

# Share the Light

## a Christmas Candle Lighting Experience

Wednesday, December 20, 2023



An Independent Interfaith Community  
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

Rev. Diana Johnson, with Lucinda Alton, RScP, Sherri Dotter, RScP, Chris Johnson, RScP, and musicians Dalton Fitzgerald, Gary French, & Special Guest Judith Preble

### Call to Awareness – 3 Bells

#### Lucinda – Opening Prayer

**Rev. Diana** – Good evening, and welcome. Thank you for coming out on this wintery evening. I trust that you will be glad you came. We'll be sharing stories, and lots of music as we celebrate together this Holy Season of Light. I invite you settle into whatever makes this time most nurturing for you...treat this time as prayer or celebration, or both. Take time to pause, to be grateful for all the year has given...and to open your heart and mind to the possibilities that lie ahead. Most of all, make this a time of remembering Who and Whose you are...a time to rekindle the Light of Divinity within...and a time to **Share the Light**.

**Sherri** – We look at the stars and wonder...How old is the universe? All we know is that once upon a time or, rather, once before time, the Great Mystery called everything into being in a great breath of creativity—waters, land, green growing things, birds and beasts, and finally human creatures—the beginning, the genesis. In God's good time the universe came into being, opening up from a tiny flower of nothingness to great clouds of hydrogen gas to swirling galaxies. In God's good time came solar systems and planets and ultimately this planet on which we gather on this cold winter evening as the Earth makes its graceful dance around the sun.


In ancient times, before written language, there were people all over the planet living in tribes or clans. Some of them were nomadic, hunting and gathering food as they travelled with the seasons. In time, some settled and began growing food for their sustenance. Although these tribes had little or no contact with one another, they had something in common – they shared a keen awareness of Mother Nature...the weather and the seasons...light and darkness...their lives depended on it. Another thing they shared in common...they looked to the spirits in making sense of their world.


**Ancient Mother**, by Robert Gass and On Wings of Song (Recorded)

**Sherri** – Take a walk backward in time...Imagine what you may have experienced...it is the longest, darkest night of Winter...what we call the Winter Solstice. It has been growing colder for months now, as the days grow shorter, and the sun's warmth becomes a distant memory. If we have pleased the gods, the light will return...we create and offer

rituals as prayer. We sing, dance and drum in celebration of Life...make wreathes and burn the Yule Log to honor the Great Mystery, offer gifts to the fire and to one another, in gratitude for the gifts showered upon us by our Mother.

### **Rev. Diana, Chris, Dalton & Gary – Music**

 **Yuletide Comes**, written by Flora Ware

 **Solstice Carol**, written by Kim Baryluck

**Rev. Diana** – Before written language, stories were passed down by word of mouth. The wisdom keepers amongst us painted pictures through song and poetry...used body language to act out their stories, bringing the power of imagination to their history and legends.

Time marches on, people all over the planet are evolving and changing...sometimes using war to establish dominance. Then as now, humans had a difficult time accepting and allowing our differences.

The story of the Hanukkah Miracle paints a picture of what the Hanukkah celebration is all about. The Jewish people had been exiled and returned to their homeland numerous times, and so they had rooted themselves in rituals and tradition, expressions of *time*, having no *place* to call their own. They had been stripped of their spiritual customs and practices and forbidden to celebrate Shabbat, or to observe their festivals. It became illegal for them to read or study Torah or worship in the Temple, and they were made to worship Greek idols.

Many Jews were afraid for their lives, so they followed the king's orders. But one group of brave souls decided they would not worship foreign gods or give up their way of life. They were determined to take back their Temple and defend their religious freedom.

Compared with the King's army, they were small in number, but they were mighty in spirit. With faith and relentless determination, and against all odds, they took back their Temple, but were heartbroken to discover that their holy space had been desecrated. They lovingly cleaned and purified every inch of the Temple. And then they held a glorious rededication ceremony.

The word "Hanukkah" means "dedication," and it comes from the moment when the Temple was triumphantly returned to the Jewish people. The story is told that when the Maccabees walked into the Temple, they found only enough oil to light the Menorah for one day – but miraculously, that small amount of oil lasted for eight days, which is exactly how long it took to replenish their supply. Today, the celebration of the Jewish Season of Light lasts eight days, in honor of the miracles that occurred so many years ago.

