



The Twelve Days of Christmas *Devotions & Prayers for home*



Gospel Based Discipleship, carol-based devotions and special litany for the 12 days of Christmas from and for the clergy and people of the Diocese of Brandon.

*Meno Makosê kisikâw
+ Merry Christmas!*

*The complete playlist of carols can be heard on Spotify:
[https://open.spotify.com/playlist/55pTuDJSYil4C07rvAt1f2?
si=epdLFw04R4KtEKhV0cDhcA](https://open.spotify.com/playlist/55pTuDJSYil4C07rvAt1f2?si=epdLFw04R4KtEKhV0cDhcA)*

December 25 - Christmas Day

Opening Prayer: **Creator, we give you thanks for all you are and all you bring to us for our visit within your creation. In Jesus, you place the Gospel in the center of this sacred circle through which all creation is related. You show us the way to live a generous and compassionate life. Give us your strength to live together with respect and commitment as we grow in your spirit, for you are God, now and forever. Amen.**

Gospel of the Day - Luke 2:1-20

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the

heavenly host, praising God and saying,

‘Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favours!’

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.’ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Reflect and Respond to the Gospel of the Day:

1. What word(s), idea(s), or sentence(s) stand out for you in the Gospel of the Day?
2. What is Jesus (the Gospel) saying to you?
3. What is Jesus (the Gospel) calling you to do or be?

Litany and The Lord’s Prayer *(last three pages of this booklet)*



See Amid the Winter's Snow - Bishop William Cliff

I have loved this carol from childhood because of the way it tells the story of Jesus. It even asks the shepherds to tell the story of what it is they saw and heard. Each verse has a response which asks us all to

"Sing, through all Jerusalem, Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

The Carol describes both the vastness of God's plan - that the Word of God would become Incarnate - and the intimacy and love of the Holy family in the stable.

It is important for us to remember that no matter how majestic, how powerful, how omnipotent or mighty we may think of God, He still chose to come to us all as a vulnerable little child, that we might love him more and see in the vulnerable and weak the works and love of God.

*Lo, within a manger lies, He who built the starry skies.
He who, throned in height sublime Sits amid the Cherubim.*

No matter how small or insignificant we may feel, or how sinful we have been, or how distant we might think ourselves from the love of God, we are meant to remember: the Lord God almighty has set aside his glory that he might come to us as the holy child. That child means a new start for each of us. A new light of the world is shining.

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPgo-UfyJgc>

December 26 - The Feast of St. Stephen

Opening Prayer: **Creator, we give you thanks for all you are and all you bring to us for our visit within your creation. In Jesus, you place the Gospel in the center of this sacred circle through which all creation is related. You show us the way to live a generous and compassionate life. Give us your strength to live together with respect and commitment as we grow in your spirit, for you are God, now and forever. Amen.**

Gospel of the Day - John 1:1-5

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, and without him not one thing came into being. 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.

Reflect and Respond to the Gospel of the Day:

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Litany and The Lord's Prayer (*last three pages of this booklet*)



Good King Wenceslas – Ken Lathlin

When I first started getting back into going to church, I was asked to go and decorate the church one evening before Christmas. I called my sisters, and they came, bringing along some of my nieces and nephews. It was a real family affair! After we finished putting up all of the decorations, we wanted to sit there for a while and sing some carols. But at that time, I hadn't yet started playing the organ.

My sister really wanted to sing the carol "Good King Wenceslas", but no one knew how to play it; and, so we sang it anyway, without the organ. That's when I made up my mind to learn how to play the organ - for my sister and for all of the other people who love Cree Hymn singing.

This carol is meaningful because it tells a story – but not the usual story about Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus. It tells the story of how we can serve Jesus by serving others.

*Therefore Christians all be sure,
Wealth and rank possessing
Ye who now will bless the poor,
Shall yourselves find blessing.*

It's a carol of generosity and giving, and that's how we show our love at Christmastime - to our families and friends, to our neighbours and communities, and to others in the world.

YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQVUMG6LZGM>

* Ken has been recording Cree Hymns during the pandemic – check out the Henry Budd College You Tube channel to listen or sing along!

