

KIRKBRIDGE



Readings and Intentions 1977

WEEK-BASE DAILY READINGS

for individual and group meditation and prayer

For the 15th year of our custom of week-base daily readings, we have asked one of our trustees, Willis Elliott of New York Theological Seminary, to arrange the ecumenical readings and to select from his writings appropriate quotations for meditation--quotations other than those in the 1975 edition. Because the Gospels are the central sacred literature for Christians, we suggest that the Gospel portion be used every day of the week -- in different translations, if you wish -- no matter what use you make of the other portions of Scripture. The quotations for meditation correlate with the Gospel portions more often than with the non-Gospel portions -- Psalms, Old Testament (except six portions from Acts), and Epistles The lections are those to be read on Sundays in the churches of many denominations during 1977, with minor variations. Though in a different order from ours, they can be found in A LECTONARY (Consultation on Church Union, 1975), the Psalms portions being from "The Propers" section of THE CHURCH YEAR (Inter-Lutheran, 1975).

JANUARY

2--Luke 2:36-40; Psalm 147:12-20; Job 28:20-28; I Corinthians 1:18-25

Jesus' coming is not the end of pain but the promise of a Presence that is, and intends -- justice and joy. For us Christians, the New Year's resolution is built in.

9--Luke 3:15-17,21-22; Psalm 45:6-8; Isaiah 42:1-7; Acts 10:34-38

When Jesus spoke straight, the crooked world, thinking itself straight, thought him crooked. Therefore says the herald, to us also, "Make straight the way of the Lord!"

16--John 2:1-12; Psalm 36:5-10; Isaiah 62:1-5; I Corinthians 12:3-11

Make of us this day, O Light from Light, a thin place where your healing, strengthening radiance can shine through into this dense world of sickness, suffering, and sadness. My will against yours makes me dense, a child of darkness; our will against yours darkens the world -- the world which you began with the words "Let there be light!" Make us children of light!

23--Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21; Psalm 113; Nehemiah 8:1-4a,5-6,8-10; I Corinthians 12:12-30

Through Jesus, God does not so much call us to do better what we are doing well, as call us to stop doing much that we are doing, do everything else for higher reasons, and do some things we never otherwise would do. "The Spirit of the Lord" is upon us, and it is "good news."

30--Luke 4:21-30; Psalm 71:1-6,15-17; Jeremiah 1:4-10; I Corinthians 12:31-13:13

The gospel can be truly heard only as good news, for that is what it is. When it is heard as something else, two things obtain: it is not really being heard, and something else -- some idolatrous and demonic substitute -- is being listened to. This day, O God of the Glad Tidings, help us to hear and to be and to do and to tell the gospel.

FEBRUARY

6--Luke 5:1-11; Psalm 85:8-13; Isaiah 6:1-8; I Corinthians 15:1-11

~~Doing a rewrite job on oneself is not enough, for it cannot get us out of ourselves. Even so, if editing can't be a do-it-yourself job, for we are in love with our manuscript (and therefore touchy about changes therein), or we hate it (and therefore in danger of throwing it away). We need editing, maybe even rewriting, by the original Author.~~

13--Luke 6:17-26; Psalm 1; Jeremiah 17:5-10; I Corinthians 15:12-20

To live in harmony with nature, rejoicing in the present without anxiety for the future -- who could fault this ideal? Not the Eastern religions, or Isaiah or Jesus, or the American counter-culture. But forming coalitions for getting there from here will force us to face issues of truth, justice, and love; to undergo painful shifts of consciousness and structure; and to pay the full fare for the journey -- not the fare of the guru, but of the crucifix.

20--Luke 6:27-38; Psalm 103:1-13; Genesis 45:3-8a,15; I Corinthians 15:35-38a,42-50

An orphan asked me what it means to be loved "by the whole universe." How was I to answer? Was I as trapped as if one born blind had asked me to describe color? I answered with my arms, and with words -- words pointing to One whom no one loved enough, the One who loved more than enough even his enemies, even us.

