

The background is a dark blue night sky filled with small white stars. A large, bright, multi-pointed star shines in the upper center. Below it, the title 'ADVENT 2025' and 'SMALL GROUPS RESOURCE' is written in white, sans-serif, all-caps font. The lower half of the image features silhouettes of the Nativity scene. In the center, a stable with a thatched roof sits on a hill, with figures of Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus inside, and two donkeys outside. To the left, three camels are silhouetted against the sky, with the lead camel carrying a lantern. To the right, a family (man, woman, child) and a dog are silhouetted on a hill, with the man holding a flashlight that beams light towards the stable. The overall mood is peaceful and hopeful.

ADVENT 2025 SMALL GROUPS RESOURCE

Shine the Light

of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love this Christmas

Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord

Isaiah 2:5

Shine the Light

of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love this Christmas

This Advent, we invite you to journey with us as we explore the theme: Shine the Light this Christmas! This material could be used as an individual, a household or a small group. It is an invitation to engage with God's word. As we prepare for the birth of Jesus, we'll reflect on how God's light transforms lives through hope, peace, joy, and love, and consider the part we play in shining that light into the world around us.

What comes to mind when you hear the word light? What images, thoughts, or feelings does it bring?

Light is essential to life on Earth, though it's easy to overlook its impact. From helping plants grow and giving vision to humans and animals, to influencing our sleep, mood, and health, and powering clean energy, light is woven into everything. Without it, life as we know it couldn't exist.

Light also carries rich symbolic meaning. Around the world, we see people shining their "light" by illuminating ideas and experiences, spreading knowledge, standing up to injustice, revealing hidden beauty, and sharing love and grace with others.

Throughout Advent, this material will help us explore God's promise to bring everlasting light to all people through Jesus. As we recognise the darkness in our own lives and the world around us, we'll also celebrate the Light of the World who transforms that darkness with hope, peace, joy, and love.

This material has been formulated through the Queensland Synod Ministry and Mission Team. Special thanks to Katherine Ruhle, Rev Josie Neuendorff, Rev Beth Nicholls, Rev Paul Clark, Rev Ralph Mayhew, Rev Willie Liebenberg, and Annette Dale.



Shine the Light of Hope

Week 1



Opening Discussion:

Have you ever lost power and found yourself in complete darkness? How did it make you feel? What did you notice? What was the impact when a light source was reintroduced?

Introduction:

It's easy to focus on the darkness.

As we look around at the world, our society, our neighbourhoods, and even our own lives, it can feel as though darkness is everywhere. Our news channels and social media feeds are filled with stories of despair, pain, greed, death, and destruction. At times, it can seem like the darkness is overshadowing and suffocating hope.

But this Advent, while we acknowledge and reflect on the darkness in our world, we will also choose to look for, and look toward, the light. The light that Christ brings, and the light that each of us is called to shine.

The readings this week, and in the weeks to come, are filled with hope:

Hope in what God is doing.

Hope for humanity.

Hope for our world.

And it's not a passive hope - it's active!

So, *"Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord."*

Let's be people who transform darkness into light.

Let's be people who carry hope and share it with others.

Read and Reflect:

As we focus on God's light, let us spend some time engaging with God's word.

It might work best to read each passage individually, then discuss it before moving on to the next.

- Isaiah 2:1-5
- Psalm 122
- Romans 13:11-14
- Matthew 24:36-44

Discussion Questions:

What stood out to you in this passage?

What sense of hope or expectation do you hear in this passage?

What kind of change or response does this passage call for in people's lives?

Going Deeper:

Matthew 24:36-44

- Jesus is making it clear that we need to prepare ourselves.
This Advent season is an active time of preparation. But what do you think it means to prepare?
- One could suggest that this indicates our preparation is to cultivate compassion, extend grace, and offer welcome. How might that look in your life?

REFLECTION: Candle

Recently I was asked to run a candle making workshop for a women and girls' group, who just wanted to make candles for themselves and for gifts.

