

# *SCRIPTURE SHARING*



*Come, O Lord,  
Prince of Peace*

*Advent 2023*

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Dear Friends,

As we enter into the blessed season of Advent, I am delighted that Faith Development Services have once more made available these scripture sharing resources. Advent puts before us the wonderful witness of our mother, Mary, who heard the Word of God, pondered it in her heart and said yes, to God.

In the footsteps of Mary, may we too ponder the Advent scriptures in which God speaks to our hearts with His message of hope and salvation, of peace and reconciliation, of the constant assurance that our God is with us. May we too hear God's word and say, yes!

I am especially grateful to the family of the late Fr John Cummins for giving us permission to draw on homilies given by Fr John and found in the recently published book 'My Life in your Hands: thoughts & words of Fr John Cummins Year B & Year C'. Fr John's priestly ministry continues to nourish us in this two-volume record of just some of his homilies, preached to the people he served with faith and love. They are another reminder to us of the living word of God that comes to us every time the scriptures are proclaimed and broken open for us in the homily.

As we turn to the Advent scriptures may we hold in our hearts a constant prayer for peace in our world that is so deeply fractured and wounded by war. I offer this prayer as a daily companion this Advent:

Loving God, as your light grows in the dark of winter,  
bring its strength and its hope to the people of the Holy Land  
and to all people who suffer through war and conflict.  
Just as you sent the star of Bethlehem to lead the way to your Son,  
guide all - leaders and citizens - to follow your ways of peace and justice.  
As we remember the difficult journey of Mary and Joseph,  
may the Holy Family be a source of courage for each of us,  
helping us to reach out in friendship  
to the oppressed and displaced of this world.  
Help us to see in the Christ-child we welcome this Christmas,  
the one who came to bring an end to all divisions.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.  
And may the Lord bless us and keep us safe this Advent Day and always. Amen.  
Come, Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace.

Every blessing in these weeks of preparation for the birth of Christ,



+ Bishop Denis Nulty

## METHOD

Thanks to all those who decide to use our Advent Booklets this year

We know that there are many well-established groups both in Kildare and Leighlin and outside who may wish to use these booklets... thanks for your faithfulness!!

We hope that this booklet may also be of use to people who wish to reflect on the Advent readings, but for different reasons cannot join a group.

Here are some guidelines to help those who are reflecting in groups:

- Wherever you gather, some focus might be very useful, such as a lighted candle or an icon. This can be very simple, but serves to remind people that we gather in the presence of the God who wants to speak to us through his Word.
- Before you begin, it might be an idea to use a small Taize chant or a well-known hymn, just to set the atmosphere.
- It would be good to pray the opening prayer together as a group.
- Take time at the reading of the Gospel passage. This is the most important part of the gathering. Allow for some minutes of silence afterwards.
- Arrange with someone beforehand to read the Reflection. Again, after the reflection, please allow for some time of silence. This can be followed by a time of sharing, but no-one should be put under pressure to say anything!

- The prayers given can be supplemented with prayers for the parish or community, or other needs as present themselves.
- The “Final Thought” is meant to give a small idea for people to take away with them. It can be read out loud, or people can read it in their own time.

Thank you once again for your faithfulness to this reflection of the Gospels. We hope it brings you the joy and peace that comes to those who “hear God’s Word and keep it”!

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wish to thank the family of the late Very Rev John Cummins for generously giving us permission to draw on the homilies found in ‘My Life in your Hands: Thoughts and Words of Fr John Cummins Year B & Year C’. May these reflections and prayers inspire us all as we make our Advent journey.



## 1<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT

***Beware, keep alert for you do not know when the time will come***

### **PRAYER**

Gracious God, we wait for you. Help us at all times to be alert and ready, for eye has not seen and ear has not heard the wonders of your deeds. Help us to see beyond our limited vision and give us ears to hear the joy of your message as we enter into this time of Advent. We thank you for giving us this time of preparation together. Amen

### **With Mary we pray**

Hail Mary ...