December 27

Opening Prayer: **Creator, we give you thanks for all you are and all you bring to us for our visit within your creation. In Jesus, you place the Gospel in the center of this sacred circle through which all creation is related. You show us the way to live a generous and compassionate life. Give us your strength to live together with respect and commitment as we grow in your spirit, for you are God, now and forever. Amen.**

Gospel of the Day - Luke 2:22-40

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord'), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.' Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.'

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

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Litany and The Lord's Prayer (*last three pages of this booklet*)



The Angel Gabriel – The Rev. Cheryl Kukurudz

This baroque style hymn from medieval ages brings me back to a state of motherly anticipation, particularly for that of a first child. Here we have Mary, a young girl of no particular import, going about her day when she is stopped short by Gabriel. Although his appearance would be shocking in itself, Gabriel's message would have been astounding. Mary is being asked to be the mother of the Son of God. The entire Christian world holds its breath while awaiting her response. I imagine a flood of thoughts running through Mary's mind: Why me? Can I do this? What will people think?

I reflect on the stillness of that moment – the heavy pause of anticipation. Her life will be changed forever if she says yes; if she receives this gift. She doesn't know the gravity of her acceptance, of being chosen. She doesn't yet know the purpose of her child's life. Mary receives the formidable gift and says yes. She surrendered and put her trust in God acting through her.

We are asked to do the same. We, too, are being asked to receive a gift. We, too, are chosen. We are to set aside our fears and put our trust in God acting through us. We must anticipate God's messengers – be awake and ready to act.

Because Mary said yes, we have Jesus. Because we have Jesus, we are Christian. Because we are Christian, we have the promise of eternal life. Let us dare to say like Mary, "To me be as it pleases God." It is all so simple and yet so awesome.

Although I unabashedly fell in love with the song through Police frontman, Sting, I've linked a stunning version sung by a quartet of women called "All Angels". Enjoy.

YouTube: <https://youtu.be/yHuokdjT4UY>

December 28

Opening Prayer: **Creator, we give you thanks for all you are and all you bring to us for our visit within your creation. In Jesus, you place the Gospel in the center of this sacred circle through which all creation is related. You show us the way to live a generous and compassionate life. Give us your strength to live together with respect and commitment as we grow in your spirit, for you are God, now and forever. Amen.**

Gospel of the Day - Matthew 2:13-18

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.' When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: 'A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.'

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Litany and The Lord's Prayer (*last three pages of this booklet*)

Away in a Manger - Jennifer Pakula

'Away in a Manger' has always been there in my memory. I have never not known this beautiful carol. Can you remember a time you didn't know the words? In the church most of us learn them before we learn to read. Where did this carol come from though? No one seems to know for sure who wrote it, but it was first sung in the 1880's in the Lutheran Church and got its third verse in the 1890's.

'Away in a Manger' is also the first carol I learned a second tune for. This link from the Latter Day Saints Children's Songbook is for a tune you may not have heard before but it is my favourite and has a two part chorus that harmonizes perfectly.

Putting the music aside the words to this song speak to me as well. God will provide for us just as Jesus was provided for. When we have nothing and there is no room at the inn, God will provide a manger (to lay down our heads), light to see by (stars in the sky), the companionship of animals (lowing cattle), and most importantly a friend...Jesus himself.

You Tube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmpQ3hVUhW4>



December 29

Opening Prayer: **Creator, we give you thanks for all you are and all you bring to us for our visit within your creation. In Jesus, you place the Gospel in the center of this sacred circle through which all creation is related. You show us the way to live a generous and compassionate life. Give us your strength to live together with respect and commitment as we grow in your spirit, for you are God, now and forever. Amen.**

Gospel of the Day - Matthew 1:18-25

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 fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.' When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

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Litany and The Lord's Prayer (*last three pages of this booklet*)

Silent Night – The Very Rev. Don Bernhardt

“He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” Isaiah 2:4

Isaiah speaks of a vision. A world where war no longer exists, not because of human wisdom, but through God’s grace, and for a little while, in a specific time and place, God’s grace broke through and Isaiah’s vision was realized. The time was Christmas Eve, 1914. The place was several parts of the front lines. Suddenly, from the German lines, a voice was heard, *Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht, Alles schläft; einsam wacht....*

Those who could not speak German still knew the words. *Silent Night, Holy Night, all is calm all is bright.* Other voices joined in and through those familiar words, God’s peace reigned. They left their trenches and their weapons and joined together as brothers, celebrating the birth of the Prince of Peace. For a while, hatred was forgotten, replaced by joy and love.