One of the things with candle making is that preparation is key. Getting all the equipment together. Deciding on the size of candles to make. Are the candles free standing or in containers? Then what size containers? What size wick is best? What kind of wax - is it paraffin or soy, and how much wax is needed? What additives are needed such colour, scent and hardener? And then there is organising the space - for melting, pouring and creating. Plus doing all the safety compliance! Without the preparation it is difficult to make a candle successfully, but preparation is part of the hope in the craft and knowing it will go well.

We gathered for the workshop with all the equipment and space organised. The decision was to make soy candles in containers with the choice of a couple of colours and scents. Still, there was more preparation to do to make the candles. The next challenge was helping individuals choose their containers, candle colour and kind of scent, then helping them to prepare the container and wick mounting.

At last, we were ready to pour the hot wax, at the right temperature. The group made some beautiful and interesting smelling candles that would make lovely gifts to bring joy to the receiver and the candlemaker. Plus, the group had so much fun together creating candles.

The other thing about candles is that it ultimately is all about the light shining. When you light a candle there is no recognition of the work it took to make the candle, the important thing is the light that shines. The hope in what was created is fulfilled.

In this time of advent there is much preparation to be done to receive the promised one – Jesus. Isaiah 2 reminds us of the promise that will come so we can walk in the light of the Lord. Psalm 122 reminds us to pray for peace. Romans 13:11-14 urges us to put aside those things that hold us back and to clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ. Matthew 24:36-44 calls us to be future-ready. So there is work to do to prepare for the joy that is to come. May you work in hope as you prepare, this advent season, for the light of Christ to shine brightly in our world.

Written by Rev Beth Nicholls

Wonder and Discuss:

- What do you think it means to “walk in the light”?
- What are some ways you can get ready for the light of Christ to shine in your life and in the world around you?
- How does the effort and care you put into preparing — as when making candles — help you find joy and hope?
- As we move through Advent, how can we shift our focus from all the “doing” to noticing the light and peace God brings?

Throughout the Week:

You might like to light a candle each day for people or circumstances that may need hope, love, and peace.

Another option is to write a short wish list, but instead of items you want to be given, write things you would like to see happen in this world. This wish list might then act as a prayer of hope.

Prayer Opportunity:

- In the center of your group, place a candle. If possible, turn off the lights and light the candle.
- Invite everyone to focus on the candle.
- Reflect as a group
 - What do you think or feel as you watch the light flicker in the darkness?
 - What might God be saying to you?
- Silently, as a group, pray that people may experience the light of God this Christmas.

An Alternative:

- Take time to pray for the others in the group, focusing on the prayer that they will experience a new sense of hope.
- God of Hope,
Sometimes the world feels dark and a little scary,
like when the lights go out and everything feels strange.
But even a small light can help us feel safe and bring us hope.

Thank You for being our light
when we feel sad, lonely, or afraid.
You remind us that we're never alone,
and that there's always hope,
even in the darkest times.

Help us to shine like candles in the dark.
Show us how to be kind, how to help, and how to love others.
Help us bring hope to people who feel stuck, scared, or sad.
Amen.



Shine the Light of Peace

Week 2



Opening Discussion:

When you hear the word peace, what images pop into your mind?

Introduction:

It can be easy to focus on the lack of peace in our world. When we look around at our society and neighbourhoods, we're often overwhelmed by signs of conflict, political instability, poverty, natural disasters, misuse of power, and even technological advances that seem to disrupt rather than help our lives.

People of all ages, especially younger generations, are living with fear, stress, and anxiety as they struggle to find peace in a world that feels unstable and ever-changing.

This week, we invite you to shine a light on places where peace feels impossible. Not to amplify the darkness, but to bring awareness, to seek understanding, and to ask, "Where is God already at work?" and "How can we join in bringing peace where it's needed most?"

The readings this week, and in the coming weeks, are full of powerful words: prophecies and promises of God's plan to bring lasting peace. Not just calm or quiet, but transformative peace.

