

The following is offered as a guide for your prayer and meditation.

There is a video with music and video images of the church available (www.stlukespr.org/come-let-us-worship/) that might accompany your reflection time.

Spend as much time as you wish in meditation.

Relax and enjoy the quiet beauty of this time.

This booklet is a guide for your devotion. Pick and choose which selections you desire to focus on.

Light one candle or more to bathe your space in the light of Christ.



An Invocation

We worship as we live, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, The love of Christ that guards our hearts and minds, and the joy and consolation of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him. What has come into being in Him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. (*John 1:1-5*)

²⁶I will make them and the region around my hill a blessing; and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. (*Ezekiel 34:26*)

¹⁶From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. (*John 1:16*)

⁹But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children-- (*Deuteronomy 4:9*)

¹³For you have delivered my soul from death, and my feet from falling, so that I may walk before God in the light of life. (*Psalms 56:13*)

⁷But you, take courage! Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded." (*2 Chronicles 15:7*)

³⁵Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (*Romans 8:35, 37-39*)

²³Jesus said to him, "If you are able! — All things can be done for the one who believes." (*Mark 9:23*)

²²By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. (*Galatians 5:22-23*)

²³they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ²⁴"The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." ²⁵The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. (*Lamentations 3:23-25*)

²Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. (*Hebrews 13:2*)

³Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. (*Daniel 12:3*)

¹²As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. (*Colossians 3:12-14*)

¹⁶So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. (*1 John 4:16*)

¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. (*Romans 12:12*)

Reflection – “God is Here”

God is here.

In many and various ways God is made known to us.

In many and various ways God is revealed.

Look to the stars, creating the matter of new worlds out of their brilliant furnaces;

Look to the leaf, gifting us with the air we breathe;

Look to the great seas, cleansing and renewing the earth with the same fluid that
rushes in our veins and flows in our tears;

Look to the wind, breathing and hovering over the living earth.

Then listen to the mystics who have wisely spoken ...

God is over all things ... under all things

Outside all,

Within, but not enclosed,

Without, but not excluded,

Above, but not raised up,

Below, but not depressed,

Wholly above, presiding,

Wholly without, embracing,

Wholly within, filling.

Reflection – “Standing at the Beginning of a New Year”

A poem by Joyce Rupp

Sacred Mystery,

waiting on the threshold

of this new year,

you open the gates

and beckon to me:

“Come! Come!

Be not fearful of what awaits you

as you enter the unknown terrain,

be not doubtful of your ability

to grow from its joys and sorrows.

For I am with you.

I will be your Guide.

I will be your Protector.

You will never be alone.”

Guardian of this new year,

I set aside my fears, worries and concerns,

I open my life to mystery, to beauty,

to hospitality, to questions,

to endless opportunity

of discovering in my relationships,

and to all the silent wisps of wonder

that will draw me to your heart.

I welcome your unfailing Presence

and walk with hope into this new year.

Reflection – “The Gate of the Year”

A poem by Minnie Louise Haskins

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

“Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.”

And he replied:

“Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.

That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.”

So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.

And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

Blessing for the Brokenhearted

By Jan Richardson

There is no remedy for love but to love more. – *Henry David Thoreau*

Let us agree	so broken
for now	can go on beating,
that we will not say	as if it were made
the breaking	for precisely this—
makes us stronger	as if it knows
or that it is better	the only cure for love
to have this pain	is more of it
than to have done	as if it sees
without this love.	the heart’s sole remedy
Let us promise	for breaking
we will not	is to love still
tell ourselves	as if it trusts
time will heal	that its own stubborn
the wound	and persistent pulse
when every day	is the rhythm
our waking	of a blessing
opens it anew.	we cannot
Perhaps for now	begin to fathom
it can be enough	but will save us
to simply marvel	nonetheless.
at the mystery	
of how a heart	

New Year Thought – “Peace Within”

Attributed to St. Thérèse of Lisieux and St. Theresa of Avila

May today there be peace within.

May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.

May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.

May you use those gifts that you have received,
and pass on the love that has been given to you.

May you be confident knowing you are a child of God.

Let this presence settle into your bones,

and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love.

It is there for each and every one of us.

The Ten Commandments – a contemporary text

Author unknown

1. Practice loyalty to the Sacred.
2. Remember every image of God is only a glimpse of one person's perspective.
3. Do not use God's name to do harm.
4. Do not allow productivity to dominate life.
5. Care for those who have cared for you.
6. Do not be unnecessarily destructive.
7. Be faithful to the commitments you make.
8. Do not take what does not belong to you.
9. Do not hinder justice from coming to fruition
10. Do not use power over others to get what you want.

