



### 2021 - THE YEAR OF HOPE

## Rebooting – Advent Hope for 2022 - Zephaniah 3:14-20

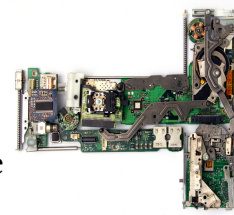
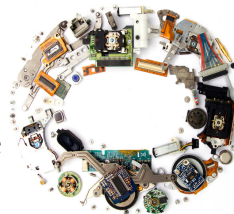
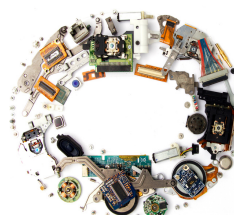
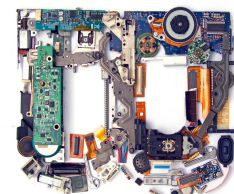
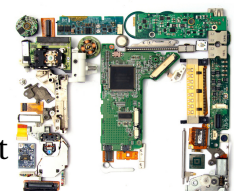
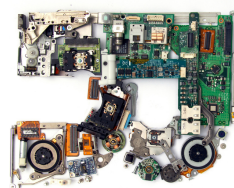
I don't know if it ever happened to you, but mobile phones were not meant to be dropped. But as we all know, if we do not invest in good quality, hard-to-break phone protective cover, you will soon discover how expensive it is to choose not to get one. Well, that is what I discovered soon after I dropped my brand-new phone some time ago. With the cracked glass both front and back, most times, it works fine. But sometimes, it is like a phone on a mission, calling random numbers and refusing to obey my frantic efforts to stop it from calling people in the middle of the night. I have since discovered that the quickest way out of it is to switch it off completely and count to 10 before restarting it again. It is the best fix.

Tech heads would call this process rebooting. "Rebooting" is a wonderful tool for getting things working again and working as they are intended to work. As we are now in week three of Advent, a season when we consider the failings of humanity to listen to and react to the Word of God. It is also an invitation to "reboot" and restores a partnership with God that allows for God's vision for the world and our relationship with God to flourish as intended.

Advent comes with an instruction for the people of God, and the world itself, to press the "reboot" button on how we live: with each other, with creation, and with God. It also points to the underlying truth, delivered centuries ago by Advent prophets, that God is the only One who could intervene and "reboot" given the extent of human disobedience. Ultimately, this we find in the birth of Jesus, his life, death, and resurrection.

In our reading from the book of Zephaniah for this week, the prophet warns the people over their failure to change and their disregard for God's will. Because the people have neither trusted nor kept in relationship with God, Zephaniah warns them that God has lost patience and will intervene. He warns the people of disasters to come. But amid those words of caution, Zephaniah keeps hold of a sense of hope for the future.

A hope for a changed world, a hope for a new character for his people, and hope for Jerusalem, that in the past, was a city known to have 'soiled, defiled, and been an oppressing city'. This hope, according to Zephaniah, is not divorced from the struggle and devastation people are facing in their journey in life because God is present within Jerusalem.



For the prophet, this is not a vague hope of blessing, or a simple inspiration, or a devotional message. God's presence with them is like a warrior, a victor rejoicing with his people, following his act of destruction or rebooting of all that has gone wrong in their lives. (verse 17 – The Lord your God is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory: he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love, he will exult over you with loud singing as on the day of festival.”

In other words, this act of renewing or rebooting in God's love holds together the tension between the hope they hold in God's future and the radical change and reshaping that must take place for that future to become a present reality.

As a congregation, I wonder what we are hoping for in 2022. As your minister, I hope that we will continue to strive to be a beacon of justice, love and mercy. I hope that we will continue to be a welcoming and hospitable community to all people regardless of gender, religious beliefs, political persuasion or ethnic background. I hope that we will grow bolder, more provocative and certainly more courageous in living out the values of the kingdom of God in our daily lives. I hope that we will grow more intentionally into the likeness of Christ no matter the cost.

I hope that we will be unwavering in our effort of holding up a reflective mirror for ourselves and the community in order that we see clearly God's future and our role in bringing it about. Holding before the world this tension of hope and our commitment to join God in reshaping the world now, I think, must be at the forefront of the congregation's mission and ministry for 2022.