Peace for individuals. Peace for communities. Peace for the world.

God's peace is not passive - it's active!

So, let's respond to the call:

"Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord."

Let's bring light to dark places,
and let's share God's peace wherever we go.

Read and Reflect:

It might work best to read each passage one at a time, then discuss it before moving on to the next.

- Isaiah 11:1-10
- Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
- Romans 15:4-13
- Matthew 3:1-12

Discussion Questions:

- What stood out to you in this passage?
- What signs of peace do you see in this passage?
- What does this reading reveal about who God is and how God is at work in the world?
- How might this passage shape the way we live each day?

Going Deeper:

Matthew 3:1-12

- As we prepare for Christmas — wrapping gifts, planning celebrations, decorating our homes — John reminds us of another kind of preparation: "Change your hearts and lives, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near." This is not about shame, but it is about opening ourselves to what could be. How will you prepare for God's Kingdom?
- In what ways is repentance a part of our preparations for God's Kingdom?

REFLECTION: Peace in a Storm

When we lived in North Queensland, we were living in a town right in the path of Tropical Cyclone Yasi. One of the biggest cyclones ever, category five.

As a family, we did all we could: cleaned up our yard, taped our windows, and brought the trampoline inside. The centre of the cyclone could have come over us. We didn't know what was going to happen. It was very scary.

We went downstairs to the strongest part of the house, and we placed lots of mattresses along the walls. We listened to the radio and then, just as it was getting dark, the power went out. The house began to shake. We couldn't see what was going on outside. We just heard bangs and clacks, windows rattling and the howl of the wind. My wife and I were on edge.

Our kids were young back then, 8 and 11 years old. Even though it was really scary. Even though there were lots of weird noises, do you know what our kids did?

They went to sleep.

I was surprised, but I realised, for them, Mum and Dad were there. They knew they were safe with us. We would look after them. We would wake them if things got really bad. They were at peace in our presence. They slept till morning.

At Christmas, we call Jesus the Prince of Peace. We can look at the world, all the trouble and chaos we see and wonder, 'where is this peace?' What Jesus did on the cross will one day stop all the trouble and chaos in the world: after the cross 'death is working backwards'. But till then, the peace Jesus brings is the peace our children experienced that night.

If we know Jesus and the Father, we can rest in their presence. We can trust that ultimately, they are in control, they know what is going on, and have it in hand. Because of the cross, we know that with Jesus, even the worst thing isn't the end. God's love goes beyond death.

When we went outside in the morning, there was a lot of damage: trees and power lines were down, but everyone was OK. We only got the edge of the cyclone, about Category 3. I will always remember how my kids slept through a cyclone, and wonder if I have that much trust in Jesus.

Written by Rev Paul Clark

Wonder and Discuss:

- What connections do you see between 'peace' and 'trust'? How are they similar? How are they different?
- How is the peace Jesus gives different from the kind of peace the world often talks about?
- What practical habits or spiritual practices help you experience and hold onto the peace God offers us all?
- How might experiencing God's peace help shine the light of Christ?

Throughout the Week:

You may want to take time each day to just be still and quiet, even for just two minutes. Using this time to focus on being calm, you may want to pray for a strong sense of God's peace to be present in your life.

Another option is to offer help to someone who is struggling, with time, food or just a listening ear.

Prayer Opportunity:

- If possible, turn off all the lights.
- Talk about what it feels like to be in darkness.
- Invite the group to share or quietly reflect on people who might be having a hard time, feeling scared, sad or experiencing disturbances or unrest.
- Pray for peace

An Alternative:

- Watch [Pope Francis' A Prayer For Our Earth | CAFOD](#)
- Take time to pray for the others in the group that they may be freed to rejoice.



Shine the Light of Joy

Week 3



Opening Discussion:

If you had to choose one image or sound that represents joy to you, what would it be?

Introduction:

At this time of year, our surroundings are full of symbols of joy - colourful displays, bright lights, festive music, fragrant candles, beautifully wrapped gifts, and more.

On the surface, it can seem like joy is everywhere.

But what if we paused to shine a light on our own thoughts and feelings or on the lives of those around us? We might discover that while Christmas can be a time of great joy, it can also be a time of hardship and heaviness. For some, it's marked by exhaustion, loneliness, worry, or even numbness.

This week's readings take us back to times when God's people had little reason to feel joyful.

They were living in exile.

In societies divided by politics, religion, wealth, and ethnicity.

They were tired, disillusioned, and longing for something more.

It's into that very darkness that God spoke, delivering messages of hope and joy. God was present. And God had a plan: a future of restoration that would bring deep, lasting, overflowing joy for all people.

Not a surface-level, glittery kind of joy but a bold, active, world-changing joy.

So, as we journey through this Advent season:

"Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord."

Let us bring light into dark places and let us share the joy of God with those around us.

Read and Reflect:

It might work best to read each passage one at a time, then discuss it before moving on to the next.

- Isaiah 35:1-10
- Psalm 146:5-10
- Luke 1:46b-55
- James 5:7-10
- Matthew 11:2-11

Discussion Questions:

- What stood out to you in this passage?
- Where do you see signs of joy, renewal, or hope in this passage?
- How does this passage describe God's action in bringing healing, justice, or restoration?
- How does this reading help you understand what true joy looks like — personally or in community?

Going Deeper:

Matthew 11:2-11

- John expected a Messiah who would bring justice and change, but Jesus' ministry was very different to what was imagined. How can unmet expectations challenge or reshape our sense of joy?
- John's question, "Are you the one?" comes from a place of uncertainty. What does this story teach us about finding joy even when faith feels fragile?
- Where is God inviting you to look again and see reasons for joy, even in the ordinary or difficult parts of life?

REFLECTION: Invitation to Joy

Joy is synonymous with Christmas, all of the lights and decorations, presents and food, friends and family, where everyone puts their issues and burdens aside to partake in the Christmas spirit. This is an illusion of course. Pain, struggle and heartache don't suddenly get switched off as we move through Advent.

For some, Christmas becomes a harsh reminder of what there isn't in their lives to be joyful about, which, beautifully, is where the true power of Christmas is. When Christ arrived in Bethlehem, it wasn't the famous bustling city it is today, but a long forgotten and enthusiastically ignored town.

Yet this is where God chose to enter into his creation! He chose a place of desolation to transform with joy. It was upon Christ's entry, all who encountered him were overcome with joy. A joy that surpassed their circumstance, their geography, their injustice, their status, their mindset. A joy lavished upon us by God, to transform the desolate into the divine.

I'm reminded of a film made in 2000, called *Chocolat*, which begins with a mysterious woman named **Vianne Rocher**, who arrives in a small French village with her daughter and opens a **chocolaterie**. It was a daring act in a community devoted to restraint and moral order. There is great distrust, that what she is offering could possibly be of benefit to them, in fact the opposite was feared. **Vianne persists** and her chocolates become more than sweets; they are **symbols of warmth, grace, and joy**, awakening laughter, courage, and kindness in people long burdened by fear, judgment, and struggle.

Vianne's chocolates were not just sweets; they were **invites of joy**. Her shop became a refuge where life's flavours — laughter, freedom, forgiveness — begin to stir again in a community that had become defined by its lack of joy.

As people tasted her creations, long-suppressed hopes awoke: a widow rediscovers companionship, an abused woman finds courage, a grumpy old man remembers kindness.

The awakening they experience is reminiscent of Isaiah's (35:1) prophecy and the Psalmist's longing (Ps 146). It is what happens when Jesus moves into our desolation, transforming it into joy. So today, let's reflect on:

- How might you have mistaken the illusion of Christmas cheer with the deeper joy that only comes from Christ's presence?
- What posture do you need to adopt to experience the refuge of joy that Christ's coming brings?

- What desolated places in your story are Jesus inviting you to bring to him?