Various Prayers

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

As we celebrate the season of Christmas, we join the praise of the cosmos, and we intercede for the church, the earth, the world, and all in need. These bids invite your prayers, either silently or aloud.

A brief silence.

We pray for the church around the globe. *A brief silence.*

We pray for all who minister in the church. *A brief silence.*

We pray for our congregation. *A brief silence.*

We pray for the well-being of plants and animals. *A brief silence.*

We pray for all who care for the earth. *A brief silence.*

We pray for peace between and within the nations of the world. *A brief silence.*

We pray for an increase of justice in every land. *A brief silence.*

We pray for an end to prejudices of all kinds. *A brief silence.*

We pray for all elected government officials. *A brief silence.*

We pray for our neighborhood. *A brief silence.*

We pray for all who are alone on this holiday. *A brief silence.*

We pray for our families and friends. *A brief silence.*

We pray for those in need – those near, those far away. *A brief silence.*

We pray for all who suffer from the coronavirus. *A brief silence.*

We pray for those in sorrow or despair. *A brief silence.*

We pray for the sick and the dying. *A brief silence.*

Finally, we pray for the desires of our own hearts. *A brief silence.*

We praise God for the lives of all those who have died in the faith. *A brief silence.*

O God, Majesty on high, Word of salvation, Power of glory, on this holy day we ask you to receive our prayers and to visit the world with your love, granting new life to the earth and its peoples. through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

A prayer of Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Creator God, you have called us to be keepers of your earth. Through greed we have established an economy that destroys the web of life. We have changed our climate and we drown in despair. Let oceans of justice flow. May we learn to sustain and renew the life of our Mother Earth. We stand with indigenous people worldwide who are demanding restoration of their ancestral lands. We pray for our leaders, custodians of Mother Earth, that they may negotiate with wisdom and fairness. May they act with compassion and courage; and lead us into the path of justice for the sake of our children and our children's children.

A prayer of Pope Francis

Enlighten those who possess power and money that they may avoid the sin of indifference, that they may love the common good, advance the weak, and care for this world in church we live. The poor and the earth are crying out. O Lord, seize us with your power and light, help us to protect all life, to prepare for a better future, for the coming of your kingdom of justice, peace, love and beauty.

Civic distress

God, our help and comfort, accompany our nation in this time of uncertainty and loss. As we grieve, assure us of your unfailing presence; as we seek direction in the days ahead, guide us by your wisdom.

Faithful living in society

God, our gracious giver, your Son Jesus taught us that where our treasure is there our hearts will be also. Teach us to love people more than money, relationships more than things, and you above all, that the way we live will reflect what we truly value and believe. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who emptied himself in love for us, and now reigns with you and the Holy Spirit forever and ever.

Racial justice and lament

Good and gracious God, you invite us to recognize and reverence your divine image and likeness in our neighbor. Enable us to see the reality of racism and free us to challenge and uproot it from our society, world, and ourselves.

We hear of hateful violence and senseless killing...

We feel the suffering, sorrow, and shame of the oppressed...

We fear that justice will again be delayed or denied...

We recognize patterns of privilege and systems of discrimination...

We see your creation destroyed by carelessness and greed...

We weep for victims and grieve the aftermath of violence...

We pray for an end to conflict.

Caregivers

O Lord, we are at the limits of our power to help. We place into your hands ourselves and all that we have left undone. For what you have helped us to do, we thank you. We ask you to lend your strength to what must be done by others. Now shelter us in your peace, which surpasses our understanding.

Hymn texts to reflect on

GOOD CHRISTIAN FRIENDS, REJOICE

Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
give ye heed to what we say: Jesus Christ is born today;
ox and ass before him bow, and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!

Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
now ye hear of endless bliss: Jesus Christ was born for this!
He has opened heaven's door, and we are blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!

Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
now ye need not fear the grave; Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all to gain the everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!

Text: Medieval Latin carol; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818-1866

IN THE BLEAK MIDWINTER

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
in the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;
heav'n and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign;
in the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed
the Lord God almighty, Jesus Christ.

What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb;
if I were a wise man I would do my part;
yet what I can I give him — give my heart.

