

The Service of Light: *Christmastide Year C*

*The table or gathering place is dark, or partially so, when the service is to begin.
A central candle may be used with any other number of candles or lamps that are necessary for light.
After the candle is lit, with the other candles and lamps, the Candlelighter greets the people.*

Greeting

Candlelighter: *Light and peace in Jesus Christ our Lord.*
People: **Thanks be to God.**

The Candlelighter reads one of the following short lessons.

The true light that gives light to everyone has come into the world!

— *John 1:9*

Or

Jesus said, and we proclaim, “God is light and in God there is no darkness at all.”

— *1 John 1:5*

Prayer for Light

Candlelighter: *Let us pray.*

O God, you make us glad by the yearly festival of the birth of your only Son Jesus Christ; grant that we, who joyfully receive him as our Savior, may with sure confidence behold him when he comes to be our judge, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. *Amen.*

Or

O God, you have caused this holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light; grant that we, who have known the mystery of that Light on earth, may also enjoy him perfectly in heaven, where with you and the Holy Spirit he lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

God’s Story

Service Leader: *Behold, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people:
to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah,
Jesus the Lord!*

People: **Glory to God in the highest!**

Service Leader: *Hear the story of God’s gift of love for all the world.*

The Service Leader or an assigned reader may read one of the following passages.

John 1:1-14 (except on December 25th)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Luke 2:1, 3-14

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. And everyone went to their own town to register. Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

Galatians 4:4-7

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

The evening service continues in any of the following ways:

Before the meal, the Service Leader may say the following Grace, or a family prayer or a sung chorus may be used. In the place of a meal, a meditation or reading could take place. If nothing, the Vespers simply continue.

Grace

Service Leader:

Dear God, the eyes of all creation look to you and you give to us our food in due season. Open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Vespers: *Good News of Great Joy for All People!*

At the conclusion of the meal. Or, if there has been no break.

Service Leader: *O God, make speed to save us.*

People: **O Lord, make haste to help us.**

(Unison)

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

O Gracious Light

Together:

O gracious light,
pure brightness of the everliving Father in heaven,
O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed!

Now as we come to the setting of the sun,
and our eyes behold the vesper light,
we sing your praises, O God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

You are worthy at all times to be praised by happy voices,
O Son of God, O Giver of Life,
and to be glorified through all the worlds.

Scripture Readings

Service Leader: *Worship the Lord in the beauty of his holiness.*

People: **Let the whole earth tremble before him.**

The Christmastide readings are listed below for each evening. One or multiple readers may be assigned.

1st Day of Christmas: *The Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ*
(December 25) John 1:1-14; Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98

2nd Day of Christmas: *Saint Stephen*
(December 26) Acts 6:8—7:2a, 51c-60

3rd Day of Christmas: *Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist*
(December 27) 1 John 1:1-9

4th Day of Christmas: *The Holy Innocents*
(December 28) Jeremiah 31:15-17; Matthew 2:13-18

5th Day of Christmas: *Thomas Becket, Defender of the Faith Against Political Tyranny*
(December 29) Matthew 10:16-22 *(Mommy? Who is Thomas Becket?)*
PS: Great movie with Richard Burton/Peter O'Toole

6th Day of Christmas:
(December 30) Isaiah 61:10—62:3; Psalm 147

Scripture Readings: *Continued*

7th Day of Christmas: (December 31)	Revelation 21:1-6
8th Day of Christmas: (January 1)	<i>The Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus</i> Psalm 8; Luke 2:15-21
9th Day of Christmas: (January 2)	Hebrews 11:1-12
10th Day of Christmas: (January 3)	Hebrews 11:13-22
11th Day of Christmas: (January 4)	Hebrews 11:23-31
12th Day of Christmas: (January 5)	<i>Twelfth Night</i> Romans 15:7-13

When the reading is concluded:

Reader: *The Word of the Lord.*
People: **Thanks be to God.**

The Prayers

Prayer Leader: *Let us pray.*
The Prayer Leader chooses the traditional or the modern version and begins.

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,
for ever and ever. *Amen.*

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 forever. *Amen.*

The Magnificat

*The Magnificat may be read alone or in unison
It can be sung if a setting is available. Children can read it.
A recording may be listened to while contemplating the scripture.*

Antiphon *(together)*

**Christ the Lord is born today;
Today, salvation has appeared!**

The Song of Mary

Luke 1:46-55

My soul magnifies the Lord,
 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.
For he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden,
 for behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.
And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm.
He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He has put down the mighty from their thrones,
 and exalted those of low degree.
He has filled the hungry with good things;
 and the rich he has sent empty away.
He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;
 as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever.

Antiphon *(together)*

**Christ the Lord is born today;
Today, salvation has appeared!**

Collects for the Evening

Choose or assign from the following, two collects for the evening.

When this evening falls on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday, the collect for that evening should be prayed first.

A Collect for Fridays

Lord Jesus Christ, by your death you took away the sting of death: Grant to us your servants so to follow in faith where you have led the way, that we may at length fall asleep peacefully in you and wake up in your likeness; for your tender mercies' sake. **Amen.**

A Collect for Saturdays

O God, the source of eternal light: Shed forth your unending day upon us who watch for you, that our lips may praise you, our lives may bless you, and our worship on the morrow give you glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

A Collect for Sundays

Lord God, whose son our Savior Jesus Christ triumphed over the powers of death and prepared for us our place in the new Jerusalem: Grant that we, who have this day given thanks for his resurrection, may praise you in that City of which he is the light, and where he lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

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One: Christmas

Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word; grant that this light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. **Amen.**

Two: The Presence of Christ

Lord Jesus stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way, kindle our hearts and awaken hope that we may know you as you are revealed in Scripture and the breaking of bread: grant this for the sake of your love. **Amen.**

Three: The Lamp of Charity

Grant us, Lord, the lamp of charity which never fails, that it may burn in us and shed its light on those around us, and that by its brightness we may have a vision of that holy City, where dwells the true and never-failing Light, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Four: Prayer in the Evening

O Lord, support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in your mercy, grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. **Amen.**

Five: St. Augustine's Prayer for the Night

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. **Amen.**

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Closing

Service Leader: *Let us bless the Lord!*

People: **Thanks be to God.**

The Service Leader concludes the Vespers with the following passage.

If clergy, a Benediction may be added.

The abuse of oppressors and the cruelty of tyrants—all their whips and cudgels and curses—is gone, done away with, a deliverance as surprising and sudden as Gideon's old victory over Midian. For a child has been born—for us! The gift of a son—for us! He'll take over the running of the world. His names will be: Amazing Counselor, Strong God, Eternal Father, Prince of Wholeness. His ruling authority will grow, and there'll be no limits to the wholeness he brings. He'll rule from the historic David throne over that promised kingdom. He'll put that kingdom on a firm footing and keep it going with fair dealing and right living, beginning now and lasting always. The zeal of God-of-the-Angel-Armies will do all this. **Amen.**

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