This Christmas, regardless of your circumstance, you are invited to Christ, our refuge of joy, that he might turn your places of desolation into divine encounters of grace.

Written by Rev Ralph Mayhew

Wonder and Discuss:

- How might experiencing God's joy help shine the light of Christ?
- In a season where those who are grieving or struggling with aspects of life can feel excluded or as if they need to hide, how might we share God's light in a respectful and helpful way?

Throughout the Week:

You may like to think about a way you could spread joy in your community, just like a firework that lights up the night's sky. Remember all joyful actions big or small can help light up someone else's day. Some options might include:

- Offering some genuine compliments or kind affirmation to someone you work, study or volunteer with.
- Pay for a stranger's coffee or treat

Prayer Opportunity:

- Christmas bells represent the joy and good news of Jesus Christ's birth. If possible, have some Christmas bells to ring.
- As you listen to the joyful sounds of the bells, you might like to pray for all people to experience deep joy this Christmas season.

An Alternative:

- Take time to pray for the others in the group that they may be freed to rejoice.
- Joyful God,
Thank You for fireworks that light up the dark sky.
They're bright, colourful, and fun
and they fill our hearts with joy and excitement.

Thank You for moments that make us smile
like birthdays, holidays, and time with people we love.
Please help us shine joy into the world,
just like fireworks shine in the night.

Help us bring happiness to others with our words and actions.
When someone feels sad or left out,
show us how to share laughter, kindness, and care.

Thank You for the joy You put in our hearts.
Help us to spread it everywhere we go.
Amen.

Shine the Light of Love

Week 4



Opening Discussion:

Before the session, invite group members to take a photo and to bring a photo of their nativity set or their favourite Christmas decoration.

Invite group members to show the photo and share something about the nativity set or decoration. Include things like where it came from, why it is special to you, and how it helps you remember and celebrate at Christmas time.

Introduction:

All throughout the Bible, we read stories of people turning away from God - choosing their own selfish desires, which often lead to pain, destruction, and even death.

It can be hard to read these stories and realise how often we, too, make similar choices. We stray from God's ways, and our decisions sometimes hurt others and ourselves.

But the good news is this: God has never given up on us.

From beginning to end, the Bible is also filled with stories of God's deep and faithful love for all people and God's ongoing plan to restore what has been broken.

Even when we least deserve it, God continues to shine light into our darkness, offering love, forgiveness, and grace.

This week, we take time to reflect on the darkness both within us and around us. With the Psalmist, we can cry out with honesty and hope:

"Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved."

Our readings this week point us toward God's ultimate plan of restoration through Jesus, Emmanuel, God-with-us who came to pour out undeserved love and offer forgiveness to all.

So, as we journey on:

"Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord."

Let us bring light into dark places and let us share God's love with others.

Read and Reflect:

It might work best to read each passage individually and then discuss it before moving on to the next.

- Isaiah 7:10-16
- Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
- Romans 1:1-7
- Matthew 1:18-25
- Additional: 1 John 4:7-21

Discussion Questions:

- What stood out to you in this passage?
- How is God's presence ("God with us") described or experienced in this passage?
- What does this passage invite you to trust in, let go of, or live differently?

Going Deeper:

1 John 4:7-21

- How can we talk about God's love without making it seem simplistic or overly sentimental?
- How do we proclaim that God is love to those who feel abandoned or disconnected from God?
- In the background of this passage is the fact that this letter is written to a community that is under fire. There is conflict, yet the invitation is to love. What helps you to love in times of conflict, uncertainty or division?

REFLECTION: Light from Within

As we enter the final week of Advent, we're invited to slow down, not just to prepare for Christmas, but to open our hearts to the light of love. God's love doesn't wait for us to be perfect. God's love continues to shine through each generation, in every season of life, not the polished kind we see in greeting cards, but the kind that meets us in the messiness, the mystery, and the everyday moments of life.

