

# Brentwood's Bible Study Group - The Rabbit Hole Gang

We gather on Zoom every Wednesday from 2-3:30pm Pacific  
The link each week is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83314289111>

*A Resource for our Explorations*  
*Wed, Nov 23 (Advent 1) to Wed, Feb 19 (Transfiguration)*



‘Christ Collage’ by David Hayward - [www.nakedpastor.com](http://www.nakedpastor.com)  
Here’s a link to David’s illuminating comments on these drawings –  
<https://youtu.be/Kc90NJFIKFc>

For Canadian Presbyterians, the living Word of God is Jesus, the Creator’s Christ, made known in relationships through the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

David’s series of drawings captures the diversity of understandings found in the scriptures as the early church grappled with the question, “Who is Jesus, the Christ, for us?”

We continue to explore that question in the gatherings of the Rabbit Hole Gang. You are always welcome to join us whenever you are able.

# Following the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) Year A – Advent 2022 through to Transfiguration 2023

Many Christian congregations around the world follow a common schedule of bible readings for each Sunday. They consist of readings from the Hebrew Scriptures, the Psalms, the Acts or Epistles of the Apostles, and the Gospels. The major principle behind the lectionary is that each Sunday members of congregations around world will hear the same voices of writers week by week. Their considerations of these writings, through the work of the Spirit of the Creator's Christ, will form a force field of forgiving and reconciling love that works wonders in and for the world.

It is organized on a three-year cycle and designed to include most of the Bible in that timeframe. There are ongoing debates about what is included and what is not, but this schedule of readings has gained broad acceptance. In Canada, the RCL is encouraged or mandated by the Anglican Church of Canada, the Canadian Baptists of Western Canada, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Grace Communion International Canada, the Lutheran Church–Canada, the Mennonite Church Canada, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, and the United Church of Canada.

You can see the whole of the RCL, along with art, prayers, and commentaries related to the scripture passages, at the website maintained by the library at Vanderbilt University - <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu>.

The outlines for each Wednesday include the following information based on the elements in the worshipping on the next Sunday, so our explorations in the Rabbit Hole Gang inform our conversations that day and enrich our communal spiritual disciplines at Brentwood in nourishing souls to flourish in the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ through welcoming, worshipping, learning, and serving. You will find the following information in each outline:

- the date with the name of the Sunday according to the Christian calendar
- the four readings from the RCL for that Sunday with brief notes on the content
- the sermon titles

- the word(s) to ponder
- the hymns.

To increase the range of voices you bring into your consideration of these bible passages, you may want to read/sing through the hymns and/or consider the sermon title and word(s) to ponder prior to the Wednesday conversations.

There is also a brief outline of *midrash*, an approach to the study of the scriptures rooted in the traditions of Judaism around which we improvise. This summary was composed by the Rev. Dr. Elisabeth R. Jones, minister with Cedar Park United Church in Pointe Claire, PQ, and is based on her doctoral project. We are deeply grateful for her permission to use it.

### **Midrash: A Way of “Turning” a Biblical Text**

You know how when you turn a cut-diamond to catch the light, different facets of the same diamond refract the same light differently, so you see many colours of the spectrum? This metaphor may be what the second century Rabbi Ben Bag Bag had in mind when he encouraged people to take any Biblical text and

*Turn it, and turn it, for everything is in it.  
Reflect and grow old and grey with it.<sup>1</sup>*

This way of turning sacred texts this way and that, so that God’s light catches the text in different ways, depending on changing contexts and circumstances, is as old as the Bible itself, where we find younger texts (for example Paul’s letters or the Gospels) which ‘turn’ an older text (e.g from the prophets or psalms), to show how they can be reinterpreted in light of new contexts for God’s people. The process of turning a text is known as “midrash” (from the Hebrew verb דָּרַשׁ *darash*, which means to search, probe, ponder, seek). While individuals can turn texts, the process is far livelier – and far more likely to transform the way we live our faith – when done in community.

Midrash as an interpretive process is deeply rooted in the Jewish tradition and continues to this day. One contemporary Rabbi has described the process as

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<sup>1</sup> Pirkei Avot, *Sayings of the Fathers* 5:2 (Koren Publishers, Jerusalem, 2015).

