

Worship Collective



DEC 10, 2023

WELCOME & OPENING PRAYER

PRAY TOGETHER

Master of both the light and the darkness,
send your Holy Spirit upon our Christmas preparations.
We who have so much to do
seek a quiet space to hear your voice each day.
We who are discouraged
ask for strength to trust your long-given promise.
We who are anxious over many things
ask for your peace to reign.
We whose hearts are heavy
ask for the joy of your presence.
We who see but darkly
ask for the fullness of your love to rule.
We are your people, walking in darkness,
yet seeking the light.
To you we say, 'Come Lord Jesus.' Amen.

Henri Nouwen

READING ONE

You may be wondering: how can we possibly enter into this season of the Church calendar if we are paying attention to this world?

In these days, celebration can seem callous and uncaring, if not outright impossible. But here's the thing: we enter into Advent now precisely because we are paying attention. It's because everything hurts that we resolutely lay out candles and matches.

Hope dares to admit that not everything is as it should be, and so if we want to be hopeful, first we have to grieve.

The weary world is still waiting in so many ways, in so many hearts, in so many places, for the fullness of the Kingdom of God to come. Advent is for the ones who know longing.

Advent beckons us to link arms with generations and saints, with young and old, with every social location and story to wait with expectation. We are invited to put our hands and our hearts to the practices that remind us

of what is true, to keep us more connected, more settled in the darkness that abides.

I've been thinking about this in light of our current moment in time. It only benefits the status quo and the powerful for us to give up. It only benefits the powers and principalities if we surrender our hope. It only benefits the thieves and gaslighters and cruel ones if we abandon love and joy and peace as impractical.

Let the darkness gather, we'll make a home there. We'll let our hope be as disruptive as a candle in the dark.

We'll create our homely corners of light and we'll clasp hands with fellow travellers and against the odds, we'll tell each other that you can only properly see the stars on nights like this.

Sarah Bessey

LET US SING TOGETHER

Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

Come, Thou long expected Jesus
Born to set Thy people free
From our fears and sins release us
Let us find our rest in Thee

Israel's strength and consolation
Hope of all the earth Thou art
Dear desire of every nation
Joy of every longing heart

Born Thy people to deliver
Born a child and yet a king
Born to reign in us forever
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring

Israel's strength and consolation
Hope of all the earth Thou art
Dear desire of every nation
Joy of every longing heart

Charles Wesley

READING TWO

Advent makes room for the dark. It is the time when we stay awake, readying ourselves for the discomfort of waiting and encountering darkness.

The season of waiting in the dark sets the path that leads us into Christmas, where almost all the significant stories of the nativity are shrouded from the light. Here in the dark shepherds will tend their flocks. Here in the dark magi will gather for escape from King Herod. In the warm cave of Mary's womb a baby gestates. In the dark Mary will awaken with a new feeling, a tension rippling up her swollen belly as she wonders, "Is it time?" In the cover of darkness a family will flee to Egypt.

So in Advent, we discover that we are feeling our way through a dark room, our hands around the outline of something we do not understand. We are doing our best to feel for the edges, to get a sense of where we are, of who we are, of the God we discover along the way. We're asked to wait a while longer.

If you have kept awake in the dark, then you know how different the world becomes, how the world at night is both strange and familiar at the same time. We make room for the impossible in the space made by the dark. In darkness we're not entirely sure who is standing on the stoop, picking at the lock—whether this one is here to help or to harm, to kill or to comfort. Only when there are no more maps, no more compasses, no more lights to direct the way, are we fully vulnerable to God.

Then we wait to see what happens next.

God of darkness
You must be the god of darkness
because if you are not,
whom else can we turn to?
Turn to us now.
Turn to us.
Turn your face to us.
Because it is dark here.
And we are in need. We are people in need.
We can barely remember our own truth, and
if you too have forgotten,
then we are without a hope of a map.
Turn to us now.
Turn to us.
Turn your face to us.
Because you turned toward us in the body of
incarnation.
You turned toward us. Amen.

Melissa Florer-Bixler | Pádraig Ó Tuama

LET US SING TOGETHER

Drive Out The Darkness

Come, O come be our light
Drive out the darkness
Come, Jesus, come

Every year under the thorn
Every wrong that we have known
Every valley will be raised
Ancient ruins will be remains

Come, O come be our light
Drive out the darkness
Come, Jesus, come

Every weapon made for war
Every gun and every sword
Will be melted in the flame
to be used for gardening

Come, O come be our light
Drive out the darkness
Come, Jesus, come

In the emptiness of grief
Through the night of suffering
In the loss and in the tears
God of comfort, O be near...

