

WAITING

WELCOMING

ADVENT TREASURES 2017

First Presbyterian Church

Brandon, Florida

Calendar of Advent Treasures

Sun. 12/3 Hymn: Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

Mon. 12/4 Callie Weber

Tues. 12/5 Jack Botts

Weds. 12/6 Priscilla Babas

Thurs. 12/7 Mike Kaufold

Fri. 12/8 Diane Russell

Sat. 12/9 Jackie Williams

Sun. 12/10 The Serenity Prayer

Mon. 12/11 John McIntosh

Tues. 12/12 Karen Weber

Weds. 12/13 Dawn Trattner

Thurs 12/14 Jim Yockey

Fri. 12/15 Cheryl Rogers

Sat. 12/16 Keven Weber

Sun. 12/17 David Teeples

Mon. 12/18 Winnie Wilks

Tues. 12/19 Sue Teeples

Weds. 12/20 Terrie Morrison

Thurs. 12/21 from Saint Francis of Assisi

Fri. 12/22 Elizabeth Crawford

Sat. 12/23 Jayne E.Parker

Sun. 12/24 Sherry Skovgaard

Mon. 12/25 Pastor Mike

Tues. 12/26 A prayer of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

**Come, Thou long-expected Jesus,
Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us;
Let us find our rest in Thee.**

**Israel's strength and consolation,
Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.**

**Born Thy people to deliver,
Born a child and yet a King,
Born to reign in us forever,
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.**

**By Thine own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all sufficient merit
Raise us to Thy Glorious throne.**

Charles Wesley 1744

Week One

Genesis 15: 1, 5 After all these things, this Word of God came to Abram in a vision: 'Don't be afraid, Abram. I'm Your shield. Your reward will be grand!' then He took him outside and said, 'Look at the sky. Count the stars. Can you do it? Count your descendants! You're going to have a big family!'

Advent is a season of waiting. From the beginning of human time, God has made promises of hope to Noah, Abraham, Moses and David. Abraham is one of the first of the waiters. Sitting in the wilderness, God promises Abraham a world very different than the one he lived in.

As we enter this season of waiting for Christmas, many of the rituals of the holidays often feel very different to the kingdom of God that we are called to live. Many of the celebrations that surround Christmas are values of material goods, a world that seeks bigger and better rather than relationship and intention. And, yet, like Abraham we await a very different world, a world full of the love that only Christ can bring to our hearts.

PRAYER: Great God of yesterday, today, and tomorrow, as we lie in wait for the coming of Your Son, please guide us in our waiting this Advent Season. Help us to seek Your values of love and kindness, knowing You give us what we need. In hope, Amen.

Callie Weber

Joel 2:28-30 I will pour out My Spirit on every kind of people. Whoever calls, "Help, God!" gets help. On Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be a great rescue---just as God said.

As we anticipate the Messiah, we should reach out to others who need assistance, guidance or compassion. Passing on the word of the Lord to others who need help can provide them with strength and hope of a wonderful life to come through "a great rescue".

Extend God's love to all people who are seeking help even if they do not hold the same standards as you, as God's love is unconditional.

Do not look at delivering this message as a Christian obligation but as a joy. Doing so will also provide strength and hope to the one who delivers. Reaching out to others who need help can give us and others a life that reflects God's love. This life of sharing God's love with "every kind of people" will be our welcome to Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the opportunity to help those in need and allowing your love to grow within me.

Jack Botts

Jeremiah 31:31 *That's right. The time is coming when I will make a brand-new covenant with Israel and Judah.*

We have been given a gift beyond measure. God promised, through Jeremiah, to make a new covenant with His people. The Old Testament covenant, given to Abraham was written in stone but the new covenant was written on our hearts as Christians. It came in the form of a baby who became a man and walked among ordinary people teaching about God's love and forgiveness. This new covenant gives us God's Grace promising salvation to those who open their hearts and believe.

In this Christmas Season, let us remember this covenant of love, sacrifice, forgiveness and hope.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank you for this assurance that through the Holy Spirit You are always with us. We only have to reach out and accept what you have so generously given. In Jesus Holy Name, Amen

Priscilla Babas

Micah 7:27 But me, I'm not giving up, I'm sticking around to see what God will do. I'm waiting for God to make things right. I'm counting on God to listen to me.

