hungry fed and greater equality be established between rich and poor. We particularly pray that all peoples of the world be given access to Corona Virus Vaccines whatever their situation, age or gender.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Mary's prayer was given to God whilst on a visit to her cousin Elizabeth. At this time of Advent and Christmas, we pray for all who are travelling to visit relatives and friends. We give thanks for the hospitality shown by our friends and families and for our opportunity to share with them and ask that we are always aware of your presence with us.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Mary recognised your promise of mercy; Lord we ask you to show your mercy on all who are sick, fearful or in mourning and especially we pray for those members of our church, families.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Heavenly Father, you sent to earth the gift of your son Jesus Christ that in your power and love we might also have the gift of eternal life; bless those whom we love that have departed this life with the gifts of your all-encompassing love and life eternal.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Heavenly Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of the promised saviour: fill us your servants with your grace, that in all things we may embrace your holy will and with her rejoice in your salvation; send us out to finish our Advent journey filled with love and joy and peace ready to receive that promise afresh into our lives.

Merciful Father: accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

Simon's Christmas message

It's the last full week before Christmas and ive just been down the Town its wet and still very dull and bleak. It looks like its going to be one of those miserable days when you feel like not wanting to do much except stay out of the rain. My clothes are wet through. I'm glad I've got fresh clothes to change into.

You know we have all been through and are still going through a tough time. But hopefully God willing, with this new vaccine, things will be brighter for us all this coming year. Walking back up the hill to home I was reminded about even in these difficult times God is still there for us.

I've just witnessed the Kindness of the Lord. The Good News of the Kingdom. About 300yds in front of me an older person had just slipped over on the wet leafy path. I hurried to see if she was OK. Her shopping carrier bag had burst open and there are tins and bottles rolling down the hill. Loo roll is also burst open and getting wet you can picture the scene can't you.

But out of nowhere people are coming to her aid. A group of young lads have rushed out of the door way of the flats and are down seeing if she's OK and are helping her up. The other lads are now running down the hill to collect her shopping. I've given a hand and doing a bit of first aid as the lady has hurt her ankle. While I'm doing this, the lads have phoned for an ambulance. A car has stopped and is helping the lads get the shopping.

The Ambulance has come she's OK and off to the BGH with her shopping.

And I'm now back at home getting changed and warmed up.

But what have I just witnessed and been part of? Well, I tell you it's the Good News of Jesus at Christmas time.

I would of probably have been cautious of these young lads. It just shows me how judgmental we can be. You can't tell a Good Book by its cover can you? Sorry Lord for being too judgmental.).

This is why Christ came to us at Christmas. To help us learn how to Care and look out for one another. Not to fight but to recognize people as people and treat them as we would like to be treated. Christ came to us, as a Gift from God. Yes, Christ may not be physically with us but His nature is in all of us. A Gift he has given to each of us of how to care for one another, and value one another.

Let us all this Christmas try to share our compassion and kindness with all those we meet not just at Christmas. But all the year round.

After all just as the advert says a pet isn't Just for Christmas it is for life. Christ too is here for all our life. Watching and caring guiding and helping us through our lives journey.

Thankyou to everyone for looking out for others and for me.

If you are able to show kindness to all around you, I guarantee you have made a difference to someone's life somewhere.

Happy Christmas to Everyone. May this coming year be brighter for you than this year has been.

Yours Simon Cake.

St Peter's Update

It's been a while since any actual update has been given other than for Covid.

Who would have thought that after all these months we would still have so many restrictions on our lives? All of us have been affected to some degree by the pandemic and church life just isn't the same. Many of us are feeling some strain and fatigue with the situation as we try to remain hopeful that something resembling normality will emerge soon. 2021 certainly looks brighter with vaccines being developed and quicker testing happening.

We have thankfully been able to start services again and there are a small group of people trying their best to keep this going.

Those able to attend church will notice that the Foodbank has some impact on the church area. We try our best to limit this impact but with the huge amounts of food parcels required this is not always easy.

