

Advent / Christmas Worship
2025 - 2026

“The Light of Christmas”



Fern Creek Baptist Church
Louisville, Kentucky

Advent/Christmas Worship

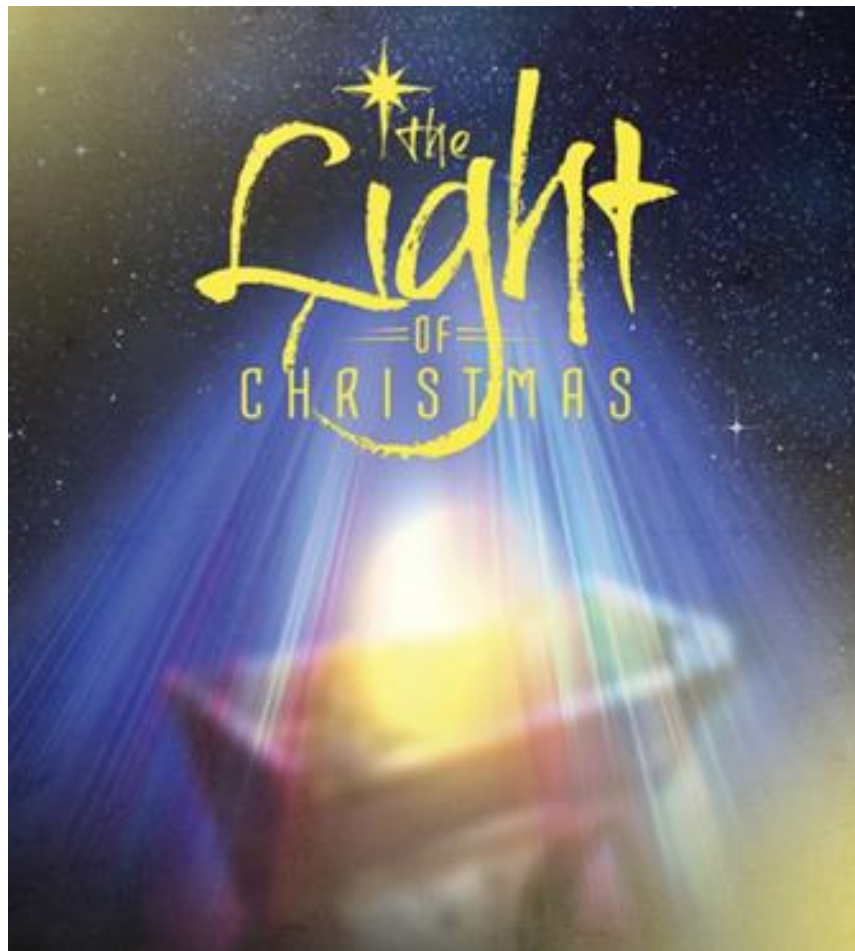
Our theme for this Advent / Christmas season is *“The Light of Christmas”*. As these devotionals point us to Jesus Christ, our prayer is that you will truly experience the hope, peace, joy, and love found only in Him, the Light of the World. Members and friends of our church (from youth to senior adults) wrote the devotionals to help us experience the deep meaning of this joyous season. We hope these devotionals will be used as a part of your personal and family worship.

You are encouraged to attend every worship experience during this season. These worship services are listed in this booklet.

Thank you to each who submitted devotionals. Thanks to those who compiled the booklet. Thanks to you for accepting this booklet as our Christmas gift to you.

May these devotionals help bring illumination to your hearts and minds in order to focus clearly on the real reason for this holy season. The Light is here! Let’s worship and adore Him!

Merry Christmas!
Linda Barnes Popham



Fern Creek Baptist Church

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(Filipino Ministry)

Rev. George Payocong, Jr., Pastor

Fire Evangelism Mission Church

(Congolese Ministry)

Rev. Jean Claude Luzolo, Pastor



ADVENT/CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SERVICES

November 30: The First Sunday of Advent

10:45 a.m. – Lighting of the Candle of Hope

6:00 p.m. – “Hanging of the Greens”

(led by the Adult Choir, Youth Choir, Young Musicians, Music Friends, Instrumentalists, and Narrators)

December 7: The Second Sunday of Advent

10:45 a.m. – Lighting of the Candle of Peace

6:00 p.m. – Instrumental Christmas Service

December 9

7:30 p.m. – “*The Beautiful Music of Christmas*”

(presented by the Mid-Kentucky Chorus / Call for tickets.)

December 14: The Third Sunday of Advent

10:45 a.m. – Lighting of the Candle of Joy

6:00 p.m. – Youth and Children’s Choirs Christmas Service

7:00 p.m. – New Members’ Reception

December 16

7:00 p.m. – Child Development Center Program (Four-Year-Olds)

December 18

10:30 a.m. – Child Development Center Program (Two and Three-Year-Olds)

December 21: The Fourth Sunday of Advent

10:45 a.m. – Lighting of the Candle of Love

“*The Light of Christmas*”

(Presented by the Adult Choir with the Youth Choir, Young Musicians, Instrumentalists, and Narrators)

6:00 p.m. – Service of Comfort and Hope

December 24: Christmas Eve

9:30 a.m. – Pancake Breakfast

11:00 a.m. – Christmas Eve Service

Lighting of the Christ Candle

December 28: The First Sunday of Christmas

10:45 a.m. – We Celebrate the Birth of Christ.

January 4: The Second Sunday of Christmas

10:45 a.m. – We Celebrate the Epiphany

Childcare for preschoolers is available during all these services.

Most of these worship services are interpreted for the deaf and are live-streamed. You may view the services by going to our website (www.ferncreekbaptist.org) and clicking the red Worship Livestream button.

ADVENT

The observance of Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas. It is a season of spiritual preparation for the celebration of the coming of Christ. The word Advent means “arrival” or “coming”.

Christ *has come* into our world;
Christ *is coming* into our lives;
Christ *will come* again!

For the Christian, Advent is a season of celebration. Our celebration should lead to both an inward and outward sense of rejoicing as we commemorate the birth of Jesus for us, His birth in us, and His final coming in glory.

May you all experience the true spirit of this holy season! May you worship, pray, and live expectantly in preparation for the coming of Christ! Jesus Christ *has come*! Jesus Christ *is coming*! Jesus Christ *will come again*!

CHRISTMAS

The Christmas season is a time to celebrate, to give thanks, and to praise God for being present with us in Jesus Christ. The name was derived from the first service of the season, Christ Mass. Jesus’ birth was celebrated on December 25 in Rome sometime between 336 and 354 A.D. A pagan winter solstice festival, the birthday of the unconquered sun, was already celebrated on December 25. Christians adopted that date to celebrate the birth of the Son of God, the true Sun of Righteousness.



EPIPHANY

Christmas continues to Epiphany Day, January 6. Epiphany is the celebration of the Wise Men’s visit and the manifestation of Christ to the world.

THE CHRISMON TREE

During our annual Hanging of the Greens worship service, we will again decorate the tree with Chrismons made mostly by members of our church family. The word Chrismon is a combination of parts of two words: Christ and monogram. A Chrismon is just that, a monogram or symbol of Christ.

Christian symbols date back to the early church and were found in various places. Early Christians used them to identify themselves to one another, to designate meeting places of the church, and occasionally to show non-believers where they stood. Most importantly, these symbols served to transmit the faith and belief of the followers of Jesus Christ. Today we have added other symbols as new explanations of God's never-changing presence in our ever-changing world. Some of our Chrismons are combinations of both old and new elements.

Chrismons were originated by Frances K. Spencer in 1957 and were used to decorate a tree for the Lutheran Church of the Ascension in Danville, Virginia. Chrismons are made in combinations of white and gold. White is symbolic of our Lord's purity and perfection; gold is symbolic of His majesty, glory, and triumph. As you see the tree this holy season, may you realize anew the beauty, power, and purity of our Christian faith!



Sunday, November 30, 2025

LIGHT BRINGS HOPE

Last month, we lost power for a few hours. This happens often in my neighborhood. When the power goes off at night, I feel so alone. I look out the window and see glowing lights from flashlights or flickers of candles. It somehow feels calming to know I'm not alone when I see those little bursts of light from my neighbors' windows. I always have hope that the power will return. I hope it is sooner than later.

Long ago, shepherds followed a star. It was their light in the hope of finding the baby Jesus.

Matthew 2:9-11

And so they left, and on their way they saw the same star they had seen in the East. When they saw it, how happy they were, what joy was theirs! It went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. They went into the house, and when they saw the child with his mother Mary, they knelt down and worshipped him.

Many times in the Bible we are reminded of God's light.

John 8:12

He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.

Psalms 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Isaiah 2:5

O house of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of the Lord.

II Corinthians 4:4

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Light brings hope. The hope that someone is always there.

I thought part of this devotional by Millie Stamm says it best.

Today, we are living in a world of spiritual darkness. People all around are groping for something to bring light into their darkened lives.

So, Jesus, the light of the world, shining through our lives, can bring light into the darkness wherever He has placed us, even though we think our light is very small.

John 9:5

While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

This season when you look at all the decorations lit up in beautiful colors, let hope come in, to comfort and strengthen you.

Glenda Coddington

HEAVY HEARTS SUSTAINED BY HOPE

In times of conflict, disappointment, or even utter despair in our lives, is there a place where we can go to find Hope? Yes, there is.

Jesus, the Author of Hope, tells us in Holy Scripture, *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”* John 14:1-3, Holy Bible, NIV (New International Version)

Whether your English translation from Greek calls the place Jesus is talking about as having many “rooms,” “mansions,” or “dwelling places” it will be the most spectacular place you have ever lived! Especially so because you will be living in the presence of the Lord!

I, as a believer, have a heart filled with the hope of my Messiah’s return to the earth possibly in my lifetime! **David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister of the modern nation of Israel, also had a heart filled with hope. He was anticipating a Messiah, too!**

David Ben-Gurion said, *“Ezekiel 37 has been fulfilled, and the nation of Israel is hearing the footsteps of the Messiah.”*

Ben-Gurion was referring to the twentieth century nation of Israel formed on May 14, 1948, when Jewish people from around the globe started coming back to the biblical lands of their patriarch Abraham. Part of the Tanakh prophecy that Ben-Gurion was referring to says, *“Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel.”* Ezekiel 37:21-22 ESV (English Standard Version)

- If you want to experience the Hope I have as a believer:
- **Read** again John 14:1-3 and Ezekiel 37:21-22
- **Pray to God** and ask for an understanding mind and heart
- **Thank God** for revelation and direction

Connie Carlisle Polley, Advent / Christmas 2025
ConnieCarlislePolley.com



Tuesday, December 2, 2025

HOPE IS LIGHT

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” — Jeremiah 29:11

When I think about *hope*, I can't help but think about my own story — and how my Lord so graciously gave me His hope when I needed it most. Hope isn't something I just learned about in Scripture; it's something I *lived* through in my journey with God, especially during times when my health and heart felt uncertain.

As I prayed about how to share what He's been teaching me, four truths came to mind — lessons that continue to shape how I see hope and how I see His light.

Hope, to me, is more than optimism or wishful thinking. It's a *confident expectation* — a deep knowing that God's goodness and light will prevail, even when everything feels dark.

1. Hope as a Reflection of God's Light

Throughout Scripture, light represents God's presence, His truth, and His gentle guidance. Over time, I've come to see that hope is the quiet awareness of that light — the inner assurance that even in suffering, God is still near.

“The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?” — Psalm 27:1

Hope is trusting in that light. It's choosing faith over fear, believing that even when you can't see the outcome, God is still lighting the next step.

When we carry hope, we let His light shine within us — pushing back the shadows of confusion, despair, and fear. It's not something we manufacture; it's something we receive.

2. Jesus as the Source of Hope and Light

Jesus said, *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” — John 8:12*

Hope begins and ends with Him. It doesn't come from circumstances — it flows from relationship.