### **READING**

People can take it in turns to read the Gospel, or else if someone is praying on his/her own, then s/he can read the Gospel a number of times. This should be followed by a time of reflective silence.

**First Reading: Isaiah 63:16-17, 3-8**

**Second Reading: 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 1:3-9**

### **Read the Text**

#### **A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark 13:33-37**

Jesus said to his disciples: *'Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man travelling abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!'*

### **WORDS/PHRASES**

Suggest that each person says a word or a phrase which stayed with them from the

reading (*with no comment from anyone else*)

### **REFLECTION**

We spend an awful lot of our time waiting - we wait in queues for buses and ATM machines; we wait at the doctor's; we wait to collect people; we wait for things to begin, or even to end. Sometimes we know exactly what we're waiting for and when it's going to happen. Many people waiting eagerly for Christmas know that it will come on December 25. We're waiting for Christ to come again. We might be tired waiting for him; we might have forgotten that we're waiting for him, but he will come again. And so, Christ tells us to be on our guard, to stay awake, because we do not know when the time will come. We are asked to be vigilant, alert, attentive, mindful even. We watch for Christ to come again; we look for signs of his presence with us now; we wait for Christmas to celebrate his birth 2000 years ago.

Watching and waiting, being alert and attentive - these are not just words for Advent. Here at the beginning of the liturgical year, they set the tone for the whole year - reminding us that being a follower of Christ means to stay alert and to watch for his coming, to be actively waiting for him. At one level, this is a contemplative task, a prayerful task. Essentially contemplative prayer is waiting for God, spending time in vigilance, watching in silence, listening with the heart, watching with the eyes of the soul, in order to discover the presence of God within us and in our world. It's not easy to be contemplative in today's world; yet we see many people searching for some sort of contemplative experience - in mindfulness, yoga perhaps, even the repetitive nature of exercise and sport can be for some a place where the mind is still, and the language of the heart can be heard, and the peace of God perhaps experienced.

Advent can be a very busy time for people, getting ready for Christmas and all that that involves. But try, if you can, to do Advent differently this year. See if you can stop and make space for Christ. Spend a little extra time in prayer - a time for yourself to be with God. This is the beginning of a new year - a little earlier than the rest of the world, and the Church begins it with a time of preparation, reflection, asking us to prepare to welcome Christ, to watch for him, to look for him. Let us take that time, so that Christ may enrich us with his presence and so that we may recognise him when he comes.  
(Homily given on 3 December 2017)

*Allow for a period of five to ten minutes silence*

#### **PRAYER**

**Response: Come Lord Jesus**

In hope, we have waited for your coming,  
O Jesus, so in confidence we pray:  
help us to appreciate the wonder of  
waiting, so that we can be alert to the  
many ways in which you call on us to  
respond.

**Come Lord Jesus**

Help us to see beyond the borders of our  
vision, that we might cut through the  
prejudices that keep us in isolation.

**Come Lord Jesus**

Help us to free ourselves and others from  
the slavery of oppression that binds us and  
keeps us from reaching out to another.

**Come Lord Jesus**

Help all those who are sick in mind, body  
or spirit. That they will know your healing  
touch.

**Come Lord Jesus**

Grant us a readiness to listen to your voice  
and bear witness to your coming into the  
world.

**Come Lord Jesus.**

#### **FINAL THOUGHT**

Can I do Advent differently this year?  
How?







## 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**See I am sending my messenger ahead of you. Who will prepare your way. The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'**

### PRAYER

Gracious God, you come to restore us to new life with you and one another. Help us to be open to every opportunity to prepare a way for you. For within and around us a voice cries to make a way for you. Help us to respond so that we can restore this new life that you offer to us and all. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

### With Mary we pray

Hail Mary ...

### READING

People can take it in turns to read the Gospel, or else if someone is praying on his/her own, then s/he can read the Gospel a number of times. This should be followed by a time of reflective silence.