That is the power of this hymn. It brought, for a time, a sense of who each of us is called to be. An agent of peace, a giver and receiver of love. Yes, it only lasted for a little while that night, but Isaiah’s vision remains. May we, like the hymn, show God’s love in a world that so desperately needs it.

Silent Night in Cree - https://youtu.be/3z_3LZs6mvw Christmas Truce of 1914 -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KH0VBK2EVE>

December 30

Opening Prayer: **Creator, we give you thanks for all you are and all you bring to us for our visit within your creation. In Jesus, you place the Gospel in the center of this sacred circle through which all creation is related. You show us the way to live a generous and compassionate life. Give us your strength to live together with respect and commitment as we grow in your spirit, for you are God, now and forever. Amen.**

Gospel of the Day - Matthew 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.' When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

"And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel." '

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and

they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

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Litany and The Lord's Prayer *(last three pages of this booklet)*



Star Carol – The Rev. Jann Brooks

My favourite carol isn't ancient, it was only written in 1972 by English composer and conductor of choral music, John Rutter. The Star Carol is a delightful carol that announces the birth of Christ and invites us to get excited about the Good News. It beckons us all to "Hurray to Bethlehem to see the son of Mary".

Rutter was charged with composing a carol that was easily singable by children for a concert. In the first verse the angels announce the birth of Jesus to the shepherds. In the second verse the shepherds are telling the people of Bethlehem and reminding them to follow joyfully. With its memorable tune and refrain, we too are urged to bear this Good News with a message of good cheer. After all, the Gospel of Mark tells us in the first sentence that the birth of Jesus is good news; in fact, Jesus IS the Good News!

By the third verse we hear families gathered around the manger and I think of all the families who foreigh hundred years have gazed on a cheche scene, passing on the Good News of Jesus' birth to the next generation. It was St. Francis of Assisi who is credited with staging the first nativity scene in 1223CE. According to St. Bonaventure's biography of the saint, Deacon Francis petitioned and received permission from Pope Honourius III to set up the first holy manger with hay and two live animals (an ox and an ass) in a cave in the Italian village of Greccio. Francis invited the villagers to come and gaze upon the scene while he preached about "the babe of Bethlehem". Bonaventure also claims that the hay used by Francis, miraculously cured local cattle of diseases and pestilences.

I hope you will listen to the Star Carol and enjoy its infectious message of joy.

YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gxoGGTicNI>

December 31

Opening Prayer: **Creator, we give you thanks for all you are and all you bring to us for our visit within your creation. In Jesus, you place the Gospel in the center of this sacred circle through which all creation is related. You show us the way to live a generous and compassionate life. Give us your strength to live together with respect and commitment as we grow in your spirit, for you are God, now and forever. Amen.**

Gospel of the Day - John 1:1-18

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, and without him not one thing came into being. 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.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks

ahead of me because he was before me.” ’) From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.

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Litany and The Lord’s Prayer (*last three pages of this booklet*)



O Holy Night - The Rev. Dr. Kara Mandryk

You will often hear “O Holy Night” sung at Christmas concerts because the melody is beautiful, and it often “shows off” the range of the soloist. While the melody is stunning, it is the lyrics of this carol that speak deeply to me.

The carol begins with the familiar theme of a quiet Bethlehem night but soon turns to the astounding impact the Saviour’s birth has on all creation. This carol focuses on the reverberations of Christ’s birth—the rippling thrill which brings hope to the weary world.

The 3rd verse overwhelms me. I cry every single time I hear that powerful promise sung, no matter how good the singing is, no matter where I am (even hearing the muzak version in Dollarama!)

*Truly He taught us to love one another,
His law is love and His gospel is peace
Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother,
And in His name all oppression shall cease.*

This carol powerfully reminds us how the incarnation of Jesus changes everything: Love, peace, freedom, and justice all pulse out from that lowly manger.

