



The Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast

Walking the Way of Creation

February 27, 2026

"Creation is not a resource to be used but a living presence with which we are interrelated and from which we learn and receive life."

Bishop Stephen Charleston

This liturgy follows the story of creation in Genesis 1 that many scholars believe was originally set as a liturgical text. However, we will follow its path in reverse, beginning at the day of rest and moving through each day until we end with the first words of creation "Let there be light." We invite you to walk meditatively as we move from station to station. Using our physical, mental and spiritual experiences, we may deepen our awareness of these surroundings—skies, water, vegetation, birds—as well as the sounds of humans and machines in the distance. As we walk, we can practice quiet acts of loving kindness, radiating well-wishes in every direction, to the animals, birds, plants and people we encounter.

Opening Gathering *Once everyone is in place, the following is said,*

Leader "Love all God's creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. Once you perceive it, you will begin to comprehend it better every day. And you will come at last to love the whole world with an all-embracing love. Love the animals: God has given them the rudiments of thought and joy untroubled. Do not trouble it, don't harass them, don't deprive them of their happiness, don't work against God's intent." *from The Brothers Karamazov by Fyodor Dostoevsky*

Leader Blessed be the God of all creation.

People For in your goodness you make all things new.

Hymn **Longing for Light, We Wait in Darkness** *text & tune are printed on last page* *Guitarist The Reverend John Talbert*

Heavenly Father, you have filled the world with beauty: open our eyes to recognize your gracious hand in all your works, that, rejoicing in your whole creation, we may learn to serve you with gladness; for the sake of the One through whom all things were made, Jesus Christ our Redeemer. **Amen.**

Let us go forth in peace.

People In the name of Christ. Amen.

The congregation follows the Cross and moves to the next station.

+++++

Station One — Day Seven: Rest

"We are not the masters of creation, we are its caretakers." Pope Francis

Once gathered the leader says,

Blessed be the God of all creation.

People For in your goodness, you make all things new.

Scripture Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work God had been doing; so on the seventh day God rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creating that had been done. *Genesis 2:1–3*

Reflection: Creation culminates in rest and becomes a part of the rhythm of covenant with God. For example, the Hebrew Scriptures talk about agricultural practices rooted in Levitical law, utilizing a 7-year cycle featuring six years of cultivation followed by a mandatory sabbatical year where the land rested, which naturally managed soil nutrients and prevented pest buildup. Key practices included not sowing the same field with mixed seeds, allowing volunteer crops to feed the poor and wild animals in the seventh year, and rotating crops to maintain soil health. I am thankful for the small farms around my home that practice regenerative farming. They model a deep respect and care for the integrity of our world and the rhythm between work and rest. These neighbors highly value the goodness found in the Earth's abundance, diversity, and mutuality that sustains and enlivens our interconnectedness.

Consider: How can honoring the Sabbath point us to our own value beyond work or productivity while fueling creativity?
-The Reverend Joy Blaylock

Responsorial: A Canticle on Sabbath

Leader Blessed are you, O God of creation, who rested on the seventh day and sanctified rest as a gift of love. You call us to lay down our burdens, to cease our striving, and to remember that we are not what we produce, but who we are in you.

People For in resting, we remember who you are, and who we are in you.

Leader Jesus said, "Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." In him we learn the holy rhythm of work and rest, of labor and trust, of faith that releases control. You remind us, O God, not to worry about our life, what we will eat or drink, what we will wear or accomplish.

People For in resting, we remember who you are, and who we are in you.

Leader Look at the birds of the air, and the lilies of the field. They neither toil nor spin, yet they rest in your care. Teach us to seek first your kingdom and your righteousness, trusting that all we need will be given in its time. Therefore we keep this holy rest, not as escape, but as trust; not as idleness, but as freedom; not as fear, but as faith.

People For in resting, we remember who you are, and who we are in you. Amen.

Be silent and listen.

O God of peace, who hast taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength: By the might of your Spirit lift us to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.** *from The Book of Common Prayer*

Let us go forth in peace.

People In the name of Christ. Amen.

The congregation follows the Cross and moves to the next station.

+++++

Station Two — Day Six: Creatures of the Land

*Whatever befalls the earth befalls the children of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life.
He is merely a strand in it. Whatever man does to the web, He does to himself.” Chief Seattle, 1854*

Once gathered the leader says,

Blessed be the God of all creation.

