



The story tells us
that it's those who wait in the world's shadows
who are the first to know of the Christ-child,
born into darkness
bringing great light.

So we gather as those who carry the rumour of peace
and the truth of love
into a world longing for light.
We gather as those who pray for the justice another is
waiting for,
who speak of the hope another needs to breathe.

Prayer after distribution

Song: Away in the manger

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes;
I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay
Close by me forever, and love me, I pray;
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
And fit us for heaven to live with thee there.

Blessing

The story tells us
that it's those who wait in the world's shadows
who are the first to know of the Christ-child,
born into darkness
bringing great light.

So leave here today
to be carriers of the rumour of peace
and the truth of love
into a world longing for light.
Pray for the justice another is waiting for,
and speak of the hope another needs to breathe

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all

Amen.

Call to Worship - the lighting of the candles

We light this candle because we have heard a promise of peace

We light this candle because we wait for the coming of justice

We light this candle because we long for the presence of love

We light this candle because we need the rumour of hope.

We light this candle because we have heard of the birth of the Christ-child
and we pray God's realm might come near.

Welcome to Christmas
Welcome to worship

Sing: Silent Night

Silent night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and Child
Holy infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight
Glories stream from heaven afar
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ, the Saviour is born
Christ, the Saviour is born.

Silent night, holy night
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Bible reading

We have been waiting
for weeks now
- though it can seem like months, or years -

faithfully praying for the day
when love and justice, peace and hope
will be made real in our world

today we hear a story of how that happens.

Luke 2:1-20

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of 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. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Reflection

Prayer

As an act of faith we pray...

... we say a prayer for those we love and miss today.

... we say a prayer for those with whom we have broken relationships, for God's peace to be born between us.

... we say a prayer for the darkest parts of our lives where God's light needs to be born

... we say a prayer for the broken parts of our world, where it seems impossible that justice will come.

God, we know that lighting candles is not enough of a prayer to make a difference. We pray also that we will have the courage to join our story to your story of love and hope, peace and justice, today.

Amen.

We say the Lord's Prayer together

**Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be your name,
Your Kingdom come,
Your will be done
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
As we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil.
For the Kingdom, the power and the glory are yours
Now and forever.
Amen.**

The Eucharist

We come to this table, and give thanks that all are invited.

We give thanks for the birth of the Christ-child, and for the gift of hope that he brings.

We remember the meal shared between Jesus and the others in the upper room where bread and wine was broken, blessed and shared.

We remember

God, you meet us in our hungering
with manna not of our making,
and in our thirsting
you surprise us
with unexpected wine.

You are the source
of our desiring
and the end
of all the longing.
O giver of the feast
and ever-present guest,
blessed be.

We remember Jesus' death and we celebrate the resurrection that in both our filling and emptying there can be life and hope.

So we share in the bread of life, and the cup of hope.

And in this time of Christmas may we prepare a space, where the Christ-child can be born again.

Distribution: