



Introduction

Each congregation, like each family, has different rhythms and rituals around the holidays. To help carve out meaningful space for reflection and prayer during a busy holiday season, we offer you this at-home liturgy. Use it in the comfort of your own home. Regardless of where you worship, God will be there.

Supplies Needed

- Advent wreath or candle
- Lighter or matches
- Bible
- Blank piece of paper or a journal for each member of your family
- Pen or pencil for each member of your family
- Optional: a stationary note card for each member of your family

Set The Space

In the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, take a moment to create a space for calm. Light the candles in your Advent wreath. If you don't have an Advent wreath, light a candle. Pour a cup of tea, coffee, or hot chocolate. Play some Christmas music in the background. Turn off the TV. Breathe deeply. Allow this place to become holy ground.

• Tips for Children

- Invite your kids to have a hands-on role in this liturgy by having them collect the supplies from around the house, lighting the candles, turning off distractions, etc.
- Before you begin the liturgy, invite your children to create a special place for you all to sit and reflect. They can make a comfortable fort out of pillows for you to sit on the floor, or gather all the supplies needed around the table!

Opening Prayer

Pastor Dan: One common psychological practice for clearing our mind and opening space in our hearts is to write a "brain dump." In a brain dump, you write down everything that's on your mind: to-do lists, concerns, worries, things that pop into your subconscious—anything that might distract or pull you away from the here and now.

As the music plays, commit to writing down your brain dump prayer until the song ends. If you run out of things to write, give yourself space to listen, and trust that more ideas will come. Feel free to draw what you are thinking and feeling instead of writing if that feels easier. There's no wrong way to pray.

Song: "O Come, O Come Emmanuel"

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory over the grave.

Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Day-spring, come on high
And cheer us by thy spirit's joy tonight
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.

Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Adonai, great Lord of might,
Who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times once gave the law
In cloud and majesty and awe.

Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Pastor Dan: Let us pray...

All: Holy God, even here, even now, you are with me. And so I pray— hover over this swirl of words that make up a prayer. Read between the lines. See what weighs heavy on me. Know what distracts and carry it all. I am giving it to you. I am clearing out space. I am opening myself up to draw closer to your home. Gratefully I pray, Amen.

Read + Reflect

Pastor Dan: Listen to Luke 2:41-52. I am going to read it two or three times through. During the first reading, pay attention to what words stand out. During the second reading, pay attention to what emotions stand out. During the third reading, pay attention to what actions stand out.

Luke 2:41-52

The Boy Jesus in the Temple

Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished; and his mother said to him, 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.' He said to them, 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

Discuss or journal, using the following questions and observations:

1. Jesus stays behind in the temple when his parents head home. Why do you think Jesus stays?
2. In this story, we get a glimpse of Jesus coming into his own self. He is on his own, listening, and asking questions. And "all who heard him were amazed at his answers" (Luke 2:47). What spaces have allowed you to be who you are truly called to be? Where do you feel the freedom to come into your own being? List those places. Reflect on what makes those spaces unique.
3. Jesus refers to the temple as a house—God's house. In your experience, has the church been a home for you? If so, how? If not, why not? What steps need to be taken to allow all churches to reflect the same welcome, safety, and security of a loving home?

Optional Questions for Kids

4. This story is of Jesus spending time at church. What is your favorite part of our church? What are some of your favorite memories at church?
5. When Jesus is in the temple, he reads the Bible. Do you have a favorite Bible story?
6. Jesus tells his parents he likes being at the temple because it is God's house. What is the best part about being home? How do you feel when you are home?

Song: "Go Tell It On The Mountain"

Go, tell it on the mountain
Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born

While shepherds kept their watching
O'er silent flocks by night
Behold throughout the heavens
There shone a Holy light

Go, tell it on the mountain
Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born

The shepherds feared and trembled
When, lo! Above the Earth
Rang out the angel chorus
That hailed our Savior's birth

Go, tell it on the mountain
Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born

Down in a lowly manger
Our humble Christ was born
And brought us all salvation
That blessed Christmas morn

Go, tell it on the mountain
Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born

Share this Good News

Pastor Dan: Worship calls us outside ourselves to connect with others and the world. To close the service, think of a person or a place that has helped you be your true self or has made you feel at home, just as Jesus was being his true self and felt at home in the temple. Send them a text, write them a letter to mail, or call them to thank them for their grace and welcome.

Tips for Families

- Invite your kids to make a video message and send it to a family member. Not interested in writing a card or making a video? Try making a batch of cookies to drop off with a babysitter, teacher, or neighbor! There are lots of ways to express gratitude.

Closing Words

Pastor Dan: We are going to close this sacred time by reading and reflecting upon the following poem. Blow out your candles. Close your journal. Allow yourself to re-enter the world refreshed, renewed, and grateful.

Chosen Home

There are a million ways to choose a home.

We choose to make it work.

We hang a wreath on the door of our shoebox apartment. We invite company over.

We ask, "Would you like coffee with that?"

We choose to make the most of it.

We take up watercoloring or kickboxing and show up to class. We mostly embarrass ourselves, but we were there.

We choose to not go it alone.

We sign up to volunteer and make ourselves a nametag. We slide weary bones into weary church pews.

We shake hands and say hello.

We let the music cover us, like a blanket, or a prayer.

We choose to love what we have.

We look in the mirror and speak kindly to our body.

We buy flowers at the market and arrange them in jelly jars.

There are a million ways to choose a home. So like Jesus in the temple who chose to stay,

who chose to speak,

who took up space because he knew he was home, I invite you to do the same.

Put your body

where your soul feels alive. Give yourself permission to take up space there.

Stay, as long as it takes. Return, as often as you need.

There are a million ways to choose a home. Choose wisely. We need you here.

Song: "Silent Night"

Silent night, holy night!

All is calm, all is bright.

Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child.

Holy infant so tender and mild,

Sleep in heavenly peace,

Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, holy night!

Shepherds quake at the sight.

Glories stream from heaven afar

Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia,

Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born

Silent night, holy night!
Son of God love's pure light.
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth