



Society of St. Andrew  
GLEANING AMERICA'S FIELDS  
FEEDING AMERICA'S HUNGRY

## Advent 2023

SCRIPTURE READINGS • REFLECTIONS • PRAYERS

# The gift of the PRESENT



God's grace and peace to you as we enter this holy Advent season! Advent is the crisp beginning of the Christian year! A season of waiting, anticipation, preparation, and celebration of Christ's birth, so many important preparations lead up to Christmas Day. It is easy to get lost in the frenzy, worrying about decorating, shopping lists, gift lists, or Christmas Card lists! Well-meaning Christians wear themselves out worrying about completing all their lists and all that "must" be done! Perhaps this is a blue season that brings up unpleasant memories of past holidays or the loss of loved ones. Either way, anxiety about the future or sadness about the past, both cause Christians to lose sight of this present moment. We are not promised tomorrow, only today... this present moment... is all we have. We must learn to stay in the present.

The Society of St. Andrew's 2023 Advent devotional, "The Gift of the Present", shares devotions written by volunteers about their personal experiences based on the scripture Matthew 6:34, in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus admonishes us to not worry about tomorrow. We are to stay in the present moment worshipping, praising, and serving Him. Many of us stay in the present by gleaning fields, farmer's markets, and feeding others. Many others stay in the present by writing devotions! Many live in the present by volunteering their sewing skills making reusable veggie bags! Still others live into the present by praying and giving a portion of their treasure to the Society of St. Andrew to feed hungry brothers and sisters in Christ, physically as well as spiritually.

As your spiritual hungers are fed by "The Gift of the Present" devotions this Advent season, please consider giving back to help the Society of St. Andrew meet the physical needs of others with a monetary contribution that will provide healthy nourishing food for people in greatest need, right here in the United States. Perhaps you will give an amount equal to what you would spend on a gift for a coworker or your child's teacher. Perhaps you will take advantage of SoSA's Alternative Christmas cards to help feed people. You could set aside a tithe of your Christmas budget to provide fresh food for hungry neighbors through the Society of St. Andrew.

Again, thank you for sharing "The Gift of the Present" devotional materials, for telling others about the Society of St. Andrew's gleaning and feeding ministries, and for making a generous gift. Together, let's stay in the present this Advent and put a healthy Christmas dinner on the tables of our hungry neighbors!

Blessings for a holy Advent season and a joyous Christmas!



Chesley R. Vohden, Director of Church Relations



**Society of St. Andrew**  
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## The Hunger Problem

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More than 40 million Americans sometimes lack sufficient food to eat. Many more cannot afford or access the nutritious food they need for a healthy diet.

Yet plenty of nourishing food is available. The USDA estimates more than 33% of the food grown in this country is never eaten. Much of that is food left in fields after harvest. The food left behind is deemed excess or unmarketable because it isn't needed to meet a sales contract or it doesn't meet strict grocery store standards for size, color, and beauty. What's left behind, without SoSA's intervention, will be plowed under or sent to a landfill, where it will generate harmful methane gas as it rots.

With this much nutritious food available in the US, there is no reason anyone should go hungry. We don't need to grow more food; we need to respond to the logistical challenges of getting available food to the people who need it most.

## The Commonsense Solution

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The Society of St. Andrew (SoSA) has a commonsense solution: bridging the gap between millions of hungry people and billions of pounds of nourishing food that is available, but simply out of reach.

SoSA has been serving others and sharing abundance for four decades, following Jesus' command to feed our hungry neighbors (Matthew 25). SoSA rescues good food otherwise destined to be lost, making it available to people in great need. SoSA does this by building links between farms and forks.

SoSA's grassroots, neighbor-helping-neighbor operating model distinguishes it from other hunger relief organizations. Three quarters of the food SoSA shares is eaten at a table less than 50 miles from the field in which it was grown.

# Ever Present, Ever Thankful

SUNDAY-DEC. 3

**Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18**

This year has been a rough one: impaired speech, a fractured family, a treasured friend succumbing to cancer, a beloved church splintering, and more—much more! About the last thing I wanted to do was thank God under all circumstances. But thank God I did—daily. Why? Not because I am faithful. Not even because God is faithful. But because I have realized none of these afflictions define me. I, and everyone else, am still made in the image of God and nothing can erase our identities as children of God!

Advent is a reminder not to worry about tomorrow. Certainly, I am learning that no amount of worrying will change present circumstances! Jesus taught this truth to his disciples and continues to teach it through the Word and the gift of the Spirit today.

If God can risk manifesting Godself in the infant Jesus and all the vulnerability and uncertainty that goes into being a human being, then each of us can truly be thankful for this amazing and grace-filled present.

**Prayer: God of possibilities, help each of us to realize that you see potential in us even when we are not in the best of shape in mind, body, or spirit. Above all, lead us to be thankful in all circumstances, for in Christ you gave us the best gift we could ever hope to receive. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**

Chris Suerdieck | Emmitsburg, MD

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# Seek Ye First

MONDAY-DEC. 4

**Scripture: Matthew 6:33**

The biblical text chosen for Advent 2023 is a favorite “Do not worry.” However, this tumultuous moment invites worry. Partisanship fractures our society. Lying is a way of life. Racism. Sexism. Neo-colonialism. Poverty. Hunger. Inequity. War with Russia or China? So much violence, and it is increasing and getting closer. No wonder so many people are drawn to this passage, “Do not worry about tomorrow.”

