



*Personal Reflections*  
from the  
*St. Andrew's United Methodist Church*  
*Family*  
for

*Advent 2024*

Look at the logo for this year's Advent season at St. Andrew's. There are many variations of light: the stars, the wisps of vapor, the yellow glow, the brightness of the hillside, the slight halo around the creche.

This year as we anticipate the celebration of Christ's birth and the glory of his final return, we will consider what scripture says to us about Jesus, the Light of the Season. Sometimes the light illuminates everything, sometimes it can only be seen as a single glimmering star, sometimes it surrounds just what God wants it to surround for just the right moment in our lives. But it is always there.

Please enjoy these daily reflections from your St. Andrew's family on the light that darkness could not overcome. What does the Light of the Season mean to you? Where do you see God's light, and where is there darkness that needs more illumination? Are you preparing?

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### *Advent Prayer, by Henry Nouwen*

*Lord Jesus,*

*Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparation for Christmas.*

*We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day.*

*We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us.*

*We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your Kingdom.*

*We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence.*

*We are your people, walking in darkness yet seeking the light.*

*To you we say "Come, Lord Jesus."*

*Amen*

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# *The Light is Promised*



## Day 1 – Sunday, December 1

*Your sun shall no more go down,  
nor your moon withdraw itself;  
for the Lord will be your everlasting light,  
and your days of mourning shall be ended.*

*Isaiah 60:19-20*

The holiday rhythm begins.

From Thanksgiving to Christmas, so many things order our days; our schedules filled full and before we know it, Christmas is here.

These words from Isaiah invite us to not just be driven by cultural expectations but to allow God to order our days.

What if we allow God to be the light of the season, ordering the next 25 days so that we see the profound impact of the Christ child in our lives and in the world. We slow down allowing God to set the meaning of this season and not our calendars, expectations nor all the things that typically make up this season.

Instead of being pulled culturally by external sources of light, we allow the light of the world that shines upon all who sit in darkness to reveal God's love and grace for each of us.

Christmas is not to be just another day of opening gifts but a day in which we see God's salvation coming into the world. A light shining on all. A light that will order our days, open our imaginations, soften our hearts and reveal the profound wonder of God's love and grace for the world.

This daily devotional will be the tool we use at St. Andrew's to allow God to order our days preparing for Christmas. Take a deep breath of divine peace as we allow the Spirit of God to prepare our lives for the coming of the Christ child.

*Rev. Drew Sutton*

## Day 2 – Monday, December 2

*The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>15</sup> In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. <sup>16</sup> In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: “The Lord is our righteousness.”*

*Jeremiah 33:14-16*

Several months ago, I bought a small potted lemon tree and was excited to finally see new growth. But my husband, Scott, showed me the location of the graft union and explained that the new growth above the graft is part of the lemon tree, but anything below were suckers and are part of the rootstock. Suckers would take over and eventually destroy the tree if we didn't remove them.

Jeremiah was a prophet during the time when the Jewish people had been conquered by the Babylonians. The Babylonians were rootstock suckers – they exiled the Jewish people and destroyed Jerusalem – the city that David built. The Jewish people were living in dark times.

But these verses from Jeremiah, written during the time of exile, offer hope. “The days are surely coming.” The Babylonians, like the rootstock suckers, were removed. The Jews would return to what was left of their city and begin to rebuild. God promises them that a new branch, a righteous branch, will appear. Darkness will be replaced with Light. The Magi followed that light to find the baby Jesus. During this Advent season, we also are reminded to follow the light of Jesus.

*Debbie Calkins*

## Day 3 – Tuesday, December 3

*A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.*

<sup>2</sup> *The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might,  
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.*

<sup>3</sup> *His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.*

*He shall not judge by what his eyes see  
or decide by what his ears hear,*

<sup>4</sup> *but with righteousness he shall judge for the poor  
and decide with equity for the oppressed of the earth;*

*Isaiah 11:1-4a*

I'm not crazy about thunderstorms, especially when I am driving. I've spent many years on the interstate between Baton Rouge and Pensacola, and I've noticed a weird phenomenon. If I am going to run into a heavy thunderstorm it will be on the stretch just past Fairhope, Alabama.

So, I've developed a trick to ease my anxiety when I'm in the darkest part of the storm. I keep my eyes peeled for a glimpse of a brighter sky ahead. The *promise* of the light on the horizon tells me things will get better, and I feel peace.

