

**TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**

2017

ADVENT DEVOTIONALS



May the God of hope fill you with all joy
and peace as you trust in him, so that you
may overflow with hope by the power of the
Holy Spirit.

TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET
2017

Isaiah 40:3 A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord"; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Advent, the first season of the church year, begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve. The word Advent means "coming." Advent is not just a time to wait expectantly but also a time to prepare for the Christmas celebration.

This is the 13th issue of Trinity's Advent Devotional Booklet. Since 2005, the Christian Education Committee has provided the congregation each year with a collection of devotions written by members of the Trinity family. The theme for this year's booklet is TRUST. This year's booklet will also include "Best of Trinity" selections from the

2014, 2015, and 2016 issues. You will enjoy seeing these entries again as they not only fit the theme of the year they were written, but they relate well to this year's theme of trust.

Each devotion begins with a suggested scripture reading that refers to the theme of trust or is one of the lectionary choices for that date. These entries can be read for private devotions or shared out loud by the family for a shared devotional time. We trust that these devotions will bring you both inspiration and peace during this holiday season.

We give our heartfelt to all the contributors who have shared their inspirational thoughts to help all of us better prepare once again for God's gift of Love, His Son, Jesus Christ. Thanks also to Carol Corson, Shelley Wheeler, and the church office for their work editing and publishing this year's booklet.

**The Christian Education
Committee**

November 26 Isaiah 40: 28-31

In The Palm of His Hand

“And he will raise you up on eagle’s wings. Bear you on the breath of dawn. Make you to shine like the sun. And hold you in the palm of his hand.”

When I was a youth here at Trinity, we had a Wednesday night gathering called Logos. At the end of every gathering we would join hands and someone would get on the piano and play the chorus of “On Eagle’s Wings.” This image always brings me peace, comfort, and trust.

Logos was filled with caring, faithful adults who always made me feel loved, welcome, and safe just by being present. I encourage you this advent season, not to run yourself crazy trying to be everything to everyone, but instead focus on being present over being perfect. Take the time to let God raise you up on eagle’s wings, bear you on the breath of dawn, make you to shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of his hand.

The final sentence in the song is my prayer for you this advent season. I have been interested lately in the practice of imaginative prayer. So today I want to lead you in an imaginative prayer. You will want to read the directions all the way

through once and then put it into practice.

Close your eyes, take a deep breath in through your nose, hold for 2 seconds and then release through your nose. Continue breathing like this for a couple of breaths, until you feel the tension of the day melt away. Imagine the person/place/or thing you are praying for, really take time to see who or what it is that you are praying for.

Really see the struggle with the situation.

Keep this image in your mind, but now imagine God's presence approaching. Fully imagine God's hand taking over and simply holding and comforting. Take a few deep breaths, inhaling God's peace for the situation, and exhaling fear and negativity. Continue with this image until you feel that you have successfully turned it over to God.

Brooke Tucker

November 27 Romans 15:13

LEARNING TO TRUST

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

As we enter this Advent season we want to feel the joy and peace that is present in the manger. We need to trust in the God who makes it so.

Our dogs, Emerson and Annie, trust me to water and feed (they both would be very happy if that is all I would do), walk, medicate, play, groom, take them to the vet (okay, that would not be their favorite activity), and find them safe a safe place to stay when we travel. And, for the most part, I live up to their trust.

Annie had to learn to trust. She was a mom at a puppy mill. She was rescued and placed in a foster home. Her foster mom, Sarah (age 12), changed her name from Jolie to Annie (as in Little Orphan Annie) because she was ill-fed, dirty, matted and infested with fleas. Sarah nurtured Annie, bringing her back to health and training her with love and affection. Annie learned to trust. I hope that Annie has also found joy and peace.

God loves us unconditionally and gives us His grace. As each of us grows in our faith, so does our trust in God. This stronger trust will lead us to a more mature faith and a deeper relationship with our Lord and Savior.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, bless us with the joy and peace of this holy season.

May we trust in Your word and work to spread that word. Amen

Karen Thomas

**November 28 1 Psalm 8, 24, 29, 84;
John 3:16-21**

**JOYFUL PRESBYTERIANS
FULL OF TRUST**

Psalm 84:4 Happy are those who live
in your house, ever singing your
praise.

When Philip and I moved to Palm
Coast in June of 1979, we were
astonished to learn that there were no
Presbyterian Churches in all of Flagler
County. We had come from New
Jersey where there were lots of
Presbyterian Churches. I was a cradle
Presbyterian and Philip was
Presbyterian by marriage. We needed
to find church home.

Thankfully, the Reverend James
Tinsley came to our door one day and
asked if we would be willing to help

start a new church. In short order, twelve couples met with Him and Martha at their home. We learned that ITT would donate the land and Presbytery would supply the funds. All we had to do was supply the people. We met several times and went over the plans, and I'm happy to say that our first service was held at the Community Center on November 11, 1979 with over one hundred people in attendance. We knew we had a long way to go, but at least we had started. Now there would be a Presbyterian presence in Flagler County.

Prayer: Father in Heaven, we are so very grateful for the presence of Trinity Presbyterian Church where so many people have found so much joy. Amen.

