

## Christmas Prayers, Scripture, and Reflections 2023

Covenant Presbyterian Church—Madison, WI

There is no greater gift than the gift of love. When we are together, we share in God's love. We celebrate Jesus; we celebrate life. Thank you, God, for the most important things: the company of family, the gift of nourishing food, and time to enjoy family and food together. Amen. (adapted from *Faithful Families for Advent and Christmas*)

At Christmas time we give: time, presents, compliments. When we give, we understand the gifts you give to us, God: you give us gifts of family and friends and moments to remember. You remind us, God, that it is better to give than to receive. As we receive this meal today, may we remember to share God's love with all those around us. Amen. (adapted from *Prayers for Faithful Families*)

*“The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light.”* (John 1:5)

God of surprises and gifts, you revealed yourself as a newborn baby and, with a star, you led the peoples of earth to worship Jesus, your only Son: lead us to see you face-to-face, and help us to discover our gifts and talents so that we may offer them up to you and your service. Let us be Jesus's light in the world today. Amen. (adapted from *Common Prayer for Children and Families*)

Holy God, we thank you for the birth of Jesus and the promise of peace sung by the angels. Help us to work for this peace in our world, our nation, our homes, and our schools. Let your peace take deep root in our hearts on Christmas and always. Amen.

Good and gracious God, on this holy night you gave us your Son,  
the Lord of the universe, wrapped in swaddling clothes,  
the Savior of all, lying in a manger.  
On this holy night draw us into the mystery of your love.  
Join our voices with the heavenly angels,  
that we may sing your glory on high.  
Give us a place among the shepherds,  
that we may find the one for whom we have waited,  
Jesus Christ, your Word made flesh, who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit in the splendor of eternal light,  
one God forever and ever. Amen.

The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. It educates us so that we can live sensible, ethical, and godly lives right now.... (Titus 2.11-12, CEB)

*A mealtime blessing, mindful of children:*

Thank you God, for all the fun and excitement of Christmas. Thank you for the amazing story, that tells us about the birth of Jesus. Thank you for sending us your Son, a gift from you into this world to show us the way. As we look at the lights on the tree, remind us of the light Jesus brought to this Earth. When we sing songs and carols, remind us of the hope Jesus showed everyone. And as we open the gifts, remind us that Jesus was the best gift ever. We thank you for the gift of this food. We ask your blessing on us, that we grow strong and loving, to share your love wherever we can. Amen.

“For Christmas Day” by Kate Bowler & Jessica Richie from *The Lives We Actually Have*  
God, this is a kind of magic the way this day shines so strangely,  
how it sparkles beyond our understanding.

(Yes, it was a disaster the way the food turned out this year and how what’s-her-face said – I told her not to– what shouldn’t be repeated. Again, this year.)

But, somehow, this day never fails to awaken a longing  
to love well –or at least better– all those here with us, and those far away,  
and to remember with gratitude those now gone, gone, gone and missed.

What is this mystery?

Our God, who set the world spinning, should come down for this one reason:  
to love us into newness.

Not for gain, nor our capitalist fantasies, but for the hope so freely, lavishly given  
that we might learn to see, feel, and live Christ’s love.

Thank you, Christ the Giver and the Gift. Amen.

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.  
(“The Work of Christmas” by Howard Thurman)

And the Word became flesh and lived among us... full of grace and truth. (John 1.14, NRSV)