



Koinonia Worship

Reflection for November 2021

GATHERING Ritual

Greet one another and add names to the liturgy of those who would like to lead, read, or facilitate. Each blank can be filled by a different person, and all ages are encouraged to participate in leadership! Help non-readers with their lines. Activity bags with resources for tactile engagement are provided for in-person groups. Members may use items as they like, including integrating creations into sharing reflections to the guiding questions.

*Over time, you may develop your own gathering rituals. While you are getting acquainted with one another, begin by having someone **light a central candle or play a singing bowl/chime.***

HEARING the WORD: Reader 1 _____; Reader 2 _____

Reader 1: A reading from Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9.

But the souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no affliction will ever touch them. To the eyes of fools, they seem to be dead; their departure will be interpreted as a defeat and their going away will be considered a disaster—but they have found peace!

Reader 2: For though, to mortals, they may have suffered punishment, their hope is in life everlasting, and after a time of trial they will receive great blessings, because God has tested them and found them worthy.

Reader 1: God purified them like gold in a crucible and found them as acceptable as a whole burnt offering on the altar. When their time of judgment comes, they will shine and will sweep over the world like sparks through the chaff.

Reader 2: They will be appointed as judges and leaders over all nations and peoples, and the Holy One will be their Sovereign forever. Those who have put their trust in God will find out that this is all true, and those who are faithful will dwell in God's love.

Reader 1: These are God's chosen ones, and grace and mercy belong to them.

Guiding Reflection: Reader: _____

Ancient and adapted celebrations of Samhain ("saw-in"), Halloween, All Saints' and All Souls' crop up each autumn, reminding us of the thin, transitional time between summer and winter. As the harvests are brought in and the leaves are piled to compost, death is acknowledged as a natural part in the cycle of life.

These shifts of the natural world beckon us to slow down. In doing so, we are invited to hold in tension two simultaneous truths: that while death is an ending, in the fullness of God's time, death is also a beginning. Death and life co-mingle as the origin and continuation of all that has been and all that will be.

As the northern hemisphere tilts away from the sun, we retrieve our quilts from the closets and lay them atop our beds and tuck them around our toes. Quilts, both visually and physically, often draw us into a reflective, sacred space; they draw to mind those who have gone before us, whose stories connect with ours, with whom we are pieced together across time and space.

With the Wisdom of Solomon passage in mind, we think, too, of the loving hands of God, who is like a quilt maker, stitching with great care our stories with thread that both holds us together and creates a design more intricate and beautiful than we may have thought possible. The hands of God enfold us with mercy and grace; we sink into Love.

Questions for Group Reflection: Facilitator _____

Reflect together on some or all of the questions below, or draft your own questions if that is best for your group today. Use of activity bags are particularly encouraged during this time!

1. *Beginning with children or youth, then moving to adults:* What sounds, smells, tastes, and sights come to mind when you think of autumn?
2. Reflecting on the scripture and guiding reflection, what gives you comfort? What challenges you?
3. U.S. culture tends to shy from talking about death and dying. As you feel comfortable sharing, what experiences have impacted your thinking or emotions around death (your own or others'?)
4. How do the stories of your ancestors impact your daily living?

At the closing of this time of sharing, pray together:

Facilitator: Loving Spirit, we give you thanks for this time of discovery in scripture and discernment with one another. May our journey through this season be filled with your grace and mercy. Amen.

RESPONDING in PRAYER and FELLOWSHIP

Sharing Joys and Concerns: Leader _____

The Leader invites each person (children included!) to share any joys or concerns they bring to the group. Remind your group that if anyone does not wish to share, they may simply say "pass." After all, including the Leader, have been invited to share, and if no one has something to add after a first round, join in a spirit of prayer (below).

Praying Together

Leader: Holy God, we offer these prayers to you this day, trusting in your faithfulness.
We pray for ourselves. *(a moment for silent prayer)*
We pray for our loved ones near and far. *(a moment for silent prayer)*
We pray for our community, our nation, and our world. *(a moment for silent prayer)*
Loving God,

Many: hear our prayers. Amen.

Benediction: Leader _____

One: Friends, as we part ways,
whether we are freshly aware of deep grief and pain,
or newly grateful for life—or both,
may we put your trust in God and dwell in God's love.

Many: Grace and mercy belong to us. Amen.

This Koinonia Group liturgy for November was curated by Valerie Showalter.

Sources used:

Scripture: The Inclusive Bible Translation

Guiding reflection: *An excerpt from the All Saints'/All Souls' day service.*