“reading the Bible with question marks”, not just as an intellectual activity but as a “personal journey” in which we can “glimpse the light of old souls” who saw the Holy in the words of Scripture, but also “to find that light within our own souls” and lives.<sup>2</sup>

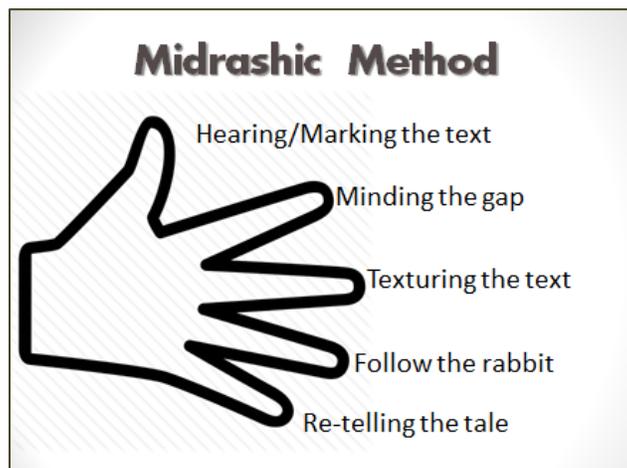
Some Christians may worry that this is not “the way” to study a Biblical text; we’ve become used to thinking one text means one thing, as if it were some sort of mathematical equation. However, Jesus was a master “darshan” (one who turns a text), as you can see so many times when he turns an ancient text (like Deuteronomy 6) to bring new light to bear on its meaning, as it meets the present circumstance (See Matthew 22:34-40). In similar fashion we see Peter “midrashing” the prophet Joel to bring light to the resurrection, when he preaches to the crowd at Pentecost (Acts 2), and Paul sees Isaiah’s description of holy mystery as the best way to describe the apparent folly of faith in the crucified Lord of glory (1 Cor 2:9;16), Jesus Christ.

### **A Christian Midrashic Method**

This simple way of using a “midrashic approach” to Bible study has been developed over the past eleven years in the Christian community of faith of Cedar Park United in Pointe Claire, QC. It’s a five-finger process:

#### **1. Reading/Marking the text**

*Hear it first (listening is how most people have encountered Scripture). Next, print off or mark up the text- with any of YOUR reactions, questions, shocks, surprises. Note repetitions, odd words, gaps (what’s missing?)*



<sup>2</sup> Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, *Midrash: Reading the Bible with Question Marks*, (Paraclete Press, 2007, 2013),153.

## **2. Minding the Gaps**

*Share everyone's "gaps" (discovered while marking the text). (DON'T answer the questions yet, let them fill the room!) Identify the key or pressing ones. Be ready to use commentaries, online resources, and human wisdom.*

**3. Texturing the Text** *(Putting the text into its biblical context.) Who wrote it, when, for whom? Who shared it? Who passed it on? What layers are added now that the text has come to us?*

**4. Follow the White Rabbit** *(a reference to Lewis Carroll's Adventures in Wonderland; Alice followed the rabbit, and entered a world both recognizable and strange). Some element(s) of a text just beg to be followed; go there! Look things up, and see how this particular point intersects with your own life.*

## **5. Re-telling the Tale**

*When Scripture re-writes us, we get to re-tell it! How would you re-tell this text? (As artist, poet, pray-er, preacher, person of faith?) Share others' re-tellings of this text (e.g. Songs, art, or contemporary re-tellings, e.g. Godspell, etc.)*

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To find out more about using Midrashic Method in a Christian community, see:

[https://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1029&context=dmin\\_theses](https://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1029&context=dmin_theses)

The Rev Dr Elisabeth R Jones studied and taught at Vancouver School of Theology, was Director of Studies at United Theological College in Montreal and completed her Doctor of Ministry degree at Luther Seminary with a project on using midrash to help people engage the Scriptures in ways that transform their lives.

# The Outlines of the Stuff to Consider

**Nov 27, 2022 – Advent 1 - Hope**

**Scriptures – Hebrew Bible – Isaiah 2:1-5**

- the light of the Lord's peace

**Psalm – 122 – Refrain #1**

- peace and prosperity

**Epistle/Acts – Romans 13:11-14**

- put on Jesus Christ, the armour of light

**Gospel – Matthew 24:36-44**

- stay awake for the coming of God's light of peace

**Sermon Title**

**Enlightening Humanity's Dark Despair**

**Word to Ponder**

**Hope**

**Gathering Song #122 Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel v1**

**Hymns – #122 Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel**

**#124 People in darkness**

**#119 Hope is a star**

**Special Notes**

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**Dec 4, 2022 – Advent 2 – Peace - Holy Communion**

