A Kwanzaa Prayer

We give thanks to God for all the blessings of the earth, and honor for the great goodness which is manifest in all of creation.

We ask that the spirit of Kwanzaa be infused into every aspect of our daily lives, that we may constantly remember the benefits and obligations of family, community and nationhood.

May the light of the seven candles illuminate our daily affairs and guide us into fulfillment of our true potential.

May we always remember our ancestors with reverence and love, and may they share with us their great wisdom and strength as we seek to preserve and continue the heritage they have left us.

May the NGUZO SABA become beacons to us to live lives in service, humility, unity, faith, love and strength.

Amen

(Resource: Excerpts taken from a Kwanzaa Service – Resource Watchnight Service held at Light of the World Christian Church. This Kwanzaa Service, led by youth, was written and directed by the Rev. Teresa Owens.)

Other Kwanzaa Celebration Resources can be found at: www.discipleshomemissions.org/
A Kwanzaa Libation


We gather to celebrate the unbroken chain between the past, the present and the future; our ancestors, ourselves and those unborn. Libation is as old as religious ritual itself, and in fact was practiced in both the New Testament and the Hebrew Bible. All you need is water and a living plant (or the ground). As the person leading the libation calls the name of an ancestor, those present affirm that name by saying “Ase” (I – Shyay), and at that time, a little water is poured out either in the living plant or on the ground. Libation is created to thank our God for those ANCESTORS who have blessed humanity. In order for a name to be included in a Libation ritual, that person must be deceased. A great deal of African cosmology is like a circle, we move from one stage of life to the next in a circle with the belief that even after a person dies they are not separated spiritually from the “circle of life”. This is very different than looking at life in a linear fashion.

Kwanzaa was created to introduce and reinforce seven basic values of African culture which contribute to building and reinforcing family, community and culture among African American people as well as Africans throughout the world African community. These values are called the Nguzo Saba which in Swahili means the Seven Principles. Developed by Dr. Karenga, the Nguzo Saba stand at the heart of the origin and meaning of Kwanzaa, for it is these values which are not only the building blocks for community but also serve to reinforce and enhance them.

Many congregations and other organizations observe Kwanzaa following Christmas, during the Sunday morning worship service, Watch Night service or a special Kwanzaa program. However, more and more congregations, communities and families are beginning to celebrate the principles of Kwanzaa throughout the year with youth groups, children’s ministries, Rites of Passage.

December 26 — Umoja (Unity): To strive for and to maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race.

December 27 — Kuujichagulia (Self-Determination): To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves stand up.

December 28 — Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility): To build and maintain our community together and make our brothers’ and sisters’ problems our problems, and to solve them together.

December 29 — Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics): To build and maintain our own stores, shops, and other businesses and to profit from them together.

December 30 — Nia (Purpose): To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

December 31 — Kuumba (Creativity): To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

January 1 — Imani (Faith): To believe with all our hearts in God, our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

We begin where all life began, in the “Cradle of Civilization”, ancient KMT (Egypt) and Cush (Ethiopia). We pay homage to the great pharaohs of the “Two Kingdoms”. To the kings and queens who advanced civilization for the next generations, we give you thanks. Ase.

To the great Imhotep, whom the Greeks call a polymath, and the French, a Renaissance Man, a man who was an architect, an engineer, a physician, a priest, a scribe and a philosopher, all at the same time – we give you thanks. Ase.

To the founders of the great West African kingdoms of Mali, Ghana and Songhay, we give you thanks – Ase.

To Shaka of Zululand and Yaa Asantewaa, Queen Mother/Warrior of the Ashanti people, who both led with courage, vision, skill and passion, we give you thanks, - Ase.

To the untold number of our people that did not survive the Middle Passage and who bones now litter the floor of the Atlantic Ocean, we give you thanks – Ase.

We are the proof that our ancestors survived. To those who endured unimaginable pain, torture, and humiliation; who survived so that their children might live; those who hoped against hope; who prayed prayers that at times seemed to fall on deaf ears – to you we owe our existence and we thank God for you – Ase.

To David Walker, Martin Delaney, and Sojourner Truth we give you thanks – Ase.

To Benjamin Banneker, Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass we give you thanks – Ase.

To Richard Allen, Absalom Jones and Preston Taylor, we give you thanks – Ase.

For the intellect of W.E.B. Dubois, the creativity of George Washington Carver, the genius of Duke Ellington and the passion of Paul Robeson we give you thanks – Ase.

To the courage and leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, Amilcar Cabral, Thomas Sankara and Patrice Lumumba we give you thanks – Ase.

For the impeccable gifts of Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Medgar Wiley Evers, Martin Luther King Jr., and El Hajj Malik El Shabazz (Malcolm X) we give you thanks – Ase.

To Fannie Lou Hamer, Ella Baker, Jo Ann Robinson and Rosa Parks we give you thanks – Ase.

To those who were beaten on Bloody Sunday, drenched with fire hoses in Birmingham and denied justice in Mississippi; to those who fought fascism abroad, only to fall victim to it at home, we give you thanks – Ase.

For the great Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Lorraine Hansberry and Amiri Baraka we give you thanks – Ase.

To those brave enough to fashion the “New Negro” movement that gave way to the Harlem Renaissance; to those who dared proclaim “The Black Arts Movement” and those who laid the foundation for Hip Hop, we give you thanks – Ase.

And yet, there are those close to home whose names are not nationally known, but without them there would be no us – we give God thanks, Ase.

When we were growing up we knew them simply as “Mother”, “Medea”, “Papa”, “Pawpaw”, “Grandaddy”, “Gran”, “GG”, “Pop Pop” or the all-inclusive “Mama and them”, they are the reason that we are who we are, think like we think and do what we do. For all of them, we give God thanks – Ase.

The Seven Principles of Kwanzaa

Kwanzaa symbols include a decorative mat on which other symbols are placed, corn and other crops, a candle holder with seven candles, called a kinara, a communal cup for pouring libations, gifts, a poster of the seven principles, and a black, red, and green flag. The symbols were designed to convey the seven principles.[7]