The only response to the magnificent implications of Christ the Lord’s birth is praise. Each chorus issues the invitation to worship– *Fall on your knees! / Behold your King! / O praise His name forever!*

Our response to the earth-changing birth of Jesus can only be:

Let all within us praise his holy name!

YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTFG_nvreoI

January 1 - The Naming of Jesus

Opening Prayer: **Creator, we give you thanks for all you are and all you bring to us for our visit within your creation. In Jesus, you place the Gospel in the center of this sacred circle through which all creation is related. You show us the way to live a generous and compassionate life. Give us your strength to live together with respect and commitment as we grow in your spirit, for you are God, now and forever. Amen.**

Gospel of the Day - Luke 2:15-21

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

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Litany and The Lord's Prayer (*last three pages of this booklet*)

In the Bleak Mid Winter – Elizabeth Sims

One of my favourite carols is “In the Bleak Midwinter” with words adapted from a poem by Christina Rossetti (1872) and set to music by Gustav Holst.

The words of the opening verse resonate here in a Canadian prairie winter, but the poem does not likely describe the weather at the time and place of Jesus’ actual birth. Instead this is an image of the condition of the world, then and even now, a world hard as iron, where the water of life is frozen like a stone. Layers of snow like layers of sin have piled up,

Jesus was born into this mid-winter world as a human baby, in the humblest of surroundings (“a stable place sufficed”) in order to share our human nature

Rossetti ties in scriptural references to the ultimate glory of Jesus as God Almighty, whom heaven cannot hold nor earth sustain; both will flee away when he comes to reign. (1Kings 8: 27 Rev 21:1-3)

We celebrate Jesus’ birth but we are waiting and watching at Christmas “not only for the incarnation event that was, but for the consummation that is to come” (Sara Schumacher) when He returns to earth a second time.

YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFca8sTbbkg



January 2

Opening Prayer: **Creator, we give you thanks for all you are and all you bring to us for our visit within your creation. In Jesus, you place the Gospel in the center of this sacred circle through which all creation is related. You show us the way to live a generous and compassionate life. Give us your strength to live together with respect and commitment as we grow in your spirit, for you are God, now and forever. Amen.**

Gospel of the Day - John 1:19-28

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the prophet?' He answered, 'No.' Then they said to him, 'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' He said, 'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord" ', as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, 'Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?' John answered them, 'I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.' This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

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Litany and The Lord's Prayer (*last three pages of this booklet*)

I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day – Karen Webb

This carol reaches back to my childhood, to St. Alban's Anglican Church in Winnipeg, and Nine Lessons and Carols with Keith Tinsley on the organ. We sang it to a different tune but is planted firmly in my brain - Waltham.

The words are by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the noted American poet, for Christmas 1863. The first time we sang it, we sang a shortened version, and I didn't quite understand why the carol moved so quickly from the joy of Christmas to the despair of death. Why do the bells need to peal long and deep?"

Longfellow's son Charles had run away to serve in the Union Army. On December 1, 1863 he was injured and returned home to recuperate from his wounds. Longfellow the younger escaped death by an inch but was never able to rejoin the army. As he sat by his son's bedside, not knowing whether he would live or die, Longfellow wrote the poem.

The carol makes so much more sense with the missing verses:

*Then from each black, accursed
mouth,*

*The cannon thundered in the
South,*

*And with the sound The carols
drowned*

Of peace on earth, good-will to men

*It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn The households
born*

Of peace on earth, good-will to men

Now we know why God does not sleep, and I understand even more why the last verse always makes me tear up:

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:

"God is not dead ; nor doth he sleep !

The Wrong shall fail, The Right prevail,

With peace on earth, good-will to men !"

And with those tears, I prayed with "sighs too deep for words", as St. Paul says. As I will again, this year.

YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ff31GHPvvcg>

January 3

Opening Prayer: **Creator, we give you thanks for all you are and all you bring to us for our visit within your creation. In Jesus, you place the Gospel in the center of this sacred circle through which all creation is related. You show us the way to live a generous and compassionate life. Give us your strength to live together with respect and commitment as we grow in your spirit, for you are God, now and forever. Amen.**

Gospel of the Day - John 1:29-34

The next day he saw Jesus coming towards him and declared, 'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, "After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me." I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.' And John testified, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit." And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.'

