

## CHRISTMAS IN ORDINARY TIME

Surprise! Christ is always with us, that's why summer is the perfect time to celebrate Christ's birth, without all the holiday hubbub that takes over every December . . . and November . . .

and sometimes even before Halloween. So, surprise! Merry Christmas! God is with us!

*(The story is familiar and easy to include different readers. Also good time to prepare for an*

*Advent fundraiser.)*

***Bring a candle/electronic candle/use your phone flashlight***

PRELUDE

O COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL

UMH 234

**WELCOME and INTRO** Rev. Dr. Rebeka Maples, COS Spiritual Formation Director

### INVITATION AND GATHERING

A light shining in the night sky . . .

**What could it be?**

The sound of angels' wings . . .

**What could it mean?**

A baby born in a stable . . .

**Who could it bring?**

Come to Bethlehem and see.

### OPENING PRAYER

O wondrous God of the stars,  
we come in summer's glory  
to see the babe who will change our lives.  
We know the names: "Wonderful Counselor,"  
"Mighty God," "Prince of Peace,"  
for you have touched the earth with your love.

**Touch us now,  
our hearts and minds and souls.  
May we never tire of this story.  
May we never take it for granted.  
May the mystery always fill us. Amen.**

### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Emmanuel—God-with-us.  
Help us hear again  
your promises of hope and love  
as we sing our familiar carols.  
**Forgive us for forgetting the joy of Christmas,  
and focusing only on ourselves the rest of the year.**  
Let us hear again angel voices,  
see shepherds hurrying to a stable,

and ponder in our hearts what all this means  
for the world, for us.

### **WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

God's love knows no bounds.  
Love comes down at Christmas—  
a love so deep and so profound  
that it will never leave us.  
Know that this love comes for each of us—  
to touch us, to heal us, to forgive us,  
to make us whole.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **PASSING THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

Today no one is a stranger. All are joined together as one family when God reaches down to touch the earth. Let us reach out and touch each other with the Peace of Christ.

*(Pass the peace in the chat or wave at the screen.)*

### **PREPARATION FOR THE WORD**

God, we see your light shining in the darkness.  
We hear the angels sing.  
We behold your promises fulfilled  
in the birth of this wondrous child.  
May the Christmas story become real in our lives.

## **MARY AT THE MANGER**

### **HYMN**

### **What Child Is This**

**UMH 219 verses 1, 3**

*During the hymn, the Christ candle and the Advent Wreath may be lit.*

### **THE STORY OF MARY: Gospel of Luke 1:26-35 (select verses)**

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to Nazareth, to a virgin named Mary engaged to Joseph of the house of David. He came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words, and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God... you will bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

### **A WORD FROM MARY**

No one ever listens to girls. Not in my world. No one listens when we have something to say. No one believes us when something amazing happens. No one believes us when we get used and abused. But this was different. I wasn't scared. I knew what was being asked. And I said, "yes." To God.

## JOSEPH AT THE MANGER

**HYMN**

**O Little Town of Bethlehem**

**UMH 230, verses 1-2**

*During the hymn, small votive candles on the altar may be lit.*

**THE STORY OF JOSEPH: Matthew 1:18-21 (select verses)**

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

**A WORD FROM JOSEPH**

It was that voice that stopped me. It was that voice which told me I should trust her. It wasn't pleading. It wasn't full of tears. There was no fear. It was that voice which helped me say, "yes." To her. To God.

## THE STAR AT THE MANGER

**HYMN**

**Star-Child**

**TFWS 2095 verses 1, 3, 5**

*During the hymn, the tall candles on the Altar may be lit.*

**THE STORY OF THE STAR: Matthew 2:1-10 (select verses)**

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him." When they saw the star, they rejoiced with great joy.

**STAR, STAR, SHINE YOUR LIGHT**

Star, star, quiet star  
Silent sparkle in the night  
Still, still, hear the star  
Lighting up the sky  
Silent noise from afar  
Hush, hush, soundless prayer  
Silent glimmer through the air  
Star, star, shine your light.

## THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

**HYMN**

**Angels We Have Heard on High**

**UMH 238 verses 1-3**

*During the hymn, the Christ Child may be brought to the manger.*

**THE STORY OF JESUS' BIRTH: Luke 2:1-7 (select verses)**

In those days a decree went out from the Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. Joseph went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver the child. And she gave birth to

her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

#### **A CHRISTMAS BLESSING**

Blessed are you, O Lord our God. You have enriched our lives with every good and perfect gift; you have commanded us to show your love to all and to praise you with our lives. Be with us now and bless us to be your love this day and always.

**Amen.**

### **THE LIGHT OF CHRIST FILLS OUR HEARTS**

#### **DISTRIBUTION OF THE LIGHT** (optional)

*Acolytes may pass the light to members of the congregation, as the light is passed, scripture may be read.*

#### **LESSON OF LIGHT: John 1:1-14** (select verses)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of God's only Son, full of grace and truth.

#### **SONG OF SIMEON:**

**Lord, now let your servant go in peace; your word has been fulfilled. My own eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared in the sight of every people: a light to lighten the nations and the glory of your people Israel. 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.**

#### **HYMN**

**Silent Night**

**UMH 239, verses 1, 4**

#### **BENEDICTION: WHEN THE WAITING IS OVER**

When the waiting is over and the child is born  
When the shepherds have gone back to the fields  
When the Magi have left their gifts and returned to distant lands  
When Mary and Joseph have fled Herod's wrath -  
May our hearts always be open, to angels calling in the night.

**Amen.** *(All extinguish their candles.)*

#### **POSTLUDE**

**HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING**

**UMH 240**

#### **Prayers, liturgies adapted from:**

*Praying with Light*, by Rebeka Maples (Glasgow, UK: Wild Goose Pubs., 2017).

*A Star-Filled Grace*, by Rachel Mann (Glasgow, UK: Wild Goose Pubs., 2015).

*The Abingdon Worship Annual 2009*, © 2008 Abingdon Press

<https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/3406/worship-elements-christmas-eve-2012>