



PREPARING TO BECOME THE
**BELOVED
COMMUNITY**

ADVENT-YEAR A

Preparing to Become the Beloved Community

Year A

Advent 2022, 2025, 2028

Session One: Advent 1 – Proclaiming the Dream of Beloved Community

Session Two: Advent 2 – Practicing the Way of Love in the Pattern of Jesus

Session Three: Advent 3 – Repairing the Breach in Society and Institutions

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Session Five: Christmas Eve or Christmas Day – Lighting the Candle

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Learn more about Becoming the Beloved Community and
The Episcopal Church at www.episcopalchurch.org/reconciliation.

Share reflections and queries by writing to reconciliation@episcopalchurch.org
or on social media using #belovedcommunity.

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ABOUT THE ADVENT WREATH LITURGY

The Advent wreath is believed to have originated with a Lutheran pastor working among the poor in Germany in the late 1800s. Tradition states that the children would ask every day if Christmas had arrived, so he arranged candles (four large candles for the weeks and then smaller ones for the days) to help the children mark time and journey with Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem without leaving Germany. The wreath came to appear as it does today through the adoption of the practice by German Catholics, who decreased the wreath to just the candles we use today. Different traditions attribute different meanings to the candles, and even use different colors, but the purpose remains the same: to provide Christians with a way of marking time through the season of anticipation until we reach the birth of Jesus. For some, the wreath is a visual pilgrimage through Advent, similar to the idea behind the recreation of the creche in churches and homes started by St. Francis of Assisi as a way of helping the poor experience holy sites from home. For many, this Advent will be spent at home and lighting the Advent wreath will serve as a method for journeying with Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. Our liturgy comes from a place of social justice and Becoming Beloved Community. It is our hope that the prayers throughout this document will help you journey through this time of waiting and anticipation for when Christ is born again in our hearts and in our world. This liturgy is written for a literacy level of 5th grade and up. For smaller children, you can adapt the liturgy by saying the “Reader 1” section and lighting the candles.

WELCOME

*In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God...
Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together. - Isaiah 40:3, 5*

Advent is a season of preparation: shopping for gifts, decorating our homes and sanctuaries. Advent is also a time to prepare our hearts and communities for the coming of Christ, the Almighty God who came among us poor and homeless, a stranger and a child. There may be no better time to reflect on how we as the Episcopal Church embrace the Holy One who continues to draw near in the neighbor, the stranger, the refugee, or the one who seems most “other” to you. It is the ideal season to commit to becoming Beloved Community and growing loving, liberating, life-giving relationships across the human family of God.

We make the journey not only as individual Christians and congregations, but as a whole church. This spring, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and President of the House of Deputies Gay Clark Jennings and their supporting officers shared “Becoming Beloved Community,” a new vision document that lays out the Episcopal Church’s long-term commitment to racial healing, reconciliation, and justice. A second resource — “Becoming Beloved Community Where You Are” — details many ways for individuals and congregations to take concrete steps toward change and healing. Both are available at www.episcopalchurch.org/beloved-community, along with a host of resources for faithful reflection and action.

The journey is framed around the labyrinth. Why? In the ministry of racial healing and justice, none of us walks a straight line. We enter the labyrinth wherever God has provided an opening – telling the truth about our church’s story around race; discerning and proclaiming God’s dream of Beloved Community where we are; learning and practicing Jesus’ way of healing and love; and bravely working to transform systemic racial injustice. We keep moving from one quadrant to another and back. No one is ever really finished. That is the way of ongoing spiritual formation.

As you “walk” sections of this labyrinth, gather a group, and together engage the scriptures, reflections, and activities. Designate a facilitator who will carefully preview the session. Set aside at least 45 minutes for each session, and consider these **Conversation Tips**:

Speak from your own experience. Be genuinely curious about what others share. Imagine you can disagree without someone being wrong. Avoid debate and stay with the story. Seek Christ in others and seek to embody his loving, liberating, life-giving way.