Although that mirror may not be as perfect as the glass on my cracked phone, although, at times, my phone seems to have a mind of its own which does not align with my intention, nevertheless, it is such comfort and joy, at least in my experience, to know that my hope for a solution for my wayward phone, can be as simple as my willingness to press the reboot button. So may the Advent journey present us with the opportunity to renew and reboot our lives as we eagerly await to welcome the Prince of Peace, Emmanuel - God with US.



# Worship At Home

## Advent 3:Action

### Acknowledgement of Country

We, the people of Belmont Uniting Church acknowledge the Wauthaurong Peoples, the first inhabitants of the land we live and worship since time beyond remembering. We acknowledge that through this land, God nurtured and sustained the First Peoples of this country, the Aboriginal and Islander peoples.

### A Prayer of Approach

God of urgency and passion, you chose John the Baptist to be your prophet, and to embody earthly holiness. When we would recoil from his coarseness, challenge our hearts that we may not miss that glimpse of your righteousness embedded in his call to repentance. Turn our faces towards Bethlehem, and let us come close to you, rejoicing that you call those whom we would not, and celebrating your all-inclusive love that is Christmas. Amen.

### Notes on the Bible readings

Luke 3.7-18 • Zephaniah 3.14-20 • Isaiah 12.2-6 • Philippians 4.4-7

### Christmas Shopping

Shopping, cooking, decorating, carol services, gatherings – all the activities of the Christmas period can be a wonderful expression of the deep connection, love and celebration we share with others at this time of year. But at times, many of us also find the expectations of lavish spending and overindulgence to be distractions and burdens. Sometimes the busyness of this time of year can make us feel as though we're dancing to the wrong tune and our priorities have been distorted.

If commercially-driven convention didn't dictate how we spend energy, time and money at Christmas, how else might you choose to respond to the call of John the Baptist to transform your life in response to the coming of Christ? If you buy gifts this year, consider the alternative gift range from many charities which support good causes, or creating a shoebox full of small gifts to be distributed by charities working among very poor communities.

If you cook, could you contribute to a Christmas meal for the lonely or homeless in your community? If you attend school or community events, can you invite elderly, isolated or lonely neighbours to join you, or organise to go carol singing and instead of collecting money, give out chocolates with a Christmas greeting to those you visit.

### Reflective Prayer

Reflect on your own life in the light of this week's Gospel reading, and gently ask the question: What should I do? In a few moments of silence, name in your heart one thing that you could change. Pray (together, if possible): God of action and of silence, we commit to you today that which we have named in our hearts. Help us to be always ready to re-evaluate our lives in the light of your challenge and your love. Amen.

### A personal prayer

Lord, when I am weighed down with tiredness, when I feel trapped by things I cannot change, when my list of cards to write, presents to buy, and people to visit is longer than the hours in my day, help me to use your winnowing shovel to separate the crucial from the cosmetic, and not always to be trying to do more, but to do less better. Amen.

### Live your faith

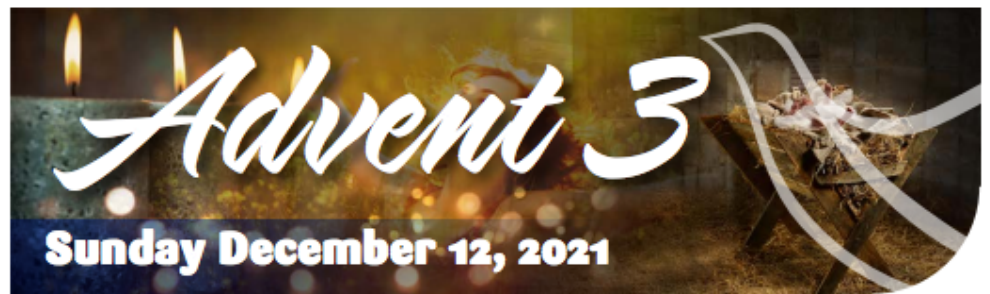
What part of your ordinary life could do with greater honesty, integrity or compassion? Make that change this week!

### Questions for reflection

- ▶ Have you seen a 'clothes for the homeless' scheme like this?
- ▶ What might you give to someone in need?
- ▶ What do you recognise that needs to change in yourself?







## Reflecting

Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson

When I was growing up I thought I had the salvation thing sorted. I was going to wait until the day before I die and then repent and ask for forgiveness. Seems I am not the only one to have these thoughts because it turns out that the people in John's time were way ahead of me. They wanted to just get baptized and get on with life. Well, I am not sure that John could be much clearer on his views on this plan! It is not our baptism itself that will save us (or any other forms of our religion perhaps). It is the desire to seek justice, the sharing of all we have and all we are with those who are in need in some way. Dorothy Day is quoted as saying that if we have two coats, we have stolen one from the poor. This is such a challenge to me, to live simply and share. It seems that salvation does not sit in any one personal act of repentance and 'conversion' but rather in who we are, in regards to our treatment of one another. We are the agents of salvation and transformation for others.

