



Readings for this week:

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| Monday | Reading Rev 10–11 Pray for Theresa Baker & family |
| Tuesday | Reading Rev 12 Pray for Val Batty & family |
| Wednesday | Reading Rev 13 Pray for John & Ann Beattie & family |
| Thursday | Reading Rev 14 Pray for Vivienne Best |
| Friday | Reading Rev 15–16 Pray for Mark, Joanne & Tom Bolton |
| Saturday | Reading: Catch up Pray for Audrey Bolton & family |
| Sunday 27th December | Reading Rev 17 Pray for Jack & Leah Bolton |
| Monday | Reading Rev 18:1–19:5 Pray for Robert Bond & Annette |
| Tuesday | Reading Rev 19:6–20:15 Pray for Sandra Burke & family |
| Wednesday | Reading Rev 21 Pray for Josh, Molly, Miley-Rose, Jonah & Ezra Jenkinson |
| Thursday | Reading Rev 22 Pray for Isobel Cave & family |
| Friday | Reading Matt 1 Pray for Christine Clarke |
| Saturday | Reading: Catch up Pray for Enid & James Collins & family |
| Sunday 3rd Jan 2021 | Reading Matt 2 Pray for Luis, Miriam & family |

Prayers: We pray for all who have been part of our journey this past year. We remember those who have lost loved ones and friends during this pandemic. Our hearts go out to all who are battling illness and confinement, for those living on their own. Grant us respite from such things and blessings over the year to come. *Hear these our prayers in Jesus' Name, Amen!*

Welcome to our Christmas services, with this the 40th edition of our Pandemic times *Update* for the final Sunday before Christmas.

On **Wednesday 24th December** – from 6.00 pm please join us for our online Digital **Candlelight Carol Service**. Then on **Christmas Day at 10.00 am** (prior to this we will send you a links to these services). This **Christmas morning Celebration** will be a little different, lasting just half-an-hour, but still trying to make it a significant part of a special day for *all* the family.

On **Sunday 27th December at 10.30 am** the morning service will be taken by Lucy Frost, our Church Support Worker, and we look forward to her ministry on this last Sunday of 2020. What a year it has been; unforgettable really.

We were sorry to hear that Ken Allcock, the husband of Elaine Allcock (née Lingard), had passed away last week. Quite a few of us will remember that Elaine faithfully attended our church some years ago. Our sincere thoughts and prayers are with Elaine. We are also mindful of Claire S and her family. Claire is starting radiotherapy soon and we will remember Claire, and others, facing serious health challenges.

On **Friday 1st January 2021**, we will be starting our reading of the entire New Testament together in our *Update*. If you can, please join us in this rewarding discipline. Saturdays are left blank to 'catch up' (or have a break if needed). Just so you know; the first Sunday of 2021 will feature our usual **New Year Covenant Service**. The wording for the collective liturgy for that occasion will be included in the next *Update*, hopefully coming to you in two weeks' time. As you can see this *Update* covers two weeks.

We take this opportunity to *thank so many people* for making ministry possible during this most difficult of years. Perhaps never before has so much technical work been done 'in the background' of church services. In addition, to those involved, your prayers and encouragements have been invaluable! For the few of us without computers, tablets, or smart phones, we have delivered printed materials so people could follow the themes of Sunday worship services. The board have worked hard to try to ensure all things were covered as much as is possible. We have learned much in the process, and hopefully this experience will help us in the 'new normal' for continued online church services after this pandemic has ended.

We also take this opportunity to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year for 2021! One day this year will be a long and distant memory, but I hope we will never forget how the Lord has helped us. We are indeed a grateful people.



Blessings to all our readers this Christmas time,

Grace and peace!

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

Message: Evidence of God's presence

Readings: Isaiah 9: 6-7; Hebrews 7: 1-4

These passages refer to one of the great points of declaration and celebration in Christmas – **Peace!** If I may just read two verses from Hebrews which highlights this on the Sunday before Christmas. “First, his name means “king of righteousness”; then also, “king of Salem” means “**king of peace**.” (Heb 7:2)

In verse four, the writer to Hebrews says, ‘Just think how great he was...’ That is what I want us to do this morning. The link is made between this Priest and **Jesus, who is Prophet, Priest & King**. I want us to think about the greatness of the Christ Child born to Mary and Joseph. **Jesus is the Great King of Peace**.

Peace has always been His stamp and trademark. When Jesus walks by, there is this sense of PEACE that pervades, persuades, and prevails. Peace is the evidence of His presence.

I tell you, friends, Peace is the underlying evidence that God is at work in your life. No wonder Peace is such a prevalent word over the Advent season... The book of Hebrews talks a lot about a ‘Priest’ called ‘Melchizedek’. The name is made up of two words meaning ‘King’ and ‘Justice’. A third word is introduced here – that of ‘Peace’; for he was also King of Salem, which became Jerusalem [which means ‘City of Peace’].

Now if you take a long look at the history of Jerusalem, it has lived through many turbulent times. Nevertheless, we have mention of a King of Salem - whom Abraham honoured! Not much is known about this mysterious King. We are informed that he was ‘Without father or mother... without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God’ (Heb 7: 3)

Then we are told, - Jesus was like Him! Jesus was...

A Perfect Man in an Imperfect World

How was Jesus a Perfect Man in an imperfect world? Well, for starters, Jesus was born in the City of David (the great King David), but in rather humble

circumstances – we all know the details of the story. The rumour going around in high circles was that a ‘New King’ had been born.

But this was a different kind of king; he was the King of Peace. He was born in Bethlehem, and died in Jerusalem, under the declared title of ***‘Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews’***.

His treatment typifies all that is wrong with our world; how we get things upside down, abounding in misunderstanding and only knowing part of the story. Nevertheless, he is *still* King. It was Isaiah who understood it all, hundreds of years before Hebrews was written, declaring so plainly... “*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**.*” (Isaiah 9:6)

One of the factors I often find is that when you get an amazing passage like this it is found right in the middle of a real mess of things going on. But then, this is not so different for us today. There are many things in recent years that for too many people have threatened our idea of peace - issues like Brexit, our present Pandemic, Scottish Independence, and the like. People feel forced to take sides; the differences are accentuated, and before we know it, things can get really messy.

One of the most disturbing things that often come ‘out of the blue’ is the threat of ill-health. And many are surprised to find it showing itself in hidden ways – one real shocker is the prevalence of mental ill-health. This is perhaps one of the greatest challenges to plague particularly our present younger generation.

What are we to do? To what or whom can we turn? One of the reasons we find ourselves living in a consumer-driven society is that it promises ‘perfection’ and quick fixes. The Media says, ‘You want to solve your problem, then this is what you need to buy’! We want you to enjoy the gifts from your family this Christmas, but the only perfection that you might find in a rather imperfect Christmas setting this December is a **godly gift called - Peace!**

Friends, ***the Evidence of God's Presence is always a deep-down Peace!*** And I want to tell you this today, that no circumstance can destroy this foundation that supports God's Kingdom!

People who follow the King of Peace and the Prince of Peace become people of Peace. Lord, help us by your grace to become Peacemakers in all circumstances of

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Drawing people closer to God:
Loving, Growing, Serving



Sunday 20-27 Dec 2020 Pandemic-times Update

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life. Let us sing together that wonderful, and Gospel-declaring hymn of old...
'Make me a channel of your peace'!