

The United Church of Canada
Lennoxville United Church

St Francis Manoir & Grace Village & Manoir Stanstead
A service of Advent meditation for at home
December 2021: Week 4 Love

Grounding Prayer

(Take a deep breath, center yourself within the love of God)
God, You are present, may I/we be transformed by this encounter.

Opening Prayer:

This Advent season is the reminder of your coming amongst us, O God. To us, you are a mystery, and yet you also come to us often in the midst of ordinary life.

In our despair: you are the God of Hope.

In our turmoil: you are the God of Peace.

In our sadness: you are the God of Joy.

In our heartache: you are the God of Love.

And so, we enter into this time of worship with confidence and hope, knowing that you are always ready to meet us and bless us with love. Amen.

Advent Wreath Lighting Liturgy

(as the first candle is lit) On the first Sunday of Advent we lit a candle for Hope.

(as the second candle is lit) Our second candle was lit for Peace.

(as the third candle is lit) Our third candle was lit for Joy.

This week we light our candle for the last Sunday of Advent, the candle for Love. *(the fourth candle is lit)*

This is the Love we search for:

the Love that gives without counting the cost, the Love that weaves compassion and justice together, the Love that endures when the going is rough, the Love that was revealed in the life and sacrifice of Jesus, the Love that lights up the family circle, the Love that searches out and defines our faith community, Love that hugs a family close, Love that shows itself in caring and encouragement at work and school, Love that breaks out in laughter, and is felt in the silence of friendship, Love within us, Love around us, Love that builds us up, a Love that shines out as we act for the powerless and the innocent, and work for a world renewed in the spirit of Christ. Amen.

Hymn: A Candle is Burning (VU6) (tune Away in a Manger)

A candle is burning, a candle of love,
A candle to point us to heaven above.
A baby for Christmas, a wonderful birth,
For Jesus is bringing God's love to our earth.

Prayer of Illumination:

Open our hearts, O God. Open our eyes. Open our lives. As we hear the scripture today and as we see the message acted out, open us to the message of Christmas. Help us to live that message all year.
Amen.

A Reading from the Gospel of Matthew 1:18-23

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her

husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

“Look, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.”

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

A Short Reflection:

Think about a moment that you felt loved...

(who made you feel loved? what was loving about the moment?)

What does unconditional love mean to you?

What does uncontrolling love mean to you?

How can you show others that they are loved?

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

Thanks be to God, for the Word-Made-Flesh. Go now, celebrating the Light of the World in this season of Advent. Expand the Light. Announce the hope. Spread the peace. Join the joy. Offer the love! May the word of God continue to be alive through you and me. Amen.

Prayers by:

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