Sometimes we experience situations that are argumentative and beyond our control. We wonder why there are so many issues that divide us.

Micah provides us a message that gives reassurance. This message goes beyond what we can control and sets a focus on humbling ourselves to the Will of the Lord. "Wait and listen" to the Lord, and He will provide hope, peace and love.

The Joy of Advent is the assurance that the Lord is coming, and whatever concerns that we have, the Lord will provide.

PRAYER: Our Father, thank you for Your many blessings. Help us to be less judgmental and more loving and forgiving. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Mike Kaufold

Isaiah 43: 19 *Be alert, be present. I'm about to do something brand new. It's bursting out! Don't you see it?*

When I was growing up in Chicagoland, my parents, two sisters, and I always gathered with my grandma, aunt, uncle and cousins to share Christmas dinner and exchange gifts.

Another guest appeared mysteriously each year. We looked and listened anxiously for the signs. Either my dad or my uncle went to the store to buy more soda. We laughed and played games, but our senses strained for more clues. We whispered excitedly when we heard the tinkling sound of bells near the back door. Suddenly, he appeared in the living room with his deep voice, wispy beard, red hat and suit. It was Santa, ready to give us presents and listen to our Christmas songs! The wait was over: we gleefully cried out while he handed out gifts, and we performed for him.

We await Jesus' arrival with a similar feeling of anxious excitement. What are the clues? How will our lives change?

PRAYER: Dear Jesus, please give us patience and peace as we hone our senses to pick up on the clues and signs of your glorious arrival on earth. Amen.

Diane Russell

Hebrews 11:13-16 *Each one of these people of faith, died not yet having in hand what was promised, but still believing. How did they do it? They saw it way off in the distance, waved their greeting, and accepted the fact that they were transients in this world. People who live this way make it plain that they are looking for their true home. You can see why God is so proud of them and has a city waiting for them.*

Sometimes the words in Scripture leave you breathless. Words fall short in expressing the awesomeness of such a promise of a city waiting for each of us. Notice the attitude and actions of the people of faith. Our faith allows us to see 'a way off in the distance.' In gratitude we send a hardy greeting to the promises which will come true. We acknowledge that this world is not our home; we are just passing through.

It appears that HOPE and WAITING embrace. The foundation of our faith, built upon the arrival of the Messiah, God's Beloved Son, is the belief that God is good; God is merciful; God is dependable; God is love; and God keeps His promises. We are often disheartened by unanswered prayers not fully understanding the Kingdom's timetable nor the Kingdom's plan. Jesus gave us many assurances and one was that He was going to prepare a place for us AND wherever we are, He will also be.

Prayer: Holy Father, we wait in hope. We wait in the assurance of your care and provisions for our needs. May our trust increase. May we see you in the sunshine and the rain, knowing that You are always with us. Help us share these truths with others. Amen

Jackie Williams

The Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the serenity,
To accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;
Taking, as You did, this sinful world as it is,
Not as I would have it;
Trusting that You will make all things right
If I surrender to Your will;
That I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.

Reinhold Niebuhr

Zechariah 2:10-12 **10** *“Sing out and be happy, Zion my daughter! For look, I have come; I will settle in your midst,” says the Lord. 11 “Many nations will join themselves to the Lord on the day of salvation, and they will also be My people. Indeed, I will settle in the midst of you all.” Then you will know that the Lord who rules over all has sent me to you. 12 The Lord will take possession of Judah as His portion in the holy land and He will choose Jerusalem once again.*

God through Jesus is in the restoration business. A definition of restore is “to bring back a previous situation; and reestablish, return someone or something to a former condition, place or position; repair so as to return it to its original condition; give something previously lost back to the original owner or recipient”. I experience God’s restoration in all these ways.

The New English Translation of verse 10 reads *“For look, I have come; I will settle in your midst, says the Lord.”* This image takes me to the Garden in Genesis where God is seeking the humans He created so He can be with them, but they were hiding. Today I still hide but God’s irresistible grace through Jesus finds me and restores me.

