

Prayers of intercession (Susan Sayers)

We are all companions on a spiritual journey.
As we travel together, let us pray.

Silence

Light of the world: **shine in our darkness.**

We pray that the worldwide Church may always be ready to travel in your way and in your direction.

Silence

Light of the world: **shine in our darkness.**

We pray for the nations as they live through conflicts and struggle with identity.

We long for all peoples to acknowledge the true and living God.

Silence

Light of the world: **shine in our darkness.**

We pray for the families and the streets we represent, asking for a spirit of generous love, understanding and mutual respect.

Light of the world: **shine in our darkness.**

We pray for all who are finding their way tedious, lonely or frightening at the moment; for those who have lost their way and do not know what to do for the best.

Silence

Light of the world: **shine in our darkness.**

We pray for those who have come to the end of their earthly journey, and for those who have died unprepared.

Silence

Light of the world: **shine in our darkness.**

We offer our thanks and praise
for the way you see us when we are still far off
and welcome us home.

Merciful Father,

**accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Opening prayer (*Winter*)

Fresh is the morning, the day and the year, O God, as we long for light in this crossing point between old and new, remembered and not yet begun story and hope.
Fresh is the morning
and our hopes with it, O God,
as we face the days,
dark now but growing ever lighter,
from solstice to summer,
frost to sunlight,
Christmas to Epiphany.
Fresh is the morning
along with our prayers, O God,
as we renew our relationship with you,
listening anew,
speaking afresh,
loving again.
Fresh is the morning.
Fresh is the year.
Fresh is the day.
Fresh is your love for us in each of them. So be it.
Amen

Hymn (*Winter, tune is Away in a manger*) Avis Palmer

We come to this moment, we have travelled so far,
like long ago wise men who were led by a star.
The roads we have taken are the days of the year,
and some have been joyous and some full of fear.

We come to this moment, we come as we are,
with all that has happened we bear the year's scar.
But here there is welcome, no more need we roam:
in the birth of the Christ child our hearts have come home.

This moment's eternal, it's endlessly new,
God's presence amongst us is endlessly true.
How awesome the silence in which can be heard
the hope and the peace of the incarnate Word.

This moment's to treasure, it's wonder, it's praise!
Enthralled by such gifting, we can only gaze.
How small is this life-light, how bright and how clear,
a star for our journey as year succeeds year.

Reflection by Anna Bosatta (*Winter*)

“Wise”

When the star arose
there was much excitement among the gazers
about what it might mean
and how to explain its appearance.

They wanted it named, and claimed.
But our hearts were beating faster because to us it was captivatingly,
beautifully more than could be pinned down by definitions
(as if words could tame it!).

What was (visible, predictable, definable, comprehensible) served only to make us
aware of something else that was not.
We travelled, we followed, we enquired, we found the baby.
Our journey took us home; the star faded.

Reports made, case closed.
But our hearts would never again beat without that rush of
hope-life-fear-joy that we knew
when we first saw that star,
which redefined with one glimmer of light our life's meaning.

What captivated us then has continued to elude our rational comprehension
but its wordless and indefinable call
is, still, an insatiable yearning
to seek beyond what can be found,
to gaze through what can be seen,
to ask more than can be answered,
and to worship.

And so we live
for what was embodied there that day.