

# Feast of the Nativity Christmas Eve



# GATHERING

*We stand as able.*

## OPENING ACCLAMATION

*Presider:* Blessed is the Luminous Night –  
the advent of Christ, our Light and our Life.

*Assembly:* **Glory to the Beloved, for ever and ever.**

ENTRANCE Drumming



## TELLING THE STORY

### COLLECT

*Presider:* The Light of Christ is born anew this night as your heart.

*Assembly:* **And also yours.**

*Presider:* In the beginning, Light shines in the darkness –  
Loving, Beautiful, Good –  
giving birth to all creation,  
the center, the heart, of unfolding life.

The Light graces all creation as God's presence.

*Assembly:* **The Light is Christ.**

*Presider:* The Light is the child of Mary and Joseph.

*Assembly:* **The Light is Love.**

*Presider:* The Light is a Jewish mystic, sage, and prophet.

*Assembly:* **The Light is Beautiful.**

*Presider:* The Light is life in the midst of death.

*Assembly:* **The Light is Good.**

*Presider:* May Christ, the Light, reveal to all who would see  
the wisdom and wonder of God's boundless love.

*All:* **Amen.**



Hymn

*We sit.*

A CHILD HAS BEEN BORN (BASED ON ISAIAH 9:2-7)

The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light.  
For those who lived in a land of deep shadows ---  
light! Sunbursts of light!  
You repopulated the nation,  
You expanded its joy.  
Oh, they're so glad in your presence!  
Festival joy!  
The joy of a great celebration,  
sharing rich gifts and warm greetings.

For a child has been born – for us!  
The gift of a child – for us!

A child whose name will be: Amazing Counselor,  
Strong One, Prince of Justice and Mercy.

The child will grow  
and there'll be no limits to the wholeness this one brings.  
(adapted from Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message*)

HYMN RESPONSE *Not the Sun by Day* (Michael Waite)

*Refrain:* Not the sun by day nor the moon by night,  
But the love of the Lord will be your eternal light.

Verse1: Dear people arise and be lit like the sun  
Feel the love of the Lord as it shines upon your face  
Every nation is lost in the darkness of night  
But the presence of God will be your eternal sun

Verse2: Looking out from His harbor the sailing ships appear  
Floating lightly like clouds, or like doves returning home  
They are ships bearing gifts and the people of the world  
Coming home from all nations to glorify the Lord

Verse 3: In a city that shines with the pure light of love  
Made of woods of the best and of silver and gold  
You will no longer suffer in hatred and disdain  
For this city rebuilt is of everlasting joy

Adapted from Isaiah 60:1-22

### LET THIS BE A SIGN TO YOU (BASED ON LUKE 2:1-14)

In the ancient days of our ancestors, when the world was ruled by Rome, the empire of Augustus declared that *Caesar is Lord*. For it was Caesar Augustus, the temple priests proclaimed, who saved the peoples through his glorious military victories, becoming *Savior of the world*. Through the power of his almighty arm Caesar conquered all, be it by land or by sea. From his divine nativity to his glorious victory against Antony and Cleopatra, this *Son of God*, Rome taught, hewed from the slain enemy the path of peace. He was the *Savior of Humanity*, to whom all the world was to give glory.

In those dark and perilous days, when the sword of Caesar was the false promise of peace, Mary and Joseph were pregnant with child. They did not look to Caesar for guidance, for Mary had heard the voice of the Holy One speak to her as an angel from within her young heart. Mary and Joseph placed the trust of their hearts not in the conquering Caesar, but in the God of Abraham and Sarah and Hagar; not in the violent redeemer from Rome, but in the liberating God of Moses and Miriam.

In those dark and perilous days, where the good news was falsely heralded by the fearful sword of Caesar, a true light was born, and his name was Jesus. Caesar could not see this light, because he knew not where to look. But the shepherds knew. Those who were hungry knew. Those who had no place to sleep knew. Those who boldly sought the wisdom of the heart knew.

