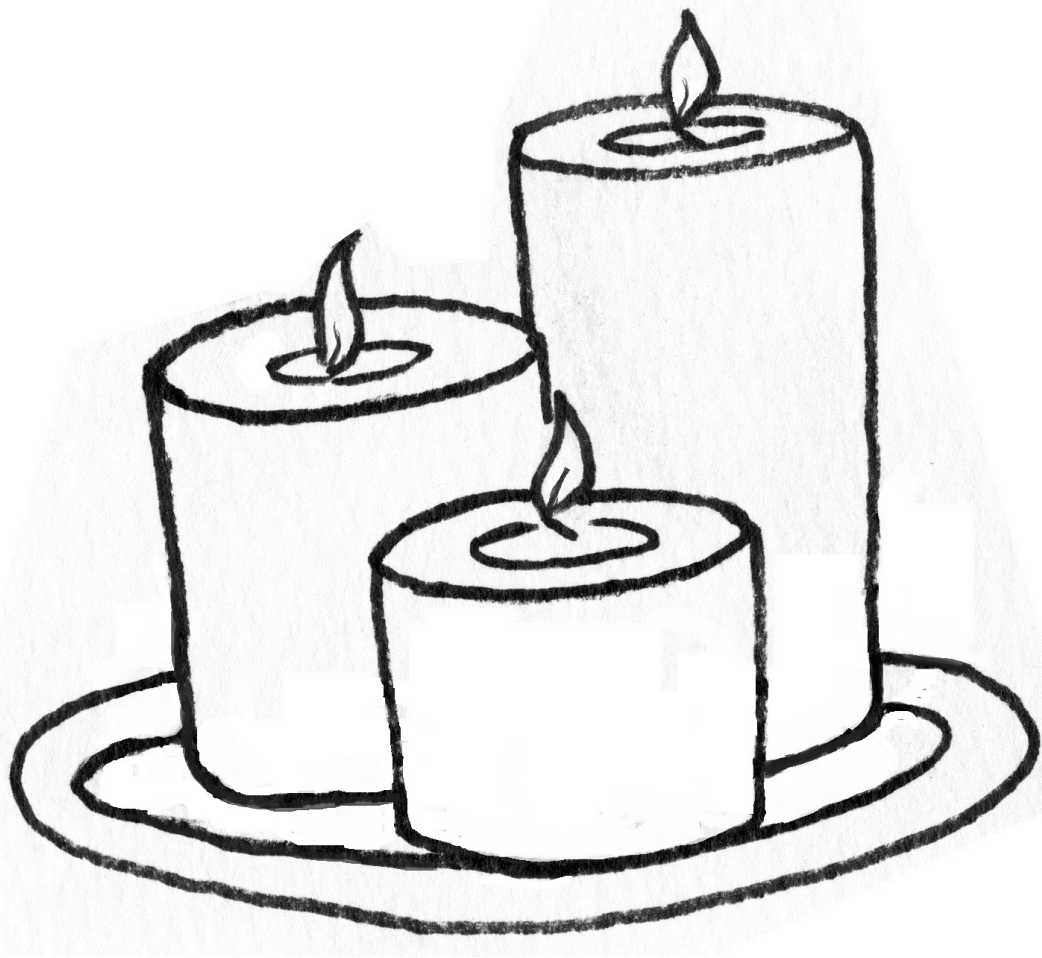


# **LIVING BETWEEN SHADOW AND LIGHT**



## **A MIDWINTER CANDLEMAS RETREAT DISCERNING OUR FAITH**

"I know where I am; but where am I going?"

**PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN BURLINGTON**  
**02 FEBRUARY 2013, 12:30 – 4:00 P.M.**

# **LIVING BETWEEN SHADOW & LIGHT**

## **MidWinter Spiritual Retreat, 02 February 2013**

12:30 p.m.	Registration Coffee, Tea & Conversation	Narthex Outside Fellowship Hall
1:00 p.m.	Welcome & Orientation Just What is Candlemas Anyway? Opening Worship Reflection on Scripture: Luke 2:22–40 “Presentation of the Lord”	Sanctuary
2:00 p.m.	Small Group Sharing & Praying: “I know where I am; but where am I going?” “How do we move away from darkness and into the light?”	Front Classroom Small Classroom Nursery Youth Room
2:35 p.m.	Break	
2:40 p.m.	Candle making & St. Bridget's Crosses	Fellowship Hall
3:00 p.m.	Spiritual Practices – The Prayer of Examen	Fellowship Hall
3:15 p.m.	Individual Responses: Continued prayer of examen, journaling, art activity, conversation, contemplation	Venues to be announced
3:45 p.m.	Closing Worship, with blessing of candles	Sanctuary



