

# KIRKCRIDGE

## Readings and Intentions 1983



WEEK-BASE DAILY LECTIONS

for individual and group meditation and prayer  
(The 21st year of this practice)

*Extracted from*

For our 21st year of this daily-weekly guide for attending, centering, and intending, we have asked Willis Elliott--who last year added 216 Bible readings on peace to the Sunday ecumenical lections and his weekly paragraphs--to write the weekly paragraphs in light of each Sunday's ecumenical lections (as well as of the Church and National Year). SUGGESTIONS FOR USE: (1) Ideally, you will use all three of a Sunday's lections every day of that week. If that seems too heavy, you might try this pattern: one reading each day, in two rounds, and all three readings on Saturday as a special preparation for the Lord's Day. In either case, each day meditate on the paragraph for the week. (2) While the paragraphs were written in light of each particular Sunday's lections theme, let the paragraph's message stand by itself: don't be anxious about finding all the connections. (3) The Bible and the paragraphs are **oral literature**: not for the eyes only, or even primarily. If circumstances permit, read aloud. (4) Read at least twice, each time more slowly. **Slow** watering seeps deep. (5) The paragraphs are thought-starters, not dogmas: make your own thought-offerings to God. (6) Observe the commas! They are invitations to pause, feel, think before you go on reading. Treat them as you do orange lights at intersections. (7) Feel the tempo variations: they are as important as in music.

### JANUARY

**2--Job 28:20-28; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; Luke 2:36-40 ....** The formative and final wisdom is to become a **joyful captive** of the Love that never lets us down and never lets us go. For no light can be given those who fail to love. Love is the courage to embrace what we cannot comprehend, namely, "what it's all about." To embrace and affirm and sustain. As we so love, wisdom light arises on us who sit in darkness, and the shadow of death is no more.

**9--Genesis 1:1-9; Ephesians 2:11-18; Luke 3:15-17, 21-22 ....** "The work of the Lord" now has expanded to include clean air-water-land, national transnational security for humanity, health, education, food, clothing, housing, adequate energy, and the techno-systems, management structures and processes, legal institutions, and voluntary associations necessary to sufficient production while minimizing pollution and waste and maximizing political and personal independence. God of creation old and new, help me to **grab hold** where I should, and not be overwhelmed.

**16--Isaiah 62:2-5; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; John 2:1-12 ....** Suddenly--as Cana's water was turned to wine by the power of the Love at the root of all love--the cup of wrath will be transformed into the cup of blessing, and the goodness of the good earth will shine forth with primordial and eternal radiance, and all things will **sing the wedding song** of the new world. We blind will see and we deaf will hear, and we shall no more betray the Beloved or break covenant with one another.

**23--Nehemiah 8:1-3; 5-6, 8-10; 1 Corinthians 12:12-30; Luke 4:14-21 ....** Life illuminated by Torah (God's Word, Teaching, Law, Gospel) informs me that I am **dumb**, the devil is **bright**, and God is **brilliant**. When I live in the light of these truths, I am smart. "The fear of the Lord (and of the devil) is the beginning of wisdom."

**30--Jeremiah 1:4-10; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Luke 4:22-30 ....** Every time I saw that retarded janitor a half century ago as he collected my trash, he'd smile and say to me, "We love Him because He first loved us." In the time between, I have not gotten beyond that wisdom, have no hope of doing so, and need no such hope. But much else that I had thought wisdom has turned out to be--well, trash.

### FEBRUARY

**6--Isaiah 6:1-8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Luke 5:1-11 ....** Over against the world's forever treating us as expendable and replaceable, here is our **security and dignity**: we are forever being called by and **taken up** into God. Prayer discovers and celebrates this fact, and so acts as a stabilizer and gyroscope for our precarious walk through the world.

**13--Jeremiah 17:5-8; 1 Corinthians 15:12-20; Luke 6:17-26 ....** This day, the God who moves all things toward "the fulness of the stature of Christ" moves me and moves with me. This frees me, face to face with the quality of life celebrated in the Gospels, to **admit** frailty and **confess** failure and **affirm** whatever conforms to this quality and **resist** whatever is alien to it. In short, I am a Christian.

**20--Deuteronomy 26:5-11, Romans 10:8-13; Luke 4:1-13 ....** Jesus used **persuasion** (as freedom requires), forbade **vindictiveness** (which violates love and forgiveness), and refused to organize **force** (which he said was God's prerogative in the coming of the Kingdom). Make of all this what you will, and be generous with those who make of it something else.