People For in your goodness, you make all things new.

Scripture And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. *Genesis 1:24-26, 31*

Reflection: On the 6th day God instructs the land to populate itself with animals, both wild and domesticated. God’s penultimate act is to create humans, forming them in God’s image and commissioning them to continue God’s work in creation. Humans were not directed to conquer or dominate, but to rule as God ruled, allowing the creative process to continue to emerge. Humanity was charged with serving and caring for that which emerged. Thus, humans have a dual role in creation: acting as stewards of the ongoing creative process, while recognizing our own place within the web of creation. From our natural beaches and variety of marine and riverine ecosystems to our longleaf pine and hardwood forests, humans are inextricably interwoven with the biologically rich habitats of the Gulf Coast. Our communities rely on healthy ecosystems for our livelihoods, yet our lifestyles often pose a threat to these very systems that sustain us and all life.

Consider: As you walk, ponder being the image of God in the domain in which you find yourself right now and how you behave toward the land, waters and other creatures? -Lella Lowe

Responsorial: Song of Creation Stanzas II& III from Enriching our Worship

Women: Let the earth glorify the Lord, *

Men: sing praise and give honor for ever.

Women: Glorify the Lord, O mountains and hills, and all that grows upon the earth, *

Men: sing praise and give honor for ever.

Women: Glorify the Lord, O springs of water, seas, and streams, *

Men: O whales and all that move in the waters.

Women: All birds of the air, glorify the Lord, *

Men: sing praise and give honor for ever.

Women: Glorify the Lord, O beasts of the wild, *

Men: and all you flocks and herds.

ALL: O men and women everywhere, glorify the Lord,*

sing praise and give honor for ever.

Let the people of God glorify the Lord,*

sing praise and give honor for ever.

Let us glorify the Lord: Father, Son and Holy Spirit,*

sing praise and give honor for ever.

Be silent and listen.

God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in peace around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us go forth in peace.

People **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

The congregation follows the Cross and moves to the next station.

+++++

Station Three — Day Five: Creatures of the Sea and the Air

"The extinction of a species is not just a biological loss; it is a moral one." E.O Wilson

Once gathered the leader says,

Blessed be the God of all creation.

People **For in your goodness, you make all things new.**

Scripture And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky." So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day. *Genesis 1:20-23*

Reflection: We are surrounded by wildlife. Entire populations and generations of animals live and breathe, reproduce and die without our notice. While some species are as familiar as the pets in our homes, others live mysterious lives deep in the sea or within the highest reaches of the mountains. Yet, they are all our brethren. They, too, are made in the image of God. Indeed, our very existence often depends upon these creatures. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat are interdependent on natural systems upon which we have no control. Without the quiet, industrious, often unglamorous work of insects, scavengers, decomposers, and predators, our planet would be uninhabitable. Without the majesty and beauty of soaring wings, colorful skin and plumage, massive size, or microscopic detail, our world would exist without wonder and variety. The creatures of sea, land, and air are our partners in life, and their care and protection are our responsibility. We are grateful for the good earth which God has given us and ask for the wisdom and will to conserve it. Let us dedicate ourselves to preserving the remarkable species we share this planet with, especially the endangered species that call the Gulf Coast home.

Consider: How do we practice greater mindfulness and attention to the goodness of God in all the vestiges of creation?
-Carrie Stevenson

Responsorial: *Selected verses from Psalm 148 Said in unison*

**Hallelujah! Praise the LORD from the heavens;*
praise the Lord in the heights.**

**Let them praise the Name of the LORD;*
for the Lord commanded, and they were created.**

**Praise the LORD from the earth,*
you sea-monsters and all deeps;**

Fire and hail, snow and fog,*
 tempestuous wind, doing his will;
 Wild beasts and all cattle,*
 creeping things and wingèd birds;
 Let them praise the Name of the LORD,*
 the Lord's splendor is over earth and heaven.

Be silent and listen.

Holy God, your mercy is over all your works, and in the web of life each creature has its role and place. We praise you for ocelot and owl, cactus and kelp, lichen and whale; we honor you for whirlwind and lava, tide and topsoil, cliff and marsh. Give us hearts and minds eager to care for your planet, humility to recognize all creatures as your beloved ones, justice to share the resources of the earth with all its inhabitants, and love not limited by our ignorance. This we pray in the name of Jesus, who unifies what is far off and what is near, and in whom, by grace and the working of your Holy Spirit, all things hold together. **Amen.**

Let us go forth in peace.