When we trust Jesus, hope becomes alive within us. His Spirit lights our souls from the inside out. Even in loss or uncertainty, we can rest in the truth that *nothing is impossible with Him*.

Our hope isn't fragile — it's anchored in the One who never changes.

3. Hope as a Spiritual Anchor

Scripture calls hope *“an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.” — Hebrews 6:19*

Anchors don't stop the storm, but they keep us steady through it. That's what hope in Christ does for the heart. It doesn't deny pain — it redeems it.

When Christ's light takes root inside you, faith begins to transform fear into peace and pain into purpose. The storm doesn't define you anymore — His presence does.

4. Living in Hope and Light

To “walk in the light” (*1 John 1:7*) means living each day aware of God’s presence — choosing trust over fear, forgiveness over resentment, and faith over despair.

It’s expecting that God’s love will bring good out of what feels hopeless, even when we don’t understand how. It’s living in quiet confidence that His light will always find its way through.

Reflection — *The Light That Never Fades*

Hope isn’t the absence of pain — it’s the presence of divine light within it.

When we place our hope in Christ, we’re not wishing for things to turn out our way. We’re trusting that His light will guide us, heal us, and bring beauty from ashes.

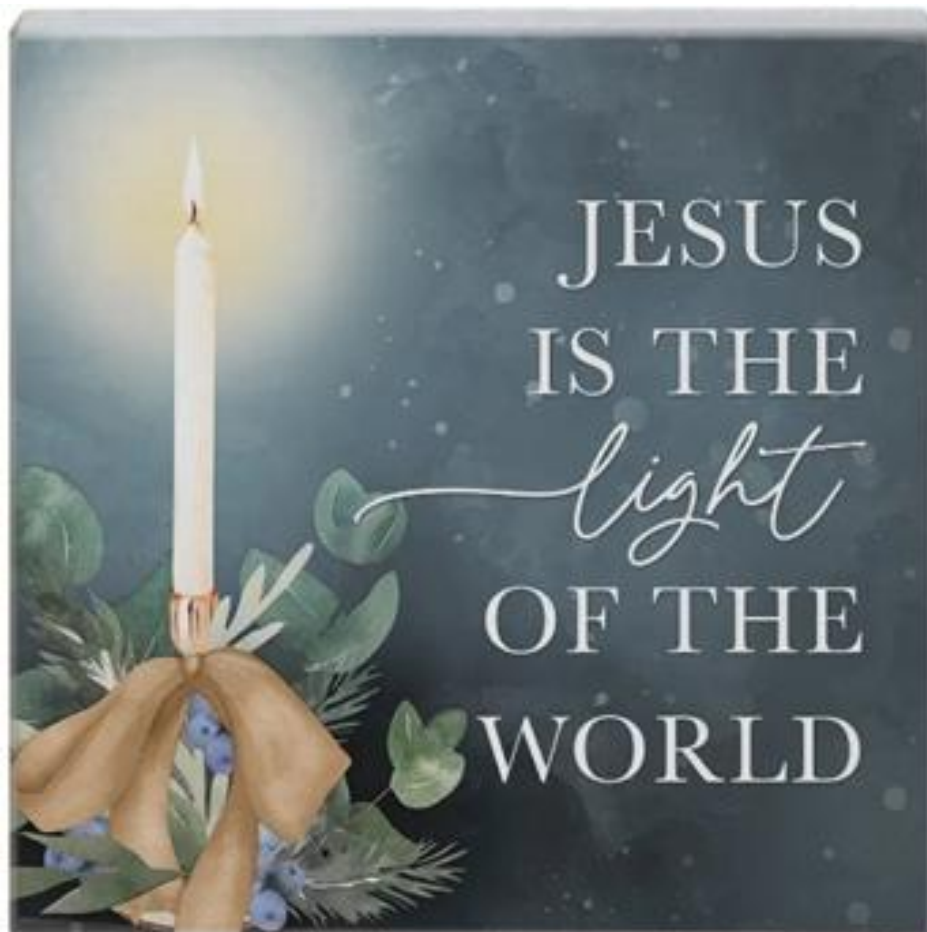
Just as dawn always follows night, God’s light always returns.

Even when you can’t see it, that light still shines — deep within your heart, in whispered prayers, in moments of stillness when you realize you are not alone.

The light of Jesus is the eternal flame that reminds us:

Darkness has limits. God’s love does not. - Anonymous

Blessings, Danny Hass



Wednesday, December 3, 2025

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

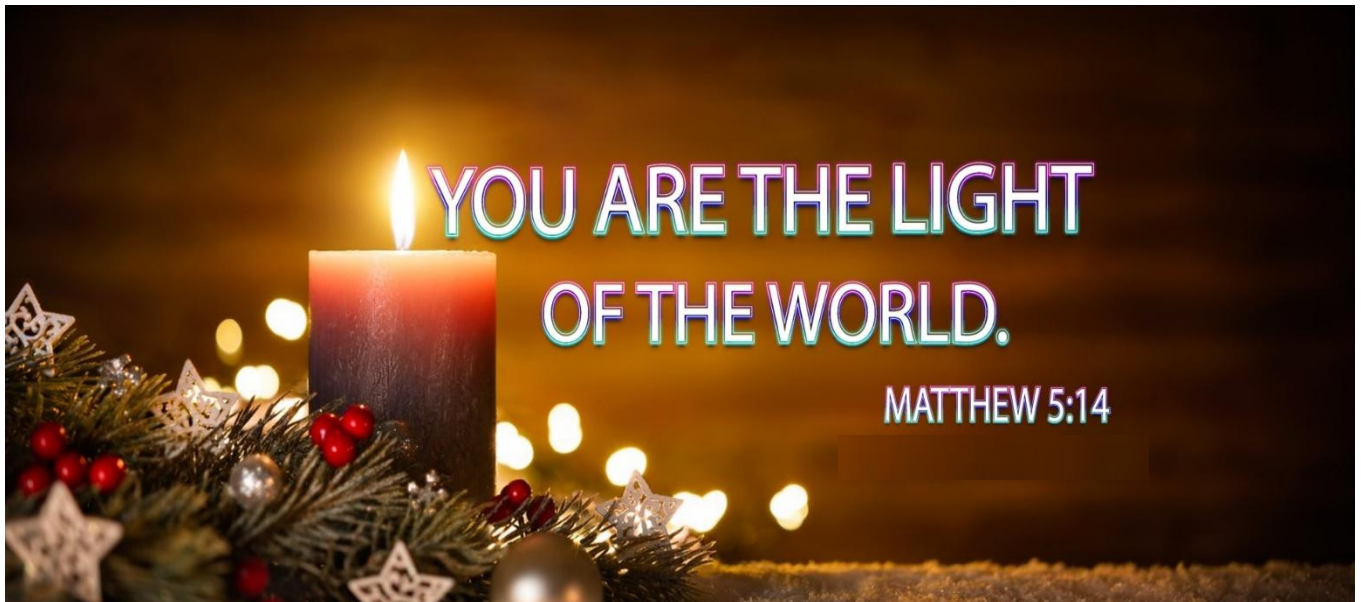
...the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining. I John 2:8b
You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Matthew 5:14

Minnie Pearl was trying to comfort her sick friend, country music icon Hank Williams, by singing a Gospel song he had written, "I Saw the Light." At some point, Williams stopped her and said, "That is the problem, Minnie, there ain't no light." He was referring to his own life full of personal problems, alcohol abuse, and no hope. Hank Williams was in a very dark place.

During the season of Advent, we celebrate the coming of the light that Hank Williams did not see, Jesus Christ. With that light came hope for all of humanity. When Jesus ascended back to the Father, He did not take the light and hope with Him. In Matthew 5:14 Jesus says to believers that we are the Light of the world. He says a little later that we should not try to hide our Light; rather, we should take our little Light and let it shine so the Father will be glorified and the Son raised up that He might draw all of humanity to Himself.

As we celebrate Christmas, let us not forget that many, like Hank Williams, do not see the Light and are without hope. As we remember this, let us make every effort to be "the Light of the world" that Jesus wants us to be, and to be ready to share the Hope that is Jesus Christ.

Roy Cantrall



HOPE

“Never be shaken from the hope of the gospel you have believed in.”

Colossians 1:23 The Passion Translation

What does hope look like?

Thinking back in my life:

The Sunday afternoon two friends knocked on my door the week before Halloween with a basket of candy. No long visit.... just hope.

The day a casual friend called to see if I wanted to come visit, and it became a weekly thing...unexpected hope.

Driving on the interstate when my car's power goes out...right before an exit that curves downhill, and you turn a left into a gas station...astonishing hope.

Those were all in the '90s, but it's after being given hope that you're willing to pass on that hope.

Maybe a lunch at McAlister's would bring her a ray of hope.

Your preschooler enjoying choir for the first time offers some hope.

Perhaps taking a shut-in, a sandwich and tea would bring a taste of hope.

Could even a text offer a way to plant a seed of hope?

Hope is a person. Emmanuel. God with us.

We live in remembrance, and our Hope (Jesus) carries us through.

Karen Love

Jesus
is our hope

Friday, December 5, 2025

IN JESUS, WE HOPE

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him,
so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13*

When I sat down to write this devotional, I began by searching for the word hope and found many Bible verses. I also decided to look up the definition which was what I expected from a dictionary, *a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen*. What I had not encountered before was the AI answer for what hope meant. (AI is Artificial Intelligence that now accompanies many internet/Google searches.) *Biblical hope is not mere wishful thinking but a confident, sure expectation of future good, based on God's promises and character.*

I have always been the type of person who keeps my struggles close to me, never sharing with anyone. Even when I was in trouble or in need of help. I kind of learned that from my dad. He never asked for help, and he was always saying he never wanted to be indebted to anyone. And I also learned that from my experiences. But now that I'm older and have grown so much in my spiritual walk with Jesus, I am learning that is not what He wants us to do. He wants us to share everything. All that we have and all that is deep down in our hearts and thoughts, not just those things that are on the surface or positive things in our lives that we celebrate. So, I have been doing that... sharing everything while keeping my hope and trust in Him. That hope I have in Jesus has sustained me over the years. I have experienced the peace and joy I never thought I would have all because I put my hope and trust in Him. I still have a lot to learn as my most recent experience is teaching me. I know it's hard to wait on His timing, but I will keep hoping in Him even when it seems impossible.

Dear Lord, thank You for all the blessings You have given us. I pray You will give peace to those who are struggling this season. I pray You will let Your presence be felt to let us know we are not alone, and we can put our hope in You. Help us to be still and know You are God. In Jesus' holy name I pray, Amen.

Wishing you a blessed Christmas,
Lisa Payne



THE LIGHT OF CHRISTMAS BRINGS HOPE

Have you ever taken a guided tour of Mammoth Cave? As part of most tours, the tour guides will have the group stop in place and one of the guides will turn off the lights that had been lighting the way of the group. Inside the cave, there is NO natural light. With the tour lights off, you cannot even tell if your hand is in front of your face. You cannot see any of your tour companions. You are as alone as alone can be in the complete, total darkness. Suddenly before claustrophobia sets in, the Tour Guide turns the lights back on. Sighs of relief come from others in the group. You are no longer isolated. You are no longer alone. You have a real hope that you will exit this cave!