But I want to focus on the Zephaniah passage for a moment. This little book hidden away at the end of the Old Testament is one of the lesser-known prophets (the ones we may well have trouble locating and need to use the index). Nahum and Habakkuk and Zephaniah were likely contemporaries speaking during the Babylonian crisis and he is forewarning of coming judgement. He ends however, with a song of joy. If you have a Christmas Wreath with a pink candle for Advent 3 it represents joy and this Sunday is sometimes known as "Gaudete (meaning 'Rejoice') Sunday".

In this passage God is joyous, totally elated and engulfed by joy. This book that begins with the threat of eradication, ends with a joyous God. Evil will be no more. Even in our failures and our struggles, God has hold of us. The people are redeemed and forgiven and, in words echoed through the gospels, told not to fear because the compassionate God is present with them. The people are renewed in God's love.

The final verses make clear that God is on the side of the oppressed and not the oppressor. God sides with the lame and the outcast and deals with those who are the oppressors. There is no fence- sitting for any of us on this point. If we do not stand with the oppressed, we stand with the oppressor. And then in the final verse, God will gather us and bring us home. I wonder how I would hear these promises if I was homeless, or outcast. If I was a refugee or dispossessed and longing for home. How does it sit with our First Peoples?

And so we rejoice in the Lord always, for God is present with us and stands with the vulnerable and the marginalized. Shout aloud and sing for joy. God loves liberation. Free now of judgement Israel can move on into true freedom and homecoming. Free to indulge in this space of mercy and grace and peace, the peace which passes all understanding. I sure am glad I don't have to wait until the day before I die.



Weekly Worship. Season of Advent 2021. Presbytery of Gippsland, Fig Tree Worship Resource



## Belmont Uniting Church December Roster 2021



Date	Time	Leader	Leader's Steward	Readers	Greeters & Ushers	PowerPoint	PA Operator	Organist
Dec 12	10.00am	Rev. Ikani	Ros Buckwell	I. Goodwin	H. McCann	B. Vaitohi	R. Bunting	L. Rankin
					R. Ferguson			
Dec 12		<b>Communion</b>	<b>Flowers</b>		<b>Morning Tea</b>	<b>Covid Marshall - Glen</b>		
		N/A	J. Kelly		R. Pearson, L. Moss			
					M. Bullock, G. Phillips			
Date	Time	Leader	Leader's Steward	Readers	Greeters & Ushers	PowerPoint	PA Operator	Organist
Dec 19	10.00am	Rev. Ikani	L. Moss	R.&J. Ferguson	R.&J. Jeffers	B. Vaitohi	B. Jennings	L. Rankin
		<b>Communion</b>	<b>Flowers</b>		<b>Morning Tea</b>	<b>Covid Marshall - Ray</b>		
		N/A	A. Merritt		A. & R. Bunting			
					E. Wood & Volunteer			
Date	Time	Leader	Leader's Steward	Readers	Greeters & Ushers	PowerPoint	PA Operator	Organist
Dec 19	7:30pm	Oasis	L. Jackson if reqrd	Oasis	J. Ferguson, G. Coomber	D. Zucarro	David Zucarro	L. Rankin
		MC R. Ferguson			<b>Supper</b>	<b>Covid Marshall - Glen</b>		
					<b>Fellowship Committee</b>			
Date	Time	Leader	Leader's Steward	Readers	Greeters & Ushers	PowerPoint	PA Operator	Organist
Dec 24	7:30pm	Rev. Ikani	J. Ferguson	TBA	R. Ferguson, A. Merritt	B. Vaitohi	TBA	L. Rankin
			<b>Flowers - A. Merritt</b>			<b>Covid Marshall - Ray</b>		
Date	Time	Leader	Leader's Steward	Readers	Greeters & Ushers	PowerPoint	PA Operator	Organist
Dec 25	9:00am	Rev. Ikani	A. Merritt	R. Pearson	R. & R. Buckwell	B. Vaitohi	R. Bunting	L. Rankin
			<b>Flowers - A. Merritt</b>			<b>Covid Marshall - Glen</b>		
Date	Time	Leader	Leader's Steward	Readers	Greeters & Ushers	PowerPoint	PA Operator	Organist
Dec 26	9:00am	TBA	L. Jackson	E. Richards	G. Coomber	B. Vaitohi	G. Schneider	L. Rankin
			<b>Flowers - A. Merritt</b>		L. Moss	<b>Covid Marshall - Ray</b>		
					<b>Morning Tea</b>			
					R and J. Jeffers R Pearson & Volunteer			

