



Touchstone

2022 Christmas Prayers for Slivers of Hope & Light

There will be one second more daylight on December 22nd than on the 21st – the shortest day of the year. Hope comes in slivers and by the 25th we'll be up by 15 seconds. The unknown keeps us guessing as the world tilts and spins every 24 hours.

Amid the spin we live, work, eat, play, and pray and none of it is easy or simple. Some days it feels like chaos on all fronts. Yet this humble story of God becoming one of us and being with and for us offers small slivers of a different sort of hope.

When looking for powerful problem solvers a carpenter, his pregnant wife and an infant vulnerable to the noses of the barn's other occupants aren't our first choice.

But at its heart the story lifts us because it is about humility, emptying of self and humble obedience not only of God Almighty but the carpenter and his wife.

In the flicker of a candle, the smile of a child, the comfort for a sorrowing loved one, the forgiveness and reconciliation between family members, slivers of hope shine out in these weeks of entertaining, concerts, and sensate bombardment.

Much of our religious experience is shaped by hierarchical structures with clear lines of power and authority – and life isn't like that. And neither is the Incarnation of God in Christ, in humbly yet all-powerfully engaging the need for restoration of Creation by entering it .

The prayers and reflections in this wee card are to enable this process of sensitizing ourselves to the slivers of light and hope amid the larger sounds of societal craziness and see Jesus at work in our world.

He offers himself by his Spirit to us individually and in our gatherings, in one another and in the needs of those he brings across our path.

We can join with the angels and magi in worship and adoration of the light of the world. This affirmation of faith may be helpful.

Affirmation of Faith & Trust

To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.

Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory.

(From Morning Prayers in Celtic Daily Prayer The Northumbria Community Harper Collins Publishers)

A Wise Man's Hope We Would Shine

Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became *human*! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient

death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.

Because of that obedience, God lifted him high and honored him far beyond anyone or anything, ever, so that all created beings in heaven and on earth—even those long ago dead and buried—will bow in worship before this Jesus Christ, and call out in praise that he is the Master of all, to the glorious honor of God the Father.....

Do everything readily and cheerfully—no bickering, no second-guessing allowed! Go out into the world uncorrupted, a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society. Provide people with a glimpse of good living and of the living God. Carry the light-giving Message into the night so I'll have good cause to be proud of you on the day that Christ returns.

(Philippians 2:5-11,14-16 MSG)

A Prayer for the Shortest Day

O God we feel the darkness being longer than the daylight and long for more light. Remind us that the light shines brightest in the darkest days and is not overcome. Help us to be short on impatience, anger, envy, and resentment. Help us receive your light and shine with it in kindness, patience, mercy, and gentleness ... for Jesus' sake.

A Prayer About Joseph

Thank you, God, for the humble carpenter who went against the grain of society to love and respect his wife, embrace his son of mystery, and protect his family against external threats. We don't need an angel to tell us that we can do better in how we treat others – show me the courage of a quiet man and let me emulate him for Jesus' sake.

A Prayer in Imitation of Mary

Help us O God to spend time with Mary and experience her wonder, confusion and fear as her life was changed forever when her womb carried God. In some mysterious way you have placed yourself inside me to carry as she did – quietly, gently, fruitfully, and eventually painfully. Let me be gobsmacked by the wonder and mystery of it all this Christmas season For Jesus' sake

From Zechariah's Prayer

'By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.'
(Luke 1.78-79 NRSV)

God of promises,
Sometimes we wait generations
for the dawn from on high;
sometimes only years.
We wait for justice and hope and light and
kindness to mingle in the tangle of our days.
And we age while we hope.
So may we age and hope
with tenderness and truth.
Because you are tender and true
even though we sometimes wonder.
Amen.

(Padraig O Tuama. Daily Prayer with the Corrymeela
Community . Canterbury Press)

A Story to Read Together

Here's an excerpt from a lovely short story by J.B. Phillips (for the full version is go to [www.touchstone.ca/Resources-seasonalprayer cards](http://www.touchstone.ca/Resources-seasonalprayer-cards)) It's a conversation between a wise old angel giving a rookie a tour of the universe and in one galaxy he points to a small grubby planet.

“That,” replied his senior, “is the Visited Planet.”

“Visited? You don't mean visited by.....?”

“Indeed I do. That ball has been visited by our young Prince of Glory.” And he bowed his head reverently.

“But how?” queried the younger one. “Do you mean that our great and glorious prince, with all these wonders and splendors of his creation, and millions more that I'm sure I haven't seen yet, went down in person to this fifth-rate little planet? Why should he do a thing like that?”

“It isn't for us,” said his senior a little stiffly, “to question his 'why's,' except that he is not impressed by size and numbers, as you seem to be. As to why he became one of them – how else do you suppose he could visit them?”

The little angel's face wrinkled in disgust.

“Do you mean to tell me,” he said, “that he stooped so low as to become one of those creeping, crawling creatures on that floating ball?”

“I do, and I don't think he would like you to call them 'creeping, crawling creatures' in that tone of voice. For, strange as it may seem to us, he loves them. He went down to visit them to lift them up to become like him.”

(New Testament Christianity by J.B. Phillips, Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd)

J.B. Phillips Comments after the Story

“Imaginary? Fanciful? Certainly, but a good deal truer than some of our current modern thinking. For in the eyes of the Eternal World this little planet is of the highest importance simply because it is the Visited Planet. We may not realize it at all, but we are right plumb in the middle of a vast drama, a tremendous battle between light and darkness. The whole core and essence of the Christian Faith, which many of us hold so lightly, is that Light Himself visited our darkness, scaled down to fit the human scene. It is true that since the Visit we know for certain that this rolling ball is by no means our permanent home; our destiny is even higher than that of the angels. But today, and every day that we live in the here-and-now, we are part of the vast Experiment, the age-long Battle, whose stage and testing ground is the planet which we call the Earth. (*New Testament Christianity* by J.B. Phillips, Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd.)

A New Year's Prayer

God of the years,
At the gate of the year
we put our hands in yours.
As the old tide recedes,
may we plant our footsteps in the sands.
May we travel with less baggage
and more wisdom,
and learn from you
how our journey should be.
(*Celtic Prayers for life Today*, Ray Simpson)

