

Litanies and Reflections based on Bible Themes

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Genesis 1:1 - Call to Worship

In the beginning

When God created the heavens and the earth

When the breath of God moved over the face of
the waters

There was evening

There was morning

There was light

In the beginning God created

Let us worship God.

Genesis 11 and Acts 2 (2004)

Fire consumes harvest and dross
indiscriminately

Fire heats the homes and melts the rock

Fire illumines the path for sojourner and
firefighter alike

Invocation

Holy Spirit,

move through the babble of our worship words
that we might hear the lucidity of your Word.

We celebrate the distinctions with each
passage of life,
hoping for infamy that will hold our lives
unique.

**While we are building towers we miss the
invitation to humility.**

We crave a place of security for our persons
and our things

where we can claim confidence and freedom
from fear.

**While we are building towers we forfeit the
power of vulnerability.**

We create visions of unity where voices are
held in harmony

and conformity grows in the absence of
conflict.

**While we are building towers we forget to
embrace the richness of diversity.**

We are building towers while God beckons
from the low places.

**In the humility, the vulnerability, the
diversity**

**we find the good news; our end is our
beginning.**

Genesis (1999) - Patriarchs

Call to Worship

Our ancient Hebrew brothers and sisters
were thirsty.

Parched lips

and dry souls.

Their voices carried in the wilderness

cries of despair....

cries that were heard.

Even today

the people of God are thirsty.

Dry lips

and parched souls.

Voices carry into the wilderness and beyond
desperation...

cries that are heard.

Come, children of God, come

into the presence of the living God

who listens

who hears.

Prayer of Confession and Assurance

With Abraham

**We have ventured forth in faith
and missed opportunities for fear.**

With Sarah

**We have given generously in love
and ruthlessly destroyed for greed.**

With Jacob

**We have gifted our children with our visions
and shackled them with our pain.**

Forgive us for the ways we have failed you and
each other.

Inspire us to live the love you offer.

The God of Abraham and Sarah
knows our selfishness and our
shortsightedness.

The God of Abraham and Sarah
who built a nation on human pillars

is building even today.

God has loved you, loves you know, and will
love you always.

Thanks be to God.

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Genesis 19 – Parable of the Sower with Lot in Sodom

Three visitors knock on Abraham's door
and he responds with confident hospitality
calling for the calf, setting the feast, making
the guest welcome.

He offers the best of what he has to the
stranger in need.

And the community responds in kind.

The seeds of compassion find fertile ground.

Two angels beckon at Lot's door
and he responds with nervous hospitality
gathering the bread, pouring the wine, offering
words of welcome.

Still, he offers the best of what he has for to the
stranger in need.

Yet the community thwarts his efforts.

The seeds of compassion fall into the weeds.

Somewhere in between the good intentions
something goes bad.

Abraham is blessed and becomes a mighty
nation.

Lot's homeland is laid waste and his wife a
pillar of salt.

The individual held in the context of
community.

The seeds of compassion are vulnerable.

A single stranger beckons now
and we respond with timid commitment
writing a check, drafting a letter,
offering promises of welcome.

**May our seeds of compassion be sown in
fertile ground.**

Genesis 19:24-26 – Called to be Salt –
with Leviticus 2:13, Judges 9:45, 2 Kings 2:19-22,
Colossians 4:6, Matthew 5:13

You shall not omit from your grain offerings
the salt of the covenant with your God; with all
your offerings you shall offer salt. (*Lev 2:13*)

We are a people of the salted covenant.

We are the salt of the earth.

Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah
sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven;
and he overthrew those cities, and all the
Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and
what grew on the ground. But Lot's wife,
behind him, looked back, and she became a
pillar of salt. (*Genesis 19:24-26*)

**We are a people who cannot help but look
back. We are the salt of the earth.**

Abimelech fought against the city all that day;
he took the city, and killed the people that
were in it; and he razed the city and sowed it
with salt. (*Judges 9:45*)

**We are a people tempted to sow destruction.
We are the salt of the earth.**

Now the people of the city said to Elisha, "The
location of this city is good, as my lord sees;
but the water is bad, and the land is
unfruitful." He said, "Bring me a new bowl, and
put salt in it." So they brought it to him. Then
he went to the spring of water and threw the
salt into it, and said, "Thus says the Lord, I
have made this water wholesome; from now on
neither death nor miscarriage shall come from
it." So the water has been wholesome to this
day, according to the word that Elisha spoke.
(*II Kings 2:19-22*)

**We are a people who discover the miracle of
'enough' in the presence of God.**

We are the salt of the earth.

Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned
with salt, so that you may know how you ought
to answer everyone. (*Colossians 4:6*)

We are a people with a mission.

We are the salt of the earth.

You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost
its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It
is no longer good for anything, but is thrown
out and trampled under foot. (*Matthew 5:13*)

**We are the salt of the earth; offering flavor
and preserving the corpse,**

symbolic of faithlessness and offering life.

We are the salt of the earth.

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Genesis 32 (1999)

Wrestling
Struggling, resisting
Powers beyond understanding
Embracing, reconciling
Sacred

Let us wrestle
Let us worship
that which is sacred.

Genesis 45 (1999)

Broken hearts
scattered
yet never lost.
Voices calling
from deep beyond
inviting wholeness.
Tears molding pieces
together again.

Hearts for God.
Hearts of God.

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Exodus (1999) – Moses Stories - Prayer of Confession
and Invitation to Pardon

The Pharaoh decrees death to the foreigner.
The power of fear and hate rage surround us.

In the face of evil

Forgive us our complacency.

The burning bush flickers beside us.
The presence of God invites us.

In the presence of the holy

Forgive us our lack of notice.

The Red Sea waters stand at attention.
The threshold of grace is breath-taking.

In the company of grace

Forgive us our reticence to embrace.

Hungry bellies and grumbling souls
are not the final word.
Manna and quail and water
fill the bellies and calm the souls.
The gifts of God reign
o'er the people of God.
Come for all things are ready.

Exodus 14 (1999) – Crossing the Sea

The sea of apathy surrounds
enticing us with self promotion
luring us with greed.
The sea of apathy surrounds
bloated with decay
the remains of injustice and idolatry.
The sea of apathy surrounds.

Our task this day
is to cross the sea.
Our task today
is to say "no" to the stench.
Our task if we chose it
is to say "yes" to life and faith.
"Yes". Yes.
Let us cross the sea together.

Exodus 16 (1999)

The promise land
just around the corner
dripping with milk and honey.

The promise land
sacrificing security
embracing the dream.

The promised land
milk and honey vaporize
as the dream comes alive.

The promised land

where faith meets hunger
and ideology gets personal.

The promised land
beckons
and taunts.

The promised land
just around the corner.

Exodus 20 and Matthew 22- Ten Commandments
(2002)

Love the Lord your God with all of your heart,
your mind and your soul.

**We will love God with an intensity
such that no substitute will suffice,
the very mention of God's name will be
precious
as we cleave to our time of communion with
the sacred.**

Love your neighbor as yourself.

**We will respect the wisdom of our elders.
We will protect the lives and the reputations
of those around us.
We will cherish the relationships entrusted
to us.
We will not take what is not ours.
We will learn the value of enough.**

Love the Lord your God.
Amen.

