

## Breathe 2 January 2021: A New Year

Our prayers today are based on extracts from today's Church of England Morning Prayer. If you are unfamiliar with this, you may have the notion that it is not designed for heartfelt, unscripted prayer. Hopefully, we will discover otherwise.

The night has passed and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind.

*Silence is kept*

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and for ever.

**Amen**

Looking up



*Blessed are you, sovereign God, creator of heaven and earth, to you be praise and glory for ever. As your living Word, eternal in heaven, assumed the frailty of our mortal flesh, may the light of your love be born in us to fill our hearts with joy as we sing:*

*Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

**Blessed be God for ever.**

Since the last Breathe, we have marked Advent and celebrated Christmas. It may have been unlike previous Christmases. Yet, there was much that seemed the same, and I hope there much that was good. For at its core lay the same message of hope as all previous Christmases. At its heart lay the gifting of God's most precious gift, his very self.

As we always do, let's therefore start by saying 'thank you' to God. Let's thank him for time spent with family, in person, on the phone or virtually. Let's thank him for our worship opportunities, again both online and in person. Let's thank him

for the opportunities given to spread the Gospel. Let's thank him for all that has made us glad.

Thank you, Lord God, for all your gifts and blessings to us.....

Open prayer.....

**Amen**



Looking in: Isaiah 9.2-3

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;  
Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, upon them the light has dawned.  
You have increased their joy and given them great gladness;  
They rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest.  
For you have shattered the yoke that burdened them;  
The collar that lay heavy on their shoulders.*

The eternal message of Christmas is that God met us in his Son. That His love and compassion were so great that our imperfections counted as nothing. We know, you and I, that it is the work of a lifetime to try to become more Christlike. The bridge between us and God can only be crossed because God made that possible.

Let's search now for those things which we are less than proud of, and ask God to lift those burdens. Let's allow God once again to shatter the yoke of our guilt and our self-disappointment.

*Silence*

Thank you, Lord God, that the light overcomes the darkness, in us and in our world. Forgive us the times when we doubt that truth.

**Amen**

Looking back – Isaiah 60:1-



*Arise, shine, for you light has come,  
And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.  
For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick  
darkness the peoples;  
But the Lord will arise upon you,  
And his glory will appear over you.*

Last January I led this prayer meeting. And we talked about making plans but holding them lightly. It seems I am a prophet. Who knew?

2020 was not at all as we expected and hoped. When we think of 2020, many of our thoughts may be dark and sad. Memories of fear, disappointment and sickness. Thoughts of restriction and unwanted change. Yet, as we look back in honesty, there will be many blessings: glimmers of light, times of love and fellowship, unexpected joys.

So, let's look back on 2020 and entrust it all, good and bad, to God.

Open prayer.....

**Amen**

Looking out – Isaiah 9:6-7a



*For to us a child is born and to us a son is  
given,  
And the government shall be upon his  
shoulder:  
And his name will be called: Wonderful  
Counsellor; the Mighty God; the Everlasting Father; the Prince  
of Peace.  
Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no  
end.*

It seems that we haven't quite attained this yet. We still await a world governed by God's priorities. We are still a long way from peace, at home and abroad. But that doesn't mean we can't pray for an increase in God's government.

Let's spend some time naming our most pressing concerns and worries, acknowledging that there are unfortunately many of these including some we are unaware of.

Lord God, we offer to you our concerns and fears for ourselves and your world.....

Open prayer.....

Amen

### Looking forward – Luke 1:76-79



*And you child, shall be called the prophet  
of the Most High,  
For you will go before the Lord to prepare  
his way.*

*To give his people knowledge of salvation  
by the forgiveness of all their sins.*

*In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high  
shall break upon us,*

*To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of  
death,*

*And to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

These words are spoken by Zechariah about his son, John the Baptist. Yet they are also for us. They are for God's church and for each person who chooses to follow Christ. We have a job to do – to spread the Gospel message by word and action.

And we know that things only come to fruit if God is in them. Plans will only have a chance of real success if we are joining in with God's work on earth. This is equally true of each of our individual dreams as well as those we hold jointly.

Lord God, we ask your blessings on the coming month and season. Be with us in our planning and help us to dream your dreams.....

Open prayer.....

**Amen**

To end, the Collect for tomorrow and this coming week:

**Almighty God,  
In the birth of your Son  
You have poured on us the new light of your incarnate  
Word,  
And shown us the fullness of your love;  
Help us to walk in his light and dwell in his love  
That we may know the fullness of his joy;  
Who is alive and reigns with you,  
In the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
One God, now and for ever  
Amen.**