

**From Cosmic to Incarnate  
Christmas Eve Worship Service  
2019**

**Cosmic Hope**

Isaiah 9:2b, 6-7

The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
on them light has shined.

For a child has been born for us,  
a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders;  
and he is named  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
His authority shall grow continually,  
and there shall be endless peace  
for the throne of David and his kingdom.  
He will establish and uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time onward and forevermore.  
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

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Intro:

One of my favourite things about this Christmas is all of the decorations.

Look at our church, all decorated.

Under our tree is some extra decorations for us to add tonight.

I wonder how many of you would like to see what they are?

Let's open them one by one.

Open Box: Christmas Decorations 1: Christmas Lights

How many of you put up Christmas lights. What do they look like?

I love Christmas lights! I love driving around at night and seeing the lights shining. It reminds me of the stars. Bright glowing stars filling the sky, lighting up the darkness.

How many of you have ever gone outside and stared up at the night sky? What did you see? How did it make you feel?

Did you know that we are made of stars? From the big bang came a cosmic gift, God unleashing the creativity of the universe, the elements of life flooding out throughout creation, the promise and potential. From supernovas, the explosion of stars, came the stuff that made life possible on this planet. Life unfolding. God's gift expanding, spreading throughout the universe, bringing to this planet, our home.

It is no surprise that people have long look up into the night sky and seen it as God's realm. Throughout time people have looked out, into the cosmos, searching for meaning and direction. Stars that guided travellers. Stars that reminded people of their sacred stories. Stars that shone God's presence. Always searching, always stargazing, always feeling the Divine pointing them towards something more.

And when life was difficult, into the difficult moments of struggles, pain, injustice, and war people looked for divine wisdom. Words like those of the prophet Isaiah came to them: "the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; (plug in lights)...."

... those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.”

Are there places of your life, in this world, where you find yourself searching out the stars – struggling to find some words of hope and blessing, looking for the divine spark that brings life fully alive?

With the stargazers ancient and old as we string up lights in the darkness, search out divine presence and promise: For a child has been born for us.

**(hang lights)**

### **Earthly**

Matthew 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

“Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel,”

which means, “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

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Are you ready to see what our next Christmas decoration?

(Pull out nativity pieces)

It is our nativity figures.

How many of you have nativity sets at home? Little figures telling a story.  
What does your nativity set look like?

As a child I loved playing with our nativity set. My sister and I would act out the stories. Mary and Joseph talking and walking. Angel announcements and Shepherds on the move.

And other than the angels the characters in the nativity set looked oh so ordinary. It was people and animals. It could have been scene most places. Here some shelter, there a new family looking in wonder at their newborn, some people watching livestock.

Hope, wonder, fear, and hesitation, all played out as it has throughout time as life is lived, as new life is birthed, as strangers come together and the holy moment of relationship is formed.

The nativity set is so earthy, so commonplace, so simple. And yet, into this place, the Divine is found not just out there in the stars, but in a woman who says yes to holy possibilities, a man who decides to stay and nurture life and Sacred promise, in the birthing cries, and first breaths.

Are there places in your life that feel so earthly, so common place, so simple and you wonder can anything holy or magnificent happen here?

We place our nativity set under our stars, shifting our gaze from cosmos to earthly as we join with the people of all time looking around us at the common everyday reality and search out where Holy presence, where God is encountered.

## Luke 2:1-20

2 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup> All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup> Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup> He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

<sup>8</sup> In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup> to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

<sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” <sup>16</sup> So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

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One final bag

An Angel, part of our nativity scene.

Some candles – a nice way to brighten our Christmas decorations.

Stones - for.... because.... okay, how many of you have stones in your Christmas decorations.

I put stones in here because I love stones. Nazareth, Jesus' home town was a stony place.

I love stones, and I always have.

How many of you like stones?

Have you ever pick up stones and toss them around? Can any of you skip stones? What happens when stones hit the water? Rings form, flowing out, changing the appearance of the surface?

What happens when stones fall from the sky and come to earth?

Many years ago my wife and I made a trip to Science North in Sudbury and one of the displays was about the geography and geology of the area. The Sudbury Basin, a large bowl shaped piece of land, is the third largest known impact crater as well as one of the oldest. 1.849 billion years ago a meteorite fell from space. The impacted area filled with magma containing nickel, copper, palladium, gold, and other materials. It filled the area with the minerals that would be mined, prized, and used by people all over the world.

A piece of space rock hitting the earth, an ancient moment of wonder and awe drawing out and enriching the landscape.

That nativity scene looked so ordinary except for the angel. The angel was in a pose depicting that something great and wondrous was being told.

Angel song breaking out, a moment of wonder and awe that changes the landscape. A holy birth has happened, divine presence, the presence that unleashed creation, that filled the night sky, and brought life into the earth, could be found right there in their presence, a baby born “and you will find him wrapped in bands of cloth and laying in a manger.”

We join with the shepherds, those who knew well what it was to look up at the stars and to feel the soil under their finger nails. Could it be that the Divine presence, that God with us, was in their midst? Could the cosmic really become incarnate, in life, in flesh and blood, in heartbeat, in love and fear and passion and pain? Right here among us, within us? Could the longed for Christ be found in a baby?

Are there places in your life where holy things lie buried beneath the surface, where a holy impact could unleash vast treasures of your life?

And the meteorite hits in the birth cries of a baby born, revealing God’s presence in this world, and changing interior and external lives. With the people of all time we look for the angels in our midst, the lights that the holy in our ordinary moments and draws out life’s deepest blessings. Christ is

born, the cosmic is the incarnate, and he will be called Emmanuel, God with us, is born.

### **Communion:**

The Gospel of John tells the birth story very differently. John reminds us that in Jesus we encounter very essence of life. We encounter the Divine One that was in the beginning, that holy presence that unleashed all that is, that flowed through the big bang, and supernovas, and flooded the cosmos with shape, and wonder, awe, mystery, substance, form, and life.

Filled with all of God's promise and presence, Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us, grows up. He reveals God's presence, speaking words of love and justice, showing all humanity our full potential. People once asked Jesus, who are you and he said "I am the light of the world."

(Light a candle or glowstick)

Gathered with his followers, with a crowd around him, with the powerful and those made powerless, those included and those excluded, those who felt worthy and those who never felt good enough – with the full breadth of humanity Jesus looked at the crowd and said "you are the light of the world – do not hide your light – let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good deeds and give glory to God."

Tonight we join with the church throughout the ages, ready to encounter once more Christ's presence in the sharing of Holy Communion. For just

as God can be encountered in magnitude of the cosmos and in the minutia of the earthly, just as a baby can reveal the full glory of God, bread and juice can reveal Christ's presence, and our lives can hold the holy wonder and mystery of Christ's presence as we share hope, peace, joy, and love in this world. The light of Christ can shine in our lives and fill this world with holy presence.

Just as Christ ate with all people and welcomed all to the table – those who were told they were worthy and those who were told they were not, all are welcome to this table. You do not have to be a member of Grace United, or of any church, all who long to feel the love of God flowing through their lives are welcome. All are welcomed, and none are obliged. Come, let us share in holy communion.