

Moravian Lovefeast Candle Service

The Christmas Eve Lovefeast Candle Service is a combination of two worship traditions within the Moravian Church. The service begins with a lovefeast. The lovefeast is a reminder of the “agape” meal mentioned in Acts 2 and Jude 12 as a common meal of celebration of the fellowship shared in our Lord Jesus Christ. It was first observed on August 13, 1727, following an unusual experience of the presence of the Holy Spirit as a celebration of Holy Communion in Berthelsdorf when Count Zinzendorf observed the brothers and sisters continuing to sing hymns, read scripture and pray together through the dinner hour. He provided some sandwiches and beverage as they continued to meet and thus the lovefeast was born.

The first Christmas Eve Candlelight Service was held in Marienborn, Germany, on December 24, 1747, and was a children’s service directed by Johannes von Watteville. That service included the distribution of lighted tapers, trimmed with a bit of red ribbon to the children, and the singing of hymns which spoke of Christ, the Light of the world. He is the “Morning Star,” shedding forth the light of truth and the light of his salvation. The custom was brought to America in 1756 with a similar service being held in Bethlehem.

The essential details of the service include the singing of Christmas hymns and carols, the message of Christmas from the scripture accounts, the serving of the lovefeast, the singing of “Morning Star”, and the distribution of candles. Traditionally, beeswax candles are used because of their fragrance and the symbol of the purity of Christ. The red trimming symbolizes the shed blood of the Savior for all humankind.

Simple in Spirit, uncluttered in detail, and gentle in tone, this service has become one of the most beloved of all Moravian worship experiences and appeals to the childlike faith nature which all those who follow the Infant King must retain.

As we welcome you, we extend the best wishes of this holy season and invite you to join with us in saluting the newborn King. During the singing of the last hymn stanza in the bulletin, you are invited to hold your candle aloft, symbolic of your welcoming Christ into your heart and your intention to share the light of His love with others.



O Come. Let Us Adore Him!

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Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed
where a mother laid her baby in a manger for his bed.
Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ her little child.

He came down to earth from heaven who is God and Lord of all,
and his shelter was a stable, and his cradle was a stall;
with the poor and meek and lowly lived on earth our Savior holy.

For he is our childhood's pattern; day by day like us he grew;
he was little, weak, and helpless; tears and smiles like us he knew;
and he feels for all our sadness, and he shares in all our gladness.

And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own redeeming love,
for that Child, so dear and gentle, is our Lord in heav'n above,
and he leads his children on to the place where he has gone. †

GRACE **Come, Lord Jesus, our guest to be and bless these gifts bestowed
by thee. Amen.**

SPECIAL MUSIC Paige Martin

"Angels We Have Heard on High" MBW # 288
vs. 1,3,4

Angels we have heard on high, singing sweetly through the night,
and the mountains in reply echoing their brave delight.
Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing.
Come adore on bended knee Christ, the Lord, the newborn king.
Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo.

See him in a manger laid whom the angels praise above.
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid, while we raise our hearts in love.
Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo. †

PRESENTATION OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS

OFFERTORY

*OFFERTORY RESPONSE MBW # 817

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise him, all creatures here below;
praise him above, ye heav'nly host;
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! †**

* UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**Prince of Peace, tonight we remember that you were born with few
material possessions. Help us to share our abundant blessings as a
community of faith with those in need. Amen.**

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

MESSAGE

PRAYER

THE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

"Candle Glowing"

Candle glowing, my heart knowing,
I should follow him;
Jesus leading, guiding, pleading,
"Let no light be dim."

Candle burning, my heart yearning
for a friend divine
to be near me, bless and cheer me,
be forever mine.

Candle gleaming, my face beaming,
let me rise and go
while he leads me, where he needs me,
in his world below.

Candle flaming, my heart naming
Christ the Lord of all;
Jesus, Savior, mine forever,
I have heard your call.

"Silent Night, Holy Night"

MBW # 297

Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright,
round yon virgin mother and child. Holy infant so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar, heav'nly hosts sing alleluia;
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!
Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light

radiant beams from your holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth, Jesus, Lord, at your birth. †

"Morning Star, O Cheering Sight"

MBW # 281

(solo and congregation)

Morning Star, O cheering sight!
Ere thou cam'st, how dark earth's night!
Morning Star, O cheering sight!
Ere thou cam'st, how dark earth's night!
Jesus mine, **in me shine**; in me shine, **Jesus mine**;
fill my heart with light divine.

Morning Star, thy glory bright
far excels the sun's clear light.
Morning Star, thy glory bright
far excels the sun's clear light.
Jesus be, **constantly**, constantly, **Jesus be**
more than thousand suns to me.

Thy glad beams, thou Morning Star,
cheer the nations near and far.
Thy glad beams, thou Morning Star,
cheer the nations near and far.
Thee we own, **Lord alone**, Lord alone, **thee we own**,
our dear Savior, God's dear Son.

Morning Star, my soul's true light,
tarry not, dispel my night.
Morning Star, my soul's true light,
tarry not, dispel my night.
Jesus mine, **in me shine**; in me shine, **Jesus mine**;
fill my heart with light divine. †

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

MBW # 295

Hark! The herald angels sing: "Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all you nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;
with th'angelic host proclaim: "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing: "Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ, by highest heav'n adored; Christ, the Everlasting Lord!

Late in time behold him come to the earth from heaven's home;
veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail th'incarnate Deity,
pleased as man with us to dwell, Jesus our Immanuel.
Hark! The herald angels sing: "Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail, the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, ris'n with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing: "Glory to the newborn King!" †

(please stand)

"Joy to the World, the Lord Is Come"

MBW # 294

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her king;
let ev'ry heart prepare him room,
and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let us our songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sin and sorrow grow, nor thorns infest the ground;
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love. †

* BENEDICTION

*CHIME

*POSTLUDE

**Please stand, as able.*

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CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHTING

CHRISTMAS EVE, YEAR A

December 24, 2025

First Reader: Tonight/Today, we gather to remember with the prophet Isaiah:

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders, and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Great will be his authority, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this (Isaiah 9:6-7).

All: We gather to once again bask in the glory that visited a stable and a manger, shepherds watching their flocks, and a young couple cradling the newborn Messiah.

Second Reader: We light the Christ candle as a sign of the glory that came among us in unexpected places and to unexpected people, that we may be people who seek and follow the glory of the Christ child here and now.

Light the center candle of the Advent wreath.¹

¹ <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/toda-la-tierra-espera-advent-candle-lighting-liturgy-2025>