Truthfully, I do not think it is possible not to worry. Matthew offers a way of making our way through this season of worry: “Seek first God’s realm and God’s righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt. 6:33). To seek God’s realm is to repent from the self-centeredness of our age and to join the community moving towards the Realm of God. Matthew believed that community is one of the principal means God uses to provide the things people need.

Advent offers the opportunity to repent of our neglect of others; to work through the community of the church; and to work in other communities to provide for the world. Funny thing: when we do these things to help lessen the worry of others, our own worry diminishes.

**Prayer: O God, as we ponder the gift of your provision through Christ, help us repent of our self-centeredness and become partners with you. Help us create communities that provide for others. Your provision decreases worry and increases love, justice, and peace. Amen.**

Ron Allen | Indianapolis, IN

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## Day by Day

TUESDAY-DEC. 5

### Scripture: Matthew 6:34

Having recently retired, it is sometimes difficult to keep anxiety at bay. Since moving to a new state, my wife and I have needed to find new providers, a new church, new friends, and new activities. There is worry about having enough funds, keeping good health, and navigating plans to build a new home.

When I was a counselor, I often referenced Jesus’ words in Matthew 6:34. Jesus invites us to concentrate on what is in front of us, and not invite worry or trouble that may be ahead. Now, I find myself practicing that advice more than ever.

When I awaken, I give thanks that God has given me another gift of a new day. I find there is always wisdom to be found in reading the daily devotion. I try to set aside an hour to exercise outside, and be grateful for the wonders of God’s magnificent creation in this beautiful seaside area. I seek

ways to volunteer or to write and be a blessing to all whom I encounter along my daily path.

In this Advent season, I am grateful we have found a new and welcoming community of faith. We have made new friends, found wonderful volunteer opportunities, and managed to be blessed with good health. None of this is guaranteed to last, only Jesus and His abiding presence, every day.



**Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for your gift of the present in this life and the wonderment of every day. Amen.**

**Bob Brooks | Swansboro, NC**

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# Do Not Worry

**WEDNESDAY-DEC. 6**

**Scripture: Matthew 6:34**

Do you live into this passage from Matthew? Do you get up each morning and go to bed each day certain of the words of Jesus? I'm not able to tell you what day or time, or even the season when I was able to begin to live into it. I can tell you, however, it happened when I had a dramatic shift from a fallen worldview to a kingdom worldview with Jesus as King and present with us through the Spirit.

One morning, I woke up to see that the Spirit of Christ was present in my storied past as well as in the present time, and He held the future in His hands. Of course, my life's path did not become smooth and without troubles. What happened though was King Jesus provided His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, to act as comforter, advocate, and guide. I was secure, all was well with my soul. I felt such rich joy in the close presence of my King and Savior.

So, friend, I invite you to consider whether you are living into this beautiful promise from Jesus, King and Savior. I pray it will be so.

**Prayer: Gracious Lord, let us rest each evening knowing your presence is always like a fresh breath of wind in our sails. Amen.**

Andy Brock | Winchester, VA

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## He Restoresh My Soul

THURSDAY-DEC. 7

**Scripture: Psalm 23:2-3**

In Mississippi on a hot, humid day in late May, while taking a short break from doing yard work, I sat on the deck next to the small pond we built years ago. As the soothing sound of the pond water gurgling captured my attention, memories, some good and some not so good, began to flood my thoughts. Looking out over the backyard landscape, Psalm 23 came to mind. "...he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul..." Sometimes dwelling on past memories can have either a positive or a negative effect on the present, and even the future. But today, God helped me to enjoy the present.

Later, as I wrote this Advent devotion, I thought of all the joy that Jesus' birth brought to so many in those days and continues to bring even now. A smile came over me, and I thanked God for giving us his son to save us from our sinful past/present/future and to guide us into life eternal with him. Thank You, God! PTL!

**Prayer: Dear God, thank you for helping us move through the past and live in the present as we work in accordance with your plan for us for life eternal with you in heaven. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.**

Denny Engle | Gautier, MS

# Worry, You Are Not Welcome Here

FRIDAY-DEC. 8

## Scripture: Matthew 6:27

Worry brings death—death to the Fruit of the Spirit. We cannot both worry and have the joy and peace we need to be content in the present. Still, with wars and fires raging, injustices ignored, children experiencing hunger, loved ones suffering physically, and constant financial struggles, it is hard not to worry.

Over the years, the Holy One has been teaching me that we truly can trust in Divine provision and care, and there are things we can do to hold worry at bay:

- Pray – invite core friends to share in lifting our concerns to the Lord,
- Play music – keep inspiring hymns and songs of faith in our hearts, and
- Say repeatedly to those persistent thoughts of worry



that they need to go away – they are not welcome here. It may sound simplistic to replace thoughts of worry with Scripture’s assurances, but I literally speak God’s Truths out loud: I am a child of God, all things work together for good, etc. Some days, I’m better at it than others! Thankfully, in God’s goodness, God still sends signs of hope.

**Prayer: Lord of love, in this season where we await once more the coming of the Christ Child – even if I have to quote scripture every hour to replace thoughts of worry with thoughts of your abundant care – by the power of your Holy Spirit, I will trust in you and your precious Son, Yeshua. Thank you for hearing our sighs too deep for words. Amen.**

Katy Yates Brungraber | Chambersburg, PA

# The Burden Broken

SATURDAY-DEC. 9

**Scripture: Psalm 55:22**

In the movie, “Manchester by the Sea”, Boston handyman Lee Chandler is overwhelmed with worries. Future burdens weigh on Lee’s soul: his dysfunctional family, his brother’s failing heart, and being the custodian of his brother’s sixteen-year-old son. Lee’s attempt to secure his life is useless.