You will find printer-friendly online resources and alternative activities for a variety of contexts – at www.episcopalchurch.org/beloved-community. Feel free to also explore daily offerings and ongoing conversation about Becoming Beloved Community on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry regularly welcomes us to live not just as the church but as the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement: the ongoing community that follows Jesus into loving, liberating, life-giving relationship with God, each other, and creation. May God bless and grow us into vibrant embodiments of the Christ we welcome and follow, this Advent and always.

Prayerfully offered,

The Episcopal Church’s Racial Reconciliation Team
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ADVENT I

Proclaiming the Dream of Beloved Community

Contributors:

Kim Heise, candidate for the diaconate, Episcopal Church in Minnesota

Wayne Pulford, postulant for the diaconate, Episcopal Church in Minnesota

Pray the Collect for This Sunday

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Read the Scripture Together: Romans 13:11-14

13 ¹¹ You know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹² the night is far gone the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³ let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Reflection: Proclaiming the Dream

In the reading it says, “Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.” When I read that I couldn’t help but think about laying aside all the commercialism and materialism of the Christmas holiday and our preparation for it. We can get so wrapped up in it, we forget the joy and hope of Christ’s coming that we can share with others.

How can we “put on Christ” during Advent? A person I know uses half of the money she plans to spend on Christmas presents to support a community nonprofit, and everyone receives a card from that organization. That is part of her “armor of light” during Advent. Participating in a food distribution program in our area is part of my protective garment. At the beginning of the pandemic, I saw firsthand how it gave people hope that they could get through the hard times they were in.

In what ways can you proclaim Christ coming into the world? Not just to family, friends, and your congregation but to your co-workers, neighbors, and your community? In the shorter, colder days we have during winter in the Northern Hemisphere during Advent, we can all benefit from more people sharing hope with others and letting it shine into the Beloved Community.

In the Labyrinth: Proclaiming the Dream

In Romans, the armor of light is God’s love and truth. How can you and your church proclaim God’s love and truth? How can you shine the light of truth on the injustices in your community and the world? What is your congregation doing to share hope, especially in marginalized communities?

Make It Real: Talk Story and Sharing Tea

Setup: Have enough tables so that no more than six people are at a table. Place butcher-block paper on the tables and tape it down so that folks can write on it. Put pens and pencils on the tables for participants. Place various individually wrapped tea bags in the center of the tables.

Instructions: Please remember to be respectful of each other. Listening to the other person is the most important thing you are going to be doing, and there are no right or wrong answers.

Ask each participant to introduce themselves, taking no more than 20 seconds per person. Then, ask each participant to share a story or their thoughts using one of the nine prompts below. Limit sharing to three minutes per person. Once a prompt has been answered, it is done and no longer available to be answered. The youngest person at the table starts first. On the butcher paper, you are free to write thoughts or notes about what you hear others saying.

Prompts for Group Sharing:

1. To me, Beloved Community looks like...
2. I was especially aware of my race when I...
3. To foster Beloved Community, I hope to...
4. To me, hope looks like...
5. This is what it looks like when we put on the “armor of light” in our neighborhoods / community...
6. I feel we could fight the “works of darkness” in our neighborhood / community by...
7. I feel this church / parish could proclaim the dream of Beloved Community by...
8. When I look at our neighborhood/community, I dream of...
9. I believe we can shine God’s loving truth on the injustices in our community by...

Next: Once everyone has had the opportunity to answer one of the questions, go around and respond to something you heard someone say.

- What did you like or appreciate about what someone said?
- How could you build on what someone else said?
- Where did you hear hope?

The oldest person at the table starts. Again, you are free to use the butcher paper to record thoughts, ideas, or suggestions.

When everyone has had the opportunity to respond to what someone else has said, take a moment to look around your table first, then the room. Ask your table this question:

- Who is not here that we should have a conversation with? Name that individual(s) and write them on the butcher paper under the title, “**Who Isn’t Here.**”

Continuation for the week ahead: Participants who are willing can take two tea bags for each person they are willing to have a similar conversation with. Contact them, letting them know you would like to have a cup of tea and a conversation about Beloved Community and hope. If the other person is willing, set a date, time, and place on how you are going to meet. Will it be by phone, Zoom, or in person? Bring or mail the tea bag and on the appointed date and time, gather together, make your tea, and start your conversation.