The modern message from the Jewish people to the world is this: we must always work to find light in the darkness, and we must always work to keep the light of religious freedom burning for all people, for all time. And we must remember that it is only by working together that we can change our world.

## Rev. Diana, Chris, Dalton & Gary – Music

 ***The Song of One***, written by Laura Powers


**Chris** – This miracle of Light also speaks to us on a personal level. It invites us to shine the Light of Spirit into the dark places, in ourselves and in our world, when we think we cannot...when there seems not enough.

This miracle symbolizes a faith that is steadfast in times of apparent lack or difficulty. It represents the ever-present Light of God, self-existent, eternal...shining always...within you...within me...

Now in the Ancient Hebrew tradition, there was a prophecy that a Messiah would come, fully God, fully human...we thought it would be nice to let the music tell the story.

## Rev. Diana, Chris, Dalton & Gary – Music

 ***O Come, O Come Emmanuel***, Traditional Chant

 ***Mary, Did You Know?***, written by Mark Lowry & Buddy Greene

**Lucinda** – Many Pagan practices were absorbed into the new Christmas festival...the evergreen, a symbol of eternal life...mistletoe, associated with fertility. And what about the many lights that we painstakingly hang every December? What of the Light? You may recall that on the night Jesus was born, there was a bright star in the sky, guiding the wise men to the stable, or so the book of Matthew tells us. Part of the Christian symbolism of light at this darkest time of year has always meant living in God's Light.

**Rev. Diana** – (excerpted/quoted from Rev. Linda Martella-Whitsett):

The Christmas Story points to the birth of our Divine Identity, our spiritual potential, our Christ Consciousness. Meister Eckhart wrote of the mystical nature of our spiritual birth: "Here is the birthplace of the light. Here we are both birthing the light and we are the light being birthed – God giving birth to God."

"Christ is forever being born by our bidding. We bid it when we yearn for it and labor for it – by study and spiritual practices. This birth occurs again and again, moment by moment, as fresh potential and limitless possibilities. This is why we celebrate Christmas..." to celebrate Jesus as an example of one who attained Christ Consciousness.

I would like to share the Silent Night, Holy Night Meditation, written by Rev. Linda Martella-Whitsett.

"Silent night, Holy night. In the quiet, sacred darkness, Christ is born.

Silent, holy night, the womb of Spirit, in silence and sacredness, a whisper of awe in the dark night.

It is time. The light has come. Christ is born.

Even when my mind is like a classroom filled with chattering kindergarteners, boisterous and ungrounded, even then, Christ is born.

Even when I fail to notice the purposeful order of my life and discount the generous blessings of every day, even then, Christ is born.

Even when I give up on myself, harboring unkind self-judgement and believing in self-imposed limitations, even then, Christ is born.

Even when I doubt, and when I worry in unworthiness or boast and pretend I am separate and self-sustaining, even then, Christ is born.

Even when I behold divine splendor in the faces of my loved ones, and when I give generously without first taking inventory of my good, even then, Christ is born.

Christ is born, into my silent, holy night. Christ is born, into my silent, holy night.”

### **Rev. Diana, Chris, Dalton & Gary – Music**

 ***Miracle Hymn***, written by Candace Lee & Luke Thomas Atencio

### **Chris & Dalton – Music**

 ***O Holy Night***, written by Adolphe Adam

**Chris** – There is another story that has grown up around the Christmas Story. Legend has it that there was a small boy who offered his drumming at the birth of the baby Jesus. He was a simple shepherd and had nothing to offer but his humble gift. Several years ago, Diana and I were talking about this well-known story and wondering where this Little Drummer Boy might have come from, and what might have happened to him after his auspicious performance. This next song tells us of his life’s story...

### **Rev. Diana, Chris, Dalton & Gary – Music**

 ***Ancient Drum, Written by Diana & Chris Johnson***

### **Rev. Diana – Love Offering**

It has become tradition to offer gifts to friends and family during this holy-day season. We take a moment now to offer you the opportunity to share of your financial good in support of the Work we are doing in the world, and in support of our growth and expansion into our new space in 2024.