People In the name of Christ. Amen.

The congregation follows the Cross and moves to the next station.

+++++

Station Four — Day Four: Lights in the Sky

"Darkness is not the opposite of light; it is its companion."— Terry Tempest Williams

Once gathered the leader says,

Blessed be the God of all creation.

People For in your goodness, you make all things new.

Scripture God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning, the fourth day.

Genesis 1:14-19

Reflection: Kenosis, which means "emptying," can be understood as God emptying God's self into creation. This understanding helps us to see God in all created things. God created light on the first day of creation. On this, the fourth day, God shapes this light, giving it the purpose of sustaining life. One light, which we now call the Sun, will rule the day. A gentler light, which we call the Moon, will rule the night. There are also stars beyond number, which we now know comprise up to two trillion galaxies. Perhaps the most awe-inspiring truth is that they and we all move in harmony, in unity, all interconnected and interdependent—a luminous web held together by God's presence within it. These lights mark the days and the years. They guide the four seasons and connect us to the rhythm of nature: to birth and death and re-birth-to resurrection, the pattern of life. You can have a direct experience of this awe and wonder of God in creation. On a moonless night simply lie in the yard looking up at the stars, or at the moon when it is full. It will carry you into divine mysteries that elude you if you stay indoors. Sadly this rhythm and harmony of God's created order is now suffering dangerously. Air pollution along with overwhelming artificial light removes us from and dampens our sense of connection to this luminous web of God.

Consider: What steps can you take to combat this disruption and to restore balance for our home Earth?

—The Reverend Bob Donnell

Responsorial Psalm 19:1-6 *said responsively*

The heavens declare the glory of God, *
and the firmament shows the Lord's handiwork.

**One day tells its tale to another, *
and one night imparts knowledge to another.**

Although they have no words or language, *
and their voices are not heard,

**Their sound has gone out into all lands, *
and their message to the ends of the world.**

In the deep has God set a pavilion for the sun; *
it comes forth like a bridegroom out of chamber; it rejoices like a champion to run its course.

**It goes forth from the uttermost edge of the heavens and runs about to the end of it again; *
nothing is hidden from its burning heat.**

Be silent and listen.

O Creator of space and time, we marvel at the mysteries of the heavens—the sun, whose radiant strength wakes the day, the moon, who reflects a gentle, guiding light, and the stars, that whisper of wonders beyond our comprehension. With each flickering light in the night sky, we are reminded of Your majesty. Help us to embrace the light, navigate the darkness, and find peace in Your creation. We bring our wonder, our gratitude, and our need for guidance before You. In the unfolding of the day and the stillness of the night, may we know Your presence. **Amen.**

Let us go forth in peace.

People **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

The congregation follows the Cross and moves to the next station.

+++++

Station Five — Day Three: The Land & The Plants

The care of the Earth is our most ancient and most worthy, and after all our most pleasing responsibility." Wendell Berry

Once gathered the leader says,

Blessed be the God of all creation.

People **For in your goodness, you make all things new.**

Scripture: Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day. *Genesis 1:10-13*

Reflection: "The worlds were prepared by the Word of God." (Hebrews 11:3) "And God saw that it was good." (Genesis 1) Walk slowly. Listen deeply. Discern the Word still speaking through creation. On this day of land and plants, we remember that life rises from the soil at God's command. What appears ordinary — seed, leaf, root, forest floor — is charged with holy purpose. Growth is not hurried. It is formed in hiddenness, in patience, and in the relationship among light, water, and earth. Stewardship begins with attention. We do not command the land; we receive it, tend it, and answer for it. Healthy ground, diverse growth, and renewed woodland are not accidents but partnerships with grace. The Spirit — the *ruach* of God — still breathes across the fields and through the trees, restoring what is worn and calling forth what is yet to grow.

Consider: Stand here a moment. Breathe. What is God growing in you?

-The Reverend Salem Saloom

Responsorial From Canticale 12: The Song of Creation Enriching Our Worship *said responsively*

Glorify the Lord, all you works of the Lord, *
sing praise and give honor for ever.

In the high vault of heaven, glorify the Lord, *
sing praise and give honor for ever.

Sun and moon and stars of the sky, glorify the Lord, *
sing praise and give honor for ever.

Glorify the Lord, every shower of rain and fall of dew, *
all winds and fire and heat.