Leviticus 2:13 - see Genesis 19:24-26 (2002) – Called
to be Salt

Joshua 24

Creating God, guide us to put first things first
in our lives.

**As for me and my household,
we will serve the Lord.**

Christ our Lord, enable us to follow your
example.

**As for me and my household,
we will serve the Lord.**

Spirit Alive, shine your light that our choices
may be a reflection.

**As for me and my household,
we will serve the Lord.**

Judges 9:45 - see Genesis 19:24-26 (2002) – Called to
be Salt

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1 Samuel 1 (2003) - Hannah's Prayer

A prayer for life to fill the void.
A prayer that reverberates throughout time
for a child
for a partner
for a friend
A prayer that is at once lost
and found
A grief exposed for the healing balm
A prayer that grows in the crevice of despair
pushing past the boundaries
bursting forth in new life
A prayer for life to fill the void

1 Samuel 17 (2003) and Mark 4:35-41

The winds raged and the disciples trembled.
Goliath taunted and Saul tasted fear.
Enter Jesus
Enter David
staring beyond the fear
daring us to do the same.
The winds will rage
and giants will taunt
and fear will weaken our gait.
Still Jesus
Still David
offer a challenge
not limited to wind and bullies
but beckoning to the heart of the timid.
Staring beyond the fear
focused on the greater power
daring us to do the same.

1 Samuel 17:1-58 and Matthew 5:38-42 (Luke 6:28-31) - Turning a Cheek (1997)

Strength is commanding
the wind and sea to obey,
Strength is wielding
a slingshot in the face of a raging giant.
Strength is accepting vulnerability
from inside the boat,
Strength is standing in solidarity
with the powerless.
Strength is turning a cheek,
Strength is loving an enemy.
We come to worship
a God who redefines our vision of strength.

1 and 2 Samuel - David Stories

Invocation

God of Bathsheba, we come yearning for
wisdom to embrace life
despite its tragic complexity.

God of Tamar, we come in search of
strength to endure
the horrific consequences of untamed greed.

God of Michal, we come claiming
courage to name the insults offered even now
that belie your goodness.

God of the Story, meet us today
with living waters abundant
to quench your thirst.

Litany of Confession and Promise\

David loved Jonathon

yet he wore the uniform of Jonathon's killer.

David danced for joy in the streets

**while Michal bore witness to his drunken
excess.**

David's power and status grew

as did his scorn of the blind and the lame.

David wanted to build a temple

thus proving his devotion.

David built a legacy of broken lives

thus proving his culpability.

We are David,

**mourning the loss of our love and our
innocence.**

We are David,

**guilty of exploiting those entrusted to our
care.**

We are David,

**unexpected hero and unrepentant
scoundrel.**

We are David,

we belong to God.

Prayer of Dedication

**Gather the gifts of our hands and hearts,
living Spirit.**

**Use these gifts to build not monuments to
your distant glory,**

but testaments to your intimate love. Amen.

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1 Kings 8:41-43 and John 6:59ff (2006)

Paraphrase of 1 Kings text:

When a stranger, who is not of your people,
comes from a distant land because they have
heard of you-
and they will hear of you, your power and your
open door -
when a stranger comes and prayers with you,
then hear my voice calling and do as the
stranger asks,
so that all the peoples of the earth may know
your name
and know that your name reflects my
indwelling.

Gospel Reflection (could be responsive)

give to them that seek
*not because of their need not because of their
worthiness*

give to them that ask
*not for our own glory not to testify to our
personal goodness*

give to them that seek
*to bear witness to the spirit dancing in our
lives*

1 Kings 17-18 (Elijah)

We see Elijah calling on the name of God,
responding to the forces of evil with an appeal
to a higher power.

May we be a people of faith.

We see Elijah caring for the most vulnerable,
offering bread to the widow and a healing
touch to her child.

May we be a people of compassion.

We see Elijah speaking truth to power,
daring to deliver words of judgment
to the King.

May we be a people of justice.

We see Elijah ascend in the whirlwind,
offering the promise of the still unfolding
future.

May we be a people of hope.

1 Kings 19 - Confession and Assurance

**We come seeking God in mighty
earthquakes.**

**We come listening for God in resounding
thunder.**

**We come expecting God in sweeping
victories.**

Yet God is found in a baby's touch.

Yet God speaks in silence.

Yet God is found in the least of these.

Save us, O God, from our aimless wandering.

Save us, O God, from our idols.

Save us, O God, from our self-induced chaos.

God, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Amen.

Hear the good news of God's love for us;
not in the earthquake, not in the storms, not in
the mighty deeds
but in the silence, in the gentle touch, in the
quiet rain
God says,
again,
"You are my Beloved. I love you."

2 Kings 2:19-22 - see Genesis 19:24-26 (2002) -
Called to be Salt

2 Kings 5 (2003) - Naaman's Story

*a little girl
an army commander
a religious zealot*

*for one brief moment
difference suspended
doubt superceded*

*ordinary water
simple ritual
extraordinary presence*

May we have the courage of the child
to reach out to even the powerful.

May we have the wisdom of Namaan
to ask for help when we are lost.

May we have the faithfulness of Elisha
to love outside the lines.

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Nehemiah 8 (1998)

Gathered together in the square
young and old
men and women
certain and seeking
slave and free.
Gathered together in the square
they opened the book
read and listened
talked and prayed.
They opened the book
gathered together in the square
and heard the Word of God.

Let us now gather
together
in the square
to open the book
and hear the Word of God.

Job 1-2 - "beware the sons of god"

You were one of the sons of God...
or sons of god...
or sons of gods?
Among them
one of them
called simply the adversary.
And I the memory of you.
So much blame
I have given you
so much shame
is it yours?
or theirs?
or mine?

Job's story
claims that you did
God's bidding
the god character ...
...goaded you on as you challenged
the comfortable
and afflicted the suffering
But what kind of God?
What kind of God
would encourage you
to taunt?
What kind of God
would allow you
to torment the grieving?
And you.
You who do the bidding,
what does that make you?
And me.
Me who holds your story,
what does that make me?

Job 38 (2003)

God beyond our knowing
Source of the earth's foundation
Voice of the morning stars
**Be gentle with us
as we stumble in the darkness
wondering where you are.**

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Psalm 8 - with quotes from the Metta Sutta by Thich Nhat Hanh, Teachings on Love

O LORD, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.
When I look at your heavens, the work of your
fingers, the moon and the stars that you have
established;
what are human beings that you are mindful of
them, mortals that you care for them?

*Even as a mother protects with her life
her child, her only child,
so with a boundless heart should one cherish
all living beings.*

Yet you have made them a little lower than
God, and crowned them with glory and honor.
You have given them dominion over the works
of your hands; you have put all things under
their feet, all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the
air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

*Let no one do harm to anyone.
Let no one put the life of anyone in danger.
Let no one, out of anger or ill will, wish anyone
harm.*

O LORD, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

*May all living beings live in security and
peace, beings who are frail or strong, tall or
short, big or small,
visible or not visible,
near or far away,
already born or yet to be born.
May all of them dwell in perfect tranquility.*

Psalm 22:1-5 - Prayer - 1997

In a world ravaged by war;
In a city undermined by racism;
In homes tormented with apathy, anger, and
frenetic pace;

We cry:

**My God, my God, why have you forsaken
me?**

**Why are you so far from helping me, from
the words of my groaning?**

Our schedules offer testimony To our frantic
search for meaning;
Getting ahead, getting healthy, getting
religion.

