



**December 4, 2022**

Melville United Church

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**Melville United Church**  
**December 4, 2022**  
**Second Sunday of Advent – White Gift Sunday**

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Presiding today - Rev. Lynda Goy-Flint

### **Welcome**

I greet you in the name of the one whose coming we celebrate and anticipate, Jesus the Christ.

We gather in community today – December 4, 2022 virtually and in person. We will continue to offer both in-person and on-line services with printed copies being distributed to those without internet access who are unable to attend in person. We encourage people to come out to worship in the sanctuary. There is ample room to socially distance, and you are welcome to wear masks or not as is comfortable for you.

We gather in the season of Advent, looking inward, pondering, and taking action to bring hope, peace, joy and love to the world as we await the arrival of the babe in the manger and the Second Coming of Christ. The colour for the season is blue, symbolizing hope.

### **Announcements**

- **“MID-DAY MUSIC AT MELVILLE” presented and performed by pianist BRAD HALLS**  
Come and enjoy a musical respite when “Mid-Day Music at Melville” returns on Wednesday, December 7th from 12 noon to 1:00 p.m. at Melville United Church in Fergus, when pianist Brad Halls will present a selection of songs written by the great popular composer Harold Arlen. Enjoy selections such as “That Old Black Magic”, “My Shining Hour”, “Accentuate the Positive”, “Over the Rainbow” and many more.
- **White Gift Sunday – Today** – The Social Justice and Outreach Committee kindly asks that if you are making a white gift offering of money that you mark your envelope with “White Gift.” Thank you!
- You are invited to our **Christmas Cantata “Bethlehem Joy” next Sunday, December 11th at 11am.** Hear music by our Melville United Choir, Melville Men’s Chorus, Spirit Sings and our guest soloist, Sarah McQuillan-Schmidt.
- **Mitten Tree** – We will once again be placing a Mitten Tree in the sanctuary and ask you to decorate it with mitts, hats, scarves and socks to keep folks in need warm during the winter.
- **Christmas Bake Sale Plus, at Melville - Sat. Dec. 17th 10 - 2pm** Cookies, fudge, squares, tarts, Christmas Pudding & Sauce, Gift Boxes, Christmas Decorations, and Our Famous Melville Meat Pies! If you are not a baker, please consider donating ingredients i.e.: flour, white/brown sugar, butter, raisins, pecans, walnuts, chocolate chips, mincemeat, cherries, etc. Items should be left in the upstairs kitchen with a note on them. We “Thank you!”
- **Memory Angels:** Our Memory Angels will be displayed in the Sanctuary on Sunday Nov 27 thru Advent and ending January 8/23. Those who have had Angels in the past, can renew your Angel with a minimum donation of \$5, by contacting Lorna Bevcar. Those who are new to this, can have a handmade paper Angel, with an inscription on the skirt, dedicating this Angel in memory of your loved one, from you, for a minimum donation of \$5. The Angels stay at Melville safely packed away, throughout the year. These Angels bring comfort and meaning to the Melville families throughout Advent, knowing we are remembering our loved ones.

- As more and more people find their dollar shrinking, and having to decide between rent and three meals a day, the demand for food bank assistance rises. We ask you to prayerfully consider if you are able to **support the Food Bank**, either with a donation of food, or financially.

Items most needed as of Dec 1/22:

Pasta Sauce	Rice Side Dishes	Pasta Side Dishes	Canned Vegetables
Small Canned Soup	Canned Kidney Beans	Canned Six Bean Blend	Peanut Butter
Chunky Soup (Habitant)	Juice	Juice Boxes	Toilet Paper
Cookies	Canned Salmon		

The Food Bank is well stocked with:

Pasta	Tomato Soup	Canned Chickpeas or Lentils
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- **Save your Used Stamps from Incoming Mail:** The holiday season is coming and you'll be receiving cards, etc. Cut off your used stamps, leaving a 1/2" border around them and give them to Marlene Tosh **or** put them in the Stamp Box on the shelf in the Cloak Room, where the Lift is on the main floor of the church. Marlene tidies them up and takes them to the Bible Society, to buy bibles. You can do this year-round!
- **Gifts with Vision: A Giving Catalogue from The United Church of Canada**
  - Give meaningful gifts that make a difference with [Gifts with Vision \(opens in a new tab\)](#)! Each year's gift catalogue gives a glimpse of the breadth of our Mission & Service ministries and programs.
  - *Gifts with Vision* has gift ideas to suit every interest, budget, and person. It's a great way to celebrate special occasions and honour loved ones!
  - The gift catalogue is updated online regularly, and is fully refreshed every fall. It is also distributed in print with *Broadview* magazine, and mailed to each pastoral charge.
  - **To order gifts, be inspired, or learn more, visit [GiftsWithVision.ca \(opens in a new tab\)](https://GiftsWithVision.ca) today!**

I invite you to join us now for a time of worship and contemplation.

**Land Acknowledgement** *Peter Chynoweth, Gathering: Pentecost 1 2022, p.33. Used with permission.*

We acknowledge that this land on which we gather for worship is the traditional land of the people of Petun,

Haudenosaunee,

Anishinabewaki,

Mississaugas of the Credit,

Odawa and

Mississauga nations. We acknowledge that we live on this land as people who have agreed to share the care and use of this land as a result of treaties—the Simcoe Patent-Treaty 4, 1793 and the Haldimand Treaty, 1784—that outline the rights and responsibilities associated with our place in this land. May we be people who remember this with thanksgiving and respect.

**Lighting the Advent Candles** *by Wanda Winfield Gathering: Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2022-2023 p.69. Used with permission.*

***The Advent of Peace***

*One purple candle is lit.*

Today is the Advent of peace.

As we light this candle,

we remember all who live in the midst of conflict,

in their homes, in their communities,  
in their countries, anywhere in the world.

**We live in a fractured world  
of racial tensions and economic disparity.**

We light this candle as our commitment  
to embracing diversity.

**We are the peacemakers in this world.**

We light this candle to herald the coming of Jesus,  
the Prince of Peace.

*The second purple candle is lit.*

**All sing: Hope Is a Star VU 7 verse 2**

**OneLicense #A-740237**

Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth,  
giving a promise of safety and worth.  
When God is a child there's joy in our song.  
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,  
and none shall be afraid.

**Call to Worship:** *Wanda Winfield, Gathering: Advent/Christmas/Epiphany, 2022-2023, p.28. Used with permission.*

We await the one who shall come from the shoot of Jesse.

**The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him.**

We await the one who comes in the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

**With righteousness he shall judge those impoverished  
and decide equitably for those who are oppressed.**

We await the one who comes in peace and hope.

**Come, Lord Jesus, come.**

**Opening Prayer (in unison):** *Sandy Ferguson, Gathering: Advent/Christmas/Epiphany, 2022-2023, p.29. Used with permission.*

**God of Peace, we gather here to continue the journey of Advent,  
a journey that takes us to the manger and beyond.**

**We journey in a world where too often the shadows are getting closer.**

**Around us, we continue to hear the clamour of war and the rattling of sabres,  
and too often, peace seems to be a distant dream.**

**O God, we pray for your peace,  
not just the peace that is the absence of war,  
but the peace that will lead to your kingdom.**

**We long for the peace revealed through your son,  
who witnesses to your kingdom coming not through the sword,  
but through healing those who are sick,  
feeding those who are hungry,  
and reaching out to those who feel lost and alone.**

**May this vision of peace fill us today,  
so together we will be agents of God's peace in the world. Amen.**

**Hymn: Herald! Sound the Note of Gladness**    **VU28**    **OneLicense #A-740237**

- 1 Herald! Sound the note of gladness!  
Tell the news that Christ is here;  
make a pathway through the desert  
for the one who brings God near.  
    Sound the trumpet!  
    Tell the message!  
    Christ the Saving One has come!
  
- 2 Herald! Sound the note of judgement,  
warning us of right and wrong,  
turning us from sin and sadness,  
till once more we sing the song.  
    Sound the trumpet!  
    Tell the message!  
    Christ the Saving One has come!
  