Betty Lou Singalewitch

November 29 John 14:27

IN GOD'S TIME

Trusting God was easy while growing up in a Christian home. We prayed at every meal and at bedtime. Whenever I had worries, mom assured me that 'things work out – in God's time'.

As I got older and had my own children, it was much harder to have patience in trusting God. Now I had concerns for my children. It seemed as though God was taking longer to answer my prayers. This is where my Trust/Peace scripture reading came into a daily practice.

The older I become, the more assured I am that I can trust God, in his time. Looking back, I can see now that through the trust and faith I had in him, he pulled us through some very tough times. Throughout Tiffany's beautiful short life, God sent angels to show us his love. So many amazing, touching moments with caring, loving people by our side and special relationships that would have never occurred, if we hadn't trusted in him. Believing in him and finding his peace has created a blessed life for us. Don't get me

wrong, I have shed many tears and made many confessions of doubt to him, but throughout our relationship, he has made me feel loved and very safe in times when I had nowhere else to turn. Questions weren't immediately answered, but the caring and support I needed was there in his spirit, in the Bible and through angels here on earth.

Bill and I have a framed poster in our living room titled 'Footprints'. It is a story about a man looking back on his life and tells the story of how the Lord was always with him even through all his troubled times. I believe that through our trust in God and having the many wonderful angels here on earth giving us plenty of hugs, our life will continued to be blessed throughout our struggles. Then one day, we will be home with him and all those who have gone before us.

I thank God for you my church family and may the peace of Christ be with us all.

Libbie Butler

November 30 Micah 6:8

WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

The beginning of October I tried to block out the sounds and pictures of the news. I heard a segment of a recording, a staccato burst – nine bullets a second – before I jumped and switched off the television. I did not want to look.

Like most people I have been searching for answers. There must be some key fact that will unlock our understanding. There must be some snippet of back story that will make sense of all this. But nothing makes sense of all this. We've been down this road before. Flowers strewn along fences, candles lit in churches, letters to the editor written, sermons preached. And then I go numb.

I read later about the heroes – the nurses, doctors and first responders – the “Here I Am Lord” people who worked like frenzied angels to keep as many people breathing as was humanly possible.

As the news bombards me over and over, I fall into depression – crying at every sentiment: a

song on the radio, a photo of children, a mother talking on the news about her son, holding my granddaughter tightly.

I read the verse from Micah 6. “What does the Lord require of us? To do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with our God.”

I pray and TRUST that GOD will do the impossible – to do what only God can do. I pray that we, as a church people: Do Justice! Be Kind! Walk humbly with our Lord!

Prayer: Precious Lord, hold these people. Hold us all. Walk alongside us through this terrible valley. Give us hope. Pour your unfathomable peace over our heads like a balm.

Helene Read

December 1 Isaiah 40:1-11

COMFORT, COMFORT MY PEOPLE SAYS YOUR GOD

In these anxious days of hour-to-hour uncertainty, global issues of hunger, poverty, homelessness, and terrorism, natural disasters, political unrest, and human cruelty and ignorance, it is sometimes hard to believe comfort is anywhere near at hand. Where is it when we need it? How can so many bad things happen? Why is there so much suffering in the world? Will we ever be able to "fix" things? We want answers to age-old questions we can barely frame. Solutions are not speedily forthcoming.

As it is told in Isaiah, we, like grass and flowers, will wither and fade, yet the word of our God will stand forever. He will "tend His flock like a shepherd," and so we must believe that he is here for us and will lead us through these troubled times, guiding us in ways that perhaps are

beyond our human understanding.

Every day amongst the rubble of destruction and despair we find evidence of God's presence. The tiny flowers escaping the pavement that attempts to eliminate them, the "wobble" that changed Matthew from a certain annihilator to a storm that effectively shook us awake to the powers of nature, and the many small miracles which we hardly recognize as we go about our business are all here to show us that God is among us.

Prayer: Gracious, God, help us always to trust in you and to feel your tender, loving comfort.

Wendy Rogers

BEST OF TRINITY SELECTION 2016

December 2 Psalm 9:10

Trust and Obey

This year's devotional theme is "Trust". Ever since I first learned of that, the hymn "Trust and Obey" has been running through my mind. Although there are at least 20 songs in the Presbyterian Hymnal concerning "trust", "Trust and Obey", possibly the most well-known hymn on that subject, is conspicuously missing. Considering the number of hymns that we don't sing from the current hymnal, one wonders the wisdom of the committee who chose to eliminate this old favorite.

Perhaps they thought the younger generation would not benefit from learning something so simple and easy to remember.

My first act in "trusting and obeying" this season was to sign up for this devotional. It is always a challenge to find something relevant to the topic and season. The word "trust" can be both a verb and a noun. We teach our children right and wrong and trust them to make good decisions. They, on the other hand, place their trust in us to lead them properly. Learning who we can trust in the

people around us is a life-long activity. It would be nice to live in a world where everyone was trustworthy, but that isn't the case. There are people we might trust with our money, but not with our children, and vice versa. People "borrow" books from the library and fail to return them...etc. We pledge our time and talents to the church and the other members trust us to fulfill our promises. Sometimes our trust is misplaced, but, hopefully, we learn from our mistakes.