All of us deal with such burdens amidst a flagging economy, fracturing church, and saber-rattling superpowers. The arrival of Advent also brings shopping lists, decorating homes, greeting cards, preparing special foods, and parties! Yesterday someone said to me, “It’s so hard not to worry!” In the midst of worries, Jesus speaks, “Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” Here, “Do not worry” acts as an imperative directing us to stop being overly anxious and excessively burdened. Are you sinking beneath a load of care about your life? What you will eat or what you will drink? Fretting disproportionately for your body, as to what you will put on? Worry assumes the impossible: securing my life and future is up to me!

Advent heralds God-became-flesh—Savior to break the yoke of our burden. Jesus came for the express purpose of doing what you cannot: carry your burden. Let Him! “Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you.” Psalm 55:22

**Prayer: Dear Savior, upon you I cast my burdens, worries, and anxieties. My burdens are yours. Thank you! Amen.**

Tom Thomas | Forest, VA

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# The Greatest Gift is Love

SUNDAY-DEC. 10

**Scripture: John 3:16**

This will be my first Christmas without Mom. My sisters, brother and I were blessed to have shared most of her 102 years on earth, including a lot of Christmases together. My sweetest holiday memories include shopping adventures, hunting for the right gifts, (still my favorite), baking cookies (several varieties), family dinners, snow, (lots of snow in the Midwest), colorful lights and Christmas decorations everywhere.

At our house, central to and prominently displayed in all the décor, was the manger scene. Purposefully, the baby didn't "appear" until Christmas morning; the wise men a week later when the shepherds went back to work. And, without exception, Christmas morning always included a church service to celebrate His birthday. Even when we left home and began families of our own, many of Mom's favorite holiday traditions became ours.

With her gone now, there will definitely be a sadness mixed in with the holiday joys. But how blessed we were to have a mother who mirrored God's love every day of our lives. It makes us smile knowing she is celebrating this Christmas with the One who started it all. Although some things have changed over the years, the Child born on Christmas day has not changed. He still comes to remind us of His promise: He was, is, and always will be loving us for all eternity.

**Prayer: Lord, sometimes the world distracts us and we forget.....forget how much you love us and are always making a way for us to come back into your loving arms. Why do we worry when all you ask is that we trust you? Amen.**

Lynda Imirie | Moneta, VA

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## Worry Is My Middle Name

MONDAY-DEC. 11

**Scripture: Matthew 6:34**

I wonder if Mary worried. Luke 2:19 states: "But, Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart." In her circumstances, Mary had much to ponder, but did the light and hope of the angels counter her worries? Despite the light and hope of Advent, I'm a worrier. In fact, my middle name should be worry. I'm fairly certain I inherited my mother's worry gene. I'm convinced she worried because she loved. She wanted life to be worry-free for those whom she loved. Growing up, I contributed to the weary lines of worry on her pretty face. I was a horrible high school student. No question she and God did a lot of pondering in their hearts nudging me through high school and into college.

In my Bible, I keep an old church bulletin. I highlighted the following words from the opening prayer: "In your strength, enable us to drop our

burdens and set aside our anxiety about life.” I read those words every morning. Some days, I’m able to set aside my worries.

During Advent, my worries shift to family, health, travel, and I work to avoid being consumed by the seasonal commercial pursuit of perfection. I might not ever conquer my worrying, but I can improve something my mother and Mary had in common—an unyielding faith and trust in God.

**Prayer: Father of us all, in this season of Advent, help us to cast aside our worries, and trust in you. Amen.**

Bill Pike | Richmond, VA

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## The Here and Now

TUESDAY-DEC. 12

### Scripture: Psalm 46:10

In our very busy lives, remaining in the present, stopping to smell the roses and practicing ‘mindfulness’, is challenging. My solution is to begin my morning devotions with Psalm 46:10; “Be still and know that I am God.” Some mornings I must read this scripture slowly and more than once in order to slow down, get my mind in a lower gear and stay in the present.

After devotions and breakfast, my dog and I walk two to three miles, and this quiet time helps keep me grounded and focused. The Japanese have a term, “Forest Bathing”, describing a walk in the woods to relax and remain calm. I also practice this when hiking The Appalachian Trail.

God reminds us of staying in the present several places in His Word. He directs Moses to instruct the people to collect only enough food for the day, only taking extra the day before the Sabbath; and again, when He says not to worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself and have enough trouble of its own. Psalm 37:7 states “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.” The Chinese have a saying: “When we talk of tomorrow, God laughs.” They know the future is not predictable.

**Prayer: Dear God, help us stay in the present so that we may enjoy your many blessings of each day. Amen.**

Carolyn Stone Purdy | Harrisonburg, VA

# The Fridge Couldn't Refrigerate

WEDNESDAY-DEC. 13

**Scripture: Matthew 6:25**

The unknown is always a bit scary and as missionaries moving to West Africa, we faced challenges that were baffling, frustrating and rewarding all at the same time. Take food, for instance. Equipping our kitchen with a range and a refrigerator was the first order of business, right after hiring a cook. Of course, the refrigerator only worked with electricity (duh!), but little or no electricity was available on a daily basis. So, the refrigerator could not refrigerate, but it did a bang up job keeping the ants out!