- 3 Herald! Sound the note of pardon!  
Those repenting are forgiven;  
God receives these wayward children,  
and to all new life is given.  
    Sound the trumpet!  
    Tell the message!  
    Christ the Saving One has come!
  
- 4 Herald! Sound the note of triumph!  
Christ has come to share our life,  
bringing God's own love and power,  
granting victory in our strife.  
    Sound the trumpet!  
    Tell the message!  
    Christ the Saving One has come!

**Call to Reconciliation** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word®** Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year A, Volume 1. Copyright 2013.*

Let us lay before God and one another  
the distances between us,  
the impatience, idolatries, and lack of compassion  
that form our confessions this day.  
For if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.  
Yet in mercy, God will forgive us and renew us.

**Prayer Seeking Forgiveness and Reconciliation (in unison)** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year A, Volume 1. Copyright 2013, alt.*

**Gracious and welcoming God,  
have mercy on your people.**

**We confess that we do not believe in your incarnation.**

**We do not heed your word each day in all that we say and do.**

**We do not see our neighbors, families, and friends  
as beloved children whom you have made.**

**In your mercy, forgive us,  
for we repent of our ways**

**and look to your power**

**to heal us and raise us up,**

**so that, at the last, you will gather us to you**

**and give us peace. Amen.**

**Words of Assurance** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year A Volume 1. Copyright 2013, alt.*

The reign of God has come near;  
the repentant will be judged with righteousness.

You are forgiven.

Be filled with hope,

believing in the power of the risen Christ

to bring you to new life.

Rejoice and believe.

**Ministry of Music:** “Dance, O Israel” *words and music by Carl J. Nygard, Jr. sung by the Melville United Choir accompanied by Colleen Weber*

**Children’s Ministry: A Visit from St. Nicholas** *Heather McClure, Gathering: Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2022-2023, p. 72-73, alt. Used with permission.*

*Today we have a special guest with us. I would like to introduce St. Nicholas. Good morning, St. Nicholas, it is good to have you visit with us. I think a lot of people might be wondering about you, because most know you as Santa Claus. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?*

Sure, it is nice to be here. I am always happy to tell people about myself. I actually lived a very long time ago. I guess it is a little bit of magic that I can be here to talk to you today! When I was still just a little boy, my mother and father died. This made me feel very sad. But it also gave me a love for children, and even when I grew up to be an adult, I never lost my love and care for children. When my parents died, they left me lots of money. I had much more than I needed for myself, so I shared it with the people who were living in poverty. I did this because I am a religious fellow, and I follow the call of Jesus to help others.

*Wow, I did not know that St. Nicholas had such a challenging childhood, and that you were so religious.*

Yes, I became the bishop of Myra in Turkey. That's why I wear this kind of an outfit. As an adult, my work with the poor continued. Most people don't know that about me. They think that I give gifts to children, and I do, but there is a story about how it all got started.

*So, how did it start?*

Once I heard about a man who had three daughters, but he had no money for their dowry. In that time and place, young women needed a dowry (or a big gift of money) to give to their fiancé's family. One night, as I was walking around town, I heard his oldest daughter crying. She wanted to get married and couldn't because there was no money for a dowry.

*So what did you do?*

That night, when everyone was asleep, I tiptoed by the family's house and threw a bag of gold over the wall. I was giving them a gift of a dowry, in Jesus' name.

*Then what happened?*

In the morning, the oldest daughter woke up and was so surprised! A bag of gold coins was lying in the courtyard! It meant the daughter could get married, and she did. It made me feel really happy to help her out in that way.

*But didn't you say that there were three daughters? What about the other two?*

When the second daughter and then the third daughter grew up and were ready to marry, I did the same thing. When everyone was asleep, I tiptoed by their house again and threw another bag of gold over the wall, more gifts in Jesus' name.

*What happened then?*

Well, the same as with the first, the other two were able to marry. It was such a wonderful feeling to preside at their weddings, knowing that I helped make it happen.