**First Reading: Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11**

**Second Reading: 2 Peter 3:8-14**

### Read the Text

#### **A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark 1:1-8**

The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah: *'Look, I am going to send my messenger before you; he will prepare your way. A voice cries in the wilderness: Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight'* and so it was that John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. All Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to him, and as they were

baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins. John wore a garment of camel-skin, and he lived on locusts and wild honey. In the course of his preaching he said, *'Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'*

### WORDS/PHRASES

Suggest that each person says a word or a phrase which stayed with them from the reading (*with no comment from anyone else*)

### REFLECTION

Our Celtic forebears had prayers to accompany every action of the day, for they believed that God was with them at every moment, in every thought, word and deed. That sense of God's presence surrounding us, with us, is characteristic of Celtic spirituality, as you see in St. Patrick's Breastplate "Christ be beside me; Christ be before me."

It contrasts very sharply with many in our society today, who find themselves alone, radically alone, some of them even conscious that they are "missing God." The absence of God, the experience of being abandoned, alone and without meaning, is an experience that came to the fore in the twentieth century, with its terrible history of war, holocausts, devastation - the experience of the human race adrift in a meaningless landscape. We escaped quite a bit of that in Ireland, but in recent years we have been catching up at least on some aspects of the experience. Certainly, the toppling of the pillars of our society – the institutions of Church, State, banking and development – has resulted in a lot of people being lost, not sure where they are or what they can hold to be certain. The fear of the future has added to the uncertainty. Where are we now? What can we believe in? Where is God, how does he fit in? Where is he

hiding? Many have stopped looking for him; some feeling that he isn't even real. But a lot are simply indifferent. Then there are those who have lost faith in life itself, those tempted to suicide, people whose inner reality is painful, and who find little in the outside world to anchor them and keep them safe.

The Gospel today speaks of a voice crying in the wilderness. The image is very strong. Yet a voice cries in the wilderness. It's as if the voice is speaking from exile, and that it is destined not to be heard, for in the wilderness, there is no one to hear it. It's an empty, desolate, barren space – a meaningless place, that perhaps corresponds with the experience of many today, who inhabit a land without landmarks, without certainties, and are trying to find their bearings in this new world. It is in this place, in this situation, that God sends his prophet to speak, to cry out. The voice that cries in the wilderness is perhaps a lonely voice; who is there to hear it? Is his message destined not to be heard? And his message is "Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight." The Lord has not abandoned his people; he is near and he is coming.

In this Advent season, we who come to church are called to be that prophetic voice for our society, that voice that cries in the wilderness of our times, saying "God is here; he is coming; prepare his way. His love is not past; he has not forgotten us. Open a way into your hearts, into your lives, into your homes for him." John the Baptist might not be the saint that we first think of when we pray, but pray to him now, for in these Advent days, we continue his mission to family, neighbours, friends, colleagues and all who form our community. We are the voice of hope; we witness to the constancy of God's love and his presence, which has not abandoned or deserted us. I know that many here are very conscious of being a voice in the wilderness. We are all called to be that

voice today; we draw our strength from one another and from the God who is always with us, even in the confusion of our times, even in the wilderness and desert landscape of our society. Our message is in the faith of our ancestors – God is with us at every moment. In this Advent season, this has a special meaning and urgency as we celebrate the coming of his Son among us two thousand years ago, as we look for his presence among us now, and as we await his coming again with joyful expectation.

*(Homily given on 4 December 2011)*

***Allow for a period of five to ten minutes silence***

#### **PRAYER**

**Response: Come Lord Jesus**

May we help to restore a sense of hope and freedom to all who have felt alone and abandoned at this time.

**Come Lord Jesus**

You come as the radiant reflection of God's love. Help us to be prayerful and reflective before we take steps of action for the sake of justice.

**Come Lord Jesus**

Help us to show care for one another, our environment and all endangered species.

**Come Lord Jesus**

May we be ready to share our gifts freely and willingly in a manner that gives dignity to the poor.

**Come Lord Jesus**

Give peace and eternal rest to all who have died today. Be with those who miss them and are grieving.

**Come Lord Jesus**

#### **FINAL THOUGHT**

Am I listening to the voice in the wilderness? Have I found where God is hiding?





