

Renewal

ADVENT DAILY DEVOTIONS



Written by: Rev Eben Grobbelaar, Yvette Angoma, Christine Stewart, Julie Crooks



ST GEORGE'S CHURCH
Anglican Church of
Southern Africa
PBO Number 930018128



Renewal

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

2 COR. 5:17



ADVENT 1: Personal renewal



ADVENT 2: Family renewal



ADVENT 3: Parish renewal



ADVENT 4: Societal renewal

MONDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 2020

St Andrew's Day



JOHN 1: 38A, 41

Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?"... Andrew first found his own brother and said to him, "We have found the Messiah."

The Season of Advent signals the new liturgical year for Christians. In anticipation of the Messiah's coming, new hope is starting to build. Soon the birth of Jesus Christ, the bursting of light into our world changes our perspective to overwhelming confidence that justice will prevail, that new life will come forth, new grace will be given to us, and fulfilment granted to our seeking. 30 November marks the celebration of St Andrew, the first of the apostles to be called by Jesus. Andrewside marks a time of prayer for the mission of the Church. During the coronavirus pandemic, we have been mourning the loss of the quality of life. It makes Jesus' question all the more poignant, "what are you seeking?" Spiritual renewal waits for those seeking the Messiah.

LET US PRAY:

LORD, our God, as I am seeking the life that you offer, lead me to Jesus, your Son, the Saviour of the world, who can renew my hope during a time of searching and uncertainty. Fill my soul with your Spirit, who creates and give rebirth to our tired minds. Let your love inspire us to share the testimony of your goodness with others who are also seeking meaning in life.

*Lord have mercy
On my frantic and searching mind
Lord have mercy*

*Christ have mercy
As you renew my personal being
Christ have mercy*

*Lord have mercy
By finding You, the source of life
Lord have mercy. Amen*



TUESDAY, 1 DECEMBER 2020

Nicholas Ferrar, Deacon and Religious / World Aids Day

P
E
R
S
O
N
A
L

R
E
N
E
W
A
L

ISAIAH 11:1-2, 10

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD... In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples – of him the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

The promise of Christ's coming starts to build and gain momentum in the hearts of people. The promise is as critical as its fulfilment. Reality's potency and enjoyment are dependent on preceding expectations. The role of the prophets is to call each one of us to align our personal hopes of renewal to a glorious fulfilment in Christ – a glorious renewing rest.

LET US PRAY:

God our Father, you inspired Nicholas Ferrar with your love to accept your calling and become a burning and shining light: Renew us by your Spirit, and grant that we too may be on fire with the same spirit of discipline and love to work for a world free of suffering, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen



CHALLENGE FOR TODAY:

Make time today, maybe just 10 minutes, to be quiet and meditate on the Spirit's various attributes, and how it can inspire you towards personal renewal. Then try start a conversation with someone about it.



PSALM 23

(EXCERPTS FROM THE PASSION TRANSLATION)

The Lord is my best friend and my shepherd. I always have more than enough. He offers a resting place for me in his luxurious love. His tracks take me to an oasis of peace, the quiet brook of bliss. That's where he restores and revives my life... The comfort of your love, Lord, takes away my fear. I'll never be lonely, for you are near... So why would I fear the future?

The images of this psalm are of a God who deals gently with us, who wants us to be renewed, refreshed and live a joyful life. It makes a strong argument that nothing will ever be able to fulfil and provide meaning to our lives like the love and presence of God, our maker. Therefore gratitude and praise come spontaneously. Getting fresh perspective in God's restful presence revives us to face the world. We should surrender to and follow the Shepherd of our souls.

LET US PRAY:

Lord Jesus, today I confess my vulnerability that I need someone who can offer me direction and advice for my fears and weaknesses. I have wandered and strayed from your ways like a lost sheep. I have followed too much the devices and desires of my own heart. Renew my conscience Lord Jesus, and redeem my soul from the self-inflicting despair of transgressing against the perfect and fulfilling ways of life you want us to walk in. Restore me God according to your promises declared to humankind in Christ Jesus and grant that I may live a life of closeness to you.

Amen



THURSDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2020

Francis Xavier, Priest and missionary

MATTHEW 7:24-25

Jesus said: “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall...”

It is all about the right foundation, and getting the basics right. Ravi Zacharias, the Christian apologist, was shown once a building designed according to postmodern principles. There were staircases leading nowhere, and random walls built with no obvious function, to which Ravi replied, “Is the foundation built the same way?” The ideas we believe are revealed how well we handle circumstances. The longer the experience, the more is revealed. Personal renewal consists of reviewing our basic beliefs and assumptions.

