

December 2017: TAKE A MOMENT

Take a moment, this Christmas, to be.

In and around the manic rushing around of the 'countdown' to Christmas, we are encouraging you to take a series of moments - simply to be. To take a break from the preparation, shopping, cooking, wrapping, stressing, and juggling of calendars and relationships.

Christmas can be hectic, overwhelming and demanding. It can be a time of conflict as well as celebration. A time where special memories are made but also when painful ones are remembered. There is a lot of pressure around Christmas to meet the expectations of family, colleagues, society and even the supermarket. It can be an endurance test, always asking you to be one step ahead. Are you having the perfect Christmas? Have you got it sussed? Have you nailed it?

The rushing around and juggling around Christmas can seem like a world way away from that first Christmas, the 'reason for the season', but in fact the first Christmas wasn't gentle, calm and restful. With its stresses, upheavals and logistics to negotiate, it was probably a lot closer to our 21st Century Christmas than it would first appear.

The young couple, Joseph and Mary, were what we'd call today 'internally displaced people' who were having to confront the reality of childbirth on the move. They were victims of the arbitrary actions of a distant and unaccountable political regime. They were like many young people throughout history and around the world to the present day. They had to struggle with dangerous travel, temporary shelter, and persistent hunger... while at the same time getting to grips with parenthood.

But there would have been many moments. Moments when Mary stopped and placed a fluttering hand on her expanding belly. Or when Joseph would have drawn the hair out of her eyes and kissed her forehead. Moments when they caught the glinting eyes of their newborn son. Moments where they could - simply be.

So this Advent, in amongst all the hurly-burly of Christmas, Sanctuary First is not going to ask you pretend that this is a laid back, chilled out time or tell you that if you haven't passed the test you've failed Christmas. Instead we are going to give you a series of opportunities to take a moment here and there to stop and breathe. Food is something that often reminds us to stop, to interrupt what we are doing and take a moment. Throughout the Bible food plays an important role, both practically and symbolically, so as we encourage you to take a moment, we'll return to food as a way of stopping to take a breather. We are also partnering with [CrossReach](#) and [Christian Aid Scotland](#) who we will be taking a moment with each week.

28 days. 28 moments. 28 triggers to think on, act on, and pray on, before carrying on again. There's no pressure, just opportunities to take a moment to contemplate joy, glory, peace, and love.

Each week contains 7 Bible references. Several from Lectionary + additional readings relating to the sub theme.

Date	Subtheme	Readings	Notes
3 Dec	Bread of Tears & Joy <i>Community and society</i>	1. John 15: 11 2. Psalm 80: 1-7, 17-19 3. Isaiah 64: 1-9 4. 1 Corinthians 1: 3-9 5. Mark 13: 24-37 6. John 6: 35 7. Matthew 25: 40	<p>We begin advent by taking a moment simply to be.</p> <p>Then in the first week we take opportunities to stop and think about the evocative phrase 'bread of tears' found in Psalm 80. It is a poetic way of talking about the national shame of a people, a society in free fall, where there are 'tears to drink in full measure'.</p> <p>We take a moment to consider the bread of tears in our society, where on the one hand we waste mountains of food, and on the other people are growing increasingly reliant on food banks and many people are homeless.</p> <p>Instead of being overwhelmed by the problem, let's take a moment to think about our bread of tears honestly... and then take a moment to do something about it, to knead in a little joy.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take a moment to be... joyful. 2. Take a moment to consider the phrase 'bread of tears'. Think of the national and global shame of food poverty. Take a moment to think of something practical you can do about it. 3. Take a moment to consider just and unjust practices in the world. Take a moment to consider writing to your MP/MSP/Councillor about an issue that concerns you. 4. Take a moment with CrossReach thinking about being thankful and about the gifts we have. 5. Take a moment to be alert to the world around you. 6. Take a moment to be inspired by the bread of life - made of tears and joy... 7. Take a moment with Christian Aid to think about looking out for others with joy.