Come, O come be our light
Drive out the darkness
Come, O come be our light
Drive out the darkness
Come, and end all the violence
Come, do not be silent
Come, we cling to your promise
Come, break all injustice
Come, Jesus, come

Paul Zach | John Swinton | Isaac Wardell | Dan Marotta



READING THREE: LIGHTING OF ADVENT CANDLE

As we journey through Advent, we light candles whose light reminds us of Christ breaking into the darkness of our world as the true light of salvation. In this season, may we receive the peace found in Jesus coming to us.

Let us join in this responsive reading:

Leader O Lord, tear open the heaven
and come down.

People We wait.
We wait restless with peace.
In a world splintered by strife
we wait in anticipation
of the peace only you can bring.

Leader Comfort, comfort my people,
says your God.
He tends his flock like a shepherd;
he gathers the lambs in his arms
and carries them close to his heart.

People We will listen to what the Lord
our God will say;
he promises peace to his people.
Come, long expected Jesus.

Leader Love and faithfulness meet together;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.
The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion will feed together,
and a little child will lead them.

People O God, excite in us
a hunger for peace:
peace in our world
peace in our homes,
and peace in our hearts.
As we wait for his coming,
remove the things that hinder
us from being peace makers
We ask this through the hope we
have in Christ our Lord. Amen

LET US SING TOGETHER

Oh Wonderful Counselor

O Wonderful Counselor
Everlasting Father, Mighty God
Prince of Peace
O Wonderful Counselor
Everlasting Father, Mighty God
Prince of Peace

You order Your kingdom with judgment
You order Your kingdom with justice
There'll be no end, there'll be no end
You carry our griefs and our sorrows
You suffer our sins and transgressions
There'll be no end, there'll be no end

Tom Wuest

ANNOUNCEMENTS

READING FOUR

- ¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was fully God.
- ² The Word was with God in the beginning.
- ⁴ The Word was life, and the life was the light of humankind.
- ⁵ And the light shines on in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1:1-5

Into the darkness, the formless void, God spoke and there was light. Yet again God spoke and co-created with humanity, coming as a baby with the intention of bringing order and peace to the dark and chaotic waters of our time. In God's goodness, God came to make Godself known as the one who brings light out of darkness.

The Light came into our darkness to reveal to us the fierce and unending love of our Creator. True Light breaking in to push back darkness and be born in us.



At the Start

At the Start
The Word, the light
At the Start
The Word, the light
And the light shines in the dark

And the dark
Could not overpower
And the dark
Could not overpower



And the Word became flesh, Word became flesh
And the Word became flesh, Word became flesh

And dwelt among us
And dwelt among us
And dwelt among us

At the Start
The Word, the light

Tom Wuest

READING FIVE

In the beginning before God created light there was darkness.

We are afraid of the dark, but God is not. Out of darkness God created everything that is, including light.

There is light and dark, shadow and shades of gray. The darkness and light co-exist but there is always shadow.

The world is filled with shadow.

Death is everywhere, in the darkness and in the light. This is the scandal of the Incarnation, God descended into shadow, even into Shadow-Valley Death and walked its lonely yet crowded pathways.

We do not walk alone among the shadows of earth because God is Emmanuel, God with us. In our brokenness, in our fullness, God is with us. God is with us when the bullets are flying, when the ground is shaking, when the planes are crashing, when the waters are rising, when the ship is sinking, when the winds are howling, when death is knocking, when the shadow of death stretches out – God is with us! God is with us in our rage and sorrow and grief!

This is the Gospel, not that we're untouchable but that we are never alone, never forsaken, never absent from the Divine presence is the Gospel of light and life.

When beginning in Genesis, the first thing God created was light. When the Word, Mary's boy child, was born, even more light flooded the world. For What has come into being in the Word was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot not overcome it. Jesus was like us, and we are like him. We are mortal, frail, embodied, humans. We ache for human companionship. We worry about our families as we come to grips with our own mortality. In our desperate pain we search for a familiar comforting face.

The light of God lives with and in us; we are the light of God. And there is no darkness, no shadow that cannot be overcome by the holy light of God. This light will shine through the ages. One day the whole of creation will be transformed by that holy light. Let the light of Christ shine in and through you to the ends of the earth Amen.