### 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it.**

#### **PRAYER**

Loving God, we give praise and thanks that you have sent your Son to be our light in the darkness of this world. Come and assist us to see your loving care and your light in the midst of our daily struggles. May you help us to bring the light of your love to the lives we meet daily. This we ask in the mystery of our God, the source of all life. Amen.

#### **With Mary we pray**

Hail Mary ...

#### **READING**

Again, ask a few people to read the Gospel text. Keep it slow! Take your time; remember that God wants to speak to you in these words.

Allow for a few minutes of silence.

**First Reading: Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11**

**Second Reading: 1 Thess. 5:16-24**

#### **Read the Text**

#### **A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John 1:6-8, 19-28**

A man came, sent by God.

His name was John.

He came as a witness,  
as a witness to speak for the light,  
so that everyone might believe through him.

He was not the light,  
only a witness to speak for the light.  
This is how John appeared as a witness.  
When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, 'I am not the Christ.' 'Well then,' they asked, 'are you Elijah?' 'I am

not' he said. 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.' So they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?' So John said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied: a voice that cries in the wilderness: make a straight way for the Lord.'

Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, 'Why are you baptizing if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?' John replied, 'I baptize with water; but there stands among you – unknown to you – the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap.' This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

#### **WORDS/PHRASES**

Suggest that each person says a word or a phrase which stayed with them from the reading (*with no comment from anyone else*)

#### **REFLECTION**

Today is Gaudete Sunday - Rejoice Sunday. This is the day when the joy of expectation overflows and bursts through. We light the pink candle to emphasize that joy. The joy of Christmas is associated with Santa Claus, with gifts, food, drink and celebrations for many. The real joy for all of those celebrations is in being with people we love - the rest of it is quite superficial. Isaiah proclaims that his soul rejoices in God, he exults for joy in the Lord. His joy is the joy of the Lord, the joy of salvation, the joy of wearing the cloak of integrity, knowing that sin has been wiped away, he is delivered from evil. That reading sets us up for the Gospel, where John the Baptist speaks as the voice in wilderness, proclaiming that the day of the Lord has come, the joy of the Lord is here; prepare the way for the one who is coming, the Christ of God. 2000 years ago, Christ came among us, present firstly in the womb of his mother,

born in a stable in Bethlehem, suffering, dying and rising again so that all crooked ways might be made straight, all obstacles to God's love removed, all darkness and all sin conquered. Today we look for him to come again, we are alert and attentive to his presence with us now, and on this Advent day, we unite with Mary in the joy of anticipating his birth.

In all that we possess and have in this world, so many people are deprived of joy. The joy we speak of is not about fun or pleasure - it's something much more profound. It's not about the kicks we get from food, drink, or from indulging ourselves. It's not about the serotonin boost or the adrenalin highs or anything akin to them; it's about the joy of the Lord, the joy of being loved, the much simpler joy that is God's gift to us. It would be terrible to celebrate Christmas and to miss that joy. In the words of the poet T.S. Eliot, "We had the experience, but missed the meaning." He continues. "And approach to the meaning restores the experience in a different form." When we come close to experiencing Christmas, the reality of Christ in our world, in our life, in our home, the experience is different, and it brings the peace and joy, goodwill and love that are the gifts of the Christ-Child. Pope Francis tells us that Christians cannot have gloomy faces; we are to be people of joy, to look for the joy of the Lord ourselves and to share it with others, even if it's only in the smile on our face and a word of friendship. There's a little prayer, one that I often repeat during the day, that goes "May the joy of the Lord be your strength." That's my prayer for us all today, that the joy of the Lord may be our strength each and every day of our lives. *(Homily given on 17 December 2017)*

*Allow for a period of five to ten minutes silence*

## **PRAYER**

### **Response: Come Lord Jesus**

Help us to be your light to those who live in the darkness of addiction of any kind. May we not judge but bring your healing presence to all we meet.

### **Come Lord Jesus**

Help us to be your light in those whose lives are worn down by sickness, by the ill health of a child or a loved one. May they know your healing presence.