27--Luke 4:1-13; Psalm 91; Deuteronomy 26:5-11; Romans 10:8-13

A saint, a holy one of God, will dream of something more than unbroken sunshine, stew over something more than personal annoyances, and scratch more than her / his own petty and grand itches. Lent is a time for turning from low dreams, greeds, grudges, and lusts -- we who have learned from the Lord how to deal with the devil.

MARCH

6--Luke 13:31-35; Psalm 42:1-5,9-11; Genesis 15:5-12,17-18; Philippians 3:17-4:1

Prophets shock a society set to reward civility, the lubricant of everyday life. They throw the sand of reality into the machinery of our false fantasies. And we -- God help us! -- know how to

reward Moses, Jesus, Socrates, and the rest of them -- for their candor. Lent is a time for remembering that we, who have often timidly stood with the cursers, are blest in return -- the return of grace.

13-Luke 13:1-9; Psalm 126; Exodus 3:1-8b,10-15; I Corinthians 10:1-13

God's finger points in judgment so that his hand may open in grace. He points against whatever denies us fullness of life, for he wants to give us our humanity.

20--Luke 15:11-32; Psalm 32; Joshua 5:9-12; II Corinthians 5:16-21

We are made not just for ourselves or each other but for the whole love potential of the universe and beyond. A prodigal Love has made and sustained us, weeps when our love is small and selfish, and welcomes us when we are humble and hungry for the feast of forgiveness.

27--John 8:1-11; Psalm 28:1-3,6-9; Isaiah 43:16-21; Philippians 3:8-14

Space and time were brutalized and now are mechanized. It is time, and it is possible, to humanize them -- by owning the space to be human and taking the time to be human and humane on pain of losing our humanity.

APRIL

3-Luke 22:14-23:56 (all, or broken into a seven-part sequence): Psalm 31:1-5,9-16;

Deuteronomy 32:36-39; Philippians 2:5-11

"Passion" is something the heart rushes to do, as with palm branches and pledges. But it is also, and in its verbal root, "suffering." Because the journey of passion to its goal is not painless, God asks us to weigh the pain against the goal in the context of "the Passion of our Lord."

10-Luke 24:1-11; Psalm 118:1-2,15-24; Exodus 15:1-11; I Corinthians 15:1-11

We are servants not of a cause that has lost but of a cause that has lost and won and has not yet won. As the battle continues, Christ continues as our light and life against every darkness and dying. For in him we know that love is too great for death, death is too small for life and has been overwhelmed: "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

17--John 20:19-31; Psalm 149; Acts 5:12-16; Revelation 1:9-19

Easter is two miracles: Christ is risen, and we believe it! In his living and dying, Jesus made his rising believable, plausible. Does my living, and my facing of death, make God's action in Jesus believable, plausible, for my neighbor?

24--John 21:1-19; Psalm 30; Acts 5:27-42; Revelation 5:11-14

Faith is not an intellectual acquiescence in Being nor a rational conclusion about Reality, but a leap of total, even though momentary, self-commitment to the present God whom we'd thought absent or perhaps even non-existent. Its loss is our deepest grief; to find it again is our profoundest assurance that we are loved by Life itself.

MAY

1--John 10:22-30; Psalm 23; Acts 13:14,43-52; Revelation 7:9-17

Facing the Crucifix, one must decide whether it is God who is dead, or the world. Only the second answer can prepare us, and the world, for "the resurrection and the life," in and beyond this world.

8--John 13:31-35; Psalm 145:1-13; Acts 14:19-28; Revelation 21:1-5

Love is so painful, even heroic, that multitudes are willing to settle for a little common decency. But since heroism is not optional to true humanity, decency is not enough. We shall have to open ourselves to *grace*, for we ourselves are not enough. And opening ourselves to the risks of *love* -- private, communal, and civil -- is a good beginning.

15--John 14:23-29; Psalm 67; Acts 15:1-6, 22-29; Revelation 21:10-14,22-23

"Myth" is not about what did *not* happen ("mere myth"), and it's not so much about what *did* happen as about what *can* happen ("the potential"), *should* happen ("the commandments"), *will* happen ("the promise"). "God saw all he'd made, and it was very good." "I've told you this so that when it happens, you'll believe."

