A vertical poster for Christmas. The background is a deep blue sky with a bright, multi-pointed star at the top center, casting rays of light. Below the star, the words "MERRY CHRISTMAS" are written in large, white, serif capital letters. Underneath that, a line of text in a white, cursive font reads "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift. Jesus is here!". The bottom half of the poster shows a silhouette of a nativity scene against a dark blue horizon. On the left, three camels are walking towards the right. In the center, a wooden manger is visible with several figures inside. On the right, a small figure is kneeling in prayer. The overall mood is serene and spiritual.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift. Jesus is here!

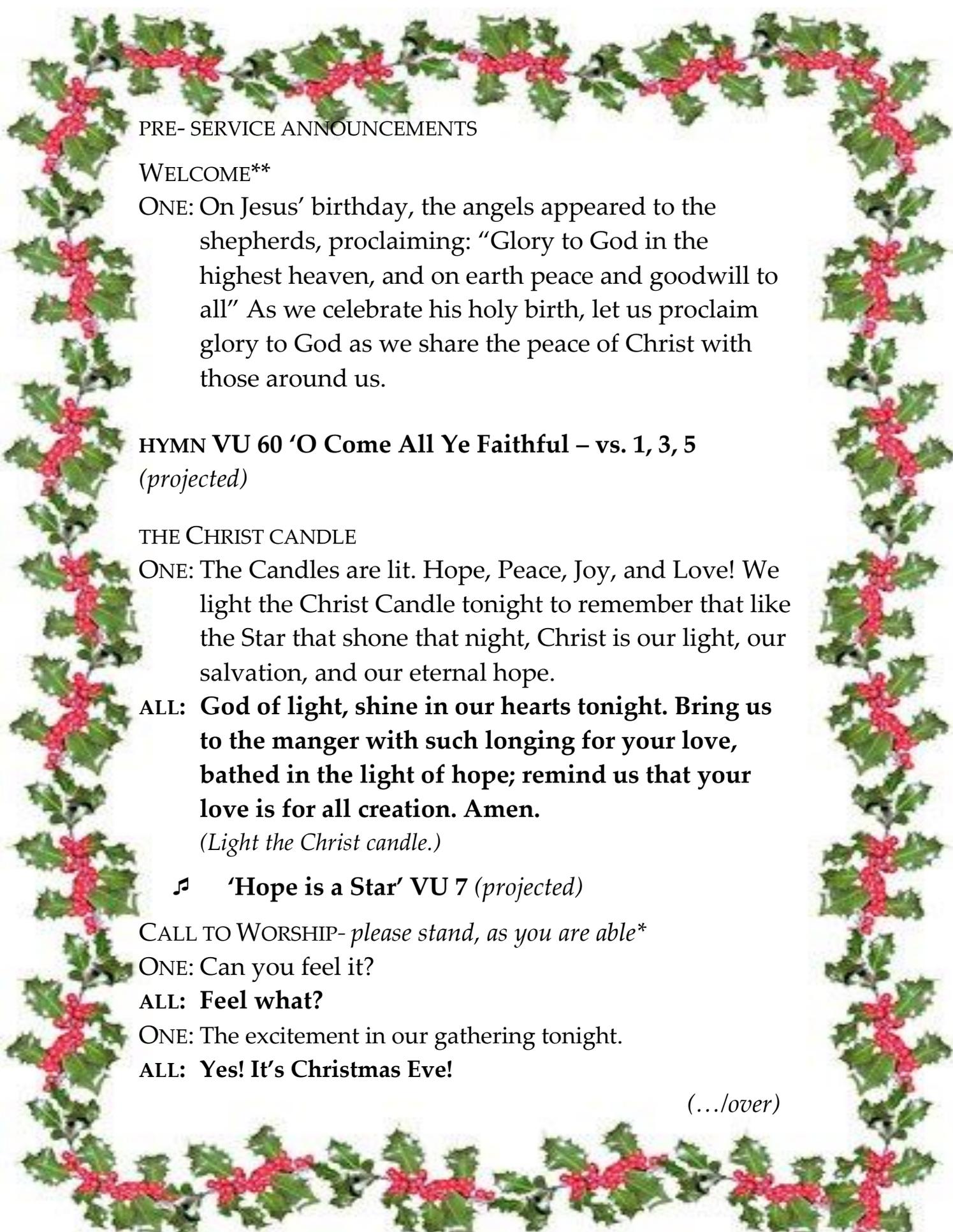
2 Corinthians 9:15

West River United Church

Rev. Barbara J. Cairns

and all members of West River United Church

Worship on Sunday, December 24th, 2017, 4 p.m.



PRE- SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

WELCOME**

ONE: On Jesus' birthday, the angels appeared to the shepherds, proclaiming: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace and goodwill to all" As we celebrate his holy birth, let us proclaim glory to God as we share the peace of Christ with those around us.