On the other hand, Psalm 9:10 says "...those who know

December 3 Joshua 1:9

TRUST IN THE LORD

.... Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

Not long ago I flew to Cincinnati to visit friends. I trusted my iPhone to wake me in time to catch my early morning flight. As I was getting on the plane I was not concerned about the plane's maintenance record or about the pilot's ability to fly the plane. I trusted Delta. On the trip between the Cincinnati airport and my friends' home, I went over an old bridge and wasn't terrified that it would collapse while I was on it. My point is that every day we go about our business while trusting that everything around us is going to work the way it is supposed to. We trust in things and systems made by persons, but do we really have that kind of trust in God; a trust that God will be with us "wherever we go"?

During Advent we will be searching for a new

pastor. Do we trust that the Lord our God will be with us during that search? Let us remember the “pep talk” that God gave Joshua as he was getting ready to lead Israel across the Jordan. That will get us across our own “Jordan”.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Help us always to remember that you are with us wherever we go and in all we do. Help us to be strong and courageous and to trust in you. Amen

Ross Royce

December 4 Mark 11:24

Getting What We Want

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. James 4:2,3

The Scripture reading for today, one short verse from Mark, is a tough one. In fact, the reason I chose this passage from those available is because it is tough, and I thought it would be good to try to understand it.

The verse clearly states that, if you believe, that you will get whatever you pray for. Yet our experience in life shows us that it doesn't work that way.

When you were a kid, did you ever pray to get something for Christmas, and then didn't get it? I certainly did; I vaguely knew this verse, including the "believing" bit, and when I repeatedly didn't get the electric train I'd prayed for I thought that it must be the fault of my not believing hard enough. But the harder I tried to wind up my belief engine, the less I really thought it would work. I finally did get an electric train, but probably due more to my constant nagging of my parents than to my praying.

I possibly also knew the passage from James (confession: I added the James verses - they were not one of the options we were given), but chose to ignore it because I didn't particularly like the implications. It says that we often ask wrongly when we ask for things

for our own profit and enjoyment; probably not many prayers asking to win the lottery are granted. So it appears that there are some limits: indulgences are not granted, but when we ask for what is in God's will, prayers are answered.

And this is where Trust comes in: we trust that God knows what is best for us, and answers accordingly.

When I was about 12 years old I asked my parents for a rifle for Christmas. I thought it was a fine idea, but they thought otherwise, and I think they were right. I should have had more trust in their judgement, and in God's.

Prayer: Lord, we trust you, that as a good Father, when we ask for bread you do not give us a stone.

Del Smith

December 5 Psalm 112: 7

MY TRUST IN GOD

They have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord.

This past year and a half has been a tough one for my wonderful wife and family. I was diagnosed with cancer of the tongue and throat. Well, we knew with our trust in God, all would be OK. We went to the Winter Park Hospital for a month of intensive chemotherapy for 24 hours a day. My family did not want me to do it as my age was against me making it through this powerful treatment. I knew God would be with me, and I could conquer this problem.

After a month, I was transferred to Flagler Hospital with Doctor Sai as my physician and Doctor Carraseosa my radiologist. I went through thirty three treatments of chemo and radiation, and I was told I was cancer free.

This is why we prayed every day and thanked the Lord for healing me from this awful disease. Trusting in God will heal all from the depths of hell and bring sunshine and happiness into your lives forever. I thank

God, my family, my church, and my friends
for their comfort and prayers.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for your blessing,
and healing. Thank you also for helping those
who are suffering at this time. Lay your
helping hand upon them. We are so grateful
for your healing and love. Amen.

With God's Love,
Howard R. Parker

December 6 Psalm 20:7

Trust in the Mercy and Grace of the Lord

*“Some trust in chariots and some in horses,
but we trust in the name of the LORD our
God.” Psalm 20:7*

This passage brings to my mind the epic movie of my childhood, Ben Hur, which made its debut in 1959. The movie swept the Oscars that year and made actor Charlton Heston a household name.

As background for those too young to remember and for those whose memory isn't what it once was, the fictional character Judah Ben Hur is a Jew who was enslaved by the Romans as a young boy and raised by royalty (not an unfamiliar Biblical story line). He is witness to some of the miracles of Jesus and is present at the Crucifixion and subsequently converts to Christianity. When he and his family are falsely accused of a crime, he takes up his sword (and chariot!) against the Romans to restore honor to his name. The chariot race scene is imbedded in my brain: razor-like scythes on the horse-drawn chariot wheels slice to smithereens anything or anyone who gets close, specifically his

adoptive Roman brother also in the race on whom Judah Ben Hur intends to extract vengeance. By the end of the movie, Jesus' voice speaks to our hero who then puts down his arms in favor of forgiveness over revenge.

Trust in chariots and horses made for great cinematography. Trust in the mercy and grace of the Lord is the victory we seek: a relationship with God and everlasting life in Him. May it be so for each of us!

Linda McClelland

December 7 Proverbs 3:5

UNBROKEN TRUST

Proverbs 3:5 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.”

