

TRINITY CIRCUIT OWN ARRANGEMENT SERVICE JANUARY/FEBRUARY
'LIGHTEN OUR DARKNESS'

(2 leaders, 4 readers, 2 candles)

Welcome and Introduction to the service: (Leader 1)

'Lighten our darkness, we beseech Thee, O Lord...' are familiar words from the evening service in the Book of Common Prayer. The theme for our service today is 'Lighten our darkness'. Christmas is past, but the nights remain long, and the world still feels a dark place of suffering and evil. And so we are going to reflect, in hope, on our belief that it is God alone who can bring light to our dark world. We will rejoice in the light of hope brought by Jesus, a light that can never be put out by our darkness, a light that opens our eyes to the joy-giving presence of God in our lives.

Call to Worship: (Leader 2)

'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.
They lived in a land of shadows, but now light is shining on them.
You have given them great joy, Lord; you have made them happy.
They rejoice in what you have done' (*Isaiah 9*)
Come, let us rejoice as we worship
The God of Life and Light.

Hymn: There's a light upon the mountains... StF 20; H&P 246; MP 679

THE FIRST LIGHT

Old Testament Reading: (Reader 1) Genesis 1: 1-6

Poem: (Reader 2) "And God Said, Let There Be Light!" by Charles Mackay

Earth heard the loud, the solemn sound,
And started from her utmost bound,
And Darkness, on his ebony car,
Spread his black wings, and fled afar;
The dun clouds opened with affright,
And hailed the burst of life and light!

"'Tis light! 'tis light!" the mountains rung,
"'Tis light! 'tis light!" the valleys sung!
The stars beheld its dawning bright,
The spheres confessed the Godhead's might,
While Nature's universal voice
Proclaimed aloud, "Rejoice! Rejoice!"

Prayer: (Leader 1)

In this prayer there is a response - God of Light and Life and Joy: **We worship and adore you.**

Let us pray:

Creator God, You called forth existence, order and life

From nothingness and chaos:

God of Light and Life and Joy: **We worship and adore you.**

Creator God, You called forth the light of day from utter darkness;

And established firm, dry land from swirling waters:

God of Light and Life and Joy: **We worship and adore you.**

Creator God, You called man and woman into being

From your desire to kindle the Light of Love in your world:

God of Light and Life and Joy: **We worship and adore you.**

Creator God, when we had stumbled into darkness

Lost sight of you and lost our way you came yourself in Jesus, the Light of the World,

To guide us back to you.

God of Light and Life and Joy: **We worship and adore you.** In Jesus's Name **Amen.**

Hymn: God (Thou) whose Almighty Word...StF 106; H&P 29; MP 699; HON 673

THE PROMISE OF LIGHT

Old Testament Reading: (Reader 3) Isaiah 60: 1–3; 19, 20

Introduction to reading: (Leader 2)

Our Old Testament reading offered hope to a people living in a time of loss and despair, lost and far from home. They were in what we would call these days 'a dark place'. But God promises to rescue them from their darkness. The well-known hymn of John Henry Newman, 'Lead, kindly Light, amidst the encircling gloom, lead Thou me on', reminds us of that promise from our God of Light and Life.

Reading: (Reader 4)

Newman wrote of this hymn, written during illness: 'Before starting out from my inn, I sat down on my bed and began to sob bitterly. My servant asked what ailed me. I could only answer, "I have a work to do in England" I was aching to get home, yet for want of a vessel I was kept at Palermo for three weeks. At last I got off in an orange boat but we were becalmed for whole week, and it was then that I wrote the lines, *Lead, Kindly Light*, which have since become so well known.'

This hymn has helped many in dark and hopeless situations. The largest mining disaster in the Durham coalfield was at West Stanley Colliery, known locally as "The Burns Pit", when 168 men and boys lost their lives as the result of two underground explosions in February 1909. 141 men lay dead but incredibly, there were still men alive underground. A group of 34 men and boys had found a pocket of clean air. A few of them panicked and left the group, dying instantly after inhaling poison gas. The remainder sat in almost total darkness, when one of them began humming the hymn "Lead Kindly Light". In no time at all the rest of the miners joined in with the words, "Lead kindly light amidst the encircling gloom, lead thou me on, the night is dark, and I am far away from home". These 30 men were later rescued.

"Lead, Kindly Light" was sung by Betsie ten Boom, sister of Corrie ten Boom, and others as they were led by the S.S. Guards to the concentration camp Ravensbruck during the Holocaust. It was also sung by a soloist on the Titanic during a hymn-singing gathering, shortly before the ocean liner struck an iceberg on April 14, 1912.

Hymn: Lead, kindly light... H&P 67; MP 399; HON 372

OR Longing for light... StF 706; HON 401

THE DAWNING OF LIGHT

New Testament Reading: (Reader 1) John 1: 1-14

Poem: (Reader 2) "And the Word was Made Flesh" by Laurence Housman.

"Light looked down and beheld Darkness.

'Thither will I go', said Light.

Peace looked down and beheld War.

