

Christmas Lights

Join us in sharing the light of Christ and a message of hope in our communities this Christmas.

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

This Christmas, you can shine a light in your community and share a message of hope through this simple service of reflection. You can take part as a church community, home group, family or individual.

We’ve provided a scripture reading, questions for reflection and intercessions. These can be adapted to suit your context, whether as part of a church service, with a small group or at home. You can ask one person to lead the service or invite a few people to take part in the reading and intercessions.

We’ve also provided separate instructions for creating decorated tea light holders as an optional additional activity that could take place before or during the service.

You’ll need:

- Copies of the reading and prayers if inviting others to participate
- One larger candle or enough candles for everyone
- Matches or lighters
- Jam jars, paper or thin card and glue (if using the optional activity sheet)



Staying safe:

Never leave a burning candle unattended. Never burn a candle on or near anything that might catch fire. Keep candles out of the reach of children and pets.

Scripture Reading

(read in semi-darkness)

John 1: 1-14 (NIV)

The Word Became Flesh

1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 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[a] it.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Candle lighting

At the end of the reading light a candle, or invite everyone to light their own candle. Spend a few quiet moments observing the flame. If you are using this reflection as part of a group, ask people to notice the difference that the light makes.



Reflection

We are aware of the darkness around us. The darkness of poverty, inequality, anxiety and injustice. We are aware that right now people are struggling without light and warmth and hot food. The impact of the issues facing individuals and families in our communities seems overwhelming, and we can feel lost and helpless in the darkness.

Sometimes it is easier to dwell on the darkness than search for the light, but the simple act of lighting a candle can redirect us to hope. Even a single candle transforms a room and makes a difference.

Light provides warmth and comfort. Light can guide us by highlighting danger or revealing that there is nothing to be afraid of after all. Light marks moments of celebration and joy.

In the reading from John, we are reminded to look to Jesus, the light of the world, our comforter, healer, guide. And, as his followers, we are called to do the same for others.

When we feel overwhelmed by the darkness, we can turn to the light of Jesus that is full of grace and truth and hope for us and for our communities. And we can share this light with others through our words and actions.

Share this story from Church Urban Fund as an example of the difference that a community of support can make to an individual, or go straight to the questions for discussion at the bottom of this page.

The Power of Community

Joe understands what it is like to face a dark and cold winter. After his mother died, Joe was left without a support network. *"That was the life-changing moment where I just ended up homeless."*

"I didn't know what was going to happen. No money, no food, I lost so much weight."

"People facing homelessness, they haven't got anything to eat, they haven't got anywhere, to just sit down, have a cup of coffee and just literally take the weight off because homelessness can be such a very heavy burden on people."

It was through Church Urban Fund's local partners that Joe found the support and friendship he needed to truly recover from homelessness over the long-term.

"As soon as I found the project, immediately, I knew I had something to eat. After breakfast, they'd help me ever so much with everything I needed, whether it be information about housing, somewhere to shower every day, pretty much everything!"

"When people are homeless, other people just walk straight past them. They don't even really acknowledge their existence. The interaction with any human is invaluable – it was invaluable to me. You know, it really did put me back on my feet."

Now, Joe is helping to reflect this light on others. He volunteers regularly, helping to cook meals and care for people who come searching for food and comfort.

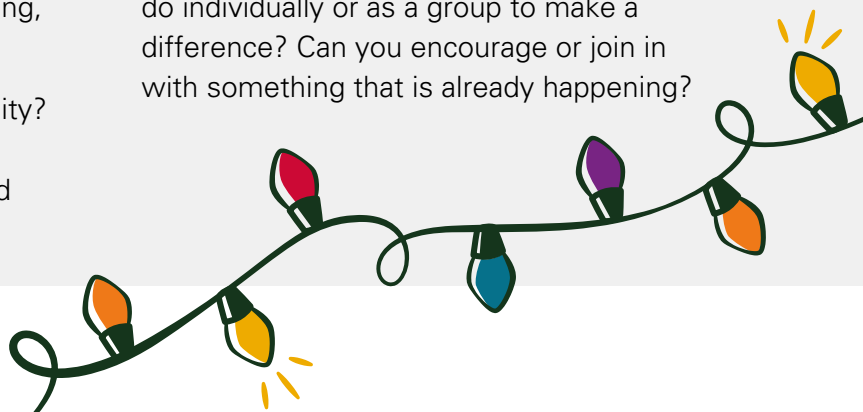
"This place has really boosted my confidence...I'm financially on my feet with regards to bills, I'm going forward."

"I've got so many supportive people here that I can always talk to. I'd love to say they're family. They're not my family, but I do consider them to be part of my heart."



Questions for reflection (as a group or for individual reflection)

- Where are you aware of darkness in your community? What are people struggling with? Where do you see poverty, suffering, fear or injustice?
- Where do you see light in your community? Who are the people, organisations and projects that are making a difference and bringing hope?
- How can you share the light of Christ this Christmas? Is there one thing you could do individually or as a group to make a difference? Can you encourage or join in with something that is already happening?



Prayers of intercession

Invite people to pray for your community silently or out loud. Or use these words as a focus for intercession:

Let us pray to Jesus our Saviour.
Christ, born in a stable,
give courage to all who are homeless.
Jesus, Saviour,
hear our prayer.

Christ, for whom the angels sang,
give the song of the kingdom to all who weep.
Jesus, Saviour,
hear our prayer.

Christ, worshipped by the shepherds,
give peace on earth to all who are oppressed.
Jesus, Saviour,
hear our prayer.

Christ, before whom the wise men knelt,
give humility and wisdom to all who govern.
Jesus, Saviour,
hear our prayer.

Christ, whose radiance filled a lowly manger,
give the glory of your resurrection to all who rest in you.
Jesus, Saviour,
hear our prayer.

**Jesus, Saviour, child of Mary,
you know us and love us,
you share our lives
and hear our prayer.
Glory to you for ever. Amen. ***

Blessing:

People of God: awake!
The day is coming soon when you shall see God face to face.
Remember the ways and the works of God.
God calls you out of darkness to walk in the light of his coming.
You are God's children.

Lord, make us one as we walk with Christ today and for ever.*