PRAYER: Most gracious and loving Lord, I cannot comprehend the depth of Your love for me and Your creation. Even when I hide from You, You search and find me. Help me be always aware of Your presence as I praise You and reflect Your love in all I say and do. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen

John McIntosh

Psalm 25:4-5 *Make me to know Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth, and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; for You I wait all day long.*

My sons lovingly remind me, every chance they get, "It's not all about you, Mom!" But, this scripture is about Me.....and You, too!

Make ME to know Your ways, O Lord – help me to understand more fully that the ways of the Lord are right, humble in justice and truth; help me to walk more by faith and less by sight

Teach ME Your paths – guide me along the path You have planned for me; make my path clear in sadness, loneliness, failure, or success

Lead ME in Your truth and teach ME – help me to abide in Your Word so I shall know the truth; guide me in Your truth and anchor me in Your love

For You are the God of MY salvation – the grace of God has reached for me rescuing me from the penalty of sin; You are my mighty rock and my refuge

For You I wait all day long – I put my hope in you all day long; waiting gives me the opportunity to welcome You into every moment of my life

PRAYER: Father, Help me to be willing to seek You, learn from Your Word, and obey Your commands. Strengthen me to trust in You with all my heart and soul. I praise Your name, for You are my Lord and Savior. Amen

Karen Weber

Colossians 3:12-14 So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.

This verse found me reflecting on those good old childhood days when at Christmas our entire family would be photographed dressed in our "finest" winter outfits. Growing up in the northeast, our wardrobe would change throughout the year, most often influenced by the seasons. The perception was that our attire directly related to our attitude and to the respect we gave to others and/or received from them.

Paul reminds us that because we are God's children, we should be "dressed for success" in a totally different manner. Do outward appearances matter? To whom? It is not the material garb or appearance that matters, but to live our lives focusing on embracing the spiritual gifts and virtues that are uniquely given to us. What is within our hearts is of utmost importance. Kindness, humility, forgiveness and compassion reflect on our outward appearance and shine like a beacon in the dark. Just as the seasons of the year change, the seasons of our lives also change. If you are feeling troubled or angry, perhaps it is time to change your spiritual attire and allow your God-given gifts to radiate from within. Christmas will soon be upon us reminding us of the birth of Christ and God's love for us. Regardless of the season, forgiveness and love are the foundation for the spiritual life we are called to share with one another.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, look down upon us and bless us today as we eagerly anticipate the birthday of Christ. We are forever grateful for the special gifts and virtues you have given to us. May Your continued presence remind us to faithfully share the gifts of forgiveness, love and compassion with others--both friend and foe. We pray for joy, love and peace for all mankind in Your holy name. Amen.

Dawn Trattner

Luke 8:16-17 No one lights a lamp and covers it with a wash tub or shoves it under a bed. No, you set it up on a lamp stand so those who enter the room can see their way. We're not keeping secrets; we're telling them. We're not hiding things; We're bringing everything out into the open.

In this famous passage, Jesus is speaking to His followers and directing us to let our faith shine for everyone to see. It is not enough for us to be faithful followers of Jesus, but it is imperative for Christians to let everyone we come in contact with know that we are committed followers of Jesus Christ by our actions. We know that we are following the teachings of Jesus when someone we come in contact with states, "You are a Christian aren't you?" Our response is always, "Why would you say that?" Obviously, we have made a positive impression on this person either through a kind word, a positive gesture, or an observation of us being kind to another person.

The easiest way to explain this behavior is for us to be selfless and place our fellow man's needs and feelings above our own. Invariably their response is, "You are a Christian aren't you?" To me, this is the greatest compliment a fellow human being can ever give. We are not all gifted pastors or teachers, but we all are capable of letting our light shine for Jesus Christ. I believe this selfless practice is what is needed in our country. We must realize the only behavior we can control is our own.

PRAYER: Lord, it is my prayer today for that all faithful followers of Jesus look inward to improve their relationships with their fellowman. Being one of God's children is enough to give us the confidence to let our light shine. Help us remember that the love of Jesus Christ is the strength we need to accomplish any task.

