

Holy Darkness: Evening Service of Word and Prayer for Advent

Power in the Spirit 2021

Wednesday Evening, July 14th

Greeting:

The peace of our God, that surpasses all understanding, the love of Christ that guards each and every one of our hearts and minds, and the unspeakable joy and comfort of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
And also with you.

Song:

O Come, O Come Emmanuel (Stz. 1&5)

*O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.*

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

*O come, O Key of David, come, and open wide our heav'nly home;
make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery.*

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

Opening Prayer:

Stir up our hearts, O God, to prepare the way for your Christ. By His coming speak peace to your people and turn our hearts toward you, that your saving grace and splendid glory, may dwell in all the earth; through Jesus Christ, whose day draws near. **Amen.**

Lighting of the Advent Wreath:

Silence for reflection

We praise you, Lord, for this wheel of time that marks our days of preparation for Christ's advent. As we light the candles on this wreath, open our eyes to see your presence in the lowly ones of this earth. Enlighten us with your grace, that we may sing of your advent among us in the Word made flesh. Grant this through Christ our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near. **Amen.**

The first, second, third & fourth Advent Candles are lit as we sing together:

*Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.
Wait for the Lord; be strong, take heart!*

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Scripture & Reflection:

Darkness Holds God

The entire story of Jesus' birth is enveloped in darkness. The Sovereign of the universe is conceived, nourished, and protected in the dark safety of Mary's womb. An angel visits Joseph in a nighttime dream, easing his doubts and fears around this unexpected pregnancy. The shepherds receive word from angelic choirs by night that the Savior has been born; the magi are led to him by a bright evening

star. And not long after his birth, Joseph and Mary flee under the protection of night to escape King Herod's slaughter of the innocents. Many assemblies hold their principal observance of Christmas the evening before by candlelight.

A reading from Matthew 1:18-24.

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." ²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife,

(Silence for Reflection)

Song of Reflection

Night Long-Awaited (ACS 912)

*Night long-awaited, God comes to earth; blooming like roses, love given birth.
Still in the star-light, silent and clear, peace comes among us; Christmas is here.*

*Sleep in a manger, safe and adored. All that is broken shall be restored.
Light for our shadows, grace for our loss; born for our dying; bearing our cross.*

*Now is God's promise born in the night; wake to its fullness; live in its light.
Christ comes among us; people, draw near! Come to the manger; Christmas is born.*

Text: Felix Luna © 1965 Lawson-Gould, admin. Alfred Music
Music: Ariel Ramirez; arr. And alternate acc. Carlos Colon © 1965, 2019 Lawson-Gould, admin. Alfred Music

Prayer

In Christ Jesus we meet the God who knows our weakness and bears the wounds of the world. Therefore, let us be bold as we pray, trusting that God draws near to those in any kind of need.

As with the Easter Vigil, each time we celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord, we remember that "*this is the night*" that God works wonders. As advent closes in on Christmas, let us imagine the story of Jesus' birth taking place in our own time and place. Where might he be born? How might he be received? Where might his parents have come from?

We pause once more to remember before God all who are frightened... those who have received unexpected news...all who dream ...all whose relationships are strained or broken...all who must make difficult decisions...all who must leave their homeland...all for whom the world has no room...all the joys or concerns we offer now in the silence of our heart...

Into your wide embrace, O God, we place all our prayers, spoken and unspoken, trusting that you will receive them into your heart of mercy, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Savior. **Amen.**

We pray together...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing:

God all mighty, God most merciful bless us, keep us, and give us peace. **Amen.**

Song:

Deep Peace (ACS 1018)

Deep peace of the run - ning waves, deep peace of the
flow - ing air, deep peace of the shin - ing stars to
you, deep peace of the qui - et earth. earth.

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It consists of three systems of music. The first system has two staves (treble and bass clef) with lyrics underneath. The second system also has two staves with lyrics. The third system has two staves with lyrics, and includes a repeat sign with the instruction 'To repeat' above it, and a final measure with the instruction 'Last time' above it. The music is in a simple, hymn-like style with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature.

Text: Celtic traditional; adapt. Ray Makeever, b. 1943
Music: DEEP PEACE, Ray Makeever
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