

**A SERVICE OF CANDLELIGHTING  
AND  
A CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION  
*Christmas Eve 2022***

Welcome

Prelude Christopher A. McCroskey

*(As the Prelude begins, prayerfully prepare your hearts and minds for worship.)*

Centering Words and Lighting of Christ Candle

Greeting:

Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of a great joy for all the people:  
**to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.**

*From The United Methodist Book of Worship. Copyright 1992 The United Methodist Publishing House, 271.*

\*Hymn “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing” 240

Opening Prayer

Old Testament Reading Isaiah 9:2-7 Pages 607-608 (O.T.)

Psalter Psalm 96 815-816

\*Hymn “Infant Holy, Infant Lowly” 229

Gospel Reading Luke 2:1-20 Page 58 (N.T.)

Meditation “The Light Broke Forth!” Rev. John D. Jordan

Invitation to Communion

Prayer of Confession

Passing of the Peace

The Great Thanksgiving

Giving of the Bread and Cup

*(Come down the center aisle to receive the meal and return via the side aisle picking up a candle as you return to your seat.)*

\*Hymn “Silent Night, Holy Night” 239

*(During the singing of the hymn the ushers will light his/her candle from the Christ Candle and light the candle of the person at the end of each pew who will then pass the light down the pew. The person who is lighting their candle should tip their candle to the light to receive the light while the lit candle remains upright.)*

Dismissal with Blessing

Walk in darkness no longer.

**We will walk in the light of Christ.**

Sing of Christ’s birth with the choirs of angels.

**We will sing with the heavenly host.**

Go and proclaim the good news.

**Jesus Christ is born. Amen.**

*From the Abingdon Worship Annual 2022. Copyright 2021 by Abingdon Press, Used by Permission.*

Dismissal Hymn “Joy to the World” On Back

*(Let us carry the light of Christ into the world!)*

\*The Congregation May Stand

*Joy to the World*

1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her King;  
let every heart prepare him room,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.
2. Joy to the world, the Savior reigns!  
Let all their songs employ;  
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

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Light Broke Forth!

12/24/2022

Luke 2: 1-14

Christmas Eve

It had been a long day for those shepherds on the Judean hillside outside Bethlehem. At sunrise, they had called their flocks out from the cave. The shepherds led the sheep to the best pasture they could find. They made sure it was near a source of water. Sheep that wandered from the flock were herded back to the safety of the flock. Lambs that were separated from their mother were carried back. The shepherds remained vigilant throughout the day for predators.

As the sun began to set, the shepherds herded the sheep into the cave. A fire was lit for light and warmth. A simple meal of bread, cheese, and perhaps a small piece of meat, was consumed. They told stories and jokes to pass the time. As the night grew darker, they huddled in their cloaks and blankets at the mouth of the cave. One by one, they fell asleep, except the ones who drew the first watch. These remained awake, alert to the sound of approaching predators and thieves.

The hours passed. The night became darker. The lights from Bethlehem went out. The fire died to a few embers. The only light that night came from the moon and the pinpricks of the stars.

These shepherds were the lowest on the social ladder. Most were either old men or young boys. The old men were no longer able to do manual labor and the boys were not strong enough. They stank from days in the pasture. They smelled of sheep, sweat, dirt, and manure. They made a pittance, perhaps some wool to clothe the family or enough money to feed themselves. Most people had little to do with them and avoided them at all costs. Their lives seemed as dark as the night which surrounded them.

We may have times when darkness envelops us like it surrounded the shepherds on the Judean hillside. We may be swathed in the darkness of grief. We may despair about our economic situation. We or a loved one may be held in the iron fist of addiction and abuse. Relationships we thought would never end are now shattered. Maybe just watching the news and seeing the state of the world cloaks us in darkness. Our souls may feel as dark as the Judean hillside that night.

That night was just a normal night. The work of the long day was done. The sheep were safely in the cave. Some of the shepherds slept, while others kept watch. One of those keeping watch noticed one star that seemed to be getting brighter. He pointed it out to the others keeping watch. Yes, one star was getting brighter. They began to wake the others.

Suddenly in the darkness, a dazzling light broke forth! An angel of the Lord, a messenger from God, stood before them. They were shaking in their sandals! They shielded their eyes and fell to the ground!

The angel told them, those dirty, stinky, lowly shepherds, "Do not be afraid; for see I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you (dirty, stinky, lowly shepherds) is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah..." Then the light got even brighter and a whole host of angels surrounded those shepherds singing "Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace to all he favors."

These lowly shepherds were the first to receive the message of the birth of the Messiah. They were dazzled by the light of God's glory. In the darkness of the night, in the darkness of their situation, God's light broke forth on them! They received the message that the Savior had been born! God's light had come into the world!

Even when the angels left, the light did not fade. They said, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place which the Lord has made known to us." "Let us go see God's light that has come into the world."

They placed large rocks and logs over the mouth of the cave and hurried down the hill to Bethlehem. They went to see the light which had broken into the darkness of their lives. The light came into the world in the form of a baby born to a young woman and a peasant father from Galilee. The light was sent into the world to overcome all darkness. The shepherds returned to their flocks. Even though it was still night, it was not dark, for God's light had come into the world.

This light shone in the manger that night. This light shone throughout the life of Jesus. Even when the powers of darkness thought they extinguished the light by nailing it to a cross, it burst forth from the tomb on the third day. This light has shone for the past 2025 years and continues to shine today.

In the darkest of our times, God's light breaks forth. God's light breaks forth as it did that night on the Judean hillside.

In the darkness of our grief, God's comforting light shines forth.

In the darkness of our infirmities, God's healing light shines forth.

In the darkness of our guilt and oppression, God's liberating light shines forth.

In the darkness of our anger and resentment, God's forgiving light shines forth.

In the darkness of our loneliness, the light of God's presence shines forth.

In the darkness of our confusion, God's calming light shines forth.

In the darkness of conflict, the light of God's peace shines forth.

In the darkness of brokenness, God's light brings wholeness.

In the darkness of sin, God's redeeming light shines forth.

God's light came into the world that first Christmas and continues to shine on us. This light does not just break forth at Christmas but shines throughout the year. In our times of darkness, God's light will break forth overcoming the darkness, giving peace on the earth, giving peace to us, and giving peace and goodwill to all, every day. God's light still breaks forth.