I think trust is a hard word to define. It means different things depending on who or what is involved. You trust your car to start each morning when you need it. You want all of your appliances to work , etc. But the trust you share with friends or your spouse is special. I have had a very dear friend since I was in my early 20's. She and I met through our children's activities. We each had our oldest child a boy and the younger a girl. Our husbands became friends too, so we saw each other socially. But we became good friends. We were together as we took the girls to sleep-away camp, the boys to tennis camp in Massachusetts, and as we took all the kids and drove to her parents' home in Wyoming. I was there for her when she and her husband divorced. We attended her wedding to her second husband. She and Ross were there for me when Jon died. In other words, we trusted each other and knew we could depend on

each other.

My trust in the Lord never waivers. To me that means I can talk to Him whenever I want, get on my knees to pray to Him and that He always has me. You know that old saying, “I have your back”. He always has mine. That is trust. As it says in Proverbs, 3:5, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.”

I think trust is a bond that you form with someone for a variety of reasons. Sometimes, people remain there for you all through your life. Others move on and that bond is broken. My bond with the Lord will never be broken. I wake with him in the morning and pray to him at night. He is beside me all day.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Thank you for your constant love and mercy.

Doing your work, Bible study and prayer strengthen me and let me have peace. For all this, I am so grateful.

Amen

Carol Graff

December 8 Romans 11:36

GLORY OF GOD

Dear Lord,

No silver nor gold have I it's true
To give you a gift from me to you.

I've thought and prayed about it

Still, oh, what can I give

That would please you?

I can give you my eyes,

Through which I see.

My hands, to do your work for thee.

My ears, to hear, what must be done.

My feet to carry me, one by one.

My heart to fill compassion for
another's pain,

My tongue to ease away that strain.

I cannot give you much, you see

But all that I have, please take Dear
Lord,

I give you me.

I dedicate my little poem to the "Glory

of God", for he was and always will be
my greatest inspiration.

Gloria Scandariato

December 9 2 Peter:1-10, Luke 21:25-36

SURE, I'VE GOT FAITH --- BUT ON GLASS??

Quite a few years ago, while still living in western New York State, we made one of our fairly frequent trips around the end of Lake Ontario to Toronto. This time we decided to take the long elevator ride to the observation tower on the spectacular 1,815 foot tall CN Tower. The observation platform is at 1,122 feet, and gives wide views of the city of Toronto and Lake Ontario (we looked in vain for our house on the opposite shore). A breathtaking feature of the platform is a 256 square foot glass floor; yes a glass floor that you can walk on 1,122 feet above the ground and look between your toes at all those ant-like humans below.

“So, Del, do you have faith that that sheet of glass can hold you?”

“Of course I do; just look at all those other people on it.”

“And do you have faith in the engineers who designed this remarkable structure?”

“Absolutely!”

“So, are you going to step out on it now?”

“Not a chance!”

And I didn't. Somehow I knew that if I so much as put one foot on that glass that it would shatter and I and all those other people would go hurtling down 1,122 feet to the ground below. So much for my faith.

In the same way, it's pretty easy to affirm our faith while sitting comfortably in church or while praying quietly at home. But when we need to take action and step out on faith? Like stepping out onto a glass floor? I think (and hope) that my Christian faith is strong. But have I ever been in a spot where my faith, that is my trust in God's leading, has been truly tested, in the way that some Christians' faith has been? I think that the only way our faith is strengthened is by exercising it, as when we exercise our muscles. We do this each Sunday in church; each day as we read our Bibles and pray; each day as we meet life's encounters. Special seasons, such as the Advent season in which we now find ourselves, give further opportunity to strengthen the faith muscle so when we are called upon to step up or step out, we'll have the faith-strength to do it.

December 10 Proverbs 3:5-6

In God We Trust

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding, In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Trust: a) a firm belief or confidence in the honesty, integrity, reliability, justice of another person or thing; faith, as defined in Webster's dictionary.

When I was a young child I trusted my parents to always point me in the right direction. Later in life I trusted teachers and listened to advise of trusted adults and family. I've trusted my husband of 65 years to always offer his counsel on matters of importance. I've raised my children to trust and to love and care for others and now in today's world I question, who can I trust? Who can we as a society trust today? Can we pick up a newspaper and with confidence read and assume we can trust the words written? Can we answer a phone call and rely on the wisdom of the

person on the other end of the line? It extends into every tentacle of our existence and forces us to question everyone and everything. Carefully, we trod thru today's world and glean only the best the world has to offer and leaving the rest by the wayside. Our nation was built on these words....

IN GOD WE TRUST

And I can't say it any better.

*Lord help me to see the best in this world
and close my eyes to all negative images.*

Edwina J. Tabit

December 11 James 1:12

It Will Get Better

I remember one Christmas nearly four year ago when my grand-daughter came to visit in the recent aftermath of her divorce. She was there with my oldest great-grand Katherine who was only 2 at the time, and so full of life. My grand-daughter was suspiciously hopeful, when they arrived. She talked about settling in to the new 2 bedroom apartment she had rented following her divorce. She talked about doing well in speech and debate and keeping up with her college studies, but I could hear the under currents of stress, pain, worry and concern in her words of assurance. Life had not been easy for my grand-daughter for while the spirit was always strong in her the spark of consciousness was barely beginning to blossom. She was still acting the part of the strong woman instead of trusting in God and her intuition to lead her there.

That year my daughter was spending

Christmas in my home as well. I thought to myself four generations of me in this space the feeling should be jovial, but was presently heavy with under tones of pain and disillusionment. I prayed for God to bring healing and equilibrium to my granddaughter's heart, and trusted in the power of the spirit to make it so with time.