So every day, a repeating ritual took place...plan the meals, then to the market to see what food was available, followed by preparation for the two meals of the day. We could worry about the food situation, but you couldn't change the circumstances of the unknown. This was a way of life for the entire country of Sierra Leone...you may worry about food for tomorrow, but there was little you could do about it. We began to learn what most Sierra Leoneans already knew, trust God in all things, worry not about the future, but be present in today's circumstances. Although challenging at times (not to mention frustrating), trusting that God will provide became a clear and pleasant reality every day. Worry is an option, not a necessity; God provides... the opposite of worry.

**Prayer: Papa God, strengthen our trust in you and help us recognize your Spirit guiding us through the challenges of every day. Be clear Father, for we know the future is hazy. Amen.**

**Kip Robinson | Richmond, VA**



# Show your love with The Society of St. Andrew *Christmas Cards!*

**Send them to everyone on your list:**  
**Co-workers • Neighbors • Pastors**  
**Friends • Teachers • Shut-ins • Relatives**

Give a gift from the heart. Your gift of \$15.00 or more, in your friend or loved one's honor, will put 300 servings of nourishing, healthy food on the tables of hungry people!

Your honorees will receive a beautiful Alternative Christmas Card, designed exclusively for Society of St. Andrew for 2023 by Virginia artist James Harris.

The full color 5" X 7" card will feature original art for this Christmas season and an inspiring verse conveying God's love, and reminding your honoree that they hold a special place in your life.

This unique card announces your generous gift to feed the hungry in your friend or loved one's name.

We'll also send a card to you, with our thanks and confirmation of your gift order.

**Finish your holiday gift shopping in only a few minutes today!**



sample of 2023 card

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# Society of St. Andrew

## *Christmas Cards!*

Minimum gift donation for each card is \$15.00.

Do not send cash through the mail. Your donation is tax deductible.

**Charge my: VISA • Master Card • American Express**

**Make checks payable to: Society of St. Andrew**

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp \_\_\_\_\_ CVV \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Total enclosed or to be charged to card: \_\_\_\_\_

**Orders must be received by December 2nd to ensure delivery before the Christmas holiday.** We will make every effort to expedite late orders. Please PRINT all information. Mail to: Society of St. Andrew  
3383 Sweet Hollow Road • Big Island, VA 24526

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Send \_\_\_\_\_ cards to me for personalizing and mailing.

Personalize and mail the following cards on my behalf:

In the blocks below, please indicate how you want each individual card signed. Attach additional sheets, if needed, to complete your list.

**You may also order online at [EndHunger.org/card](http://EndHunger.org/card)**

In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Sign this card with these words:

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In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

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# What, Me Worry?

THURSDAY-DEC. 14

## Scripture: Matthew 6:34

I am a worrier—mostly over that which I have no control. I'd love to live by the scripture—but I am obsessive. I begin the day doing the math – how many hours until I can stop worrying over what can go wrong? I want to emulate Alfred E. Neuman – “What, Me Worry?” It's ironic, that as much as I dread the coming day, by the end of it, everything has gone pretty well – no one died, no one was fired, and most everyone is content.

When someone else is driving a car I'm in, I am a nervous wreck, at regular intervals practically putting my foot through the floor. It doesn't matter who's driving – if it's anyone other than myself, you might as well put me in a straightjacket. When traffic is crazy busy with tractor trailers and rain or snow—I am filled with anxiety. During exceptionally stressful car trips, I find myself offering a prayer to get us safely home, but if anything was to happen, I pray to God to keep my whole family safe and healthy, and to forgive me for every bad thing I have ever done.

In these brief moments of prayer, I am able to calm myself, feel my panic ease, and stop slamming on the passenger side brake. I am at peace.



**Prayer: Great protecting God – calm our hearts, our fears, and remind us you are with us. We are in your hands, and we are yours. Amen.**

Kathi Wise | McLean, VA



## Heavy Backpacks

FRIDAY-DEC. 15

**Scripture: Matthew 6:34**

A grandfather at church was telling me he arranged to take his young grandson hiking. The hike would be long enough that they should each bring a backpack. Driving that morning to the trail, the grandfather stopped and bought two boxed lunches and put them in his backpack. They arrived and began to hike up a mountain trail. It wasn't long before the grandson was struggling a bit and asked his grandfather if he would carry both backpacks. Certainly. They set off again, but it wasn't long before the boy's backpack was slowing the grandfather down. He stopped and opened the child's backpack and discovered it was filled with several large stones.

"Why are you carrying rocks?" the grandfather asked. His grandson replied, "Everybody has to have something in their backpack. You can't carry an empty backpack." That's true. But too often, as the Lord warns, we carry tomorrow's problems when today's problems are heavy enough. And, yes, no one ever has an empty backpack.

**Prayer: God, teach each day us to shoulder only the problems for that day, trusting you will help us carry them, knowing you will walk with us tomorrow. Amen.**

Norman Tippens | Hampton, VA

# The Hopes and Fears of All the Years

SATURDAY-DEC. 16

**Scripture: Isaiah 9:2-7**

Isaiah's prophecy is something we imagine on our way to Christmas: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined."

But what stands in the way of seeing the light of Christ at Christmas are the many preparations – shopping, decorating, baking... When our daughter was still quite young, we had trouble finding the most popular doll every little girl wanted for Christmas that year. Every store we went to had already sold out. The worry of not getting this doll took over and caused us to lose sight of the true meaning of Christmas. We made one final call to a dear friend who operated a Sears catalog store. After a couple anxious days of waiting, she called to tell us she found the doll, the one we hoped would bring our daughter much joy on Christmas morning.