*Do you think anyone knew it was you?*

I am not sure. Each time I gave the money to that family, the father did not come to me to thank me, so I don't think he knew.

*Weren't you disappointed that they didn't thank you?*

Oh no. I gave that money as a gift from God. I think the man understood that. I overheard neighbours talking about how he got down on his knees each time to say thanks to God. But some people must have figured out it was me because the story of my giving has lived for so long.

*So, how did you get from being a bishop who gave money to those living in poverty to being someone who gives present to children at Christmas?*

Well, I am not really sure. It just sort of happened. In some countries, I come on December 6, especially in Europe. There, children set out their shoes or boots and are surprised by small gifts the next morning. In the Netherlands, they put a carrot in their shoe as a treat for my horse. And

sometimes I even visit the children in their homes. In your country and many others, you hang up stockings on December 24 and are surprised by gifts the next morning.

*Oh, now I understand: you divide up your trips on different days so you can get to every house? I have always wondered how you managed it.*

Well, I don't talk about how I do it. That part is a secret between me and God. All I will say is that with God's help, I can do just about anything.

*Well, however you do it, it makes a lot of children very happy.*

As the patron saint of children, I want all children to be happy, especially the children who are sad or having a difficult time. Not everyone calls me St. Nicholas. Some call me Santa Claus and others use names from their own culture or country. I love that. The hard part for me is that so many children are so mixed up about who I am. It seems that some children (and adults, too) have become greedy about what they want for Christmas, and that makes me sad. All I want to do is leave a little surprise for each child. I just wish that more children, and adults, too, would be more generous and share what they have with others who need some help. I just wish more would give in Jesus' name, like I did.

*Well, don't feel too sad, St. Nicholas. Some people still do share with others. Here at Melville, we are sharing gifts today with the food bank and the Hub. We are giving them a gift to help with their work with people who need support at this time of year. In fact, I know we gave over \$1,500 already, and today there is more.*

That is wonderful! It is so good to know that my work in Jesus' name is being carried on. Thank you, everyone. I am sorry, I have to go. It is a busy time right now. Happy St. Nicholas' Day everyone!

*Goodbye, St. Nicholas! Thank you for coming today.*

**Hymn: Thank You for the Great St. Nicholas**

Thank you for the great St Nich-o-las,

Friend of children good St Nich-o-las,

For the things he used to do,

Loving people because he loved you.

And today we think of all he used to do,

Loving Jesus and the people too.

If a person had some wrong to bear,

Good St Nich-o-las would get to hear,

Come along and do his best,

Righting wrongs and putting fears to rest.

And today we think of all he used to do,

Loving Jesus and the people too.

Sometimes people were badly abused,

Paid too little and unfairly used,

Nich-o-las came to their aid,

Doing miracles, or so it's said.



And today we think of all he used to do,  
Loving Jesus and the people too.  
When three girls could not afford to wed,  
Guess who came as they all slept in bed,  
Dropped gifts down the chimney flue?  
Yes, you're right of course, I knew you knew!  
And today we think of all he used to do,  
Loving Jesus and the people too.  
Let's be like St Nich-o-las today,  
Helping those we meet along the way,  
Doing what we can to help,  
Making this a happy time to keep.  
So now let's do what Nich-o-las used to do,  
We'll love Jesus and our neighbour too.

**Minute for Mission: Nutrition Program in Somalia Helps Save Lives** *Mission Story: Shawna*



Suheyb and his mother Hodan receiving nutritional supplements.  
*Credit: Trócaire*

Hodan has three children. Her husband works as a charcoal burner and is the family breadwinner. He works hard but the \$3–\$5 he makes each day just isn't enough. Eight months ago the family had a farm. But all their livestock died during a devastating drought, and they had no choice but to leave their home to try to find help.

In Somalia, one in seven children die before the age of five. Therapeutic feeding centres dot the country, but they are overwhelmed. The country is going through its worst drought in 40 years, and more than half a million farmers and herders have lost their crops and animals. Humanitarian agencies say they have less than 3 percent of the money they need to help.\*

That's why for the last three years, in partnership with Development and Peace—Caritas Canada and Canadian Foodgrains Bank, your generosity through Mission & Service has been supporting a nutrition program in the Gedo region of Somalia. There, families receive nutrition education, supplements, and treatment for malnutrition in healthcare facilities.