'Thither will I go', said Peace.

Love looked down and beheld Hatred.

'Thither will I go', said Love.

So came Light and shone.

So came Peace and gave rest.

So came Love and brought Life."

Prayer: (Leader 1) Let us pray:

Lord, we offer to you the darkness that is in our lives:

our fears; our worries; our suffering; our sorrows and our loneliness

Lord, make us aware that you are with us in the darkness

as well as the light.

Lord, we hold up to the light of your love

the darkness that is in our souls
and causes shadows on our lives and the lives of others.
We confess to you: our failures in loving; our struggles with faith
our self satisfaction and our holding back from you.
Forgive us, Lord,
and pour into our lives the light of your love
made know to us in Jesus, your risen Son, **Amen.**

Offering

Receiving Prayer

Generous God, take this money and use it, take our lives and use us,
To light up our darkened world with the glory of your love. **Amen.**

THE OPENING OF EYES

New Testament Reading: (Reader 3) John 9: 1–9; 35-41

Reading: (Reader 4) From an article in the Daily Mail. (2nd Nov 2010)

A blind British pensioner who flew to China for pioneering stem cell treatment has got her eyesight back - and has arrived home to see her great grandson for the first time. Dorothy Leach, 76, can make out faces, shapes and colours for the first time in more than a year after receiving stem-cell treatment in China. 'When I got back to Heathrow Airport last Wednesday I could see such a lot. It was unbelievable,' said Dorothy. 'The other day I saw a crow on the fence in my garden and had to check with people that I could actually see it but I did see it. It is amazing. 'The doctors said it could take another six months to a year before my sight gets as good as it will be, but it is much better already. It was definitely worth it.'
Dorothy's main aim is to see her two-year-old great grandson Chris at Christmas.

Reflection: (Reader 5)

I am the man whom Jesus healed. I was blind but now I see. I see everything...not only the things and people around me, but realities that my blindness hid from me. Seeing what others can see is a blessing but it has also made me question whether what I see is true. I see a beautiful world, but also the ugliness of human cruelty. I see the finery and religious demeanour of the Pharisee, hiding the lack of compassion he feels towards those guilty of physical or moral imperfection. I see the man called Jesus, so ordinary in appearance, and know that 'ordinary' he is not. His apparent poverty disguises his wealth of truth and wisdom and love. His vulnerability belies his spiritual power. My new ability to see the world as it is confuses and challenges me. But I trust that the insight Jesus has given me will enable me see the truth that will set me free.

Prayer (by Rev Stephen Brown): (Leader 2) Let us pray

Loving God, thank you for Christ's light shed in the world,
breaking into the darkness of our soul's winter,
casting hope amidst despair
and completing our joy.

Loving God, thank you for Christ's light shining not from afar,
but among us:

heralding a spiritual springtime
of renewal and recommitment.

Loving God, thank you for Jesus, our winter-sun Saviour:
shedding light into the gloom of godlessness,
warming hearts to the wonder and hope of the gospel
and piercing minds with new insights of faith.

Thank you, Loving God, in Jesus' Name, **Amen.**

Hymn Christ is the World's Light...StF 346; H&P 456; HON 88

LIGHT FOR THE WORLD

New Testament Readings: (Reader 2) John 8:12. ..and to his followers... Matthew 5: 14-16

Prayers of Intercession (with candles): (Leader 1)

Let us pray, with the response... Come, light of God: **shine on our darkness.**

God, who called creation into being, we pray for light in the dark places of your world.

Where there is conflict and war, let there be peace;

at this present time the war in Syria
and the deeds and threat of ISIS
weigh heavily on our hearts and minds,
and we pray for a satisfactory solution
to the violence and suffering,
and a lasting and just peace.

Where there is injustice and discrimination, let there be justice.

we pray for freedom and justice
for the many oppressed peoples in our world.

Where there is poverty and hunger, let there be plenty;

we remember before you those
forced to flee their homes as refugees.

(Reader 3 lights a candle, saying: 'We pray for the dark places in our world')

Come, light of God: **shine on our darkness.**

God, who made your home among us, we pray for light in darkened lives.

Where there is illness or injury, let there be healing;

we pray for all those injured in war and conflict,
both civilians and soldiers.

We pray also for those for whom we have a particular concern.....

Where there is anxiety or depression, let there be joy;

we pray for those consumed by fear and worry about loved ones.

Where there is sorrow or grief, let there be comfort;

we remember those who have lost people they love.

Where there is guilt or hatred, let there be forgiveness.

(Reader 4 lights a candle, saying: 'We pray for those whose lives are dark.')

Come, light of God: **Shine in our darkness.**

In the name of Jesus Christ, the light of the World, **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn Lord, the light of your love is shining...StF 59; MP 445; HON 416

OR Christ whose glory fills the skies...H&P 457

Blessing/Dismissal

Lord grant us, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ,
that our lamps may feel the kindling touch of his love
and, knowing no quenching, may burn for us and give light for others.
May the blessing of God's light shine upon us all,
light without and light within. **Amen.**