What did you learn? What can you take back to your faith community and share? What might you build on?

Lighting the Candle

Readings can be said by one or two people depending on the needs of your family or congregation.

All: Light of the world, in grace and beauty,
 Mirror of God’s eternal face,
 Transparent flame of love’s free duty,

You bring salvation to our human race.¹

Reader 1: Sacred mystery, we light the first candle of Advent for hope and light.

The first candle is lit.

Reader 2: We kindle it with love and hope. As we await your coming, Jesus, help us to shine forth your light of love and truth.²

All: Sacred mystery, fill us with your Spirit, that with your armor of light we can shine God's love, truth, and justice out into the world, giving hope to those on the margins and in all in your world. Amen.

¹ Throughout the liturgy, the prayer said at the beginning is slightly adapted from the "Phos Hilaron" on page 23 of "Enriching Our Worship I": the word "human" was added before "race."

² Throughout the liturgy, the prayers said by Reader 2 and at the end have been adapted from the "Liturgy for Lighting Advent Candles" from the United Church of Christ.

ADVENT II

Practicing the Way of Love in the Pattern of Jesus

Contributors:

The Rev. Mary N. Sebold, deacon, Episcopal Diocese of Washington

Rebekah Hays Estera, postulant for the diaconate, Episcopal Diocese of California

Pray the Collect for this Sunday

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Read the Scripture Together: Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

- 1 Give the King your justice, O God, *
and your righteousness to the King's Son;
 - 2 That he may rule your people righteously *
and the poor with justice;
 - 3 That the mountains may bring prosperity to the people, *
and the little hills bring righteousness.
 - 4 He shall defend the needy among the people; *
he shall rescue the poor and crush the oppressor.
 - 5 He shall live as long as the sun and moon endure, *
from one generation to another.
 - 6 He shall come down like rain upon the mown field, *
like showers that water the earth.
 - 7 In his time shall the righteous flourish; *
there shall be abundance of peace till the moon shall be no more.
-
- 18 Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, *
who alone does wondrous deeds!
 - 19 And blessed be his glorious Name for ever! *
and may all the earth be filled with his glory.
Amen and Amen.

Reflection: Practicing the Way of Love in the Pattern of Jesus

As Christians, we are charged to pursue peace by practicing the way of love in the pattern of Jesus. Psalm 72 is “of Solomon,” a ruler from the Hebrew Scriptures often associated with sound judgment and defense of the oppressed. Notice how the psalmist repeats and interchanges the words “justice” and “righteous[ness],” two characteristics of peace.

Like King Solomon, we will never be perfect justice-bearers, reconcilers, or peacemakers, but our attempts to seek Christ in each other will promote God’s Beloved Community. God will do the rest.

Let us begin the church year by practicing peace anew. We can share stories of where we found, and failed to find, peace. We can listen for tales of endurance and righteousness, deliverance and justice. We can ask ourselves where we need peace. Then, we can dream of a time when, with God’s help, we follow Jesus’s pattern of inclusivity and mutualism to see God’s “glory fill the whole earth. Amen and Amen.”

In the Labyrinth: Practicing the Way of Love in the Pattern of Jesus

The psalmist uses some words almost interchangeably. Think about what each word means. Can we have righteousness without peace? Can we have peace without justice? Can people live in true justice if there is not justice for the earth?

Make It Real: Labyrinth Reflection

Go to a labyrinth if you are able. You may also find a handheld labyrinth, an online labyrinth (such as <https://labyrinthjourney.app/>), or a paper labyrinth to trace or color (such as the cover of this booklet). As you travel into the center, reflect on the first part of each prompt—*where does peace need to be made?* As you travel out from the center, reflect on the second part of each prompt—*how will I show up?* Remember, there are ways to be present to others whatever our physical abilities or life responsibilities. Think expansively about how you can show up.