LET US PRAY:

Lord Jesus, I believe, help my unbelief [Mark 9:24]. May your words give me the renewed strength of will to choose to do what is right. Like Francis Xavier, may I sacrifice the temporal pleasures of this life to take your words of truth to the world, and gain an inheritance that will not be pass away.

Amen



CHALLENGE FOR TODAY:

Pray for a missionary, perhaps offer your support, or even plan going on a trip to visit and help people in need.



ISAIAH 29: 17-19

Is it not yet a very little while until Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be regarded as a forest? In that day the deaf shall hear... and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see. The humble shall obtain fresh joy in the LORD, and the poor shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.

There are things we are all deliberately or unknowingly deaf and blind to. Renewal is liberation and justice; it is development and wealth of personal achievement. But who initiates it? Who can open our eyes and ears? How can we be happy? It is said that evangelism is one beggar telling another where to find bread. If you are seeking truth, justice and renewal for yourself, your family, community and the world, Jesus Christ embodies those promises fulfilled and longs to give them to you, and by the power of his Spirit working through you renew the world.

LET US PRAY:

Our Father filling the space of perfection

We praise and thank you for who you are and what you do

Let your righteous values be established in the nations of the world

Give us what we need to live meaningful and content lives

Please help us to be more kind, more just, and more loving

Acknowledging our own faults, we humble forgive those that hurt us

Help us to resist evil, as we trust in your protection

Make us aware of your presence, for your rule is supreme, and we honour you always for your goodness towards us.

Amen



MONDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2020

Trust

F
A
M
I
L
Y

R
E
N
E
W
A
L

PLEASE READ LUKE 5:17-26

Nowadays the definition of family can change from its traditional idea of a group you were born or marry into. A family in today's society could be one that you choose whether that be in a social group or one developed at work. Despite the form your family takes, when a group is made of different individuals, you have different ideas and methods of doing things, and this can often cause conflict. In the lesson we read of a group carrying one their members to see Jesus. They work hard to get that member to Jesus with the hope of Jesus healing him. There were no guarantees that their friend would be healed though.

One could wonder whether the friends argued about how to cut the hole in the roof and how best to lower him to Jesus, or even the discussion beforehand when they couldn't get him through the front door. There was an element of trust in each other to execute this plan. Families are not rigid and predictable at some point. In each life cycle of a family dynamics will change, but trust needs to continue in the family unit. When we start this week thinking about family renewal, we need to first establish the trust in the family unit before we can do anything else.

PRAYER:

Merciful God, as we come to understand and trust you, we pray that we can take that understanding and trust into our own lives. We pray for insight, patience and clear communication in our dealings with one another. We pray this in your gracious name, Jesus Christ.

Amen



CHALLENGE FOR TODAY:

Trust exercise/partner obstacle course.

Have each member pair up, one person in each pair wearing a blindfold. Set up an obstacle course and have one person verbally navigate the blindfolded person through it.

TUESDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2020

Compassion



PLEASE READ ISAIAH 40: 1-3; 11

Family dynamic are always complicated. We often argue from our own perspective and think that is the only way to do things. We judge the actions of those around us, especially our families. The term “my brother’s keeper” comes to mind when we think about how our families are perceived outside of our homes. If our spouse does not react the way we want them to, or our children don’t perform well, or a sibling isn’t as successful or continues to make the same mistakes, we get upset and it enforces how we tend to see things from our own perspective. In the reading we are told to comfort and to speak tenderly to Israel, a collective family unit. It is a lesson that we should apply in our own relationships. Having compassion and empathy for our families builds on our trust for one another. The last part of the reading is the image of the sheep and how the shepherd tends to the flock, guiding in a loving way.

PRAYER:

God of compassion and love, we pray for wisdom and knowledge to understand our family. We ask for empathy and compassion when dealing with difficult situations. Be with us in all the decisions we make.

Amen

CHALLENGE FOR TODAY:



Reflect on the last disagreement that you had in your family unit and reflect on how you reacted to the situation: Was there something you could have done differently, and did you show the other person compassion? How can your family relationships be renewed or strengthened?



WEDNESDAY 9 DECEMBER 2020

Spending time

F
A
M
I
L
Y

R
E
N
E
W
A
L

ACTS 2:42

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

When work, bills, responsibilities, keeping up appearances and other commitments are always in the forefront of our lives, it is not surprising that spending quality time with our families takes a back seat to all the other things on our to-do-list. We tell ourselves that the work we are doing is for the good of the family unit, we have to put food on the table, children need to be clothed and school fees need to be paid. In some cases we are responsible for other people's livelihoods too and the pressure builds. During lockdown it highlighted the need and importance for family connection. Quality time with one another goes hand in hand with trust and compassion. For the family unit to perform at its ultimate potential you need time to understand and love one another.