This week's symbol, bioluminescent (glowing) animals, reminds us that light doesn't always come from outside – it often glows from within. Even in the darkest places, God's love can shine through us. Like fireflies in the night, we are called to be small but radiant witnesses of grace. No sermon can be preached louder than a simple act – pure, unfiltered love – that bridges generations and reminds us all, that God's light shines through even the smallest among us. Whether you're a child mesmerized by the glow of Christmas lights, a teenager wrestling with identity and belonging, a parent navigating the pressures of life, or an elder, holding stories of faith and resilience – God's love meets us right where we are, in the messiness of the world. Love is the light that connects us.

The Scriptures this week speak to that light:

- Isaiah promises Emmanuel, God with us (Isaiah 7:10–16)
- Matthew tells of Joseph's quiet courage and obedience, choosing love over fear (Matthew 1:18–25)
- Romans reminds us we are called to belong (Romans 1:1–7)
- And the Psalmist cries, "Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved." (Psalm 80:1–7)

All point to a love that is active, forgiving, and generational. As Richard Rohr says, "Our Christian wisdom is to name the darkness as darkness, and the Light as light, and to learn how to live and work in the Light so that the darkness does not overcome us."

In a world that feels heavy with division and despair, we need this light. And we need each other. When elders share stories of faith, when children ask bold questions, when teens challenge us to live authentically – we all grow. That's intergenerational love. That's the light of Christ. As Joan Osadchey said, "If we really want to love, we must learn how to forgive." Forgiveness is a light that heals across generations.

So, this Advent, let's be brave. Let's receive the light of Christ's love and reflect it – at home, in church, in our communities. Let's walk together, young and old, in the

light of the Lord. For in doing so, we become a living story of love – a light that never goes out.

Written by Rev Willie Liebenberg

Wonder and Discuss:

- Where do you see signs of “God with us” in your own life or community?
- Who in another generation has shown you the love of God?
- Where do you see darkness in your life or community – and how might you shine light there?
- What does it mean for you to carry the light of Christ this Christmas?

Throughout the Week:

You might like to do something kind for the environment. You could pick up rubbish, use less water, or recycle. Every small action helps take care of God’s creation!

An alternative might be to prepare something, potentially a home-baked treat and give it to someone who is doing it tough this Christmas, a sign of love and respect.

Prayer Opportunity:

- If possible, have a candle for each group member and turn off the lights.
- Take a moment to just be still in the dark.
- Invite one person to light a candle. As their candle burns, the group can silently pray for that person.
- Repeat this one at a time, until everyone has a lit candle.
- Invite the group to reflect on how each group member helps to make this space and the world a little brighter.
- You might want to conclude this time of prayer with words like this...
“Thank you, God, for each member of this group. Help us to shine the light of your love brightly this week. Amen.”

An Alternative:

- To pray intentionally for Blue Christmas Services, Services of Solace or the like, that are taking place around the world. These services are opportunities to create spaces of hospitality and love for people who are grieving this Christmas. You might also like to pray for people experiencing mixed emotions and struggling with this season. That they may feel loved and free to express their emotions.
- Take time to pray for the others in the group that they may be freed to rejoice.

Optional:

Week 5 (Christmas): Christ, the Light for All People

Opening Discussion:

In what ways has Advent helped you to be ready for Christmas this year?

Introduction:

Over the past four weeks, we've reflected on what it means to live in darkness, and we've explored the power and promise of light.

Our Bible readings have been filled with prophecies and proclamations—words of hope, peace, joy, and love that point to God's plan for restoration through the Light of the World.

As we've listened to stories from long ago, we've also considered how we might reflect that same light in our own neighbourhoods, towns, and cities.

At Christmas, we celebrate the fulfilment of God's promise. Jesus entered the world not with grandeur or fanfare, but in humility - born among the broken and the overlooked. Like a light breaking through the night, Jesus came to reveal truth, to embody grace, and to share divine love with all people.