We need someone to be on Morning Tea-Dec 19th & Dec 26th. Also January 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd & 30th. Please see Julie today or phone 0418 996 592

## Prayer Points For the Week

Loving God, we thank You for the gift of Jesus Christ who came to save the world from all its ugliness and evil. He brought to us all the message of love, hope and peace.

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You for Mary, the mother of Jesus, for her faithfulness, courage and willingness to be obedient and follow the path which You had prepared for her.

Dear Lord Jesus, You came to earth to be a peacemaker. Help us to know the importance of sharing Your love and peace with family members, our neighbours and people we come into contact with during the Advent season.

### Lectionary Readings

*Peter Woods*



Dec 12 - Advent 3  
Zep 3: 14 - 20  
Is 12: 2 - 6  
Phil 4: 4 - 7  
Lk 3: 7 - 18

Dec 19 - Advent 4  
Mic 5: 2 - 5  
Psalm 80: 1 - 7  
Heb 10: 5 - 10  
Lk 1: 39 - 45, (46 - 55)



Dec 24/25 - Christmas Day 1	Is 9: 2 - 7	Ps 96	Tit 2: 11 - 14	Luke 2: 1 - 14, (15 - 20)
Christmas Day 2	Is 62: 6 - 12	Ps 97	Tit 3: 4 - 7	Luke 2: (1 - 7), 8 - 20
Christmas Day 3	Is 52: 7 - 10	Ps 98	Heb 1: 1 - 4, (5 - 12)	John 1: 1 - 14
Dec 26 - Christmas 1	1 Sam 2: 18 - 20, 26	Ps 148	Col 3: 12 - 17	Luke 2: 41 - 52



May you have the gladness of Christmas which is hope;  
The spirit of Christmas which is peace;  
The heart of Christmas which is love.





## LOOKING AHEAD

Sunday 12 December	-	10.00am	-	Advent 3	-	Rev Ikani Vaitohi
Sunday 19 December	-	10.00am.	-	Advent 4	-	Rev Ikani Vaitohi
		7.30 pm.		Christmas Carols Service	-	OASIS Group
Friday 24 December	-	7.30pm	-	Christmas Eve Service	-	Rev Ikani Vaitohi
Saturday 25 December	-	9.00am	-	Christmas Day Service.	-	Rev Ikani Vaitohi
Sunday 26 December	-	9.00am	-	Christmas 1	-	TBA

CHRISTMAS CARDS SUPPORTING UNITING VIC/TAS have been ordered and are available for purchase on Sunday during morning tea. There will be 5 cards in each bundle @ \$5.50 per bundle, with 5 different designs to choose from. All 5 cards in each bundle will be the same. Please bring the correct notes/coins for your purchase. "The early bird catches the worm." (A project of the Mission and Outreach Committee.)

### ANGLESEA UNITING CHURCH FETE

On Saturday, January 8th, the Anglesea Uniting Church will hold their annual Fete. In the past our church has helped them with various donations of goods. Eg, plants and books. Some of these goods were left over from our own Fair!

On behalf of the Anglesea church I am getting together plants – anyone who has seedlings, flowering plants, indoor plants, cut flowers etc. is invited to contact me. I will transport any donations to Anglesea.

If you want to do some baking these goodies will be gratefully received.

Proceeds for the Fete will go to Frontier Services and the Nippers Starfish squad. (this is a group of children with various disabilities – the church pays the membership fees and buys some equipment for them).

Raye Pearson 0414431006 - or speak to Sue or Bill Jennings.

### CAN YOU HELP?

Over the past couple of years Malcolm has put together some great Christmas decorations on the outside of his house. This year was no different until some person or persons decided to cut up and destroy the complete display. Malcolm is heart-broken and disappointed that this happened. If you can help with some unused decorations please contact Max Ingles or Ray Ferguson.



# BUC - IN - MISSION



## Support

If you would like to support the Christmas Bowl 2021, there are envelopes on the table in the front foyer. You can place your donation on the offering plate each Sunday and we will be forward it on. If you have any questions please speak with Raye Pearson.