PRAYER:

God of ultimate wisdom and love, we pray for renewed guidance in living a full and balanced life. Help us to distinguish between what is urgent and what can wait so that family can come first. Give us the courage to put our families before work. Give us renewed appreciation and understanding.

Amen



CHALLENGE FOR TODAY:

Sit down with your family and decide on how much time you think you can and need to spend together, and make a commitment to do it.

THURSDAY, 10 DECEMBER 2020

Listening



JAMES 1: 22-25

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror 24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25 But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

Our world is filled with so much noise, from the devices in our back pockets, to the traffic on the road, to the television and the music playing around us. We spend hours reading emails, in (Zoom) meetings listening to challenges, or to gossip. So when we get back to our home routine we often make idle talk about our day around the dinner table. Or, if we are tired we brush off what our children say when they come with problems, often overreacting or not reacting enough. We also often only hear what we want to hear. Communication is at the heart of any family and if we don't actively listen we will miss what is important.

PRAYER:

Heavenly God, as we sit and take in the sounds around us, help us to hear your voice in our everyday lives. Renew our ability to listen not only with our ears but also with our hearts. Let us hear one another with love.

Amen

CHALLENGE FOR TODAY:



Active listening: Tell each other stories of your day, let the first person go, allow them to speak without interruption. Once they have finished repeat the story back to them, beginning your sentence with “I heard...” This allows the storyteller to know if you were actually listening.



FRIDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2020

Family

PHILIPPIANS 2: 1-5

Your life in Christ makes you strong, and his love comforts you. You have fellowship with the Spirit, and you have kindness and compassion for one another. 2 I urge you, then, to make me completely happy by having the same thoughts, sharing the same love, and being one in soul and mind. 3 Don't do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble toward one another, always considering others better than yourselves. 4 And look out for one another's interests, not just for your own. 5 The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had.

The family unit stands strong in love. If we come into every family unit from a place of love, the family unit can work together in the best possible way. When we do things from a place of love, not from a place of selfishness, we do what is right for the whole family. Practicing trust, compassion, active listening and spending quality time together works towards building a stronger family unit.

PRAYER:

Sovereign God, we pray for all family units, may they be renewed in your love, compassion and care as they continue on their Advent journeys. May this time help all families reflect and be transformed in your love as we approach Christmas.

Amen



CHALLENGE FOR TODAY:

Take some time to pray for one another's renewal. This prayer doesn't need to be fancy or long but let it come from the heart.



JAMES 1: 22-25

“Simeonwas righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him.”

“Waiting” is a fact of life. We actually spend more time waiting than we do receiving. Patience implies a willingness to remain actively in the present situation and time until what is waited for comes to pass. Simeon was living and waiting on the promise of the arrival of the Messiah. During this coronavirus pandemic we are all waiting for the development of successful ‘vaccines’ to our way of life, including that for worship and fellowship. A challenging time for our church and parishioners is to maintain connectivity, fellowship, and outreach initiatives of assistance to those in great need. This is indeed a time to develop new ideas and ways of thinking, and creating unity in the church, bridging spiritual and economic divisions, and serving as Christ has called us to do.

PRAYER:

God our Father, how can we ever thank you for your love!? You sent your son to save us. May your patience dwell in us - the patience that is willing to wait for us even while we still hesitate to come to you. Renew our faith in you so that we can live in this chaotic world and survive spiritually.

Amen



CHALLENGE FOR TODAY:

Today I will try and show God’s love and goodwill with gentleness and compassion to all I encounter who are in need of help and support.



TUESDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2020

P
A
R
I
S
H

R
E
N
E
W
A
L

ROMANS 15:13

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit”.

Jesus is the source of all peace. He didn't cling to his divine power, but became weak with the weak, and identified with the rejected. Where is his peace to be found? In weakness. If we can understand this, there is peace to be found in our own weakness and vulnerability; where we feel most afraid, insecure and broken. We know that peace on earth can only come when hearts find peace with God. And only then can we be ambassadors of peace for Christ's church in the world.

LET US PRAY:

Lord God, we pray for peace in all situations, no matter what the circumstances. In a season when hearts should be happy and light, many of us are struggling with the heaviness of life – burdens that steal our joy. We need your peace Jesus. In a world where worry and uncertainty of the future prevails, stir up that good news of peace again. The coronavirus pandemic has affected our very way of life, health, safety and livelihoods. Lord, protect and be with us all, especially the most vulnerable as fear grips our world. This Advent renew our hearts so that we can welcome you more deeply into our lives.