In the midst of our worry and anxiety, our friend's diligent searching reminded us that God's own Son was born a baby in the little town of Bethlehem to bring true joy and light to the world. Wise people still search for him today. Now we could stop worrying and focus on the good news that "the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight" as the hymn writer put it.

**Prayer: Dear God, we walk in the darkness of worry and fear, but our hopes are rekindled now that we walk in the light of Christ. Amen.**

Bill Jones | Waynesboro, VA

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# Goodness and Mercy

SUNDAY-DEC. 17

**Scripture: Matthew 6:34,  
II Corinthians 12:7-9, Psalm 23**

I was a young man, just 24 years old, newly married and in my second year of seminary. The day following our first Easter together, my wife and I were told that she had acute leukemia. Within three weeks Louise died of a massive cerebral hemorrhage.

How could I face life alone without her? How would I ever find the strength to complete my studies? How would I ever pay off all the hospital bills? Although I was upheld by the love of family and friends, my grief and worries were overwhelming.

A brother in Christ shared with me Jesus' words and wisely said "Don't go looking for tomorrow's troubles ...you've got enough troubles today, don't you Bill? Let God take care of tomorrow." When I opened a thick envelope of all the medical bills, including the cost of each aspirin, the total charge was... \$0.00, a miracle I have never comprehended.

Seminary was completed. Forty years of ordained ministry followed. Yes, like you, I've had many fears and worries, but more often, what I feared never happened.

Like Saint Paul, when troubles did come, God's grace was always sufficient. It still overflows.

**Prayer: Heavenly Father, as Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem, not knowing where they would lay their heads, so may we trust in you today, confident that your grace will be sufficient for all our tomorrows. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen**

William Nash Wade | Strasburg, VA



# A Reminder: Focus on our Faith

MONDAY-DEC. 18

## Scripture: Psalm 121:1-2

No matter which window in my house I look out of, I can see the beautiful hills in this part of Virginia. I cannot imagine living in a place with no hills. God's creation includes so many diverse landscapes, and each one has its own beauty. These hills remind me of King David and all of the problems he faced from the time God chose a shepherd boy to become a king. The problems I have in my life cannot compare to what David went through, and yet he still saw the beauty of God's creation and never lost his faith in the only one who could help, the only one who could keep him safe.

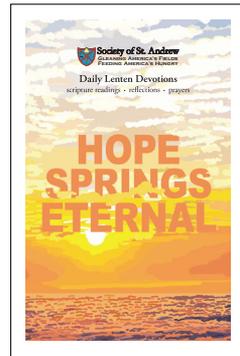
So why worry? God is in control and Jesus said "Do not worry about tomorrow." If we look out of our windows and see the amazing creation given freely to all of us, we realize God is so much bigger than our earthly problems. Soon we will celebrate the birth of Emmanuel, God with us, the gift freely given as the source of all our strength and the focus of our faith.

**Prayer: Father, as we prepare our hearts and our minds for the birth of our Savior, help us to look to the hills for our help and to lay our worries down at your feet. Amen.**

Doris Hedrick | Natural Bridge, VA

## Daily Lenten Devotions Hope Springs Eternal

All New Lenten Devotions for 2023  
PRE-ORDER online: [EndHunger.org/lent](https://EndHunger.org/lent)



# Something Had to Give

TUESDAY-DEC. 19

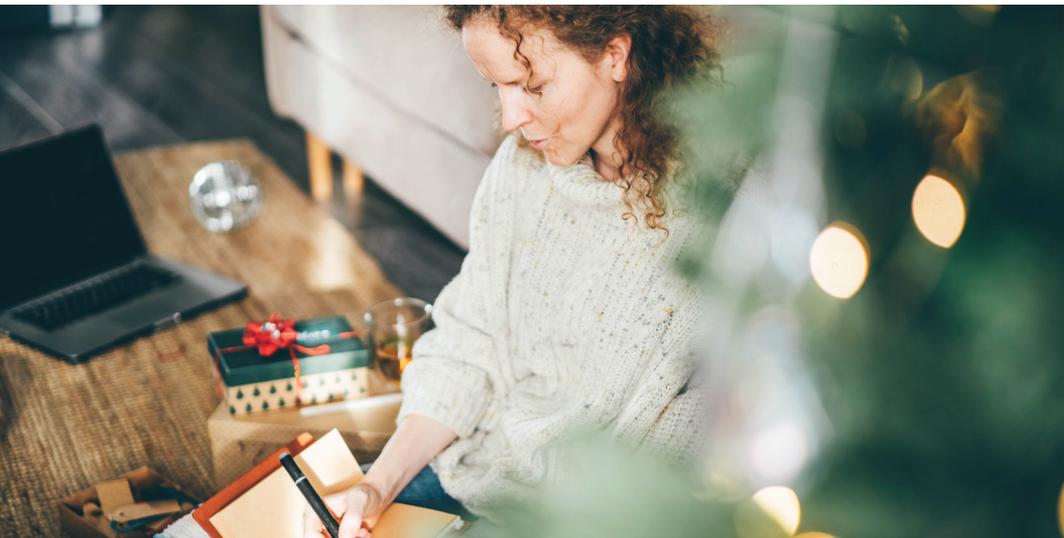
**Scripture: Luke 10:41-42**

“What am I doing?” I thought as I tiredly stared at the cards and address labels spread across the dining room table. Joel, my toddler son, had just tugged at my sleeve, “Mama! Mama! Let’s go outside and play!” Interrupted, I had quickly shushed him saying, “In a little bit, first we have to get these Christmas cards ready to mail.” “Why, Mama, why?”