HYMN VU 60 'O Come All Ye Faithful – vs. 1, 3, 5
(projected)

THE CHRIST CANDLE

ONE: The Candles are lit. Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love! We light the Christ Candle tonight to remember that like the Star that shone that night, Christ is our light, our salvation, and our eternal hope.

ALL: God of light, shine in our hearts tonight. Bring us to the manger with such longing for your love, bathed in the light of hope; remind us that your love is for all creation. Amen.

(Light the Christ candle.)

♪ **'Hope is a Star' VU 7** *(projected)*

CALL TO WORSHIP- *please stand, as you are able**

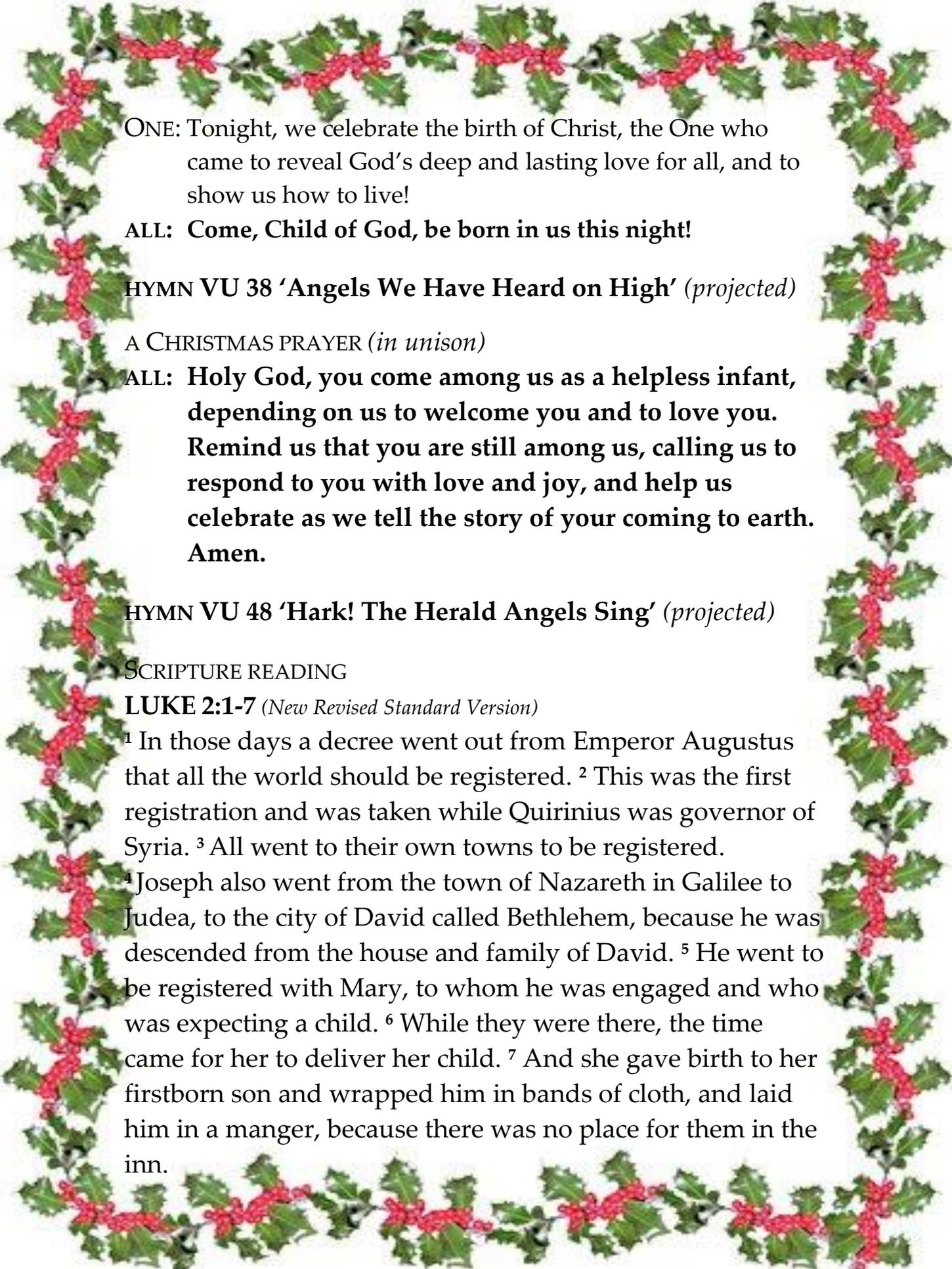
ONE: Can you feel it?

