

# twelvebaskets

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## CHRISTMAS 1A

1st January 2023

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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For more information <https://theworshipcloud.com/terms/free-weekly-resource>

## Opening Prayers

Let us pray.

Resolution time.

Expectations for the year,

Optimism: Full.

Optimism vs.

War, Natural Disasters,

Greed, Hate, Poverty.

Against this darkness

What hope do we have to help

Build your kingdom here, Christ?

My hope is in you.

You share our sorrows, worries,

weep with and love all.

Born in a manger.

Taught peace, love, understanding.

Crucified on that cross.

Kyrie eleison.

What can I change,

I am only one person, yes?

Today, as I pray, help me to

Begin with loving friends.

Love one another.

Love as a community.

Support each other.

Build your Kingdom here Lord.

Help me to love as you would

Each and every day.

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

**You may now wish to say the Lord's prayer in a version or translation with which you are most comfortable.**

**Hymn:** 83 STF – Praise my soul, the King of heaven

Enjoy this version put together by the choir gathered and connected from around the UK by Matt Beckingham - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FXpTyD3Qn-g>

**Readings:** Isaiah 63:7-9 – [Click for reading](#)  
Matthew 2:13-23 – [Click for reading](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Opening prayers written by Tim Annan-Hood

## Response to the readings

The Gospel passage for today may not be the sort of story we want to hear amidst parties and holidays. It's a fascinating but harrowing account, told only by Matthew in his gospel, of how God watched over the early years of the life of Jesus – and of how wrong humanity sometimes gets it, as shown by the jealous reaction of King Herod.

For so many families, this was the end of a part of their story, and we lament and wail with them – as we do when we hear of violence against children continuing today; as we do when we consider the statistics about baby loss here in the UK and recognise the many tidal waves of grief which are always lapping at our shores. Herod himself dies next and so God once again alerts Joseph to the possibility of return to Israel – although there is still a threat around, so Joseph heads to the north, to Nazareth in Galilee.

Perhaps we haven't been caught up in a massacre ourselves – although tragically they still happen all too frequently – but almost all of us have known heartache and loss... and yet there is something within us which wants to be able to keep hoping in a 'Happy New Year'.

As you look back at 2022, although there will have been tears, I hope it wasn't an unmitigated disaster. Where might you join with the prophet in not just calling to mind, but 'recounting', talking about, telling others about, God's goodness? It is a surprisingly powerful antidote to the kind of low feelings which sometimes hit after the excitement of Christmas is over and the series of sugar-rushes tails off... God's love and pity are not to be doubted, God seeks to lift and carry us all in the same way as the people of Israel were carried and held throughout their life of disaster and triumph.

Some questions for reflection *[maybe this week you could find a time to discuss these with someone you trust, or start a conversation with a friend around these issues. Perhaps it will help take a conversation about New Year's Resolutions more seriously.]*

1. How do you feel about the coming year – for you, your family, the world?
2. Does the way in which God protects Jesus from the massacre disturb you? How do you respond to this part of the story?
3. Is there any value in making a decision to 'recount the goodness of the Lord'? Can you do that now?
4. Think a little more about what God's glory means in relation to our life here and now. Is the idea that 'there is stuff going on at a level we can't imagine or see' helpful or not?

### Hymn:

178 STF – Long ago, prophets knew Christ would come - [YouTube](#)

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## **Blessing**

I am a part of the family of Christ, the people of Christmas, living the incarnation story in my day to day lives,

I am a guardian of the greatest story ever told: the story of a God come to be amongst us,

As I step out into this week, God of the incarnation,

Show me how to live that story, share that story, make that story real for each and every person who I meet, including myself,

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

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## **Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week**

### **Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> January**

- Open your Bible at the Psalms and read one as a prayer to God.
- What resonates with you? Consider in what ways these old words feel new to you and offer them to God.

### **Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> January**

- Today, on the tenth day of Christmas, you might like to pray this prayer:  
God of all grace,  
Thank you for all that we have received – thank you that everything we have is gift.  
Help me to appreciate all that I have and am.  
Help me to live from a place of grace.
- Come amongst me, God of all grace.  
Amen.

### **Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> January**

- Light a candle.
- Jesus, you are the light of the world.
- Today, pray about the places you experience darkness in your life, that Jesus light might shine divine light into those spaces and places.

### **Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> January**

- Today is the Twelfth Day of Christmas – the final day of the Christmas season. How has the season been for you? How have you made time and space to appreciate the story of God-with-us this year?
- Take some time now, to check in on yourself, your body, your mind, your soul. How are you doing? No, really? Spend some time in quiet prayer and offer up your reflections to God.

### **Friday 6<sup>th</sup> January**

- Today is Epiphany.  
In Western Christianity, this day is traditionally the one in which we celebrate the visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus.
- Why not read (and listen to) T. S. Eliot's poem 'The Journey of the Magi' here: <https://poetryarchive.org/poem/journey-magi/>
- What emotions or images does this poem summon in you? Listen and be attentive to yourself as you read and/or listen to the poet. Pray about how you feel, or the thoughts that occur to you.

### **Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> January**

- Look up a hymn or worship song on YouTube and sit and listen (you could use one of the ones from this Sunday's worship, above, or look for your own).
- Don't do anything else while you're listen.  
Let your hands fall to your sides or rest in your lap. Let your mind, body and soul tune into God through the music in prayer.