Candlemas Bells

## WHAT IS CANDLEMAS?

### The Presentation in the Temple

Forty days after Christmas, on February 2<sup>nd</sup> is the Christian celebration or 'feast' of the *Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, also known as the *Purification of the Virgin Mary*, or simply as *Candlemas*. It celebrates the presentation of Jesus in the temple at Jerusalem, and the ritual purification of his mother Mary. According to Jewish law (Leviticus 12), after the birth of a male child the mother was ritually unclean for 40 days after the birth. At that time, she was to bring an offering and present herself to the priest to be purified. The law specified that the offering was to be a lamb; or if the family could not afford that they were to bring two doves or pigeons. In his birth narrative, Luke records that when the time came for the purification, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice according to the law, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." The offering of a pair of birds implies that the couple was too poor to afford a lamb for an offering. While in the temple, an elderly devout man named Simeon, perceives that Jesus is the promised Messiah. In words which we have come to call the *Song of Simeon* or the *Nunc dimittis* (Latin for "Now let me depart") Simeon declares that having seen the Messiah he can now depart this life in peace. Simeon foresees that Jesus will become a light to the Gentiles, but that he will also be a cause of division, sorrow, and judgment. At that moment, the 84-year-old prophet Anna began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Candlemas celebrates the many themes of these events, presentation, purification and light for the world. Candlemas is a turning point in the church year, it marks the point at which we take a last look back at Christmas and then turn our minds firmly towards the Easter cross. We have been working through the Sundays of Epiphany, now we leave them behind, and soon it will be Lent.

### A Light to the World

Light is a central symbol of the Presentation. Coming in the season after Epiphany, the feast celebrates Christ as the *Light of the World*. In the Epiphany, the magi or wise men recognized the significance of the newborn Jesus. Likewise, in the Presentation, Simeon and Anna are also enlightened as they recognize and proclaim Jesus as the awaited Messiah.

Light has always been a significant image of Christian spirituality. From the dawn of creation to the sunset of time the Bible rejoices in light. 'Let there be light' are the first recorded words of God (Genesis 1:3), and in the very last chapter of the New Testament, Jesus reveals himself to be 'the bright Morning Star' (Revelation 22:16). Light illuminates, clarifies, brightens, reveals. It was in these terms that Simeon recognized the Christ-child when Joseph and Mary traveled to Jerusalem to present their first male child in the Temple. In the contemporary Bible translation, *The Message*, Eugene Petersen paraphrases Simeon's words this way: "Now I have seen for myself, you can let me go in peace, I can die a satisfied man! It's out in the open now for all to see: a God-revealing light to the non-Jewish nations, and a glorifying light for us Jews".

By the seventh century it had become the custom to begin the worship service on February 2 with candle-lighting by the congregation gathered outside the worship area followed by a procession into the Church with lighted candles. This was to relive Simeon's experience of meeting the "Light of Nations" at the temple. It became the day of the year when all the candles, that were used in the church during the coming year, were brought into church and a blessing was said over them – so it was the Festival Day (or 'mass') of the Candles. The candle blessing is one of the three principle blessings of the liturgical year, the others being the blessing of palms and ashes.

Candlemas is about *Recognition*, *Revelation*, and *Renewal* of hope.

*Recognition:* In our material culture, how do we train ourselves to recognize the presence of holiness? There were no flashing arrows for Anna or Simeon screaming out, 'This is it!' Theirs were hearts, and eyes, prepared by patient waiting; lives of anticipated expectancy enabled the moment to be recognized, grasped and savored. Simeon and Anna recognized something special in Jesus. They had witnessed the Lord's Christ, and had seen God's salvation; perhaps not the salvation they were expecting, the vindication of a particular people, but something bigger and better, the salvation which God had prepared for all people.

*Revelation:* But Simeon adds some disturbing words to his joyful song of recognition. This salvation had a dark side. Not everyone will take kindly to Jesus; Jesus will be spoken against. No one will escape this penetrating, heart-searching event, not even Mary the mother of Jesus. We're not very comfortable with that kind of straight talk! We want Jesus to be light and fluffy; no talk of difficulty or crisis or falling. And as for having my deepest thoughts revealed – well really! In truth, Candlemas reminds us of the penetrating light of Christ; searching and cleansing, not with abrasive intention but only in love, helping us to get real.

