



GOD WITH US

A
Great
Light

Creative
Communications
Sample



WORSHIP KIT



A Great Light

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A Great Light

Notes and Ordering Information

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, Isaiah foretold. This candlelight service for Christmas Eve reveals the Good News that our Great Light has dawned: Jesus Christ is born. Hymns in the service include “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear,” “Away in a Manger,” “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” and “Silent Night.” Use with the God With Us series or alone.

Printed bulletins (8 1/2" x 11") are available. Code GS8A

Blank bulletins (8 1/2" x 11") are available. Code GS8B

Blank bulletins (8 1/2" x 14") are available. Code GS8C

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a Great Light

Newsletter/Bulletin Notices

Newsletter Notice

The prophet Isaiah foretold, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Isaiah 9:2). Join us for Christmas Eve to celebrate the great Light that has come into our world to dispel the darkness of sin forever. Candlelight, carols, Scripture, a homily and prayers reveal the Good News that our Great Light has dawned: Jesus Christ is born; let us rejoice!

Bulletin Notice

Merry Christmas! The prophet Isaiah foretold, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Isaiah 9:2). Let us celebrate the Light of the Christ Child who has come into our world to dispel the darkness of sin forever. Candlelight, carols, Scripture, a homily and prayers reveal the Good News that our Great Light has dawned: Jesus Christ is born; let us rejoice!



A Great Light

Order of Service

Opening Hymn..... It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold:
“Peace on the earth, good will to men, from heaven’s all-gracious King.”
The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come with peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heav’nly music floats o’er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains, they bend on hov’ring wing,
And ever o’er its babel sounds the blessed angels sing.

And ye, beneath life’s crushing load, whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow:
Look now! For glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing!

For lo, the days are hastening on, by prophets seen of old,
When with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold
When peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world send back the song which now the angels sing.

Invocation

P We begin our worship in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Lighting the Advent Wreath

Confession and Absolution

C Loving God, who sent Jesus as Savior of the world, we confess that our busy doing and decorating have shrouded our Christmas and caused us to lose our focus on the Christ Child. Forgive us for shaping the celebration to fit our desires. Seize us by your Spirit, focus our eyes and hearts on the coming Christ. Inspire us with that coming so that we shout from the housetops the Good News proclaimed by the angels and shared joyfully by the shepherds. Make us into your joy-filled Christmas messengers, sharing your powerful message of salvation for all.

P Jesus has promised that the sins we forgive on earth will also be forgiven in heaven. Trusting that precious promise, as a called and ordained minister of the Gospel, I confidently declare to you that, in Jesus Christ, all of your sins are forgiven and you are privileged to share that same forgiveness with all the others in your life. We are filled with Jesus' light of life so that we can shine among the people of this world like stars in the sky.

Call to Worship

P A voice cries out, "In the wilderness clear a way for the Lord;

C make a way in the desert, a road for our God.

P Every valley must be lifted up, and every mountain and hill leveled.

C The rough places will become a level plain, the rugged land a wide valley.

P The glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it at the same time.

C For the Lord has decreed it."

P "Go up on a high mountain, O herald Zion!

C Shout out loudly, O herald Jerusalem! Shout, don't be afraid!

P Say to the towns of Judah, 'Here is your God!'"

C "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son.

Ⓟ And they shall call his name Immanuel (which means God with us).”

Ⓒ **“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”**

Hymn of Praise O Little Town of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond’ring love.
O morning stars together, proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth!

How silently, how silently, the wondrous Gift is giv’n;
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heav’n.
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!

Prayer of the Day

Children’s Message

Old Testament Reading Isaiah 9:1-7

Epistle Reading 1 John 1:5-9

Gospel Reading Luke 2:1-20

Sermon

Hymn of Response Silent Night

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.



A Great Light

Sermon

- The **Sermon** is delivered by the pastor:

P The soldier lay in the hole he had crawled into at sunset. The cold night settled over him and an eerie silence shrouded the battlefield. The place of fire and fury had become an icy tomb.

He needed to move, to get back to his lines, to rejoin the others. But which way? He had no idea. Turned and turned again during the fighting, running and often falling—now in the darkness, he was completely lost—as lost as he had ever been—as lost as anyone can be. Going the wrong way could cost him his life. Not going at all could mean freezing, capture or worse.

He tried to pray. The words didn't seem to come. He had not prayed much in the years since he left home. Somehow God had slipped away ...

“Pray. Prayer. What prayer?” The word brought a clear picture of his mother to his mind. Every evening she would gather the family by “the altar”—she called it. And there on an old table with a piece of white cloth on it, she would light a candle and they would pray. He always thought it such a bother, so silly, all of them praying on their knees in front of a broken-down table and a old, bent candle.

“I don't need this!” he would grumble—more and more as he got older.

“Just come and pray,” she would say.

“But what for?”

“Some day,” she would say, “it will light your way.”

The darkness pressed on him. “God remember me,” he muttered. “God help me.” Stumbling prayers. Not what they should be. What else could he say?

He waited for an answer, but there was nothing but night and silence and cold. Finally, he raised his head just above the edge of the hole and squinted into the gloom. There! Off there, barely visible in the mist he saw a flame—a single, silent flame.

What was it? Could he trust it? Could he follow it? There was nothing else to do. He began to crawl toward the flame, toward the tiny, flickering flame.

After what seemed like hours he broke into a clearing. There were the others, soldiers he knew, huddled around a little fire.

“Hey soldier,” his sergeant whispered. “Where have you been? You look a little lost.”

The fire still peeked at him between the gathered figures in the darkness.

“The fire,” he muttered.

The sergeant came closer. “Just a little while ago, the captain said we could risk one small fire to help keep warm. But we’ve got to put it out soon. The enemy ...”

The soldier got to his knees and stared at the flame in wonder. “It looked like a candle. From out there—from out there in darkness, it looked like an old, bent candle I used to know.”

(Pause)

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone” (Isaiah 9:2). The soldier in our story certainly was in the dark. Darkness surrounded him, trapped him, held him captive. Left on his own, he had no idea where he was, where he could go, where he would be safe. Confusion. The darkness describes our story, the story of all of us. On our own, we are left in the spiritual darkness of this world. It is a deep darkness, a blinding darkness, a darkness that we cannot overcome on our own. We have the illusion that we can make our own light. We think we can find the way, make our own way by the light of our intelligence, our wisdom, our inborn ability to be light to ourselves. But we are no more able to create our own light than was the soldier in the story. All of us are lost in the darkness of sin and we cannot fix it, make our own light. All of us, all of humankind is unable to create anything but the illusion of light. “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one” (Romans 3:11-12). “For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

The image displays a piano accompaniment for the tune 'Carol CMD'. The music is written in 3/4 time and the key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The score is organized into two systems, each containing five staves. The first system starts at measure 1, and the second system starts at measure 28. A large, semi-transparent watermark reading 'Creative Communications Sample' is overlaid diagonally across the center of the page.

- The **Opening Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Carol CMD:

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold:
“Peace on the earth, good will to men, from heaven’s all-gracious King.”
The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come with peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heav’nly music floats o’er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains, they bend on hov’ring wing,
And ever o’er its babel sounds the blessed angels sing.

And ye, beneath life’s crushing load, whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow:
Look now! For glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing!

For lo, the days are hastening on, by prophets seen of old,
When with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold
When peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world send back the song which now the angels sing.

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