

# Prayer Focus

December 2018

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**Consider these prayers and use them along with your own this month.**

This is the period of Advent, when our communion table carries the Advent wreath to celebrate the light of God coming into the world through the birth of Jesus Christ. It has four candles on a wreath of evergreen. It is shaped in a perfect circle to symbolize the eternity of God. In the centre is a fifth candle to represent Christ. While the Advent wreath with its candles did bring light to churches in the past, it was not only to illuminate the interior as much as to symbolize the coming of Christ. The Advent wreath began in the time of the Protestant reformer Martin Luther.

During each Sunday of the Advent season, we focus on one of the four virtues Jesus brings us: Hope, Love, Joy and Peace.

## **Week 1 beginning 2nd December**

Our first candle is lit, symbolising Hope.

*For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. (Romans 8:24-25)*

And what do we think, after a month in which we remembered those many millions who died in two world wars? Do we wonder where God was? Never give up in our trust in Him. If we truly believe, he *will* respond.

**A Prayer for Hope: Heavenly father, I am your humble servant, I come before you today in need of hope. There are times when I feel helpless. There are times when I feel weak. I pray for hope. I need hope for a better future. I need hope for a better life. I need hope for love and kindness. And I know you will never let me down. Amen**

## **Week 2 beginning 9th December**

Our second candle is lit, symbolising Love.

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. (1 Corinthians 13:4-5)*

There are many kinds of love expressed in the bible. The most important is *AGAPE*, the unconditional love we have for God. It is the love that exists regardless of changing circumstances. But our love for God and his son Jesus should be extended to all mankind. This week pray for all you know, for all peoples you do not know, whatever their creed. God created us all, and we are all one to Him.

**A prayer for love: Creator of all, Sustainer of all, Saviour of all, your glory and majesty are beyond our understanding, your power too awesome to behold. And yet your love enfolds us as a gentle breeze. Saviour of all, Sustainer of all, Creator of all, we bless your holy name. Amen.**

## **Week 3 beginning 16th December**

Our third candle is lit symbolising Joy.

*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)*

This week will see enhanced fervour in the shops, desperate to bring “joy” to their customers. But is it truly joy for the coming of Christ? Think on this as you prepare for Christmas. What is it *really* about? Pray that others will also realise the true meaning of Christmas.

**A prayer about joy: I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in Your**

presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Amen (Psalm 16:5-11)

#### **Week 4 beginning 23rd December**

Our fourth candle is lit, symbolising Peace.

*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. For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it". (1 Peter 3:9-11)*

First of all, there must be peace within ourselves, knowing we can trust God. But we also yearn for peace amongst others. World Peace is what we must pray for, must work for. As James said (3:18) "And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness."

**A Prayer for Peace: Father God, my heart is filled with chaos and confusion. I feel as if I am drowning in my circumstances and my heart is filled with fear and confusion. I really need the strength and peace that only You can give. Right now, I choose to rest in You. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.**

#### **Christmas Day 25th December**

We light the centre candle. This represents the life of Jesus Christ, the Light of the World.

*When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." (Luke 2:15)*

Today we thank God for the best gift of all, that of his son, Jesus Christ. Amongst the celebrations do not forget the four candles we have lit: Hope, Love, Joy and Peace. Pray for the hope for a better future, the love we have for Jesus Christ, the joy of that love returned, the peace in the knowledge that He will never leave us.

**A prayer for Christmas day: Child of Bethlehem, smile upon all who are troubled, anxious or sick in mind, body or spirit and for those who love and care for them. Give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen.**

### **Week 5 beginning 30th December**

We prepare to greet the New Year

*Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:11-13)*

The New Year is a time for making resolutions, a hope that we can do better than last year. This we can only do with God's guidance through Jesus Christ. Pray to Him. Ask for the way to a better life and to a better world.

**A prayer for 2019: Our Father and our God, as we stand at the beginning this new year, we confess our need of your presence and your guidance as we face the future. So help us to humbly put our hands into your hand, and to trust you and to seek your will for our lives during this coming year. In the midst of life's uncertainties in the days ahead, assure us of the certainty of your unchanging love. Amen**

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**Altrincham United Reformed Church**

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