Amen



CHALLENGE FOR TODAY:

I will live this day confidently of God's love for me, and trust in His power to work things out for the best in my life. Ask God to show you how to follow His example of gentle love to all you meet today.



JOHN 16:20

“You will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice. You will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy.”

Develop the habit of being surprised by joy and not by pain and suffering. In life there is suffering for us all, suffering that will cause us to question our decisions and choices we made. We can choose to live our losses as passages to anger, hatred, resentment and depression – or we can choose to let these losses be passages to something new and much greater. When our hearts trust we will get what we need; and having a spirit always surprised by joy - we will witness miracles taking place along our journey.

LET US PRAY:

Lord God, fill our hearts with the fresh wonder of what that first Christmas means for us today. Let joy flood into our souls as we lean on you and feel renewed by your presence. You are our Wonderful Councillor, Mighty God and Prince of Peace. Help us to look with expectation to what you will do in our lives and fill us with joy.

Amen



CHALLENGE FOR TODAY:

Let me be an instrument of bringing joy to all I meet today.



THURSDAY, 17 DECEMBER 2020

P
A
R
I
S
H

R
E
N
E
W
A
L

1 PETER 3:15

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”

Jesus came as a light to a dark world. Since the birth of Christ ages have passed and regardless of a disobedient and loveless mankind, He is still the same Saviour. In spite of attacks by the forces of evil, who tries to lead his followers into darkness, the Star of Bethlehem is still shining to lighten our path through the sin-drenched darkness of this world and bring us to the path that leads to God. On entering this festive season and continuing our journey through life, we must fasten our eyes upon the Saviour of the world – our guiding star to hope and peace.

LET US PRAY:

Lord Jesus, thank You that You came to place hope in our hearts and our lives. As this year comes to a close, Advent reminds us that You came to this world to save us sinners. Regardless of the chaos and despair surrounding us – You invite us to leave the darkness behind and put our hope in You and face the future with hope in our hearts. Regardless of what we have to suffer, with the coronavirus pandemic threatening the very quality of our lives; You are our hope for the future as You have been down through the ages. Nothing can separate us from your love. In this hope we celebrate the good news of Christmas.

Amen



CHALLENGE FOR TODAY:

Today I want to awaken hope in the hearts of all I meet – spreading the good Advent news of Christ’s message of love and hope.

FRIDAY, 18 DECEMBER 2020



P
A
R
I
S
H

R
E
N
E
W
A
L

ISAIAH 62:11

The Lord has made proclamation to the ends of the earth: "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'See your Saviour comes.'"

At Christmas we celebrate Christ's coming to the earth. However, may we never forget that he came to live in our hearts. We may confess that he came into the world as the Lamb of God to take the sins of the world upon him - It may be a wonderful confession, but it serves no purpose if we do not personally place this in our hearts. For many Christmas has become a feast without Christ. As Christians it is our duty to restore Christ to his rightful place in this most wonderful of all holy days. During Christmas the world should see who we are as we renew our Christian Advent faith: through our prayers, through our gifts and all we wish to sacrifice to God.

LET US PRAY:

Holy Father, thank you that Christ comes with his hands full of mercy, forgiveness and blessing and that He came to seek and save the lost. Lord Jesus, we worship you and look forward to celebrating your birth at Christmas. May your Spirit add new meaning to all our traditions. May the peace, the wonder and the joy enter our hearts, not only for a short time, but remain with us when we have to resume our duties, and face the worries and responsibilities that each day brings. May we be mindful of those in great need at this time of the year – through ill health, approaching old age, the loss of a loved one, economic hardships, and families far away. May the message of Christmas fill our hearts - love triumphs over everything because God so loved us He gave us His Son...

Amen



CHALLENGE FOR TODAY:

Today I will be a blessing to others – my thankfulness towards God's goodness to me will be revealed in serving others in deeds of love, helping personally and through the Church.



MONDAY, 21 DECEMBER 2020

S
O
C
I
E
T
A
L

R
E
N
E
W
A
L

JEREMIAH 22:3

This is what the Lord says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place.

May we learn to seek justice and peace for all people, especially those who have been treated unfairly and unjustly - This is a call for all sectors of society and individuals to contribute to improving social and economic conditions in our country South Africa. Let us come together to heal the wounds of our nation: unemployment, inequality, gender-based violence, crime, and violence against foreign nationals. Let us restore the moral fibre of society, common values, and social cohesion. In order for healing to happen, there needs to be forgiveness. As we have been forgiven we need to forgive those who have wronged us.

