

Prayer for the Winter Solstice Salford Mennonite Church

Supplies needed: one candle per person, plus a taller central candle (or make beeswax candles as part of this ritual, if you have the supplies available)



Gather: Move candles to a family altar space or dining table. Light the taller central candle.

Discuss: What is the Winter Solstice? Why is the "longest night" meaningful?

- Days have been growing shorter (e.g. remember when it was light outside even at bedtime in the summer?) and the sun is up for less time each day...
- Until today, the shortest day of the year. We have gone as far toward the darkness as we can. (And in some places like the north pole, it is dark almost all day)

Be With the Dark:

- **Turn off all lights** in the house. **Blow out the central candle.**
- **Pause for a moment to rest in the stillness & darkness.**
- **Share:** On this day we are very close to the darkness. Sometimes we feel afraid in the darkness because we're not used to it. But we spent our first nine months of life in darkness, in the warm and safe womb of our mama, before we were born. We grew up in the dark until we were ready to come out. And seeds sprout in the warm darkness of the soil before they come up out of the ground. We need the darkness to sleep and dream and see the stars.
- "The dark embraces everything: shapes and shadows, creatures and me, people, nations— just as they are. It lets me imagine a great presence stirring beside me."
- Rainer Maria Rilke, Austrian poet

Read Aloud: *God's Holy Darkness*: [Listen & watch on YouTube](#) (6 min)
(this book is in the Salford Church library)

Scripture Reading:

- ***Relight the central candle, and read [John 1:1-5](#)***
- The scriptures talk about Christ being the Light. Sometimes people hear that and think that light is good and darkness is bad. But that's not true. They both work together, as we've seen tonight.

Candle Lighting Ritual:

Each person lights their candle from the center candle, and names a gift of the light, and a gift of the darkness.

Closing Prayer:

Blow out the candles and say, "thank you God for light and for darkness."

OR:

Loving God, Your spirit surrounds us in both light and darkness. Like sunlight, you help us find our way and explore our world. Like a dark night sky, you give us rest from all the worries of the day. May we be light for people who need to see hope in this world. May we be cozy darkness for those who need a safe place to rest. Thank you for the season of Advent and for bringing us together. Amen.

(prayer from [Illustrated Ministries' Advent for Families: In Light and Darkness](#))

Optional longer prayer: **["Blessing for the Longest Night"](#)** by Jan Richardson