**O my God, I cry by day, but you do not
answer;**

And by night, but you do not answer.

Slow us down, loving God.
Let us be still in your presence.

Yet you are holy.

**In you our ancestors trusted, and you
delivered them.**

To you they cried, and were saved.

**In you they trusted, and were not put to
shame.**

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Psalm 23 - Prayer of Dedication - 1994

Psalm 66 - Call to Worship

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;
We believe in the goodness of God.
We believe God hears and responds to our needs.
We believe God responds to all children everywhere.

He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters,
he restores my soul.

We are grateful that we've been blessed with enough water.
But we know that many do not have enough.
Not enough water, not enough food, not enough peace.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Too many children do not see God's righteousness.
Too many children watch violence, taste hunger, feel fear.
Too many children cry from the unspeakable horror of war.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

To become involved is risky. Pain is often contagious.
Our hearts may be broken and our lives may be threatened.
Yet we hear God calling and we can no longer hide.

Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of my enemies; thou annointest me head with oil, my cup overflows.

Our steps may be small and timid.
We may read a book, write a letter, or make a gift.
But each tiny step is blessed by God and multiplies.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

God is more relentless than war.
God is more pervasive than hatred.
God is more insistent than despair.

Amen. **Amen.**

Come and see the works of God,
God's awesome deeds among us.
Come and hear, all who revere God,
God's still speaking voice in our weary world.

Come and touch the sacred, extraordinary in the ordinary,
God's presence in water, bread and wine.

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Isaiah 2:4 and Mark 13:8 (2003) – Swords and Plowshares

The bible says:

Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. (Mark 13:8)

and also

nation shall not lift up a sword against nation neither shall they learn war any more. (Isaiah 2:4, Micah 4:3)

The bible says:

They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. (Isaiah 2:4, Micah 4:3)

and also

Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears. (Joel 3:10)

**Caught in the chasm
between your kingdom and our reality
we pray to you, Sophia, God of Wisdom,
for compassion in our day.**

Isaiah 2:1-5, 11:1-10, 35:1-10, and 7:10-16 – Advent
(Isaiah's vision juxtaposed with the lyrics for "Toda la Tierra" by Alberto Taule)

First Sunday of Advent

And everyone 'neath the vine and fig tree
Shall live in peace and unafraid.

**All earth is waiting
to see the promised one,
And the open furrows,
the sowing of the Lord.**

And into plowshares turn their swords
Nations shall learn war no more.

**All the world, bound and struggling
seeks true liberty;
It cries out for justice
and searches for the truth.**

Second Sunday of Advent

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse
The Spirit of the Lord shall rest on him

**Thus says the prophets
to those of Israel
"A virgin mother
will bear Emmanuel,"**

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard
shall lie with the kid,
And a little child shall lead them.

**For his name is "God with us",
Our brother shall be,
With him hope shall blossom
once more within our hearts.**

Third Sunday of Advent

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

**Mountains and valleys
will have to be made plain;
Open new highways,
new highways for the Lord.**

For the waters shall break forth in the
wilderness, and streams in the desert;
A highway shall be there, and the ransomed of
the Lord shall return.

**He is now coming closer,
so come all and see,
And open the doorways
as wide as wide can be.**

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Hear then, O house of David!
The Lord himself will give you a sign.

**In lowly stable,
the promised one appeared,
Yet, feel his presence
throughout the world today,**

Look, the young woman is with child and shall
bear a son,
and shall call his name Immanuel.

**For he lives in all Christians
and is with us now.
Again, with his coming
he brings us liberty.**

Isaiah 40:21-31 (2003)

Have you not known?

**Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;
but we who wait for the Lord shall renew
our strength.**

Have you not heard?

**We shall mount up with wings like eagles.
Has it not been told you from the beginning?**

We shall run and not be weary.

Have you not understood from the foundations
of the earth?

We shall walk and not be faint.

They who wait for the Lord.

We who wait for the Lord.

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Isaiah 43 (2002)

Bring forth the people who are blind, yet have eyes,

Who are deaf, yet have ears!

We are the witnesses.

You are my witnesses, says the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am your God.

We are the witnesses.

Before me no god was formed, says the Lord, nor shall there be any after me.

I, I am the Lord, and besides me there is no other.

I declared and saved and proclaimed, and you are my witnesses, says the Lord.

We are the witnesses.

We are God's witnesses,

**gifted with the vision
challenged with the responsibility.**

We are the witnesses.

Isaiah 61 - see Luke 4

Jeremiah 1 and Acts 9

Jeremiah was just a young inexperienced boy when he heard God's call to preach.

All are welcome here.

Jesus shared supper with the undesirables in his community.

All are welcome here.

Paul was attacking Christians when God spoke to him and changed his life.

All are welcome here.

Jeremiah 29 (1998)

Litany of Confession and Assurance

But thus says the Lord:

Seek shalom wherever you are, and pray to the Lord

for your shalom shall be found in the shalom of the community.

We find ourselves in exile caused by relationships, economics, and failing health.

But thus says the Lord:

Seek shalom wherever you are, and pray to the Lord

for your shalom shall be found in the shalom of the community.

**We feel used by people and systems,
sometimes even abused.**

But thus says the Lord:

Seek shalom wherever you are, and pray to the Lord for your shalom shall be found in the shalom of the community.

We thirst for God's promised justice through swift vengeance.

But thus says the Lord:

Seek shalom wherever you are, and pray to the Lord

for your shalom shall be found in the shalom of the community.

We strive to protect our families and our interests from any wrath.

But thus says the Lord:

Seek shalom wherever you are, and pray to the Lord

for your shalom shall be found in the shalom of the community.

We long for the day when passive peace will prevail.

But thus says the Lord:

Seek shalom wherever you are, and pray to the Lord

for your shalom shall be found in the shalom of the community.

**May our actions embody our prayers
for the healing of the community
and therein may we find our long awaited
wholeness.**

Amen.

Jeremiah 33 - see Zephaniah 3- Advent Prayer

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Jonah's Call (2003)

The Voice calling long ago.

The Voice calling today.

The Voice compelling Jonah to go.

The Voice compelling us to go.

The Voice calling to Jonah
compelling him to share the good news
of God's redemptive love.

**The Voice calling to us
compelling us to share the good news
of God's redemptive love.**

With those who would be enemies.

With those who would be enemies.

The people of Nineveh, beloved of God.

The people of Iraq, beloved of God.

The Voice calling long ago.

The Voice calling today.

Micah 4:3 – see Isaiah 2:4

Micah 5 – see Zephaniah 3– Advent Prayer

Joel 3:10 – see Isaiah 2:4

Joel 2:28-29 and "Send Down Your Spirit" (Marty
Haugen)

Call to Worship

Then I will pour out my spirit on all flesh, thus
says the Lord.

Send down the fire of your justice!

Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,

Send down the rain of your love!

Your old shall dream dreams,
and your young shall see visions.

**Send down your Spirit, breathe life in your
people!**

In those days, I will pour out my spirit.

And we shall be people of God.

Communal Confession

The Spirit comes with fire of justice
and we offer the extinguisher of complacency.

Lord have mercy,

Lord have mercy,

Lord have mercy upon us.

The Spirit comes with the rain of love
And we offer an umbrella of reserve.

Christ have mercy,

Christ have mercy,

Christ have mercy upon us.

The Spirit comes
bearing fresh winds of change
and we close the windows.

Lord have mercy,

Lord have mercy,

Lord have mercy upon us.

Invitation to Pardon

Hear the great good news of our faith:

The Spirit is alive!

Breathe, children of God,

breathe the fresh winds of the Spirit.

Taste, children of God,

taste the quenching waters of God's love.

Touch, children of God,

touch the heat of God's passion for justice.

Habakkuk 2:1-4

Invocation

Write the vision,

make it plain

so that it may be read.

For there is still a vision

it speaks of the day of the Lord

and does not lie.

If it seems to tarry,

Wait;

For surely it will come.

Litany of Confession and Assurance

For ignoring the vision

breathed by the living Spirit

churning deep within our souls;

Lord have mercy,

Lord have mercy,

Have mercy upon us.

For refusing to look at the vision

alive within those

who look or act or sound different from us;

Christ have mercy,

Christ have mercy,

Have mercy upon us.

For choosing familiarity, ease, and comfort

rather than risking the opportunities

afforded in the vision

Lord have mercy,

Lord have mercy,

Have mercy upon us.

Invitation to Pardon

If the vision seems to tarry

wait for it;

it will surely come...

it will surely come...

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Zephaniah 3 (2003) and Jeremiah 33, Baruch 5, and
Micah 5 - Advent Prayer

The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. (Zephaniah 3:17-18)

Yet ours is an upside down victory.

In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. (Jeremiah 33:15)

Ours is a story of power in humility.

For God has ordered that every high mountain and the everlasting hills be made low and the valleys filled up, to make level ground, so that Israel may walk safely in the glory of God.

(Baruch 5:7)

Ours is a story of strength in vulnerability.

And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

(Micah 5:4-5)

**Ours is a story of a baby deemed king,
of a carpenter's son praying alone,
of a Roman execution.**

The Lord, our God, is in our midst.

May we have eyes to see and ears to hear.

Amen.

Baruch 5 - see Zephaniah 3 - Advent Prayer

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Matthew - Parables (2002)

As sabers rattle in lands both close and distant
we confess that we are in pain,
fear has taken root in the souls of our being.

*Even as we turn to the parables,
familiar stories that we thought we loved,
we find troubling stories offering ever more
questions.*

**Lord have mercy,
lord have mercy,
have mercy upon us.**

We are loathe to take account of the many
ways

in which we unwittingly profit
from the machinery of war and greed.

*Still we read the parables of Jesus
which fly in the face of social convention
offending those who dare to listen.*

**Christ have mercy,
Christ have mercy,
have mercy upon us.**

Believing that we are insignificant,
and at the same time fearful that we might
become so,
we are timid to use our voices to speak truth to
a world of war.

*Now the parables of Jesus offer a new vision;
now the servants dine and the masters serve,
now the last becomes and the first becomes
last.*

**Lord have mercy,
lord have mercy,
have mercy upon us.**

Hear the good news of the Story
that no sheep is unworthy of rescue,
no coin too small to be missed.
Hear the good news
that love is stronger than hate
and that this power is alive within you
now and forever.
Amen.

Matthew 5 - see 1 Samuel 17:1-58 - Turning a Cheek
(1997)

Matthew 6:9-13 - see Luke 11:2-4 - Lord's Prayer
Litany

Matthew 6:25-27

Look at the birds of the air;
they neither sow nor reap nor gather into
barns
and yet God provides for the basic sustenance
of life.

May our hearts be open to trust you.

Look at the birds of the air;
they neither study nor plan nor plot their
course
and yet God writes the instinct for migration
into their hearts.

May our eyes be open to see you.

Look at the birds of the air;
they neither talk nor vote nor debate their
responsibility
yet God weaves them into communities which
nurture and defend.

May our hands be open to serve you.

Matthew 9:9-13 (1999)

Jesus calls
even today
tax collectors and Pharisees
high achievers and impish children.
Jesus calls
even today.

Matthew 10:34 and Luke 12:51 (1998) - Swords and
Plowshares

*We bring swords
that you turn into plowshares.
We bring expectations of peace
and you meet us with swords.*

*God
help us.*

Matthew 10:40 (1999)

Jesus said:
"Whoever welcomes you
welcomes me,
and whoever welcomes me
welcomes the one who sent me."
Let us welcome a stranger.
Let us welcome God.

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Matthew 11:15-17 (1999)

*Let anyone with ears listen!
To what will we compare this generation?
Children sitting in the marketplaces and
calling to one another, 'We played the flute for
you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you
did not mourn.'* (Mt 11:15-17)

God's flute plays in our souls. Will we dance?
God's voice weeps in our hearts. Will we
mourn?

Matthew 13:1ff and Luke 8:4ff, Mark 4:1ff

Benediction
In the name of the God
who creates see and calls each one good;
In the name of the God
who knows the dangers of weeds and thorns;
In the name of the God
who carries safely to good soil, now and
forever;
In the name of the God
go forth from this place to blossom and bear
fruit. Amen.

Matthew 13:3-9 - see Genesis 19 - Sower meets Lot

Matthew 13:31 - Litany of Parables (1999)

The kingdom of God is here, and coming.
A mustard seed that someone took and sowed
in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds,
but when it has grown it is the greatest of
shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of
the air come and make nests in its branches.

The kingdom of God is here, and coming.
Yeast that a woman took and mixed in with
three measures of flour
until all was leavened.

The kingdom of God is here, and coming.
Treasure hidden in a field, which someone
found and hid;
then joyfully sells all he has and buys the field.

The kingdom of God is here, and coming.
A merchant in search of fine pearls;
on finding one of great value,
sells all of his possessions and buys the pearl.

The kingdom of God is here, and coming.
Let all who have ears, hear.

Matthew 15:21-28 - see Mark 7:24-30

Matthew 16:13-20 - see Mark 8:27-33

Matthew 16:25 (Mark 8:35) - Losing One's Life (2002)

Those who want to save their lives
**have good health insurance,
pay their bills on time,
exercise and eat right...**

Those who want to save their lives
will lose them.

Those who lose their lives
in pursuit of God

**who abandon the world's values,
who live generously and faithfully,
who listen to a voice beyond...**

Those who lose their lives
in pursuit of God
will find life.

May we learn the value of loss.

**May we know the value of life.
Amen.**

Matthew 17:1-6 (Mark , Luke 9) Transfiguration

Litany (1997)

We have seen the light of God;
**on high mountains of celebration
and in the ecstasy of a lover's embrace.**

We have seen the light of God;
**through the bitter scorn of betrayal
and the searing chasm of grief.**

We have seen the light of God;
**with eyes that have been shaded,
with eyes that have been opened,
with eyes that have been blinded.**

We have seen the light of God.