## UPDATE - BARWON VALLEY SCHOOL

*We received a letter from Alyssa Mercer, Chaplain of the Barwon Valley School, Belmont updating us on her ministry. You will be aware that we supported the school in 2019 by purchasing 12 bongos for their music program. Our ongoing support and prayers are making a difference in the lives of the students and the school community.*

Dear Ikani & Belmont Uniting Church,

What a year it has been. No one could have ever predicted we would have experienced the numerous lockdowns and varying restrictions like we have this year. Yet despite the stop start nature this year has presented, the chaplaincy program has been positively received by the Barwon Valley School community and continued to build momentum.

Since my last update letter, I was able to complete part 2 of the Rhythm 2 Recovery (R2R) facilitators training in Geelong. This not only allowed me to further develop my skills as an R2R facilitator, but also created an opportunity for me to network with others in the Geelong region in similar roles.

*...cont next page*

## Sharing God's love through the Christmas Bowl

Thank you for joining once again with churches across Australia to share God's love through the Christmas Bowl.

Like 2020 before it, 2021 was a year of turbulence and disruption. The coronavirus pandemic continued to impact us all, with congregations again having to connect virtually, and many community members suffering.

And as is often the case, the impact was not felt evenly, with the poorest among us hit hardest, especially the 82 million people around the world uprooted from the stability of their homes by conflict or disaster, and the people caught up in the humanitarian crises caused by this year's conflicts in Ethiopia, Myanmar, Gaza and the fall of Afghanistan.

In the midst of this division and chaos, the Christmas Bowl is a vital channel for expressing our unity in Christ. And it provides a powerful mechanism for sharing God's love, with those who need it, through practical Christian action.

**Thank you for being part of this important tradition, and helping to create a world where uprooted people have a safe place to belong.**

The senior students R2R group that began in Term 3 has now transitioned into the therapeutic phase of the program. Each week we use different drumming activities to discuss topics such as emotions, friendship, teamwork, and self-regulation. The senior students have responded so well to this program that we decided to pilot a junior students R2R group as well. Within this group we have seen verbal & non-verbal students, students in wheelchairs and those that are physically able, come together and have fun in a safe environment

It has been wonderful to see how encouraging students have been towards one another and hearing comments from students such as “I feel more hopeful” after participating in an R2R session.

In term 3 I was also able to bless the staff community on RUOK day with “survival packs”. These included various items like chocolate, party poppers and stickers that acted as prompts to remind staff to practice self-care and encourage them in the fantastic job they have all been doing over the past year.

Barwon Valley School has recently been successful in obtaining a Smiling Mind grant to go towards renovating two small shipping containers in our senior backyard. We hope to transform these containers into a drumming space and a lunchtime drop-in space. We are thankful for being able to partner with James Ashley (from the Salvation Army) who has offered to volunteer his time, skills, and resources to see this project come to life. Due to the building materials needed for the fit out currently being out of stock, we have had to postpone the start date of this project until early next year. We look forward to getting our senior drumming students involved in the process to help make this space their own.

Once again, I would like to thank-you for your continued support and prayers towards the chaplaincy program at Barwon Valley School. Specific areas you can be praying for our school and this ministry include:

- Transition program: as students transition into Barwon Valley School, change classrooms in 2022, and transition out of Barwon Valley School.
- R2R programs: for guidance around selecting students to be involved in next years R2R programs and for a real sense of friendship and trust to be developed in the initial weeks.
- Shed renovation: that the shipping container renovations would go smoothly and become spaces that students are proud of and enjoy spending time in.
- Community engagement opportunities: please pray for creativity and wisdom on how to navigate and engage with the local churches and community organisations as things being to open up again.
- Christmas: knowing that Christmas may not be a happy time for some of our students, please pray that each one will be able to experience hope and joy this festive season.

Blessings,  
Alyssa Mercer

Chaplain at Barwon Valley School

## Crosslight - December Edition is here!



The December Edition of the Crosslight is now available to be collected from the table in the front foyer. Crosslight is a bi-monthly printed publication by the Communication and Media Services of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania available to all congregations. All editions of the Crosslight are available both in print form and electronically.

If you prefer to receive or access the electronic online version of the Crosslight you can view it here - <https://crosslight.org.au>. A very important benefit of accessing the online version is that we will reduce our carbon footprint by printing less copies of Crosslight. So if you do so incline, please let Ikani know.