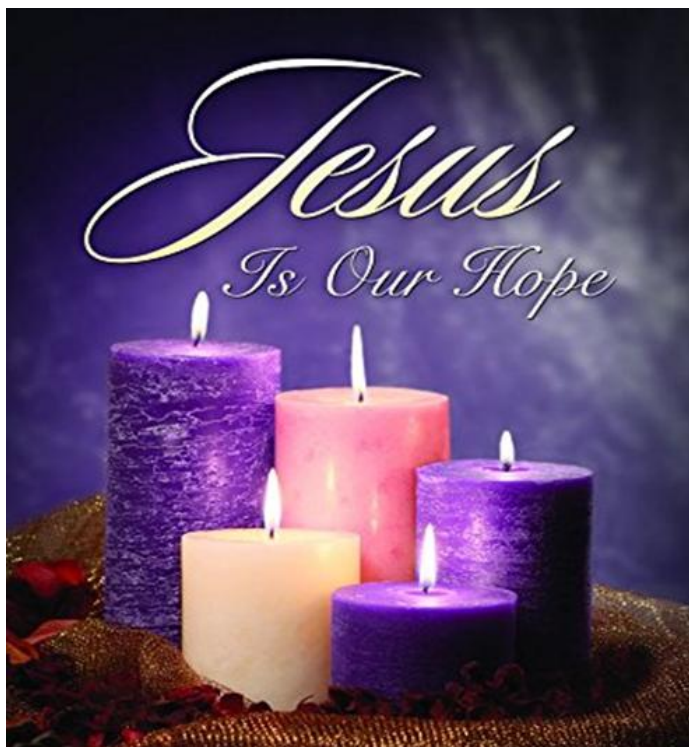
John recorded Jesus saying: *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* John 8:12

The Prophet Isaiah saw the darkness the people were in and saw deliverance: *"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned."* Isaiah 9:2

Simeon quoted Isaiah chapter 49 upon seeing the baby Jesus, *"For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel."* Luke 2:30-32

As sinners, we were like those in the cave with no light. We are alone, lost, and hopeless. Jesus brought us out of darkness into light. That light illuminated our hope, our future!

As Christians, we have hope. Hope for the present, hope for the future! That hope is not a wish. A wish is something uncertain you would like to see...I wish I could get a raise; I wish I could go on a cruise next year; I wish...for things that are uncertain and even maybe unlikely to happen.



Hope is so much more! Our hope is a looking forward to; it's an expectant attitude toward something we know will happen in our future. As Christians we KNOW we will spend eternity with Christ. We know GOD will provide for all our needs between now and then. We know He has forgiven us and is willing to cast our sins deeper than the deepest depths of the sea, to be remembered no more.

The light of the world was born one night in Bethlehem. Hope was born one night in Bethlehem. Hope for now and for all time! Hope for me and hope for you!

If you are not walking in the light, if you do not have that hopeful vision of your future, you can - just by asking Jesus to come into your life and be your Savior.

Phil Shewmaker

Sunday, December 7, 2025

THE LIGHT BRINGS PEACE

“The True Light which gives Light to everyone, was coming into the World.” John 1:9 ESV

Several summers ago, I had finished running some errands, unlocked my door, and brought my purchases into my apartment. I flipped on the lights as I went to lay my bags on the table. Mild anxiety began to rise in me. I walked quickly into the other room flipping on the lights in there. Panic began to take over my brain. I couldn't see. Everything was darkened! I wondered if I was losing my sight. Suddenly, I realized I had forgotten to remove my sunglasses.

We live in a darkened World today. 374 mass shootings in the first ten months of 2025; the tragic mid-air collision of an Army helicopter and an American Airlines passenger jet near Washington, D.C. where all aboard, 67 people, died. There was the catastrophic Guadalupe River flooding in Central Texas which killed 135 people including many children. Pornography, addiction, domestic violence, and child abuse are daily “common” occurrences. And our horrific November 4th UPS cargo plane crash and subsequent burning in Louisville, KY – 14 dead and countless others traumatized. We each have also had personal struggles, losses, health challenges, countless griefs, and uncertainties plaguing our hearts and minds. King David commiserates in **Psalm 38:10** ESV: ***“My heart throbs; my strength fails me, and the light of my eyes – it also has gone from me.”***

A dark World indeed ~ plagued by Death, destruction, and sin.

How do we recover? How can we continue?

God sent His Son, Jesus. It is finished. A worship chorus reminds us about our Hope, the Light, our Savior, Jesus: ***“Light of the World You stepped down into darkness. Opened my eyes, let me see...”***

Jesus voluntarily left Heaven, in all its glory, to step down into this darkness. What a wonderful and Life-Lifting Truth! Jesus has conquered Death, settling our sin debt in this darkened World once and for all. As a baby, He came into this World for us, and as a triumphant king, He will return for all who believe and follow Him. The Light **has** come into this dark World – for all humans -- every tongue, tribe, and nation. When we truly see Him and draw near to Him the Lightness infiltrates our hearts and returns also to our eyes. What comfort and joy!

Even in the midst of really dark times: Celebrate and adore Jesus! He died so we could be free to live. Just before He was betrayed in this dark World, Jesus said in **John 16:33** ESV, ***“I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have Peace. In the World, you will have troubles. But take heart; I have overcome the World.”***

In this Advent season, share Jesus' Light with others. Bear witness to Him and give this dark World the comfort and peace of His everlasting Love.

Linda Adkins



DON'T WORRY...WE HAVE THE PRINCE OF PEACE!

We have all heard phrases or quotes about trouble and hard times in the world.

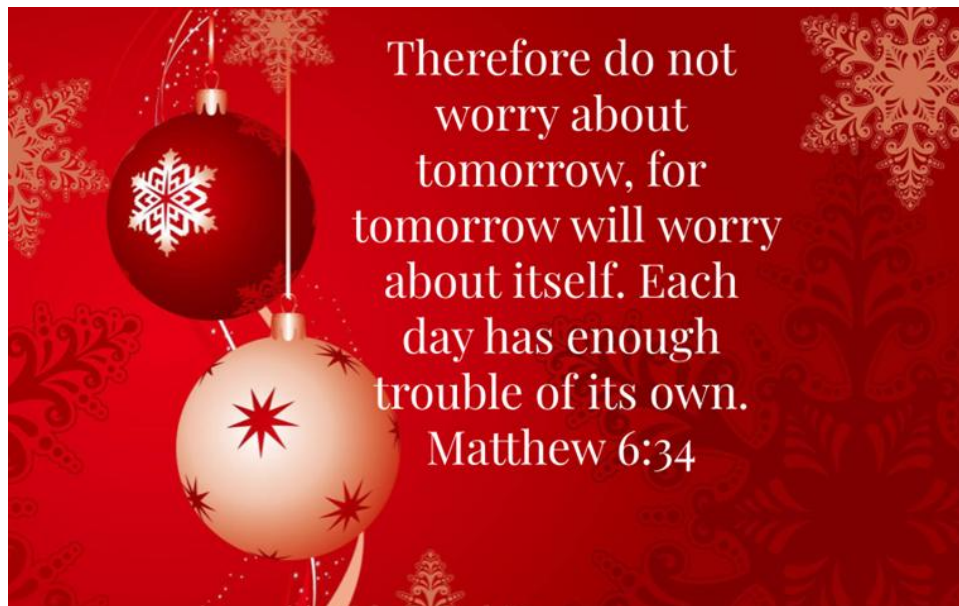
- Trouble is the common denominator of living. It is the great equalizer. - Søren Kierkegaard
- Nothing is permanent in this wicked world - not even our troubles. - Charlie Chaplin
- God will not permit any troubles to come upon us, unless He has a specific plan by which great blessing can come out of the difficulty. - Peter Marshall
- The only things that get me through hard times are my faith and my people. - Lainey Wilson

The world has always had hard times and trouble. We live in a world where we can often focus on the hard times. The Irish went through a turbulent 30-year period specifically called “The Troubles.” We may be worrying about personal conflict, unemployment, major health problems, financial issues, or just uneasiness about the political climate in the world. Some may worry about even worse things like war or pandemics. This world never has a shortage of things to worry about. Worrying about our current circumstances can bring more trouble to our lives.

Jesus often addressed His disciples’ worries. They were just people much like we are today. They had troubles and hard times in their country, money, health, and daily lives. Jesus knew that their human nature often focused on troubles. Instead, Jesus reassured them with His Words and gave them peace. We can give our troubles to the Prince of Peace by trusting in Him. Have a peaceful, worry-free Christmas!

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. John 14:27*

Chris Towles



Tuesday, December 9, 2025

LASTING PEACE

When you are a parent, peace is hard to come by. In the newborn phase, peace is elusive. Sleep is rare and quiet moments are full of catching up with chores that you fell behind on while you were trying to keep this tiny human alive and happy.

The toddler stage is a whole different animal. They are usually sleeping better, which is good news for you, but every waking moment is full of watching out for the dangers that this new walker, new talker, new explorer can get into. Danger lurks around every corner, and you have to be ready!

They somehow manage to survive being a school-age kid and now you can finally breathe easily and have some peace.

NOPE!!

The teenage years might just be the worst of all. The physical exhaustion of raising a small child has eased up some. BUT now, NOW, they can drive, go out with friends, DATE!! Sleepless nights are back and harder than ever.

I'd love to say that as they become young adults you can ease up a little on the worrying. Honestly, it just never goes away. Or at least, it hasn't for me. I still want to know that my babies are safe in their homes at the end of the day. I want to know that they made it to work safely, and I want to make sure that they have a good hot meal every now and then. I can remember being in my forties and still having to call my parents when I got home from visiting them. They just wanted to know that I was alive and well.

When Nate was almost 16 and was planning to go on his first mission trip to Honduras, I was a wreck. I wasn't sure I wanted him to go. When Holly was a junior in college and was planning to go study abroad in South Korea, I was again a nervous mama. I took comfort both times in the knowledge that as much as I love them, God loves them so much more. He holds them in His big hands and keeps them safe. I know that no matter where they go, there is no place any safer for them to be, than in the will of God. I take comfort and I find peace in those worrisome moments trusting Him.

John 14:27 is one of my favorite verses because it assures me that Jesus has given me the gift of peace. All I have to do is reach out and take it. It is a lasting peace that is there no matter what is going on around me or inside my own head. It encourages me to just trust in Him and in the promises He has made.

*"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." John 14:27*

Martha Blansette



JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

“When Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” John 8:12

It can often seem difficult to find peace in today’s world. There seems to be so much anger, selfishness, greed, so many things seem to divide us as a people. The world can be a very dark place. It’s easy to get swept up in the many tasks that need to be completed as the holidays approach. It becomes more and more difficult to find joy in the holiday season as we rush and try to complete all our plans. It can be harder and harder to spend time in prayer or the study of God’s Word. The more we feel stress in our lives the less we experience peace or joy. We begin to worry about all the problems we may be facing. We think that everything is up to us and there seems to be no way to accomplish all that must be done. The days become harder, and darkness can fill our thoughts.

At night when we are alone with our thoughts Jesus calls to us. He told us that the Father would send the Holy Spirit to be our Comforter and Counselor. In the Bible, John 14:26-27 tells us, *“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”* If we have come to know Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior, there is nothing we will ever face alone. There is no darkness that the light of His love cannot penetrate. We can give Him our cares and our worries and know that He loves us more than anyone else ever could. He is the light in our darkness, and He will give us peace. He will forever light our path not just for a day but all eternity.

Jesus willingly gave His life so that each one of us can receive forgiveness for our sins and have the assurance we will spend eternity in Heaven with Him. I believe Jesus is God’s Son, that He lived a sinless life on this earth, and was crucified for my sin. I believe He died and rose again on the third day and is now seated at the right hand of God. He is my Savior forever and nothing can ever change that. There is peace in knowing that no matter what might happen He is with me. He loves and comforts me, and I never need to fear being alone. There may be many trials to face but I will never face them alone.

As the holiday season approaches, I pray we will focus on the true meaning of Christmas. Do you know Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior? Does your heart know the joy and the peace that only our Lord can give? If you have never asked Jesus to come into your heart and forgive you of your sins, I pray you will do that today. It is so simple. Jesus loves you just the way you are. You can’t buy or earn salvation, and He doesn’t expect you to wait to ask Him into your heart until you are better than you are at this moment. He asks only that you pray and give Him your heart and ask Him to forgive your sins. Tell Him you believe He is the living Son of God and that He willingly gave His life for your sins so that you can spend eternity in Heaven with Him. Tell Him you believe He overcame death and now sits at the right hand of God. In praying this simple prayer, you will be saved. No matter what happens in this world we can know the peace that only God can give. We are bought with the price of His precious blood. He is the light in the darkness. We can know we are safe in His love forever.

