



**Mennonite
Church**
Canada

Resource Centre

From our Churches

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Church:

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Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Adapted from the 1993 original version

REQUIREMENTS: 4 Readers
 4 Candle Readers
 Candle lighters

- Advent wreath/display is lit - and on the stage
- Christmas tree lights are on
- Microphones:
 - #1: Stage - opposite side to piano
 [4 Readers will sit in front row on this side - and use this mike]
 - #2: Piano - with piano light - for introduction of songs
 - #3 & #4: On each side of sanctuary - for the 4 Candle Readers
- Candle lighters will stand at back - ready to move to a candle for lighting
- 9 large candles on stands around the perimeter of sanctuary - one to be lit each time the 9 Candle Reader texts are read.
- Lights - lights up to sing hymns, and will have a lit candle for candle lighters
- Pianist/song leader - introduce songs from the piano
 - as an introduction to each song – the pianist will play it through once
 - perhaps sing only verse 1 of each hymn?
- Sound person to control microphone volume

INSTRUMENTAL PRELUDE

WELCOME:

Tonight we celebrate the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God. Promised to Israel, thrust upon humble parents, and revealed to an unsuspecting world, tonight we journey with Joseph and Mary to witness the birth of this most holy child.

Now let us remember the days before the coming of Christ, and imagine the world of trouble and turmoil into which Jesus was born. A world not unlike the one we still have. Let us remember the hope given to us in the coming of the light.

CONGREGATIONAL SONG: HWB 172 - O COME, O COME EMMANUEL

CANDLE READER #1

**There is a light shining in the darkness
a light which shines through the word,
and the word is light
and the light,
is the
light
of the world**

(As text is read a candle lighter from the back moves to the 1st of 9 candles around the periphery and lights it.)

READER 1:

Under the covers of a warm and quiet night
there is a heart that beats with quiet thunder
that shudders under the load of fear
that comes with glimpsing the face of the unknown.

He shivers in the night air as he looks out the window,
wondering how he will manage.
Where is the light?

So many worries ...
No money
No security
No steady income,
only the sweat of his brow and the work of his hands.

But he is lucky.
He is not out there in the streets begging for the mercy of strangers
Shivering in chill night air.
But neither is he warm.

How will they manage?
the two of them,
soon to be three ...
so young,
so scared,
so full of "what will happen if ..."
Will there be light at the end of this tunnel of uncertainty?

CONGREGATIONAL SONG: HWB 182 - OH HOW SHALL I RECEIVE THEE?

CANDLE READER #2:

**There is a light shining in the darkness
a light which shines through the word,
and the word is light
and the light,
is the
light
of the world**

(As text is read a candle lighter from the back moves to the 2nd of 9 candles around the periphery and lights it.)

READER 2:

They have a family nearby
who try to understand and refrain from judging.
but there are questions...
unasked.
murmurs behind his back,
Hands covering
mouths whispering.

Then he thinks of her.
The wonder in her eyes.
The anticipation of great things to come.
Her calmness...
Sure that God is with her.

Eyes follow her down the street. He's seen them watch and wonder at her.
She grows daily more beautiful and more full of the wonder of life.
Can there be light for her that he can't see?

CONGREGATIONAL SONG: HWB 178 - COME, THOU LONG EXPECTED JESUS

READER 3:

But there was an angel!
Imagine, an angel!

She said there was one.
The angel's name was Gabriel.
How could she mistake an angel
for anyone else?

It was no one they knew,
not dressed up
not from far away
but rather "otherly"
from another place entirely ... from heaven
where there is no fear of what tomorrow will bring.
Where no one asks whether there will be comfort and safety

CONGREGATIONAL SONG: HWB 180 - THE ANGEL GABRIEL

READER 4:

And she rested in the words of the angel.
In the darkness of her room,
the light flickered within her.

Soon they would travel. Weariness would well up in them. And the man and woman would try to remember the words given to them by the angel.

So, the man and the woman packed up their food and their belongings
and headed toward the town of crowds and camels, of pushing and noise, of travelers looking for
shelter.
There they would find lodging.

CANDLE READER #1: and food
CANDLE READER #2: and warmth
CANDLE READER #3: and shelter
CANDLE READER #4: and **light**.

(As text is read a candle lighter from the back moves to the 3rd of 9 candles around the periphery and lights it.)