- Where does my life need peace to be made? How will I show up?
- Where does my church need peace to be made? How will I show up?
- Where does my community need peace to be made? How will I show up?
- Where does my country need peace to be made? How will I show up?
- Where does our world need peace to be made? How will I show up?

Afterward, gather together. Share a story of a time that you acted as a peacemaker or were inspired by a peacemaker. Listen to each other.

Make a list of ways your community can act as peacemakers. Pin this list in a place you can all see it, reflect on it, and revisit it throughout the season. As the reflection reminds us, we will never be perfect, but we can always strive to return to the goodness in which we are created. Remember to keep showing up throughout the year.

Lighting the Candle

Readings can be said by one or two people depending on the needs of your family or congregation.

The first candle is lit.

All: Light of the world, in grace and beauty,
 Mirror of God's eternal face,
 Transparent flame of love's free duty,
 You bring salvation to our human race.³

Reader 1: Sacred mystery, we light the second candle of Advent for peace.

The second candle is lit.

Reader 2: We kindle it with your peace. We await the coming of Christ who gives us a pattern for peace and beloved community through his example of righteousness and justice.⁴

³ Throughout the liturgy, the prayer said at the beginning is slightly adapted from the "Phos Hilaron" on page 23 of "Enriching Our Worship I": the word "human" was added before "race."

⁴ Throughout the liturgy, the prayers said by Reader 2 and at the end have been adapted from the "Liturgy for Lighting Advent Candles" from the United Church of Christ.

All: Saving God, look upon your world, heal your land, and your people. Prepare us to be changed. Teach us to be righteous and just, as you are. Amen.

ADVENT III

Repairing the Breach in Society and Institutions

Contributors:

Diane Cox, postulant for the diaconate, Episcopal Diocese of Western New York

Robin Kozlowski, postulant for the diaconate, Episcopal Diocese of Western New York

Pray the Collect for This Sunday

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

Read the Scripture Together: Cantic 15 (Luke 1:46-55)

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; *

for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed: *

the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him *
in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm, *

he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, *
and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things, *
and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel, *

for he has remembered his promise of mercy,

The promise he made to our fathers, *
to Abraham and his children for ever.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Reflection: Repairing the Breach in Society and Institutions

Mary's faith was deeply rooted in God's greatness and mercy. While she knew her child would be born into a world breached by oppression and injustice, Mary proclaimed the dream of Beloved Community brought forth by God: a time when the proud and mighty would no longer rule with oppression, and those in need would receive what justice demands. With faith, she rejoiced in the promise that the child in her womb would teach all humanity how to repair the breach with justice and mercy.

We proclaim in our baptismal promises that we will, with God's help, strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being. Will we have the faith and courage, based on our promises, to be repairers of the breach in our institutions and society? Will we, like Mary, proclaim the dream of Beloved Community and follow the example of Jesus to bring about justice and mercy?

In the Labyrinth: Repairing the Breach in Society and Institutions

God came among us in Jesus because of the deep, divine longing to heal the brokenness of this world with love. What institutions and systems are broken? How will we participate in the repair, restoration, and healing of people, institutions, and systems?

Make It Real: The Far by Faith Exercise

Repairing the breach in our institutions and societies begins with an understanding of where the breach exists and how our group or family may become involved in the repair. Gather in groups of no more than eight people or as a family at home, forming circles so that everyone is able to see and hear one another. Take turns sharing from your own experiences and perspectives for each of the prompts listed below, allowing everyone to have an opportunity to share. Please be respectful of those who choose not to share. A suggested timeframe is to allow about 10 minutes for each of the prompts. Once everyone has spoken, enter into conversation to understand one another's perspectives more fully.

Conversation Tips:

Speak from your own experience. Be genuinely curious about what others share. Imagine you can disagree without someone being wrong. Avoid debate and stay with the story. Seek Christ in others and seek to embody his loving, liberating, life-giving way.