I looked at my granddaughter and said sweetheart you did everything you were supposed to do to keep your marriage going, but marriage is a two person job and he was the one that violated your Trust. When asked to write this article I thought of that Christmas and the talks I'd had with her. Thanks be to God today my granddaughter is a happy thriving single Mom.

James 1:12: Happy is the person who remains faithful under trials, because when he/she succeeds in passing such a test, he/she will receive as their reward the life which God promised to those who love him.

Marie McCray

December 12 Isaiah 41:10

Hear God's Loving Call

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

My husband once said my mother was a “world class worrier”. Most mothers are. As a mother myself I stress on one issue then another. It all seems to resolve itself without my involvement, but in my head I jump from one crisis to another. We don't have to live that way because we have the holy trinity to guide us. As good Christians we trust in God. God watches and guides our children as they are led.

God loves us and is always there with us when we need him - always. How do I know that? Spending quiet time in prayer, study, and worship builds your relationship with God. You need to learn Jesus' character, his wisdom, his love and his way of dealing with life and people. Joanna Weaver explains in “Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World”: If I don't take time to pray, there will be no real communication in our relationship.

If I don't take time to read God's Word, I won't hear his loving call. And if I don't take time to be alone with Jesus, our relationship will suffer, because time is integral to any relationship.

Building trust begins with spending more time with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and less time on worldly things or your own fear and worries.

FEAR imprisons, FAITH liberates
FEAR paralyzes, FAITH empowers
FEAR disheartens, FAITH encourages
FEAR sickens, FAITH heals
FEAR makes useless, FAITH makes
serviceable

And most of all...

FEAR puts hopelessness at the heart of life,
while
FAITH rejoices in its God –

American Pastor Harry Emerson Fosdick
(1878-1969)

Tracy Martin

December 13 Psalms 29:11

Having faith in the LORD's strength and being blessed with the LORD's peace

*The LORD will give strength to his people;
the LORD will bless his people with peace.*

The balance of mind, body and soul has been a focus of mine since early adulthood. All three areas are nourished from my relationship with my church. This healthy balance gives me strength and peace to get through life's ups and downs. After college my career took off and I enjoyed the business executive life. I was disappointed that God didn't send me my husband yet, but I stayed strong and faithful which gave me peace. However, by age 30 I was lonely and unfulfilled (i.e. I wanted a husband and children). I prayed and prayed to the LORD for my mate to find me. I made ridiculous deals with the LORD to bring me my special someone. By age 35 I gave up on the deal making and just decided to build my IRA and work hard to secure my retirement. I stayed strong by volunteering and had peace that I

didn't have a broken marriage or unruly children.

The fall of 1996 was a turning point in my career and life. A national company from Atlanta, GA acquired the small company I worked for in Indianapolis, IN. I was looking forward to this change because my salary would increase and the national company had more career opportunities. What I didn't expect is I would meet the man I would marry. Over the next 5 years Nick and I fell in love and married in 2000. Now 17 years later, I am grateful that I trusted in the LORD. He gave me strength to get through my 20's and 30's without being a hateful person. I am a half-full personality and I owe it all to the LORD.

Prayer: Thank you LORD for never leaving my side during the difficult times. You gave me strength to keep the faith in your love for me. May the peace you give me continue throughout my days on

December 14 I John 1:4-7

A FORK IN THE ROAD

I have always been intrigued by the comparison of God to light. Jesus was both God and Man and only by the science of the Twentieth century do we learn that light has a dual nature too, being both wave and particle. It seems to be human nature to reject difficult concepts especially those ideas that are beyond our understanding. Even some clergy have trouble with the concept of the Trinity or with Christ's dual nature, yet science has taught us that reality is not always something we can wrap our minds around.

Fundamentalists have been mocked for believing that creation took only six days as described in Genesis and now science has shown us that the entire universe was created in a brief second during the big bang.

Believe is a word that has a dual meaning. I would assert that it is wrong to think that "believe" as used in John 3:16 is simply an intellectual assent. Believe also means trust and that definition is more appropriate.

I used to enjoy spending time at an airport watching skydivers jump from airplanes. I came to believe that parachutes were extremely reliable and safe, but the only way I could trust that notion was to strap on a parachute and try it myself.

The only path to salvation is not only to believe, but to trust in the blood and sacrifice of Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, keep us mindful that salvation comes from trusting in your grace and not from our own goodness. Amen

Sinclair W. Stickle

BEST OF TRINITY SELECTION 2016

December 15 Romans 8:28

Trust Must Be Earned

“God works all things together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose.”

Do you remember the TV series “The X-Files”?

The character Fox Mulder is an FBI agent who investigates the paranormal and government conspiracies. He abides by his slogan we see on a poster on his office wall: “Trust No One.” Not surprisingly, his other slogan on the office wall is “I Want To Believe”.

Can you imagine trusting no one? What a lonely hopeless existence! Trust brings us into closer relationship with each other—it helps us be our best selves. Yet we cross our arms and stubbornly declare that “Trust must be earned.”

Not our job; it’s up to the other guy or gal to earn our trust!

