

Holding Space, Christmas Eve

This liturgy (worship service), was crafted by a small group of individuals who were part of a larger group of Lay Worship Leaders who gathered to learn about EPIC (Experiential, Participatory, Inclusive/Image Rich, and Connective) worship leadership, reflect on the theme of **holding space** in Advent, and collectively prepare for the season.

Based on the readings of the Revised Common Lectionary, the resource offers prayers and hymn suggestions, and, as time and energy permitted, reflection ideas. Where the authors have used or adapted material written by others, credit is offered at the bottom of the document. The left-hand column identifies the portion of the liturgical element. The middle column contains the words that may be shared. Spoken text for one voice is in regular font. The text for many voices is in **bold** font. Text that is to be shared in unison or responsively is offered in sense lines. The right-hand column offers any guidance for participation or movement.

This resource is offered to you as a gift by all of those who had a hand in preparing it. You are encouraged to adapt it for use in ways that fit your context, with the prayer that it may assist you in creating and **holding space** for hope, peace, joy and love to enter.



Liturgical Element	Content	Guidance
Word of Welcome	Good evening and welcome! On this holy night, we pause from the rush of the season to rest and wait for Christ's birth. Let us acknowledge this holy space within the unceded territory... Land Acknowledgement.	
Candle Lighting Litany ¹	Come gather in the light. The light of HOPE (light first candle) The light of PEACE (light second candle) The light of JOY (light third candle) The light of LOVE (light fourth candle) We gather this day as a people of God	

¹ Lloyd Bruce, FSLDW Regional Minister

	who follow in the Way of Jesus. We gather in the presence of fragile candlelight and in the presence of mystery to commit again to nurturing hope, sharing peace, speaking joy, and living love. Surely God is in this place. Surely the Spirit is near. May we rest in the good news that gathers us: Unto us a child is born. A light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it. Glory to God in the highest heaven! Amen. <i>Christ/centre candle is lit.</i>	
Sung Response #90 More Voices (adapted)²	Don't be afraid through Advent's waiting for hope is stronger than our fear. Keep holding space for hope to enter... For God has promised, promised to be always near. Don't be afraid through Advent's waiting for peace is stronger than our fear.	

² Jennie Delmotte, Music Director at Sackville United

	Keep holding space for peace to enter... For God has promised, promised to be always near. Don't be afraid through Advent's waiting for joy is stronger than our fear. Keep holding space for joy to enter... For God has promised, promised to be always near. Don't be afraid. through Advent's waiting for love is stronger than our fear. Keep holding space for love to enter... For God has promised, promised to be always near.	
Gathering Prayer	Holy One, we've heard Your promise to always be near. Here we are in the final hours of waiting for Your light to come and fill the space within our hearts, the space that only You can fill. We open our hearts to receive your gift of holy light that we can shine for others, bringing Your hope, peace, joy, and love to all the world.	
Invitation to Confession	Sometimes we (all) fail to live as followers of your way. Let us join together in confessing our shortcomings to our gracious God.	

Prayer for Transformation and New Life	Sometimes we're afraid to shine your light for others. We don't think we are good enough. Sometimes we are unkind. There's always some excuse. Sometimes we don't see your face in the faces of others. Inspire us to show the light of your love. Help us to carry forward the warmth of this joyous season. May we use the gifts of the Spirit to bless others now and always.	
Assurance of Grace	The world teaches us to be afraid. Throughout scripture we are told not to be afraid. God has promised transformation that begins this night when God's presence came to share this earthly life with us. Praise be!	
Hymn/Song	VU #12 She Walked in Summer	
Ancient Wisdom	Luke 1:26-38	
Modern Wisdom	Gretta Vosper. We All Breathe Spun into a velvet darkness, we greet this midwinter night. Promises of wonder, delight, and hope, lie waiting for us to capture them and make them real, building a world that shimmers with beauty.	

	Into the moments between receiving and giving, may we weave a tapestry of celebration; and as we cherish the gifts it has to offer, might the beauty, truth, and goodness that resides within us all be illumined with new meaning for each of us. May the world spin this night into wonder. As those born into love, yet ever seeking it, we offer ourselves to the quest.	
Reflection	What spaces are we shining light into? Are we exposing and addressing the broken places.	
Hymn/Song	MV #158 Dream a Dream	
Prayers of the People	In today's challenging world there is still so much to be thankful for. Thank you for the taste of gingerbread and chocolate, for the cheeriness of twinkling lights, for the fragrance of cedar and pine, and the feel of warm drinks in our hands on a cold day. Thank you for the way familiar carols sink into us bringing back memories of Christmases long past. Thank you for the gift of people who care for us.	

	On this holy night in which God joins heaven and earth, we hold space awaiting your presence. So many of us are tired or cranky; there is conflict in our families and communities and the world and many of us have a hard time dredging up hope. And yet your love continues to be born again. You are born again and again in all who go the extra mile; in caregivers and essential workers who support others even if it is a holiday, those who work at recovery following natural disasters, people who bring food to the hungry, and in everyday people reaching out in kindness. Open our eyes to those who bring good news of great joy to our aching world. You are with us every time we receive hard words and return soft ones, every time we give gifts to someone in need, expecting nothing in return. In the challenges and the blessings of the season we can lose sight of our purpose. But one thing is for certain. There will be angels.³	
Prayer of Jesus	Nope. Sing VU#38 Angels We Have Heard on High verse 4	
Commissioning	<i>Hand out battery operated votive candles while musician plays Silent Night (softly).</i>	

³ -Adapted from *Looking for Good News Advent Prayer* © Copyright Carol Penner www.leadinginworship.com.”

	The candles we hold this night cannot stay inside these walls. The true light of Christmas begins when we step out the door. <i>When all are distributed, music crescendos and all join in singing...</i>	
Hymn/Song	Silent Night VU#67	
Benediction	May God the creator of open spaces, the Word that illumines our lives, and the Spirit of love fill our hearts with joy now and always.	