Nancy Shewmaker



Thursday, December 11, 2025

THE PEACE FOUND ONLY IN JESUS

“Look at that sunset...it’s so peaceful.”

“I just love the peace and quiet!”

“I love to go camping...it’s so peaceful.”

“I love the sound of a bubbling brook or a rushing stream...it’s so peaceful!”

“There is nothing more peaceful than a baby sleeping.”

These are just a few examples of peace as some see it and experience it.

I grew up in Carrollton, Kentucky, on a farm about a half mile from the Ohio River. I can recall hearing the calliope (A calliope is a keyboard-type instrument resembling an organ but with the notes produced by steam whistles used mostly on riverboats and steamboats like the Delta Queen or The Belle of Louisville) from a river boat (no it wasn’t the 1880s, it was probably the 1980s).

Looking back, I think about how peaceful that sounded to me and how peaceful it must have been to the ones riding on the riverboat, listening to the calliope and cruising up (or down) the river.

It was also very dark on that farm in Carrollton at night and much of the night sky was visible through the hills that surrounded our little farm. I enjoyed many a night gazing up at the multitude of stars and planets. I always found star gazing to be very peaceful.

Peace comes to us in many different ways. Sometimes we realize it right away; other times we don’t realize it until many years later. Regardless, all these many forms of peace are brought to us through Jesus Christ. Once you have let Jesus into your life, the peace becomes more abundant and more complete. The many examples of peace I have listed here are fantastic and certainly peaceful through many eyes, but there is no comparison to the peace found in Jesus Christ.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

Kevin Blansette



THE LIGHT BRINGS PEACE

*He was with God in the beginning. In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. John 1:2, 4-5*

Jesus had been with God the Father since the beginning. God sent Him into the world to save the world. He had every right to judge it and condemn it, but He did not because He loved it. Rather He loved us, each one of us. He came to be a light for us, to shine brightly in the darkness. Just like lighthouses used to give that glimmer of hope for ships at sea, Jesus gives us that same hope. He does not allow the darkness to overcome us. He gives us the peace that only He can give in uncertainty.

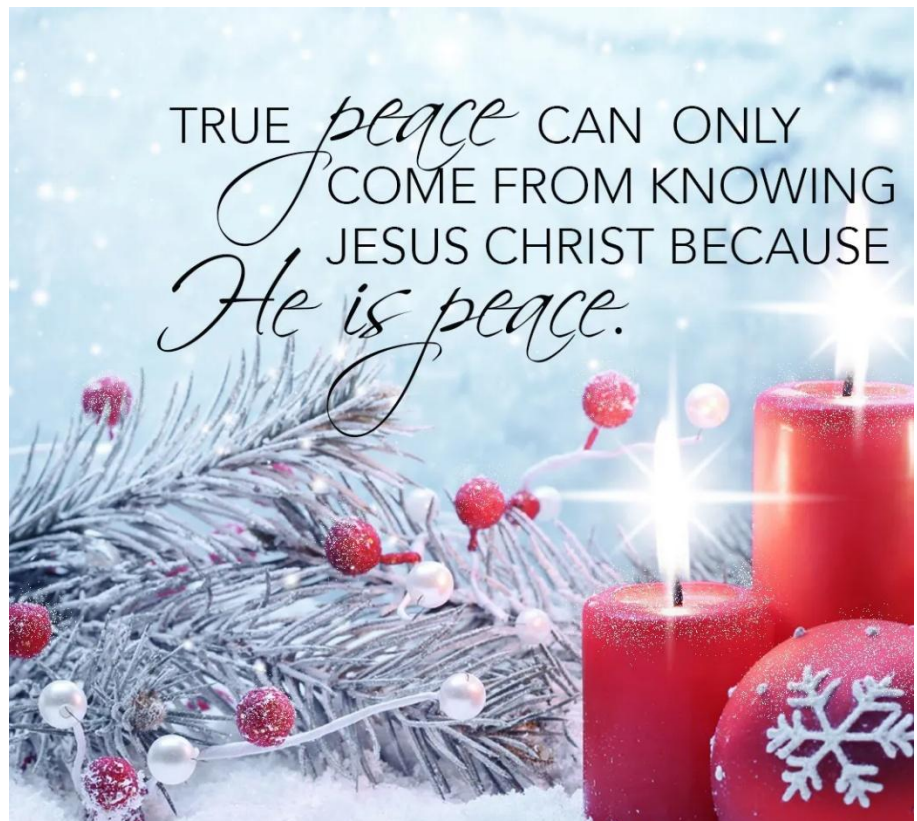
*"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness,
but will have the light of life." John 8:12*

Jesus tells us He is the light of the world. All we have to do is follow Him. He will give us guidance, He will illuminate our lives, and He will provide eternal life. He will get rid of all the darkness that tries to creep in and take over. Satan cannot prevail with Jesus in our lives. He likes to hide in the shadows and try to rule the world from there, but his power is weakened when he is exposed to the light.

Peace I leave you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. John 14:27

Finally, Jesus gives us His peace. Not temporary peace that the world tries to give but His everlasting peace. The kind that envelopes you like a warm blanket where you know things will be okay even though things aren't perfect! You know He will always be there by your side, for eternity. The Prince of Peace is Everlasting.

Melissa Logsdon-Young



Saturday, December 13, 2025

JESUS, PRINCE OF PEACE

Be still and know that I AM God. Psalm 46:10a

I am supposed to be writing a Christmas devotional on peace, and my computer has been misbehaving for an hour, and I have no idea why, and everything I try is not working, and could I just get on with this?!! I am losing my peace about this! Losing my peace is a cousin to anger, and not a thing that I want!

This is the thing....peace is something Jesus bequeathed to us in His last will! Yes, He did! I didn't make this up. It's right there in John 14:27! If you know anything about me, you know I love John: the gospel, and John 1,2,3, and the Revelation of Jesus Christ as noted by.....come on now!, 'the disciple Jesus loved'.....and you've gotta know how much that burned Peter!

Now that I have had a good laugh, let's get to holding our peace, keeping our peace, being at peace, RIP; well let's forget the last one for a bit and move on!

When Jesus lived on earth, He spent a good deal of His time with people like us...just people! I am so thankful He showed us tons of examples, that would teach us how to behave; and how NOT to behave. One of the major things He did was: 'He came apart before He fell apart'! Now listen here; if Jesus Christ, the Son of God, needed to go so often to His Father in prayer; couldn't that be a reason Paul told us to 'Pray without ceasing' (1 Thessalonians 5:17)! Prayer will bring us peace, and back into the very presence of our Father! This is a thing we need to do; and yes! Constantly!

Things Jesus wanted us to know: (1) God called us to live in peace! (2) God is not a god of disorder, but of peace (3) God wants us to have peace with each other (4) and to live at peace with everyone. (5) If we promote peace, we will have joy! and don't you want that (6) joy unspeakable and full of glory??? I cannot recall how many times when going to bed, I have said in prayer (7) 'I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for You alone, LORD make me dwell in safety'. Seven is the number of completion and perfection, so I will end these scriptures and move on. (See Key Below)

How did Jesus keep His peace while He was here on earth, dealing with people like you and me??? We must realize this was difficult, BUT He loved us THAT much; and He was (IS) God!!

1. Jesus prayed about everything. (see the fourth paragraph)
2. He trusted Himself to God. *The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; He knows those who take refuge in Him.* (Nahum 1:7) *We trust in the name of the LORD our God.* (Psalm 20:7b)
3. He knew when to be still. (or in Dollie speech...Shut up!) *He answered him not a word* (Matthew 27:14a) *Hereafter I will not talk much with you.* (John 14:30)
4. He forgave quickly. I believe many times Jesus was forgiving people even as they were speaking, and oh! How I pray I can do this before I leave this earth! *Forbearing one another and forgiving one another...* (Colossians 3:13a) *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another.* (Ephesians 4:32a)

Can we attempt to place our name where 'Jesus' or 'He' is in the above four statements and practice them daily? Maybe we won't win every time something arises to steal our peace, but we can try, and if we pursue peace, after some time of practicing that pursuit, it is bound to become easier and easier.

Back to John 14:27: "*Peace I leave with you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your heart be troubled and do not be afraid.*" He didn't just give us peace; Jesus gave us an untroubled mind and one more: 'fear not'. Actually peace, or some form of peace is mentioned in the Bible 429 times. It begins in Genesis 15:15 and ends in Revelation 6:4. We are loaded with peace. Don't let it leave you! We all need peace! And while you are reading this, I have one last scripture for you today:

Laughter is good medicine and a joyful mind causes healing. Proverbs 17:22

Have yourself a peaceful Christmas, in Christ Jesus, our Savior and Lord!

- 1) 1 Corinthians 7:1
- 2) 1 Corinthians 14:33
- 3) Mark 9:50
- 4) Romans 12:18c
- 5) Proverbs 12:20
- 6) 1 Peter 1:8
- 7) Psalm 4:8

Yours in Christ,
Dollie Dixon



Sunday, December 14, 2025

JOY

Joy is one of the blessings of Christmas. It shows up at Christmas with beautiful greenery, music, lights, and crispness of the air. Joy is in the giving and receiving presents. Joy can be evident in reconnecting with family and friends. True joy is not dependent on circumstances but is a gift from God even when times are tough.

Joy can be contagious.

One December when a small group caroled at the Adult Day Center, I noticed most of the participants joined in the singing while a couple did not. One man frowned through every song. There was no hint of a smile at all. His face was down cast and his eyes sad. When asked if he would join in the singing, he shook his head. He didn't move away from us but remained near us. Soon his lips formed the words of a familiar carol. "I thought you weren't going to sing," I said. "It was too hard to not do it," he replied. As much as he tried, he couldn't resist it. His eyes grew a little brighter with the presence and power of Christmas Joy.

Joy comes from God. The angels proclaimed: *"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."*
Luke 2:10-11

Their message proclaimed the joy of salvation.

Joy to the world! The Lord has come!
Let earth receive her king! Let every heart prepare Him room.

Look in the manger to see the good news of great joy – a Savior has been born. May you share the Joy of Christmas throughout the year.

Rev. Renee Bryant



Monday, December 15, 2025

THE LIGHT BRINGS JOY

“God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all.” I John 1:5 NIV

In describing God as “light,” John emphasizes God’s holiness, His absolute holiness—in Him there is no darkness at all. It also talks about God’s splendor and glory. Imagine the beauty of God manifested in the rays of light. This beauty eclipsed even the brightest of stars in the galaxy. Furthermore, as light, God guides His children into the blessed path. They will never be lost or stumble because God lights their path.

Believers who live in the shadow of God’s holiness; those who are captivated by the glory of His splendor; and those guided by the all-knowing and all-wise God will be the happiest people on earth. Holiness produces the fruit of joy and happiness. In God’s presence there is unspeakable joy. Finally, those who walk in the ways of the Lord find the joy of the Lord. God is light and He brings joy in the hearts where His light shines.

When darkness casts its shadows of ugliness, guilt, shame, and regrets, please come into the light. God’s light dispels the darkness of this world. In the light of God, we see clearer and fuller the path of a happy life. God’s light brings joy.

Rev. George Payocong, Jr.



Tuesday, December 16, 2025

THE REAL CHRISTMAS LIGHT

Christmas lights are one of my favorite parts of the season. I love how they make everything feel a little softer, a little brighter. Some people go all out with lights that cover their entire house, and honestly, it's magnificent. Those glowing displays bring smiles to faces and help spread a little extra Christmas joy to everyone who passes by. But even with all the lights we hang and plug in, there's still a kind of darkness in the world that no amount of decoration can fix.

