

CHRISTMAS EVE

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

The four Advent candles are lit before the service begins.

One: Because God so loves the world,

Many: This beautiful and broken world,

One: This divided and distanced and world,

Many: This warming and burning world,

One: This lost and hurting world,

Many: God's love is made flesh.

One: For such a time as this,

Many: A child is born unto us.

One: For such a time as this,

Many: The light of Christ shines upon us.

One: In a stinky stable turned birthing room,

Many: New visions of family and community are born.

One: By the surprising subversion of God's in-breaking love,

Many: The burden of injustice is thrown off.

One: Through the ages-old song of angels and shepherds,

Many: God's glory is proclaimed.

One: On this holy night, the one we've been watching for is here.

Many: On this holy night, the time we've been waiting for is now.

One: Let us rejoice together!

Many: Glory to God in the highest, and peace and goodwill to all!

The Christ candle is lit. Silence is kept.

ALL: FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS, THE CHRIST CHILD COMES TO US.

FOR SUCH AS TIME AS THIS, GOD'S LOVE IS BORN IN US.

JOY TO THE WORLD!

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

We admit it, O God: That in a time such as this, it can be harder than usual to open our hearts to the wonder of your love. In a time such as time, it can be harder to feel the joy. Thank you for reminding us that Christ comes for such as time as this. Thank you for understanding that in such a time as this, we need you all the more. Thank you for promise of the Christ Child, come to us again. Amen.

CALL TO THE OFFERING

The sacred story tells us it was on this night that God's greatest gift was given. But the story does not end there: It goes on to show us how to respond to that wondrous gift with offerings of our own. Now, we probably don't have any frankincense in our pockets. Chances are we have no myrrh in our purses. We may not possess even a glimmer of gold. What we do have is the greatest resource of all: God's love in our hearts. By that love, let us care and give like never before. By that caring and with great joy, let us give to the United Church of Christ's Christmas Fund, so that the church's retired clergy and lay staff might know the miracle of God's love through our generosity.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

One: Good Christian friends, rejoice!

Many: All God's beloveds, rejoice!

One: All creation groaning, rejoice!

Many: Retired clergy, church staff, and spouses, rejoice!

One: Heaven and earth, rejoice!

All: Jesus, our savior, is born today!

Christ, our Lord, was born for this!

Love, our light, shines brightly through our gifts!

May our offerings, by God's blessing, become hope renewed and life restored. Amen.