Text: Christina Georgina Rossetti, 1830-1894

INFANT HOLY, INFANT LOWLY

Infant holy, infant lowly, for his bed a cattle stall;
oxen lowing, little knowing Christ the child is Lord of all.
Swiftly winging, angels singing, bells are ringing, tidings bringing:
Christ the child is Lord of all! Christ the child is Lord of all!

Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping vigil till the morning new
saw the glory, heard the story, tidings of a gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow, praises voicing, greet the morrow:
Christ the child was born for you! Christ the child was born for you!

Text: Polish carol; tr. Edith M. G. Reed, 1885-1933, alt.

JOY TO THE WORLD

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her king;
let ev'ry heart prepare him room and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sin and sorrow grow nor thorns infest the ground;
he comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748

OF THE FATHER'S LOVE BEGOTTEN

Of the Father's love begotten ere the worlds began to be, he is Alpha and Omega, he the
source, the ending he, of the things that are, that have been, and that future years shall see,
evermore and evermore.

Oh, that birth forever blessed, when the virgin, full of grace, by the Holy Ghost conceiving,
bore the Savior of our race, and the babe, the world's redeemer, first revealed his sacred face,
evermore and evermore.

This is he whom seers in old time chanted of with one accord, whom the voices of the
prophets promised in their faithful word; now he shines, the long-expected; let creation
praise its Lord evermore and evermore.

Let the heights of heav'n adore him; angel hosts, his praises sing; pow'rs, dominions, bow
before him and extol our God and King; let no tongue on earth be silent, ev'ry voice in concert
ring evermore and evermore.

Christ, to thee, with God the Father, and, O Holy Ghost, to thee, hymn and chant and high
thanksgiving and unwearied praises be: honor, glory, and dominion, and eternal victory
evermore and evermore! Amen.

Text: Marcus Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, 348-413; tr. composite

RISE US, SHEPHERD, AND FOLLOW

There's a star in the East on Christmas morn; Rise up, shepherd, and follow;
It will lead to the place where the Christ was born; Rise up, shepherd and follow.

Follow, follow; Rise up, shepherd, and follow.

Follow the Star of Bethlehem; Rise up, shepherd, and follow.

Leave your sheep, and leave your lambs; Rise up, shepherd, and follow;
Leave your ewes, and leave your rams; Rise up, shepherd and follow.

If you take good heed to the angel's words; Rise up, shepherd, and follow;
You'll forget your flocks, you'll forget your herds; Rise up, shepherd and follow.

Text: Traditional Spiritual

SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT! / *STILLE NACHT, HEILIGE NACHT!*

*Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht! Alles schläft, einsam wacht
nur das traute, hochheilige Paar. Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,
schlaf in himmlischer Ruh, schlaf in himmlischer Ruh.*

Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child. Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar, heav'nly hosts sing, alleluia!
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!

Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from your holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth, Jesus, Lord, at your birth.

Text: Joseph Mohr, 1792-1849; tr. John F. Young, 1820-1885

THE FIRST NOEL

The first Noel the angel did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
in fields where they lay, keeping their sheep, on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a star shining in the east beyond them far;
and to the earth it gave great light, and so it continued both day and night.

And by the light of that same star three wise men came from country far;
to seek for a king was their intent, and to follow the star wherever it went.

This star drew near to the northwest, o'er Bethlehem it took its rest;
and there it did both stop and stay right over the place where Jesus lay.

Then entered in those wise men three, full rev'rently upon their knee,
and offered there in his presence their gold, and myrrh, and frankincense.

Text: English traditional

'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime

'Twas in the moon of wintertime when all the birds had fled,
that *God the Lord of all the earth sent angel choirs instead;
before their light the stars grew dim, and wond'ring hunters heard the hymn:

Jesus your king is born! Jesus is born, in excelsis gloria!

Within a lodge of broken bark the tender babe was found;
a ragged robe of rabbit skin enwrapped his beauty round;
but as the hunter braves drew nigh, the angel song rang loud and high:

The earliest moon of wintertime is not so round and fair
as was the ring of glory on the helpless infant there.
The chiefs from far before him knelt with gifts of fox and beaver pelt.

O children of the forest free, the angel-song is true;
the holy child of earth and heav'n is born today for you.
Come, kneel before the radiant boy, who brings you beauty, peace, and joy.

**original: "mighty Gitchi Manitou"*

Text: Jean de Brébeuf, 1593-1649; tr. Jesse E. Middleton, 1872-1960, alt.
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