

Small and Simple

Christmas readings and poems
for Cashmere Presbyterian Church,
Christmas 2017



All over creation
by Shirley Murray

All over creation, joy spills into light,
stars, candles ablaze this Christmas night;
where Jesus is sleeping, peace kisses the earth,
O that we could know who Mary has brought to birth!

This child will bring freedom, this child will release
wellsprings of compassion, ways to peace,
this child will bring healing, this child will inspire
love answering love, and spirit to Spirit's fire.

This child will befriend us, this child will invite
all children to share his world's delight:
this Christ will confront us when, children no more,
we plunder our planet, crying from want and war.

Let there be a moment held, as in one breath
when all the earth turns away from death,
peace nursing creation, peace spreading her wing,
O that we could know what Christmas is meant to bring!

Christmas comes around every year - 'coming, ready or not'! This year you are invited to make space for Jesus in small and simple ways. This booklet has readings, poems and suggestions.

Make room

In this busiest of seasons, it is up to each of us to make space for Christ. There is plenty that will crowd out God, even as God is coming to us.

Time: What's a good time in your day when you can sit and be still for a moment?

Place: What's a comfy seat, in bed, by the window, in the garden? Prepare a space, make a cup of tea, get your Bible, pen and paper ready. Sit and rest with God a while.

We all need some solitude, but you can also sit with a child or a friend and read and pray together.

A Welcome Place for Jesus

Find a spot in your home to lay out a 'welcome place for Jesus'. Lay down a pretty cloth. Set out your nativity set. Add Christmas cards as they come. Each day, find a small simple thing to place there. Maybe a single flower, or a stone, or a treasured gift from the past. Maybe light a candle.

Noticing the little things

Take your camera out for a walk in the park. Look for small beautiful things, take close-up photos. Slow down and notice.

Daily Bible Readings

These are short readings from all around the Bible. If you have time, read the whole chapter. In your journal, write out the key words that intrigue you. Choose one verse to remember; write it all out 2 or 3 times. Use a word or image from the reading in your prayer.
(from the Catholic.org website)

Sunday 26 November: Romans 13:11-14
Monday: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Tuesday: Mark 13:33-37
Wednesday: John 1:1-5
Thursday: John 1:6-9
Friday: Jeremiah 33:14-16
Saturday: Isaiah 6

Sunday 3 December: 1 John 4:7-12
Monday: Psalm 43:3-6
Tuesday: Psalm 27:1-4
Wednesday: Psalm 119:105-106
Thursday: John 12:35-36
Friday: Ephesians 5:6-14
Saturday: 1 Peter 2:5-9

Sunday 10 December: Romans 15:4-13
Monday: 2 Corinthians 4:3-6
Tuesday: 1 John 1:1-7
Wednesday: John 3:16-21
Thursday: Isaiah 40:1-11
Friday: John 9:1-7
Saturday: Luke 3:1-6

Sunday 17 December: Isaiah 60:1-3
Monday: Zephaniah 3:14-17
Tuesday: Matthew 1:18-25
Wednesday: Luke 2:8-20
Thursday: Matthew 4:14-16
Friday: Isaiah 2:1-5
Saturday: Luke 2:25-33
Sunday 24 December: Isaiah 11:1-10

Christmas Poems

These poems come with the suggestion that you find more poems and Carols to enjoy. You probably have some old books in your home, and there are plenty at the library and online. You may even feel inspired to write your own!

Into the Darkest Hour *by Madeleine L'Engle*

It was a time like this,
War & tumult of war,
a horror in the air.
Hungry yawned the abyss –
and yet there came the star
and the child most wonderfully there.

It was a time like this
of fear & lust for power,
license & greed and blight –
and yet the Prince of bliss
came into the darkest hour
in quiet & silent light.

And in a time like this
how celebrate his birth
when all things fall apart?
Ah! wonderful it is
with no room on the earth
the stable is our heart.

First Coming

by Madeleine L'Engle

He did not wait till the world was ready
till men and nations were at peace.
He came when the the Heavens were unsteady,
and prisoners cried out for release.

He did not wait for the perfect time.
He came when the need was deep and great.
He dined with sinners in all their grime,
turned water into wine. He did not wait

till hearts were pure. In joy he came
to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.
To a world like ours, of anguished shame
he came, and his Light would not go out.

He came to a world which did not mesh,
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh
the Maker of the stars was born.

We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

All who would see God's greatness

by Marnie Barrell

All who would see God's greatness,
draw near, bend down, look low:
see how love appears among us
as small as a child. Then go,
tell of the greatness made so small,
tiny and hidden, God of all.

If you would share God's riches,
draw near, reach out and touch:
God has only love to offer,
enough for us, and too much.
Take up God's treasure, made so poor,
naked the God that we adore.

Would you receive God's power?
Draw near, find strength in this:
laid open to all our violence
is love that will not resist.
This is our God, who chose to be
tied with our bonds to set us free.

Stand in the holy silence
while earth with heaven sings
that here in our hands for holding
is love that sustains all things.
Strange is this love that draws us near:
Glory of God, among us here.

A Christmas Carol Poem
by G. K. Chesterton

The Christ-child lay on Mary's lap,
His hair was like a light.
(O weary, weary were the world,
But here is all aright.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's breast
His hair was like a star.
(O stern and cunning are the kings,
But here the true hearts are.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's heart,
His hair was like a fire.
(O weary, weary is the world,
But here the world's desire.)

The Christ-child stood on Mary's knee,
His hair was like a crown,
And all the flowers looked up at Him,
And all the stars looked down



Virgin Birth
by Joy Cowley

We have within us a virgin place,
a holy space which belongs to God alone.
We know it by its hunger,
we name it by its need,
the space which will not be touched
by the people we love
or the things we gather
or the positions we hold.

We have within us a growing place,
an eternal space that exists for Truth,
where the love of God overcomes us,
where the life of God fills us,
the Emmanuel space where we conceive
and become pregnant of the Holy One
and day by day, give birth
to Christ in the world.

Sources

Madeleine L'Engle & Luci Shaw, *'WinterSong: Christmas Readings'* (Regent College, 1996)

The New Zealand Hymnbook Trust, *'Carol our Christmas: A book of New Zealand carols'* (1996)