LET US PRAY:

O Lord, we pray for courage and passion to pursue justice, to speak up for all people who cannot speak for themselves; to protect the rights of all who are helpless. Guide us to do what is right and fair, to show constant love and to live in humble fellowship with God and others. Open our eyes, ears and heart, and lead us to where we can spread love, hope and faith. Sincerity and truth is what you require, fill our minds with your wisdom.

Amen



CHALLENGE FOR TODAY:

Find 10 minutes in your day to think and reflect about the role you can play in social justice.



1 PETER 5:2

Be Shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve.

We all have a role to play in society whether you are the president of a country, parents taking care of their children, doctors caring for patients or teachers educating the future generation. God wants us to love and take care of those who we are responsible for, to be and lead by example.

LET US PRAY:

Dear God, we pray for those who are in positions of authority with the responsibility to make wise decisions. We pray for a law-abiding nation that is faithful to God. Give our leaders wisdom, discernment and strength. May all people in leading roles put their trust in you Lord with all their heart and not to rely on their own understanding.

Amen



CHALLENGE FOR TODAY:

Reflect on a leader that you admire, think about the qualities that you admire about them and see if you can implement any of those qualities into your life.



WEDNESDAY, 23 DECEMBER 2020

S
O
C
I
E
T
A
L
R
E
N
E
W
A
L

PHILIPPIANS 4:6

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Many have lost their jobs and have therefore suffered financially during the coronavirus pandemic. Unemployment can challenge one spiritually, physically, mentally and emotionally. We are encouraged to seek God in the midst of this difficulty. We might not understand this challenging situation but should pray that God will give us wisdom and discernment. An even bigger challenge is to trust and believe God's promises for us to be true and that he will bring good out of every circumstance.

LET US PRAY:

Lord, we pray for those people and families who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic and face an uncertain and difficult future. We pray that through your love and power you will work out all things for good in our lives. Through faith and courage we approach your throne of grace to receive mercy and help in our time of need. May we always trust in you Lord because you are forever our steadfast rock. God, we ask that you will take care of all our needs with the wonderful blessings that come through Christ Jesus.

Amen



CHALLENGE FOR TODAY:

Volunteer your time or make a donation to those less fortunate.



2 CORINTHIANS 9:12

For this service you perform not only meets the needs of God's people, but also produces an outpouring of gratitude to God.

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted a number of jobs and work as essential services. A shift in one's mind-set changed, i.e. work was no longer just work but rather an act of love and service to people. God has blessed us with talents to share and use them for the good of all people. We have been created for a life of good deeds. May the light of our Lord Jesus shine within us as we continue to serve others graciously.

LET US PRAY:

Almighty God, we thank you for all who serve this country in their specific vocations. We pray for the renewal of the mind, body, spirit and soul of all the essential workers who have worked tirelessly, especially during the lockdown period of the pandemic to ensure that people's needs were met. May they find time to regain their energy and compassion for the work they do, to serve and use their gifts for the good of others. We pray for God's grace to be renewed, become aware of his presence, and to seek quiet spaces to hear God's voice each day.

Amen



CHALLENGE FOR TODAY:

Find a quiet space and spend time in meditation and prayer.



FRIDAY, 25 DECEMBER 2020

Christmas Day

ROMANS 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Over the past couple of months, many of us have experienced very little to no joy due to many unforeseen tragedies, losses and circumstances. As we celebrate the birth of Our Lord, may we be filled with his light so that we can encounter within us his joy, hope and peace. In turn, let us spread that light to others by performing random and intentional acts of kindness within our communities. We are encouraged to be there for our neighbours and the people within our surroundings. This will hopefully lead to igniting that hope, joy and peace that people have perhaps lost due to a very disruptive and unsettling year. True peace is not the absence of trouble, but resting in the sovereignty of God in the midst of it.

LET US PRAY:

We pray for peace in all situations, no matter what the circumstances, and to live in harmony with everyone. God, help us to notice and be thankful for all the goodness in our world. May we find time in this season to celebrate life's joys and beauty with friends and family. May the glory of the Lord Jesus shine upon us as we commemorate the good news of his birth, which brings great joy to people. Thanks be to God for the Prince of Peace.

Amen



CHALLENGE FOR TODAY:

List or write yourself a letter about all the things you love and are thankful for.



ST GEORGE'S CHURCH

Anglican Church of

Southern Africa

PBO Number 930018128



7 Sherborne Rd, Parktown, Johannesburg, 2193

Phone: 011 482 1606 www.stgeorgesparktown.org