The Wisdom of God, who had hovered over the deep and brought all things into being; the Wisdom of God, who had given Abraham and Sarah and Hagar hope when all seemed lost in barrenness; the Wisdom of God, who had brightened the night and led the peoples out of Egypt and across the sea into freedom; the Wisdom of God, who had whispered the truth to Mary and Joseph about their courageous path; this same Wisdom of God now broke out into a chorus of angelic praise to all who had ears to hear:

**You have nothing to fear! I come to proclaim good news to you –  
news of a great joy to be shared by the whole people.**

Many years would pass before our ancestors would know the meaning of these words. Jesus would grow, teach, feed, be killed, becoming a sacred healer --- revealing the futility of the

sword and the restoring power of forgiveness. Jesus would embody boundless hospitality --- gathering all to the table, not just the Romans and the Caesars of this world. Jesus would become our saving Christ --- showing us that all are anointed as the Light of God.

The angels came alive with song:

### **Let this be a sign to you!!**

Who could have known that the path of life was to be lit by the tender eyes of an infant wrapped in a simple cloth, lying in a manger? Who could have known that the path of life was to be lit by the merciful eyes of our Beloved's body, wrapped in linen in an earthen tomb? Let this be a sign to you: loving kindness lights the path of life.

And so, we indeed remember this night. For the child of Mary and Joseph, a child like any other child – like you and like me – woven into being through the Light of grace, grows to become the Light of God --- touching our hearts, teaching our minds, transfiguring our lives --- freeing us from the dark and perilous days of any Caesar Augustus.

We do indeed remember this night and with a multitude of the heavenly host praise God and say,

### **Glory to God in the highest heaven! God's favor rests upon all!**

*We stand as able.*

#### **HEART OFFERINGS OF THE PEOPLE**

*Leader:* In gratitude, in praise, may our hearts turn to receive the Light of the Luminous Night. Guide us in the ways of laying our lives gratefully before You.  
We lift our voices to God:

*All:* **May the Wisdom of Christ light our path.**

*Leader:* You call us each by name.  
Teach us to serve all creatures of your sacred creation.  
Guide us toward unity, healing our division.  
We lift our voices to God:

*All:* **May the Wisdom of Christ light our path.**

*Leader:* The nations are yours, part of your wondrous body.  
May all leaders know they are called to care;  
may they heed your peoples' cries

for release from senseless oppression.  
Guide us toward justice and peace, healing our deceit.  
We lift our voices to God:

**All: May the Wisdom of Christ light our path.**

*Leader:* We are yours.  
Guide our hearts and minds and bodies in the ways of wisdom,  
that we might hear and heed the pleas of friends among us  
who hunger, thirst, and face the cold nights.  
Guide us toward mercy, healing our fear.  
We lift our voices to God:

**All: May the Wisdom of Christ light our path.**

*Leader:* Strengthen all who suffer, and those who care for them (*N*).  
Open our hearts to see your tender Presence already within us.  
Guide us toward wholeness, healing our blindness.  
We lift our voices to God:

**All: May the Wisdom of Christ light our path.**

*Leader:* You welcome all who have completed their earthly journey (*N*).  
Your peace is now their peace.  
Guide us into your Heart, healing our soul.  
We lift our voices to God:

**All: May the Wisdom of Christ light our path.**

*Leader:* In gratitude and praise, we invite your peace into our lives.  
We lift our voices to God:

**All: May the Wisdom of Christ light our path.**

*Presider:* God of hope and promise:  
through your love  
    the promise of life enfolds our hearts;  
in your heart we offer our lives in hope;  
and so,  
as the Star of Night eternally sings your praises –  
    we lay in your open hands  
    the thankful prayers of our selves, our souls, our bodies.

**All: Amen.**

## THE PEACE

*Presider:* The peace of Christ is with you now.

*Assembly:* **And also with you.**

## HOSPITALITY

Welcome to all!