ALL: Feel what?

ONE: The excitement in our gathering tonight.

ALL: Yes! It's Christmas Eve!

(.../over)



ONE: Tonight, we celebrate the birth of Christ, the One who came to reveal God's deep and lasting love for all, and to show us how to live!

ALL: **Come, Child of God, be born in us this night!**

HYMN VU 38 'Angels We Have Heard on High' (*projected*)

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER (*in unison*)

ALL: **Holy God, you come among us as a helpless infant, depending on us to welcome you and to love you. Remind us that you are still among us, calling us to respond to you with love and joy, and help us celebrate as we tell the story of your coming to earth. Amen.**

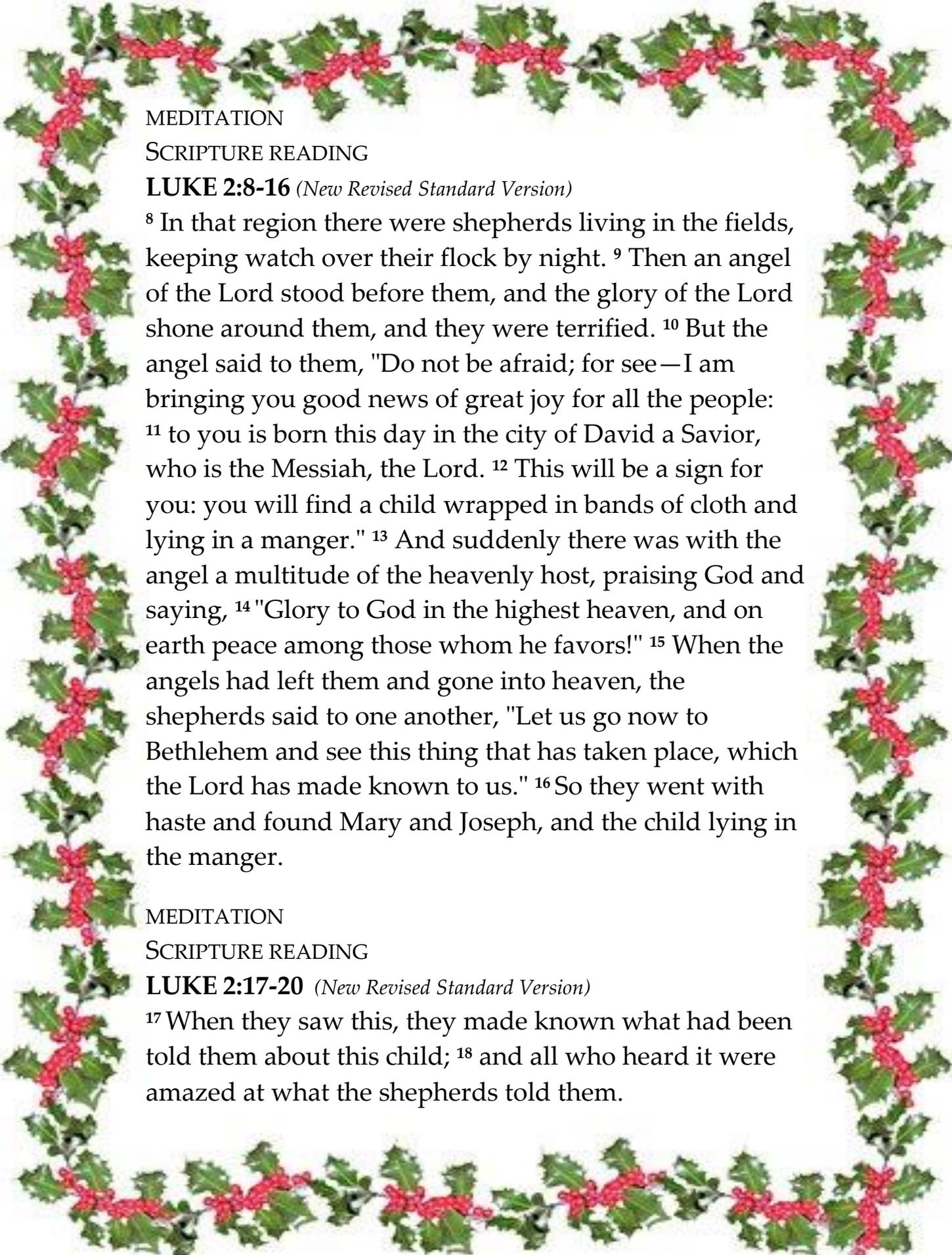
HYMN VU 48 'Hark! The Herald Angels Sing' (*projected*)

SCRIPTURE READING

LUKE 2:1-7 (*New Revised Standard Version*)

¹ In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ All went to their own towns to be registered.

⁴ 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. ⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ 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.



MEDITATION

SCRIPTURE READING

LUKE 2:8-16 (*New Revised Standard Version*)