*Renewal:* Hope can never die when its source is living. Jesus, is the source of hope, for hope is held by God, and God is alive in Christ. That was what Anna and Simeon recognized, and what has continued to be revealed, through the Spirit, to all of us whose lives need the hope that he can give.

### **Candlemas, Customs, and Culture**

And so Candlemas was born! Or was it? Like so many Christian festivals, Candlemas has its roots in elements of pre-Christian spirituality. February second is not only the midway point between Christmas and Lent, it was also an ancient festival of light which marked the midway point between the Winter Solstice and the Spring Equinox.

The holiday is also called "Brigid's Day", in honor of the great Irish Goddess Brigid. At her shrine, in the ancient Irish capital of Kildare, a group of virgin priestesses (no men allowed) kept a perpetual flame burning in her honor. She was considered a goddess of fire, patroness of craft work, poetry and healing. She was closely associated with livestock, regeneration and light. She was a Goddess of three faces, Maiden, Mother, and Crone and on this day, midway between solstice and equinox, she was reborn from the Crone of winter to the Maiden of spring. This 'trinitarian' symbolism was sometimes expressed by saying that Brigid had two sisters, also named Brigid. Brigid worship was so ingrained in Ireland that the Church couldn't very well erase her, so they made her a saint. When Christianity overtook Ireland the temple was taken over by nuns and became an Abbey. The nuns continued the custom of keeping the eternal flame burning and they also kept the rule about no men allowed.

Like Christmas, Candlemas has its secular side. Poised in this moment between shadow and light, ancient traditions held that this day could predict the weather for the remainder of winter. Well before

that groundhog Punxsutawney Phil ever crept out of his snug burrow, an ancient rhyme declared:

If Candlemas be fair and bright,  
Winter will have another fight.  
If Candlemas brings cloud and rain,  
Winter won't be back again.

Snowdrops (*galanthus nivalis*) those delicate flowers that herald new life from hardened ground, are also known as 'Candlemas Bells' because they bloom early in the year, even before Candlemas. The superstitious used to believe that it was unlucky to bring these flowers into the house before Candlemas.

Candlemas is not just an old tradition, now forgotten. The festival is still celebrated in many countries. In Spanish-speaking countries it is called '*Candelaria*', and in France '*la Chandeleur*'. On Epiphany, or 'Three Kings' Day' in Mexico, a figurine representing the baby Jesus is baked into a cake, and the person who finds the baby in their slice is obliged to host the celebration of Candelaria on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, when a feast of tamalitos and hot chocolate is enjoyed by all. In France and French-speaking Canada, la Chandeleur is better known as 'crepe day'; the round golden crepes enjoyed on that day are reminders of the round golden sun. If you can hold a coin in your writing hand while successfully flipping a crepe with the other hand, it is thought to bring good luck that year. (If you are unsuccessful, it presumably brings immediate good luck to the family dog!)

Candlemas marks the very end of the Christmas season. For some, no doubt including many of those who commence their secular Christmas season the day after Halloween, Christmas ends abruptly on December 26<sup>th</sup>. Most folk hold on at least until New Year's Day, and some even celebrate the full 12 days of Christmas until the Feast of Epiphany on January 6<sup>th</sup>. But for true diehards the Christmas season ends with Candlemas. In medieval times the greens, or at least the nativity scene, were commonly left intact until Candlemas, which gives Christmas the forty days of a major Christian festival along with Advent, Lent and Easter. A rhyme called "Ceremony upon Candlemas Eve" by the British poet Robert Herrick (1591 - 1674) includes the verse:

*Down with the rosemary, and so  
Down with the bays and misletoe ;  
Down with the holly, ivy, all,  
Wherewith ye dress'd the Christmas Hall.*

*Thus times and seasons oft do shift; each thing his turn doth hold ;  
New thoughts and things now do succeed, as former things grow old.*



# OPENING WORSHIP

## Opening Words

Light and peace to you in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

Christ is the light of the nations:

**And the glory of Israel his people.**

## Silence

*Be still and aware of God's presence within and all around us.*

## Sung Call to Worship

*Arise Shine*

Softcover #2005

## Litany of Light

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

**The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness has not overcome it.**

Those who dwell in the land of deep darkness, on them has the light shined.

**We have beheld Christ's glory,  
glory as of the only Son of the Father.**

For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given.

