

Respecting the Winters in Our Lives



SETTING Circle of chairs around center small table with:

- dry twigs or dried brown plants
- pages of white paper and colored markers for each participant
- one live bright flower to add to table at concluding prayer

Opening

Hymn “Holy Darkness” Dan Schutte, vs 1, 2, 3 (*OCP, Publisher*)

Opening Reflection

Now I say to you in conclusion,
life is hard,
at times as hard as crucible steel.

It has its bleak
and difficult moments.

Like the ever-flowing waters
of the river,
life has its moments of drought and
its moments of flood.

Like the ever-changing cycle
of the seasons,
life has the soothing warmth
of its summers
and the piercing chill
of its winters.

But if one will hold on,
[you] will discover that God walks
with [you],
and that God is able to lift you

from the fatigue of despair
to the buoyancy of hope
and transform dark and
desolate valleys
into sunlit paths of inner peace.

eulogy for the martyred children
— martin luther king, jr., 1963.
(worldprayers.org)

Readings 1 and 2

Leader In our lives each of us experiences those “winter periods” when the darkness seems to cover us and the light of hope is dim or lost. It is in being with these moments and honoring their gifts that we can move on to the spring time of hope. Let us listen to expressions of these winters.

Reading 1 Job 11:24-26

Why did I not perish at birth, come forth from the womb and expire? For sighing comes more readily to me than food, and my groans well forth like water. For what I fear overtakes me, and what I shrink from comes upon me. I have no peace nor ease; I have no rest, for trouble comes!

Reading 2 from “A Soldier’s Homecoming” by Elizabeth A. McDaniel (*America*, 11/8/10)

...Mr. Meshad volunteered

to go to Vietnam.... He remembers his first night treating casualties as the most horrific night of his young life.... “And it all seemed so senseless. These young guys...blown to shreds, dying. And us having to just pile them up to get them out of the way. It was madness. And I thought to myself, maybe there isn’t a God. God wouldn’t allow this.” As his time in Vietnam wore on, Meshad felt his faith being strained more and more, until it was on the verge of collapse.... “This just and loving God was just nowhere to be found,” Meshad remembered.

Responsive Activity 1

Leader I invite you now to recall a winter time in or life (*or to be with the winter time you are now experiencing*). Let the experience wave over you in images, colors, or symbols. Feel the “steel” of that time.

(Quiet reflection time.)

Leader Please take a paper and markers. Express in color, image, and symbol the “steel” of your winter time.

(Creative expressive time.)

Leader Let us now pray for those who are in the midst of winter times now in their lives. Let us remember in prayer:



—People who live in terror because of war.

*All God of hope,
grant them your peace.*

—Those suffering from drug addictions.

*All God of hope,
grant them your peace.*

—Parents of missing children.

*All God of hope,
grant them your peace.*

—(Please add others for whom you pray...)

Readings 3 and 4

Leader In owning, holding and respecting our winters, we can be open to the healing power of hope. Let us again listen to the experience of Job and Meshad.



Reading 3 Job
42: 1-6, 12

Then Job answered the Lord and said: I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be hindered. I have dealt with great things that I do not understand; things too wonderful for me, which I cannot know. I heard of you by word of mouth, but now my eye has seen you. Therefore, I disown what I have said, and repent in dust and ashes.

Thus the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his earlier ones.

Reading 4 from “A Soldier’s

Homecoming” by Elizabeth A. McDaniel (*America, 11/8/10*)

Meshad did get back in touch with God. He realized that God was not responsible for Vietnam. God did not condone or make those things happen. And God was not absent, either. People made those choices.... Meshad realized how God had saved him again.... Eventually, Meshad founded the National Veterans Foundation.

(Quiet reflection time.)

Responsive Activity 2

Leader Reflecting on the hope and healing that moved you out of your winters, on your papers add a color, image or symbol that expresses this experience of new life for you.

(Creative expressive time.)

Leader Let us pray. You are invited to name people, events, experiences that have led you to hope and new life.

Response *(After each naming.)*
*Compassionate God,
we give you thanks and praise.*

Closing

Leader Let us close with these words of hope in the many things around us that we can delight in each day.

(Side 1)

Walking in the Summer rain,
Noisy wee-folk in their play,
In hush that stills a boisterous day,
In waterbeads on windowpane.

(Side 2)

In bell-clear tones when robin sings,
Dew-kissed web a spider weaves,
Rich and gold of
Autumn leaves,
And fairy-
flakes that
Winter brings.



(Side 1)

A gentle pat upon my cheek,
In glancing moonbeams on a lake,
In happy laughter children make
While wading in a rushing creek.

(Side 2)

In wind that plays in willow trees,
And angel voices in a choir,
The crackle of an open fire,
And tulips nodding in the breeze.

(All)

In silky strands of milkweed pod,
In sparkling grains of
sea-washed sand,
The courteous clasp of
Friendship’s hand,
And in a dialogue with God.

delight I find in many things
— *anne shannon demarest, 1965.*
(worldprayers.org)

Hymn “Holy Darkness” Dan Schutte, vs 4, 5 (*OCP, Publisher*)



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