- How are you aware of brokenness in the policies and practices of social institutions with which your community, your family and/or you, personally interact?
- Institutions and societies are composed of connected individuals. How may your community, your family, and/or you, address the brokenness through the sharing of your faith with the people you encounter each day?
- How may your community, your family, and/or you, begin, continue, or join the work of repairing the breach in such a way that your intentions become concrete action?

Lighting the Candle

Readings can be said by one or two people depending on the needs of your family or congregation.

The first and second candles are lit.

All: Light of the world, in grace and beauty,
 Mirror of God's eternal face,
 Transparent flame of love's free duty,
 You bring salvation to our human race.⁵

Reader 1: Sacred Mystery, we light the third candle of Advent for faith and courage.

The third candle is lit.

Reader 2: We kindle it with joy. We hear the joy of Mary's song and witness her faith. Give us faith and courage so that we may repair the breach created through oppression and injustice.⁶

⁵ Throughout the liturgy, the prayer said at the beginning is slightly adapted from the "Phos Hilaron" on page 23 of "Enriching Our Worship I": the word "human" was added before "race."

⁶ Throughout the liturgy, the prayers said by Reader 2 and at the end have been adapted from the "Liturgy for Lighting Advent Candles" from the United Church of Christ.

All: Sacred Mystery, visit us and fill us with your Spirit. Bring your Good News to life within us. Give us faith and courage to walk in the way of the Beloved Community that you set before us. Amen.

ADVENT IV

Telling the Truth about Our Churches and Race

Contributors:

The Rev. Dawn McNamara, deacon, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia

The Rev. Susannah Harding, deacon, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia

Pray the Collect for This Sunday

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Read the Scripture Together: Psalm 80: 1-7, 16-18

- 1 Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock; *
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.
- 2 In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, *
stir up your strength and come to help us.
- 3 Restore us, O God of hosts; *
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.
- 4 O Lord God of hosts, *
how long will you be angered
despite the prayers of your people?
- 5 You have fed them with the bread of tears; *
you have given them bowls of tears to drink.
- 6 You have made us the derision of our neighbors, *
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.
- 7 Restore us, O God of hosts; *
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.
- 16 Let your hand be upon the man of your right hand, *
the son of man you have made so strong for yourself.
- 17 And so will we never turn away from you; *
give us life, that we may call upon your Name.
- 18 Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; *
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

Reflection: Telling the Truth

Sometimes we just want to know “how long?” How long before justice comes, and all people are treated equally and valued for who they are and not who others think they should be?

The psalmist repeatedly asks for God to illumine us in the hopes of being saved from the laughter and scorn of injustice in all forms. When we as congregations can let God’s light shine through our lives together, then we can begin the work of restoration needed so badly. This begins with truth-telling.

It’s not easy work. We may get discouraged and feel angry that our words seem to fall on deaf ears. We may see the community gathered inside our church doors and how different the world looks outside and wonder how we can bridge the barrier between us.

We know that God hears us. We know that because a babe is about to be born who shows us the way by love.

One of the many great blessings of the psalms is that their words give insight into the feelings of a people living out their covenant with God, just as we are living out our lives in the light of covenant and the way shown to us through Jesus Christ. Let me close with a poem I wrote in response to Psalm 80:

*Gaze into my eyes and just maybe I will be whole.
Instead of the shell of myself that calls out your name in the night.
Or maybe I'll just drown myself with whatever idol makes me forget.
How long will I carry this load?
Consumed with tears of doubt that you ever listened.
Can you not tear this burden away from me?
My eyes grow faint and my legs are weak with this load of injustice tossed upon me through no fault of my own.
You know I will never turn away from you.
I will stand in the torrent of my tears,
Knowing that you, God, hear my sighs
You, God, give me strength for the coming day,
rest for my wearied soul,
and balm for my aching heart.
See, our new day is coming,
Carrying yet lifting up,
A heavy heart,
Not heavy with scorn,
Heavy with love,
Always love.
A love that has guided me oh these many years,
To pray,
To serve,
For a new tomorrow.*

In the Labyrinth: Telling the Truth about Our Churches and Race

We cannot become who God created us to be unless we also examine who we have been and who we are today. Who are we as a church community? Which voices are heard? Which ones are silent or absent? What are the prophetic voices among us saying? What opportunities are there for bridges to be built?

