Readings from *Singing the Living Tradition*:

424

Have you entered the storehouses of the snow?  
Or have you seen the treasuries of the hail?  
From whose womb did the ice come forth,  
and who has given birth to the hoarfrost of heaven?  
The waters become hard like stone,  
and the face of the deep is frozen.

428

Come out of the dark Earth  
Here where the minerals  
Glow in their stone cells  
Deeper than seed or birth.

Come into the pure air  
Above all heaviness  
Of storm and cloud to this  
Light-possessed atmosphere.

Come into, out of, under  
The Earth, the wave, the air.

Love, touch us everywhere  
with primeval candor.

- May Sarton

445 *The Womb of Stars*

The womb of stars embraces us;  
remnants of their fiery furnaces  
pulse through our veins.

*We are of the stars  
the dust of the explosions  
cast across space.*

We are of the Earth;  
we breathe and live in the breath  
of ancient plants and beasts.

*Their cells nourish the soil;  
we build our communities  
on their harvest of gifts.*
Our fingers trace the curves
carved in clay and stone
by forebears unknown to us.

We are a part
of the great circle of humanity
gathered around the fire, the hearth, the altar.

We gather anew this day
to celebrate our common heritage.

May we recall in gratitude
all that has given us birth.

- Joy Atkinson

447

At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.

- Albert Schweitzer

448

We gather this hour as people of faith
With joys and sorrows, gifts and needs.

We light this beacon of hope, sign of our quest for truth and meaning, in celebration of the life we share together.

- Christine Robinson

450

Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flame.
Blessed is the flame that burns in the heart’s secret places.
Blessed is the heart with strength to stop its beating for honor’s sake.
Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flame.

- Hannah Senesh

451

Flame of fire, spark of the universe
that warmed our ancestral hearth -
agent of life and death,
symbol of truth and freedom.
We strive to understand ourselves
and our Earthly home.
Leslie Pohl-Kosbau

453

May the light we now kindle
inspire us to use our powers
to heal and not to harm,
to help and not to hinder,
to bless and not to curse,
to serve you, Spirit of Freedom.

Passover Haggadah

456 Extinguishing the Chalice

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth,
the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment.
These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Elizabeth Selle Jones

487

The bell is full of wind
though it does not ring.

The bird is full of flight
though it is still.

The sky is full of clouds
though it is alone.

The word is full of voice
though no one speaks it.

Everything is full of fleeing
though there are no roads.

Everything is fleeing
toward its presence.

Roberto Juarroz

541 Winter Meditation

The bare trees have made up their seed bundles.

They are ready now. The warm brown light pauses briefly, shrugs and moves on.
They are ready now to play dead for a while. I, human, have not as yet devised how to obtain such privilege.

Their spring will find them rested. I and my kind battle a wakeful way to ours.

- Denise Levertov

542 Solstice

Again did the Earth shift
again did the nights grow short,
and the days long.

And the people
of the Earth were glad
and celebrated
each in their own ways.

543 Winter

Let us not wish away the winter. It is a season to itself, not simply the way to spring.

*When trees rest, growing no leaves, gathering no light, they let in sky and trace themselves delicately against dawns and sunsets.*

The clarity and brilliance of the winter sky delight. The loom of fog softens edges, lulls the eyes and ears of the quiet, wakens by risk the unquiet. A low dark sky can snow, emblem of individuality, liberality, and aggregate power. Snow invites to contemplation and to sport.

*Winter is a table set with ice and starlight.*

Winter dark tends to warm light: fire and candle; winter cold to hugs and huddles; winter want to gifts and sharing; winter danger to visions, plans, and common endeavoring - and the zest of narrow escapes; winter tedium to merry-making.

*Let us therefore praise winter, rich in beauty, challenge, and pregnant negativities.*

- Greta Crosby

621 Why Not a Star

They told me that when Jesus was born a star appeared in the heavens above the place where the young child lay.

*When I was very young I had no trouble believing wondrous things; I believed in the star.*

It was a wonderful miracle, part of a long ago story, foretelling an uncommon life.

*They told me a super nova appeared in the heavens in its dying burst of fire.*
When I was older and believed in science and reason I believed the story of the star explained.

But I found I was unwilling to give up the star, fitting symbol for the birth of one whose uncommon life has been long remembered.

The star explained became the star understood, for Jesus, for Buddha, for Zarathustra.

Why not a star? Some bright star shines somewhere in the heavens each time a child is born.

Who knows what it may foretell?

Who knows what uncommon life may yet again unfold, if we but give it a chance?

- Margaret Gooding

653 Reflections on the Resurgence of Joy

How short the daylight hours have now become. How gray the skies, how barren seem the trees.

A damp and chilling wind has gripped my mind and made me gloomy, too.

But there is that in me which reaches up toward light and laughter, bells, and carolers,

And knows that my religious myth and dream of reborn joy and goodness must be true,

Because it speaks the truths of older myths;

That the light returns to balance darkness, life surges in the evergreen - and us,

And babes are hope, and saviours of the world, as miracles abound in common things.

Rejoice! And join in the gladness of Christmas. [and Solstice!]

- Dori Jeanine Somers

663 One Small Face

With mounds of greenery, the brightest ornaments, we bring high summer to our rooms, as if to spite the somberness of winter come.

In time of want, when life is boarding up against the next uncertain spring, we celebrate and give of what we have away.

All creatures bend to rules, even the stars constrained.

There is a blessed madness in the human need to go against the grain of cold and scarcity.
We make a holiday, the rituals varied as the hopes of humanity.

_The reasons as obscure as ancient solar festivals, as clear as joy on one small face._

- Margaret Starkey