Jim Yockey

Psalm 146:5 *Happy is the one whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God.*

Psalm 146 is a hymn praising God for His Help. It begins and ends with “Hallelujah!” which means “Praise the Lord.” The Hallelujahs are carried over to the end of the Bible itself, echoed in the heavenly choirs of the Redeemed (Revelation 19). Picture the choirs singing “God Reigns! While I live, I will praise God. I will sing praises to God while I have any being.” (Halley’s Bible Handbook).

We are reminded that we are to be happy knowing our help comes from God. We have proof of that help in the Scriptures and in our daily lives. How often do we offer a quick prayer to God? ‘Please help me get through this traffic.’ ‘Please help me with this project.’ ‘Please help me forgive the person who hurt me.’ The circuits to God must be busy with all of our “Help Me’s.”

We can find comfort in knowing our prayers are heard, our help comes from God, and so we Praise Him, Hallelujah! We wait on the Lord’s help and we welcome the help that always comes. Here is the Hope: It is found in our Prayer Time, our Study Time in the Word, and our Praise Time in the singing of hymns like “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus’ name. On Christ, the Solid Rock, I stand..”

PRAYER: Thank You, God, for loving me, choosing me, and helping me . My Hope is in You. Hallelujah and Amen.

Cheryl Rogers

Galatians 3:28-29 In Christ's family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us you are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ.

In the book of Galatians Paul addresses a quarreling community. The stakes are high, the sides have been drawn, and neither side is willing to back down. Jews and non-Jews cannot agree over what is required to be a follower of Christ. Could one simply believe in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection or must one also bear the physical marks of the historic Jewish faith? Paul unleashes his fervor squarely on both parties: You are missing the point.

It may sound like an antiquated argument, but take a listen to the evening news, to the conversations at the water cooler, or to any number of the vast talk radio channels. We are still good at dividing each other. We are still good at labeling each other. We are still good at questioning the love, commitment and intentions of each other. In this way, Paul's fervor could be aimed squarely at us: We are missing the point.

In Christ, not only are all of our differences irrelevant, they are non-existent. We are members of one body, heirs of one promise, and part of one family. All that matters is Christ, and, in Christ, we are all children of God.

Dear God, Help us to see each other through your eyes. Remind us that the same bonds that bind us to you also bind us together. And let us continually welcome each other with the love and peace of Christ.
Amen.

Kevin Weber

Romans 1:2 *The Gospel of God, He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scripture regarding His Son, who as to His human nature was a descendent of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.*

The opening of Romans includes key information about our Lord's first advent. The Apostle Paul refers to "the Gospel of God ... concerning his Son" to underscore the significance of the Christ child. In other words, God owns the Gospel. It is His Good News, not a message that was invented by human beings. The story of our Lord's lineage and entrance into this world is not a manmade fable but the truth of God revealed by His Spirit.

Secondly, God promised this Gospel "beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures." While the work of Christ represented a new act of God in an important sense, we cannot regard His ministry as something entirely new in the sense of something entirely unexpected. Actually, the Lord prepared His people for millennia before the coming of the Messiah via the ministries of the Old Testament prophets.

Today, we expect the second advent of Christ to judge the living and the dead. Sometimes we are tempted to be discouraged, to doubt that He is coming back, because it has been almost two thousand years since His ascension. But the people of God had to wait millennia for His first advent, and their faith was vindicated when He was born in Bethlehem. Our faith will be vindicated as well when our Savior comes in glory.

PRAYER: Dear God, thank You for Your promises, for we know they are always fulfilled. Thank You for Jesus and His coming into the world to save us. Give us courage and strength to face each day.
Amen

David Teeples

Isaiah 52:7-8 *How beautiful on the mountain are the feet of the messenger **bringing** good news, **breaking** the news that all is well, **proclaiming** good times, **announcing** salvation, **telling** Zion "Your God reigns!"*

In this passage, Isaiah is proclaiming peace, good news and salvation for God's people exiled in Babylon. His prophecy was not just for the exiles but for all people, for all time.