Truly, I love the annual ritual of sending and receiving cards (and newsy letters) from far-flung friends and relatives; it is a treasured part of my Christmas celebration. But that Dec. I was exhausted and overwhelmed. The joy I usually felt at preparing both home and church for the holy, festive season was depleted. My husband Harold and I, pastoring neighboring churches, had weeks filled with hospital visits, worship planning, and “everyday” crises. Mornings and evenings at home had been a blur of meal preparation, dish washing, and laundry. Everything, even bath, books, and bedtime prayers felt hurried and rushed. Something had to give. Freed, I packed up the Christmas cards and stored them away for another year. Bundled in coats, Joel and I ran outside and played with our dog, Duck. I felt a burden had been lifted. Lighter, with joy in my heart and peace in my spirit, I was again hopeful we would be ready to welcome Baby Jesus.

**Prayer: Holy God, we long to be attentive to your clarion voice. Free us from franticness so we can respond faithfully. In Christ, we pray. Amen.**

**Kathleen Overby Webster | McGaheysville, VA**



# Present as a Gift, or the Gift is the Present?

WEDNESDAY-DEC. 20

**Scripture: Matthew 6:34**

Really? Does it come down to a play on words? I think not. For what one really must accept is that the present moment is all we can know. Our mind tells us to plan and build for the tomorrows. Career paths are laid upon our expectations of tomorrow. Our families' livelihoods and aspirations for the future are pawns in the strategy of tomorrows....

Calm yourself; drop your focus down to your diaphragm and breathe. Inhale for four and exhale for four. Feel the moment. Only then may we quiet ourselves enough to hear the Spirit.

**Prayer: Dear God, in your divine presence, please guide my heart to think in the present. This Christmas season, open my mind that I might feel the present to hear your Spirit. Humbly, I beseech Thee, to speak to my soul, today, in this moment. Amen.**

Beth Harlin | Plainfield, IN

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## What's Next?

THURSDAY-DEC. 21

**Scripture: Matthew 6:34**

God gives us time. The very word “advent” points to the future, to God’s coming gift in the season of Christ’s birth. Our scripture, Matthew 6:34, sums up how Jesus would have us look to our futures.

Jesus tells us that God knows our needs—food, drink, clothing. Even more, we need God’s way of life. If we focus on love, forgiveness, and welcoming God into all our living, we see God at work in past, present, and future.

I was an on-call chaplain at an urban hospital. One morning I learned that a couple had lost their newborn baby. Could I come and meet them? Our women’s group was gathered nearby, and I asked them for prayer and for strength.

At the hospital I saw the young couple. We sat together, wept, talked,

# The Society of St. Andrew is the Ultimate Green Ministry



## Good Stewards of God's Creation

The Society of St. Andrew (SoSA) was founded in Virginia in 1979 on Biblical principals of caring for the environment; living a simple, sustainable lifestyle; and caring for the "least of these" by modeling a commonsense solution to the problems of food waste and feeding the hungry.

SoSA uses the excess of God's abundance to feed those who don't get enough to eat, for less than 5¢ per serving.



## Saves Good Food from Going to Waste

Each year, millions of pounds of perfectly good, fresh produce is prevented from being lost as waste and are instead, donated to feed hungry people across the nation. Using the proven biblical practice of gleaning farm fields and orchards after the harvest, each year SoSA engages tens of thousands of volunteers who pick, bag, and deliver leftover crops that, for a variety of reasons, would not be sold.



## Benefits the Environment

Preventing food waste not only saves good food but also prevents the loss of water, soil, seed, nutrients, labor, and fuel as well. This ensures each input is used for its best purpose and reduces negative impacts on the environment and climate.



## Opportunities to Act on Faith

Each SoSA program or project teaches people how to live responsibly in a hungry world and to care for those who are hurting. As well as provides opportunities to put their faith into action by gleaning surplus produce from farms, sorting/bagging loads of fruits and vegetables, and delivering food to feeding agencies addressing critical human needs.

Each year, SoSA publishes free spiritual resources for Lent, Advent, Vacation Bible School, and Hunger Action Month. These materials are designed to raise awareness of SoSA's mission; to invite new congregations into service to their

## Go Green with The Society of St. Andrew

Give



Serve



Learn



Lead



prayed, and I listened as they shared their hopes, pain, and need in a hoped-for advent that had turned into unimaginable loss. I suggested the God of new life was still with them, and they and God could hurt, heal, and move together into a renewed future.

As time went on, I discovered God was also working with me in this manner. Many personal hopes did not come to pass, but as Jesus promised, God knows our needs and walks us through them, in love.

**Prayer: May God's Advent be not just a season but a holy way of life. Amen.**

William E. Olewiler | Fleming Island, FL

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## Trust and Simple Things

FRIDAY-DEC. 22

**Scripture: Isaiah 12:2-5**

The first time I made a conscious effort to “not worry” was over 30 years ago. I was just getting started in my career. My rent was more than my monthly income. For an entire year I panicked.

Can I pay my bills, keep my car running, and still eat? The fear and worry lines in my eyes became more obvious. As hard as I tried to wear my “everything’s fine” face, the effort to hold up the mask became too much. At the same time, God placed people along my path in a comparable situation. We shared dinners, access to “free” laundry, and money tips. We found ways to save, while providing for one another’s needs. By Christmas two years later, my outlook had changed. I had no anxiety about the holidays. Gifts of home-made cookies, fudge, and decorated jars of candy were well received. Hand-stitched ornaments were appreciated more than the fanciest Christmas décor. Through this period of my life, God helped me see the abundance He provided. Sharing our spiritual gifts, creativity, and time takes effort. One of the keys to not worrying, is to not be afraid. Placing our trust in God’s hands, is a good place to start.