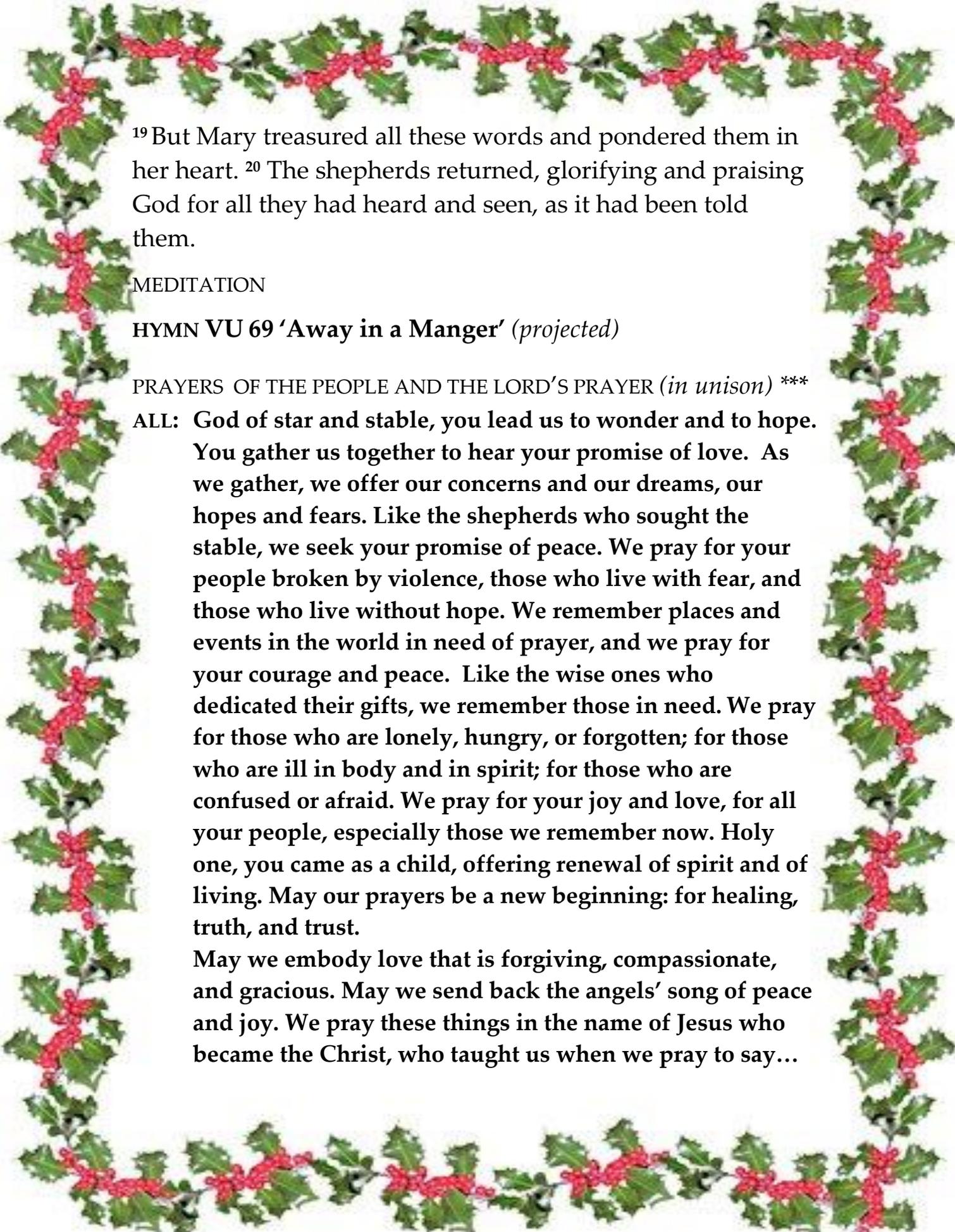
⁸ In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" ¹⁵ 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." ¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

MEDITATION

SCRIPTURE READING

LUKE 2:17-20 (*New Revised Standard Version*)

¹⁷ When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.