Date	Subtheme	Readings	Notes
10 Dec	Glory and Locusts... <i>Lifestyle choices</i>	1. Luke 2: 9 2. Mark 1: 1-8 3. Isaiah 40: 1-11 4. Psalm 85: 1-2, 8-13 5. 2 Peter 3: 8-15a 6. Exodus 23: 9-11 7. Amos 5: 14-15	<p>We continue advent by taking a moment simply to be.</p> <p>Then, in the consumer rush of Christmas, we take a moment to think about our lifestyle. It is hard to get more countercultural than John the Baptist, a man who made 'bold' life choices that couldn't help but provoke discussion. We can assume that his locusts was sourced locally and ethically...</p> <p>How do the choices we make affect how others see us and interact with us?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take a moment to be... in the presence of glory. 2. Take a moment to consider John the Baptist's avant-garde lifestyle that pointed towards an unseen glory. What do the choices we make about what we eat and what we wear, and where those things come from, influence how people see us? 3. Take a moment to look at nature. Consider the beauty but also precariousness of flowers, that blossom into glory and then fade. 4. Take a moment with CrossReach to consider the phrase 'righteousness and peace will kiss each other'. What would that look like in our home, in our community, in our society? 5. Take a moment to think about the relationship between God and time. We are bound by the passage of time, but God is not and is able to act outside of time in ways we cannot imagine. How does this make you feel? 6. Take a moment to make a change, a small change in what you buy/wear/cook that will make a positive difference in the world. It can be choosing to do something, or choosing not to do something. 7. Take a moment with Christian Aid to think about lifestyles and glory, are there 'glorious lifestyles'...?

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17 Dec	<p>He has filled the hungry with good things</p> <p><i>A global outlook on restoration and peacemaking</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Philippians 4: 7 2. Luke 1: 46b-55 3. Psalm 126 4. Isaiah 61: 8-11 5. 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24 6. John 1: 6-8, 19-28 7. James 2: 14-17 	<p>We continue advent by taking another moment simply to be.</p> <p>This week we will take a moment to step out of our everyday concerns to think about the wider world. You can be forgiven for wanting to take refuge in the mundane when global events are so unpredictable and unstable, but we are called to work for peace.</p> <p>Instead of overwhelming ourselves, we can take a moment to carefully and prayerfully consider the world, to take a step back from the simplistic headlines and go a little deeper, with the Holy Spirit as our guide.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take a moment to be... peaceful. 2. Take a moment to consider God's sympathy for the oppressed, for the underdog, "He has filled the hungry with good things - while the rich were sent away empty" How should this outlook change our way of looking at the world? 3. Take a moment to think about the fragile economies and food chains around the world that can leave people vulnerable. Pray that many more can carry home sheaves, with shouts of joy! 4. Take a moment with CrossReach to consider the 'garments of salvation' referenced in this evocative passage. What would they look like? 5. Take a moment to 'say grace', to give thanks to God before eating your meal. Does praying about our food make us more discerning in the choices we make? You could take a moment to look up online and say Grace in another language. 6. Take a moment to think about baptism. How do you feel about it? Do you feel like part of a worldwide movement? 7. Take a moment with Christian Aid... to think about the links between hunger and peace.

Date	Subtheme	Readings	Notes
24 Dec	An unexpected guest <i>Love: How do we treat the unexpected guest?</i>	1. Luke 1: 26-38 2. Isaiah 52: 7-10 3. Hebrews 1: 1-4, (5-12) 4. Proverbs 19: 17 5. Romans 16: 25-27 6. 2 Samuel 7: 1-11, 16 7. Deuteronomy 15: 7	<p>Have you had that phone call? At the last minute there's one extra for Christmas dinner, somehow things are going to have to be shuffled around. Or a guest that was going to stay a few nights, is stopping for a fortnight. We often have mixed feelings about including others when they ruin our carefully made plans.</p> <p>Take a moment to spare a thought for Mary, who also got an unexpected call that told her there was going to be one more for Christmas this year... What can we learn from her openhearted response? How do we welcome unexpected people at our table, in our homes, in our society?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take a moment to be... loved. Jesus was the ultimate unexpected guest. How do we treat unexpected guests? 2. Take a moment... to be the bearer of good news - share delight, share warmth, share food, share love - include and welcome others. 3. Take a moment to consider life lived on the fringes and the margins, without safety nets and home comforts. The "radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being" chose to be born, not into luxury at the centre of things but in fragile and precarious circumstances. Surely this must challenge how we think about life on the edge? 4. Take a moment with CrossReach to think about how we can 'lend to the Lord'. 5. Take a moment to live in the mystery - Jesus has been disclosed to us, that part of the mystery has been revealed, but our stories are still being written, we live in the time when the rest of the mystery is unfolding, in the 'now and not yet' and we are learning more about ourselves and as a church, what questions do you have, who do you want to invite along with you in the mystery? 6. Take a moment to consider people spending the Christmas season in makeshift camps. How, as a society, can we be hospitable to those experiencing such turmoil? 7. Take a moment with Christian Aid to think about love and the stranger.