Foodbank parcels went from around 50 to 60 a month, pre- Covid, to 60 to 80 a week. A massive demand which hasn't reduced over the months as people find themselves furloughed or unemployed and waiting on benefits to come through. It's been a difficult time for many.

Thankfully donations are still coming in and Phil does his best to keep the areas clear, whilst still fulfilling his duties to the church.

Having the Foodbank operating from St Peter's is a privilege and a great opportunity for outreach. Some of you have been able to help in the past but with the Covid situation were unable to continue. The Foodbank continues to run with many non-church volunteers which is fantastic. However if anyone is able to help out you would be most welcome. It's not all about meeting people who collect the parcels, there are some tasks which can be done with limited contact to others. Restocking the supplies, checking stock dates or splitting some foodstuffs for example can be done at quiet times. The Foodbank provides all the PPE required and follows strict hygiene procedures.

If you wish to volunteer then please feel free to ask me and this can be arranged.

Many thanks Karen



Ethel's stall at Guess What raised £234.60 in November for the Foodbank
That's a lot of knitting over the year - congratulations

CHURCH ONLINE

As part of the ongoing response to the Coronavirus pandemic the Scottish Episcopal Church (SEC) will be broadcasting video coverage of Eucharistic services via its website, social media channels and YouTube channel. The web page is located at www.scotland.anglican.org/broadcast-sunday-worship



For those who are not online the Archbishop of Canterbury has set up a Freephone Daily Hope service of hymns, prayers and readings. It is available 24 hours a day on 0800 8048044

TV and Radio Sunday Worship: BBC RADIO SCOTLAND – 7.30am Acts of Worship BBC RADIO 4 - 08:10am Morning Worship BBC 1 TV –

1.15pm Songs of Praise BBC Radio 4 Longwave – 9.45am Morning Service (Mon-Fri)

Those who enjoyed BBC Scotland's worship offering **Reflections At The Quay** when it was introduced at this start of lockdown will be pleased to know that a second series has been commissioned, starting from Sunday 6 December.

Join Pip this week at Holy Trinity at <https://www.holytrinitymelrose.org/> and click on the link - Holy Trinity YouTube channel. 11.00am

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJkxEqnglnze4SeN4I54Ecw>

St John's Selkirk now has their weekly Sunday services on their YouTube channel, with several (different) familiar voices each week, music, inspirational quotes and images at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9ITNAH6VHZkqM0NiH6Vt9w> available from 10am each Sunday morning..



11am to 11:30 every Wednesday morning.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87979280424?pwd=UEJzRXk0UjFpVcnJuaUjVZTzJvaE92UT09>

Meeting ID: 879 7928 0424 Password: 023545 Host: Tim Hatton



Bible Studies hosted on Zoom - all are welcome. Wednesday 7:30pm & Thursday 10:30am hosted by John Marsden Follow this link <https://zoom.us/j/7538094986?pwd=Q0x4YVYk2b3Y5eEt0VkozS0ZlVWVxGUT09> or use this information to open a Zoom meeting: Meeting ID: 753 809 4986 Password: 751474



Communion
for the
Homebound

Home Communion is only available to those people can't come out or get to church for self-isolation reasons. Please book through Sheena then Simon will contact to arrange a time.

Reserved Sacrament is still suspended until further notice due to corona virus restrictions.



opening for communal worship from September.

St John's are overjoyed their first service in church will be in Sunday 6th December at 10.30 am.

St Peter's 10.30am services on 1st and 4th Sundays will be Communion with Simon or other clergy. 2nd & 3rd Sundays will be Service of the Word. Thursday mornings will be a Said Communion service.

St Cuthbert's 10.30am services on 2nd & 3rd Sundays will be Communion, 1st & 4th Sundays Service of the Word. Wednesdays at 11.00am will be Said Holy Communion. Please remember to bring a face covering to wear unless you have health issues and the service booklet and newsletter which contains the readings etc for the week.

