

Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness.

CANDLE LIGHTING

(Let all who wish to light a candle to remember a loved one, to remember a loss, to remember a relationship, come forward now to do so. Light a candle and set it into one of the containers on the table. Like our lives, each container is in darkness until it is filled by the light of Christ.)

SILENT PRAYER

These lights in their brightness are only symbols, but as they burn and finally go out, we remember that suffering passes, though memory remains forever.

Let us remember that though Christ has gone before us he is ever with us.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

We thank you, wonderful God, that gaiety, togetherness, and festivity do not exhaust Christmas's meaning. We thank you for the ways that you reach especially to us in our seasons of emptiness and aloneness. We remember how the holy family was alone with no support. For we know what it means to be alone.

We remember the Mary's public humiliation, for we too have known shame.

We remember Elizabeth's anguish, whose womb was empty. We also remember how you filled it.

We remember the danger that compelled the Holy Family to leave behind their families and livelihood for faraway Egypt.

We know something of Mary's grief at the unnecessary loss of her son.

Indeed, in Christ, you share even our hardest experiences so that we may know in the fabric of our own lives that in spite of everything, we are never alone.

Thank you, Lord.

We pray for all who are empty in this season of plenty.

For all who have long walked with a partner and who must now walk alone.

For all who know tears long after others have forgotten and moved and nudge us to move on too.

For all who must go on believing, go on loving, go on hoping, go on working in a world where cruelty or blind chance has taken the life of a child.

For those who have lost track of their reason to go on, Those who have lost status or dignity.

Be the companion to every empty heart among us.

Finally, we pray for ourselves.

In this quiet moment each of us here opens his or her heart to your ministering presence.

Come, Risen Lord and be our personal guest. Fill the empty place within. Speak to us of your undying love; search out and correct what is broken or shabby in our inner selves. Be our companion in all the trials

and difficulties of this life. And meet us and prepare for us glad reunion on that distant shore that no eye has seen nor tongue described that awaits us when our work is done.

*HYMN:

“Still, Still Still”

Hymnal #47

*CLOSING BLESSING

*POSTLUDE