**In him was life, and the life was the light of all people.**

Behold! Now is the acceptable time –

**Now is the day of salvation.**

Turn us again, O God of our salvation,

**that the light of your face may shine on us.**

May your justice shine like the sun;

**and may the poor be lifted up.**

The city of God has no need of sun or moon,

**for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.**

By its light shall the nations walk,

**and the rulers of earth shall bring their treasures into it.**

Day and night around the throne they never stop singing:

**Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,  
who was, who is, and is to come.**

Friends, forty days ago we celebrated the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Today we rejoice with Simeon and Anna as the infant Jesus is presented in the Temple, when he is offered to his Father and shown to his people. In their old age Anna and Simeon recognized Jesus as the Messiah, as we today sing of his glory. Today, we celebrate both the joy of his coming and his searching judgment, looking back to the day of Jesus' birth and forward to the coming days of Christ's passion.

## Hearing of the Word

*Luke 2:20-40*

## Reflection on the Word – A Bible study on *Luke 2:20-40*

## **Candlemas Litany from Iona**

Like Simeon, may I grow old  
**in hope and in wonder.**  
Like Anna, may I be in love with you  
**all my days.**  
May I be open to truth,  
**open to surprises.**  
May I let your Spirit  
**into my life.**  
May I let your justice  
**change my behavior.**  
May I live  
**in the brightness of your joy.**

HOPE can never die when its source is living. Jesus, and only Jesus is the source of hope, for hope is held by God, and God is alive in Christ. That was what Anna and Simeon recognized, and what has continued to be revealed through the Spirit to all of us whose lives yearn for the hope that he can give.

## **Collect for the Day** (*Join together in unison*)

Lord, you fulfilled the hope of Simeon and Anna, who lived to welcome the Messiah: may we, prepare to meet Christ Jesus when he comes to bring us abundant life; for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

## **The Lord's Prayer** (*Ecumenical version*)

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen

## **Hymn**

*In His Temple Now Behold Him*

(See Handout)

## **Closing**

Let us go forth in peace.  
**In the Name of Christ. Amen.**

# In His Temple Now Behold Him

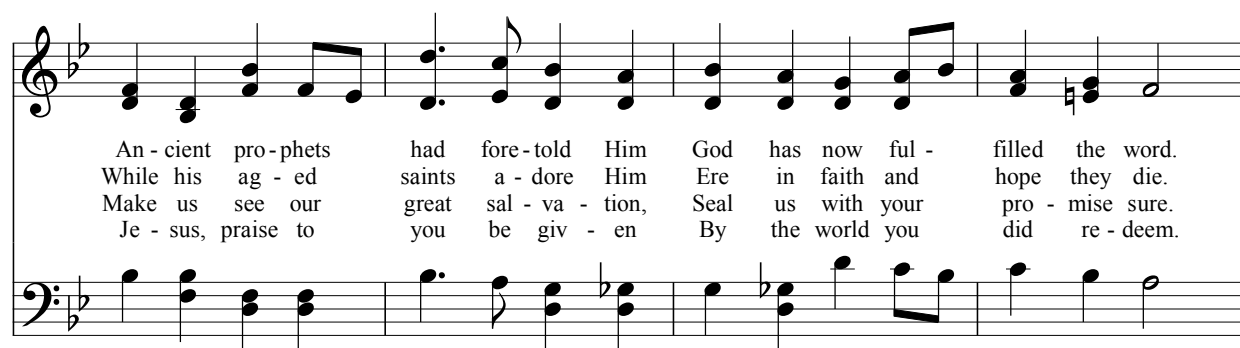
Regent Square; H.T. Smart

H.J. Pye (1851)

$\text{♩} = 100$



In His tem - ple now be - hold Him, See the long ex - pect - ed Lord;  
In the arms of her who bore Him, Vir - gin pure, be - hold Him lie,  
Je - sus, by your pres - en - ta - tion, You, who did for us en - dure,  
Prince and Au - thor of sa - lva - tion, Be your bound - less love our theme!



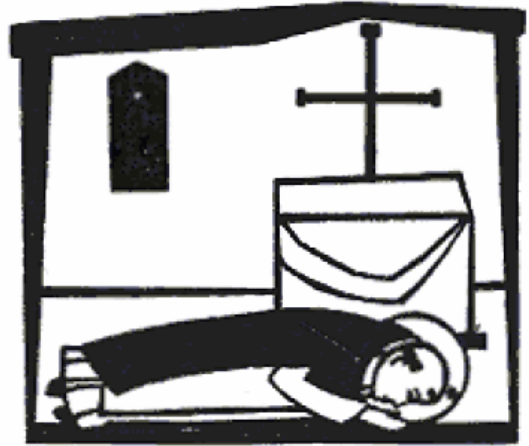
An - cient pro - phets had fore - told Him God has now ful - filled the word.  
While his ag - ed saints a - dore Him Ere in faith and hope they die.  
Make us see our great sal - va - tion, Seal us with your pro - mise sure.  
Je - sus, praise to you be giv - en By the world you did re - deem.