22--John 17:20-26; Psalm 47; Acts 7:55-60; Revelation 22:12-14,16-17,20

I have to do this because you may be "Wanted," said the customs agent as he looked for my name in a huge book-list of undesirables and criminals. "But I know I'm wanted," I said to myself. "I am loved, and therefore wanted with a wanting that, instead of limiting, frees and unites."

29--John 15:26-27; 16:4b-11; Psalm 104:24-33; Genesis 11:1-9; Acts 2:1-21

Only God, when taking up all the room, enlarges the space. Pentecost, the coming of Creator-Gifter-Helper Spirit, expands one fearful "upper room" into "all the world."

JUNE

5--John 3:1-16; Psalm 8; Proverbs 8:22-31; Romans 5:1-5

A religion is a way of seeing and living in the world. Once-born eyes of flesh see the world without seeing how to live in it. Born-again eyes of faith see how to live in the world -- from beyond-within the world. So Jesus can say, "No one can see the Kingdom of God unless born again."

12--Luke 7:1-10; Psalm 117; I Kings 8:38-43; Galatians 1:1-10

In history and in the heart, God's love suffers and speaks within our loves. For me, that speech is clearest, and that suffering most luminous, in Jesus, whom I therefore rejoice to call my Lord.

19--Luke 7:11-17; Psalm 30; I Kings 17:17-24; Galatians 1:11-24

In the chronicles of earth, no story has ever been told to the end. The period at a story's end is only provisional, for every end is an invitation. The world is still open -- or rather open again, with the grave of Jesus.

26--Luke 7:36-8:3; Psalm 32; II Samuel 12:1-10,13; Galatians 2:11-21

Father of all, we draw near in amazement at your power and love in nature and grace, in humility before you and each other at your persistence in invitation, in penitence over our sinful disobedience to your holy will revealed in your Servant-Son Jesus, our Lord Christ. Through the joy of forgiveness, grace us with an open window on you in devotion, on your world in service and witness, and on each other in listening love.

JULY

3--Luke 9:18-24; Psalm 63:1-8; Zechariah 12:7-10; Galatians 3:23-29

The words of our Story and the wounds of the world are meant for each other; and Christian mission -- following Jesus -- is the process through which God enables the world, through us who believe this good news, to understand its wounds through Christ's wounds and its opportunities through Christ's resurrection.

10--Luke 9:51-62; Psalm 16; I Kings 19:14-21; Galatians 4:31-5:1,13-18

What fun raiding the cookiejar was! When we grew up, we found we had to give attention to the process that puts cookies in jars. If the jar is empty, we haven't grown up. If any jar is empty, the world hasn't grown up. Faith says that no jar need be empty, and calls to appropriate action, "of use for the Kingdom of God."

17--Luke 10:1-12,17-20; Psalm 66:1-12,16-20; Isaiah 66:10-14c; Galatians 6:11-18

God, bread, forgiveness, and the triumph of love are the themes of the Lord's Prayer and of the entire Bible. Love is in temporary defeat to the extent that we separate soul from body and self from society; but as we converge spiritual orientation and economic justice, and person and community at all levels, we truly experience and joyfully celebrate the fact that love's defeat is only temporary.

24--Luke 10:25-37; Psalm 25:1-10; Deuteronomy 30:9-14; Colossians 1:1-12

Staring at the Sistine ceiling I tingle at the sight of the flow of flesh from the finger of God -- hundreds of us, all starting from one! I am in that flow of flesh, I am one responsible for others. So I am under that Judgment and in that Resurrection. I am awed, calmed, exhilarated because I am made, owned, placed, and given a share in the Song.

31--Luke 10:38-42; Psalm 15; Genesis 18:1-11; Colossians 1:21-28

An idol is a God-sign become a God-substitute, a Good Thing in place of the One Thing Needful here and now (and therefore the Right Thing). Against this baleful and dangerous displacement of attention, the daily discipline of devotion to God is the best prophylaxis.