Reflect and Respond to the Gospel of the Day:

1. What word(s), idea(s), or sentence(s) stand out for you in the Gospel of the Day?
2. What is Jesus (the Gospel) saying to you?
3. What is Jesus (the Gospel) calling you to do or be?

Litany and The Lord's Prayer (*last three pages of this booklet*)

The Sussex Carol – The Rev. Christopher Evetts

Christmas Eve has always been my favourite time in the church year. Not only because of the obvious birth of our Lord, but because of the way it influences most people. The calmness of the night, when no matter what kind of year we had, it is as though the world seems at peace with itself. Of course, with this comes the carols. There are many beloved carols that speak to this peace, but for me, the carol that always creates that image of a happy Christmas Eve is the Sussex Carol.

I love this carol, because its tune is recognizable, it creates a feeling of joy and cheer, all the while keeping the message simple. No matter what the year was like before this day, everyone pauses because on “Christmas night all Christians sing to hear the news the angels bring”. Then in the last verse “all out of darkness we have light, which make the angels sing this night”. It gives that feeling of hope as we walk out into the crisp evening with a fresh coat of snow, letting us know that regardless of tomorrow, tonight everything is going to be well. That’s what I feel, with the Sussex Carol.

YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWICUo65wW4>



January 4

Opening Prayer: **Creator, we give you thanks for all you are and all you bring to us for our visit within your creation. In Jesus, you place the Gospel in the center of this sacred circle through which all creation is related. You show us the way to live a generous and compassionate life. Give us your strength to live together with respect and commitment as we grow in your spirit, for you are God, now and forever. Amen.**

Gospel of the Day - John 1:35-42

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, 'Look, here is the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, 'What are you looking for?' They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which translated means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' He said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter).

Reflect and Respond to the Gospel of the Day:

1. What word(s), idea(s), or sentence(s) stand out for you in the Gospel of the Day?
2. What is Jesus (the Gospel) saying to you?
3. What is Jesus (the Gospel) calling you to do or be?

Litany and The Lord's Prayer (*last three pages of this booklet*)

Earth Has Many a Noble City (Cree Hymnal 149) – The Venerable Lydia Constant

This carol was a favourite of the elders when I was growing up - we heard it a lot, and I look forward to singing it at Christmas. I love it because it has a story - the story of the chosen city of Bethlehem, that place where the star was shining to show where Jesus, who is God, was born.

But I really love the story of the wise men (*kisāyinewuk*) from the east. They walked and journeyed for so long to find Jesus. And when they did, they gave him precious gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh; and, I remember someone comparing myrrh to sweet grass in our tradition.

When the wise men finally came face to face with Jesus, they bowed down and worshipped him. That's like our lives. Sometimes we search a long time for Jesus. And when we come before him, we bow down (*putupestaskik*) before Jesus in prayer. Our elders taught us to kneel when we pray, especially at our beds, as a way of humbling ourselves before Jesus.

V.6

Christ, the old men (elders) bowed down to you.

The Three-in-One, we give you great honour.

(translation by Judy Wilson)

The last word in this hymn is *kistukimitinan* – “give great honour”. That's what we do when we come before Jesus, bowing down in prayer – we give him great honour, just like those wise men from the east so long ago.

YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=raZnnVLVEgs>

January 5

Opening Prayer: **Creator, we give you thanks for all you are and all you bring to us for our visit within your creation. In Jesus, you place the Gospel in the center of this sacred circle through which all creation is related. You show us the way to live a generous and compassionate life. Give us your strength to live together with respect and commitment as we grow in your spirit, for you are God, now and forever. Amen.**

Gospel of the Day - John 1:43-51

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.' Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.' Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.' When Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' Nathanael asked him, 'Where did you come to know me?' Jesus answered, 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.' Nathanael replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' Jesus answered, 'Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.' And he said to him, 'Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

Reflect and Respond to the Gospel of the Day:

1. What word(s), idea(s), or sentence(s) stand out for you in the Gospel of the Day?
2. What is Jesus (the Gospel) saying to you?
3. What is Jesus (the Gospel) calling you to do or be?