Make It Real: Placing Yourself in the Story

Break into groups of four to six people:

Listen as one member of the group reads the following portrait of courageous truth-telling, then hold space for silent reflection before continuing.

When she first started telling her story, the faces of the others in the room looked surprised. Could she keep going and tell the truth about what had been happening? She could feel the tears rising. Would anyone take her seriously? Would the others laugh or ridicule her? Would telling the story of what happened make a difference? She wondered, "How long, O Lord, must I bear this burden?" She knew what needed to change to make things fair for everyone. She breathed in "Yah" and out "weh," then continued telling her story ... naming the truth of her lived experience. Soon others in the room were nodding. They were listening. Afterward, one person said, "I thought I was the only one that had happened to." Another said, "I had no idea that was happening." Another said, "Your story changed the way I think about that issue." Still others continued to reflect for days afterward, recognizing the sharing of the story as a gift.

After time for silent reflection, invite people to name which character(s) in the story they found themselves identifying with, and—if they are comfortable talking about it—why.

Review the **Conversation Tips**:

Speak from your own experience. Be genuinely curious about what others share. Imagine you can disagree without someone being wrong. Avoid debate and stay with the story. Seek Christ in others and seek to embody his loving, liberating, life-giving way.

Now reflect as a group:

- How does our congregation or community encourage or discourage expressions of truth?
- Name three things that this congregation or community could change or embrace to help create space that would make you more comfortable sharing the truth of your experience?
- What are some truths that no one speaks about in this congregation or community?

Lighting the Candle

Readings can be said by one or two people depending on the needs of your family or congregation.

The first, second, and third candles are lit.

All: Light of the world, in grace and beauty,
 Mirror of God’s eternal face,
 Transparent flame of love’s free duty,
 You bring salvation to our human race.⁷

Reader 1: Sacred mystery, we light the fourth candle of Advent for love and truth.

The fourth candle is lit.

Reader 2: We kindle this flame with love and the hope for the truth that is the light you brought into the world.⁸

All: Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; show the light of your countenance and we shall be saved. Amen.⁹

⁷ Throughout the liturgy, the prayer said at the beginning is slightly adapted from the “Phos Hilaron” on page 23 of “Enriching Our Worship I”: the word “human” was added before “race.”

⁸ Throughout the liturgy, the prayers said by Reader 2 and at the end have been adapted from the “Liturgy for Lighting Advent Candles” from the United Church of Christ.

⁹ Repeated antiphon from Psalm 80:3, 7, 18

CHRISTMAS EVE OR CHRISTMAS DAY

Lighting the Candle

Readings can be said by one or two people depending on the needs of your family or congregation.

The first, second, third, and fourth candles are lit.

All: Light of the world, in grace and beauty,
Mirror of God's eternal face,
Transparent flame of love's free duty,
You bring salvation to our human race.¹⁰

Reader 1: Rejoice, people of God. The Light has come into the world. Sacred Mystery, we now light the candle of your nativity.

The Christ candle is lit.

Reader 2: With the company of heaven and with sounds of great joy, you come to us. Now is the time of celebration and joy.

All: Blessed Jesus, our Life and Light, thank you for coming this night (day) to us. Fill us with joy at your coming and make us instruments of your love. Help us to love those you loved, the least, the last, and the lost. Amen.¹¹

¹⁰ Throughout the liturgy, the prayer said at the beginning is slightly adapted from the "Phos Hilaron" on page 23 of "Enriching Our Worship I": the word "human" was added before "race."

¹¹ Throughout the liturgy, the prayers said by Reader 2 and at the end have been adapted from the "Liturgy for Lighting Advent Candles" from the United Church of Christ.