

NEW Simple Christmas Eve Service for 2023

Prelude

Welcome

Welcome to everyone on this holy night. This is a simple service of scripture, carols, and reflection, as we ponder the mystery, the incarnation of God, the Word becoming flesh and living with us. This is a night where we understand that darkness is holy, darkness is bright. Live into the darkness and silence and stillness, when possible. And when the cries and giggles and wondrous chatter of children and adults join in, we know the angels are present among us. Bring your whole self, and listen, pray and invite God into your hearts in a new way this night.

Call to Worship (John 1:10-14)

Christ was in the world, and the world came into being through Christ;

Yet the world did not know Christ.

Christ came to what was his own,

And the people did not accept Christ.

But to all who received Christ, who believed in his name,

Christ gave power to become children of God,

Who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh,

Not even of the will of humanity, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us,

And we have seen Christ's glory,

The glory as of a father's only son,

Full of grace and truth.

Carol: Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence, *or* O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Prayer of Invocation (light the Advent candles during the prayer)

A match has struck, a spark kindled. A light is shining in the bleak shadows of death and despair. God has started a fire in our hearts, in our world, to purify and cleanse us. We hail the sun of righteousness, risen with healing in its wings! O Glorious One, as the Holy Spirit descended long ago, descend to us, we pray, and light our hearts on fire this Christmas Eve, knowing that You are arriving again in our hearts and lives, burning brightly in us in a new way, so that You might transform the world. Make Your presence known to us in this time of worship. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7

Carol: O Come, All Ye Faithful

Gospel Reading: John 1:9-10

Carol: It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 23:1-6

Carol: O Little Town of Bethlehem

Gospel Reading: Luke 2:1-20

Carol: Angels We Have Heard on High *or* Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Gospel Reading: John 1:1-5

(light all candles during this reading and dim the lights)

Prayer (from John 1:9-10)

True Light, You have come into our world to enlighten us all. Though the world does not know You, You continue to reveal who You are in Your extravagant love for us, coming to us as one of us, dying and rising again, so we might know that death does not have the final word. As we celebrate Your birth long ago, we remember that we are all born of the Spirit, born anew in You, and we rejoice and give thanks that life is the story still unfolding. Life is the story still being told. Life is the story that lives forever, because You became flesh, the Living Word, the Light of Life. To us has been born this day a Messiah, and You are Lord. We proclaim You, Sovereign of Life, Source of all Being, Savior of the World. Amen.

Carol: Silent Night

Benediction:

The prophet Isaiah spoke long ago: "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you." Go and declare the good news: Christ is here, among us, now! Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace. Go and share the peace of Christ with the world. Amen, and Merry Christmas.