Hodan's son Suheyb was badly malnourished when she brought him to the health facility for care. She had already tried everything she could on her own and he wasn't getting better. For just over a month, Suheyb received treatment. In the end, he got better.

"I never imagined that my child would recover," says Hodan. "I am very happy to see my child's health improve. I will continue to give him his therapeutic food regularly."

Even though there's enough food to feed everyone on the planet, conflict, climate change, disasters, and unjust systems that strip people of their resources mean that each of us has to be strongly committed to achieve the goal of a world without hunger. Please continue to [provide immediate support](#) and advocate for long-term solutions. Together, we *can* build a better world. Thank you.

### **Offering Invitation**

Because God first loved us,  
we are made to love one another.  
For the sake of the life of the world, let us offer ourselves,  
our time, and our possessions as signs of love.

### **Collection of White Gifts**

**Offering Hymn: In the Bleak Midwinter**  
**What can I give him, poor as I am?**  
**If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;**  
**if I were a wise one, I would do my part;**  
**yet what I can I give him - give my heart.**

VU55 v.4

**Offering Prayer (in unison)** *Spill the Beans Resources Team, spill the beans: worship and learning resources for all ages, Issue 33, p. 27. Copyright 2019.*

**Creator God,**  
**source of life and love,**  
**hope and peace,**  
**you have given us life;**  
**we give our lives to you.**  
**You have surrounded us with love,**  
**drawing us to love you in return.**  
**When all seems dark and hopeless,**  
**you give us a beautiful vision**  
**of our world and all its creatures**  
**living in perfect harmony.**  
**As we bring these token gifts of money,**

**we commit ourselves to living, loving,  
hoping and working for peace,  
in Jesus' name.  
Amen.**

**Hymn: Dream a Dream      MV158      OneLicense #A-740237**

1. Dream a dream, a hopeful dream,  
as children do on Christmas Eve,  
imaginings, surprising things  
to hold and to believe. (to believe.)
2. Dream a time, this Christmas time,  
when no one's hungry or afraid;  
that weapons go and harvests grow,  
that friends are met and made. (met and made.)
3. Dream a peace, our planet's peace,  
the greening of the earth at play,  
the holy ground where life is found,  
where God has touched the clay. (touched the clay.)
4. Dream a gift, the Christmas gift  
that changes every thing we see:  
the shimmering of angel wing,  
the Child, the Mystery. (Mystery.)

**Prayer of Illumination** *Laura J. Turnbull, **Gathering: Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2022-2023**, p.31, alt.. Used with permission.*

God of Justice, may the reading of scripture and the reflection that is to come  
be filled with your good news.

Free our senses that we might receive the cry  
of the prophets of old and prophets of today.

Open our spirits to notice the needs of your beloved ones,  
expressed all around us.

Soften our hearts that we might be sensitive to the call for peace.

Come to us, O Glorious Christ, as we receive the words of scripture. Amen.

**Scripture: Isaiah 11:1-10** *(The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Translation)*

*The peaceable reign of God*

Then a shoot will sprout from the stump of Jesse;  
from Jesse's roots, a branch will blossom.

The Spirit of YHWH will rest on you—  
a spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
a spirit of counsel and strength,  
a spirit of knowledge and reverence for YHWH.

You will delight in obeying YHWH,  
and you won't judge by appearances,  
or make decisions by hearsay.  
You will treat poor people with fairness  
and will uphold the rights of the land's downtrodden.  
With a single word you will strike down tyrants;  
with your decrees you will execute evil people.  
Justice will be the belt around this your waist—  
faithfulness will gird you up.  
Then the wolf will dwell with the lamb,  
and the leopard will lie down with the young goat;  
the calf and the lion cub will graze together,  
and a little child will lead them.  
The cow will feed with the bear;  
their young will lie down together.  
The lion will eat hay like the ox.  
The baby will play next to the den of the cobra,  
and the toddler will dance over the viper's nest.  
There will be no harm, no destruction  
anywhere in my holy mountain;  
for as water fills the sea,  
so the land will be filled with Knowledge of YHWH.