**Scriptures – Hebrew Bible – Isaiah 11:1-10**

- nations curious about root of Jesse’s vision

**Psalms – 72:1-7, 18-19 – Refrain #2**

- justice and righteousness

**Epistle/Acts – Romans 15:4-13**

- encouragement to live in God’s steadfast love

**Gospel – Matthew 3:1-12**

- following in Abraham and Sarah’s footsteps on the way of the Lord

**Sermon Title**

**Walking in the Ways of Peace**

**Word to Ponder**

**Peace**

**Gathering Song #122 Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel v1**

**Hymns – #113 Comfort, comfort you my people**

**#530 I come with joy**

**#128 There’s voice in the wilderness crying**

**Special Notes**

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**Dec 11, 2022 – Advent 3 – Love – Ben MacRae preaching**

**Scriptures – Hebrew Bible – Isaiah 35:1-10**

- restoring return by God's gracious workings with rejoicing

**Psalm – 146:5-10 – Refrain #1**

- happy in reliance on God's workings

**Epistle/Acts – James 5:7-10**

- patience in waiting for God's workings

**Gospel – Matthew 11:2-11**

- John the Baptist announces a new phase in God's workings

**Sermon Title                      Seeing and Hearing God's Love**

**Word to Ponder                  Love**

**Gathering Song #122 Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel v1**

**Hymns – #123 My soul gives glory to God**

**#115 Hail to the Lord's Anointed**

**#220 My song is love unknown**

**Special Notes**

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**Dec 18, 2022 – Advent 4 - Joy**

**Scriptures – Hebrew Bible – Isaiah 7:10-16**

- Immanuel

**Psalm – 80:1-7, 17-19 – Refrain #1**

- restoration of Israel

**Epistle/Acts – Romans 1:1-7**

- bringing about the obedience of faith

**Gospel – Matthew 1:18-25**

- God with us

**Sermon Title**

**The Joy of God With Us and For Us**

**Word to Ponder**

**Joy**

**Gathering Song #122 Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel v1**

**Hymns – #732 O day of peace**

**#153 Joy to the world**

**#410 Joyful, joyful we adore you**

**Special Notes**

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**Dec 25, 2022 – Christmas Day**

**Scriptures – Hebrew Bible – Isaiah 9:2-7**

- the light of liberation that increases joy

**Psalm – 98 – Refrain #1**

- judging with righteousness and equity

**Epistle/Acts – Hebrews 1:1-4**

- the Creator is fully in the Christ, Jesus of Nazareth

**Gospel – John 1:1-14**

- Jesus full of grace and truth

**Sermon Title                      Getting the Story Line Straight from the Start**

**Word to Ponder                  Incarnation**

**Gathering Song #133 Go tell it on the mountain v3**

**Hymns – #159 O come, all ye faithful**

**#146 Angels from the realms of glory**

**#141 Good Christians, all rejoice**

**Special Notes**

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**Jan 1, 2022 – 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas – Holy Communion**

**Scriptures – Hebrew Bible – Isaiah 63:7-9**

- saving in their distress

**Psalm – 148 – Refrain #1**

- all creation praising its Maker

**Epistle/Acts – Hebrews 2:10-18**

- for whom and through whom all things exist

**Gospel – Matthew 2:13-23**

- Herod's wrath and God's providence

**Sermon Title**

**Who took flesh and dwelt among us?**

**Word to Ponder**

**Jesus**

**Gathering Song #133 Go tell it on the mountain v3**

**Hymns – #163 Of eternal love begotten**

**#542 Let all mortal flesh keep silent**

**#712 Arise, your light has come**

**Special Notes**

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**Jan 8, 2023 – 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Epiphany – Baptism of our Lord**

**Scriptures – Hebrew Bible – Isaiah 42:1-9**

- servant song – light of gentle justice

**Psalm – 29 – Refrain #1**

- the strong voice of peace

**Epistle/Acts – Acts 10:34-43**

- preaching peace

**Gospel – Matthew 3:13-17**

- pleased with what?

