Lord of peace and hope,

Here we are:

With our gifts and ourselves;

we are rushing headlong into the holidays to come.

We look at our calendars and our day planners

and wonder how we will get everything done

in the time left to us before the "big day" arrives.

We begin to panic at the thought of projects still to be finished,

contacts that need to be made,

preparations for festivities that have only just begun.

And the darkness of obsessive holiday planning

overtakes us and clouds our minds and spirits.

But you are a God of love and light.

You bring hope to us,

as you always have through the voices of the great prophets,

and now through the one who is to come, Jesus Christ.

Remind us again what this season is truly about:

love, hope, peace and joy.

Calm us down.

Slow us down.

Help us remember that it is in loving relationship

that you gave your son to us and it is in loving relationship

that your word is carried into the hearts of the people.

Help us to remember that you come to us

in the small gestures, the tiny signs and the little and ordinary.

No tinsel, ribbons, tape, or cards

can express the eternal message of hope adequately.

You have given us the light,

to shine in our path and cut through our darkness.

Shine in the hearts of your people today.

Bless those dear ones whom we are now thinking about before you in silence...

Bless them with your healing, reconciling, comforting presence and love.

Give strength to all who face difficult situations

and let your compassionate light shine on them

guiding their decisions and their steps.

Bring us at last to your presence,

where the light of hope and love continually pour out on us.

Let us be peacemakers.

Let us be lovers of humanity.

And let us offer our prayers and hopes

in confidence and gratitude for your love and presence. Amen.