

Hope-filled Waiting

Setting the Scene Prepare chairs in a circle. In the center set symbols of waiting, expectation, e.g. a barren tree branch, an unlit candle.

Introduction Have soft music playing as participants enter. To begin: turn off music and pause in silence for a short time.

Leader

Our lives are filled with times of waiting: of waiting filled with stress and anxiety; of waiting filled with joyful expectation. We come together in this special season of waiting to honor these experiences in our lives and to be sources of strength for one another. I invite you as we enter into this prayer time, to close your eyes, relax and listen to your own breathing in the process of waiting. Breathe deeply and draw within yourself the gift of light that surrounds you. Breathe out slowly and let go forth any color of resistance or stress that may be within you. Breathe in, breathe out. Breathe in, breathe out.

(Pause for a brief time and then invite everyone back to the circle of prayer.)



Opening Prayer

Spirit God, source of the breath of our lives, open our hearts to the mystery of the not yet, waiting experiences in our lives. You gift us as we struggle through times of darkness and loss of hope; you renew our spirits in times of joyful hope as we await the new life of events of promise. Breathe on us now as we ponder these

experiences and ask that they move us forth into the resourceful living to which we are all called. In trust and hope we pray. Amen.

Reflections on Waiting in Darkness

Leader

Let us listen to Job's lament as he waits in darkness for some answer in the pains and sufferings he has endured.



Reader I Job 17: 11-16

My days have passed; my plans have failed;
my hope is gone.
But my friends say night is daylight;
they say that light is near,
but I know I remain in darkness.
My hope is the world of the dead,
where I will lie down to sleep in the dark.
I will call the grave my father,
and the worms that eat me
I will call my mother and my sisters.
Where is there any hope for me?
Who sees any?
Hope will not go with me
when I go down to the world of the dead.

Personal Reflection and Sharing

Leader

Have you experienced times of darkness in your waiting? What brought you through to hope again? I invite you to share your own experiences or those you have lived through with others.

(Time for group sharing.)

Prayers for Those Waiting in Darkness

Reader II

We remember those who wait in the darkness of abusive situations: those addicted to alcohol and other drugs; children and spouses experiencing domestic abuse; women and children who are victims of sex slavery trafficking.

All Respond

*The bright dawn will break upon us,
giving light to those in darkness,
guiding hearts to the way of peace.*

We remember refugees waiting for new homes and places of safety; people, especially children, in countries torn by war and conflict hoping for peace; men, women and children working in unsafe conditions desiring the essentials of meaningful living.

All Respond

*The bright dawn will break upon us,
giving light to those in darkness,
guiding hearts to the way of peace.*

We remember parents who have lost their children in death or abduction; children who have lost their parents; spouses who have lost their companions in life.

All Respond

*The bright dawn will break upon us,
giving light to those in darkness,
guiding hearts to the way of peace.*

We remember those experiencing the final days of earthly life: those in hospice care; sick elderly in nursing homes; prisoners on death row; hostages held captive in various countries.

All Respond

*The bright dawn will break upon us,
giving light to those in darkness,
guiding hearts to the way of peace.*



We pause and invite your additions of people and names that you wish to remember.

Leader

Let us listen to the words of the poet Rainer Maria Rilke in “The Wait”:

Reader III

It is life in slow motion
it’s the heart in reverse,
it’s a hope-and-a-half:
too much and too little
at once.

It’s a train that suddenly
stops with no station around,
and we can hear the cricket,
and, leaning out the carriage

door, we vainly contemplate
a wind we feel that stirs
the blooming meadows, the meadows
made imaginary by this stop.

Leader

Are there images, emotions, that you related to in this poem?

(Time for group sharing.)

Reflections on Waiting in Hope

Leader

Many of our times of waiting are filled with hope and expectation as we hear in the lives of two wisdom figures in the Gospel.

Reader IV

(Luke 2:25-26, 28-29) At that time there was a man named Simeon living in Jerusalem. He was a good, God-fearing man and was waiting for Israel to be saved. The Holy Spirit was with him and had assured him that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s promised Messiah. Simeon took the child in his arms and gave thanks to God: “Now, O God, you have kept your promise, and you may let your servant go in peace.”

(Luke 2: 36-37) There was a very old prophetess, a widow named Anna. She had been married for only seven years and was now eighty-four years old. She never left the temple; day and night she worshiped God, fasting and praying. That very same hour she arrived and gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were waiting for God to set Jerusalem free.

Leader

What waiting experiences have you had in your life that have been hope-filled leading to joyful fulfillment?

(Time for reflection and sharing.)

Leader

We remember now those whose lives are filled with expectant waiting.

Reader V

We remember parents awaiting the birth of a child; children in foster care waiting for adoption and a loving home; teachers encouraging the wonder and delight in life within their students.

All Respond

*Your light will come;
our God will dawn on you in radiant beauty.*

We remember those recovering from cancer and other life threatening diseases; immigrants building a new home in a new land; those looking for meaningful employment.

All Respond

*Your light will come;
our God will dawn on you in radiant beauty.*

We remember dedicated peace workers bringing hope to others; healthcare personnel bringing healing to those in their care; those preparing for marriage.

All Respond

*Your light will come;
our God will dawn on you in radiant beauty.*

Please add those you remember living in hope.



Leader

We conclude by listening to our call to hope in waiting from a reflection by Joan Chittister in *Life Is for Living*, published by [Benetvision](#). (A longer reading may be used directly from this book or copies made available to participants.)

Reader VI

Waiting is about the virtue of hope. Waiting gives witness to the fact that, like it or not, want it or not, help it or not,

God's will will indeed be done, if not now and not here and not for me, then surely sometimes, somewhere, for someone, if only I will wait with honest heart, in hope.

But while we wait we can learn and grow and become stronger than ever in our convictions. We can be conscientious and creative, and no matter who wants to suppress us or to silence us, we can be signs of hope that never go away until, someday, the star finally shines.



Closing Ritual

Leader Invite all to stand and gather around the table. Light the candle as the symbol of hope in waiting.

Closing Prayer (together)

O God of Light, we wait in joyful hope for the fulfillment of all you have promised us through the presence of Jesus, Our Savior. Help us to proclaim this hope by our lives as witnesses to your truth and compassion that those who wait in darkness and those who wait in joy will come to know the fullness of Light that comes from your love. With confidence and hope we pray. Amen.

Pass the lit candle around the circle with the giver extending a "Blessing of Peace for the Journey in Hopeful Waiting" to the receiver.

A song of joyful music may be played in the background as the candle is passed.

Acknowledgments

"Finding Courage and Hope Midst Conflict and Struggles" ritual: [Marguerite Samz, OSM](#); from [Hill Connections](http://hillconnections.org) (<http://hillconnections.org>), a web site linking [Contemplation](#) and [Social Justice](#).