The people to whom Isaiah wrote were trapped in the darkness of oppression, famines, wars and despair. In this passage he made a huge promise: something was coming. There was a light ahead. The *promise* of this light was comfort to the ancients. And oh, what a promise! The Lord will be near. The poor and oppressed will receive favor and equity. The suffering will be gone. There will be relief!

This promise is eternal. This promise is the brightening horizon, the light through the darkness. It's what makes the waiting possible. It's what we can cling to when it seems there is no way out of the darkness. This promise – the light of Jesus – is everything we need. Let's keep our eyes peeled for the light!

*Marcy Brennan*



## Day 4 – Wednesday, December 4

*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel.*

*Isaiah 7:14*

In the summer of 1981, I suspected I was pregnant and a couple of weeks later my doctor confirmed that I was expecting a baby, my first, due in February. It was nothing as mysterious as Mary's angel announcement about her pregnancy with our Savior, but amazing and miraculous to me nonetheless. As my baby began to grow and move, the experience was like a miracle each day. I gave birth to a son, a surprise, and nothing prepared me for the love I experienced immediately upon seeing and holding him.

Strangely, I also experienced an emptiness and loneliness as though I missed having him just to myself inside me.

I think that is the emptiness and loneliness I would experience if I didn't have that Savior that Mary carried inside her, inside my heart. Thankful for both of these "Sons!"

*Debbie Anderson*

## Day 5 – Thursday, December 5

*This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.*

*1 John 1:5*

Advent is a season of new beginnings. As the first season of the church year, it brings with it an opportunity to begin anew and refocus ourselves on what it means to live a life in Christ. Advent is also a season to remember that we were all once in darkness. I think back to Isaiah prophesying the birth of the Messiah. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Jesus is that great light. And now we see in 1 John: "... in him there is no darkness at all." To me this is such a hard concept to wrap my head around, because I don't know that I've ever had a day in life without a downer (dark) moment. But through the gift of Christ, those down and dark moments never last long because I have faith that there is hope in the light of the morning. What a blessing to know that as we anticipate this birth of Christ, we have the foresight to know that the light is, in fact, coming soon! My prayer this Advent season is to dwell in the light and look for ways to lighten the lives of others, just as Jesus has done for us.

*Trey Miller*

## Day 6 – Friday, December 6

*For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.*

*Matthew 24:27*

Christmas has always been one of my favorite times of the year for different reasons. Through the years as a child, the excitement of receiving gifts. As a mom, watching the excitement on my kids' faces as they open up gifts. Now, I enjoy the act of giving more than ever because it just means more to me.

I am very grateful that our Heavenly Father enjoys giving as well. He gave us the most precious gift of all, Jesus. He fulfilled this promise to us during this season. Jesus isn't just the light of the season, but the light of the world.

*Trina McAlister*



*The Light Draws Near*



## Day 7 – Saturday, December 7

*The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.*

*John 1:9*

During autumn and winter, we're shrouded in darkness. The sun rises later and sets earlier; the days become shorter and the nights become longer. We find ourselves leaving for work or school in the morning in darkness and coming home in the evening in more darkness. But we know that soon, the Earth will tilt back in the other direction, and the daylight will come back.

Scholars tell us that Jesus' birth was probably not in winter, but what a meaningful time to celebrate it! In the physical world, while we live in the darkness, we look forward to the light that we know is coming. During Advent, while we long for more light in our days, we also look forward to the spiritual light that we know is coming to all people. And we anticipate both with deep longing.

*Marty Ducote*

## Day 8 – Sunday, December 8

*The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.<sup>31</sup> And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.<sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David.<sup>33</sup> He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”*

*Luke 1:30-33*

Think back to a time when you received life-changing news. Our lives are filled with unexpected changes. Mary certainly didn't expect what she was told; however, what a way to hear. An angel saying she was favored by God and would have a son who would be the son of God. The visit and words must have comforted her when things got hard later. During the doubt, gossip and ridicule wondering if/when Joseph would break off the engagement. This is a lot for a 12–15-year-old girl to face. God's words through Gabriel must have brought her light and comfort for the season she was going to live in. The child she carried brings us that same light and comfort for the seasons we will face in our lives.

*Susie Hahn*

## Day 9 – Monday, December 9

*A voice cries out:*

*“In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord;  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

*Isaiah 40:3*

The exiled Israelites were to journey home from Babylon to Jerusalem. This journey was to be made easier by “leveling the mountains and straightening the roads.” This seems to be a miracle that the survivors of the hurricanes and natural disasters could use this year.

