



Gifts — Given and Received

*ENVIRONMENT: Table in center of a circle of chairs
with gift wrapped boxes and a candle.*

Opening

Song shaker song - simple gifts
elder joseph brackett - 1848

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free,
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.

When true simplicity is gain'd,
To bow and to bend we shan't be asham'd,
To turn, turn 'twill be our delight,
Till by turning, turning we come round right.

'Tis the gift to be loved and that love to return,
'Tis the gift to be taught and a richer gift to learn,
And when we expect of others
what we try to live each day,
Then we'll all live together and we'll all learn to say,

When true simplicity is gain'd,
To bow and to bend we shan't be asham'd,
To turn, turn 'twill be our delight,
Till by turning, turning we come round right.

'Tis the gift to have friends and a true friend to be,
'Tis the gift to think of others not to only think of "me",
And when we hear what others
really think and really feel,
Then we'll all live together with a love that is real.

When true simplicity is gain'd,
To bow and to bend we shan't be asham'd,
To turn, turn 'twill be our delight,
Till by turning, turning we come round right.

Prayer (All)

Creator, open our hearts
to peace and healing between all people.

Creator, open our hearts to provide and protect for all
children of the earth.

Creator, open our hearts
to respect for the earth, and all the gifts of the earth.

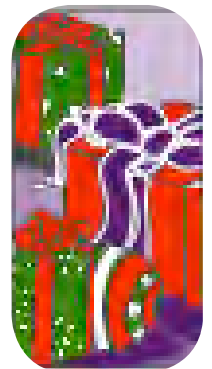
Creator, open our hearts
to end exclusion, violence, and fear among all.

Thank you for the gifts of this day and every day.
(native american - micmac - alycia longriver - 1995)

Reading and Reflection

from Julian of Norwich

And in this God showed me something small, no bigger than a hazelnut lying in the palm of my hand, as it seemed to me, and it was round as a ball. I looked at it with the eye of my understanding and thought: What can this be? I was amazed that it could last, for I thought that because of its littleness it would suddenly have fallen into nothing. And I was answered in my understanding: it lasts and always will, because God loves it, and thus everything has being through the love of God. In this little thing I saw three properties. The first is that God made it, the second is that God loves it, the third that God preserves it. But what did I see in it? God is the creator, and the protector and the lover.



Response

Leader As we prepare for and celebrate the Christmas Season, gifts, given and received become a central focus in our lives. As Julian, we may be surprised and amazed at a gift received. We may be challenged to respond to its meaning to discover the richness of the giver. Let us pause to recall such a gift and its affect on our lives.

(Pause for reflection)

You are invited to share this experience in a brief statement: The gift I received was _____. This gift brought to my life _____.

(Time for responses)

Leader We are receivers of gifts and also we are givers of gifts. Recall a gift given or how you have been gift to another.

(Pause for reflection)

Please share this experience of being a gift giver. I was a gift giver when _____.

Let us give thanks for gifts given and received as we pray and give thanks for their light in our lives.

(Light the candle on the table and pass it around the circle during the prayer.)



Side 1 In the place where you worked,
Your light remains.

Side 2 In the stillness of the starry night,
Your light remains.

Side 1 In the light of each day fully embraced,
Your light remains.

Side 2 Like the touch of an Angel,
Your light remains.

All When you live as a light,
Your heart is joined in the Infinite Light of Love.
And that about you which is eternal ... remains.
(your light remains - rev. jacquie riker - 2003)

Spontaneous Prayers

Leader Let us now pray for those people throughout the world and in our lives who are in need of our gifts this day.

(Pause for spontaneous prayers.)

Response after each:

Gift-giving God, with Christmas hope we pray.

Closing

Prayer *(Alternate sides)*

Your Light Remains

Side 1 In the joy of your heart,
Your light remains.

Side 2 In the gift of your caring,
Your light remains.

Side 1 Where you reached out to help,
Your light remains.

Side 2 Where you sat in silent peace,
Your light remains.

Final Prayer *(All)*

As you leave this place
may the Living Lord go with you;
May he go behind you, to encourage you,
beside you, to befriend you,
above you, to watch over you,
beneath you, to lift you from your sorrows,
within you, to give you the gifts
of faith, hope, and love,
and always before you, to show you the way.

(benediction - blair monie)

Acknowledgment

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