Winter and summer, glorify the Lord, *
sing praise and give honor for ever.

Glorify the Lord, O chill and cold, *
drops of dew and flakes of snow.

Glorify the Lord, O nights and days, *
O shining light and enfolding dark.

Storm clouds and thunderbolts, glorify the Lord, *
sing praise and give honor for ever.

Be silent and listen.

Almighty God, Lord of heaven and earth: We humbly pray that your gracious providence may give and preserve to our use the harvests of the land and of the seas, and may prosper all who labor to gather them, that we, who are constantly receiving good things from your hand, may always give you thanks; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.** *from The Book of Common Prayer*

Let us go forth in peace.

People **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

The congregation follows the Cross and moves to the next station.

+++++

Station Six — Day Two: The Waters

“Water is the driving force of all nature.” Leonardo da Vinci

Once gathered the leader says,

Blessed be the God of all creation.

People **For in your goodness, you make all things new.**

Scripture: And God said, ‘Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.’ So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good. *Genesis 1:6-9*

Reflection: We have been created, along with the beings of the sea, air, and land, to ebb and flow with nature. We draw nearer to the essence of life itself when we draw in what all living beings need to survive: water. In the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, we meet water as gathered gift — tide and marsh, river and rain. “Let the waters be gathered into one

place,” God says, and here that place shimmers before us. Bays breathe. Marsh grass bends. Rivers carry pine pollen and red clay toward the salt. Water makes room for life. And water is not only around us. It is within us. Each of us begins in water — cradled in the hidden sea of the womb, held before we ever draw breath. We pass again through water in baptism, marked as beloved. At the end of life, even as earth is commended to earth, we entrust one another to the mercy of the One who first hovered over the waters. From first breath to last prayer, we live between waters. Here along this coast, we also know how thin the shoreline can feel. Rivers gather what we release. They remember what we forget. What we send downstream does not disappear.

Consider: When storm tides surge or grief runs deep, what in us needs to be healed so that peace can return again?
-The Reverend Stephen Pecot

Responsorial: Psalm 104:1, 5-13

All: Bless the LORD, O my soul; *

O LORD my God, how excellent is your greatness! you are clothed with majesty and splendor.

You have set the earth upon its foundations, *
so that it never shall move at any time.

You covered it with the Deep as with a mantle; *
the waters stood higher than the mountains.

All: Bless the LORD, O my soul; *

O LORD my God, how excellent is your greatness! You are clothed with majesty and splendor.

You send the springs into the valleys; *
they flow between the mountains.

They went up into the hills and down to the valleys beneath, *
to the places you had appointed for them.

All: Bless the LORD, O my soul; *

O LORD my God, how excellent is your greatness! You are clothed with majesty and splendor.

All the beasts of the field drink their fill from the waters, *
and the wild asses quench their thirst.

Beside them the birds of the air make their nests *
and sing among the branches.

You water the mountains from your dwelling on high; *
the earth is fully satisfied by the fruit of your works.

All: Bless the LORD, O my soul; *

O LORD my God, how excellent is your greatness! You are clothed with majesty and splendor.

Be silent and listen.

God, whose Spirit moved over the deep: We thank you for the gift of water — the waters on the earth, and under the earth, the water above us, and within us. Make us mindful of the care of all the planet’s water, that it may richly sustain life for us and for those who come after us; through Jesus Christ, source of living water. **Amen**

Let us go forth in peace.

People In the name of Christ. Amen.

The congregation follows the Cross and moves to the next station.

+++++

Station Seven — Day One: Light

“To be alive is to be bathed in light.” — Teilhard de Chardin

Once gathered the leader says

Blessed be the God of all creation.

People For in your goodness, you make all things new.

Scripture In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. *Genesis 1:1-5*

Reflection: Light—that elusive form of energy with a different significance to different things. Capable of changing into other forms of energy, such as heat. For animals, a visual cue, for plants an essential source of energy. For the rock, it is a source of weathering. So, destructive? Then, ask the soil that forms from that weathering. It would declare light as a creating force. This is the soil that is habitat to plants, those special life forms that convert light into life, and in doing so, carrying out the will of God. As the German poet who wrote *Urlicht* (Primal Light) stated:

I am from God and to God I will return,
Dear God will give me a light,
Will light my way to eternal blessed life.