**27--Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18; Philippians 3:17 - 4:1; Luke 9:28b-36 ....** **Prayer** (says an old saw)--if it worked, they'd pay people to do it. It **works**: it un-egos the self, it dethrones the individual, it diminishes the hold of society on the soul, it opens the spirit to Spirit, and it strengthens hope against despair and love against fear. Besides, in answer to prayer, God just might do something for us citizens of earth and heaven.

### MARCH

**6--Exodus 3:1-8, 13-15; 1 Corinthians 10:1-12; Luke 13: 1-9 ....** The world is neither everything nor nothing. It is the theater of God's glory and our opportunity to worship God or idols, Creator or

creatures, Source or "values." For nice people, it's **uncomfortable** (1) to repent of idol-worship and (2) to engage in idol-smashing (Greek, "iconoclasm")--but Moses and Jesus call us to both; and we obey, else our worship is false.

**13--Joshua 5:9-12; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Luke 15:11-32** .... Nutrition is in the news, against starvation and for wellness. Let's check ourselves, and help each other, on these polar elements for **the diet of a healthy soul**: habit/adventure, quiet/ecstasy, order/chaos, earthy/heavenly, solitude/society, contemplation/action, leisure/work, repentance/forgiveness.

**20--Isaiah 43:16-21; Philippians 3:8-14; Luke 22:14-30** .... Said a sardonic wag, "It's easier to be crucified than resurrected." But our Christian faith says it was harder for God to let Jesus be crucified than it was to resurrect him: power that need not suffer for love, but does, is stronger than power that causes suffering. The God who reigns over us by **suffering beside us and for us** is the Servant wounded by attack and neglect, betrayed, scorned, rejected--the Fellow of all sufferers and the Lord of all who long for deliverance.

**27--Isaiah 59:14-20; 1 Timothy 1:12-17; Luke 19:28-40** .... If we know the bright side of our hearts, Palm Sunday is **no surprise**: we lean toward praise and joy and liberty. If we know the dark side of our hearts, the Crucifixion is **no surprise**: the death of the holy in the name of the good is just what we'd expect we'd do. And if we know Jesus, the Resurrection is **no surprise**: it is just what we'd expect God to do--no miracle, for miracles are surprises.

## APRIL

**3--Exodus 15:1-11; 1 Corinthians 15:20-26; Luke 24:13-35** .... Jesus Resurrectus is God's loudest **YES! to life** and loudest **NO! to death**. Being a Christian includes taking this as a double model for our life in the world. How, here and now, am I to shout **YES! to life** and **NO! to death**? And will I let the Crucifix en-courage me to take the consequences?

**10--Acts 5:12-16; Revelation 1:9-13, 17-19; John 21:1-14** .... Sustain us, Father-Mother of Life, with glimpses of your Glory, that we may **live** in the power of **your promise** of shalom. "For Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory forever."

**17--Acts 5:27-32; Revelation 5:11-14; John 21:15-19** .... Jesus' Resurrection is a **fact**: ours is a **hope** based on that fact. But the resurrection is also an **assignment** to confront death wherever we encounter it--in ourselves, our relationships, our institutions, our communities, the world. For through us the One who says "Follow me!" calls to all who are holding on for dear death, to let go and fall into Life. Grace works resurrection through the works of life against death.

**24--Acts 13:44-52; Revelation 7:9-17; John 10:22-30** .... The pieces we can't find places for are not from another jigsaw puzzle: since there is only one, there must be something wrong with our seeing. Will we treat the pieces (and persons, and perspectives) we can't find places for as friends or enemies? As **invitations to re-visioning**, or as annoyances to be rejected?

## MAY

**1--Acts 14:19-28; Revelation 21:1-5; John 13:31-35** .... He was not killed because of any misunderstanding but because it came down to **his world or theirs**. It is theirs, still. It will be his: Christians are people who believe it will be his. After the struggle of "the Way"--the believing and doubting and re-believing, the misunderstanding and persecuting, the anxiety of unknowing and the anguish of knowing--"the gentle-strong shall inherit the earth."

**8--Acts 15:1-2, 22-29; Revelation 21:10-14; 22-23; John 14:23-29** .... As New Jerusalem is first in the heart and later on in the world, so **being peace** precedes "peace on earth." Being peace is the source, the point, and the goal of talking peace and doing peace (being a "peacemaker"). Is "peace" the statement made by my existence and by the institutions I influence? The prophetic word only condemns the sword: the incarnate word beats it into a plough.

**15--Acts 7:55-60; Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20; John 17:20-26** .... The yearnings that leave remainders are prayers for the shalom, the fulfilment, that leaves no remainders. The shortfalls of our longings are sacraments toward "**the Desire of all nations**." Messiah came but must come; we are together on this small planet, but we must become one. We seize the tree of knowledge: **The Tree of Life**, which is beyond our grasp, is within our reach.

