

January 2nd, 2022

A Service of Milk and Honey

Opening Hymn: *'Tis Winter Now*

*to the tune of *The Water is Wide*

'Tis winter now; the fallen snow
has left the heavens all coldly clear;
through leafless boughs the sharp winds blow,
and all the earth lies still and drear.

And yet God's love is not withdrawn;
all life within the keen air breathes;
God's beauty paints the crimson dawn,
and clothes each branch with glittering wreaths.

And though abroad the sharp winds blow,
and skies are chill, and frosts are keen,
home closer draws her circle now,
and warmer glows her light within.

O God, you give the winter's cold,
as well as summer's joyous rays,
you warmly in your love enfold,
and keep us through life's wintry days.

Opening Prayer

Let Us Pray:

O God, who makes all things new, we come to you to claim your gifts of love, healing, peace and compassion. You have promised us that you care, and our hearts are encouraged.

As the Psalmist said, you have made us a little less than you, and we are filled with awe. You have called us from our busyness, to pause with you long enough to encounter your hope and possibility for ourselves and for the world.

Enliven all our senses to appreciate the moments before us and awaken us to your guiding love. May we leave behind that which no longer serves you and your love. May we move forward in the new year with renewed hope and courage, guided ever by your presence.

In this day of thinking about our way forward, we pray this all in the name of Jesus the Christ who taught us to pray:

Our Creator in heaven, Hallowed be your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. AMEN.

Ritual of Milk and Honey

Several years ago, People's Church began a practice of sharing a cup of milk and honey during the first service of the new year. The cup harkens back to God's promise to the children of Israel, in the time of their Exodus from Egypt, that they would be led to a land flowing with milk and honey. Today, let us remember that even in times of bitterness, God's hope and possibility endure.

As we begin a new year, we remember that Ecclesiastes tells us: There is a time for every season and every matter under heaven:

- A time for planting, a time for uprooting what was planted. . .
- A time to throw stones, a time to gather stones together
- A time for tearing down, a time for building up
- A time for keeping, a time for throwing away.

Our invitation to the cup today is for each of us to consider the season of our own lives, wondering what needs planting, nurturing, and growing in us.

Please take your cup now, and as you sip from its sweetness, reflecting on these questions together:

- Is there something we need to uproot? *Pause*
- Is there something we need to gather? *Pause*
- Is there something we need to keep? Is there something we need to throw away? *Pause*
- Is there some kind of bitterness we're hanging onto that we need to let go? *Pause*

Closing Prayer

Creator God, You have blessed us with sweetness in every season. Thank you for your eternal promises of hope and possibility, and renewal that can be found in each of us. Thank you for this wonderful, changing world that is eternally alive with your word and love. Help us to find

wisdom and courage from your creation, sensing the deep roots of love that are our strength and sustenance, now and forever. Amen.

Closing Hymn: *The Holly and The Ivy*

The holly and the ivy,
When they are both full grown,
Of all trees that are in the wood,
The holly bears the crown

O, the rising of the sun,
And the running of the deer
The playing of the merry organ,
Sweet singing in the choir

The holly bears a blossom,
As white as lily flow'r,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
To be our dear Savior

O, the rising of the sun,
And the running of the deer
The playing of the merry organ,
Sweet singing in the choir

The holly bears a prickle,
As sharp as any thorn,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
On Christmas Day in the morn

O, the rising of the sun,
And the running of the deer
The playing of the merry organ,
Sweet singing in the choir