Confession and Assurance (2000)

He came bathed in light, dazzling, radiant...

**Forgive us, God, for accepting mediocrity in
your name and calling it good enough.**

He came appearing with Elijah and Moses...

**Forgive us, God, for demanding exclusive
expressions of faith even in the face of your
expansive vision.**

He came while a voice was shouting, "this is
my Beloved; listen!"

**Forgive us, God, for silencing the voice of
the other struggling to praise your name.**

He came and she comes.

She came and he comes.

They come as they came

bathed in light, appearing in communion,
shouting for all who have ears to hear...

for all who have ears to hear.

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Matthew 18 (1999)

"Truly I tell you," says Jesus,
"whatever you bind on earth will be bound in
heaven, And whatever you loose on earth will
be loosed in heaven."

To bind, to be bound, to be bound with
So many competing demands and expectations
Aging partners and parents
Unplanned expenses
Demands at work and home and school and
church
Bound

Bound now
Bound forever
Bound with whom and for what?

What shall we carry with us into eternity?
Our gold? Our politics? Our relationships?
Which?
For with this choice
We will be bound in heaven.

Dear God,
May we bind with care.

Matthew 18 (2002)

"Truly I tell you," says Jesus,
"whatever you bind on earth will be bound in
heaven,
And whatever you loose on earth will be loosed
in heaven."

May we be bound with love.

We are bound with so many competing
demands and expectations;
Aging partners and parents;
Unplanned expenses;
Demands at work and home and school and
church.

May we be bound with love.

Bound now, bound forever;
but bound with whom and for what?

May we be bound with love.

What shall we carry with us into eternity?
Our gold?
Our politics?
Our relationships?
Which?
For with this choice
We will be bound in heaven.

May we be bound with love.

Matthew 18:21-35 (2002)

forgiven and unforgiving
the servant becomes master
forgiven and unforgiving
greed overpowers compassion
forgiven and unforgiving
ripe fruit left on the vine,
rotting and useless.

Matthew 20:1-16 (2002)

A grueling day in the vineyards
bone weary
grateful for the waning sun
proud of the accomplishments
superior even.

Imagine the surprise
the last receives as the first
all compensate equally
not equitably.

How then is justice defined?
Is there no reward for the toil?

Haunting words are all that's left
an echo reverberating over time
"the last shall be first and the first shall be
last"

Matthew 20:1-16 (with echoes of Micah 6:8)

Already overburdened with the demands
of work and leisure, family and friends,
we come to this place in search of rest.

May we find here

the strength to work for justice.

Forgiveness is elusive and anger is justified,
too often we settle for the sweet fleeting fruit
of revenge.

May we find here

the patience to embody mercy.

Deluded by the world in which we live
receiving power and prestige and money as
just reward

missing the Spirit's call
to a life grounded in humble service.

May we find here

the wisdom to walk in the Spirit.

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Matthew 18:1-3 - Litany of Greatness - Matthew
23:12, Luke 14:7-10, Luke 18:9-14

Now Jesus told a parable to those who were invited, when he marked how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, "When you are invited by any one to a marriage feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest a more eminent man than you be invited by him; and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher'; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you." (Luke 14:7-10)

For every one who exalts themselves will be humbled, and they who humble themselves will be exalted.

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them, and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:1-3)

For every one who exalts themselves will be humbled, and they who humble themselves will be exalted.

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other." (Luke 18:9-14)

For every one who exalts themselves will be humbled, and they who humble themselves will be exalted.

Then said Jesus to the crowds and to his disciples, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practice. They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move

them with their finger. They do all their deeds to be seen by men; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues, and salutations in the market places, and being called rabbi by men. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brethren. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called masters, for you have one master, the Christ. He who is greatest among you shall be your servant." (Matthew 23:1-11)

For every one who exalts themselves will be humbled, and they who humble themselves will be exalted.

Matthew 22:1-10 (2002) - Wedding Banquet

The invitations are sent
the regrets received
the food is ready
and the table is empty.

A celebration
is not
without the celebrants.

The kingdom of god...
celebration?
or place of meeting?
triumph or encounter?
Herein lies the challenge
the invitation for repentance.

The invitations are sent once more
accepted by the oft' forgotten
the table is filled and overflowing
the kingdom of god arrives.

There is a space in the pew beside us.
There is an empty seat at our table at home.
There is room in our car, on our couch, in our lives.

Whom then shall we invite?

The doctor the lawyer the banker?
The mother the neighbor the friend?
The homeless the outcast the poor?

Whom then shall we invite?

Maybe we are planning an event.
Maybe we prefer to dine alone.
Maybe,
just maybe,
we are ready to encounter the kingdom of God.

Whom then shall we invite?

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Matthew 22 - see also Exodus 20 - Ten Commandments (2002)

Matthew 22:34-40 (Mark 12:28, Luke 10:25) (2002)

Once upon a time
a wise man offered a challenge;
"What is the greatest commandment?"

The calendars on our desks share a vision of greatness;
bills to pay, phone calls to return,
appointments to keep.
Love the Lord your God.

The cameras of our memories share what commands us;
children to bathe and partners to help
parents calling and grandchildren hopeful.
**Love the Lord your God
with all your heart, and with all your soul,
and with all your mind.**

Still the Spirit lures us to new priorities;
open spaces to experience wonder,
strangers becoming friends,
devotion to that which transcends.
**Love the Lord your God
with all your heart, and with all your soul,
and with all your mind.
Love your neighbor as yourself.**

Matthew 23:1-11 - see Matthew 18:1-3 - Litany of Greatness

Matthew 23:12 (2002)

Searching for greatness
Christ is encountered in service.
Pausing to remember
New life awaits our embrace.
Striving for meaning
Whispers of peace beckon within.

Matthew 25:1-13 (1999)

Ten lamps gathered,
with oil enough for all.
Ten lamps gathered,
But five are empty
showing careless disregard.
Ten lamps gathered,
Five blaze with oil
abundant enough to share.
Ten lamps gathered,
Five lifeless
when laziness and greed collide.

Ten lamps gathered...
How many will burn tonight?

Creator God, giver of oil, hear us as we pray...
For generous hearts to share oil with our neighbors.

Creator God, giver of oil, hear us as we pray...
For the vision necessary to leave our comfortable seats in search of oil.

Creator God, giver of oil, hear us as we pray...
For forgiveness for the ways our selfishness and our apathy collide.

Ten lamps gathered, with oil enough for all.
Come children of God, into a sacred circle
Where sharing creates abundance
And no one leaves hungry. Amen.

Matthew 25:14-30 (2002)

we have talent
precious metal
protected, hoarded.

we have talent
symbolic worth
invested, growing

we have talent
opportunity unfolding
sharing, giving

Matthew 25:31-46 (2002)

Looking for the king
Christ lives in the prisoner.
**Whenever we see the captive and the lost,
we see Christ.**

Serving in the palace
Christ lives in the homeless.
**Whenever we touch the last and the least,
we touch Christ.**

Listening for the powerful
Christ lives in the vulnerable.
**Whenever to hear the frail and the lonely,
we hear Christ.**

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Mark 1:40-45 (2003)

When we grieve for what might have been and
lament our mistakes,
May we cry with the leper,
"You can make me clean!"

When we fall prey to the lure of believing that
all we need is ourselves,
May we pray with the leper,
"You can make me clean!"

When we forget the possibilities of God's
presence realized in our lives,
May we proclaim with the leper,
"You can make me clean!"

May we hear the good news proclaimed to the
leper,
promised to all who believe,
"You are clean!"
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Mark 2:1-12 (2003)

Empowering God,
when the road ahead looms endless,
**Empower us to be companions
for one another along the road.**

Inspiring God,
when the road forward is blocked,
**Inspire in us creative responses
that move us beyond the barriers.**

Enabling God,
when the road before us divides,
**Enable us to hear your voice
from beyond the divide.**

Mark 4:1ff - see Matthew 13:1ff

Mark 4:3-9 - see Genesis 19 - Parable of the Sower
meets Lot

Mark 4:31

Invocation and Call to Worship

We feel like mustard seeds,
tiny and insignificant.
Like unplanted seeds,
we forget that it is our calling
to be planted in the warmth of God's earth.
May the Great Spirit
carry our seeds to fertile ground
where the roots of our faith may grow deeply
and the branches of our love be broad.

Called to be branches in Christ's body,
We yearn to be connected to the vine.
Called to be mustard bushes offering shade to
God's creatures,
**We search for places to plant the seeds of
faith.**

Called to be growing with God in the midst of
this world's painful questions,
We seek God's nurturing presence.

Prayer of Dedication

**May the offerings brought this day be used
as seeds,
planted faithfully and nurtured lovingly
so that God's way may be realized anew in
this world.**

**Grant us the humility we need to plant and
tend your precious garden. Amen.**

Mark 4:35-41 - see 1 Samuel 17

Mark 6:30ff (2006) - Sabbath Rest

Weary God
you who crept into human skin
skin that was tired and weak
skin that needed Sabbath rest
skin that felt harried and pained...
Weary God
be gentle with us
as we gather in our neediness.

Come with your questions, come with your
awe!

**For the God who broods over the chaos
meets us in this place.**

Come with your energy, come with your
weariness!

**For the God who breathes new life into the
dust**

meets us in this place.

Come with your sadness, come with your joy!

**For the God who dared to become human
meets us in this place.**

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Mark 7:24-30 and Matthew 15:21-28 (2000)

Don't beg.
My mother told me.
Don't whine.
I tell my children.
Be polite.
The key to civil society.

The foreigner approached the rabbi.
Her need was great, her daughter ill,
Her desperation complete.

She begged.
She whined.
She was impolite.

Faith emboldened by need
Shouting.
Heard.
Healing.

Uppity faith and
Feisty women
Annoyance rewarded.
Challenge inspiring.

Mark 8:27-33, also Matthew 16:13-20 and Luke 9:18-22 (2002) - "Who do you say?"

Reflection

Jesus asked them,
Who do you say that I am?
Elijah, Prophet, Rabbi.
Son of God, Messiah, Christ.
The Way, The Truth, The Life.
Savior, Shepherd, Friend.
The last, the least, the lost.
Jesus asked Peter.
Jesus asked Pilate.
Jesus asks us.
Who do you say that I am?

Statement of Believing

We believe in God
who creates mystery
and revels in ambiguity.
We are inquisitive by nature.
We believe in Jesus
whose life and teachings
offered more questions than answers.
We are students of enigma.
We believe in the brooding Spirit
who leaves us discontent
offering possibilities.
We are a people on a quest.

Mark 9:1-8 - see Matthew 17:1-6- Transfiguration

Mark 9:30-37 (2003)

The first shall be last.
We come to worship as we are.
The last shall be first.
We come with confidence.
The first shall be last.
We come with questions.
The last shall be first.
We come burdened by failure.
The first shall be last.
We come celebrating success.
The last shall be first.
We come fearful of the future.
The first shall be last
and the last shall be first
and a little child shall lead them.

Mark 9:49-50 (1997)

God of the salt
God of the fire
God of anger
God of laughter
God of parables and riddles
God of story and proclamation
God of comfort
God of affliction
God of the salt
God of the fire
come now
be now
here now.
Amen.

Mark 9:49-50 (1997)

We offer salt.
We offer our questions.
We offer fire.
We offer our hunger.
Bless the gifts laid before you.
Bless the questions and the hunger.
Amen.

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Mark 10 (2000)

Treasure is...
Gold and silver,
Frankincense and myrrh.
Treasure is...
To have and to hold,
'Til death us do part.
Treasure is...
Family heirlooms
Offering precious memories.

Come...
bringing treasure, seeking treasure.
Come...
treasured, treasuring.

Mark 10:4-52 (2003)

The beggar cries out, "Jesus, Son of David,
have mercy on me!"
Grant us the vision to ask for help.
The one of God responds, "What do you want?"
Grant us the peace to hear you.
The beggar chooses healing, "Teacher, let me
see again."
Grant us the courage to choose health.
The choice collides with life itself, "Go, your
faith has made you well."
Grant us the wisdom to go.

Mark 12:28-34 - see Matthew 22:34-40

Mark 12:38 (2003)

two copper coins
echo beyond time
*abundance yielded drought,
poverty bloomed to generosity*
two copper coins
echo beyond time
*the need to protect
confronts the call to relinquish*
two copper coins
echo beyond time
*redefining worth
as a place in the heart*
two copper coins
echo beyond time

Mark 13:8 - see Isaiah 2:4 (2003)

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Luke 3:17

The winnowing fork
yielded by an unseen hand
haunts the imagination.

Tossed in the air,
the breath of God
sifts and sorts.
The wheat ground to new life,
the chaff discarded and burned.

Masks broken and useless
vulnerability exposed
spasms of grief reshaping
transition interminable...
New life emerges.

The winnowing fork
yielded by an unseen hand
trembles.

Luke 4:21-30 (2004)

A hometown boy
made good.
Isn't that Joseph's son?
His ministry begins
prophetic words.
Who is that man?
The message haunts
painful challenge.
Is that Joseph's son?
Welcome worn thin
dismissed, forgotten.
Who is this man?

Luke 4 and Isaiah 61 (2004)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon us.
The Spirit of the Lord is in us.
Anointing us,
Sending us.
To bring good news
to bind up
to proclaim favor
to comfort
to provide
to loosen.
The day of the Lord is coming.
The day of the Lord has come.

Luke 6 (2004)

Happy are we
when our treasures cannot be quantified.
Happy are we
when our knowledge is tempered by

mystery.

Happy are we
when our pain is held in the balm of love.
Happy are we
when our delight comes from beyond ourselves.

Blessed are we when we let go of possessions
for the kingdom of God unfolds in open places.

**Woe to us when we gather into barns
for soon this life will be over**

Blessed are we who know the ache of hunger
for the empty places in body and soul are the
fertile soil for new growth.

**Woe to us who fill our lives to capacity
for we fail to recognize what is missing.**

Blessed are we who know sorrow
for the ache of love lost is witness to the seed
planted.