**22--Isaiah 65:17-25; Acts 2:1-13; John 14:25-31** .... Vegetarian lions! Do the Bible's shalom images bring peace into ridicule? Rather, they shock us into awareness that Pentecost is of a Spirit **radically different** from the spirit of the world and that the New Creation is so different as to seem discontinuous with the old creation. No wonder that in the world's eyes, the saint often appears to be stupid.

**29--Proverbs 8:22-31; 1 Peter 1:1-9; John 20:19-23** .... "Sin" is irresponsibility. "**Repentance**" is turning to God in admission that we have been irresponsible, unresponsive to our duties, and so have wallowed in illusion, sickness, betrayals, and despair. "**Forgiveness**" is the freedom, by divine permission, to return to our responsibilities after admitting, confessing, our violations of truth, honor, love, neighbor, the good earth, God .... The vocabulary of life restored through a Wisdom that comes through our closed doors.

## JUNE

**5--1 Kings 8:41-43; Galatians 1:1-10; Luke 7:1-10** .... Here Solomon, Paul, and Jesus have news for the laid-back lifestyle: **disciplined living** is necessary for character, and character is necessary for freedom. Morals are limits on behavior; ethics is duty; mature religion is the free and joyful acceptance of the limits and the duties as divine commands. Only half the picture? Yes; the half easier to forget.

**12--1 Kings 17:17-24; Galatians 1:11-19; Luke 7:11-17** .... The King who delights in life calls us forth from the graves we stumble into as we wander away from the King who delights in life. Loyal subjects of this King live as **enemies of death** and deathmakers -- disease, malice, betrayal, suicide, murder, war, unrestricted birth. Resurrections are political events, in league with the living.

**19--2 Samuel 12:1-7a; Galatians 2:15-21; Luke 7:36-50** .... Our impulse toward purity and simplicity is more than a call to clean up our act and set our house in order. It is an invitation with promise -- an **invitation** to pass from love of the blessings to love of the Blesser, and the **promise** of forgiveness unto newness of life.

**26--Zechariah 12:7-10; Galatians 3:23-29; Luke 9:18-24** .... When we grasp the truths we can, the Truth we cannot grasp **grasps us** -- grasps and embraces and gives comfort and strength. That Truth illuminates our ignorance, condemns our prejudice, and graces us with the courage both to suffer the loss of the lesser life and to receive "the Kingdom prepared" for us. We the Church say,

of our messianic Model in all this, "Jesus is Lord!"

## JULY

**3--Kings 19:15-21; Galations 5:1, 13-18; Luke 9:51-62 ....** You are there in the midst of our tricks and toys and tools, but You will not let us fit You into our frames. Rather, You anoint us to **follow** You in loving and serving one another and in proclaiming the Kingdom of God and in suffering the consequences and in entering into Life. Unconfined Lord, direct us from independence **into freedom**.

**10--Isaiah 66:1-14; Galations 6:11-18; Luke 10:1-9 ....** The end of the world, which was a **belief**, by science became a **doubt** and now by technology has become a **nightmare**. For cynics it's a **hope**. For pessimists, a **fate**. For optimists, an **impossibility**. For biblical people, it is the **fulfilment** of the promise of justice and joy .... the **victory** of shalom .... the messianic **feast** .... the **marriage supper** of the Lamb .... the **return** of the Lord .... **Kingdom come**.

**17--Deuteronomy 30:9-14; Colossians 1:15-20; Luke 10:25-37 ....** I feel my **pain** so I can better offer it to God and feel your pain -- and offer you and your pain to God. All this I learned from the One of whom it is rightly said, "He is our Peace (Shalom)." Theologians call this "the doctrine of the **atonement**."

**24--Genesis 18:1-11; Colossians 1:24-28; Luke 10:38-42 ....** So that we can do what most needs doing toward the flourishing of the life of the spirit and of the biosphere, we must **master the disciplines** of ~~not doing much that we can do and sharing the fruits of much that we have done~~. That's as improbable as that Sarah would have a son or that Jesus would survive death: our faith-story heartens us to believe, and to strive, beyond the odds.

**31--Genesis 18:20-33; Colossians 2:8-15; Luke 11:1-13 ....** "Pray without ceasing." "Bring every thought into captivity to Christ." "Do all to the glory of God." Three **impossible** things before breakfast! But also think on this: "With God, all things are **possible**."

