



# A Christmas Service of Light

Thursday December 21, 2017

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Welcome to  
St. Paul's

Wherever you are on your spiritual journey, you are welcomed here. On this longest night of the year, we pray that you will know God's love, comfort and hope.

Large print bulletins are available upon request.



## Words of Welcome

### Gathering Prayer

Leader: I rise before dawn and cry for help;  
I have put my hope in your word.  
My eyes stay open through the watches of the night,  
that I may meditate on your promises.  
Hear my voice in accordance with your love;  
preserve my life, LORD, according to your laws.  
*(Psalm 119:147-149)*

**All: Your word is a lamp for my feet,  
a light on my path.**

*(Psalm 119:105)*

Leader: The LORD is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?

*(Psalm 27:1)*

**All: Your word is a lamp for my feet,  
a light on my path.**

Leader: Within your temple, O God,  
we meditate on your unfailing love.

*(Psalm 48:9)*

We are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that we may declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light.

*(1 Peter 2:9)*

**All: Your word is a lamp for my feet,  
a light on my path.**

Introduction to  
First Reading

*1 John 1: 1-5*

We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. <sup>2</sup> This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us. <sup>3</sup> We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy.

<sup>5</sup> This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all.

Reader: This is the word of the Lord.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

Responsive  
Reading

*Psalm 121*

Leader: I lift up my eyes to the hills —  
from where will my help come?

**All: My help comes from the Lord,  
who made heaven and earth.**

Leader: He will not let your foot be moved;  
he who keeps you will not slumber.

**All: He who keeps Israel will neither slumber  
nor sleep.**

Leader: The Lord is your keeper;  
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

**All: The sun shall not strike you by day,  
nor the moon by night.**

Leader: The Lord will keep you from all evil;  
he will keep your life.

**All: The Lord will keep your going out and your  
coming in from this time on and forevermore.**

## Song

*Please join to sing*

### *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.**

**By thine own eternal Spirit  
Rule in all our hearts alone;  
By thine all sufficient merit,  
Raise us to thy glorious throne.**



Introduction to  
Gospel Reading

**Reader:** Hear the Gospel of our Saviour Christ, according to John chapter one beginning at verse one.

**All:** **Glory to you, O Lord.**

***John 1: 1-14***

In the beginning the Word already existed.

The Word was with God,  
and the Word was God.

<sup>2</sup> He existed in the beginning with God.

<sup>3</sup> God created everything through him,  
and nothing was created except through him.

<sup>4</sup> The Word gave life to everything that was created,  
and his life brought light to everyone.

<sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness can never extinguish it.

<sup>6</sup> God sent a man, John the Baptist, <sup>7</sup> to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. <sup>8</sup> John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light.

<sup>9</sup> The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

<sup>10</sup> He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. <sup>11</sup> He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. <sup>13</sup> They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

<sup>14</sup> So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

**Reader:** This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** **Praise to you, O Christ.**

## Message

The Rev. Steve Shaw

## Song

*Please join to sing*

### *How Deep the Father's Love for Us*

**How deep the Father's love for us  
How vast beyond all measure  
That He should give His only Son  
To make a wretch His treasure  
How great the pain of searing loss  
The Father turns His face away  
As wounds which mar the Chosen One  
Bring many sons to glory.**

**I will not boast in anything  
No gifts, no power, no wisdom,  
But I will boast in Jesus Christ  
His death and resurrection  
Why should I gain from His reward  
I cannot give an answer  
But this I know with all my heart  
His wounds have paid my ransom.**

## Lighting the Candles of Remembrance and Hope

Leader: We light this first candle to remember God's light, a light that shines in the darkness of our world. A light that the darkness can never overcome, a light of peace that shines into lives full of hurried activity, anxiety, frustration, and hurt.

*In quiet prayer we offer our world to our Sovereign God.*

Leader: Let us pray,  
**All: May God's light of peace shine deeply within us.**

*The first candle is lit*

Leader: We light this second candle to remember those we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their names, their faces, their voices. We give thanks for the memories that bind them to us this Christmas season.

*Names are read from the memorial book and silence is kept.*



Leader: Let us pray,  
**All: May God's eternal love surround them.**

*The second candle is lit*

Leader: We light this third candle as we hold gently the loss in our lives and the lives of those we love: the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health, the loss of security. We present this loss to God, asking through the strength of his sure promises, that he will return to us the peace-filled gift of hope.

*In quiet prayer we offer our losses to our God of Life.*

Leader: Let us pray,  
**All: May God's future give light to our present.**

*The third candle is lit*

Leader: We light this fourth candle to remember the conflicts and struggles of people around the world, and in our own lives. We pray that these struggles we experience do not lead us to sea and doubt, but become the gateway for the gracious power of God's redeeming love and peace.