AUGUST

7--Luke 11:1-13; Psalm 138; Genesis 18:20-33; Colossians 2:6-15

The universe with one less prayer is not the same universe. How is it poorer? One less investment of good will. One shimmer less of love intended, sent to and by way of God. One less surge of power-yearning for the New Creation. One less dream of peace and resolve of justice. One less act of yielding to the Holy Purpose within and beyond, under and over, the world.

14--Luke 12:13-21; Psalm 49:1-12; Ecclesiastes 1:2, 2:18-26; Colossians 3:1-11

Lord of heaven and earth, help us value what Christ would have us -- the priority of persons over things, of your Kingdom over our kingdoms and nation, of truth over security, of justice over peace, of equal opportunity over law and order. And, in our valuing, deliver us from violating those who value otherwise.

21--Luke 12:32-48; Psalm 33; Genesis 15:1-6; Hebrews 11:1-2,8-19

God is dishonored or glorified in the great public decisions, which are few, and in the small-scale, day-to-day, ordinary, private decisions affecting "the neighbor," which are many. In God's eyes, what matters about a decision is not primarily its size, but its quality.

28--Luke 12:49-56; Psalm 82; Jeremiah 38:1b-13; Hebrews 12:1-6

~~Chaos again! Last time we got creation out of it.~~

SEPTEMBER

4--Luke 13:22-30; Psalm 117; Isaiah 66:18-23; Hebrews 12:7-13

Vibrant political dialog, the lifeblood of freedom, is possible when the inner life of the citizenry is vigorous. Worship thus is more than a private affair; it is a public necessity if power is to be used to create and maintain human space.

11--Luke 14:1,7-14; Psalm 112; Proverbs 25:6-22; Hebrews 12:18-24

"The Fall" may be *outward*, copping out on accountability in the presence of God, or *inward*, avoiding responsibility for the world. The biblical life-style is a third way, with one foot inner and private, the other outer and public the inner not neglected, for we "look inward" (intuitus) in self-reflective meditation and prayer; the outer not neglected, for we do not "curve inward" (incurvatus, Luther's definition of sin).

18--Luke 14:25-33; Psalm 10:12-14,16-18; Proverbs 9:8-12; Philemon 1-20

Renunciation has its stages -- of body, mind, emotions, will, relations. As one ascends the scale, the cost becomes greater while the reward gets less clear. At the top, all is given up and no reward is in sight except God and his will. The saint lives on the other side of self-calculation, beyond ego-reward. The cost of discipleship is total, and seldom paid in full.

25--Luke 15:1-10; Psalm 51:1-17; Exodus 32:7-14; I Timothy 1:12-17

The spinning top centers, sings, blends its colors. Take me to where the colors of the world are mixed and its song composed and its dance begun. Take me to the Center!

OCTOBER

2--Luke 16:1-13; Psalm 113; Amos 8:4-8; I Timothy 2:1-8

Lord, may I be humble enough to know I'm bad news; and proud enough to know I'm good news, and can be better through communion with you and your folk and caring for your creation.

9--Luke 16:19-31; Psalm 146; Amos 6:1-7; I Timothy 6:11-16

Salvation is not so much the absence of sin as the presence of caring.

16--Luke 17:1-10; Psalm 95:6-11; Habakkuk 1:1-3; 2:1-4; II Timothy 1:3-14

God can be heard, talked with, and talked about -- three languages, in descending order of importance. Tag words we use for these events, names for these languages, are "revelation," "prayer," and "theology," in that order. The middle language, as duty and joy, is open to all, regardless of gifts.

23--Luke 17:11-19; Psalm 111; II Kings 5:9-17; II Timothy 2:8-13

Since only sustained symbols sustain us, no one else is responsible when, having neglected our life-symbols, we collapse into anomie, accidie, apathy -- the three ungraces. The way out is, with God's grace, grateful action to order our time and space for the graces -- faith, hope, love.

30--Luke 18:1-8; Psalm 121; Exodus 17:8-13; II Timothy 3:14-4:5

"This do in remembrance of me" is said at the heart of all the world's religions. The body keeps us from amnesia about its needs, but the inner life easily forgets and suffers unconscious neglect silently. One practices one's religion to offer thanks and praise -- but also to prevent forgetting what one's religion says is most important not to forget.