That's what makes Jesus' light so different. When He came into the world, He didn't just *light things up* for a season — He *changed everything*. Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."* John 8:12. His light isn't just something we see; it's something we *feel*. It's peace when life feels messy. It's comforting when we're anxious. It's joy that doesn't depend on how perfectly the holidays go. And, we know ultimately our walk in life is leading to the light in Heaven.

I think we forget sometimes that joy doesn't mean everything's easy. It just means we know where our light comes from. Even as Christians, we still walk through the same struggles and challenges as everyone else. We're treated the same by the world, but the difference is that we carry a light within us that doesn't fade. Jesus brings joy because His light never burns out. No matter how dark things get, it keeps shining.

So, this Christmas, when you see the twinkling lights on trees or houses, let them remind you that the true light, Jesus Himself, is still here, still shining, and still bringing joy to every corner of our hearts.

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." John 1:5

Here is a small prayer to pray this Christmas season:

"Jesus, thank You for being the light in our darkness. Help me to hold onto Your joy even when life feels heavy, and to shine Your light for the people around me. Amen."

Jayla Grigsby



THE WONDER WITHIN

“The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” Isaiah 7:14

And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. Luke 2:6-7

The Christmas season is known worldwide and if one were asked to describe it in one or two words, there would be a wide range. I’d guess that festive, shopping, parties, special foods, decorating, and music might come to mind for some. On the other end of the spectrum, we’d see stress, busy, disappointment, and even exhaustion. And you know what? All these words are probably accurate – maybe even together at times!

It’s not universally celebrated, or even known by all, but I can’t separate Christmas and Advent. It’s one of the blessings of the season to me. I’m emotionally and physically connected to the expectation and joy that comes from these four weeks. Despite my share of stress, pain, and busy schedule, there’s a rhythm to Advent that keeps my focus on what matters. It’s as if Advent is woven internally and causes me to notice the expectation and reminders of the season. I think of the light, the “insight” of the expectations from the words of Isaiah. As I look around the house, I can’t help but be reminded of the joy of Jesus’ birth and the heavenly light as my collection of different styles of nativities makes up a good part of the decorations scattered around, covering many surfaces.

We were blessed to have children and to this day, the memory of their connections to the familiar, now worn, nativity set hits me each time I see it. They arranged it and retold the nativity stories as they did. (I knew which had touched it last as each had a unique arrangement.) In addition to the church Christmas Eve Service, we had a family celebration. After the birthday cake for Jesus, we’d gather as someone read of that special night, the birth of Jesus. (My favorite is Luke 2:4-20.) I now have a collection of nativities. While the more delicate ones are in a safe spot, I encourage our grandkids to feel free to rearrange the many nativities, telling them the story when they’re young, just as it was done with our children. As they age, they tell it to their younger cousins.

This is the wonder within me – that calmness, reassurance, and joy that comes from the Advent season. It’s a stressful and busy time for sure. Work is busier, shopping and cooking can be both a joy and a chore, and the “invasion” of a large family makes the season. But at the end of the day, the week or the season... if you can keep the “reason for the season” at the core within, you will be blessed.

Barbara Creasy



Thursday, December 18, 2025

WE ARE BUGS

Have you ever seen a lamp or porch light outside turned on at night? Have you ever noticed that all kinds of bugs swarm to its warmth and glow? What is it about illuminated spaces that is so appealing to insects? There are many reasons for this.

First, bugs see sources of light as the literal moon or stars. They are seeking accurate navigation and guidance to help them fly straight at night. Essentially, they are looking for their “North Star” when they accidentally come to our porch lights.

Next, insects are drawn to the safety and warmth of light. They are seeking warmth on a cold, winter day. Bugs know that there is guaranteed comfort and security in light.

Lastly, insects can see more colors than we can, specifically ultraviolet, or “UV” light, which many artificial light sources produce. Therefore, bugs naturally gravitate to these wavelengths.

What on earth does this analogy of bugs and lights have to do with joy and our walk with Jesus??

First, Jesus is our “North Star” as Christians. He gave us the Bible to be a guide and a compass on our journey through life. While the straight and narrow road is challenging at times, it produces an abundance of joy if we stick to it. Faithful obedience to God leads to our good and His glory. When we seek His face and flee from sin, “we have more fun and less scars” in life, according to Jonathan Pokluda at Passion Conference 2023. Thank You, Jesus, for being our true North Star and the source of deep, genuine joy.

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” Matthew 7:13-14 NIV

Next, “the safest place to be is in the center of God’s will,” well stated by Corrie ten Boom. Whether that looks like the jungles of Africa, the desert of Australia, or simply a peaceful neighborhood where He has placed us, we can trust that He is holding our hand.

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12:2 NIV

Additionally, the Lord has given us the armor to prepare for the spiritual battle we face daily. We can have joy knowing that there is no better, more tender Father than the one we follow as believers in Christ. “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him:”, coined by John Piper.

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Ephesians 6:12 NIV

Lastly, we have a sixth sense as Christians, where we can “see” more dimensions than other people. You can tell when it is about to rain because the sky changes and the air smells different. As Christians, we can see in a spiritual sense when it is “about to rain,” such as through prophecies being fulfilled right

before our eyes, as the unbelieving world obviously carries on with normalcy. We take joy in knowing that the book we follow is accurate and worthy of trust.

“For we live by faith, not by sight.” II Corinthians 5:7 NIV

As Christians who follow the light of the world, we have joy during the Christmas season! We have IMMENSE JOY that Jesus is who He says He is, put on human flesh, was a baby born in Bethlehem, and ultimately died on a cross so we could live.

“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.” Psalm 119:105 NIV

So, if Jesus is the light, then yes, that makes us the bugs.

Alexis St.Clair



Friday, December 19, 2025

A LAMB NAMED “FLASHLIGHT”

Through the years I have shared the stories of my childhood with the children in my life: my nieces and nephews, our son, and now, our granddaughter. I tell them like fairy tales except every word is true! Here is another one of my children’s stories that illustrates the joy we find in the birth of Christ.

Once upon a time there was a family with four children that lived on a farm with their mother and father. The oldest girl’s name was Carolyn. She had long brown hair. The next girl’s name was Marilyn. She had long red hair. Then, there was a really cute little girl named Shirley, followed by a little-bitty boy named Larry.

The children had been so excited about the approaching Christmas season and were saving their money to buy presents for Mother and Father. When they had saved four dollars and twenty-five cents, Carolyn told her sisters and brother, “This certainly is enough money to buy two really nice presents.”

Christmas Eve finally came and the children went to the Dime Store in town to buy the gifts. The girls told little Larry that he could start looking for Father’s gift while they found something suitable for Mother.

Marilyn immediately found some earrings for their mother and she showed them to the other girls. Shirley said, “Those are the most beautiful green diamond earrings I have ever seen!” Marilyn told her that the earrings were emeralds and not green diamonds. “We would not even think of buying green diamonds,” Marilyn scolded. Carolyn loved the earrings too, so they decided to buy them. Shirley thought they needed to ask Larry, but Carolyn assured her it wasn’t necessary.

Carolyn and Marilyn went to the cashier to pay for the earrings while Shirley went off to find little Larry. She searched for some time before finding him looking at some tools. Shirley told him that Carolyn and Marilyn would be there soon to help pick out the gift for their father.

Little Larry told Shirley that he had already found the gift that he wanted to give to Father. He took her hand and they went off to find their older sisters. After finding the girls, Larry took all of them to see the present he had chosen. He was so proud when he picked up a big red flashlight and showed it to the girls. He told them he knew Father really needed one. Carolyn didn’t like the idea of such a thing for their father’s gift. Marilyn said, “I think he already has one.” But little Larry stood his ground with the girls, “Father has lost his old one and really needs it!” “Well, we will not have enough money to buy the flashlight and batteries too,” answered Marilyn. But little Larry showed the girls that the batteries were included in the package with the flashlight. Shirley walked over beside little Larry and told the girls that she thought he should get to decide since they had chosen their mother’s gift. Carolyn and Marilyn finally agreed and they all went off to pay for the flashlight.

After they had returned home, Carolyn and Marilyn wrapped the presents for their parents while Shirley and little Larry watched. The older girls still did not like the idea of a flashlight for a gift but little Larry kept telling them that their father really needed it.

The children were so excited that night as they prepared for dream-filled rest. They always slept in the same bed on Christmas Eve. They all talked about what they hoped they would get for Christmas and right before they fell asleep Marilyn again voiced her fear that their father would not like his gift. Little Larry whispered to Shirley, “He will like it.”

The children awoke the next morning to find everything they had wished for under their Christmas tree. They played with the toys and had so much fun. Carolyn looked under the tree and found the gifts that they had bought for their parents. She asked Shirley to give the gift to their mother. When Mother opened her present, Shirley exclaimed, "They're emerald earrings!" Mother smiled as she modeled the gift for her children. "They are beautiful," she said as she thanked them.

Marilyn told Larry that he could give the gift to their father. Little Larry was so proud when he handed it to him. Father opened the flashlight and told the children that he could really use it. Father soon put the flashlight in his toolbox. Marilyn told the other children that she did not think he liked it because he had put it away so quickly. But they did not have time to give it much thought because they were having so much fun playing with their gifts.

The family had a wonderful Christmas day at Grandmother's house and did not return home until late that night. As they were getting out of the car, they could hear a strange sound in the field. Father told Mother to take the children in the house and he would check on that strange sound. He returned to the house after a short time and told the children that he thought they had a new baby lamb and that it might be lost from its mother. He looked at Larry and told him that he needed the flashlight because it was so dark outside. Little Larry ran as fast as he could to get the flashlight from the toolbox and brought it to Father. The children and their mother sat together in the living room waiting for Father to return. Finally, they heard him at the back door. They could not believe their eyes! In came Father with a new baby lamb in his arms! He told the children that the mother of the lamb could not take care of her baby. "We will have to feed and care for it," he said. Mother fixed a bottle of milk for the children to take turns feeding the lamb. Father looked at little Larry with a great deal of pride as he told him, "The light from the flashlight helped me find the lamb." He thanked the children for giving him such an important gift. Little Larry was so proud.

Father and Mother told their children that it reminded them of the gift of love that God had given on Christmas. God had given his own son, Baby Jesus, to be a light to the world so that the world would not be lost like the baby lamb. The children named the baby lamb Flashlight and they lived happily-ever-after!

Finding the newborn lamb and nursing it brought so much joy to the children—all made possible by the flashlight. God doesn't need a flashlight to enlighten us to His truth. Rather, He gave us Jesus, the Light of the world. The gospel hymn writer and composer, Philip Bliss, was inspired by John 1:4-5, 8:12 and 9:25 when he wrote the following concerning the joy of knowing The Light:



*"The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin,
The Light of the world is Jesus;
Like sunshine at noonday His glory shone in,
The Light of the world is Jesus.*

*Come to the Light, 'tis shining for thee;
Sweetly the Light has dawned upon me,
Once I was blind, but now I can see;
The Light of the world is Jesus."*

*I am the light of the world.
Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness,
but will have the light of life. John 8:12 (NIV)*

Saturday, December 20, 2025

LIGHT POLLUTION

Today's world suffers from an abundance of light pollution. It is difficult to find a place where it's totally dark. When trying to stargaze, watch for comets speeding by, or looking at planets, there's always a haze of light on the horizon, or coming from nearby buildings. Other things take our attention away too: LED lights on buildings, car headlights, giant screen TVs, Smart phones, tablets, and huge sporting arenas are just some of the sources of light pollution. All of these can distort our vision or make it difficult to see past them. The world makes it nearly impossible to stay focused on God.

Psalm 109:105 says, *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."* The Bible can be a source of light that is pure. It's better than GPS to keep you on the right path; or to help you find your way back if lost. Psalm 27:1 says, *"The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?"* This means God can keep the darkness at bay; and all that darkness includes. Whether that is sure footing along an unfamiliar path, or striking out into an unknown like a new career, new marriage, parenthood, etc., God will never leave you or forget about you.