As we receive this gift once again, we are invited to reflect on what Christ's light means in our lives and in our world today. You might like to consider these questions:

As the light of Jesus shines:

- What is illuminated in the world around us?
- What truths are uncovered?
- What is revealed in our communities, in our hearts?
- Who might still be living in darkness?
- In whom, or where, might we be missing the light of Christ?
- How are we being called to respond?

So, "Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord."

Let us be people who transform darkness into light, and who shine the hope, peace, joy, and love of Christ into the world.

Read and Reflect:

It might work best to read each passage individually and then discuss it before moving on to the next.

- Isaiah 9:2-7
- Titus 3:4-7
- Hebrews 1:1-4
- Luke 2:1-20

Discussion Questions:

- What stood out to you in this passage?
- Where do you notice light breaking into darkness in this passage and or in life today?
- How does this reading express the meaning of “God with us”?
- How does this text shape your understanding of Christmas beyond the celebrations?

Going Deeper:

Titus 3:4-7

- What do you think it means that God’s kindness and love “appeared” through Jesus Christ?
- The passage talks about being “renewed by the Holy Spirit” and becoming heirs of eternal life. How does this renewal connect with the idea of God’s light shining in our lives?
- How can the hope and mercy celebrated at Christmas inspire us to be bearers of light in our communities today?

REFLECTION: Light for All

It’s Christmas - a time when we celebrate a central moment of the Christian story: that in Jesus Christ, the Light of the World has come to dwell among us. In the ordinary setting of a crowded town, in uncertain and humble circumstances, light broke into darkness - not with fanfare, but with quiet faithfulness. The birth of Christ is more than a beautiful moment; it is a profound declaration that darkness does not have the final word.

Recently, the BBC shared a story¹ that echoes the tension between light and darkness. In a remote part of Peru, a small group of families continues to live in literal darkness. Without access to the national electricity grid, they cook over

¹ The Story can be found here: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4ge1gw5zd8o>

open fires and spend their nights without light. What makes this more striking is that just beyond their homes, they can see one of the largest solar energy complexes in Latin America. It shines brightly, sending power to hundreds of thousands of homes while these families remain in shadow. The contrast is painful. The light is near, yet it does not reach them. The government is aware of the situation, but nothing changes. The families remain in darkness.

This image speaks powerfully to us on Christmas Day. Christ came not only to bring light but to extend it - to reach those left in darkness, on the margins, and in forgotten places. As His followers, we are now bearers of that light. So today, let's reflect on:

- Where are we seeing God's light shining with hope, peace, joy, and love, in our lives and in the world around us?
- Who still sits in darkness - physically, spiritually, or socially - because of our inaction, inattention, or apathy?
- What is God saying to us, as light-bearers, in the face of those still waiting for hope to arrive?

The light of Christ is not just a comforting glow; it's a call. A call to see, to act, and to shine. As we rejoice in the birth of Jesus, may we also renew our commitment to bring His light to those still in darkness. The Light has come - not to be kept, but to be shared.

Written by Katherine Ruhle

Throughout the Week:

- Take a moment to encourage one another. You might like to share something kind, loving or thankful before you share in your Christmas Meal, or maybe you want to attach a special affirmation along with any gifts that you give others.

Prayer Opportunity:

- If possible, have a Nativity Scene available. Use the nativity as a visual prompt.
- Pray for different things as you focus on each element:
 - Stable – those experiencing homelessness
 - Animals – care of creation
 - Mary and Joseph – families that may be enriched by love
 - Shepherds – people working this Christmas
 - Wisemen – that we may seek God's wisdom

An Alternative:

- Take time to pray for the others in the group that they may be freed to rejoice.
- Jesus,
Thank You for coming into the world
as the Light that brings hope, peace, joy, and love.

When things feel sad or scary,
help us remember that You are always with us,
shining in our hearts.

Please help our family be lights too.
Show us how to be kind, helpful, honest, and loving,
just like You.
Even in little ways,
help us make others feel happy and loved.

Thank You for the gift of Christmas.
Amen.