

**Lectionary readings: Isaiah 63: 7-9; Psalm 148; Hebrews 2: 10-18; Matthew 2: 13-23**

**For reflection and prayer**

- **Isaiah 63:** This is a time to give thanks for God's gracious dealings with us, for all God has been to us over Christmas and for all the good things He has given us. He has lavished His love on us and calls us His own people, coming to share our life. Christmas has come and gone, but God hasn't. He is still with us and He intends to go on blessing us in our everyday lives, wherever we find ourselves. Are we going to allow God to have a real part in our life this week? Are we going to be open to His presence and allow His presence to be a reality to us every day? How about taking time each day this week to let God love you and to drink in the fact that you are His, simply because He has chosen to lavish His love on you?
- **Psalm 148:** After all the excitement of Christmas, people can feel low. There's nothing like praise and thanksgiving to lift the spirit. So let this week be a week of thanksgiving and praise - sing hymns or put on a CD of praise songs and sing along. In v14 'Psalms for Praying' God issues an invitation to us: *'For all are called to be friends, companions to the true Friend, giving their lives joyfully as co-creators and people of peace.'* Let's seek to be people of peace in the week ahead, building people up, affirming people, encouraging them, finding good in everyone, seeing Christ in everyone, and seeking to be reconciled with people with whom relationships have broken down.

Let's look back over the year and praise God for His presence, His love, His forgiveness, His blessings. And let's look forward with eager anticipation to all that God has for us in the year ahead. But let's never forget that it is in the present we meet with God and so let's live each moment of this week fully, being present to where we are and who we are with, remembering that God is present with us in the midst of life.

- **Hebrews 2:** God is actively at work in the world today. And He is present in us as He was present in Jesus. Jesus lived His whole life by faith in God, open to God's Spirit moment by moment. In Jesus, God shared every experience of human life and, because He has been through it all Himself, He understands all that we are going through and wants to get alongside us and help us in whatever way we need. Whatever fears or joys we experience this week, whatever anxieties or troubles, let's share them with God and allow Him to minister His presence to us and give us faith to go forward, knowing we are not alone. I find in sharing what is on my heart with God I can experience a measure of peace and hope.
- **Matthew 2:** The world into which Jesus was born was similar to our own, full of ruthlessness, cruelty, brutality and fear. And it is in this world that we find God present - not in some far-off distant utopia, but right here in the midst of pain and suffering, joy and sorrow. And we see Joseph here, a man listening for and attentive to God's leading. He was open to God being active in the situation of apparent hopelessness. Let's this week look for God amidst the confusion and despair; let's listen for God's gentle whisper and let's have faith to open ourselves to His gracious presence within us and all around us. We will be amazed!