Litany and The Lord's Prayer (*last three pages of this booklet*)

O Come All Ye Faithful – The Rev. Matt Koovisk

For me, it just doesn't "feel" like Christmas until the last verse of "O Come All Ye Faithful" is played. There's lots of arrangements, but my favourite arrangement is by David Willcocks, a sometime director of music at King's College, Cambridge. In the last verse of his arrangement, the harmonization underneath the melody line builds up over the first half of the verse with the pinnacle of the music coming as the congregation sings the word "Word." Underneath that note, there is a chord that many consider to be musically scandalous.

Perhaps this chord could help us to reflect on the birth of Jesus and how it relates to us – in the eyes of the world, the birth of the timeless Son of God in such humble beginnings is scandalous. It doesn't make sense in our worldly logic – kings aren't born in such humble surroundings. However, God's ways are not our ways. God used what the world believes to be "scandalous" to change the world forever. With the birth of the timeless Son of God into our time and place, we have heard the Word of the Father: that we are His beloved children, worthy of His Son, and worthy of a relationship with the Holy and Undivided Trinity.

And so, let us come and adore this Christ child in the manger. Let us come and adore this Word of the Father: the Word that says that no matter what, we are beloved.

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kRq8eywc57I>



A litany for the 12 days of Christmas

We rejoice with all creation at the birth of the child Jesus. Let us pray for the whole world He came to save.

Heavenly Father, we give thanks for the love you have shown us in the birth of Jesus. Help us to share the humility of his manger; and in that humility let us love one another as sisters and brothers of the holy child.

O come let us adore him.

Faithful God, with Mary and Joseph we give thanks for the care and concern which surrounds us. Help us make our families places of light and health. As Jesus is the light of the world, strengthen and guide our parents and elders, and help us to listen as they lead the way.

O come let us adore him.

Loving God, the Shepherds were surprised by the announcement of the birth of Jesus. Help us to see Jesus in the poor, the sick, the hungry and those whom the world might think unimportant. We know that to you, all are precious. Make us aware of those whose lives and work make possible our own life.

O come let us adore him.

God of Glory, you sent Angels to sing a song of glory to announce the birth of Jesus. Give us tongues to proclaim your glory that we might speak to your love, and wings to speed us to the places where our hands are needed to work. Make us witnesses of all your goodness and loving kindness.

O come let us adore him.

Father of comfort, like the Innkeeper, stretch us to think of new ways to help those in need. Grow our hearts to make room for those who serve others. Bless all the nurses and

aides who care for the sick. Keep watch with those who keep us safe and make us all willing to make room for the unexpected stranger.

O come let us adore him.

Lord of hosts, protect us from those like Herod, who would destroy and hurt those who are no threat because they fear to lose their power. Guide and give wisdom to all earthly rulers; make them wise in their willingness to govern according to your word. Give patience and protection to all who currently wait to be liberated from the rule of those who do not serve their people.

O come let us adore him.

Bless and comfort all parents who have lost children. Reveal yourself to those who grieve and cannot find comfort. Give rest to those we love and have lost. Remember those who have died who have no one to remember them. In the midst of the holidays, help us to comfort those for whom this time of year brings pain, loneliness or despair. Be their light and their peace.

O come let us adore him.

Make us wise enough to seek after you and, like the Wise Men, willing to open our treasures to you for your glory. Be with all those who travel or are on the roads and make a straight path home for all those who are seeking a way.

O come let us adore him.

Merciful Father, grant these prayers through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, **Amen.**

The Prayers conclude with the Lord's Prayer:

Cree:

Nohtâwînan kîcikîsikok ê-ayâyan
kita wî kanâtênitâkwon kiwînwîwin
kitipêncikêwin kita wî ocîcipanîw
ê-itênitaman kita wî itôhcikâtêw
ôta askihk kê isi ayâk kîcikîsikôhk
mîninân anôhc kâkîsikâk ka oci pimatisîyak
mîna asênamawinân nimacîtiwinâna
kâ isi asênamawakîcik anikik kê wanitôtâkowâkok
mîna kawîna itôhtawinan kôtênimikôwinihk
mâka mîtakwinamawinan maci kêkwon
kina ki tayan tipêncikêwin mîna sôkâtisîwin
mîna kistênitâkosiwin
anoc mîna kâkikê
êmen

English:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom 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 kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.