WHEN YOU ARRIVE FOR THE SERVICE AT ANY OF THE A7 CHURCHES PLEASE BE READY TO FILL IN THE FORM FOR GOVERNMENT TRACK AND PROTECT.

Spiritual Communion

Here is a prayer that can be used at 10.30 on Sundays when Simon will be celebrating the Eucharist

For an Act of spiritual Communion, the following prayer -

My Jesus,

I believe that you are present in the most Holy Sacrament.

I love you above all things, and I desire to receive you into my soul.

Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace you as if you were already there and unite myself wholly to you.

Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.



A7 Centre of Mission

Hello Everyone

Simon would like to know from your own understanding of what is the A7 centre of Mission and what is it all about?

Please e mail or wright down and return to Sheena as e mail smstcg1945@gmail.com or talk to Simon or Tim when you see them. many thanks Sheena

IF YOU NEED SUPPORT

Priest in charge of St Peter's, St John's & St Cuthbert's Rev Simon Cake 07710523856 cakekands@btinternet.com

St Peter's pastoral support contact Monica Reynolds 01896 757114 monica@tempelstowe.com

St Peter's prayer support Muriel Lounsbach 01896 831418 gordon.lounsbach@btinternet.com

Tim Hatton (A7 Church Army) 07784872307 tim.w.hatton@gmail.com

St Cuthbert's pastoral and prayer contact Sue Crozier 01450 376499 susanacrozier17@yahoo.co.uk

St John's pastoral and prayer contact Margaret Moyes mmoyes2@gmail.com

Joyful News

I was reading last Sunday's Service in my early morning prayer time about "being joyful ". Later that day my son Neil Skyped me from his home in Prague, as he's been doing regularly ever since lockdown. He showed me the rooms in a flat which I assumed belonged to a friend in Prague. He then showed me the view from the window and I said in amazement " but that's Galashiels! Across the road from Scott Park!" Unknown to me Neil had rented a flat for two weeks so that he could isolate after flying from Prague, then come and stay with me for Christmas and into the New Year. I just couldn't believe it and was crying with joy and amazement. So this is a joyful Advent for me! May yours be joyful too. Shirley

Christmas services

St Cuthbert's Hawick

Christmas Eve Midnight mass 11.30pm
Christmas Day Family fun service at 10.30am
Sunday 27th Service of the word at 10.30am
Sunday 3rd January Service of the word at 10.30am.
No midweek services on 23rd and 30th December

If you need to book for any of these services please contact Sue Crozier suecrozier17@yahoo.co.uk

Christmas at St John's

Christingle (on YouTube) Christmas Eve from 12 noon
Midnight Eucharist Christmas Eve 11.30pm in church
Christmas Day Communion 10.30am in church and on YouTube
NUMBERS ARE LIMITED SO PLEASE PRE-BOOK FOR SERVICES IN CHURCH, SO THAT WE CAN
THE ARRANGE SEATING IN CHURCH ACCORDINGLY
Phone 01750 22418 or email mmoyes2@gmail.com Usual Covid-19 precautions will be in place

St Peter's Christmas services

St Peter's Carol Service: this Sunday (20th) at 4pm on Zoom. Sing your heart out in the comfort and safety of your own home! [Click here to join](#) at 4pm. Zoom details: Meeting ID: 753 809 4986 Password: 751474 If you have any technical concerns about using Zoom don't hesitate to phone John Marsden on 0753 809 4986.

Christmas Eve 8pm Communion

Please book a place with Sheena on 01896 751694 or smstcg1945@gmail.com

Christmas Day There will be a said Communion service at 8.30am

There will be **NO** 10.30 service this year so that families can spend that precious time together. Simon will be in Hawick so we would not be having communion at that time as Reserved Sacrament is not permitted.



Sunday 27th December

Bishop John has indicated that as families will be travelling home after the Christmas break from COVID restrictions services can be cancelled so there will be no service in St Peter's that day.