**Sermon Title**

**The Effect of Baptism**

**Word to Ponder**

**Baptism**

**Gathering Song #133 Go tell it on the mountain v3**

**Hymns – #173 We three kings**

**#161 What child is this**

**#521 Child of blessing, child of promise**

**Special Notes**

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**Jan 15, 2023 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany**

**Scriptures – Hebrew Bible – Isaiah 49:1-7**

- called before born to responsibility to be light to the nations

**Psalm – 40:1-11 – Refrain #1**

- God listening to cries + invites trust and loyalty

**Epistle/Acts – 1 Corinthians 1:1-9**

- called to be sanctifiers in God's faithfulness

**Gospel – John 1:29-42**

- John recognizing Jesus as Lamb of God – cf. Ex 12 & Is 53:7

**Sermon Title**

**What's God Trying to Show?**

**Words to Ponder**

**Light of the Nations**

**Gathering Song #133 Go tell it on the mountain v3**

**Hymns – #525 Behold the Lamb of God**

**#672 Jesus call us, o'er the tumult**

**#634 Will you come and follow me**

**Special Notes**

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**Jan 22, 2023 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany**

**Scriptures – Hebrew Bible – Isaiah 9:1-4**

- the agony of darkness to the joy of freedom

**Psalm – 27:1, 4-9 – Refrain #1**

- Lord is light and salvation that casts our fear

**Epistle/Acts – 1 Corinthians 1:10-18**

- united in same mind with same purpose

**Gospel – Matthew 4:12-23**

- darkness to light of the kingdom of Jesus – follow in inviting others

**Sermon Title**

**What Do You Fear Most?**

**Word to Ponder**

**Fear**

**Gathering Song #133 Go tell it on the mountain v3**

**Hymns – #644 May the mind of Christ my Saviour**

**#704 Teach me, God, to wonder**

**#692 Where charity and love prevail**

**Special Notes**

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**Jan 29, 2023 – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany**

**Scriptures – Hebrew Bible – Micah 6:1-8**

- God in controversy with his people over what he wants

**Psalm – 15 – Refrain #1**

- who God accepts

**Epistle/Acts – 1 Corinthians 1:18-31**

- message of Christ crucified on the cross

**Gospel – Matthew 5:1-12**

- Beatitudes – mandate letter from the crucified God

**Sermon Title**

**The Gratitude in which God Delights**

**Word to Ponder**

**Reconciliation**

**Gathering Song #133 Go tell it on the mountain v3**

**Hymns – #709 What does the Lord require of you**

**#637 Take my life and let it be**

**#624 Blest are they**

**Special Notes**

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**Feb 5, 2023 – 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany – Holy Communion**

**Scriptures – Hebrew Bible – Isaiah 58:1-9a**

- rebellion of the people + what God desires

**Psalm – 112:1-9 – Refrain #1**

- God's people to be gracious, merciful, and righteous

**Epistle/Acts – 1 Corinthians 2:1-12**

- mystery of God – Spirit leads us to understand our gifts

**Gospel – Matthew 5:13-20**

- light it up and spice it up

**Sermon Title**

**How Does God Want Us  
to Show Up in the World?**

**Word to Ponder**

**Salt and Light**

**Gathering Song #709 What does the Lord require of you**

**Hymns – #456 Be present at our table**

**#534 All who hunger**

**#403 She comes sailing on the wind**

**Special Notes**

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**Feb 12, 2023 – 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany**

**Scriptures – Hebrew Bible – Deuteronomy 30:15-20**

- God sets before us life & prosperity vs death and adversity

**Psalm – 119:1-8 – Refrain #1**

- walking in God's ways

**Epistle/Acts – 1 Corinthians 3:1-9**

- infancy in Christ to working together in God's building

**Gospel – Matthew 5:21-37**

- you have heard it said, but I say to you

**Sermon Title**

**Walking in God's Ways**

**Words to Ponder**

**God's Ways**

**Gathering Song #709 What does the Lord require of you**

**Hymns – #639 We are marching (walking)/Siyahamba**

**#671 I heard the voice of Jesus say**

**#496 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet**

**Special Notes**

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**Feb 19, 2023 – Transfiguration Sunday**

**Scriptures – Hebrew Bible – Exodus 24:12-18**

- covenant ratification on the mountain in devouring fire

**Psalm – 2**

- telling of the decrees of the Lord

**Epistle/Acts – 2 Peter 1:16-21**

- God's Son, God's Beloved in whom God is well pleased

**Gospel – Matthew 17:1-9**

- transfigured – don't be afraid of the glory of the Lord

**Sermon Title**

**Embraced by God's Loving Energy**

**Word to Ponder**

**Transformation**

**Gathering Song #709 What does the Lord require of you**

**Hymns – #356 You, Lord, are both lamb and shepherd**

**#186 Swiftly pass the clouds of glory**

**#727 Let there be light**

**Special Notes**

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