Trust is not just a noun, it is also a verb. Like love, it is an action that we choose whether or not to take. Some of the most empowering words you can say to a young person are “I trust you”—to stay home alone, to take the family car, to make the right choice. And yet, whether the relationship is with a child, a spouse, a friend, or someone in the workplace, there is the risk that the trust will be broken, leaving us with pain, disappointment, feelings of betrayal. We want to

protect ourselves from such loss of trust. We want to be Fox Mulder and trust no one.

Still, even Fox wants “to believe.” We want for our trust to be restored, to be in right relationship. The crucial path is to first trust God, The One who will never betray you.

Prayer: Trust God actively, trust his desire for only good things in our lives. Pursue a trust in God’s good purposes, then amidst even the trials of this life, God’s providence will prevail. Amen

Linda McClelland

December 16 Isaiah 26:3-4

PRACTICE UNCONDITIONAL TRUST

Isaiah 26: 3: “Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord is the Rock eternal.”

On a recent tour of New England, we visited Dog Mountain Chapel in St. Johnsbury, VT. This chapel is built as a tribute to much-loved dogs who no longer are alive. The building is a small, white, traditional New England chapel with a steeple. It has just a narthex and a main room. The end support pieces for the four pews are carved statues of either faithful seated Labrador retrievers or Golden retrievers. The walls of the entire chapel are covered with love notes and pictures of much loved pets. I could not read the notes. But I did enjoy a visit to this beautiful place for quiet reflection. It gave me time to be thankful for the time we have enjoyed with much loved dogs and grand-dogs.

The main room has seven stained glass windows that portray the characteristics of dogs. The windows are titled Faith, Friend, Joy, Play, Peace, and Trust with each having an appropriate picture of a black lab. The seventh window is at the front and has a yellow lab with angel wings gliding upward in a blue circle. The lower two thirds of the window has colorful geometric designs. The side chairs at the back have large black Labrador retrievers for the backs. It is obvious that artist who created this chapel, Stephen Hunek, enjoyed the unconditional love of dogs.

This visit made me think about our relationships with people. What if people all displayed these six characteristics: faith, friendliness, joy, playfulness, peace, and trust. What would the world be like if we all displayed unconditional love in our close friendships and in our families? Help us all to trust our Lord so much that we recognize that He is indeed our Rock eternal, the rock we trust in all things.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You are our rock. Help us to trust you each and every day. You sustain us in all we do. Please help us to display more faith and trust in each other so we can make this world a better place.
Amen

Carol Corson

December 17 John 11:1,11:25 & 11:43

WHO DO YOU TRUST

John 11:1 Now a man named Lazarus was sick.

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.

John 11:43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

From today's scriptures we know that Lazarus came back from the dead after four days. We also know that Jonah came back from the belly of the whale and certain death after three days, as did Jesus. And many of you might know that I also came back from the dead.

The Reader's Digest version is that after surviving and recovering from a triple bypass over a year ago, Julie and I were out for our "doctor ordered" morning walk. We came back home. I sat in my easy chair while Julie went to get my oatmeal. She took ten steps, turned around...I had "flat-lined"...no pulse, no breathing. I was dead. Julie started CPR, called 911, and with 200 compressions the EMTs and police arrived.

At Ormond Hospital the doctor performed another surgery to stent the 'left main' and start the blood flowing. The doctor told Julie, our daughters, and other family and friends in

attendance that this was a last resort.

Doctors put me in an induced coma. On the second day, Pastor Sheryl was saying a prayer with family and friends surrounding me. At the end of her prayer I interjected, "Amen!" which was the first word I had spoken after the second episode. (That became the seed for Pastor Sheryl's Sunday sermon.)

Many people asked me following the flat-lining and coma, "*Did you see the LIGHT? Did you see JESUS?*" My answer was, "*NO...but there was no pain, and all was serene.*" It just wasn't my time.....

For the older citizens of our congregation, there was a TV program called, "*Who Do You Trust?*" with Johnny Carson hosting from 1957-62. Well, *WHO DO YOU TRUST?* I trust in family, friends, doctors (all of whom had a part in saving my life). But, most of all...*IN GOD I (WE) TRUST!* Never forget that.

Bob Pearson

December 18 Joshua 1:9

TRUST IN THE LORD

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.

Joshua 1:9

I knew life would throw you curve balls when you least expect it, but I wasn't quite prepared for what God had planned for me 2 years ago. I have spent the last 20 years of my life going down a path I thought would be THE path. God had other plans, and it wasn't until I was able to surrender to his will that I was able to truly live. It took a sequence of events for me to realize I wasn't really living the life I wanted. It took an accident to open my eyes that life is too short to not be happy.

Jason and I have moved a lot in our marriage. Several times for him and several times for me. All we have ever wanted was for each other to be happy in our lives and careers. Palm Coast has been "home" for the longest time in our marriage, and our boys have been able

to grow up here. It's all Andrew knows, and David only remember bits of our other homes in Alabama and South Florida.

We have been able to grow into ourselves here, and I have taken a new career path. One I hope will suit me for a long time to come, but have realized that it is not for me to decide. I will allow GOD to help guide me through this life, and lead me to the next. I will trust in what he has planned for me.