This message was written long before the birth of Christ, but it reminds us that God as Savior is not something new. God as Savior is who God is and who He has always been. The good news was then, is now, and will be forever.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help us to always remember that you are the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Amen

Sue Teeples

Week 3

Matthew 1: 22-23 *And this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Look, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will name him **Emmanuel**, which means **God is with us**."*

Of all the mysteries and promises contained in the Bible, this short passage is perhaps the simplest, yet, forms the basis of our Christian faith. It foretells the mystery of the virgin birth and the promise that God will send His son to us in the form of the Christ Child, Baby Jesus. And, the baby is to be named Emmanuel, "God is with us." Although our days are busy, especially during this time of year, and our lives are filled with stress, worries, and demands that sometimes feel more than we can bear, the simple assurance that **God is with us** lightens our load and carries us forward. We feel His presence; we know He is with us.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, we give thanks to You for the miracle of the virgin birth and the gift of Your Son, Emmanuel. Help me to be mindful that today and every day You are with us.

Terrie Morrison

1 John 1:2b-4 *The infinite Life of God Himself took shape before us. We saw it, we heard it, and now we're telling you so you can experience it along with us, this experience of communion with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ . . . We want you to enjoy this, too. Your joy will double our joy!*

This past Friday after months of anxious anticipation and preparation, my dear husband, Don, was honored to be laid to rest at Arlington Cemetery. It was a spectacular ceremony, and the day was warm and sunny, not a cloud in the sky. From the cemetery, we drove to Ft. Myer for the reception. Everything went off perfectly. Why had I worried and fretted over it the last ten months?

As I was writing the events in my diary the first morning back, I could see the Lord's handprints all over the preparations and the actual events down to the minutest details. He had been there every step of the way. I was overwhelmed with a sense of awe and awareness of His goodness and steadfast love. His Presence was very evident in the whole process. Joy filled my heart. Then I read the day's devotion from Sarah Young's Jesus Calling, and it so beautifully described my experience of communion with Him. We don't often think of bringing Him joy, and I loved the idea of His heavenly smile of approval. I've transposed it into a prayer.

PRAYER: O Lord, help me to turn my attention to You and feel the Light of Your Presence shining upon me. Open my mind and heart to receive Your heavenly smile of approval. Let Your gold-tinged Love wash over me and soak into the depths of my being. As I am increasingly filled with Your Being, I experience joyous union with You: You in me, and me in You. My Joy-in-You and Your Joy-in-me become intertwined and inseparable. You suffuse my soul with joy in Your Presence; at Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore. Amen

Winnie Wilks

From Saint Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

To be consoled as to console;

To be understood as to understand;

To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

And it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.

**PRAYER: God of all creation, open our hearts to
Your Word, so that, listening to it, we may comfort
one another, finding light in time of darkness and
faith in time of doubt. Amen**

Isaiah 9:6 *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."*

The birth of a child, especially this child, brings such joy, hope and peace. Isaiah 9:6 is confirmation of the upcoming rule of Jesus on earth. The actual roles of the coming Messiah are stated in this verse. He will rule God's kingdom with God's authority. He may be called by many names; Wonderful, Counselor, The Almighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace; but most important, Our Savior. Peace will characterize His reign on earth.

Dear Lord, Thank you for the hope of calmness and Peace. In your precious name we listen and pray. Amen.

Elizabeth Crawford

"Joy to the world, the Lord has come! Let earth receive her King; Let every heart prepare Him room...And heaven and nature sing!"

Psalm 130:7 *O Israel, wait and watch for God-with God's arrival comes love, with God's arrival comes generous redemption.*

When I read Psalm 130:7 from the Message, I get the feeling God is someone we wait for. He's ready to show up and bring Peace on Earth in a few days, or weeks . . . or months. It's like the first month of the New Year, when, we already look forward to the *next* Christmas.

However, when I read the history of Psalm 130, I learned it was likely written during the Babylonian Exile, when Israel was forced to leave Judah for detention in Babylon. Israel wasn't just waiting for the Messiah, it was waiting for God to save them from a captivity of 50 years. Little did Israel know it would be over 500 more years before Christ would be born in Bethlehem.

Today we can't wait twelve months for Christmas! How hard was it for those on the other side of the timeline; waiting not for weeks or months, but for years, then decades, then centuries?

That's why I also like the King James version of this verse: "Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord *is* unfailing love and with him *is* full redemption." This translation keeps God – and hope - in the present. God is the present - and the future.