## AUGUST

**7--Ecclesiastes 2:18-23; Colossians 3:1-11; Luke 12:13-21 . . .** Was God talking to the animals when these words resounded in the primordial jungle, "Let Us make man in Our image?" We make a lot of sense as a joint project, as super-fauns, earthy creatures whose aspirations far **outreach** our powers and our lifespan. But "It's all useless" is not the Bible's last word; rather, this: "raised with Christ into **newness of life**."

**14--2 Kings 17:33-40; Hebrew 11:1-3, 8-12; Luke 12:35-40 ....** All things are creatures of God except **idols**: idols are our creations over against God. **Faith** is action in response to hearing this: "I will rescue you from your idols." Faith returns us to reality by delivering us from "I" (the illusion of our initiative) to "you" (the truth that God addresses us into being and obedience: the first and final word about us is not "I" but "you": "You shall love ...").

**21--Jeremiah 38:1-13; Hebrews 12:1-6; Luke 12:49-53 ....** We survived because we were more clever: if we continue to survive, it will be because we succeed in becoming **less stupid**, learning to surrender such stupidities as these: (1) All knowledge is good for us; (2) Split humanity and the split atom can coexist on the same planet; (3) Forcing quiet is the same as making peace; and (4) Speaking truth to power is wicked. Jesus "did not give up," and we are called to **fix our eyes** on him.

**28--Isaiah 66:18-23; Hebrews 12:7-13; Luke 13:22-30 ....** The biblical point of punishment and stricture is this: to **shape us up** on the negative side, as providential love and liberty **shape us up** on the positive side. We are being readied for **the biggest doings**, which are not for small souls. We are to "share God's holiness" and join in the universal worship, the gathering beyond all scatterings, the grand return after all wanderings. To this end, endure!

## SEPTEMBER

**4-- Proverbs 22:1-9; Hebrews 12:18-24; Luke 14:1, 7-14 ....** Your wise ones, O Lord, teach us to **link** our swift-passing seasons **with** your unending purposes of **love**. Forgive us where we have linked our lives with less--with lust for position and "means" and fame. May we live humbly among those who have come to your "joyful gathering," "that all the earth may know You."

**11--Proverbs 9:8-12; Philemon 8-17; Luke 14:25-33 ....** These merge in **prayer**: praise, reverie, thanksgiving, contemplation, intercession, petition. These merge in **action**: kindness, justice, love, humor, reconciliation, confrontation, labor, leisure. But cool lists do not encompass the full cost of discipleship -- the beginning of wisdom in "the fear of the Lord," and its crowning in "Take up your cross and follow Me."

**18--Exodus 32:7-14; 1 Timothy 1:12-17; Luke 15:1-32 ....** When we are lost in the woods, a **way-sign** is the most wonderful sight we can see. When we are worshipping golden bulls and golden eagles, a **way-shower** out of our spiritual woods should be the most welcome sight -- should be. May the glint of all golds be outshone by the glory of the Shekinah of Shalom, the Presence of the one who "is our Peace"!

**25--Amos 8:4-8; 1 Timothy 2:1-8; Luke 16:1-13 ....** Underlying and overleaping "civilization" are the ancient gods -- the **earth** gods rooting us in the common ventures of life, the **heaven** gods rousing us to aspire and to experience beyond-above dailiness. Our biblical faith in "the (one) God of heaven and earth" joins root and sky and asks us what we are doing about earth-poverty and heaven-poverty. Because God is One, the **poverties** are not separate.

## OCTOBER

**2--Amos 6:1,4-7; 1 Timothy 6:11-16; Luke 16:19-31 ....** Not where I **own**, but where I love, I live. Not where I **know**, but where I love, I live. Not where I **control**, but where I love, I live. For love is the name of every road that leads to life: all other roads lead to death. And "love never fails." Love never fails to demand that we love.

**9--Habbakuk 1:1-3 and 2:1-4; 2 Timothy 1:3-12; Luke 17:5-10 ....** The **titles** we give Jesus -- Master-Teacher, Lord, Savior, Messiah, Son of God, (and one he gave himself) Son of Man -- point to the gleaming Mystery from which he came, in which he lived, to which he went, and into which he introduces us by faith, by hope, by love. But there is no mystery about the **titles** he gives us: little children, children of light, disciples, servants, friends.