Will C. Gafney

LET US SING TOGETHER

Come Light Our Hearts

For You, O Lord, our souls in stillness wait
For You, O Lord, our souls in stillness wait
Truly our hope is in You
Truly our hope is in You

O Lord of life, our only hope
Your radiance shines
on all who look to you in the dark
Emmanuel come,
Come light our hearts

For You, O Lord, our souls in stillness wait
For You, O Lord, our souls in stillness wait
Truly our hope is in You
Truly our hope is in You

O Joy above all other loves
In You we find more than enough
We come as we are
O heal and restore
Come light our hearts

For You, O Lord, our souls in stillness wait
For You, O Lord, our souls in stillness wait
Truly our hope is in You
Truly our hope is in You

Sandra McCracken

READING SIX

Spiraling In, Deepening Down

Holy One of many names,
As we learn to embrace the darkness,
help us to be hopeful enough to dig our hands
deep into that rich soil where new things grow...
help us to be fierce enough to love ourselves,
each other, and You...
help us to be just enough that all may breathe,
be fed, sheltered, and safe...
help us to be wise enough to let our own bodies rest...
help us to be brave enough to enter the
darkness of our unknowing...
help us to be vulnerable enough to trust in that
which is germinating in the dirt of your creation...
help us to be here, in the darkness, with You.

Kerr Mesner



Into the Forest

Into the forest you came
You came
Stole into our wilderness
Speaking your name
The darkness was thick
Black like silence
Black like silence
And you
You sung over us
Sung over us

Into the darkness you came
You came
Spoke into nighttime
Your name
Your name
The song it was sweet when it fell
When it fell
Out of your mouth
Out of your mouth

The darkness is aglow with you

Laura Koch

READING SEVEN

Blessing of Hope

So may we know the hope
that is not just for someday
but for this day—
here, now,
in this moment that opens to us:
hope not made of wishes
but of substance,
hope made of sinew
and muscle and bone,
hope that has breath
and a beating heart,
hope that will not keep quiet
and be polite,
hope that knows how to holler
when it is called for,
hope that knows how to sing
when there seems little cause,
hope that raises us from the dead—
not someday
but this day,
every day,
again and
again and
again.

Jan Richardson

LET US SING TOGETHER

Great Are You Lord w/ Oh Light

You give life
You are love
You bring light to the darkness
You give hope
You restore
Every heart that is broken
Great are You, Lord

It's Your breath in our lungs
So we pour out our praise
We pour out our praise
It's Your breath in our lungs
So we pour out our praise
To You only

Hallelujah,
Holy God is with us
Love is always born within
Hallelujah,
Light will chase and find us
Love is facing us again

Jason Ingram | David Leonard | Leslie Jordan

READING EIGHT

² The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

Isaiah 9:2

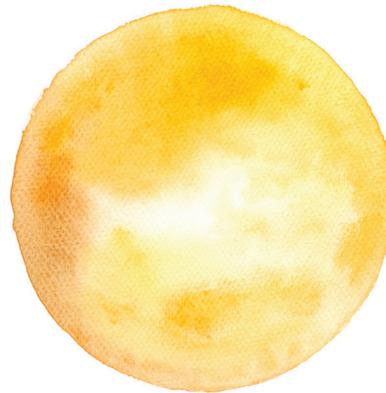
May you honour the ways you find light during this Advent season. May you find comfort, strength, and rest in the practices you choose. May you be open to receive everything that God has for you in these weeks, even if it looks so much simpler and quieter than you expected.

May you cultivate hope on purpose, learning to wait with expectation. May you find comfort in community, sharing the burdens and blessings of this pilgrimage of hope. We bless anything that reminds you to keep going. May your soul be a front porch light, shining in the darkness of winter, promising a welcome home.

May your journey through this season ready you to receive the gift of Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.

Sarah Bessey

LET US SING TOGETHER



The Sun Will Rise

The sun will rise
The sun will rise
Bringing life to the earth
as it springs from the ground

The sun will rise
The sun will rise
Won't you dry all your tears
Lay your burden down
Won't you dry all your tears
Lay your burden down

John Arndt | David Gungor

READING NINE

- ⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
- ⁷ Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

Isaiah 9:6,7

And so, Advent reminds us that God is always coming toward us. God never turns God's back on us. God is always, always coming towards us, not esoterically, but in movements toward justice and toward freedom, which are always perfect reflections of God's love.

As we are recognize and see how God is coming toward us, we are called to move toward God. We move towards God by joining God in the movement toward justice by doing and living actions of justice.

Kelly Brown Douglas



LET US SING TOGETHER

He Shall Reign w/ Seeds of Peace

Come broken, come captive
Come all you who mourn
O groaning creation, rejoice
A child, a Saviour
Our healing he brings
What freedom
What consolation

May the seeds of peace be scattered
Birthing trees whose shade gives us rest

He'll order his kingdom
with justice and peace
O Merciful One
O Lamb of God
All nations, all people
All heaven and earth
will bow down
and to Him proclaim

He shall reign
He shall reign

Tom Wuest | David Gungor | John Arndt | Dave Campbell

BENEDICTION

O gracious light,
dispel the darkness of our hearts,
that by Your brightness
we may know the light.
True light from light,
pour into every heart
Your peace, hope, love, and joy.
Grant that Your light,
deep and kindled in our hearts,
may shine forth and give us divine life.
Amen