

The United Church of Canada
**St Francis Manoir & Grace Village & Manoir
Stanstead**

A service for personal meditations at home
January 2021

Grounding Prayer

(Take a deep breath, center yourself within the love of God)

God, You are present, may I be transformed by this encounter.

Opening Prayer:

Creative Force, we ask you to make us tools of your ongoing creation. We ask that we may be partners in creating a world where your delicate balance is maintained and our needs are met. We ask for your constant support so that we may act out of a place of love, of generosity, of mutual support for one another.

When we tear down, help us to rebuild.

When we divide, help us to rally.

When we exclude, remind us of our mutual humanity.

Forgive us when we fail, and give us a glimpse of your radiance so that we may learn, grow, and abide in you. Amen.

Prayer of Illumination:

O God of the ages:

As I open the scriptures this day, let me take heart, for you are calling me. As I seek your will for me, free my spirit to receive the truths that you have for me today. Amen.

A Reading from the Gospel of Mark 1:14-20

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

The Living Word, I listen with my heart, my mind and my spirit.

A Short Reflection by Rev. Linda Buchanan:

Here we are at the beginning of a new year, Praise God! Generations of God's people have marked this time of Epiphany by reflecting on our call to follow Christ, trusting that we are beloved children of God. This season calls us to live out the hope within Christmas, by shining the Light of Christ wherever we go. I have a favorite Epiphany hymn, and this year I was given new insight that has illuminated my love of this hymn. I share with you a poem written by the Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman, a theologian of the civil rights movement. May these words dance in your spirit bringing you new epiphanies of God's abundant love.

The Work of Christmas by Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,

The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among others,
To make music in the heart.

Prayers of the People:

Compassionate God, I humbly come before you trusting in your deep love for all your children, and your deep love for me. I thank you for your gifts in my life (pause to reflect on your blessings). I am faced with challenges and struggles, and so I ask for your courage and strength (pause and reflect on your concerns). I know that you hear me when I call, and I ask that you remind me that you are with me in the challenges and joys of living. Inspire me with your love and empower me with your hope. I pray using the words Jesus gave to his disciples;

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your Name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Blessing & Commissioning

We are the light and love of God! Let us go out into the world and challenge its struggle with the good news that God's love is for all! Through our witness, may we spark the fire of God in others. Amen.

Hymn: (VU87) I Am the Light of the World

I am the Light of the World

You people come and follow me.

If you follow and love, You'll learn the mystery

Of what you were meant to do and be.

1. When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and the shepherds have found their way home,
The work of Christmas is begun!
2. To find the lost and lonely one,
To heal that broken soul with love,
To feed the hungry children with warmth and good food,
To feel the earth below the sky above!
3. To free the prisoner from all chains,
To make the powerful care,
To rebuild the nations with strength and goodwill,
To see God's children everywhere.
4. To bring hope to every task you do,
To dance at a baby's new birth,
To make music in an old person's heart,
And sing to the colors of the earth!

Prayers by:

OP: Eric Hébert-Daly, *Gathering A/C/E 2014-15 (Year B)*, pg.42.

PI: Beth W. Johnston, *Gathering A/C/E 2020-21 (Year B)*, p.50.

BC: Sandy Ferguson, *Gathering Pent2 2020 (Year A)*, 44.

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Opening Prayer:

Great and loving God,
when you created the cosmos, you shaped eternity.
With great care, you divided the week into days from birth to death, from
generation to generation, from eon to eon.
You modelled for us a balance of work and rest.
This moment, in your presence, I set apart this time to rest in you, and to be
renewed in your word of life. As I breathe in your goodness, may I echo your voice
and prayer: "It is good." It is good, it is good. It is good to be here in your love.
Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Great calling God, I have noticed your voice calling out my name, but I have often
turned over and gone back to sleep. You have called to my innermost selves, but I
have ignored your voice. You have met me where I live, but I have found many
reasons not to respond. Forgive me, Gracious God. Call me once again and I will
listen.
(a time of silent reflection)

Assurance of Forgiveness:

The good news is that we do not live out our discipleship merely with our own
strength, but with God's grace holding us up. In our times of fear and frailty, we
know that God is closer to us than our breath. And God's faithfulness is ours, even
in our doubts. Thanks be to God!

Prayer of Illumination:

As we come to hear scripture today, let us open ourselves that we might experience
the intention the Divine Creator has called us to fulfill and act upon. Amen.

A Reading from the Hebrew Book of Psalms 111

Praise the Lord!

I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart,
in the company of the upright, in the congregation.

Great are the works of the Lord,
studied by all who delight in them.

