

December 24, 2023
The Vigil of Christmas
The Rev. Dr. Paul Jacobson, *Rector*

Genesis 3:8-15, 18-19

Luke 2:1-7

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

Luke 2:8-16

Luke 1:26-38

John 1:1-14

In the Name of God, whose coming we adore. Amen.

As we gather here in this holy night, we wrap ourselves in the familiar stories of the birth of Jesus. We've been waiting, impatiently, for this night, for this event, for this Child. In this place we call Grace, we are enfolded every day by two of the great moments of this story. On the panels that surround us, painted so beautifully for us by Harriett Maitlen Thomas, there is (on the East) the *Gloria in excelsis*, the song of the angels from St. Luke, which we will take up in the morning. On the west, there are the resonant cadences of St. John's prologue.

Having walked together through Advent and now sitting here tonight in the darkest part of our year – tonight, I want us to think about the Light of the World, the Daystar from on high that has dawned upon us. John distills the Christmas story to its essence: The Word. Light. Life. Dwelling among us. In the flesh.

Here is a poem by Jan Richardson, artist, writer and ordained minister in the United Methodist Church. It is called "How the Light Comes."¹

¹ <https://adventdoor.com/2011/12/21/christmas-day-how-the-light-comes/>

How the Light Comes

I cannot tell you
how the light comes.

What I know
is that it is more ancient
than imagining.

That it travels
across an astounding expanse
to reach us.

That it loves
searching out
what is hidden,
what is lost,
what is forgotten
or in peril
or in pain.

That it has a fondness
for the body,
for finding its way
toward flesh,
for tracing the edges
of form,
for shining forth
through the eye,
the hand,
the heart.

I cannot tell you
how the light comes,
but that it does.
That it will.
That it works its way
into the deepest dark
that enfolds you,
though it may seem
long ages in coming
or arrive in a shape
you did not foresee.

And so
may we this day
turn ourselves toward it.
May we lift our faces
to let it find us.
May we bend our bodies
to follow the arc it makes.
May we open
and open more
and open still
to the blessed light
that comes.

—Jan Richardson

Tell the story of this Light, testify to its shining in the night.
The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.
A blessed Christmas to you all. Amen.