CANDLE READER #3:

**There is a light shining in the darkness
a light which shines through the word,
and the word is light
and the light,
is the
light
of the world**

(As text is read a candle lighter from the back moves to the 4th of 9 candles around the periphery and lights it.)

READER 3:

For the angel had promised her a great joy.
A child of wonder and wisdom.
A child of grace.
A **child**.

The name of the child would be
the awaited one
the comforter
the prince of peace.
the promise of God

CONGREGATIONAL SONG: HWB 176 – COMFORT, COMFORT, O MY PEOPLE

READER 2:

And as the man and the woman stumbled wearily into the dark town
there were no smiles of reassurance
with hot food to warm them
or
beds ready
with clean linens smelling of sun and wind.

But after the final step was taken...
the time arrived.
waiting not for beds, or linens,

CANDLE READER #1: or warmth
CANDLE READER #2: or shelter
CANDLE READER #3: or comfort
CANDLE READER #4: or **light**.

(As text is read a candle lighter from the back moves to the 5th of 9 candles around the periphery and lights it.)

CONGREGATIONAL SONG: HWB 211 - LO, HOW A ROSE E'RE BLOOMING

READER 1:

A miracle...
an every day miracle! ...
that was made miraculous
by the touch of God.

the man stared at the wonder before him.
what strange and holy waves were they,
that cast this child on the shores of their lives?
to be part of such a moment...
surely it was never before like this
for anyone.

CONGREGATIONAL SONG: HWB 194 – AWAY IN A MANGER
or HWB 206 – INFANT HOLY, INFANT LOWLY

READER 4:

An everyday miracle
but more.

the woman nestled the babe to her breast,
as if there were nothing in all the world
but the child...

CANDLE READER #1: no chickens underfoot
CANDLE READER #2: no musty straw to sneeze away
CANDLE READER #3: no drafty darkness

(As text is read a candle lighter from the back moves to the 6th of 9 candles around the periphery and lights it.)

CANDLE READER #1: just warmth,
CANDLE READER #2: just shelter
CANDLE READER #3: just comfort
CANDLE READER #4: just **light**.

(As text is read a candle lighter from the back moves to the 7th of 9 candles around the periphery and lights it.)

CANDLE READER #4:

**There is a light shining in the darkness
a light which shines through the word,
and the word is light
and the light,
is the
light
of the world**

(As text is read a candle lighter from the back moves to the 8th of 9 candles around the periphery and lights it.)

READER 1:

There they lay,
Whole and complete.

the man wondered at the gentle sounds and soft breathing
when suddenly a joy ... so deep it wound around his heart,
wafted out the cracks in the walls,
soared high into the night,
and cracked the darkness.

CONGREGATIONAL SONG: HWB 203 - BREAK FORTH, O BEAUTEOUS HEAVENLY LIGHT

READER 2:

The night was changed.
no longer a waiting, shapeless presence;
but a time of holiness and awe.

Even those in the fields
were shaken by the shattered darkness.
A rent in the sky appeared and angels gushed out over the night-shrouded hills.

CONGREGATIONAL SONG: HWB 197 - ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH

READER 4:

The Darkness could not hold the light.

Light poured out over the men
and sheep;
and rolled over the town
pushing before it those who had no love for the town,
its crowds and its noise,
and pulling in its wake, wanderers from the world's edge.

All to see the babe.
the Word become flesh.
the light of the world.

CANDLE READER #1: bringing hope
CANDLE READER #2: bringing peace
CANDLE READER #3: bringing love
CANDLE READER #4: bringing joy.

(As text is read a candle lighter from the back moves to the 9th of 9 candles around the periphery and lights it.)

CONGREGATIONAL SONG: HWB 318 - JOY TO THE WORLD

READER 1:

And the man leaned against the dark of the stable wall,
his head resting on the rough surface,
hands limp with relief.

The men had gone,
leaving behind gifts, and memories of faces touched by holy light.
Wisps of excitement still hung in the air
and joy wrapped in garlands around the sleeping pair.

He watched them sleep.
breathing low
and soft
wrapped together in straw and silence.
the light of God shining in and around them.

CANDLE READER #1:

There is a light shining in the darkness

CANDLE READER #2:

a light which shines through the word,

CANDLE READER #3:

and the word is light

CANDLE READER #4:

and the light is the light of the world.

CONGREGATIONAL SONG: HWB 193 - SILENT NIGHT