Now to praise Him, His re - deem - ed Shall break forth with one ac - cord.  
Hal - le - lu - jah! Hal - le - lu - jah! Lo, th'in - car - nate God most high.  
And pr - sent us in your glo - ry To the Fa - ther, cleansed and pure.  
With the Fa - ther and the Spir - it, Lord of ma - jes - ty su - preme!



# DAILY PRAYER OF EXAMEN



A daily prayer of "examine" or "examen" (pronounced ex'-uh-min) is a practice of briefly reviewing the past day's events in relation to God's presence. This ancient contemplative practice is attributed to Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit order. The examen prayer is primarily an exercise in remembering. The heart of the practice is becoming aware of God's presence and the Holy Spirit's movement throughout your day. It works well at the end of the day before going to bed, but can be used at other times of day as well. There are several steps in this practice, which, depending on the source, may be laid out in different ways. The practice includes: coming into God's presence, giving thanks, praying for illumination, reviewing the events of the day, and responding in contrition and hope. No matter how the steps are defined, the beauty of the practice is its simplicity; it is more a guide than a prescription. If some portion feels especially important on a given day, feel the freedom to spend all or most of your time in that portion. The purpose is to increase awareness and sensitivity, not to finish or accomplish a task. The descriptions below are synthesized from the sources listed below under "Other Resources".

## **1. Awareness/Presence**

Be comfortable somewhere; breath deeply and slowly; close your eyes if it helps. Begin the practice by recognizing that you are in the presence of God; remind yourself that God desires to be with you. Ask for awareness of God's presence, and pray for a spirit of openness and gratitude. To become more focused, it might help to repeat a simple phrase. It's important to begin this practice in a calm and centered state. Don't rush this portion; take the necessary time to wait and find comfort in God's presence.

## **2. Gratitude/Thanksgiving**

Spend a moment in gratitude for this day's gifts. Let one or two points come to mind that delighted you today and still delight you now as you think back on them. Give thanks for God's presence in the big and the small things in your life. Be specific as special moments come to mind! Recall the smell of your morning coffee, a kind word or smile, a beautiful flower or sunset. Be in that moment again but don't spend time or effort trying to explain it or analyze it; just be there once more, before it vanishes into the past. Give it to God with joy. Be thankful also for your strengths and gifts that help you and others through the day: your health, your sense of humor, family and friends, your patience. Remember that God gives you these to draw you into the fullness of life.

### **3. Illumination/Intention**

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you be honest with yourself, to look at your actions and attitudes with candor and patience. Ask to know what you really want for yourself today. The Spirit gives freedom to look at yourself without complacency or condemnation, and thus open to growth. Ask that you will learn and grow as you reflect, thus deepening your knowledge of self and your relationship with God.

### **4. Review/Examine**

Now review your day. This is the longest of the steps. From getting up in the morning through all the commutes and journeys, meetings, encounters, frustrations, successes, hopes, disappointments, delights, hurts and events of the day, right up to this moment, let your day play back to you again. Recall the situations you've been in, noticing the details. The intent is to observe and remember, not to interpret, justify, or rationalize. But be aware of the positive and negative, “the warm spots and the cold spots”, what delighted you, and what left you saddened, annoyed, or angry. Many situations will show that your heart was divided -- wavering between helping and disregarding, scoffing and encouraging, listening and ignoring, rebuking and forgiving, speaking and silence, neglecting and thanking. Be objective in your review. This is not a time to dwell on your shortcomings; it is a gentle look with the Lord at how you have responded to God's gifts. It is an opportunity for self growth and deepening your relationship with God.

### **5. Respond/Look Forward**

The final step is a heart-to-heart talk with Jesus. Here you speak with Jesus about your day. You share your thoughts on your actions, attitudes, feelings and interactions. You may want to seek forgiveness, ask for direction, share a concern, express gratitude, etc. Having reviewed this day, look at yourself with compassion. Finally, think ahead, look forward to your journey away from the place where you are this moment. Can you imagine tomorrow morning? What comes to mind, the same as most other days, or different? See in the imagination the place you will go to and how you will get there. Resolve with God's help to move forward in action where appropriate. What you are doing now is blessing the day ahead of you, because God has been with you throughout this reflection.