How do we prepare a way for the Lord when the world is so chaotic? I think that our church can help answer this question. Together we can prepare the way. My husband and I were blessed to travel to UMCOR Sager Brown in Baldwin, Louisiana recently. The road was not straight, and I saw a part of our state that I usually see in the news when hurricanes visit the area. The facility has an amazing history, and I could see how working together can help so many people. The people who work at Sager Brown are truly dedicated to doing the Lord’s work. When we work and pray together, we can prepare the way of the Lord.

*Libby Roper*



## Day 10 – Tuesday, December 10

*<sup>4</sup> as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,*

*<sup>5</sup> Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made  
low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth,  
<sup>6</sup> and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’ ”*

*Luke 3:4-6*

The preparations must be perfect: the perfect Christmas tree, artificial or live. All decorations in their place, the nativity, Santa Clauses, nutcrackers, poinsettias, Christmas villages, or whatever we do to get our homes and businesses ready for the season. All the time and expense to make sure it is perfect to help us celebrate Christmas. We look forward to the special events, the Christmas program, cantata, parties, etc. What a wonderful time of the year.

John the Baptist went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins to prepare for the coming of our Lord, Jesus. We should use this word today as a light for us. As we prepare our personal places, we also prepare our hearts for the arrival of Jesus. Through prayer, reading His word, and singing his praises, we renew His presence with us.

*Ray Davis*

## Day 11 – Wednesday, December 11

*<sup>15</sup> As the people were filled with expectation and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, <sup>16</sup> John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>17</sup> His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”*

*<sup>18</sup> So with many other exhortations he proclaimed the good news to the people.*

*Luke 3:15-18*

I remember all too well as a child being afraid of the dark, especially when my siblings and/or my cousins were playing in my grandparents' basement along with me. They would race up the stairs leaving me behind, holding the door shut and flipping the light switch to the off position. This would throw my world into inky blackness. My terror would rise as I struggled to force the door open against them and fight my way back into the light. When they would finally relent and I was allowed to emerge into the light, my fears were quickly vanquished.

This is also how I felt when I was baptized at the age of eleven. I had received the “good news” that John the Baptist started to spread so long ago when he foretold of the coming of Jesus, our savior. I remember entering the baptismal pool at our church and not knowing exactly what to expect. As the pastor lowered me backward into the water, I was again plunged into darkness as I covered my eyes, nose and mouth with a cloth I had been instructed to use. After what seemed like an eternity, I was brought up out of the water and light burst into my eyes as I uncovered them. I also felt light enough to fly.

I have reflected on that moment many times in my life, because I learned that light always conquers darkness. Advent is truly a season of light and makes me so grateful for John the Baptizer's words proclaiming that Jesus would be coming and as we know, he is the truth, the way and the LIGHT!

*Cat Pitre*

## Day 12 – Thursday, December 12

*The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
on them light has shined.*

*Isaiah 9:2*

During my career, I have worked as an artist and I have used the contrast between light and dark in my work many times to convey meaning and create visual impact. The world of Isaiah's time was a dark place for the people of Israel, with war, political conflict and sin. Sound familiar?

But Isaiah foresaw a "great light" that would shine upon the land and its people – "the Light of the world," "the Sun of righteousness," "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." God sent his son Jesus to be a light for us to follow. In this season, let that light shine upon us and lead us out of the darkness.

*Russ Roper*

## Day 13 – Friday, December 13

*Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.  
<sup>2</sup> For darkness shall cover the earth  
and thick darkness the peoples,  
but the Lord will arise upon you,  
and his glory will appear over you.  
<sup>3</sup> Nations shall come to your light  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.*

*Isaiah 60:1-3*

Every day we are to strive to be like Jesus. Every day we fall short. Every night we go to bed sinners who have failed. Yet, every day the sun rises and we arise as well. We arise in the loving glow of God's glory and grace. Every day when the sun rises, we too are to rise and once again strive to be like Jesus. To let God's glory appear over us and shine through us. To be a light to our world, our friends, our family, our enemies. We will fall short again, but every new day God is there to help us again.

*Shane Morrison*

## Day 14 – Saturday, December 14

*Your word is a lamp to my feet  
and a light to my path.*

*The unfolding of your words gives light;  
it imparts understanding to the simple.*

*Psalm 119:105,130*

Psalm 119 resonates with me in many ways. First, God had a hand in my becoming the Director of Children’s Ministry. Since I follow Haleigh Wingate on Facebook, I learned about St. Andrew’s and found a new church home where I have made so many friends. After teaching English at LSU for almost twenty years, I never imagined I would be working with children at this stage of my life and having so much fun just doing my job. The Psalm helps me explain God’s love and presence, and I often use light imagery to present the scriptures in a way children can relate to using flashlights, candles and glow sticks.

