

***A Prayer for All Families by Carol Penner:***

Jesus, you grew up in a family  
that did not always understand,  
who questioned you and no doubt squabbled;  
hear our prayer for family gatherings this year.  
Thank you for families that get along,  
showing unconditional love and support:  
families that are flexible and adaptive,  
that can stand any storm.  
Bless all who are travelling to gatherings  
that they can't wait to get to.  
And then there are other families,  
where tension, suspicion and judgement  
vie for power with love and acceptance.  
Sentences begin with "You always..."  
"I never..." and "Not this again...."  
Bless those who are travelling to gatherings  
with shields up, heads down,  
not sure if they will find a home at all.  
And then there are those who are not travelling:  
they can't afford the expense,  
or there is no home to go to,  
or home is so toxic it's healthier to stay away.  
Bless those who are working to create  
new networks of caring and support.  
God of hope, send angels down this year  
to give good tidings of great joy  
right in the midst of real-world family dynamics;  
the good, the sad, and the ugly.  
Let us be these messengers of hope,  
improbable emissaries of a newborn king,  
astounded witnesses  
to family Christmas miracles.

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**Additional resources for meaningful family dialogue:**

- Karen Hostetler's [Tips for Talking with Family about Racial Bias](#)
- Christena Cleveland's [tips for dialogue and self care at family gatherings](#)
- On Being's [Civil Conversations Project](#)