PRAYER: Father, as we look forward to Christmas, help us to remember you are here now, in the future, and forever. In Christ Jesus, Amen.

Jayne E. Parker

Christmas Eve

Timothy 2:4-6 He wants not only us but everyone saved, you know, everyone to get to know the truth we've learned: that there's one God and only one, and one Priest-Mediator between God and us=Jesus!

Fake news! We tend to think of fake news as something new. Of course, we are discounting the salacious stories in the tabloids that have been around forever. We have always known them to be false, yet we find them entertaining and read them anyway, cluttering our minds with false information. Fake news is everywhere today: t v, twitter, face book, tabloids, and newspaper. All day long we are inundated with so-called facts. It even innocently comes out of the mouths of people we know. Is that because if we hear something often enough, that it makes it true?

Our ears and eyes are saturated with words trying to convince us to the other person's point of view. It does have a way into the brain that could lead to doubt if we keep hearing it over and over again and are not solid in our belief. One way we have of learning is by repetition, and falsifiers know that the mind is susceptible to this method. Tweak it a little and spice it up and there you have it. Fake news. Don't you just love it?

Fake news was alive and well when Jesus was alive. Paul writes to Timothy and tells him that false doctrine must be erased and for him to proclaim the scriptures. By studying the scriptures, we can put our faith on the knowledge that it is the truth. (11 Timothy 2:15) Paul tells Timothy "to study to show yourself approved," that way we will not be easily fooled by falsehood and led astray. Knowing the truth can show others the way and keep us safe from stumbling and questioning what is true or false when we hear untrue or fake news.

On this Christmas Eve let us celebrate with joyful hearts and the truth. The truth today is the same as it was then: God **is, was,** and **will be** forever more! Knowing the truth sets us free and calms our hearts and gives us the reassurance that we are indeed saved. Rejoice and be glad! Merry Christmas!

PRAYER: Dear Lord, may the truth forever reign in the hearts of mankind and ring out from heaven that Jesus Christ is Lord of all. Hallelujah and Amen!

Sherry Skovgaard

CHRISTMAS DAY

Pastor Mike

Ephesians 3:14-17 My response is to get down on my knees before the Father, this magnificent Father who parcels out all heaven and earth. I ask Him to strengthen you by His Spirit--- not brute strength but a glorious inner strength---that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite Him in. And I ask Him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you'll be able to take in with all Christians the extravagant dimension of Christ's love.

Holiday Joy in Christ with appreciation for all contributors to the "50 Years and Still Cookin'" FPC Cookbook)

1/2 package of worry

1 problem

1 tbsp of burdens

1/2 c. of guilt

1/4 c. of anger (or fear, if in season)

Thaw your worry and mix with problem. Add the burdens, guilt and anger (or fear, if you prefer a tart favor). Noticed that it begins to set up. Brush with sleeplessness or tears (optional).

With the oven preheated by the fire of the Spirit, place this dough before the Magnificent One, our One God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Baking time varies, depending on dimensions.

The dough of doubts, despair, desperation, and depression will turn golden brown, depending on elevation.

Worry, burdens, guilt and anger (fear) caramelize and become trust, freedom, forgiveness, and acceptance (confidence).

Garnish with mustard seeds. Brush with gratitude and tears. Let stand for 1 hour. Serve this Joy to others.

PRAYER: Open the door of our hearts, Lord God, and through the warmth of Your Spirit, turn our worries, anxieties, our anger and our shame into the Joy of Your Son, a Joy beyond all our believing. May we know true holiday Joy, and from that Joy strength and courage. We ask it in Christ's name. Amen

A PRAYER OF DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

God, early in the morning I cry to you.

Help me to pray

And to concentrate my thoughts on You:

I cannot do this alone.

In me there is darkness,

But with You there is light;

I am lonely, but You do not leave me;

I am feeble in heart, but with You there is help;

I am restless, but with You there is peace.

In me there is bitterness, but with You there is patience;

I do not understand Your ways, but You know the way
for me...

Restore me to liberty,

And enable me so to live now

That I may answer before You and before humanity.

Lord, whatever this day may bring,

Your name be praised.