

Christmas Candlelight Service - Of Light, Bread and Stars

3 characters

4 readers

1 narrator

The three characters can be portrayed in still poses or in pantomime – or in costume under spotlight (the latter is more effective but requires a degree of familiarity with the script.)

Place 4 candelabra around the sanctuary – or across the front and down toward the congregation. These four stations are where the poems will be read.

The wreath may be made of glazed bread – an important symbol in the story.

The 4 candelabras will be lit when people enter (the only light in the church).

Place a candle on every other seat in the sanctuary – so that one person can hold a hymnal and another can hold the candle. (These candles are lit near the end of the service.)

Opening Song: Hymnal: A Worship Book (HWB) # 318 - “Joy to the World”

(by memory, if possible, so the church remains dark)

Reader 1: We are children of the light! *(lights one candelabra)*

Reader 2: We are people of the light! *(lights one candelabra)*

Reader 3: The light reminds us of the coming of Jesus and the light he brought to earth.
(lights one candelabra)

Reader 4: The light shines in the darkness! *(lights the final candelabra)*

Reader 1: We are children of the light!

Reader 2: Like vines that grow from seeds planted in the ground, we stretch toward the light.

Reader 3: The light feeds us with energy and with joy. Our roots go into the soil of knowledge and drink up the wisdom it holds.

Reader 4: The light is not always bright upon us but we know that it will come again, after the night.

Narrator: The God who said, “Out of darkness the light shall shine!” is the same God who made his light shine in our hearts, to bring us the knowledge of God’s glory shining in the face of Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:6)

Song HWB #182 – “O How Shall I Receive Thee”

Narrator: But even darkness is not dark for you, and the night is as bright as the day.
Darkness and light are the same to you. (Psalm 139:12)

Reader 2: The sun shines, brightening the corners of the world. The moon reflects calm
brightness over the darkened earth. Stars look down with infinite patience
on the unfolding events of people everywhere in every place and every time.

Reader 3: See, on a hillside? A child of the light – long ago.

Shepherd Boy:

Under the stars
the sheep huddle against the wind.
I lie shivering on the hillside,
pulling my cloak tight around my shoulders,
waiting for something that eludes me.

The shivering is not always the same.
Sometimes I shiver with a feeling that there is something out there for me.
Something wonderful and wild
something that won't be herded and gathered
something that stretches the fabric of everything I know and understand.

It is cold on this hillside,
never a sheltered spot for me to snuggle.
Just rocks and scrubby grasses
that poke through the layers of cloth and fur that surround me.

There is no fireside,
with my mother stirring the pot hung over the flames.
The stew on the hillside tastes different.
There is flavor of loneliness
and mutton that has tasted too many hillsides,
before succumbing to age and the thorn bush.

A little light would be nice.
The fire has gone out
the wind has come up from under the blanket of sunset
to frost my nose and curl its icy fingers around my neck.
The sheep and the wind and hillside are forever,
But a little light would cheer me.
A small flame like the one that lit my way to bed
in the small house my mother and I shared
before the days of sickness and sorrow.

I miss her hand on my forehead

the scent of her
the way she looked at me over the coals in the calmness of the evening.
A little light...
only enough to catch the sparkle of a laugh
only enough to see that she thought I would grow up to be a good shepherd
like my father had been,
on some unremembered hillside.
So I lie here, under the stars, waiting...

Narrator: The God who said, "Out of darkness the light shall shine!" is the same God who made his light shine in our hearts, to bring us the knowledge of God's glory shining in the face of Christ. 2 Cor. 4:6

Song HWB # 180 – "The Angel Gabriel"

Reader 1: When the darkness gathers around us we are sometimes afraid,
Worried that the light of God has stopped shining on us.

Reader 4: But then, without warning, the clouds drift apart, the grey disappears
and the light bursts upon us like an avalanche of beauty.

Reader 2: We wait for the light
for the clouds to move
for day to come again.

Reader 3: for Emmanuel,
God with us,

Reader 1: The light of the world.