NOVEMBER

6--Luke 18:9-14; Psalm 34; Deuteronomy 10:12-22; II Timothy 4:6-8,16-18

To "put heart into" our worship overcomes the split between our moral-spiritual consciousness and our will, determination, passionate decision. Prayerbook phrases for the first: "unto whom all hearts are open," "feed on him in thy heart by faith," "make clean our hearts within us"; and for the second: "proud in the imagination of their hearts," "thoughts of our hearts," "put into the hearts of many to offer themselves."

13--Luke 19:1-10; Psalm 145; Zephaniah 1:14-16; II Thessalonians 1:11-2:2

Since I am the size of the questions I now ask, what size am I? When I was little I asked big questions, frightening my elders as all children do. When I got bigger, did my questions get smaller? Lord, give me the humility and wisdom to ask and live with the size questions I should.

20--Luke 20:27-40; Psalm 148; I Chronicles 29:10-13; II Thessalonians 2:15-3:5

In biblical perspective, "belief" is not what I think I think, but what I do. Thus, Christian believing is not the holding of certain opinions about Jesus, but the worshipping of God through him. To this, "doctrinal controversies" have never been more than a sideshow.

27--Matthew 24:36-44; Psalm 122; Isaiah 2:1-5; Romans 13:8-14

Our friends are friends out of our past. But Jesus as Lord of the future is our friend from out of the future, coming toward us from tomorrow this same Jesus whom we know from out of the world's past, and our own.

DECEMBER

4--Matthew 3:1-12; Psalm 72:1-14(15-19); Isaiah 11:1-10; Romans 15:4-13

"Sin" is action that (the Greeks said) exceeds the *bounds* and (the Jews said) violates the *bonds*, the covenants. The stranding of the two is a basic clue for understanding the New Testament, Christianity, life and all the isms, prejudicial (classism, nationalism, racism, sexism) and ideological. "The wages of sin is death."

11--Matthew 11:2-11; Psalm 146; Isaiah 35:1-10; James 5:7-10

Through the anguish of dying dreams, new commitments are being born, for without commitment we are nothing. Commitment without God's grace is nothing, or worse. Grace through commitment is everything.

18--Matthew 1:18-25; Psalm 24; Isaiah 7:10-15; Romans 1:1-7

When life reduces us to a cry, we cry in our mother-tongue, however deep it may lie beneath cultural overlays. God means this pilgrim's regress for progress. The Cry from the Crib and the Cry from the Cross are sounds of resurrection on its way.

25--Matthew 2:13-15,19-23; Psalm 111; Ecclesiastes 3:1-9,14-17; Colossians 3:12-21

"If God be for us, what can stand (successfully) against us?" On God's side, nothing. On ours are a multitude of untowardnesses -- in ourselves, in others, in nature and history, in social structures and attitudes. The Good News from the cradle and the cross is that none of these need succeed. The Victim-Victor has undone the dark powers.

THE KIRKRIDGE PRAYER — Almighty Father, known in our silence, and entreated in our hunger for Thee, nourish us now with the common bread of Thy grace. Shape with Thy hands the witness of this quiet company, that our ministry may be Christ's own life in our day. Bestow Thy serenity and clean strength on each member of this circle, granting us honest work and steadfast friendship in Him. Deepen, O God, Thy intention for our life in Thee. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

SHARED INTENTIONS — This varied fellowship seeks a style-of-life with *daily*:

1. Openness to Scripture till word or verse speaks with power;
2. Intercessions by name, with thanks and praise;
3. Centering down in silence for at least minutes before God;
4. Seeking to act out Christian claims about justice, enemies, church, families, body-earth-air, intellect, our own affluence.

It is the aim of Kirkridge in everything to celebrate Christian faith in joy, without compulsion and without anxiety. Join us!



KIRKRIDGE

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The Kirkridge symbol, a modified Celtic cross, is actually the medieval sign for annealing, tempering -- our own devout intention.