### **Other Resources**

- A very brief introduction: <http://springfieldop.org/prayer/forms-of-prayer/prayer-of-examen/>
- A short step-by-step guide: [http://www.seattlevineyard.org/files/prayer\\_of\\_examen.pdf](http://www.seattlevineyard.org/files/prayer_of_examen.pdf)
- A slightly different approach: <http://imagodeicommunity.ca/category/awareness-examen/>
- A longer article with more background from the Jesuit perspective:  
<http://norprov.org/spirituality/ignatianprayer.htm>
- A bookmark that can be cut out and used as a reminder of the steps:  
<http://norprov.org/spirituality/examenbookmark.pdf>

# **CLOSING WORSHIP + + BLESSING OF THE CANDLES**

**Moving Prayer** – Led by Jennifer Dewar

## **Candlemas Litany from Iona**

Starmaker God,  
    **Lightener of the world,**  
bless us and warm us  
    **into light and loving.**  
Bring us to the light of Jesus  
    **all the length and breadth**  
    **of our nights and days.**  
You have found me.  
    **I have seen you.**  
Daily I know you  
    **cherishing me.**  
Kindle and draw me into the light of your loving  
    **every night and day**  
    **of my journey home.**  
As is the candle,  
    **so is my life;**  
flickering, burning, changing,  
    **alight and warm**  
    **with the light which is you.**

**Hymn** – Song of Simeon, Hymnal #603

## **Blessing of the Candles**

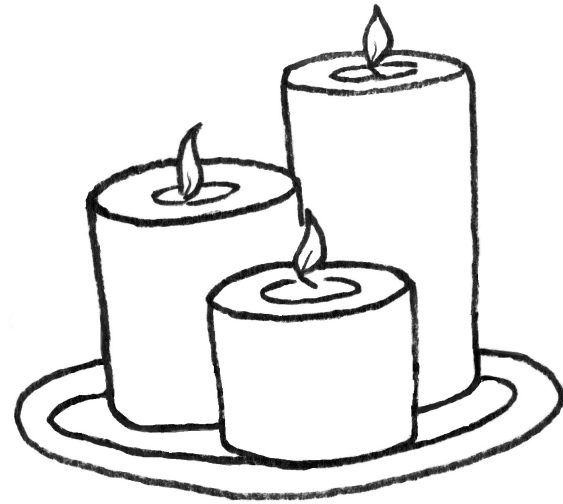
Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.  
    **Thanks be to God.**  
Jesus Christ is the light of the world, a light no darkness can overpower.  
    **Blessed be the name of the Lord.**  
These candles bring beauty and light into our homes.  
    **In the darkness, they tell us of God's gift of light**  
and of Christ, whose light we received at baptism.

*Gather at the front for the blessing of the candles*

Let us pray.

God of night and day,  
**we praise you for the brightness of our sun,**  
for the softer light of the moon  
**and the splendor of the stars,**  
for the fires that bring us light and warmth,  
**even as they imperil all who use them.**

for all creation which you formed out of nothing,  
**including your creatures the bees,**  
**who gave us the wax for making these candles.**



By the great and small lights we mark our days and seasons,  
**we brighten the night and bring warmth to our winter,**  
**and in these lights we see the Light –**  
Your son, Jesus, whose light we receive in baptism,  
**whose light we carry by day and by night.**  
Lord, you fulfilled the hope of Anna and Simeon,  
**who lived to welcome the Messiah**  
By your mercy, grant that we may be enlightened by the same Holy Spirit  
**and kindle in us the faith to recognize and proclaim Jesus**  
**as the Light of the World.**  
Bless these candles and let them remind us of you.  
**May we who carry them walk in the path of goodness**  
**and come to the light that shines forever.**

*Participants light their candles as this chant from the Taizé community is sung.*

The Lord is my light,  
My light and salvation:  
In God I trust, in God I trust.

In the beauty of these candles,  
**keep us in quiet and in peace,**  
keep us safe and turn our hearts to you  
**that we may ourselves be light for our world.**  
All praise be yours through Christ, the light of the nations,  
**the glory of Israel, for ever and ever. Amen.**  
Let us bless the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

*Depart in peace continuing to sing:  
extinguish your candle as you leave the sanctuary or as you leave the building.*