### **Come Lord Jesus.**

Help us to be your light to those who live lives of service. May they always respond with hope and with courage.

### **Come Lord Jesus**

Help us to bring your light to all who are homeless, especially children who need food, care and companionship.

### **Come Lord Jesus**

Help us to be bring your light into lives that are lonely, for one reason or another. May we move them from despair to a life of hope and confidence in your goodness and nearness.

### **Come Lord Jesus.**

## **FINAL THOUGHT**

Christians are often the voice in the wilderness nowadays. But do even we have difficulty finding Jesus in the modern cacophony? What can we do to seek him out?





## 4<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT

### PRAYER

Gracious God, may we come to recognise that with Mary, we are your favoured ones and that you desire to be with us. Increase our faith and put a new spirit in our hearts so that we can bear your word to the world in which we find ourselves. We ask this in your name. Amen

### With Mary we pray

Hail Mary ...

### READING

Once again, ask a number of people to read the Gospel Passage. Remember that God wants to speak to you through these words, so spend a little time in silence to grasp these words and hold them.

**First Reading: Isaiah 7:10-14**

**Second Reading: Romans 1:1-7**

### Read the Text

#### **A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew 1:18-24**

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and said, *'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.'* Now all this took

place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet: *'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'.*

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home.

### WORDS/PHRASES

Suggest that each person says a word or a phrase which stayed with them from the reading (*with no comment from anyone else*)

### REFLECTION

One of the saddest features of the world today is the sheer number of people looking for a home. We're conscious of the homeless all the time; we're hearing and reading about them all the time, but the problem continues to escalate. Those who have homes struggle to pay for them and keep them. At Christmas, we value being at home, having a home and we give thanks for the home we have. It's part of what Christmas is about. And certainly, part of the message of the Christmas story is about homelessness and at another level, it's about making a home for God. It's hard to make a home for God when his people have none.

Our readings today are all about finding a home for our God - in the first reading, we see King David, having settled into his own house, now wanting to build a house for God. The Jews treasured the Ark of the Covenant, where the Presence of God was said to dwell. But it was Solomon the son, not David his father, who built the Temple to house The Ark and the Divine Presence. In the Gospel, we hear about the call to Mary to be the new Ark, the new Temple, the new place where God will make his home, his dwelling place among humanity. And she says 'yes', she is ready, she will welcome him and be a home for him. We know that the Christmas story, with its tale of no room at

the inn, continues this theme of searching for a dwelling place for God, searching for a people who will recognise their need of him and welcome him.

Today he comes to us, offering himself to us in Word and in the Eucharist. When you think of it, to receive Christ in the Eucharist is the most extraordinary thing - here he comes to us, to make his home in the physical presence of the sacrament within us. It's awesome. The call to us is to recognise him when he comes, to truly open the doors of our hearts and our minds and our spirits to our divine guest, to give him the space that he would like, to truly make him at home. He doesn't intrude; he comes gently and quietly, and so it's easy to forget that he's there at all and that we are his dwelling place, tabernacles of his presence.

We cannot welcome Christ in the Eucharist or in his Word without also welcoming him in the person of the one who is homeless, or hungry, or suffering, or unloved. We cannot welcome Christ spiritually without welcoming him physically as well. Christ became flesh - the spiritual became tangible; God became human. We welcome Christ at every level, not just one.

If our world is to be transformed by the presence of Christ; if we are to find hope and courage to face the struggles and tragedies of life; if we are to experience salvation, then we need to welcome him and to encourage others to welcome him. Maybe this Christmas, before you share your Christmas dinner together, you might take a moment with those who share the table with you, to welcome Christ, to make a place for him, and to bring to him those who are homeless or hungry, those who are grieving or are lonely, those whose lives have been touched and damaged by violence or war, those who need the presence of the Prince of Peace. May

Christ find a welcome home in every human heart.

*(Homily given on 24 December 2017)*

***Allow for a period of five to ten minutes silence***

**PRAYER**

**Response: Come Lord Jesus**

We await your coming, so with joyful hearts we pray:

You became human and were born of Mary in a troubled land. Come and liberate all peoples' suffering oppression.