Isaiah 60:1-3 says, *"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn."* Isaiah prophesied Jesus' birth and His effect on the earth. His presence on the earth was a source of light for the world that had never and has never been seen before.

When Jesus was born, the world at that time was a dangerous place. Herod was king over Judea, and his power was tremendous. When the star arose over Jesus and the Magi followed it, they knew it meant a powerful new Jewish ruler had entered the world's stage. *"Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."* Matthew 2:1-2 These learned men followed the star and its light for miles over rough terrain and through different countries. They did not suffer from light pollution. They just kept their eyes on it and traveled until they found its source—Jesus. The Magi didn't let the world interfere with their mission. *"When they saw the star, they were overjoyed."* Matthew 2:10. They worshiped Jesus when they found Him. Just like the Magi, we worship Him, too.

Jesus is the best and purest source of light for this world. Every year we celebrate Advent, preparing our hearts and minds for the coming of Christ into the world at Christmas. The world tries to take our sights off the real meaning of Christmas with too much light pollution. This year, make an effort to stay focused on the real, pure, bright light of Jesus. Joy to the world, the Lord has come!

Lesley Hass



Nations will come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Isaiah 60:3 NIV

LOOK TO GOD

“Because He can never forget to show mercy.” Luke 1:54 The Passion Translation

Cousins.

I have 22 of them.

Two of them were older girls who lived far away. I thought they hung the moon. Visits at my grandparents' home every few years were priceless. But Mary and Elizabeth's visit certainly outshone them.

Can you just imagine the text exchange, if it was a part of their technology:

Mary: Headed your way.

Elizabeth: What? When?

Mary: I need to talk....as soon as I can get there!

Elizabeth: What's up? (while thinking, I could use someone to talk to!)

Mary: I just have to tell you in person. Totally unexpected and life changing to say the least!

There was nowhere else to go, and no one else to confide in that Mary could think of. She absolutely was following God's leading, yet again.

As it turned out, both Mary's and Elizabeth's husbands had been visited by the angel, Gabriel. What a wonder that God would choose two cousins to bring His light into this world.

They spent three months talking through what God had done and where do we go from here. Elizabeth prophesied to Mary and Mary sang a prophetic song. And that is only a tiny portion of their months together.

They had nowhere to look for guidance, but to God. And that is all they needed. He is always enough to meet our questions and confusion and give us His peace.

Karen Love



Monday, December 22, 2025

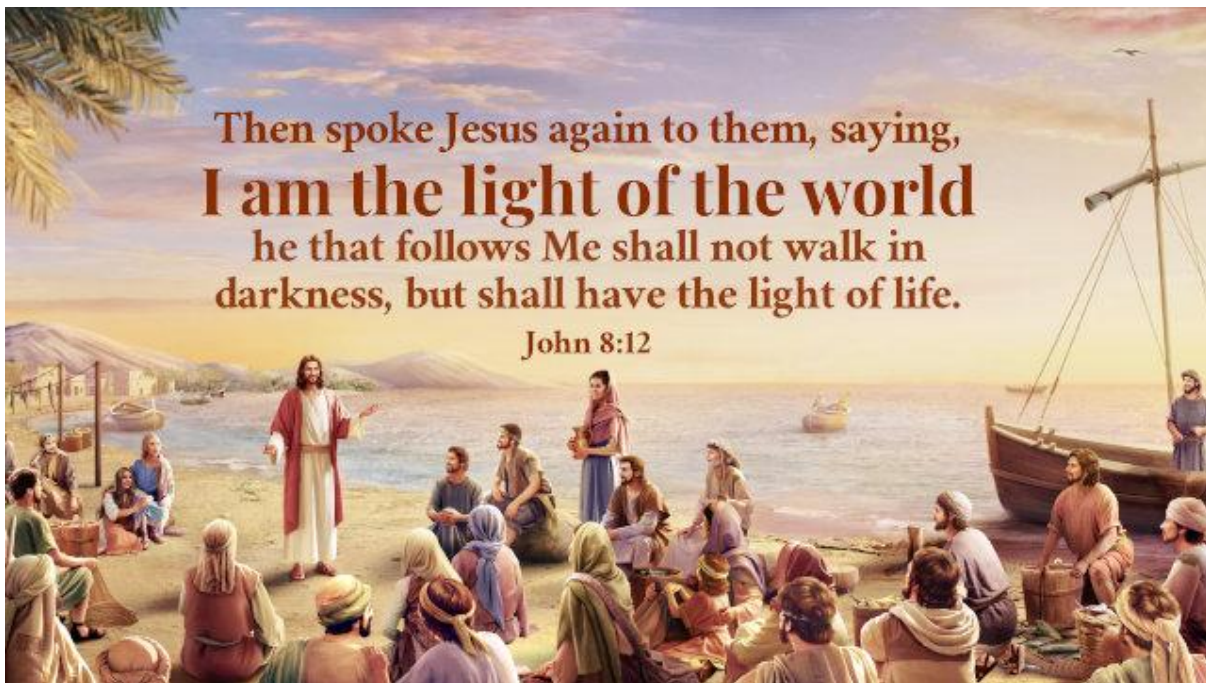
THE LIGHT BRINGS LOVE

Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, *“I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.”* (John 8:12 NLT)

The immediate result of knowing and following Jesus is “not walking in darkness.” In contrast, those who do not know and follow Jesus live and walk in darkness. When the light is out, we stumble and fall; we get disoriented and lost. This is a sad state. Walking in darkness is manifested in selfishness, self-centeredness, and pursuit of self-interest. Self, not the Savior, sits on the throne. Our preoccupation with ourselves results in bitterness, anger, division, and ironically, unhappiness. We must unfollow self and follow Jesus if we are to walk in the light.

We must follow Jesus like soldiers follow their commander, students their teachers, children their parents. Discipleship is heeding the call for obedience to God’s commandments as a way of life. When we follow Jesus, the light of the world, we are led to the path of love for God and neighbors. Christian living means living in the light of God’s love. Step in the light of God for it brings love.

Rev. George Payocong, Jr.



NO GREATER LOVE

When I signed up to write a devotional for the Advent booklet, without hesitation I was signing my name next to the entry for “love”. Immediately the Bible verse, “*Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends*” (John 15:13), flashed into my mind.

As days passed that same verse would pop into my mind again and again. I had completely forgotten that I even signed up to write a devotional, until I was reminded that it was due in two days. Panic began to set in when that verse flashed in my mind once again. “That’s it, Lord, that’s the verse You want me to refer to when I write my devotional! But how Lord, this verse seems to fit more into a devotional for Easter?”

Without much more thought I set out for my evening walk. As I walked by a neighbor’s house, I could not believe that Christmas was here and soon found myself humming the tune of 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.*

“That’s it, Lord, a perfect picture of *Love* - the Virgin Mary cradling the Precious Christ Child! But how Lord does this Christmas carol tie into the verse John 15:13!” Then it occurred to me, “Yes, Lord, this is the perfect picture of *Love*! Who would have ever thought this tiny infant so tender and mild would one day lay down His life for His friends!”

“YES, LORD, THERE IS NO GREATER LOVE THAN THIS!!!”

Terri Bosemer



Wednesday, December 24, 2025

THE LIGHT BRINGS LOVE

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. I John 1:5 (ESV)

Light and love are key words of the Advent and Christmas seasons. They are two words used throughout the Bible to describe the attributes of God and to teach us how to know Him and how to relate to others.

The Apostle John is credited with writing the fourth gospel and three epistles. In these writings he uses the words light and love more than any other New Testament author. A search of the English Standard Version (ESV) reveals the use of the word light 16 times in the Gospel of John and 5 times in the epistle of I John while the word love is used an amazing 39 times in the Gospel and 26 times in the Epistle.

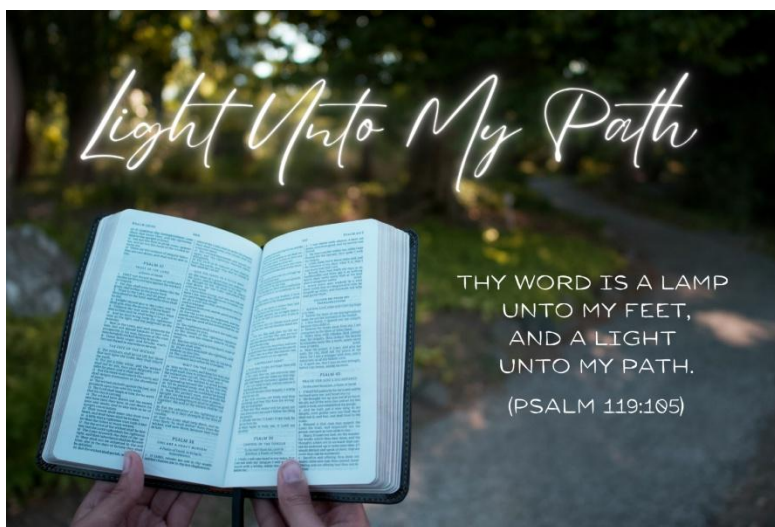
John describes Jesus as “the Word” in the prologue to his gospel and adds “in him was life, and that life was the **light** of men. The **light** shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it” (John 1:4-5, NIV). Throughout his gospel, John contrasts light and darkness with light representing God and darkness representing Satan. In John 3, Jesus has a night-time meeting with Nicodemus that gives us some of the most memorable and significant verses in all of scripture such as, “You must be born again” (verse 3). The Lord goes on to deliver these familiar words in verse 16: “God so **loved** the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (KJV). Jesus then follows this teaching on God’s eternal and sacrificial love by returning to the metaphor of light. Here are some excerpts in verses 19-21 from the NIV: “This is the verdict: **Light** has come into the world...Everyone who does evil hates the **light**...But, whoever loves truth comes into the **light**.”

John, describing God, writes, “God is **light**” in I John 1:5 and adds “God is **love**” in 4:8. Then, as if recalling the words that Jesus spoke to Nicodemus, he wrote, “In this the **love** of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him” (I John 4:9, ESV).

Take time today to examine John’s use of the words light and love in his writings.

Lord, I thank You that Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light to lead me in the path of following You in love. In Christ’s name. Amen.

Rev. Steve Skaggs



CHRISTMAS DAY

“and He was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.”
Luke 2:21

In the pale light of early morning a baby turned His face to the warmth of the new sun. He had taken His first breath only a few hours ago and had been held close in His mother’s arms until now when He had been gently placed in a manger to rest.

It had been an amazing night. His parents had taken shelter in a stable just before He was born because it was the only lodging His father could find. Then a few hours after He was born shepherds, who had been sent by angels, came to see Him and celebrate His coming. The baby wouldn’t have known that any of that was unusual until He was older, or that He was the child humankind had been waiting for since shortly after time began.

That was so because this child was no ordinary child. He was the infinite, almighty, uncreated, and eternal Son of God who had taken the form of a man. He had helped create the world but would now grow up in it like all children do. He would need other people to take care of him until He was grown. He would learn from them and experience first-hand both the pain and the delight of being human. He would be tempted to sin, too, because we all are, but unlike us, He would not give in.

What was all this for --- this condescension on the part of God that made Him want His Son to become one of us? Why would He decide to take on flesh and blood, feel what we feel and think with a mind as limited in what it can grasp as ours is? The reason the Son of God came to us the way He did was to save us --- from ourselves, from sin, from Satan, and from a death without hope.

Ultimately, the Son of God was made like us because the Father loved us too much to let us keep making one bad choice after another until we had no choices left. We matter to God, and we matter so much that He sent His Son in a form we could see, hear, and touch in order to find the lost among us, bring the forsaken home, and turn the faces of all of us toward the light.