# FEED WITH THANKSGIVING

*We stand as able.*

## PRESENTATION OF THE GIFTS

*Presider:* The Beloved is with you

*Assembly:* **And also with you**

*Presider:* Lift up your hearts

*Assembly:* **We lift them to the heavens.**

*Presider:* Let us give thanks.

*Assembly:* **We lay open our hearts and minds and bodies in thanks and praise.**

*Presider and Assembly:*

**Holy One, source of life and without end,  
we give thanks to you!**

**You continually call all life into being,  
cradling your creation in compassion.**

**You spread out the heavens like a tent and  
enclose the seas.**

**You fill the world with wondrous creatures and  
know all things as truly good.**

**You send your heavenly messengers of hope day and night, and  
with them we sing and give glory to you:**

## SANCTUS

*Presider:* In the days of Simeon and Anna, You lean toward the earth.  
Your eternal Spirit becomes known to us through your Beloved.  
Born into the family of Mary and Joseph,

Jesus is cradled beside the beasts and warmed by their breath –  
Here is your child, like all your children, woven into life by the Spirit  
and in need of compassion.  
Worldly rulers are troubled by your dawning reign embodied in this child,  
in whom the fullness of your Spirit is pleased to dwell.

*Assembly:* **Born of your Spirit.  
Full of your Grace.  
Radiant with your Beauty.**

*Presider:* As your Beloved servant,  
Jesus becomes empty of might upon the cross.  
As the Risen Anointed One,  
Jesus is forever embraced by You as Christ,  
embodying your eternal mercy and  
restoring justice to all the earth,  
now and forever.

*Assembly:* **And so,  
together we stand,  
rejoicing in all that you,  
All-loving God,  
have done and continue to do for us.**

**Holy God,  
as You visit us in the birth of Jesus,  
heal our blindness  
so that we may see your presence now  
always within and among us.  
In these delightful creatures of bread and wine  
– holy food and holy drink –  
help us to taste the banquet of heaven here on earth.**

*Presider:* We remember how Jesus takes bread,  
blesses, breaks it and gives it to his friends saying,  
take, eat, this is my body being given for you,  
do this for the remembrance of me.  
Likewise, the Beloved holds the cup of wine,  
blesses it and gives it to them saying,  
drink this, all of you.  
This cup is the covenant in my blood,  
Being poured out for you and for many,  
that you may know God always holds you in tender forgiveness.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

*Presider and Assembly:*

**Holy One,  
You shed your grace  
brighter than starlight on us,  
that our hearts may radiate your good tidings to all  
and renew the weary world in your name:  
Emmanuel, God-With-Us.  
Holy One,  
to You we give honor and glory in joy,  
now and forever. Amen!**



## LORD'S PRAYER

*Presider:* In the Spirit of Christ we now sing.

## THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

*Presider:* We break this bread  
to share in the Body of Christ.

*Assembly:* **We who are many are one body,  
for we all share in the one bread.**

*Presider:* The Gifts of God.  
All are invited to God's table.

## THE COMMUNION

## CAROLS

# Sending Forth

*We stand as able.*

*Presider:* Let us pray together.

*Assembly:* **Holy One,  
God of Abraham and Sarah and Hagar,  
God of Mary and Joseph,  
God of Angels and Shepherds,  
God of our Beloved, Jesus of Nazareth:  
You are God of all the earth.**

**Tonight You reveal to us again  
that all people are your beloved children  
and that all creatures are your handiwork.  
Let us never cease to tell the story  
of your boundless love in all we say and do. Amen!**

*Presider:* Let us go forth in the name of Christ!

*Assembly:* **Thanks be to God!**

Hymn

Postlude of Drums

(The liturgy is written by Kevin G. Thew Forrester. The Collect and Eucharistic Prayer are revisions of those found in *My Heart is a Raging Volcano of Love for You* [LeaderResources, 2011]). © Kevin G. Thew Forrester, 2018.