**Woe to us who have yet to know the pain of
grief, for the fullness of love is woven with
sorrow.**

Blessed are we who know scorn
for the rejection of humans keeps us mindful of
that beyond.

**Woe to us who depend on the approval of
others, for to dance with Spirit appears
foolish.**

Blessed are we who live in the harmony of life
in the Spirit,

For we will recognize abundance. Amen.

Luke 6 – see 1 Samuel 17:1-58 - Strength (1997)

Luke 7

A drop of water.
Insignificant in isolation.
When dropped in a pool
The ripples move out into infinity
The water is changed
By one drop of water.
A drop is falling
Now
Into the pool of our spirit.
The water begins to ripple...

*Holy God, as we consider
the magnitude of a drop of water
to touch and change the pool,
may we hear the power of your touch in our
lives,
the potential for our lives to touch others.
Amen.*

Luke 8:4-8 – see Genesis 19 – Parable of the Sower
meets Lot

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Luke 8:4 - see Matthew 13:1ff

Luke 9:18-22 - see Mark 8:27-33 - "Who do you say?"

Luke 9:28-36 - see Matthew 17:1-6 - Transfiguration

Luke 10

Carrying the myriad of relationships which define us,
Lugging complicated family relationships that we'd rather not mention,

We come to God's table of welcome and healing.

Bearing God's image in our physical beings,
Dragging painful medical histories that threaten our welcome,

We come to God's table of welcome and healing.

Holding the promise of life before us,
Grasping at the frayed edges of our youthful dreams,

We come to God's table of welcome and healing.

Luke 10:25-37 (2004)

he walks by preoccupied frightened

we walk by

he lies helpless dazed overwhelmed

we lie helpless

dear god, may they find each other.

dear god, may we find each other.

Luke 10:25ff - see Matthew 23:34-40

Luke 11:2-4 (and Matthew 6:9-13)- Lord's Prayer
Litany

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

**Mystery beyond our knowing,
close to us as our breathing,
in humble awe we pray.**

Your Kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven

**We pray for your vision of justice and mercy
to be made real in our world even now.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**We pray for your vision of enough;
enough sustenance, enough warmth,
enough healing for all of your children.**

Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

**We pray for the grace to let go of that which
is death dealing
as we embrace your vision for life,
that we might follow you safely through the
obstacle course.**

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are
yours.

Now and for ever.

**Giving thanks for presence that defies
definition
in this life and beyond.**

Amen.

Amen.

Luke 12:51 - see Matthew 10:34

Luke 14:7-10 - see Matthew 18:1-3 - Litany of
Greatness

Luke 16 (1998)

Gospel Reflection

Masters,
two and more,
competing for our money
clamoring for our time
creating chaos in our lives.
Master,
one God,
quiet us and draw us near.

Prayer of Dedication

Knowing that many voices clamor and
compete,
we pray that these offerings given
may become symbolic of our decision
to serve one master, one God.

Luke 18:9-14 - see Matthew 18:1-3 - Litany of
Greatness

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Luke 21 and Acts 4

Scriptural Reflection

Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury;

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common.

Gather us in, Holy One, show us the way home.

and Jesus saw a poor widow put in two copper coins.

There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold.

Gather us in, Compassionate Christ, help us to see safety and hear welcome.

Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all the living that she had."

They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

Gather us in, Sustaining Spirit, enable us to open our arms extend the circle.

Litany based on Starhawk quote

We are all longing to go home to some place we have never been - a place half-remembered and half-envisioned - we can only catch glimpses of from time to time. Community.

Gather us in, Holy One, show us the way home.

Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats.

Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us,
eyes will light up as we enter,
voices will celebrate with us
whenever we come into our own power.

Gather us in, Compassionate Christ, help us to see safety and hear welcome.

Community means strength that joins our strength

to do the work that needs to be done.

Arms to hold us when we falter.

A circle of healing. A circle of friends.

Someplace where we can be free.

Gather us in, Sustaining Spirit, enable us to open our arms extend the circle.

Luke 24 - Call to Worship

We gather to remember the ancient stories of revelation.

We read from our ancient texts.

We gather to interpret the meaning these stories reveal in our lives.

We hear from our traditions.

We gather to share the revelation of the risen Christ.

We experience in ritual and story.

The Word of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

Luke 24 - Prayer of Dedication

Their eyes were opened.

Our eyes are opened.

They recognized him.

We recognize her.

He vanished from their sight.

She vanishes from our view.

Their eyes were still open.

Our eyes can still be open.

They claimed the truth of their experience.

We can claim the truth of our experience.

He vanished from their sight, but not from the souls.

Even when we cannot see her, her presence is real.

Open eyes,

Recognizing Christ,

Vision beyond sight.

Christ has risen. Christ has risen indeed.

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John 1, altered for choral reading.

In the beginning

was the Word.

The Word was with God,

and the Word was God.

In the beginning with God.

All things came into being through the Word,

without the Word not one thing came into being.

What has come into being was life,

And the life was the light of all people.

The light shines in the darkness,

And the darkness did not

will not

can not

overcome it.

John 3:1-17 - Call to Worship

For God so loved the world;

**The sparrows, the mountain lions,
the fish and the people.**

For God so loved the world;

**In success and failure, in sickness and
health, in mediocrity and extraordinary.**

For God so loved the world;

**Enough to become one of us, enough to suffer
along with us,
enough to offer new life for us.**

For God so loved the world;

Let us worship God!

John 6:1-15 (1997)

Gospel Reflection

A young boy's lunch,

Two loaves and a few fish,

Fed the multitude;

Five thousand and more.

Each eating their fill,

Each knowing enough;

With baskets to share,

Plenty for all.

Insufficiency shared

Is broken and blessed

And scarcity is redeemed,

Now and forever.

Prayers of the People

We come believing in our emptiness,
believing that we will never have enough,
believing that what we have is unworthy.

We come fearful of sharing,
fearful of losing our tenuous grip on security,
fearful of touching and knowing the pain of
others.

We come overwhelmed by the hunger,
overwhelmed by the suffering of children near
and far,
overwhelmed by the endless tales of senseless
violence, greed, and death.

We come aching from the weight of the
responsibility,
aching from the chilling challenge of knowing
our abundance,
aching from the gnawing awareness that we
have much to share.

We come clinging to our meager lunches;
bless them, and us.
break them, and us.
share them, and us.

John 6:59ff - see 1 Kings 8:41-43 (2006)

John 13:34-35

Call to Worship

Jesus offers a new-old commandment,
that we should love each other.

With the incredible power
and the unfathomable depth
of God's love for us
we can

we must love one another.

And it is in this our love for one another
that the world will know
whom and what we worship.

Come, children of God,
let us love one another.

Called to love one another
we gather aware not only of our "Hallmark"
moments but also our pain;
hiding from wounds still festering
and dreams denied knowing
and at the same time not knowing
the impossible essential truth of love's
demand.

Called to love one another,
God of mercy,
hear our prayer.

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John 13:34-35

Litany of Confession and Assurance

Come with what you have.

For you who grieve this day
know that you are invited to bring the broken
pieces of your heart.

**Loved by one another,
we discover God's love for us.**

Come with what you have.

For you who come with gladness know that
your melody will find harmony.

**Accepting God's love for us,
we are called to love one another.**

Come with what you have.