Solo Song – HWB # 178 – "Creator of the Stars of Night" (verse 1 & 3)

Narrator: For I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will have the light of life
and will never walk in darkness. John 8:12

Song – HWB # 172 – "O come O come Emmanuel"

Reader 2: The world is full of waiting.

Reader 3: we wait in line at the bank

Reader 4: we wait to get old enough to drive a car

Reader 1: we wait for the children to come home

Reader 2: we wait for the telephone to ring

Reader 3: we wait for 5 o'clock

Reader 4: we wait for Friday

Reader 1: for recess

Reader 2: for coffee breaks with treats

Reader 3: we wait for the mail to come

Reader 4: we wait a long nine months for a baby

Reader 2: we wait for the bread to rise

Reader 1: Ahh, bread.

Reader 4: bread, warm

Reader 2: bread, warm, just out of the oven

Reader 3: bread, warm, just out of the oven, with grandma's homemade raspberry jam.

Reader 4: bread, warm, just out of the oven, with raspberry jam
And a tall cold glass of milk.

Reader 1: It makes me hungry just thinking about it...
the fragrance floating on the air
calling me to come and eat.

Narrator: I am the bread of life. One who comes to me will never be hungry, one who
believes in me will never thirst. John 6:35

Song HWB # 464 – (vs 1 & 3) “Let the Hungry Come to Me”

(Communion is optional at this point) Standard Liturgy

Reader 1: bread

Reader 2: will there ever be enough for everyone?

Reader 3: Will there be a time when children everywhere will have food to stop the
hunger pangs? When there will be more than enough for just today?

Reader 4: Lord in your mercy give us bread to feed the hungry.

Reader 1: Lord in your mercy, teach us to make bread and feed those in need.

Reader 2: Lord, let us understand that we all need more than just bread.

Reader 3: That we need the word of God

Reader 4: And that we need God's leading.

Narrator: He made you go hungry, and then he gave you manna to eat... He did this to teach you that people must not depend on bread alone to sustain them, but on everything the Lord says.

Peasant Woman:

Heila! Heila!?

Where are you impish child?

Don't you know it is time to come and help me?

There will be no soup for us tonight if you don't get the potatoes in from the garden!

Where are you child?

(to herself)

Hiding under some leaves no doubt,

waiting for whatever it is you wait for!

It seems that every time I look for you,
you are off some place, looking to the east,

searching the stars for some word or some secret that I don't share.

Why do you wait?

What is there so important?

More important than bread for the table and clean floors,
and a fresh bed of straw for the animals?

I just can't imagine it

spending time dreaming

and looking up at the stars that come out so early these days.

Is there something in them that speaks more clearly to you
than to the learned men in far away towers?

Heila,

Don't go...

don't slip away under the guise of playing in the fields

running down the pathways toward the light in the distance.

Don't leave me with the sweeping and the dirt

with the animals and their contented munching,

don't leave me without dreams

And hopes;

without a child waiting

for a light from the stars

listening to music too far away for my ears.

I listen for your steps in soft dirt,

waiting under the stars,
waiting for the small loaves to rise,
waiting...

Song HWB # 204 – “Gloria”

Reader 1: But you want us to eat Lord,
you even gave us manna in the wilderness so that our stomachs would stop
complaining maybe even hoping that we would stop complaining.

Reader 2: We don't always understand your leading Lord,
We don't always recognize the path you would like us to take
We don't always recognize the bread you provide

Song HWB # 456 – “Shepherd of Souls, Refresh”

Reader 3: But God, you give us bread, and you give us light!
You feed our bodies with bread,

Reader 4: with corn meal,

Reader 1: with potatoes,

Reader 2: with rice,

Reader 3: with manna.

Reader 1: Let us take your bread to feed our bodies and comfort our souls;

Reader 2: Let us take your bread to feed others who hunger;

Reader 3: Let us take your bread to the banquet table you provide for your people.

Song HWB # 176 – “Comfort, Comfort My People”

Reader 1: The heavens shine in the darkness of Bethlehem's cold.

Reader 2: The long awaited light begins to glimmer;

Reader 3: The light of the world is waiting to shine;

Reader 4: The Bread of life is moulded, will rest a while and then...rise!

