



## CIRCLE OF LIGHT

*An Advent/Christmas Program*

*This Christmas candlelight program uses Holy Scripture, Christmas hymns and carols, and lights. It is more effective when used in the evening or where the room can be darkened.*

*Preparation: One Christ candle or white pillar candle, 21 tea lights. If this is a small group of people, arrange chairs in a circle so the Christ candle is in the middle of the group. If it is a larger group, the Christ candle may be placed on a table or an altar in the center of the group.*

*Participants: One Leader (L) and as many as 21 Readers (R). Each Reader in the large group should come forward during the previous hymn verse. We suggest the songs be copied separately for the entire group or you may use the hymnbook. If the music for “Someone Special” is not available, you may use one of the following hymns or substitute another: “God Loves Me Dearly” (LSB 392) or “I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light” (LSB 411).*

*Lights are on to begin.*

**Leader:** We sing “Someone Special” from *All God’s People Sing* #217, stanzas 2 and 3

**Leader:** We are a circle of friends, gathered around the “one true Light.” As friends, we will now share with each other, in word and song, the joyous message of Christmas!

**R1:** *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ... And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God saw that the light was good ... God saw all that He had made, and it was very good* (Gen. 1:1, 3-4a, 31 NIV).

**R2:** The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden ... And the Lord God commanded the man, “*You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die*” (Gen. 2:15a, 16-17 NIV).

**R3:** But the serpent was a crafty animal. He tempted Eve to eat of the fruit, who then gave some to Adam, and he ate it. Sin was born in the heart of man. Darkness entered the world. *(All lights are turned off and Leader lights the Christ candle.)* But God showed His love to Adam and Eve, and all mankind, with this first Gospel promise: “*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel*” (Gen. 3:15 NIV).

*(As the remaining parts are read – left to right around the small group – the person to the left of the reader will light a tea light. Or, if you have a large group, you can form pairs and have one light the tea light as the other one reads. The tea lights are lit from the Christ candle.)*

**R4:** The prophet Isaiah further testified of God’s plan to overcome the darkness: *“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace”* (Is. 9:2, 6 KJV).

**Leader:** We sing “The People That in Darkness Sat” (LSB 412 stanzas 4 and 5; LW 77, stanzas 3 and 4; TLH 106, stanzas 4 and 5).

**R5:** *“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn”* (Is. 60:1-3 NIV).

**R6:** John the Baptist’s father Zechariah prophesied about John: *“And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace”* (Luke 1:76-79 NIV). Our Savior is the Dayspring, the very earliest dawn, the Light that overcomes darkness.

**Leader:** Please sing “Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel” (LSB 357, stanzas 1 and 6; LW 31, stanzas 1 and 6; TLH 62, stanzas 1 and 3).

**R7:** *In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.” Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be* (Luke 1:26-29 NIV).

**R8:** *But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end”* (Luke 1:30-33 NIV).

**R9:** *“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God”* (Luke 1:34-37 NIV).

**R10:** *“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” Then the angel left her ... And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on*

*all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me -- Holy is His name... ” (Luke 1:38, 46-49 NIV).*

**R11:** *“His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble” (Luke 1:50-52 NIV).*

**R12:** *“He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers” (Luke 1:53-55 NIV).*

**Leader:** We sing stanzas 1 and 3 of “Oh, Little Town of Bethlehem” (LSB 361; LW 60; TLH 647).

**R13:** *And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David;) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child (Luke 2:1-5 KJV).*

**R14:** *And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn (Luke 2:6-7 KJV).*

**Leader:** We sing all three stanzas of “Away in a Manger” (LSB 364; LW 64).

**R15:** *And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid (Luke 2:8-9 KJV).*

**R16:** *And the angel said unto them, “Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger” (Luke 2:10-12 KJV).*

**R17:** *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us” (Luke 2:13-15 KJV).*

**Leader:** We sing “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” (TLH 94, stanzas 1 and 4; LSB 380, stanzas 1 and 3; LW 49, stanzas 1 and 3).

**R18:** *And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child (Luke 2:16-17 KJV).*

**R19:** *And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them (Luke 2:18-20 KJV).*

**R20:** *Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us (Matt. 1:22-23 KJV).*

**Leader:** We sing the first two stanzas of “Joy to the World” (*LSB 387; LW 53; TLH 87*).

**R21:** *“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel” (Luke 2:29-32 NIV).*

*(Candlelight only)*

**Leader:** We close with singing all three stanzas of “Silent Night, Holy Night” (*LSB 363; LW 68; TLH 646*).

**Leader:** We pray together:

**All:** O blessed Christ Child, may the light of Your love dwell in our hearts and in our lives that all who see us will see Your light. Amen.

*NIV: New International Version*

*KJV: King James Version*

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