If you are viewing the service from home, either tonight or on Christmas Eve morning, you can go to our website, [mysticheart.org](http://mysticheart.org), to find our Donate Button or mailing address. We truly appreciate your generosity. It ensures a prosperous start to the New Year and assists us in growing this powerful Work. We know that God is the Source of all Good, and that It flows through your generous hearts and hands.

### **Chris & Dalton – Offertory Music**

 ***Ave Maria, composed by Franz Schubert***

**Sherri – Prayer of Gratitude for the Offering,**

**Rev. Diana – Closing & Prayer**

Jesus was both human and Divine...a great teacher, evolutionary, and revolutionary. His powerful message was for the common people, for all people...that when we live from Love and Compassion, we are expressing our Divinity, in the image and likeness of the Creator. His spirit lives on in our hearts and minds, in the Collective Consciousness, and his example continues to guide us.

We join our hearts in prayer...

There is only One Eternal Light, One Source, One Power, One Life... I call It God...Great Mystery...It is the All-In-All...It is the Divine Spark that brings Life into being...the Divine Order behind Life's unfolding. I Am that Light; *You* are that Light. All that exists, at its very core, is Light. I know that the Light of the Christ is inherent in all beings, in all of Creation, no matter the appearance...we need only let it shine...

And so we do...through the deep cracks left behind by every heartbreak and loss, by every time we were hurt or hurt another...we let that Light shine. We say Yes to the gifts of this Advent Season...the Divine Qualities that are already given...Faith, Peace, Love, and Joy...acknowledging the Light of the Christ, in full Faith that it is present within *me*...in full Faith that it is born in form and experience in our world, here and now.

For this I give deep and profound thanks, honoring and celebrating the Light, releasing, accepting, embodying, and radiating the Light of the One...And so it is. And so it shall ever be. Amen!

Please remember this coming Sunday is the fourth Sunday of Advent, where the candle of Joy is lit. You may want to take your candle home with you this evening and light it again on Sunday morning to celebrate the Joy. I will close with a short message from Rev. Theresa Burton of the Unity Tradition:

“The joy that is quiet, the joy that fills our hearts with love and our eyes with tears, is the joy that brings us home to ourselves. That joy is ours when we touch the peace and perfection of the Divine and know deep in our hearts that God is not separate from us and never was. At the end of our Advent journey, we finally arrive – through faith, peace, love, and joy – at the home we can never leave. We realize at the deepest level that we are in God, fully human and fully divine, and the Christ is born anew.”

And this realization can happen in a flash...in ***One Night, One Moment***.

**Rev. Diana, Chris, Dalton & Gary – Music**

 ***One Night, One Moment***, written by Deborah Ann Isitt & Nicholas Charles Ager

 ***Share the Light***, written by Karina Skye

**Rev. Diana – Candle Lighting Ceremony**

Within apparent darkness, there is always a ray of Light. So that we might enter the New Year with our hearts, minds, and gaze set on that Light, we light these candles. As we begin, let your eyes gently close for a moment if you are comfortable doing so. Call to mind something in your life, or in the world, that is calling to have its Light revealed...

...That is awaiting the return of Wholeness. Maybe it is a personal healing...or maybe it is a global challenge, or something else.

Know with me that the act of lighting your candle this evening is a symbol for your intention...to shine your Light in the world. It is a reminder that wherever you shine your Divine Light, Wholeness is revealed.

And may it remind each of us that, no matter the appearance, the world is alight with blessings for those who will see.

I trust in the Divine Flow of Spirit to guide our ceremony this evening. As you feel called, come to the front, and choose a candle. Allow yourself to receive a blessing from one of our Prayer Practitioners as they share the Light of the Christ Candle. Then carry that Light with you as you return to your seat. When everyone has a candle, we will close the evening by joining our voices in Silent Night.

**Christmas Carols**, played by Judith Preble

**Judith Preble, Rev. Diana, Chris, Dalton & Gary – Closing Song**

 **Silent Night / May Peace Prevail**, written by Joseph Mohr, Franz Gruber, & Chris Johnson

**Rev. Diana** – In honor of the Buddhist tradition, which also celebrated the Light this month, I offer the Metta:

May all beings be happy; may all beings be well; may all beings be safe; may all beings be peaceful and at ease.

May you and yours enjoy Yuletide Blessings, a Merry Christmas, and a Peaceful, Prosperous, and Happy New Year as you **Share the Light**.



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