Prayer: Dear Lord, I pray I can follow where you lead and come when you call.
Amen

Shelley Wheeler

December 19 Psalm 40: 16-17

Trust in the Lord

But all who are hunting for you – oh, let them sing and be happy. Let those who know what you are all about tell the world that you're great and not quitting. And me? I'm a mess. I'm nothing and have nothing: and make something of me. You can do it; you've got what it takes – but God, don't put it off.

Many of the verses in Psalms refer to complete **trust** in the Lord, with a willingness to let go of our rock-like belief that we are able to manage on our own.

This verse takes us to both ends of this dilemma, - to those with complete trust in the Lord at one end, and those of us who are nothing, a mess, - short of the grace of God.

One appeal of this verse is in the extremes, - that God has what it takes, but God, don't put it off. This time dimension brings home the dilemma we all face with our short time on earth as we

envision a timeless eternity to come.

How desperate must we become before we realize our total inability to save ourselves through our own devices. We have no devices of our own, and must place complete trust for our future in God's hands. This is reminiscent of the response of a former teaching elder at Trinity. When asked how he was doing, his classic reply was "I am better than I deserve". Aren't we all?

Prayer: Lord help us all come to believe that we are better than we deserve, and that our future depends entirely upon trust in the Lord, whose grace is the only device we have.

Bob Settles

December 20 Psalm 91:1-2

THE KEY TO LIVING A JOY-FILLED LIFE

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.

While in Cancun this October, one morning I was watching the Hoda & Kathy Lee Show. During that show, Kathy Lee was talking about the death of her husband (Frank Gifford) and said that when she found him dead on the floor with his eyes fully opened, she said, I knew he saw Jesus and he took his breath away. And then she went on to say, "When you learn to trust god, He will bring you joy!" How true that is as the Psalmist reminded us.

When I was four, we moved to the house in Bloomfield, NJ where I grew up most of my life, and I spent all of my years there until I graduated college. We started attending Montgomery Presbyterian Church in

Belleville, NJ. It was there that I learned to love and trust God, and He never let me down. As Kathy Lee said, “When you learn to trust God, He will bring you joy.” I am one of the very fortunate ones whose life was always filled with joy because, at an early age, I learned to fully trust God.

Of course, there were moments of sadness when I lost my parents and my wife Karen. But I always remember the joy that I had being blessed with such great parents and a loving wife who filled my life with joy. God gives us the power to overcome sadness and to remember the happiness in our lives if we will only trust in Him.

Prayer: Heavenly father, you have given us such wonderful lives. Help us to learn to fully trust you that our lives may be filled with joy all the days of our lives.

As a side note – Kathy Lee Gifford’s song, “He Saw Jesus” is one of the most beautiful songs I have ever heard and is worth a listen.

December 21 Luke 2:10-11

TRUST THAT GOD GAVE US THE BEST GIFT OF ALL

Luke 2: 10-11: 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 Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.”

Every year on the second Saturday in December, the young couple’s club from our church in Clearwater, FL met for our Christmas party. It involved a gift exchange, an ornament, a gag gift, a little something of about \$10-\$15 value. We gathered, greeting each other and placing out gifts under the tree. The rules allowed you to pick a gift from under the tree or to “steal” someone’s gift. The gift exchange began.

We were about half way through the exchange when it was Mike’s turn. This was the first Christmas party for Mike and Sharon. They were new members of the church and our couple’s group. Mike chose a gift from under the tree. He sat back down and opened the gift. It was a nice gift, but not pretentious, just a nice little treat. You could tell already that some who had not had their turn were planning on “stealing” it. But then Mike started to cry. All in the room were stunned by this unusual reaction to a gift. Mike and Sharon excused themselves and went into another room so Mike could compose himself. Luckily no one “stole” Mike’s gift while he was gone from the room.

Later we learned the reason for Mike's tears. Mike grew up in very hard circumstances. His father was a coal miner in West Virginia. The family just barely got by. Mike's normal Christmas present each year as a child was a new pair of socks. If it was a really good year, he also got an orange. He had never experienced so much generosity from strangers.

We enjoy gathering with family and friends and exchanging big or small gifts. This year as we enjoy the gift giving, let us remember it is not so much the gift itself but that we show love and caring to each other. For all our material gifts are insignificant to Your most wonderful gift to us, Jesus. Remind us to praise Him in song or by reading scripture as we celebrate His birth.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, as we celebrate Christmas, we thank you for the best gift of all, your son Jesus.

Help us to keep our focus on the true reason we celebrate the holiday and give thanks and praise to you for sharing your Son with us. Amen

Carol Corson

December 22 Jeremiah 29:11

JOY! JOY! JOY!

**For nothing can be impossible with
God.**

Our first Christmas in Africa began with the thought “surely Santa would not be able to find us here.” Besides it was too warm and Santa might even have gotten stuck in the chimney trying to shimmy down it if he attempted to make a visit. That Christmas my mother thought it would be a good idea if we spent the early part of Christmas Day visiting the orphans who were housed in a community outside of Nairobi. I had second thoughts about that, but jumped in the land rover, begrudgingly. To my surprise the day was filled with the excitement of presents, food, candy, and music. I had not seen so many smiling children in one place ever! The day was so full I did not have a moment to think of the logistics of Santa coming for us. As I was crouched preparing to play a game of marbles, I felt my mother take my hand and lead us into a side room. This room didn’t have as many children, but there was a huge Christmas tree in the middle of the room with a “kinta clothe” angel on the top. Some other children were playing on the floor, so I joined in, but soon realized the air was a bit different.

