



ADVENT WORSHIP SERIES

Come Home for Christmas

REFERENCES

- [Jeremiah 31:7-14](#)
- [Psalm 147:12-20](#)
- [Ephesians 1:3-14](#)
- [John 1:\(1-9\), 10-18](#)

This week can be a continuation of last week; the Christmastide desire to hold on to the hope of Christmas. Except this week, we go from a position of strength and not of loss. Instead of focusing on the cloud, we look to the light. Light is the dominant image this week. Consider how you will share the light, offer the light to those who worship with you this week. Remember all those Christmas Eve candles? You know you're going to have to get new ones next year, so why not hand them out as folks leave today? We sometimes take them home on Christmas Eve, but what about the second Sunday after Christmas? What about the first Sunday of a new year? Let's cling to the light.

Many communities use the Wesley Covenant Prayer (See *A Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition*, 607 in the *United Methodist Hymnal*) on this first Sunday of the year. It also is a way of clinging to the light. It is an honest prayer, admitting that not everything is easy in this life of faith, this discipleship journey. "Let me be full, let me be empty" or "put me to doing, put me to suffering" are words of deep commitment and genuine faith. And yet, a life lived to this model, this pattern, becomes a light not just for the one who lives it but to all those around.

There is a curious mixture of seeing the light and being the light in the Christian life, which is true for all kinds of light. Carrying a candle means your

light is shared to any and all those around you. And that's as it should be. We aren't to hide our light under a bushel, remember? What are some ways that your community is the light for the wider neighborhood? Where does your light shine? This would be a good week to celebrate that sharing, that radiance.

We started this series with a suggestion that "we'll leave the light on" would be a good subtitle. It is also a good exit line for Christmastide. As we head to Epiphany, where light is also central, we go with confidence, surrounded by the light of home behind us and around us and within us. But perhaps most importantly coming from us. Let your light shine.

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The Light of Home

COME HOME FOR CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SERIES



WEEK 6: THE LIGHT OF HOME

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was

not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.¹

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known. (John 1:1-18)

It is no mistake that the Advent and Christmas seasons, falling on the longest, darkest nights of the year, are also referred to as the seasons of light. It is a time when we string lights from every possible tree and eave on our property. We light trees in our houses and put out candles. In church, we watch as the light grows each week, lighting one more candle to count down the days and weeks until Christmas, when God's light — the light of the world comes to earth.[1]

We hang all these lights in a futile attempt to dispel darkness. We know, no matter how many lights we hang, someone somewhere is not experiencing the light of the season. For some, this is the first Christmas without a loved one. Just managing to get through it all will seem like a success. Churches have begun holding Blue Christmas worship services in an attempt to bring together those who are in grief over the holidays. A Blue Christmas service can help those who are sad express that grief together and begin the healing process. This is an excellent response as a community, but one service will not erase the sadness of an entire holiday season.

Inviting someone for a meal and sharing it over candlelight is one of the most classic holiday traditions. Every person, every meal looks better in candlelight. Enjoy sharing the light of the holiday season with someone for whom the light was hard to find or see this year. Bring light to them when all other lights in their lives have grown dim.

Our project this week asks you to create a menu and execute it. Pay attention to each dish as you select it and make it. Invite someone whose life could be improved by the extra attention to the details such as creating a candle-lit space. Help this person feel special – like a beloved child of God.

Holiday Dinner Party: Share the light of your home by inviting someone over for a meal. Consider inviting someone who has been unable to spend the holiday with friends or family. Be sure to light the space with lots of candles. Weekly discussion questions:

- 1) What was your menu for dinner? Why did you choose these dishes?
 - 2) Whom did you invite? Why did you choose this person? Tell the person's story.
 - 3) How has this project affected you? Your relationship with someone else? Your relationship with God?
 - 4) What ideas do you have about intentionally continuing some of these practices? What benefit to your faith might this have?
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[1] *Feasting on the Word*, 191.

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