

Call to Worship

[the candle lighting]

We are here

because we have heard a promise of peace
and we have faith its day will come

we have heard a rumour of justice
and we have faith its day will come

we have heard a whisper of hope
and we have faith its day will come

we have heard a hint of love
and we have faith its day will come

we have heard of the birth of the Christ-child
and we have faith his day is here.

Welcome to Christmas
Welcome to worship

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

If we were to list the miracles of Christmas
we'd probably talk about virgin births
angels, perhaps
and stars that light the sky

but perhaps there's another miracle:
one of Mary saying 'yes' when God asked her to believe
and Joseph saying 'yes' when God asked him to trust.

They had to change everything about their lives
and the birth of the Christ-child wasn't possible until they did.

What does it mean for you to say 'yes' to this story?
to believe that it might be possible
for the darkness to be transformed to light
and for peace to come in the world?

Those who know the darkest of the world
know the fragility of light;
we hold our breath as the candles flicker
we know they don't always last.

the birth of Jesus doesn't make everything right
but it shows us that the only way the darkness can be beaten
is to say 'yes' to the birth of light.

In the silence, we pray for those we love and miss today
and we pray for a broken world...

[Time of silence, then invite people to take one of the candles from the side, put it onto the worship space, and light it as we say the following prayer:]

God,
this is the season for miracles
and we pray for one today.

Where there is sorrow,
we pray for your grace to light the darkness.

Where is despair,
we pray for your hope to light the darkness.

Where there is hatred,
we pray for your forgiveness to light the darkness.

Where there is war,
we pray for your love to light the darkness.

Where there is confusion,
we pray for your peace to light the darkness.

Where there is injustice,
we pray for your courage to light the darkness.

Where there is fear
we pray for your joy to light the darkness.

It is the season for miracles
and we pray for one today:
Come, Lord Jesus, may your light come into our world.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

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

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 his 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.

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

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.