Karen Purnell



Friday, December 26, 2025

OUR FOREVER LIGHT

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews? We saw His star when it rose and have come to worship him." Matthew 2:1-2 NIV

Just as Isaiah had prophesied hundreds of years before Jesus' birth, a bright star appeared in the sky to announce the arrival of the newborn King. This amazing star was the perfect bright light to guide the Magi on their journey through many miles of dark desert land in search of the Messiah. This was not just any star, but a divine sign from God that fulfilled the early prophecies. The wise men followed that star until they came to the house where the star stopped above it as if it were a big, illuminated sign showing, "Here He is!" So, they entered the house and indeed found the Holy Christ child. The Magi must have been completely overjoyed by knowing that by following that bright light in the sky, they had actually found the most perfect light of all, Jesus Christ, who would grow up to become the "Light of the World."

"On coming into the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh." Matthew 2:11 NIV

Jesus came to earth to be our light. He is not just a light, or like a light, He is the True Light, our Eternal Light. Just as the star led the Wise Men through darkness to find the Holy infant, the prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus Christ whose birth brings us hope and salvation to a world of spiritual darkness. THE LIGHT IS HERE!, for He is our guiding light.

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life". John 8: 12 NIV

Looking back at my childhood, I remember my mother reading us the Bible at bedtime and telling us that we should always put our trust in God and not be afraid. Knowing God brings us comfort and strength to help us overcome fear. He will always be with us and never fail us.

One Christmas when I was ten, we decorated our tree, turned all the lights out, except the back hall light, and patiently waited for the big reveal. My younger brother was only about three at that time and was running around the house barefooted and full of excitement. We had wooden floors at that time that were very cool, so my mother had told him several times to go put on his house shoes. He would walk slowly back to his bedroom, but stopped and said that it was dark in there and he was afraid to go in. At age three, that fear was very real. My mother pulled him close to reassure him that the hall light was on and his room was not completely dark. She told him there was absolutely nothing back there to be afraid of and reminded him that God was there watching over him. As we patiently waited on the sofa for him to return, I could see him slowly tippy toeing down the hall to his bedroom. He then stopped, pushed the door open wide and very quickly said "Hey God, throw me my house shoes." That little three-year-old is now sixty- five and that memory will be forever priceless to me.

God is always with us and is our forever light. The scripture **Psalm 91:5** tells us, "You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day". This is a promise of God's protection against any danger or threats during the night or day. Just as my mother instilled into us as children, this is our reassurance that we should always put our trust and faith in God daily.

“The LORD is my light and my salvation-whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life-of whom shall I be afraid?” Psalm 27-1 NIV

Jesus is our forever light, not just at Christmas. When Isaiah told of the coming “Prince of Peace” and spoke of the light dispelling darkness, he was referring to those that are “in the dark”, by not knowing Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and are lacking in hope and salvation. As Christians, we are to share the love of Jesus Christ to enlighten all others.

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light, on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.” Isaiah 9:2 NIV

Dear Lord,

In our times of darkness, please help us to be strong and know that You are always with us. You are the Light of the World and with You there is no darkness. Help us to let Your light shine through us to share Your promise of hope and grace with all others and bring them out of darkness so that they may know You and glorify You. Thank you for being our Guiding Light.

In Christ’s name,

Amen

May your light shine brightly as you follow the Light of the World, Jesus Christ, not only through the Christmas season, but every day. May you have a joyful Christmas and a very blessed New Year.

Jeryl Presley



Saturday, December 27, 2025

THIS IS NOT A CHRISTMAS STORY... OR IS IT?

You all know the story of Cornelius in Acts 10. Cornelius knew and loved God even though he was a Roman Centurion. He represented Rome, but his home was in Caesarea due to his job. He was a godly man and was respected by the Jews.

He sought God, he revered God, he was a *pray-er*, and he was honest in dealing with people.

God tells him to send for Peter so he could learn more about the God whom he sought. Meanwhile, Peter is having dreams and visions about eating unclean animals.

While he is pondering the meaning of these dreams and visions, three men show up and tell him that Cornelius, 'a righteous and God-fearing man', wants Peter to come to his home.

Peter goes to Caesarea to Cornelius' home and tells him, "You know it is against Jewish law to associate or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me (via the dream and visions) that I should not call anyone impure or unclean." Peter asks Cornelius why he sent for him.

Cornelius tells Peter that God told him to send for him. Now, Cornelius had his whole family and friends there to listen to Peter. He tells Peter, "We are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us."

Peter tells them he now knows God doesn't show favoritism and accepts from every nation the one who fears God and does what is right.

Acts 10:34-43 is the message Peter gives Cornelius, his family, and his friends. The message included... that they and the other disciples were witnesses to Jesus and His miracles... that they had seen Him killed on the cross... that God had raised Him from the dead on the third day... that Jesus was seen by Peter and others after His resurrection... that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.

While Peter was still talking, they believed, and the Holy Spirit came onto all who were listening.

Two different men, from two different places, in two different occupations, with two different backgrounds – one Jewish and one Gentile, but both being obedient to the Lord!

Many were added to the family of Christ that day.

A question for all of us: What am I doing with family and friends to further God's kingdom and help them know the Light of Christmas, the One who brings the real hope, peace, joy, and love of Christmas?

Deborah Raia



EASY?

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” John 1:5

Sometimes the unexpected comes and it’s not easy.

There was nothing easy about Zechariah not being able to speak for months.

It wasn’t easy for Mary to walk to Elizabeth’s home.

The rocky journey to Bethlehem wasn’t easy for Mary or Joseph.

Searching for lodging for he and Mary had to be difficult when they arrived in Bethlehem.

The Wise Men’s journey as they followed The Star had to seem endless at times.

Did any of them turn around and go home? Did any of them say, “Forget this, I’ve had enough!”

No, not one. They were following God’s words and directions.

Sometimes light surprises, they were following the Light of the World, who came to bring His Light into each of our lives. And nothing will ever be the same after that.

What are you facing today that is not easy?

Go ahead...make a list.

Be ready in the coming days, months, or years to list how God’s light surprised you with answers.

Karen Love



Monday, December 29, 2025

SHARE THE LIGHT

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” John 8:12

He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” Mark 16:15-16

Growing up in the Baptist church I was always taught as Christians we need to share the gospel with the world, but I was always a shy kid. I would never speak or pray in public. Telling others about Jesus only happened if someone asked me about my faith, and even then, I had a hard time.

In college, I started to come out of my shell a little. Doors were opened for me to be in front of people over and over again. Looking back, I can see now, Jesus’s light was shining, even if I wasn’t talking about it. I joined the puppet team at my college Baptist Student Union because I could hide behind the curtain, but I soon joined other performance teams doing drama and music. I learned the joy of performing for Jesus, using it as a way to speak the truth to others through drama and song. I was still afraid, but was given several opportunities to learn to trust Him. He gave me the strength to do more than I ever thought possible. I eventually had the opportunity to lead someone to Christ.

I still remember that first time. It felt so good, and I knew it wasn’t me at all. It was Jesus speaking to their heart. I was just there helping them pray the prayer, encouraging them to follow the light of Christ. Jesus had already done all the work. At the same time, He showed me that I, when walking with Him, was given everything I needed to shine the light on Him. It made it much easier to be in front of people, because as long as I was His instrument, telling His story, I was bringing His light to the world.

You might feel like I did when I was younger. Even now I still sometimes feel that fear, but then I remember that Jesus is the light of the world. It is His light that we are bringing to the world. He needs us to share that light, and He gives us all the tools and strength to do that. As we celebrate His birth this Christmas season, let us remember to be brave and share with the world the light and love of God.

Jon Heinrich



THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

As the lights get taken down, the presents get put away, and people go back to work, it is easy to get caught up in life's responsibilities again. This is often the case for most of us; however, as followers of Christ, we must remember that His light is not meant to be seasonal.

Christmas is not meant to represent the store-bought lights that we see on every house, or the trees that we decorate in our living rooms, but it is meant to be a celebration of Jesus coming to be the light of the world. The light that Jesus provides for us is like no other, it is a lifesaving light. John says that, "In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (1:9). John shows us through this passage that Jesus brought with Him a light that is full of life, and one that will not be dimmed by any force of darkness. The book of John also states that, "*When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life' "*" (John 8:12).

Knowing that Jesus wants to illuminate our paths with His light should be encouraging to us as Christians, because we can rest on His promise that we will never be left alone in a dark time. While we can always trust that God is never going to leave us, we must always keep our eyes fixed on Him and the path that He has set out for us.

As this Christmas season ends, and the new year begins, there will be times of struggles and thanksgiving. During these times, remember that Jesus came to be the light of the world, which means that if He lives in us, then we will always have His light to guide us.

Lucas Seraphine



Wednesday, December 31, 2025

THE LIGHT IS HERE

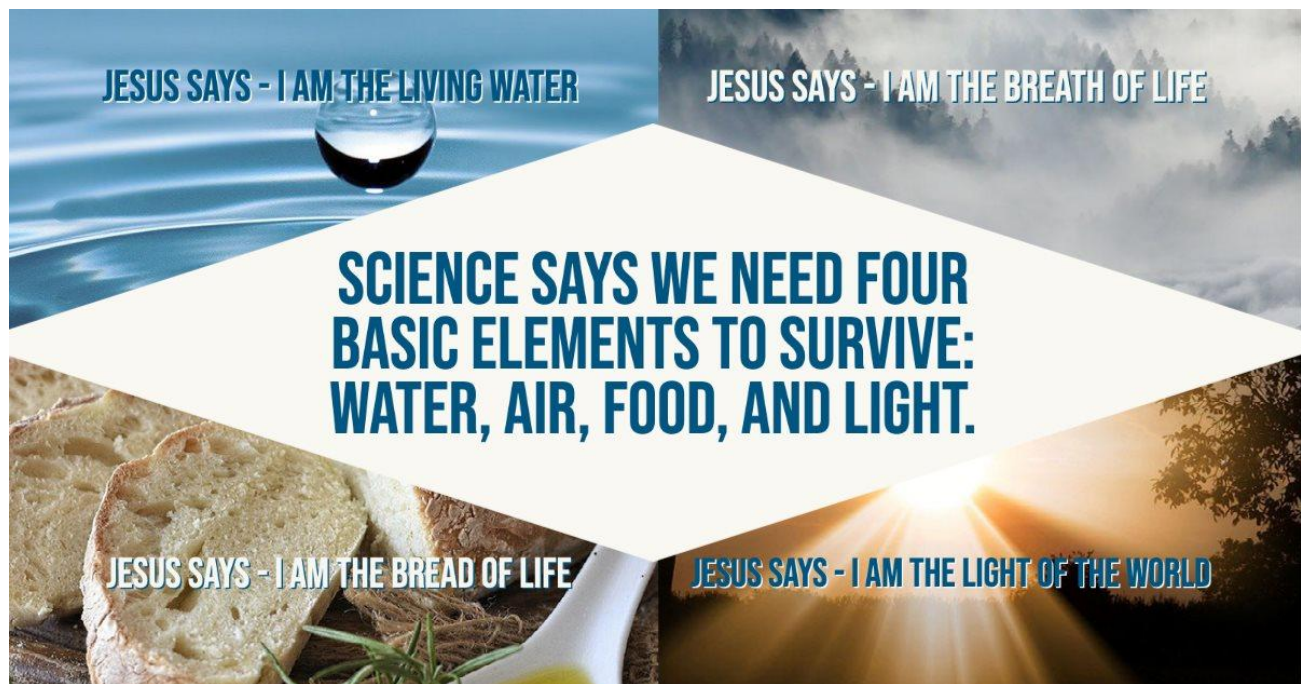
“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” (John 1:4)

Humans need four essential things to survive: light, air, water, and food. The same is true in the spiritual life. Jesus is our light to keep us from getting lost (John. 8:12). He gave the Holy Spirit as “breath of life” to empower us for living (John 20:22). He is the Living Water that quenches and satisfies our deepest needs (John 4:10-14). And He is the Bread of Life that fills our spiritual hunger (John 6:35). In Christ, God provided for us everything we need to live a godly and God-honoring life.

