



Meditation for Christmas Eve/Christmas Day

On this holy night, let us hear the angel's proclamation:

"Do not be afraid, for to you is born this day a Savior."

Glory be to God.

And peace on earth.

Sing two stanzas of O Little Town of Bethlehem.

Prayer of confession and assurance of pardon *(based on Luke 2):*

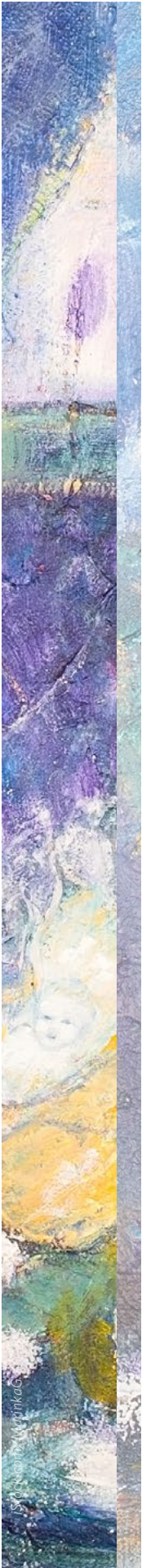
Gracious God, we confess our sins against you and one another, our unwillingness to quiet our hearts and wait for the promised light, our reluctance to make room for Christ and for those, who like Mary and Joseph, seek shelter and sustenance in a difficult world.

Despite our human failings, God sent God's son into the world, bringing light and hope in the most unexpected way. The angel told the shepherds: "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people," The shepherds followed where God led, and when they saw the baby in the manger, their hearts were opened and they went out to tell the world this wonderful Good News.

Read Luke 2:1-7.

As you reflect on these verses, you are invited to exercise your imagination — to enter into the scene with Mary and Joseph and their new baby. Ponder the difficulty of their trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem in compliance with imperial decree. Where are you in this scene? Are you a fellow traveler or a bystander on the road? Are you among those who helped feed them on their journey? What questions would you like to ask the holy couple? What would you like to say to God?

Sing two stanzas of Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.



Read Luke 2:8-14.

As you reflect on these verses, imagine that you are among the shepherds, hearing the angel's declaration and the choir of angels' song about the coming of a savior to the world. Ponder the angel's announcement: "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord." Imagine that the angel is addressing these words to you this day. In what ways do you - and we - need a Savior today? Try to name them.

Sing two stanzas of Away in a Manger.

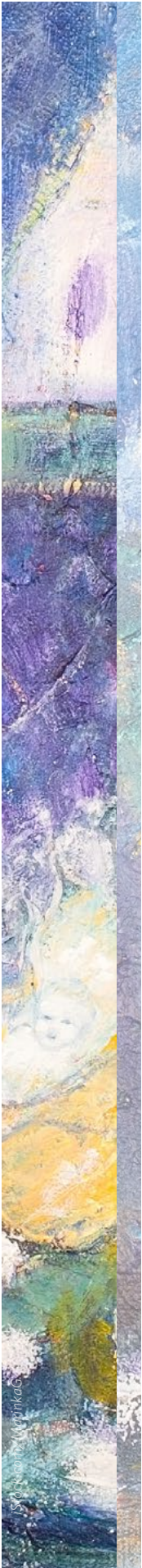
Read Luke 2:15-20.

As you reflect on these verses, imagine this holy scene and your place in it — perhaps as one of the shepherds or one of the many with whom they shared the news of what they had been told about the child. What do you see? Imagine the expressions on the faces of the holy couple when they hear the shepherds' news. What do you imagine Mary ponders in her heart? What feelings does this scene evoke in you? Joy, amazement or hope? What connections do you discern between this story and realities in your life here and now?

Sing two stanzas of What Child Is This?

Read John 1:1-14.

John 1:1-14 is likely an early Christian hymn. As you reflect on its familiar lines, which words or images most capture your attention, shimmering for you on this holy night? Perhaps "In the beginning was the Word"? "The light in shines in the darkness"? Or "the Word became flesh"? Ponder the words and images that leap off the page and reflect on what they mean to you in this time and place. What emotions are stirred by these images? (Despair or anxiety, hope or peace?) Where do you discern the presence or movement of God amidst these emotions?



Sing two stanzas of Silent Night.

Sing these familiar verses and then reflect again on the angel's words to the shepherds: "To you is born this day a Savior." Ponder the "you" in this verse — it is plural and thus a communal address to the many people in your life and in the world. Identify and name persons who come to mind who may be especially in need of this good news and ponder what it might mean for a Savior to be born to each of them. Then pray for each person you have identified. Finally, pray for yourself, lifting your own needs before God.

Conclude with two stanzas of Joy to the World.

What came into being through the Word was life,
and the life as the light of all people.
The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light.

Go into the world with the Peace of the Christ,
and let the light of God illumine your way. Amen.

© *Presbyterian Outlook*, 2020.

Liturgy written by Roger Gench
and provided for free distribution.

For more resources,
visit pres-outlook.org.