

Time for Personal Reflection

Leader: O God of all seasons and senses, grant us the sense of your timing to submit gracefully and rejoice quietly in the turn of the seasons.

In this season of short days and long nights, of grey and white and cold, teach us the lessons of endings;
children growing, friends leaving,
loved ones dying, grieving over,
grudges over, blaming over, excuses over.
O God, grant us a sense of your timing.

In this season of short days and long nights, of grey and white and cold, teach us the lessons of beginnings;
that such waitings and endings may be the starting place,
a planting of seeds which bring to birth
what is ready to be born--
something right and just and different,
a new song, a deeper relationship, a fuller love—
in the fullness of your time.
O God, grant us the sense of your timing. **Amen**

Leader: Lord Jesus,

Master of both the light and the darkness,
send your Holy Spirit upon our preparation for Christmas.
We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day. We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us. We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your Kingdom. We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence. We are your people, walking in darkness yet seeking the light.. To you we say “Come, Lord Jesus”.
Amen.

Leader: Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. **Amen.**

Sing: “O Little Town of Bethlehem” (v. 1,2,3,5) – Hymnal 79

Leader: My friends, life is short and we do not have much time to gladden the hearts of those who make this pilgrimage with us, so be swift to love and make haste to do kindness. And the blessing of God who comes to us as Creative Presence, Saving Grace, and Lifegiving Spirit be upon you and all you love and pray for this day and always. **Amen.**

Sing: “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” – Hymnal 87

Welcome to St. Mary’s Episcopal Church!

If you are a member of a worshipping community, we wish you God’s grace as you leave tonight. But if you do not have a faith community and might be seeking one, we invite you to contact us or to return any Sunday.
Our celebration of the Holy Eucharist is at 9:15 am on Sunday.
Child care is provided.

Christmas Eve Services: Monday, December 24, 2018

4:30 pm (children’s service)
7:30 pm (candlelight service)

Christmas Day Service: Tuesday, December 25, 2018

When Christmas Feels Blue

December 13, 2018

6:30 pm



It is with pleasure that St. Mary’s welcomes you this evening. We would like to know you and serve you beyond the events of this day. If we can be of help to you, please feel free to contact our church office or our priest, Cindy Howard.

St. Mary’s Episcopal Church

Andalusia, Alabama

334-222-2487

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Leader: Light and peace in Jesus Christ our Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Leader: Let us pray

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Sing: “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” (v. 1, 6, 7) – Hymnal 56

The Proclamation of the Word

Isaiah 12:2-6 (The First Song of Isaiah)

Surely, it is God who saves me;
I will trust in him and not be afraid.
For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense,
and he will be my Savior.
Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing
from the springs of salvation.
And on that day you shall say,
Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name;
Make his deeds known among the peoples;
see that they remember that his Name is exalted.
Sing praises of the Lord, for he has done great things,
and this is known in all the world.
Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion, ring out your joy,
for the great one in the midst of you is the Holy One of Israel.

Psalm 121 (said together)

I lift up my eyes to the hills;
from where is my help to come?
My help comes from the LORD,
the maker of heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot be moved
and he who watches over you will not fall asleep.
Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel
shall neither slumber nor sleep;
The LORD himself watches over you;
the LORD is your shade at your right hand,
So that the sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.

The LORD shall preserve you from all evil;
it is he who shall keep you safe.

The LORD shall watch over your going out and your coming in,
from this time forth for evermore.

Romans 8:14-19, 34-35, 37-39

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Psalm 131 (said together)

O Lord, I am not proud;

I have no haughty looks.

I do not occupy myself with great matters,

or with things that are too hard for me.

But I still my soul and make it quiet,

like a child upon its mother’s breast;

my soul is quieted within me.

O Israel, wait upon the LORD, from this

time forth for evermore.

Matthew 11:28-30

‘Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’

Time for Personal Reflection

Candle Lighting

Leader: We light the first candle to remember those persons we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their names, their faces, their voices. We give thanks for the memory that binds them to us in this season. We hold them before God, giving thanks for their lives. I now invite you to name these whom we love and see no more, either aloud or in your hearts.

People: May God’s eternal love surround them.

Leader: We light the second candle to redeem the pain of loss: the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs and the security they bring, the loss of health in ourselves or in those we love, the loss of joy and peace in our lives from the stresses which surround us. As we gather up the pain of our lives, we offer it to you, O God, asking that into our open hearts you will place the gift of peace.

People: Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.

Leader: We light the third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and perhaps years of difficult times. We remember the poignancy of memories, the grief, the sadness, the hurts, and the pain of reflecting on our own mortality
Leader: We light the third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and perhaps years of difficult times. We remember the poignancy of memories, the grief, the sadness, the hurts, and the pain of reflecting on our own mortality.

People: Let us remember that the Light overcomes darkness.

Leader: The fourth candle is lit to remember our faith and the gift of hope which God offers to us in the Christmas story. We remember that God, who shares our life, promises us a place and a time of no more pain and suffering.

People: Let us remember the One who shows the way and who goes with us into our tomorrows.

Sing: “Silent Night” – Hymnal 111

The Prayers

Leader: Each of us comes bearing our own wounds and brokenness, our own hopes and dreams for the future. As we pray, may each of us hear the voice of the One who said, “Come to me and I will show you how to rest. Keep company with me and you will learn to live freely and lightly.”

Leader: For any person we have loved and who has died, for all the losses we know in our lives, that all may be redeemed by your Easter promise. God, hear our prayer.

People: And in your mercy, answer.

Leader: For our family and friends, that you may bless them with love and peace and joy. God, hear our prayer.

People: And in your mercy, answer.

Leader: For peace throughout the world as proclaimed by the Christmas angels on that faraway hillside. God, hear our prayer.

People: And in your mercy, answer.

Leader: For greater understanding of the lessons of love and acceptance as taught by Jesus your Christ. God, hear our prayer.

People: And in your mercy, answer.

Leader: God of compassion and love, hear the prayers of your people. Grant to all, especially the bereaved and troubled ones this Christmas, the blessing we ask in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray.

People: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.