Let us welcome 2026 with full confidence that we are fully equipped to do the work God called us to do. In Christ, we are never deficient. Paul affirmed we are complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10). Because Jesus is the life (John 14:6) Christians live best when they live in and for Christ (Philippians 1:21).

When the Lord Jesus Christ was born, the world saw the light. He walked among humankind for 33 years. After Jesus completed His mission, He returned to the Father. But He left faithful witnesses, His disciples. Today, the Spirit-empowered Christians are the light that reflects the Light. Through our lives, the light of Christ shines in this world filled with darkness. Let your light so shine before others so that the world may know the Lord. As Christ’s ambassadors the world knows the light of God is among them.

Rev. George Payocong, Jr.



SHINE WHERE YOU ARE

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.” Matthew 5:14 (NIV)

It’s easy to think that being young means you must wait until later to make a difference. Maybe you thought, “I’ll serve God more seriously when I’m older,” or “I don’t have enough influence yet.” But Jesus didn’t say, “You will become the light of the world someday.” He said, “You are the light of the world” - right now.

Light doesn’t have to be loud or powerful to make an impact. Even a small candle can change a dark room. In the same way, your kindness, honesty, and love for God can make a huge difference in your school, your home, and your friend group. You don’t have to be perfect—you just have to be willing to shine.

Early in my life, I had many different jobs. Some were pretty good, and I had responsibilities, in charge of others, and the money was pretty good! I WAS NEVER SATISFIED!

I always felt like if I got a higher position or even left my current job for a better job, I would be happy! WRONG!

I was called to serve God after going through a life-threatening illness. God changed my life; God changed me!

One regret I have is that I waited so long to answer the call to serve God! No one has to wait. We can all serve God now!

I encourage you to accept Jesus Christ into your heart!

The Lord will instruct you and guide you along the best pathway for your life. He will advise you and watch your progress. Psalm 73:23-24

Let Jesus shine in you and through you to guide you on the most wonderful and rewarding journey you can imagine!

Reflection Questions:

1. Where has God placed you to shine His light right now?
2. What’s one way you can show Jesus’ love to someone this week?
3. Are there any areas in your life where you’ve been hiding your light?
4. Prayer:

“Lord, thank You for calling me to be Your light in the world. Help me to shine brightly wherever I go, even when it’s hard. Give me courage to live for You and reflect Your love in everything I do.”

Will Ennis



Friday, January 2, 2026

IN HIM THERE IS NO DARKNESS

*“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you:
God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.” 1 John 1:5*

Winter is my least favorite season of the year. Like many of you, the older I get the less I like it. While I can appreciate the beauty of new-fallen snow, the yumminess of crockpots full of hot soup, and the excitement of college basketball (GO CATS!), I still would prefer the colors and warmth of the other three seasons. While the cold and snow and inconvenience of inclement weather are irksome to me, what really gets me down in the winter is the lack of light. The days are so short and often so dull and gray that I just want to crawl back in bed with my heated blanket and hibernate until spring. But, praise be to God, He has sent the Everlasting Light into our dark, gray world!

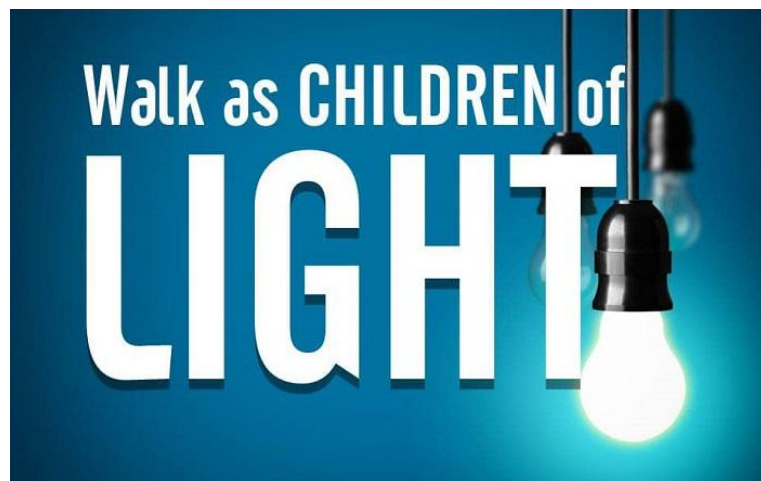
I know that there are differing views on what time of the year Jesus was actually born, but I am glad we celebrate His birth at the darkest point (here in the Northern Hemisphere) in the calendar. What a blessed reminder that in the midst of our darkness, He gives light. In His presence, darkness must flee.

Our Adult Choir is currently working on an anthem for Advent called, *“I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light.”* The lyrics quote 1 John 1:5, declaring that there is no darkness at all in Him. It is my prayer that during the physical darkness of Advent and oncoming winter, we will walk in the light as children of the light. Because He has shone His light on me, I want to share the Light that is here with those who remain in darkness.

*I want to walk as a child of the light;
I want to follow Jesus.
God set the stars to give light to the world;
The star of my life is Jesus.*

*In him there is no darkness at all;
The night and the day are both alike.
The Lamb is the light of the city of God:
Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.
(by Kathleen Thomerson)*

Rev. Debbie Gorbandt



Saturday, January 3, 2026

PRESENCE

'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Matthew 25:35-36

I am reminded of this scripture as I traveled to Florida this past weekend to visit a family friend. We got a call that he was in the hospital for the second time in two weeks and I knew immediately that I needed to get there. He was giving up. He didn't have the will to live. I heard that change in his voice as soon as I said, "We are coming to see you." Hope! At 6:00 a.m. the next morning we get a call, "Where are you?" Well, of course we were still sleeping, but you could hear the joy coming back in his voice. When we got to the hospital, he had been there for six days. As we visited with him over the next two days, we surrounded him with love, sometimes tough love. His road to healing is not going to be easy, but he is ready to fight again. The next morning, as we were driving back home, we got another call. He was being released from the hospital. Peace, and lots of praise!

We are all busy. Many times, we forget that just showing up for someone is enough. During this Christmas season, let us all try to focus on being present for our loved ones, instead of buying presents. Yes, even the children. They don't need more stuff. They need your time and attention. Have a conversation with them. Play a game with them. Bring them to church. They will remember it more than any gift you can buy them. Your presence is the gift of love.

Let us not get too busy to see these opportunities to let our light shine as Jesus instructs us to do in Matthew 25. We have people in our families, in our church, and in our communities who are in those dark places and need the Light of Jesus. Some of them already know Him, but you might just be the way they are reminded of Him.

Tiffany Keranen



Sunday, January 4, 2026

LOVE NOT HATRED

Our world has become a cruel place in the past years, but especially now – Christians hating each other and persecution everywhere for Christian beliefs. As we have been in the Christmas spirit this season, we need to truly remember why Jesus came to this world.

Jesus was born into this world to save us all from our sinful nature. When we mess up, we can be forgiven through Him and His blood. His birth reminds us of the love Jesus brings to us. Jesus loved everyone, no matter what they had done or what they would do. For us humans, this is a very hard thing to comprehend, because it is in our sinful nature to hate. A prime example of this is Charlie Kirk. He died for his strong beliefs and for sharing the gospel with others. Now that he has passed, social media has blown up with everything about him. On my feed, I would see all these people hating him, saying he deserved to die, and some were even Christians. Now, how they would go about doing this to a fellow Christian and have these feelings, I'd never understand. For Jesus never hated the Pharisees, the people who had Him crucified, or anyone. He stood by loving them all and that is what we are called to do as Christians.

“You have heard that it was said, love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” Matthew 5:43-44

Jesus does specifically tell us not to hate, but to love all those who have hurt us or will hurt us, because at the end of the day, the goal is to convert all to following Christ and to live in heaven. To do that, we can't hate others; we must love them to Christ and teach them the correct way we have been instructed to do so.

“The one who says he is in the light but hates his brother or sister is in the darkness until now.”
I John 2:9

Jesus is right to know Him and all his glory; we must follow Him and all His commands. For if we don't, we don't truly know God. God created us all, and if we hate someone, we are hating on God's creation. Even though it is hard to do with our sinful nature, we have a relationship with the Lord to help us, all because of Jesus.

This Christmas season, we should be thankful for Jesus, our best example, who has shown us how to live and love by God's commands. We must love others no matter what they have done to us, or even if we have not ever met them. Let us pray that the Lord will take away our hatred towards His creations, because He loves them all, as we should.

Emma Towles



THE LIGHT IS HERE

Hank Williams is known for his song, “*I Saw the Light*”. It tells of a sinner who wandered not letting his Savior in. Then Jesus came and he saw the light. He was no more in darkness or night. He was so happy with no sorrow in sight. He praised the Lord when he saw the light.



I think the same thing has happened to many people over the years. It began back on the first night Jesus appeared. People were wandering around, busy about their business. Then Jesus was born, and a great light appeared. A star over the place where He was born, Bethlehem! Then the angels appeared to sing of His birth and there was happiness and celebration. There was praise of the Lord. Then the shepherds had to go see it for themselves. They had to see the Light.

“Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”
Luke 2:15

Sunday, January 6, 2026

CARRY THE LIGHT!

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.
Matthew 2:9-10

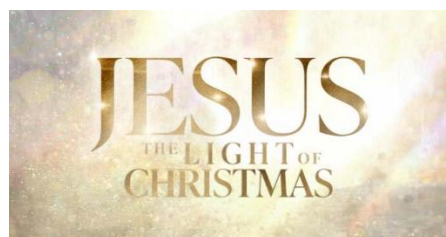
January 6 is the Day of Epiphany. Epiphany comes from a Greek word meaning reveal. It is the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles as represented by the Magi. Also, this day emphasizes the giving of gifts as evidenced through the gifts of the Magi – gold, frankincense, and myrrh. It is a time when we, like the Magi who followed a distant star, are reminded of the fullest meaning of the gift of Jesus Christ, the Light of the World. This Day of Epiphany is one of my favorite days of the church calendar! It's the day that reminds me of how much the world needs Light and how we have the wonderful privilege of revealing and shining that Light to the world.

On this Day of Epiphany and throughout this year, let us remember that the Magi from the East followed the light of the star to find Jesus. As they needed the light for their guide, our world desperately needs LIGHT. Jesus is the only LIGHT. Is He your Savior? If not, will you let Him save you today? You will then resonate with the words written by Philip Bliss: *Once I was blind, but now I can see; The Light of the world is Jesus!*

To those of you who are Christians, will you participate in the privilege we have of revealing and shining the Light of Jesus to the world? We live in a dark world in need of a Savior. Jesus is the only way to bring Light to that darkness. He is the only One who makes the way clear in the dark.

We are Light in the world, not calling attention to ourselves, but pointing the way to God through serving others, loving them, showing them the way to Jesus, and walking in the way of Christ with them. Our lives should be so radiant that they give testimony to our Lord and Savior and show Jesus to others. May the words of Twila Paris help spur us to share Jesus.

*In this world of darkness we are given light,
Hope for all the dying. How will they know? How will they know?
That Jesus loves them, and He died to save them?
Carry the Light, carry the Light.
Go and tell the children – they are precious in His sight.
Carry the Light, carry the Light.
Go and preach the gospel – 'til there is no more night.
In the name of Jesus Christ, carry the Light.*



Our church family of FCBC has recently affiliated with our Texas brothers and sisters (Baptist General Convention of Texas) as partners in taking Light to the world by more intentionally living out the Great Commandment (Luke 10:27) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Will you join us in sharing Light to the world by loving God with our whole heart, soul, strength, and mind, by tangibly loving our neighbors, and by making disciples of all nations?

My prayer on this Day of Epiphany is that you will all embrace the LIGHT and carry the LIGHT throughout the world! Let's ***Carry the Light*** together!

Rev. Linda Barnes Popham