This Psalm speaks to me as I look back over my life and recount all the ways God has guided me and been a light to my path. My husband and I moved 13 times in 17 years as he “climbed the corporate ladder.” Each time we moved I was able to find teaching jobs in colleges. It was a “God thing” that we were able to come back to Baton Rouge and be near family shortly before his death. Widowed at age 30 with 2 young children and very little income, I relied on my faith to see me through a very dark time. God comforted me and guided my decisions as I navigated being a single parent. With the support of my family and my church, I managed to recover from my grief and be present for my children.

When I was injured in a car accident, God healed my body and helped me adjust to a new normal. Due to my injuries, I was forced to take early retirement with a much lower retirement benefit and went from being a professor at the height of my career to being a patient in physical therapy for 3 years. My children were also impacted by my depression, and my injuries took a toll on my marriage as well, as did my subsequent breast cancer diagnosis. Had it not been for God’s grace and presence, I could have been bitter and questioned my faith. Instead, I learned “to every season there is a reason” and that life is a

series of changes and stages. The Scriptures comfort me, and I take refuge in God's word and my friends and family.

Now in my second retirement, I have come full circle from raising my own children, to teaching for 40 years, and now to being blessed to work in the children's ministry. Throughout my life, God has truly been "a light unto my path." What I am, perhaps, most thankful for is that my parents raised me in the church and gave me a foundation of faith that has sustained me throughout my life. Now I get to shine my light on our children to instill that faith in them.

*Kay Richardson*

## Day 15 – Sunday, December 15

*39 In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, 40 where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit 42 and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 43 And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? 44 For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."*

*Luke 1:39-45*

I love it when the characters in the Bible are so relatable to our own human experience. Mary found out she was expecting a child and hurried to share this exciting news with her aunt. I vividly remember the day that I found out I was expecting twins. Obviously, that news does not compare to finding out you have been chosen to birth the savior of the world, but that did not deter me from feeling elated and blessed. That day still stands out in my mind as one of the most joyful days of my life. My first response was to call everyone and share the good news. I called my husband, parents, siblings, friends, everyone I could think of to tell them of the gift God had given me. God frequently gives each of us unexpected gifts, the greatest of these being His son who came to us in the form of a child to be the savior of us all. Share the good news!

*Natalie Goldberger*



*The World is Illuminated*



## Day 16 – Monday, December 16

*Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.*

*Genesis 1:3*

As some of you know I have over the years dealt with anxiety and depression issues. From a spiritual perspective, when those issues arise the light of God’s presence diminishes greatly. The ebb and flow of these thoughts I may have I know clearly come from the darkness or the Adversary. But in my mind and heart, when I come to terms with these thoughts, God’s light of mercy and grace shines through as clear as day.

Scripture says, “In this world you will have trouble but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world!” This statement was spoken over me on numerous occasions when I was in the throes of my sadness and grief. Especially after my parents died, I felt this numbness that definitely was not God’s light shining. I had little self-confidence and the dark night of the soul took over. But God “who is faithful and just to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” has done just that in my life. If you ever went through a tunnel you remember that darkness overwhelms the vehicle in that time.

But the hope and good news is that the darkness doesn’t last long; the light will come back again. In this season of Advent my hope and prayer for you all will be that God’s love and light through His Son Jesus Christ be received in your heart because he is the true light of this world! Praise Jesus for His love through His life that we can learn through the darkness what we can learn much greater in the light!!

*Tiffany Hincks, Houston*

## Day 17 – Tuesday, December 17

*For a child has been born for us,  
a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders,  
and he is named  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

*Isaiah 9:6*

The prophet Isaiah foretold the coming of Jesus. However, it was over 700 years until the Prince of Peace was born. During that time the Jewish people faced many challenges, including Assyrian, Babylonian, and Roman conquests. During those hard times the Jewish people waited and believed.

As Debbie and I waited for the birth of our second son, she was diagnosed with a pregnancy complication. She was hospitalized 90 miles away in Denver while Kyle and I stayed in Cheyenne. We would drive to Denver on Wednesdays and weekends to see Deb. Occasionally we could spring her for a night away from the hospital or a trip to Casa Bonita restaurant to see the indoor cliff divers and, Kyle's favorite, Black Bart's Cave. Finally, after 3 months, countless examinations, and many ultrasounds, Steven was born healthy and strong.