On that Day, the root of Jesse will serve as a symbol to the peoples of the world—nations will flock to you, and your home will be a place of honour. On that Day, YHWH will once more raise a hand to recover the remnant of what is left of the people, and gather them back from Assyria, Egypt Pathros, Ethiopia, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and the islands of the sea.

**Prayer** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year A, Volume 1.** Copyright 2013.*

O Root of Jesse, O Peace, stir up your power within us,  
that in this time we may await with abundant expectation  
the fulfillment of your eternal presence in creation,  
for you live and reign among us,  
Maker, Savior, and Giver of Life,  
one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

*Isa. 11:10*

May the words I speak and the reflection that we all share  
find a response that is worthy of you,  
most Just, most Loving, and most Compassionate God. Amen.

**David Sparks, Summerland, B.C.**

## Reflection: Peace as Justice



Hicks, Edward, 1780-1849. Peaceable Kingdom, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=53085> [retrieved December 1, 2022]. Original source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Edward\\_Hicks\\_-\\_Peaceable\\_Kingdom.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Edward_Hicks_-_Peaceable_Kingdom.jpg).

Our Old Testament reading from today talks about the depths of peace as justice. In the preceding chapter, Isaiah has spoken God's word of judgment against the wealthy and powerful people of Judah and Israel who have created economic and political systems that exploit and disregard the poor and needy. They have become predatory in their greed and hunger for more and more. God-through-Isaiah uses language like widows being the spoil of the rich and powerful, who will plunder orphans. The language describes an almost war-like atmosphere among the people of God, whom Isaiah calls "godless", warring against their own fellows. God will allow the Assyrians to destroy this kingdom.

We might think well there, that is their just desserts, the elite of Judah and Israel will be reduced to refugees and beggars in the cataclysm of an Assyrian invasion. They will be carted off to foreign lands and will lose all their status and power. There is a certain satisfaction to imagining and anticipating retribution on that scale. The poor and needy won't be spared, but one doesn't have nearly so far to fall when one is so close to the bottom anyway.

But, we might wonder, where is the peace, where is the hope in just destroying the lives of the

wealthy and powerful by invasion? While they have surely been brought down, those at the bottom will see no relief, no benefit.

But God promises to do more than just destroy those who for their own ends have caused the downfall of Israel and much of Judah

The peace that God is planning is a peace that goes so deep as to alter even the very nature of the animals that God-through-Isaiah puts together. Predators will give up their hunting ways, and that which has been prey will trust their predators enough to dwell with them, rest with them, graze with them. Children and their parents will have nothing to fear from venomous and lethal snakes, so much so that children will play with and near them.

This very bottom-up response is justice. It is the nature of the peace that God intends. It prioritizes those who have been most ignored and exploited and restores peace among all.

We are invited to have a hand in bringing about this justice: to really see the downtrodden, and working with God, name their plight, calling out those who exploit, and making inroads of parity into the systems of injustice we find. It is a calling for all of us in Advent and throughout the year. May we shine a light of searching, a light of justice. May we live as Advent candles of peace.

### **Joys and Concerns**

- Happy Birthday
  - Marg Frayne celebrates on Tues. Dec. 6th
  - Jean Alexander celebrates 90 years on Fri. Dec. 9<sup>th</sup>
- Happy Anniversary
  - Vivian & Harvey Andrews celebrates 71 years on Tues. Dec. 6th
  - Ruth & Gary Sproule celebrates 45 years on Fri. Dec. 9th

### **Preparation for Prayer**

Let us practice the art of Praying with our Eyes Wide Open, that in seeing the world and those within it we are called to tend we may be *opening the eyes of our hearts to all in need around us* (Lamont Koerner '81 MDiv God Pause for Thursday, September 16, 2021 from Luther Seminary):

**Prayers of the People** *Spill the Beans Resources Team, spill the beans: worship and learning resources for all ages, Issue 33, p. 27. Copyright 2019, alt.*

God of righteousness and justice,  
we give thanks for the high standards  
that the Bible expects of people in power,  
even if, as people of the Word,  
we have failed more often  
than we have succeeded  
in living up to them.

