

Introit "Christ, You Are Light"

Christ, you are light for those who follow you.

You come to bring to all the light of life.

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Isaiah 52:7-10 (NRSV)

How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,
who brings good news,
who announces salvation,
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."
Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,
together they sing for joy;
for in plain sight they see
the return of the Lord to Zion.
Break forth together into singing,
you ruins of Jerusalem;
for the Lord has comforted his people,
he has redeemed Jerusalem.
The Lord has bared his holy arm
before the eyes of all the nations;
and all the ends of the earth shall see
the salvation of our God.

Call to Worship

Joy comes to the world this night!

God sets aside glory

to become as hopeful and helpless as we.

God comes to the world!

In Jesus who embraces the poor as family,

who brings justice for those who are oppressed.

Peace comes to the world!

In the Spirit who reconciles the divided,

who builds bridges and tears down walls.

Carol

O Little Town of Bethlehem

John 1:1-14 (NRSV)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Evening Prayer

Here, the faithful adore you.

Here, we find you and your family.

Here, we look with wide-eyed wonder.

Here, we listen for comforting words.

Here, we join with those who watch.

Here, we join the animals gazing at a new life.

Here, we welcome all who have burdens in this season.

Here, we hear our carols of joy and grace.

Here, we pray as we are taught - The Lord's Prayer

Carol "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks"

Call to Reconciliation

Be near us this night. Be near us, as we bring our lives, words, choices to you. Be near us, and touch us with mercy and new life, even as we rejoice in the Child whose birth we celebrate in these silent moments.

Prayer for Forgiveness

We sing of the one in a manger and consider the cries of little ones who are forgotten. We imagine the holy family like us and remember that they are the relatives of the poor.

Come to us to give us new life and hope. May we join the angels in singing songs of joy, as we bring healing to the broken. May we see each person as precious in Your eyes, as the One whose lowly birth we celebrate this night.

Silence is kept

Assurance of Pardon

Here in the silence of these moments, in the light of candles as well as grace, in the warmth of hope as well as those around us, we are offered good news. This is the night God came to us, to remind us

that we are never alone, we are loved and welcomed and affirmed by our God.

Let us adore the one whose love came; whose grace and justice walked among us; whose peace and hope are the gifts.

Amen.

Meditation "O Holy Night"

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

May the God of silent nights be with you.

Come, let us adore our God as we lift our hearts.

Let us echo the songs we have heard from angels on high.

In the bleak midwinter of chaos,

where empty winds moaned

creation tumbled forth:

birds that fly south

and bears which hibernate;

And snow that drifts;

stars which guided wise ones to a stable

and point sailors safely home.

All that was good and beautiful was shaped

for those created in your image,

but we had no room for you.

Through Hannah and Zechariah,

with the songs of Isaiah and Mary,

you told of what you were going to do

but we preferred the gifts of temptation.

So, you became one of us, taking on

our birth, our life, our death.

As we join in the joy that has come to the world,

as we look for your light in the shadows of this night,
we sing our praises to you:

We join the angelic chorus
and all creation in praising you, God of silent nights.
Glory in the highest!

Blessed is the One born this night.
Glory in the highest!

It was in David's hometown
that holiness became humility,
your power turned into weakness,
your glory transformed in humanity
as a baby drew its first breath.
Placed in a feeding trough,
Jesus came to feed us.

With animals as his midwives,
Jesus came to offer
new hope and wonder;
born into poverty,
Jesus came to share
the abundance of God's love;
dying our death,
Jesus came to set death's power aside,
to break death's cold grip
with the warmth of the resurrection.

As we celebrate his birth on this night,
as we seek to follow him every day,
we proclaim that mystery known as faith:

Born, Jesus knew the hunger of babies.

Living, Jesus knew the hurt of rejection.
Dying, Jesus knew the moment of separation from life.
Raised, Jesus knew God's love.
Returning, Jesus will journey with us into new life.

Reveal

And though the days are hastening on,
you continue to pour your Spirit
on the holy meal of this night
and on all your children gathered in this moment.

Communion Hymn

T'was on that night when doomed to know
The eager rage of every foe
That night in which he was betrayed
The Saviour of the world took bread.

And after thanks and glory given
To him that rules in earth and heaven
That symbol of his flesh he broke,

And thus to all his followers spoke:
“My broken body thus I give
For you, for all; take, eat, and live
“And oft the sacred rite renew
That brings my wondrous love to view.”

Then in his hands the cup he raised,
And God anew he thanked and praised,
While kindness in his bosom glowed,
And from his lips salvation flowed.

“My blood I thus pour forth” he cries,

“To cleanse the soul in sin that lies;
In this the covenant is sealed,
And Heaven's eternal grace revealed.

“With love to man this cup is fraught'
Let all partake the sacred draught;
Through latest ages let it pour,
In memory of my dying hour”

Here, the broken bread gives us the strength
to share hope with those in despair,
to challenge the injustice all around us,
to rebuild neighborhoods others rush past.

Let us eat with thankful hearts - **Eat**

Here, the cup is poured into our souls so we may
offer a welcome to all who are forgotten,
embrace those who grieve amidst so much joy,
reconcile with those from whom we are estranged.

Let us drink with thankful hearts - **Drink**

Re-Cover

And when that birth of new life comes,
as all time and history comes to an end,
we will join our sisters and brothers
of every time, and of every place,
in praising you forever and ever.

Amen.

Hymn "What Child Is This?"

Sending

Let us share God's joy with all the world.

Let us be the hope of Jesus for others.

Let us offer the Spirit's peace.

Carol of the Lights VU 67 Silent Night