Waiting during uncertain times isn't easy, but through patience and faith, wonderful things are possible.

*Scott Calkins*

## Day 18 – Wednesday, December 18

*The Lord is my light and my salvation;  
whom shall I fear?*

*The Lord is the stronghold of my life;  
of whom shall I be afraid?*

*Psalm 27:1*

Fear is a powerful and overwhelming emotion. As long as I can remember, I have always had a fear of being alone at night. A feeling of unease and dread would settle over me on those times when I found myself having to stay alone.

As I got ready for bed the night after my husband passed away, heartbroken and truly alone, I realized the same fear would be with me the rest of my life. I lay in bed and reached out to God, asking Him to please let me not be afraid any longer. A peace settled over me and I slept.

That night, God sent His LIGHT to me and its brightness is there each evening when I lay my head down. I have never been afraid again at night.

Thank you, Father, for answering my prayer, once again. Thank you for being the LIGHT in my life.

*Patricia Corkern*

## Day 19 – Thursday, December 19

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.*

*John 1:1-5*

When I was growing up, I was a voracious reader and would sometimes walk around the house with an open book. I just couldn't bear to put it down to move from one room to another. Eventually I would find a chair and sit, never having taken my eyes off the page.

Invariably, Dad would come into the room, see me reading, walk over and turn on a lamp, say "you need some light," and keep walking. This happened way into my adulthood. And he was right. It was always better with the lamp. I needed some light.

In this season of preparation for the Light that is, was and will always be, this memory is a good reminder. When I was so absorbed in my book, I would wander without preparing, without bothering to engage the light that was right there beside me. Had I prepared, I would have enjoyed the benefit of the light and had a fuller experience.

Christ's light was with God in the beginning; nothing in the world has happened without it and it is there for us now whenever we reach out for it. As a child, the darkness may have overcome my ability to read the words, but only because I didn't access the light that was there. The darkness did not overtake the light itself.

My goal this Advent season is to prepare myself to be a more vital servant of God by letting His Light shine in my daily life. It's there – always was and always will be – ready to illuminate my soul and the world. Yes, I "need some light." Don't we all!

*Marcy Brennan*

## Day 20 – Friday, December 20

*for once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Walk as children of light,*

*Ephesians 5:8*

As a kid I always welcomed the end of daylight saving time. I still do today.

The shorter days always bring the coming cooler weather, the holiday seasons and bright festive lights.

My favorite part of the Advent season has always been Christmas Eve candlelight service. I love the end when the church goes dark and then slowly as each candle is lit, the warm light just grows and grows until the whole church is lit up with the light of Christ.

I think that's the kind of light we are called to be in the world. Christ is within us and lights us up for the world to see. We are called to stand out and draw others to Christ as light draws others to more light. Then Christ's love lights them as well. Just like the passing of the candlelight on Christmas Eve.

*Julie Miller*

## Day 21 – Saturday, December 21

*Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”*

*John 8:12*

Such a straightforward statement from Jesus. No parable to unravel, just a simple statement of who he is and what life will be if you follow him. When I saw the verse Marcy assigned me, I was thrilled. Such an easy verse. It will be simple and quick. Not so. Not for me anyway.

The first plan was to give a brief synopsis of what occurred before Jesus made this statement then get to the heart of the matter then lead into Advent and light. Well, Jesus was at the Festival of Tabernacles and was teaching in the temple courts and the Pharisees were all aggravated and jumpy and before I knew it, I had gone way off course and what I had written had nothing to do with Advent or light.

The next plan was to tell about the little white Bible, King James Version, red letter edition that my grandparents gave me when I was ten years old and how with the red-letter edition you know what you need to pay attention to because it is right there in red, “this is what Jesus is telling you, pay attention.” My thought was I would eloquently say the “I am” statements do not need red letters; it is clear how important they are. It was too wordy so I tried something else.

Finally, it came to me. Reference some of the places in the Bible that mention light. There are a lot of them. In Matthew’s gospel, this verse seemed to fit the theme of the Advent season: Jesus says, “...let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven...”. This idea ended with the lyrics of “This little light of mine.”

So, after all the thoughts and ideas – and trust me, it was much more convoluted than what I have described above -- this is what I offer:

Jesus has given us the gift of light for a lifetime of seasons. We really do not need red letters to impart the value and importance of this gift of light and life. And we really do need to let our light shine through all seasons so that all people may experience the Light of the season.

