

CRAMOND KIRK



DECEMBER PRAYER DIARY

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them & the glory of the Lord shone around them & they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths & lying in a manger."

(Luke 2 : 8 - 12)

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Prayer topics are arranged over seven days which you may find helpful.

Sunday

Pray for Tom & Colin & for their pastoral role in the life of the congregation & also for their work in the community. Pray for Russell & Margaret as they continue with their many public engagements.

Monday

The Columba Declaration

(from the Church of Scotland website)

A landmark agreement to enter into an historic ecumenical partnership has been signed by the Church of Scotland & the Church of England. Right Rev Dr Russell Barr, Moderator of the General Assembly & Archbishop of Canterbury the Most Rev Justin Welby made the Columba Declaration official in London. The Columba Declaration, which was 15 years in the making, represents a "significant step" between the two denominations & will open up new possibilities of closer working together to develop God's Church." We pray for the future success of this partnership.

Tuesday

Pray for the continuing crisis in Aleppo & the terrible suffering of many of the local population. Pray that peace might prevail & for humanitarian aid to reach the city.

Wednesday *(from the Christian Aid Website)*

As the international 16 Days Against Gender-Based Violence began on Friday, 26 November, pray for all who are unsafe because of their gender. Pray for our work in Nicaragua to dismantle damaging 'machismo' culture that it will set women free from fear & bring about flourishing, mutually respectful relationships between men & women. Pray for the 30 church leaders studying with our partner CIEETS (Centre for Theological Study) for a diploma on biblical & theological ways of re-imagining gender relations.

Thursday

Pray for the divisions in society caused by Brexit & the election of Donald Trump. Our world has begun to look far less stable over the past few months & as we approach 2017, we look for political stability both in Europe & the United States in the coming year.

Friday

Pray for families helped by the Old Kirk & Muirhouse congregation as they receive toys from our Gift Service. Pray for Brodie Davidson & Tessa White, baptised on 27 November.

Saturday

Pray for the elderly & lonely of our community at this time of festivity & celebration. Pray also for those facing a first Christmas having lost a loved family member or friend during the past year.

REFLECTION

In the events of Jesus birth, Herod & the shepherds are defined by their response to Jesus. Today, we are each defined by our response to Jesus. Even more extraordinarily, Christmas defines God. Here is the most startling of claims; this baby, this Jesus, who is God, defines God. God is self-defined as pure love, love celebrated in angel light & seen in human vulnerability, love that is indifferent to status & that hates injustice, love the news of which is borne on the heavenly songs but which is seen in poverty & insecurity.

What the shepherds glimpsed that silent night outside Bethlehem was an apocalypse, which means an uncovering of God's final purpose for all the universe.

The shepherds were the poorest of the poor, out on cold hillsides day & night. They probably weren't religious people. They certainly weren't powerful, influential people. They were the butt of jokes, the object of contempt & the outsiders. They were unlikely to consider themselves on a journey in search of meaning & personal fulfilment.

Yet to **them** the angels flew, not for private experience but for public declaration. They told of a once-for-all event that shifted the entire world, the whole creation. This event wasn't just to be observed from far off, it was close, inviting, a God-for-them apocalypse, an event in which they are invited to participate. And they did.

Today, across the Middle East, close to the area in which the angels announced God's apocalypse, ISIS & others claim that this is the time of an apocalypse, an unveiling created of their own terrible ideas, one which is igniting a trail of fear, violence, hatred & determined oppression. Confident that these are the last days, using force & indescribable cruelty, they seem to welcome all opposition, certain that the warfare unleashed confirms that these are indeed the end times. They hate difference, whether it is Muslims who think differently, Yazidis or Christians & because of them the Christians face elimination in the very region in which Christian faith began. This apocalypse is defined by themselves & heralded only by the angel of death.

The shepherds see the truth, eternal, unwavering, divine truth, defined not by them, but by God: it was truth for them then, it is truth with us today. Goodness knows what they were expecting, but what they find is a new-born child – tiny, helpless & vulnerable. Yet they bow down in worship. The shepherds get this apocalypse.

Herod too gets this apocalypse. He senses that this tiny, helpless, vulnerable, utterly normal child is the ultimate threat to his power & authority. He is right: this child is the ultimate judge of all human power & authority. Having heard about the birth of Jesus, Herod responds in devastating destruction. He tries to annihilate the apocalypse of God. Force meets love & love has to flee into Egypt & returns to ordinary life & eventually to a cross & an empty tomb, conquering the world. At Christmas we are confronted with God's form of power, which judges all our forms of power.

(from a Sermon by Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury)

(<http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/5655/the-archbishop-of-canterburys-christmas-sermon>)

If you have a prayer request or a favourite prayer which you would care to share in a future Prayer Diary, please e-mail cramond.kirk@blueyonder.co.uk