
A Ceremony of Candles

(These readings can be used for lighting candles on a Chanukah menorah, or for days leading up to Christmas, or for a Solstice observance, or simply for candles on the table at mealtimes.)

We light a candle for peace in the world, remembering that peace must begin in each of us, and in our family.

We light a candle for justice, as a reminder that every day we make choices that affect others and their lives.

We light a candle for courage, for the people who have given us an example to follow. (Name people who have shown courage, and why.)

We light a candle for those who have suffered, and for those who have given their lives in pursuit of courage, and justice, and peace.

We light a candle of thanksgiving, for all the gifts we have received, and all the blessings which have come our way. (Name some of the things you are thankful for.)

We light a candle for joy, so that we will remember to spread what is joyful to us as widely as we can. (Name some of the sources of your joy.)

We light a candle for hope, to remind us that there are always possibilities to help make the world better. (Name one thing that gives you hope.)

We light a candle for love, which is the source of hope, joy and thanksgiving, which is the source of courage, and justice, and peace. (Name some of the people you love most, and think of at least one loving thing you can do today.)

(You can also adapt this candlelighting to fit the observance of Kwanzaa, the African American holiday which celebrates community, December 26 – 31. Each day of Kwanzaa has a specific focus, including: Unity, Self-Determination, Responsibility, Working Together, Purpose, Creativity and Faith.

See www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org for more information.)

READINGS AND MEDITATIONS

To Share with Family and Friends

Solstice, Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, New Year's

December 2014

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Corvallis

Now is the moment of magic, when the whole round earth
turns again toward the sun,
and here's a blessing:
the days will be longer and brighter now
even before the winter settles in to chill us.

Now is the moment of magic, when people beaten down and
broken, with nothing left but misery and candles and their own
clear voices, kindle tiny lights and whisper secret music,
and here's a blessing:
the dark universe is suddenly illuminated by the lights of the
menorah, suddenly ablaze with the lights of the kinara, and the
whole world is glad and loud with winter singing.

Now is the moment of magic, when an eastern star beckons the
ignorant toward and unknown goal,
and here's a blessing:
they find nothing in the end but an ordinary baby, born at
midnight, born in poverty, and the baby's cry like bells ringing
makes people wonder as they wander through their lives, what
human love might really look like, sound like, and feel like.

Now is the moment of magic, and here's a blessing:
we already possess all the gifts we need;
we've already received our presents:
ears to hear music, eyes to behold lights, hands to build true
peace on earth and to hold each other tight in love.

*Victoria Safford, from Walking toward Morning
Reprinted in Quest, CLF, December 2005*

Mealtime Graces and Blessings-----

May peace come to our house and home. May peace come to us and to all we love. May Christmas bring us peace, deep down inside. May peace be among us as we gather around the table, with thanks for all the gifts life gives us.

unknown

May these candles we light remind us of the glowing of love in our hearts.

May the songs we sing renew our hearts, our hope and our vision. May these moments when we gather with family and friends to give thanks strengthen the bonds of caring between us, to last throughout the coming year.

Patrick Green

May we be worthy to serve others throughout the world
Who live and die in poverty or hunger,
Give them, through our hands, this day their daily bread,
And by our understanding love, give peace and joy.

Mother Theresa

Meditations and Readings-----

In this season of hope, let us be reminded, oh spirit of love and life:
Keep us from missing life by small neglects that blind the eyes of the spirit;
Keep us from being overly analytical when we need to be understanding;
From talking too much when the situation demands listening;
From being too orderly when we may need the disorder of insight;
From being so involved in the immediate that we miss the long view of the soul;
From making such great efforts in life when the truth that saves is so simple;
From plodding along when we could hear celestial music and begin a magnificent journey to the kingdom of heaven which is at hand;
Keep us trusting, lighting candles in the darkness, knowing that with the eyes of the spirit and the ears of the mind we may perhaps know Christmas this year.

Ralph Helverson (adapted)

As the winter solstice turns our earth and early twilight closes down the day, while all around December snowfall covers our streets and walks....we come together as people have done from earliest times to celebrate with flame the waning winter and rejoice that the globe now swings once more toward the light. As our burning candles bespeak this ancient faith, so may it express our prayer that the power that directs our planet in its path will set such a solstice for our hopes for our future. Form the dark hours of perversity and wrath, we pray that sad humanity may be guided in the path of peace, that like our earth we may emerge from longest night to a brighter day.

Paul Carnes

How full was the inn at Bethlehem? Too full?

How full are our lives? Too full?

Too full of society and societies to have room for family?
Too full of activities to have room for accomplishments
Too full of responsibilities to have room for simple joys?
Too full of business to have time for religion?
Too full of busy-ness to have time for thought and prayer?
Too full of self interest to have room for common needs?
Too full of regrets to have time for hope?
Too full of fear to have room for faith?
Too full of suspicion to have room for love?
Too full of conflict to have room for peace and goodwill?
Too full of noise to have room for angel choirs?

Make room! Clear away the debris!

Open the doors to your heart!

The things that matter will not clutter and crowd your life.

The things that matter will enlarge the orbit of your being until you are large enough to contain all that is worthy of being welcomed.

Albert Q. Perry

Here's to epiphanies great and small, whenever they occur. A blessing on all Wise Men and Women, East and West. Here's to stargazers and pilgrims everywhere, who are still foolish enough and brave enough to follow their stars, who travel by night, who bestow their uncommon gifts on us all.

Patrick T.A. O'Neill