*Nancy Wright*

## Day 22 – Sunday, December 22

*For it is the God who said, “Light will shine out of darkness,” who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*

*2 Corinthians 4:6*

My father died unexpectedly in 1996 from a heart attack while playing golf with my husband and two of my brothers. To say it was a shock to our entire family is putting it mildly – between taking care of my mother, telling my children, and learning how to continue on without the rock of the family, it was a very difficult time. He was buried in Houston, so going to his grave to feel close to him wasn't a frequent occurrence, but we were able to have a brick etched with his name at the church our family attended locally. I frequently visited that brick, desperately wanting to feel the connection we always had. On one visit, I pressed my palm to his name, saying, “Daddy, be with me.” At that exact second, the church's courtyard lights came on, and I was filled with the peace that passes understanding, knowing God was letting me know that the connection we had while my dad was alive hadn't left, and that because of what Jesus did on the cross, I would be with my dad again in glory.

In the Bible passage above, God gave us the gift of light twice – when He created the world, and when He gave us His only Son. Both are needed in order for us to live as He intended. Knowing God takes care of our every need, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, gives me great peace. As we prepare our hearts for celebrating Jesus coming to physically live among God people, I pray there are instances of peace amidst the planning, as the true meaning of God's light shines this season.

*Karen Agnew*



## Day 23 – Monday, December 23

*<sup>11</sup> to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,*

*<sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he  
favors!”*

*Luke 2:11-14*

Imagine a perfect moment. More than just an instant in time, the perfect moment is one that is unforgettable, that transports us back to the event feeling the same emotions and reinforcing the powerful memories surrounding it.

Luke’s account of Jesus’ birth is one of those perfect moments. The Creator, faithful to his promises, sent his son to live as a human. In this passage we realize that the great God regards humans so much that he entrusted his baby to be cared for by two inexperienced earthly parents, to grow up as part of a human family, and to experience all the pleasures, hardships, joys, and suffering common to humankind. In his wisdom, God created light amidst the darkness.

God shared this extraordinary event with shepherds, and thanks to Luke, with us. Though we are nothing special in the eyes of the world, God is no respecter of persons and, true to his nature, he has shared this perfect moment with us. Let us join with the heavenly host glorifying God and thanking him for the favor he bestows upon his human creation.

*Jerry Parker*

## Day 24 – Tuesday, December 24

*And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.*

*John 1:14*

For me, the Christmas season encompasses everything between Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. In years past, it was filled with anxiety as well as excitement – were all the decorations in place, should I go out for one more gift, did I have all the ingredients for my Christmas Eve crab bisque, was this the year we traveled to Knoxville, or did the grandparents come here? I loved all the hustle and bustle – the red and green and lights and music and the Nativity scene on the table.

While I look back at those busy years nostalgically, I find that I am totally content with the slower pace that David and I enjoy now. I put out less decorations, my tree is only 3-4 feet tall, we gift ourselves a trip to the beach instead of wrapped presents. Out of town gifts are usually edible gifts ordered weeks in advance – no wrapping or shipping needed from us.

We read the rich and detailed story of Jesus' birth in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. For me though, the Christmas experience is stripped down to the basic Scripture shared in the gospel of John, "And the Word became flesh and lived among us ..." So simple. So profound. This is all I need to celebrate. My heart is filled with God's grace and glory.

Thanks be to God.

*Georgia Ford*

# Christmas at St. Andrew's

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## *Light the Night Service / Chili by the Campfire*

Sunday, December 1 – 5:00 p.m.

## *Children's Play - "A Charlie Brown Christmas"*

Sunday, December 8 – 5:00 p.m.

*Followed by a Spaghetti Dinner (eat in or take out)*

## *Christmas Cantata / Nativity Walk*

Sunday, December 15 – 8:30 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.

## *Travelers Communion Service*

Sunday, December 22 – 6:00 p.m.

(Praise Band)

## *Christmas Eve Communion Worship Services*

3:00 p.m.      Family Service with Live Nativity

5:00 p.m.      Candlelight Service  
(Chancel Choir)

*The light of the season is here!*

Thank you to everyone who submitted a devotional for this Advent season. This compilation is proof of the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of our St. Andrew's family. **God is so good!**



St. Andrew's United Methodist Church  
17510 Monitor Avenue  
Baton Rouge, LA 70817  
225-752-2903  
[www.saumcbr.com](http://www.saumcbr.com)