**16--2 Kings 5:9-17; 2 Timothy 2:8-13; Luke 17:11-19 ....** The Maker of Heaven and Earth is ever more strongly nudging us to mean, by "we," the **whole** human race, the **whole** earth, the **whole** creation. Evidences? The wider the "we," the better for all: the narrower the "we," the bigger the troubles. We Christians -- all who name Jesus' name and try to walk in his ways -- are called to

**unbind** the Word of God from our divisions, that together we may witness toward the "we" that leaves none out.

**23--Exodus 17:8-13; 2 Timothy 3:14 - 4:2; Luke 18:1-8 ....** As in Rembrandt the sublime illumines the homely from within, so -- if we will it so -- the Holy Word is heard through our daily chatter and clatter. If we will it so, if we let it happen, if we help it to be so, in coming the Son of Man will find the faith on the earth. Since the everyday is **real** and the common is to be hallowed, our hunger for being is also the **hunger for holiness**, the yearning to become real saints.

**30--Deuteronomy 10:16-22; 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18; Luke 18:9-14 ....** **Buffoons** do funny things. **Comedians** make funny connections. **Saints** see the quiet humor infusing life, and so relieve us of the unholy burden of being too serious about ourselves and even about God. All three are God's servants in teaching us to **lean toward laughter**, which is food and medicine and -- as the celebration of life -- reverence. The self-righteous, who are humorless, are not in danger of becoming buffoons, or comedians, or saints.

## NOVEMBER

**6--Exodus 34:5-9; 2 Thessalonians 1:11 - 2:2; Luke 19:1-10 ....** The Word arises out of mystery into **clarity** and out of oppression into **liberation**. Freedom is obedience to the One who by our obedient love delivers us from all that is set against our liberty -- even death itself.

**13--1 Chronicles 29:10-13; 2 Thessalonians 2:16 - 3:5; Luke 20:27-38 ....** **Hallowing God's Name** is the project behind, and the question about, all the **honors** given among us. If this is not the **project**, our honoring becomes worship, and those we honor assume divine status and powers, with demonic results. If this is the **question**, the honors given among us will be honors primarily given to God, and we shall expect, along with this hallowing of God's name, less idolatry in those who honor and more humility in those who are honored.

**20--Malachi 3:16 - 4:2; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13; Luke 21:5-19 ....** Two arm-lengths away, a nuthatch is circling a pine, denuding it of insects. No peace for the insects, little for the bird, much for me. For me, a deep rightness, and thanksgiving, and peace. And the mystery of good and evil. And the call to **live gratefully**, giving my life back to Life. The same message from bird and Bible.

**27--Isaiah 2:1-5; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:36-44 ....** Strangely, my spirit has wings that can fan darkness into light, mystery into luminosity. But are the wings mine? If I think so, I am burdened with messianic illusion. If I think not, "underneath are the everlasting arms," "**the Lord has come**," and the future is mine because the God of time and eternity is my God. To my duties, then: **the Lord is coming!**

## DECEMBER

**4--Isaiah 11:1-10; Romans 15:4-9; Matthew 3:1-12 ....** Civilizations differ in the **limits** they put on behavior. A civilization dies when it fails to **engender** its limits (i.e., becomes amesiac), or to **revise** its limits (i.e., becomes rigid), or to **impose** its limits (i.e., becomes licentious). Where, now, are we? And what are we biblical strangers in a strange land to do where we are?

**11--Isaiah 35:1-6, 10; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11 ....** The Church and its influence has been and is "**Good News to the poor**." Not the best news imaginable, but the best available. **But** how, now, become **better news** than we have been? Now, when much news we thought good has turned bad? Now, when **new questions** call for wisdom and courage to let our caring take new shapes? The grace, O Lord, to make this desert bloom with joy!

**18--Isaiah 7:1-15; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25 ....** "Immanuel" is not only the Word become flesh but also that **flesh become word** -- costly word that turned that flesh into corpse. Christmas and Good Friday are the vertical and horizontal of a single Cross. Easter and the Kingdom of God come only thereafter. Milk and honey only after sweat and blood. We are **apostles** of the One whose Story, beyond all other stories, moves from joy through pain to Joy! So sing we, "The Savior is born!"

**25--Isaiah 62:1-4; Colossians 1:15-20; Luke 2:1-14 ....** If we don't know where we are, it's because we're lost or because we're **journeying with Someone** who is leading us to where we should be. In this, **Abraham** is our first model: a nobody who became somebody through the courage to be, with God, nowhere. And **Jesus** is our final model: a Somebody who in a manger became a nobody in the promised land, to turn the world into the Land of Promise. Christmas invites us who live our fears or at best our hopes, to **live instead God's Hope** for us, for the world.

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### THE KIRKRIDGE PRAYER —

(unison) **ALMIGHTY GOD**, 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 Thee. Deepen, O God, Thy intention for our life in Thy Spirit. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

1. Openess 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!

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