**Come Lord Jesus**

Lord, you faced the reality of death. Give courage and strength to all who are terminally ill and those who are close to them.

**Come Lord Jesus**

Jesus, you and your mother Mary showed us how to be more fully human in our giving to a needy world. May we share our gifts freely and willingly as you so often did.

**Come Lord Jesus**

Jesus, your death brought us the hope of resurrection. Grant new life to all who have died this day.

**Come Lord Jesus**

**FINAL THOUGHT**

At Christmas, we should bring to Christ those who are homeless, hungry, grieving or lonely. Do we stay in our comfort zone instead of extending the hand of friendship at this festive time?

## CEREMONY OF HOPE

### *From Darkness into Light*

Wrapped in December darkness we welcome the birth of the Son of God, the light of lights, the Prince of Peace.

#### SUGGESTED SETTING

Group in a circle. Cloth in the centre with an unlit large candle, and a small tea light for each member of the group.

#### LEADER

Let us take a few moments to be aware of our breathing, to be quiet and focus on the unlit large candle. (*Background music if possible*)

December 21<sup>st</sup> has the longest hours of darkness for those of us in the Northern Hemisphere. If you were in Newgrange, Co. Meath on that morning at 9am you would experience the rising sun and the sunlight peeping through the passage grave.

In pre-Christian times our ancestors were fearful that darkness and death would rule over the earth, so they circled sacred fires built on hilltops and in holy places to petition the gods and the goddesses to bring back the sun.

The Christian feast, December 25<sup>th</sup>, Christmas day, celebrates the word made flesh who came as a light in the darkness. Jesus the Light of our world has overcome darkness. This darkness comes in many forms and patterns. It can be a brief visitor or a long-term resident. The darkness holds a variety of emotions, some of which may not feel good (*Background music*) Let us reflect on the dark times in our lives during the past year (*pause*). (*The large, unlit candle is passed around as each person takes time to reflect on the darkness in their own lives. Each person is then invited to share their dark times with one other person, or with the group if they so wish*)

#### VOICE 1

If we listen carefully in the darkness, we will hear a tiny voice whisper.

#### VOICE 2

I will go before you and level the mountains. I will give you treasures out of the darkness and riches that have been hidden away.

#### VOICE 3

In the dark days I do not wait until light dawns for I know not when it shall come. I go instead stumbling into the darkness, searching for a road, straining to see a way – darkness, it is a place of growth.

Tonight, we are celebrating and marking the emergence of light out of darkness, of hope out of despair. (*one person is invited by the leader to light the large candle. All present stretch out their hand towards the candle as the blessing is read*)

#### BLESSING

As we light this candle, we ask that God who is the fullness of light will protect each of us, our families and friends, from that which we fear most.

#### Scripture Reading: Isaiah 9:1

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. On those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone

*(Silent Reflection)*

#### PRAYER

May we all be encircled by the warmth of the light and love of God and the flame of our friendship with one another.

May we who are gathered here be protected from all harm and disease, all evil and wickedness, all fear and darkness. Let us celebrate the light breaking through the darkness with song.

*'The Light of Christ has come into the World' or 'City of God' or any suitable hymn.*



**LEADER**

*Invites each one to light a tea light from the large candle.*

We focus on each person as s/he light a candle, and we remember his/her family and friends. We are aware also of our connectedness with each other, with the world and the whole of creation.

*Invites each one to share their hopes for this Christmas and for 2015*

**PRAYER**

May we find hope in the lights we have kindled, hope in one another and in all who form the web work of peace and justice that spans the world. May we call forth from one another the light and the love that is hidden in every heart.

**HYMN**

The Lord is my Light  
My Light and Salvation  
In Him I trust  
In Him I trust

*Or any hymn of choice.*

**FINAL BLESSING**

Light of God to give us hope  
Power of God to protect us  
Light of God to give us joy  
Peace of God to calm us  
Light of God to give us faith  
Grace of God to save us,  
this night and ever more.  
Amen







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