*In quiet prayer we offer our hidden selves to our God of Love.*

Leader: Let us pray,  
**All: May God's Spirit, refresh, restore and renew us.**

*The fourth candle is lit*



## Song

*Please join to sing*

### *In the Bleak Midwinter*

**In the bleak mid-winter, frosty wind made moan,  
Earth stood hard as iron,  
water like a stone,  
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,  
In the bleak mid-winter, long ago.**

**Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;  
Heaven and earth shall flee away  
when he comes to reign;  
In the bleak mid-winter a stable place sufficed  
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.**

**What can I give him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd,  
I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;  
Yet what I can I give him — give my heart.**

## The Confession

**All: Almighty God, We need your healing and forgiveness; give us true repentance. Some sins are plain to us, some escape us, some we cannot face. Forgive us, set us free to hear your word to us; set us free to serve you, in all that we do, say and think. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.**

**Leader: Merciful God, grant to each of us forgiveness; secure in us the knowledge of your love and strengthen us by your Spirit to serve you and our neighbour, now and always.**

**All: Amen.**

Celebrating Our  
Communion With  
Christ

Leader: The Lord be with you  
**All: And also with you.**

Leader: Lift up your hearts.  
**All: We lift them to the Lord.**

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
**All: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Leader: We give you thanks and praise, almighty God, through your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer. He is your living Word, through whom you have created all things. By the power of the Holy Spirit he took flesh of the Virgin Mary and shared our human nature. He lived and died as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all. In fulfilment of your will he stretched out his hands in suffering, to bring release to those who place their hope in you; and so he won for you a holy people. He chose to bear our griefs and sorrows, and to give up his life on the cross, that he might shatter the chains of evil and death, and banish the darkness of sin and despair. By his resurrection he brings us into the light of your presence. Now with all creation we raise our voices to proclaim the glory of your name.

**All: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Leader: Holy and gracious God, accept our praise, through your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ; who on the night he was handed over to suffering and death, took bread and gave you thanks, saying, "Take, and eat: this is my body which is broken for you." In the same way he took the cup, saying, "This is my blood which is shed for you. When you do this, you do it in memory of me."

Remembering, therefore, his death and resurrection, we offer you this bread and this cup, giving thanks that you have made us worthy to stand in your presence and serve you. We ask you to send your Holy Spirit upon the offering of your holy Church. Gather into one all who share in these sacred mysteries, filling them with the Holy Spirit and confirming their faith in the truth, that together we may praise you and give you glory through your Servant, Jesus Christ. All glory and honour are yours, Father and Son, with the Holy Spirit in the holy Church, now and for ever.

**All: Amen.**

Leader: As our Saviour taught us, let us pray

**All: 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 for ever. Amen.**

## The Communion

*All who are baptized in any Christian Church and seek to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour may receive the bread and the wine. As the Ushers direct, please come forward and kneel or stand at the rail.*

- *To receive the bread, hold out your hands, crossed with palms up*
  - *To receive the wine, hold the bottom of the cup and guide it to your mouth*
  - *If you prefer to receive a blessing, please indicate this by crossing your arms over your chest.*
  - *For health reasons, dipping the bread in the wine is not permitted.*
- If you require gluten-free wafers please let a communion administrant know.*



Lighting the  
Fifth Candle

Leader: We light this fifth and final candle to refocus our hearts and minds on the gifts of faith, hope, love and new life that God offers to us in Jesus, and which we celebrate at Christmas.

Our faith is in the Risen Christ, who conquered death once and for all. Our hope is in God, who holds each of us in his merciful care. Our love is born and reborn from God, who first loved us, who created us in his image and breathed his Spirit into us. He will go through the fire and pain with us, and will turn mourning into joy.

Let us pray,  
**All: May God's enduring presence show the way and go with us into our future.**

*The fifth candle is lit*

Closing Prayers  
*(from Psalm 16)*

Leader: Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge.  
**All: I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing."**

Leader: LORD, you alone are my portion and my cup:  
you make my lot secure.  
**All: The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.**

Leader: I will praise the LORD, who counsels me:  
even at night my heart instructs me.  
**All: I keep my eye always on the LORD.  
With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.**

## Song

*Please join to sing*

### *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

**O little town of Bethlehem  
How still we see thee lie  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
The silent stars go by  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
The everlasting Light  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee tonight**

**For Christ is born of Mary  
And gathered all above  
While mortals sleep, the angels keep  
Their watch of wondering love  
O morning stars together  
Proclaim the holy birth  
And praises sing to God the King  
And Peace to men on earth**

**How silently, how silently  
The wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessings of His heaven.  
No ear may hear His coming,  
But in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive him still,  
The dear Christ enters in.**

## Blessing





# Got Questions?

Ask anything about life, faith and God at our Alpha experience.

Starting January 17, join us for food, a video and discussion about the questions you have about anything.

For more information go to [stpaulsbloor.org/alpha](http://stpaulsbloor.org/alpha) or call the office at 416-961-8116.



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