Full of honor and majesty is God's work,
and God's righteousness endures forever.

God has gained renown by God's wonderful deeds;
the Lord is gracious and merciful.

God provides food for those who fear God;
God is ever mindful of God's covenant.

God has shown God's people the power of God's works,
in giving them the heritage of the nations.

The works of God's hands are faithful and just;
all God's precepts are trustworthy.

They are established forever and ever,
to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.

God sent redemption to God's people;
God has commanded God's covenant forever.

Holy and awesome is God's name.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
all those who practice it have a good understanding.

God's praise endures forever.

The Living Word, I listen with my heart, my mind and my spirit.

Personal Reflection:

May the words of this Psalm bring you comfort and conviction. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom." I wonder if perhaps the 'fear of God' that is 'the beginning of wisdom' is in part the willingness to move through our fears and discover God reflected in others- especially those most marginalized, particularly since we are the only "Jesus" many people will ever experience. May we trust that God is with us, God will keep promises and uphold the covenant; our part is to love others so they will know of God's love.

Prayers of the People:

Compassionate God, I humbly come before you trusting in your deep love for all your children, and your deep love for me. I thank you for your gifts in my life (pause to reflect on your blessings). I am faced with challenges and struggles, and so I ask for your courage and strength (pause and reflect on your concerns). I know that you hear me when I call, and I ask that you remind me that you are with me in

the challenges and joys of living. Inspire me with your love and empower me with your hope. I pray using the words Jesus gave to his disciples;
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your Name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Blessing & Commissioning

Go forth today bathed in the warmth of the love of God and aware of the relationship God wants to have with you. In the days ahead, may you know that you are blessed with worship, joy, and connection. Find time teacher day to rest in the love of God, for you are God's beloved child. Amen.

Hymn: Take My Life and Let It Be (VU506)

Take my life, and let it be consecrated, all for Thee;
Take my moments and my days,
let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of Thy love;
Take my feet and let them be swift and purposeful for Thee.

Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from Thee;
Take my intellect and use every power as thou shalt choose

Take my will and make it Thine, it shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart, it is Thine own, it shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love, and I will pour at Your feet, it's treasure store;
Take myself and I will be ever, only, all for Thee.

Prayers by:

OP: Wendy MacLean, Gathering A/C/E 2014-15 (Year B), pg.42.

PC: Beth W Johnston, Gathering A/C/E 2020-21 (Year B), pg.48.

AF: Frances Flook, Gathering A/C/E 2020-21 (Year B), pg.49.

PI: Jim McKeanl, *Gathering Pent2 2020 (Year A)*, 41.

BC: Gill Le Fevre, Gathering A/C/E 2020-21 (Year B), pg.51.

An Epiphany Prayer

by the Right Rev. Richard Bott

Make me a magi, God.

Make me someone who looks up and wonders;
someone ready to leave my comfort
and journey, not knowing exactly
the destination.

Make me a seeker of possibility,
a searcher for truth,
one who asks questions when I lose
my way.

Make me someone who listens to dreams,
who accepts not only my own mind,
but is open to the messengers of yours.

Make me someone who kneels
in sacred places, (even when my legs are tired),
who celebrates when they meet the Holy Child,
who gives gifts without counting the cost.

Make me someone who travels a new way,
willing to accept new hardship,
to protect others from the powers-of-the-day.

Oh, make me a magi, God,
that I might glimpse your, "Aha!"
and, with that Epiphany, alive in my heart,
travel on.

Amen.

Greetings wonderful child of God,

Blessings to you as we begin a new year in a different way. I pray that you are well in mind, body, and spirit, despite the challenges of the pandemic. Images of your faces danced through my head as I prepared the personal meditations for this month. I miss you in body, but through prayer I am with you in spirit.

I have never been afraid of the dark, and as a child I loved to play in the dark, especially in my church sanctuary. Sometimes I would play hide and seek with the other kids, other times I would just sit in the darkness. There were windows in the doors from the hall to the sanctuary, and they always cast a small amount of yellow light. I remember staring at that yellow light, and it seemed like the light was getting bigger and bigger, wider and wider; but it was simply my human eyes adjusting. As we adjust to the light, we see more and more. Light is a magical thing, once it shines it begins to overtake the darkness.

You are children of the light, may you find comfort and connection in the lights all around you; sunlight, starlight, flashlight and ceiling light. May the light of Christ surround you, bringing you courage for whatever challenges you face.

I pray that you will find moments of wonder even as we continue to struggle. You are loved beloved child of God; may you light up the world with the peace of Christ.

Blessings,

Rev. Linda & Rev. Samuel