Reader 1: The news of Christ's coming rustles across the skies, and pours down on
unsuspecting mortals. With the angels they wonder at the news.

Song HWB # 199 – “The First Noel”

Reader 1: The Stars are out tonight Lord.

The angels have heralded the good news. The light is come.
The Bread of life to feed the hungry world.

Reader 2: Even in the alleyways and byways your light shines;

Reader 3: No sadness can overcome the joy of this miraculous day, the one awaited so long.

Song HWB # 192 – “On This Day”

Old Man:

Look at that boy!

you'd think it was treasure the way he looks at that skin.
I suppose it is smooth and soft,
just the way worn out hide always looks
before someone tosses it out as useless!
The way he looks at it you almost expect it to
sing or something.

Of course.

And now he has found some rope and cords
in that pile of useless discards.
I wonder what he is up to?

There is so much excitement in his eyes!

they shine like stars
that are so bright tonight.
He dances around in a circle that includes
his treasures
and the alley he found them in
and the stars
and even me.

How can so much joy be found on the ground
of an alley long forgotten
by everyone but me?

It doesn't matter that this used to be a
well worn path that resounded with
dancing and singing as people went to market
early in the morning, and trundled through late at night.

The walls of this alley have heard
so much laughter and song
that it must still be nestled in the stones
just waiting to bubble out in the joy of a child

with new-found treasures.

Now he sits on the stones
listening to them sing to him
the stars humming in the distance

And look,
he has done it.

Made something wonderful
appear out of nothing.

A drum.
An instrument
that pounds out the darkness of the alley
the music of the stones
and the song the stars are singing tonight.

And there he sits,
the stars shining on him as he waits for them to speak.

Waiting...
waiting to play...
waiting for some signal
that now is the time for music
now is the time to rejoice
and herald
another treasure
come into the world
newly shaped
by the music of the stars.

Song HWB # 595 – “Jesus Priceless Treasure”

As the song is sung light may be passed along the rows until all the candles are lit.

Narrator: The God who said, “Out of darkness the light shall shine!” is the same God who made his light shine in our hearts, to bring us the knowledge of God’s glory shining in the face of Christ. 2 Cor. 4:6

Reader 4: You give us light Lord,
light to see the pain in another person’s heart.

Reader 2: light to understand the purpose of us living and breathing in this world

Reader 3: light to illumine the dark corners of poverty and ignorance

Reader 4: light that can shine through us to people everywhere.

Reader 2: Light our paths, O God,
light our lives with your love;

Reader 1: light our hearts with your fire;
light our way to you, O God.

Readers 1-2: As the stars shine on the miracle of Christ's coming,
so they shine on us today.

Readers 3-4: We are children of the same light that shone on Bethlehem.
We are followers of the Christ who came to earth as a baby.

Readers 1-4: Together we covenant to share the bread of life, the Christ, with others.
Together we greet the season of joy,
mindful of the fulfillment of Christ's life, in the cross.
You are the bread of life
the start that heralds new life
and the light of the world.

Song HWB # 203 – "Break Forth O Beauteous..."

Narrator: The God who said, "Out of darkness the light shall shine!" is the same God who
made his light shine in our hearts, to bring us the knowledge of God's glory
shining in the face of Christ. 2 Cor. 4:6

Readers 1-4: You are the bread of life
the star that heralds new life
and the light of this most silent night.

Song HWB # 193 – "Silent Night"

Prayer: Lord you can hear the angels in the tumult of the heavens
you can also hear the quiet prayers of our hearts.
Hear our prayers O God.

silence

Lord we extinguish our lights now,
remembering that you are the light of the world,
extinguished on the cross for us, and for our salvation.

We hold the light you shared with us in our hearts,
as Mary held the news of your coming in her heart.

As the stars shine down on us this night, let us go now to be your lights in the
world; sharing the bread of your love, and holding the light of your presence in
our hearts. Amen.

Go in Peace.

Lynette Wiebe (Canada). Mennonite Church Canada.

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