**Prayer: Dear Father, we thank you for your many blessings. Guide us this Advent season, to place more trust in You. Help us realize giving our talents is the greatest gift. We pray this in the name of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Kelly Desclos-Estes | Glen Allen, VA

# His Faithfulness, Our Hope

SATURDAY—DEC. 23

## Scripture: Hebrews 10:23

In 2022, our son's six-week outdoor Christmas festival, Light Garden, consumed the holidays. We assembled \$400,000 worth of original light displays in our local park, scheduled nightly entertainment on the big stage, and booked food vendors and artisans. At home, we minimized décor with only our nativity, some greenery on the mantle, and a wreath on the door. Light Garden enchanted the public, but uncommon frigid weather plagued the event with high winds, heavy rains, or snow. Financial backers worried. Tempers flared. We hoped for a respite that did not come.



On Dec. 23, the forecast was so grim that our son closed Light Garden until after Christmas and sent employees racing to brace for another storm. I stopped to buy a turkey and some festive foods plus a tiny pre-lit tree—not a spruce or a fir, but a three-foot tall, brown-limbed skeleton boasting tiny clear flowers like twinkling stars on the tips of its branches.

Christmas Eve found our family gathered in front of a blazing fire, relaxing for the first time in weeks. We made it to church on Christmas morning while the turkey roasted in the oven and filled the house with the sweet aromas of basil and thyme. There were few but thoughtful gifts under

the makeshift tree, and we enjoyed lively conversation and fun board games. Christmas was everything it should be—a celebration of the gift of Jesus in the presence of people we love.

As Light Garden resumes this season, I refuse to worry. God is faithful.

**Prayer: Dear Lord, remind us that the anecdote for worry is hope, and our hope is in you. Amen.**

**Andi Lehman | Hernando, MS**

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## Release the Worries

SUNDAY-DEC. 24

### Scripture: 1 Peter 5:7

I became a “worrier” at age eight. Family loss and multiple major changes caused me to question and fear what tomorrow might bring. In time, however, I learned to ask God for help in letting go of my worries and trusting Him to lead my steps one day at a time. Have I succeeded in always turning concerns over to God? No, but I can lessen my human tendency to become overwhelmed by anxieties from life’s difficulties.

First, I think again about Jesus’ message in His Sermon on the Mount and remind myself that each day does bring its share of worries, but we don’t need to let them overcome us. Next, 1 Peter 5:7 helps provide relief during troubling times. Jesus cares about us so much, He’ll take the anxieties in our daily lives from us. A simple prayer and release are all it takes.

## CALLING ALL WRITERS

The Society of St. Andrew is always looking for those who are being called to share their experience or insight with others by writing for our free printed resources. Our next publication, *Hope Springs Eternal* is for the season of Lent in 2024. Contact us today with interest!

EMAIL SOSA’S DIRECTOR OF CHURCH RELATIONS  
CHESLEY VOHDEN AT [CHURCH@ENDHUNGER.ORG](mailto:CHURCH@ENDHUNGER.ORG)



**Society of St. Andrew**  
GLEANING AMERICA'S FIELDS  
FEEDING AMERICA'S HUNGRY

## The Best Food to Those Who Need it Most

Society of St. Andrew began in 1979 in the hills of Virginia and has grown into the largest field gleaning organization in the country. Each year as thousands of farmers donate their crops, tens of thousands of volunteers are deployed to glean and distribute farm-fresh food to thousands of feeding programs in all 48 contiguous states, at no cost to the recipients.

You make it possible to bring this nutritious, but excess, bounty from the field to the people in greatest need. SoSA relies on farmers to share their abundance and volunteers to handle the hands-on aspects of picking and delivering food.

SoSA needs its donors to provide the funds to cover critical costs, like proper packaging, commercial transportation when needed, and behind-the-scene logistics.

### 2022 Statistics

**Pounds Distributed:**  
**20.7 Million**  
**Events Held: 6,888**  
**Volunteers: 18,300**

**3.85 billion servings**  
**shared historically**

**Cost less than .05¢ a serving**

**Less than 3% overhead**



When I consider how many precious hours I've let be clouded by worrying about unknowns of future days, I'm remorseful, yet grateful to know our Lord carried me through those difficult times. Still, health problems, financial and employment issues, and busyness continue to impact family and friends: more sources of worry! Some concerns I can help with; others I can't change. Regardless, Jesus can take our burdens and guide us through whatever life brings.

**Prayer: Lord, may our focus be in the gift of the present this Advent season and always, not allowing worries to take away from embracing your abundant love and mercy. Amen.**

Julie Erickson | Olathe, KS





# Receive, Believe and Wait

CHRISTMAS DAY-DEC. 25

## Scripture: Luke 1:35

We wait excitedly for Christmas and the present we receive from God the Father, His Son Jesus. Mary received God the Holy Spirit, she believed Him and waited for God's Son. For us, Jesus' First Advent is celebrated, received, and believed. So, too, is the present time of waiting.