For you weighed down by too many 'shoulds'
and 'what-ifs'
know that here you may lay down the burdens
of guilt and shame.

**Loved by one another,
we discover God's love for us.**

Come with what you have.

For you who have the answers,
know that new questions await you.

**Accepting God's love for us,
we are called to love one another.**

Come with what you have.

For you who come seeking,
know that your questions are safe in the
presence of God.

**Loved by one another,
we discover God's love for us.**

John 14:15-21

loving Jesus
is loving our neighbor
loving Jesus
is being loved by God
loving our neighbor

is being loved by God
who would have guessed
that the kid next-door was divine?

John 15:1-8 - 1997

Abide in me,

We pray for God to abide in us.

Abide in me,

**We yearn to feel God's presence,
hoping that God will find and protect us.**

As I abide in you,

**Jesus offers an invitation for us to do the
abiding.**

As I abide in you,

**We can choose life in the Spirit's presence,
bearing the fruit of the Spirit's love.**

Abide in me as I abide in you.

John 15:1-8 - We are the Vines (2000)

Reflection

The vine emerges from the earth,
nourished

and nourishing.

Rises without visible connection;

roots hidden,

promise unknown.

Strong to withstand storms,
fragile when plucked too soon.

So it is that we grow...

nourished by invisible connections to the
living God,

called to nourish that which is seen and that
which is yet buried within.

Call to Worship

Called to be branches in Christ's body,

We yearn to be connected to the vine.

Called to be mustard bushes offering shade to
God's creatures,

**We search for places to plant the seeds of
faith.**

Called to be growing with God in the midst of
this world's painful questions,

We seek God's nurturing presence.

John 21:15-19 (2003)

Children of God, do you love the God
who hovered over the face of the deep and
called the worlds into being?

Yes, you know that we do.

Then feed God's children.

Children of God, do you love the God
who was revealed in the life, death, and
resurrection of Jesus the Christ?

Yes, you know that we do.

Then take care of God's children.

Children of God, do you the God
who breathes new life into us even as we
gather this day?

Yes, you know that we do.

Then feed God's children.

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John 21:15-19 (1999)

Jesus asked: Do you love me more than these?

Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.

Feed my lambs.

Coming to church on Sunday

Teaching, cleaning, planning

Making church happen

But do we love Jesus?

Jesus asked again: Do you love me?

Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.

Tend my sheep.

Glancing over the newspaper

Blood spilled in Kosovo and Denver

Shudders, tears, silence

How can we take care of the sheep?

Still Jesus asks: Do you love me more than these?

Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.

Feed my lambs.

Follow me

Such simple words

Challenge and invitation

Loving Jesus means following him to the sheep.

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Acts 2 – see Genesis 11 (2004)

Acts 4 – see Luke 21 (2006)

Acts 9 – see Jeremiah 1

1 Corinthians 1

Reflection

The Apostle Paul writes to the people of the church;

appealing that all should be in agreement,
*Judge not, and you will not be judged;
condemn not, and you will not be condemned;
forgive, and you will be forgiven.*

Admonishing that there should be no divisions,

*Love your enemies,
do good to those who hate you,
bless those who curse you,
pray for those who abuse you.*

Advising that all should be united in the same mind and the same purpose.

*As you wish that people would do to you,
do so to them.*

Litany

Called to be of one mind

We have a wide array of ideas.

Called to be united

We are more comfortable with our own kind.

Called to be in agreement

Still we cherish our right to dissent.

Creating God, remind us again that Our diversity of body, mind and spirit Is a pale reflection of your expansive spirit. Enable us to embrace our diversity Not to divide but rather To draw us closer to you and to one another.

Amen.

1 Corinthians 8:1-13 - Knowing and Understanding

We know so much.

We understand so little.

We value education.

Empower our values to blossom into commitments that all children have access to a quality education regardless of parents, neighborhood, gifts, or disabilities.

We value intellectual pursuit.

Endow our scholarly inquiry with a quest for spiritual awareness that the seeds of knowledge may fall onto fertile ground.

We value academic success.

Enable us to cherish each child's successes recognizing your light beckoning from within an infinite array of talents and challenges.

We know so much.

We understand so little.

Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

1 Corinthians 13 - for congregational response.

If we speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels,

but do not have love,

I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

And if we have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if we have all faith, so as to remove mountains,

but do not have love,

I am nothing.

If we give away all our possessions, and hand over our bodies so that we may boast,

but do not have love,

I gain nothing.

Love is patient;

love is kind;

love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude.

Love does not insist on its own way;

Love is not irritable or resentful;

Love rejoices in the truth.

Love bears all things, **Love believes all things,**

Love hopes all things,

Love endures all things.

Love never ends.

Amen.

Colossians 4:6 - Leviticus 2:13 - see Genesis 19:24-26 (2002) – Called to be Salt

Hebrews 11

Now faith is

*the assurance of things hoped for,
the conviction of things not seen.*

We come convinced of many things but trusting very few.

Holy God of limitless surprises,

meet us here

in this place

as we touch that which we can not see that which we have not dared to hope.

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James 1:18 - Call to Worship (2006)

The world is hard
Our losses real
Our grief tangible
Our fear palpable
Merciful God, quiet our rush to judgment.

The world is heavy
Our anxiety clawing
Our confusion large
Our responsibility tenuous
Brooding God, slow our impulsive actions.

The world is mystery
Our faith rooting
Our hope kindling
Our love blossoming
Loving God, may we be quick in our understanding of your call.

James 2 - Call to Worship (1997)

Come to hear the Word.
Come to do the Word.
Come to experience Comfort.
Come to experience Challenge.
Come to find Cost.
Come to find Joy.
Come to find Humanity.
Come to find Community.
Come to find Church.
Come to find God.

James 5 - Call to Worship

Are any among you suffering?
Then let us pray.
Are any cheerful?
Then let us sing songs of praise.
Are any among you sick?
Then let us turn to each other for God's healing touch.
The prayer of faith will save us
And God will lift us up.

1 John 4:7 - 1994

From God comes the wonder of creation.
We will worship God the Creator.
From God comes healing for the brokenness we see.
We will worship God our Redeemer.
From God comes the strength to face the new day.
We worship God our Sustainer.

1 John 4:7 - Litany - 1994

God calls us to a ministry of love.
Beloved, let us love one another.
We are called to love our parents and our children, our friends and our neighbors.
Love is from God.
We are called to love the neighbor that hurt our feelings,
the parent who was cruel, and the co-worker who is selfish.
Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.
We are called to love even the people we cannot see...in Chicago's tenements, in Bosnia's war, in South Africa's elections.
Those who love God Must love their sisters and brothers also.
May we accept God's call to this mysterious ministry.
Amen.

Revelation 1:4 (2003)

We come diffidently
weighed down by the excesses and the sorrows of the past.
*Grace to you and peace,
from the God who is and who was
and who is to come.*

We come hopefully
knowing that the presence of God will not be limited
by our human constructs.
*Grace to you and peace,
from the God who is and who was
and who is to come.*

We come thankfully
discovering abundance born not of possession but of the heart.
*Grace to you and peace,
from the God who is and who was
and who is to come.*