The caregivers told us that this was their “special day”. A day of JOY! Couples would come in one door and meet quietly with a child, share smiles, hugs, and whispers, and then they would take the child out of

another door. Each child in this room was meeting their parents for the first time. Each child in this room had a home to go to. You could see that some parents were crying; they were so happy. You could see that Christmas meant LOVE, JOY, and HOPE. The children looked so happy! The last boy who was adopted that day got up and danced saying: "They picked me to be their special son and I won't let them down!" "MERRY CHRISTMAS" he said at the top of his lungs! "Merry Christmas" said the little girl who began her day "begrudgingly" that Christmas. I found that jubilation and joy comes when you least expect it!

Prayer: Thank you, God, for the love, joy, and hope given and received in Your name. Amen.

Rev. Sheryl Sumlin-Walker

BEST OF TRINITY SELECTION 2014

December 23 John 8:12

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Who would ever have guessed the little boy child born to Mary and Joseph in a stable in Bethlehem would become the Hope and Savior to the world? This little child was sent by God, His only son. Over the years as he grew and preached and healed, and prayed, many names were given to him:

(All these come from John in the New Testament): He was called the “bread of life”, “the light of the world”, “the door for the sheep”, “the good shepard”, “the resurrection and the life”, “the way and the truth and the life”, and the “true vine”.

But, also from William Barkley in DISCOVERING JESUS “Jesus: Greek for a combination of three Hebrew names, Joshua, Jehoshua, and Jeshua; Meaning “The Lord is my help” or “Yahweh rescues”.

Lord: signifying Christ’s rule over all. Used very frequently by Paul.

Son of Man: used by Jesus of himself to include both meanings as found in the Old Testament, both human and devine.

I am: Personal name of God revealed to Moses (burning bush). In Hebrew, Yahweh.

Messiah: Hebrew title meaning ‘anointed’, its Greek equivalent is ‘Christ’.

Son of God: While all Christians, as God’s children,

are sons of God, Jesus is The Son of God, He addressed God as 'Father' and has a unique relationship with Him.

Son of David: From the promise to David that his throne would be established forever, the Jewish people looked for a 'son of David' who would be their Messiah. Born in David's city of Bethlehem, Jesus was seen as the Son of David by the first Christians.

The Lamb: Coming from the lamb used in sacrifices, this title signifies the spilling of blood in order to save God's people from death."

No matter what he is called he came to be our hope and our salvation.

An old hymn brings it together. *HOW SWEET THE NAME OF JESUS SOUNDS*

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear! It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds, and drives away his fear. It makes the wounded spirit whole and calms the troubled breast; 'tis nourishment to hungry souls and to the weary rest.

Jesus! My savior, Shepherd, Friend, My Prophet, Priest, and King, my Lord, My Life, my Way, my End, accept the praise I bring. Weak is the effort of my heart, and cold my warmest thought; but when I see Thee as Thou art, I'll praise Thee as I ought.

Prayer: Our Father God, help us to remember to thank you for Your Son, and for all He means to us and all He gave for us. Help us to listen for you and to feel your peace. Amen

December 24 Genesis 6:18-22; Genesis 12:1-3: Luke 2:8-20

Trust but Verify!

Today the international news often includes the phrase “trust but verify” when speaking of the United States’ relationship with other countries especially in the area of treaties. The message being communicated is that we are hoping to develop a trusting relationship with other nations which will expose us to risks that might allow the other parties to take advantage of our vulnerabilities. The hope is that by showing trust in others they will do what they promised and our relationship with them will improve to the benefit of both parties. However, by adding the term “but verify” the definition of trust is negated because we really don’t trust the other party. Trust does not include verification, trust is believing-- trust is absolute.

Man’s relationship with God must be different than that used by countries because trust should be unqualified. Also there are no unknown vulnerabilities with God. Consider one of the earliest examples of man’s trust in God as reported in the Bible. God told Noah, who lived in an arid land, to build an ark (which took about 75 years), gather a collection of all animals and his family, enter the ark and wait for the earth to flood. In exchange Noah and his family would be saved from the pending disaster. Prior to this time seeing rain would have been a rarity for Noah yet he trusted in the Lord and followed His instructions exactly. Noah trusted God completely. Would you have trusted God’s promise then? Do you trust God today?

Another example of trust occurred when God told Abram, later called Abraham to, *“Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”* Imagine being asked to pick up all your possessions and your family and move to a place as of yet unidentified. Remember at this time Abram had no children. How could he possibly become a “great nation”? Would you have

trusted God when life experiences suggested impossibility?

Fortunately the fulfillment of God's promise justifying Abram's trust came 2,000 years later with the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ which was announced by the Angels to the shepherds. To us 2,000 years might seem like an eternity but God's time is not our time and He is always trustworthy—**Trust in the Lord** (no need to verify).

Prayer: Our Father, during this Advent Season, help us to trust in you and our brothers and sisters. Let us live lives that will allow others to trust us in all that we say and do. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our Redeemer in whom we trust completely—Amen.

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