In receiving Christ Jesus, we believe in His Second Advent, and we wait, like Mary, not for the worries of yesterday, but for the coming glory of Jesus Christ. Having believed in Jesus, we receive the Holy Spirit and live into the life of Jesus. Being sanctified, we will be found ready for God and live with Him forever. Today must be focused not on the worldly trappings of glitz and glamour, packages and services, and the stress and worry it brings, but on the presence of Jesus.

We focus on the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the lives of those around us. We actively wait for God the Father to send again God the Son, Jesus. Like Mary, we wait anxiously to welcome the King of kings, the Messiah, the Son of God, Jesus our Savior.

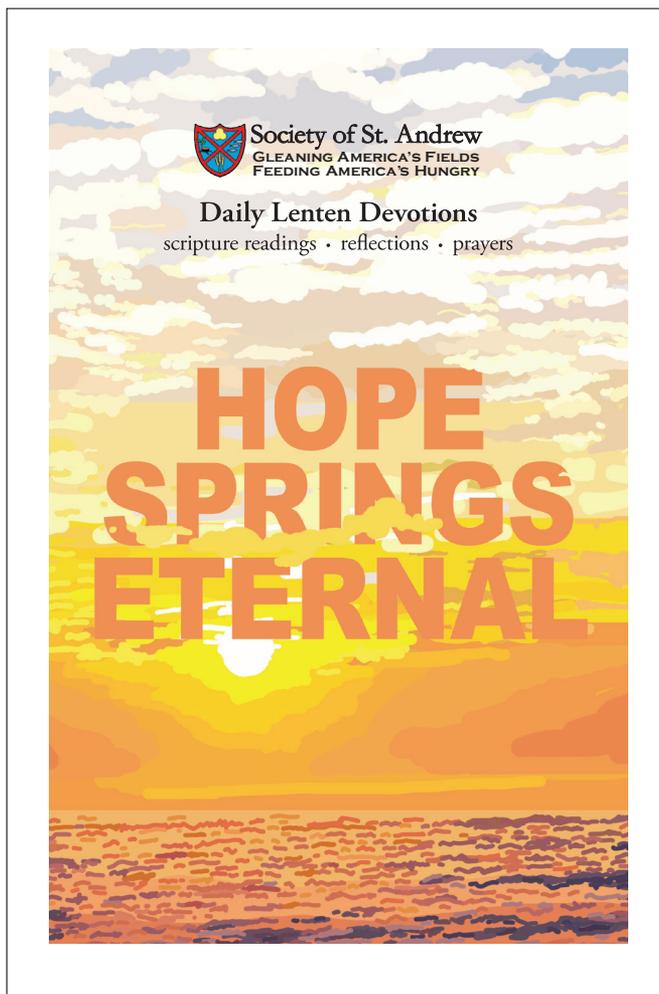
What are you focused on? What have you received, believed, and waiting for? Is your life different?

**Prayer: Lord God, Almighty lift us above the ruckus of this world, bring us into your presence to stay focused on you now and forever. Amen.**

Douglas E. Hollenbeck | Covington, VA

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Share nourishing food with people in the greatest need year-round by joining the 12 Baskets Monthly Giving Program. Your gifts will make a tremendous impact by faithfully sharing healthy food with our hungry neighbors throughout the year.

## Yes! Please sign me up for 12 Baskets

- \$35 per month saves over 300 pounds of healthy food from being lost as waste and help a soup kitchen feed 192 people each month.
- \$50 per month will enable SoSA volunteers to glean 475 pounds of food and put food on the table for 275 hungry men, women, and children.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other monthly donation amount

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

- I'd like to set up my monthly donation at: [www.EndHunger.org/12](http://www.EndHunger.org/12)
- I'd like to automatically withdraw funds from my checking account.

Please send the form to me.

- Charge my credit card monthly  VISA  MC  AmEx  Discover
- Account # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ CVV \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail to: Society of St. Andrew • 3383 Sweet Hollow Rd • Big Island VA 24526**

## Other Ways to Support Society of St. Andrew

**Give Securely Online by Credit Card, PayPal, or eCheck**  
[EndHunger.org/donate](http://EndHunger.org/donate)

**Give by Check—Mail to:**  
3383 Sweet Hollow Road | Big Island, VA 24526

**Give through your Congregation**  
Note "Society of St. Andrew" in the Memo line of your check

# Hunger Relief Ministries of The Society of St. Andrew

## **You're invited!**

As the Advent season ends, will you continue to participate in The Society of St. Andrew's mission to reduce waste and end hunger?

## **Families in your community need your help.**

Every night, there is a family that sits down to a meal together. Except there isn't enough for second servings. At least one person goes to bed without feeling full—without adequate nutrition for a busy day at work or school the next day.

Every month, there is a couple who have more bills due than dollars in the bank. They know they need to make cuts in the budget to stay afloat. The easiest thing to cut is a grocery budget because they can't skip on rent or electricity.

## **You can change their story.**

You can make a difference to a family just like the ones above. When you give and serve with The Society of St. Andrew, you share life-changing food with a family.

It may only seem like a few pieces of fruit to you, but to a mother faced with few options, it feels like a lifeline. It feels like hope.

We invite you to give financially, to serve as a volunteer, to raise awareness through educational opportunities, and to lead others into the mission as well.

## **How will you continue to participate?**

How will you help the families in need in your community? Visit The Society of St. Andrew's website to learn more about donating, volunteering, having a staff person speak to your group, or leading the effort in your own community.

Society of St. Andrew, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, grassroots, interfaith ministry, has been working toward a world without hunger since 1979.

3383 Sweet Hollow Road Big Island, Virginia 24526 800-333-4597

**EndHunger.org**

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