Amidst all the opportunities there are  
for politicians to indulge their appetite for power;  
for business people to grow rich  
at the expense of the poor;

for religious leaders to exploit the trust  
that is placed in them;  
we give thanks for people of integrity  
in all these walks of life.

And for Jesus,  
who fulfilled the hopes of his people,  
and the long-ago vision of the prophet  
in so many ways.  
He was confident, but never arrogant;  
wise, but not superior;  
strong, but not a bully;  
good, but never self-righteous or judgemental.

Living God, we pray for the people  
who were always his chief concern:  
the little ones who need to be protected,  
and whose trust must never be abused.  
We pray for adults living with the scars  
of childhood neglect or abuse;  
for children forced to grow up too soon,  
and those who may not get the chance  
to grow up at all.

We pray for all whose lives and whose hopes  
have been cut short by war;  
for homes and churches riven by conflict.  
We pray for victims of injustice;  
those accused of crimes they have not committed,  
while others escape unpunished  
because they have money and influence.

As we await the coming of the just judge,  
the compassionate king,  
the prince of peace,  
may we not rest until this world is as close  
as it possibly can be  
to the peaceable kingdom  
of which the prophet dreamed,  
and that Jesus was born, lived and died  
to establish here on earth.  
Amen.

**Lord's Prayer**

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kin-dom come, thy 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 kin-dom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

**Hymn: It Came Upon the Midnight Clear**      **VU44**

- 1      It came upon the midnight clear,  
          that glorious song of old,  
          from angels bending near the earth  
          to touch their harps of gold,  
          'Peace on the earth, good will to all,  
          from heaven's all-gracious King!'  
The world in solemn stillness lay  
          to hear the angels sing.
- 2      Still through the cloven skies they come  
          with peaceful wings unfurled;  
          and still their heavenly music floats  
          o'er all the weary world;  
          above its sad and lowly plains  
          they bend on hovering wing,  
          and ever o'er its Babel sounds  
          the blessed angels sing.
- 3      Yet with the woes of sin and strife  
          the world has suffered long;  
          beneath the angel strain have rolled  
          two thousand years of wrong;  
          and warring humankind hears not  
          the love song which they bring.  
O hush the noise, and cease your strife,  
          to hear the angels sing.
- 4      For, lo! the days are hastening on,  
          by prophets seen of old,  
          when with the ever-circling years  
          shall come the time foretold,  
          when peace shall over all the earth  
          its ancient splendours fling,  
          and the whole world send back the song  
          which now the angels sing.

**Commissioning** *Robin Wardlaw, Gathering: Advent/Christmas/Epiphany, 2022-2023, p.32. Used with permission.*

Go into the world.  
It is Christ who sends you  
With a message of peace to each house.  
Eat with others,  
Pray for their healing,  
Be the message of peace, in Christ's name. Amen.



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May the God of hope  
fill you with all joy and peace in believing,  
so that you may abound in hope by the power of  
the Holy Spirit.

**Household Prayer: Morning** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word**<sup>®</sup> **Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year C, Volume 2.** Copyright 2013.*

As I rise, O God, I give you thanks for safety in the night,  
for rest from my labors, for another day in this creation.  
Turn my eyes toward what is noble.  
Teach me to see hope where it is veiled.  
Give me the wisdom to desire the good.  
Help me to love not only those I encounter  
but myself as well,  
for with you, I know my many frailties and failings.  
Let peace reign. Amen.

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As I end this day, Holy One,  
I give you thanks for the richness of my hours:  
for family and friends,  
for people with whom I work and play,  
for my neighbors,  
for those who fill this world with music and art,  
for those whose needs remind me of my blessings  
and whose skills make me grateful for differences.  
Guard us all, O God, and keep us in your embrace  
until the daylight comes. Amen.