Consider: Whenever we eat—meals, snacks, Eucharist—we eat the energy of light. What does that mean to you?
-Frank Gilliam

Responsorial: In the Beginning A Canticle for Creation *based on John 1 Said responsively*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

All things came into being through the Word, and without the Word not one thing is made.

What has come into being is life,
And that life is the light of all people.

The light shines in the darkness,
And the darkness does not overcome it.

By the Word, the heavens were spoken, the earth took form, and the deep knew its boundary.
By your Word, O God, creation found its voice and its purpose.

You called light from chaos, order from emptiness, life from the dust of the ground.
By your Word, O God, we are made, and we are sustained.

All: Glory to God, Source of all being, Eternal Word, and Life-giving Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Be silent and listen.

Let us confess our sin against God and God’s creation.

Holy and merciful God, we confess that we have failed to honor you by rightly claiming our kinship with all your creatures. We have walked heavily on your earth, overused and wasted its resources, taken for granted its beauty and abundance, and treated its inhabitants unjustly, holding future generations hostage to our greed. Have mercy on us and forgive us our sin. Renew in us the resolve to keep and conserve your earth as you desire and intend, with grateful and compassionate hearts, through your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Absolution

Let us pray.

Great Spirit God, we give you thanks for another day on this earth. We give you thanks for this day to enjoy the compassionate goodness of you, our Creator. We acknowledge with one mind our respect and gratefulness to all the sacred cycle of life. Bind us together in the circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and one another. Amen. *source: Native American/Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Liturgies*

The Closing Hymn *Repeat the Refrain from Longing for Light, We Wait in Darkness [omitted in the ballroom]*

Refrain

Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the
dark - ness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your
church gath - ered to - day.

Blessing May the Creator who delights in all that is made bless you; may Christ, through whom all things were created, walk with you; and may the Spirit renew the face of the earth. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Creator and creation.

People

Thanks be to God.

Following the service please join us for a festive reception in the appointed location.

The convention will reconvene in the morning at 9:00 AM

A hearty breakfast will be served beginning at 8:00 AM.

Clergy Spouse Brunch is in Salt Restaurant tomorrow at 9:00 AM

Clergy vesting is in corner of ballroom

Longing for Light, We Wait in Darkness 314

Christ, Be Our Light



1 Long-ing for light, we wait in dark-ness. Long-ing for
 2 Long-ing for peace, our world is trou-bled. Long-ing for
 3 Long-ing for food, man - y are hun - gry. Long-ing for
 4 Long-ing for shel - ter, man - y are home-less. Long-ing for
 5 Man - y the gifts, man - y the peo - ple, man - y the



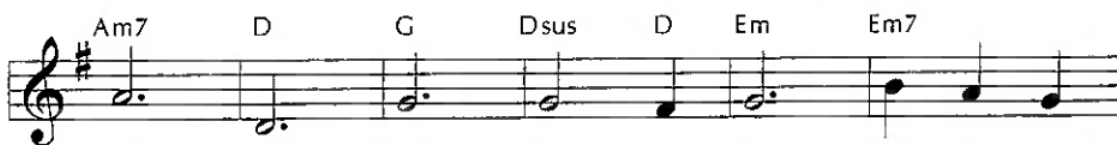
truth, we turn to you. Make us your own,
 hope, man - y de - spair. Your word a - lone
 wa - ter, man - y still thirst. Make us your bread,
 warmth, man - y are cold. Make us your build - ing,
 hearts that yearn to be - long. Let us be ser - vants



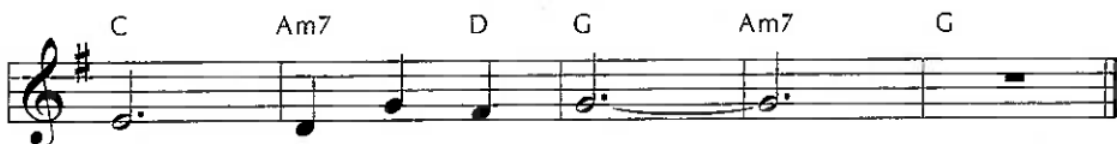
your ho - ly peo - ple, light for the world to see.
 has power to save us. Make us your liv - ing voice.
 bro - ken for oth - ers, shared un - til all are fed.
 shel - ter - ing oth - ers, walls made of liv - ing stone.
 to one an - oth - er, mak - ing your king - dom come.



Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the



dark - ness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your



church gath - ered to - day.