**We acknowledge with gratitude Lloyd's tremendous work in labelling and sorting our Crosslight.**



# Children's Activities

Name \_\_\_\_\_



## ROOTS Activity sheet

12-18 December 2021 | Advent 3



### Luke 3:7-18

John is talking to those who have come to be baptized. He explains that they need to change their behaviour if they want to live for God.



What should we do? Draw your ideas of how we can be 'good news' around this person.



### Puzzle

Jesus talks about the action people should take: match the pictures of what people have with how Jesus says we can be a sign of the good news.



Can you unscramble the words to discover who spoke to John?

Lots of the crowd asked John what they should do. They included, rolsseid and eeplop and xta srotclecol



John was talking to the people. Can you add the people he was talking to in this picture?



**S**ome people had come to John to be baptized. 'You are like poisonous snakes,' he said to them. 'You think that just because you have Abraham as your ancestor you can get away with pretending to live good lives, and pretending to be sorry for the wrong that you do. But I tell you this: just as the farmer cuts down a tree that does not produce good fruit, so will you have no place with God, if you do not produce good fruit by the way that you live.'

The people asked John, 'What should we do to live a new life with God?'

He replied, 'If anyone has two coats, they must give one to someone with none; whoever has food, must share

it with someone who has nothing to eat.'

Some tax collectors came to be baptized and asked, 'What about us? What should we do?'



John said, 'Charge the right amount. Be honest.'

Some soldiers asked him, 'What should we do?'

'Don't be bullies,' John told them. 'Treat people with respect, and be satisfied with the money you earn.'

People were getting excited, thinking that John might be the Messiah, so John said to them, 'No. I baptize with water, but someone is coming who is more powerful than me. I'm not fit to undo the strap of his sandal. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with power from God, like fire. When he comes, he will sort out good from evil, like a farmer separates wheat seeds from the chaff, and his power will last for ever.'

So John the Baptist proclaimed the good news of God to the people. But King Herod, whom he had criticised for all the wrong things he had done, put John in prison.

Luke 3:7-18

### Did you know?

- Tax collectors were unpopular and often charged too much, keeping money for themselves.

- The Messiah was the 'anointed one', someone chosen by God to save the Jewish people, also a title used for Jesus

## What should we do?

### Luke 3.7-18

John challenges the crowds that their faith needs to make a difference to the way they live their lives. They ask John what they should do to become better people, and John shares with them how their actions need to demonstrate how they have had a change of heart. John speaks directly to each group of people, giving them a practical way they can live differently because of their faith.

Now read **Luke 3.7-18** see p.2 for text.

### A note on the passage

The lead up to the new year is often a time for us to reflect on our habits, lifestyle choices and make plans for our future. But how many of these resolutions are centred around how our actions impact others? We should remember that as John addresses the crowds and they cry out, 'What should we do?', he is not interested in how the crowds look, their work targets or status, but is concerned about renewed hearts and lives for Jesus.

## Christmas Shopping

Do you tend to stock up your cupboards at Christmas with more treats and snacks than usual, so you can share them with friends and family? How often do we stop to think about those who are not able to even buy enough food for one meal? Could you spare a few extra tins or dry foods to support your local Foodbanks this week?



**Ask yourself:**  
How might what these young people are doing be 'good news' for someone?

## DO AND DO NOT

Take time to think and pray about John's words to the groups of people. Now write one example of a 'Do...' that Jesus might be asking of you to change or do differently, and one 'Do not...' about another aspect of life. Put them somewhere to remind you to try and live in this way.



When do you normally open your Advent calendar? Is it as soon as you wake up, to retrieve a yummy treat? This week, challenge yourself to save it until the end of the day. Once you have opened the door, write on the inside something which you have done for others today before you eat!

## What would you do?

Spend some time re-reading the passage and imagine that you are in the crowds with John preaching. How would you respond to hearing his message today about what we must do? Have your attitudes or behaviour been challenged in this way before? Although spoken over 2,000 years ago, John's message is still relevant today. If you find yourself in a moral dilemma this week, try remembering these words, 'What then should we do?' And think about how your faith might influence your next move.

## WATCH



Watch a clip of *The Muppet's Christmas Carol* [U] when charity workers ask Scrooge for money <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHHK9MVaMkM> and a second clip when he has had a change of heart and purpose! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyshHNNBW2k>

How had learning to help and love others changed Scrooge's life? Are there any small changes you could make to help others this Christmas?