

# 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

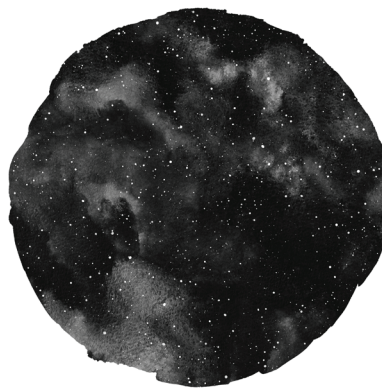
Every weapon made for war  
Every gun and every sword  
Will be melted in the flame  
to be used for gardening

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

- <sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was fully God.
- <sup>2</sup> The Word was with God in the beginning.
- <sup>4</sup> The Word was life, and the life was the light of humankind.
- <sup>5</sup> 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

- <sup>2</sup> 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

- <sup>6</sup> 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.
- <sup>7</sup> 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  
He shall reign  
He shall reign  
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