¹⁹ But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

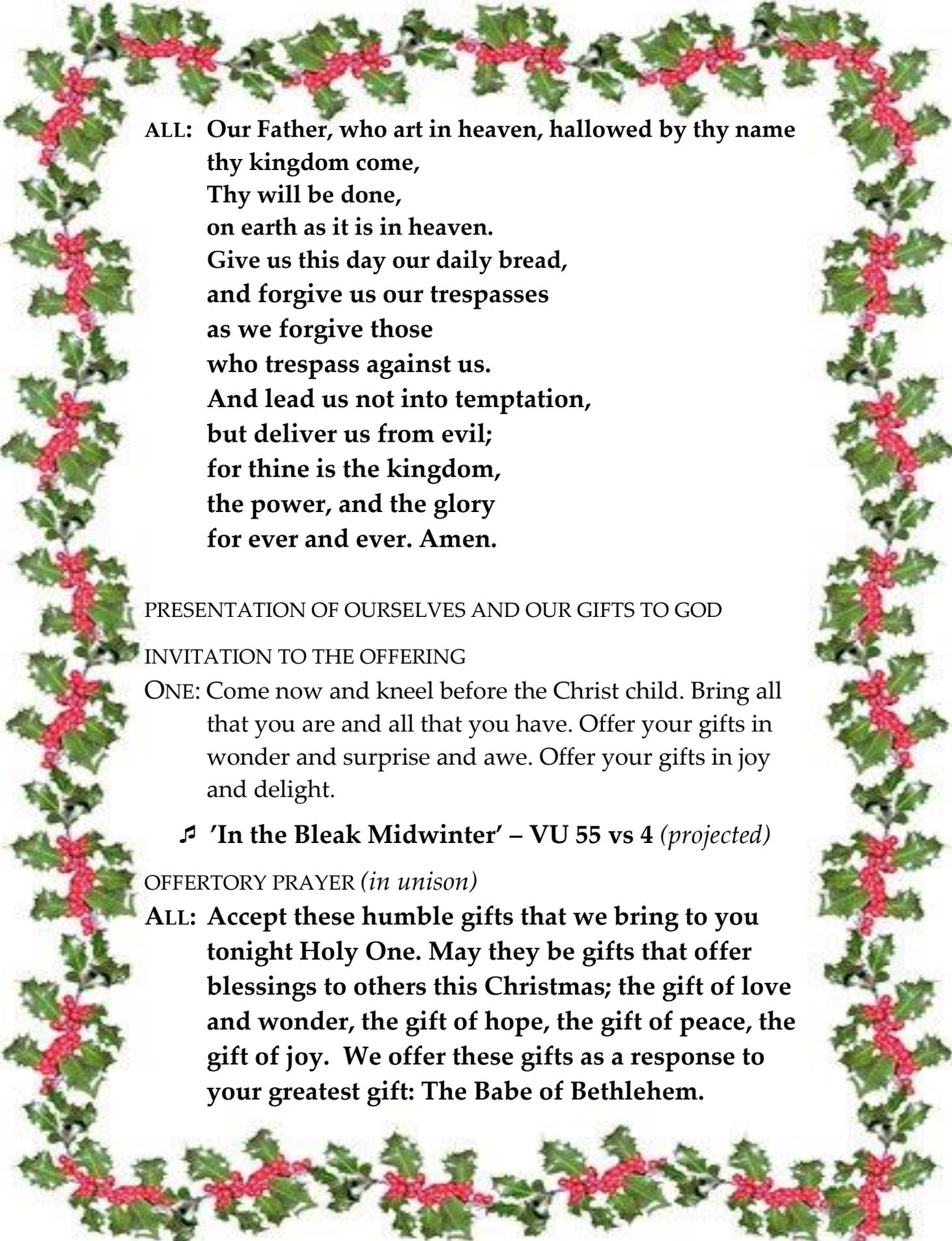
MEDITATION

HYMN VU 69 'Away in a Manger' (*projected*)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER (*in unison*) ***

ALL: God of star and stable, you lead us to wonder and to hope. You gather us together to hear your promise of love. As we gather, we offer our concerns and our dreams, our hopes and fears. Like the shepherds who sought the stable, we seek your promise of peace. We pray for your people broken by violence, those who live with fear, and those who live without hope. We remember places and events in the world in need of prayer, and we pray for your courage and peace. Like the wise ones who dedicated their gifts, we remember those in need. We pray for those who are lonely, hungry, or forgotten; for those who are ill in body and in spirit; for those who are confused or afraid. We pray for your joy and love, for all your people, especially those we remember now. Holy one, you came as a child, offering renewal of spirit and of living. May our prayers be a new beginning: for healing, truth, and trust.

May we embody love that is forgiving, compassionate, and gracious. May we send back the angels' song of peace and joy. We pray these things in the name of Jesus who became the Christ, who taught us when we pray to say...



**ALL: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name
thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil;
for thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory
for ever and ever. Amen.**

PRESENTATION OF OURSELVES AND OUR GIFTS TO GOD

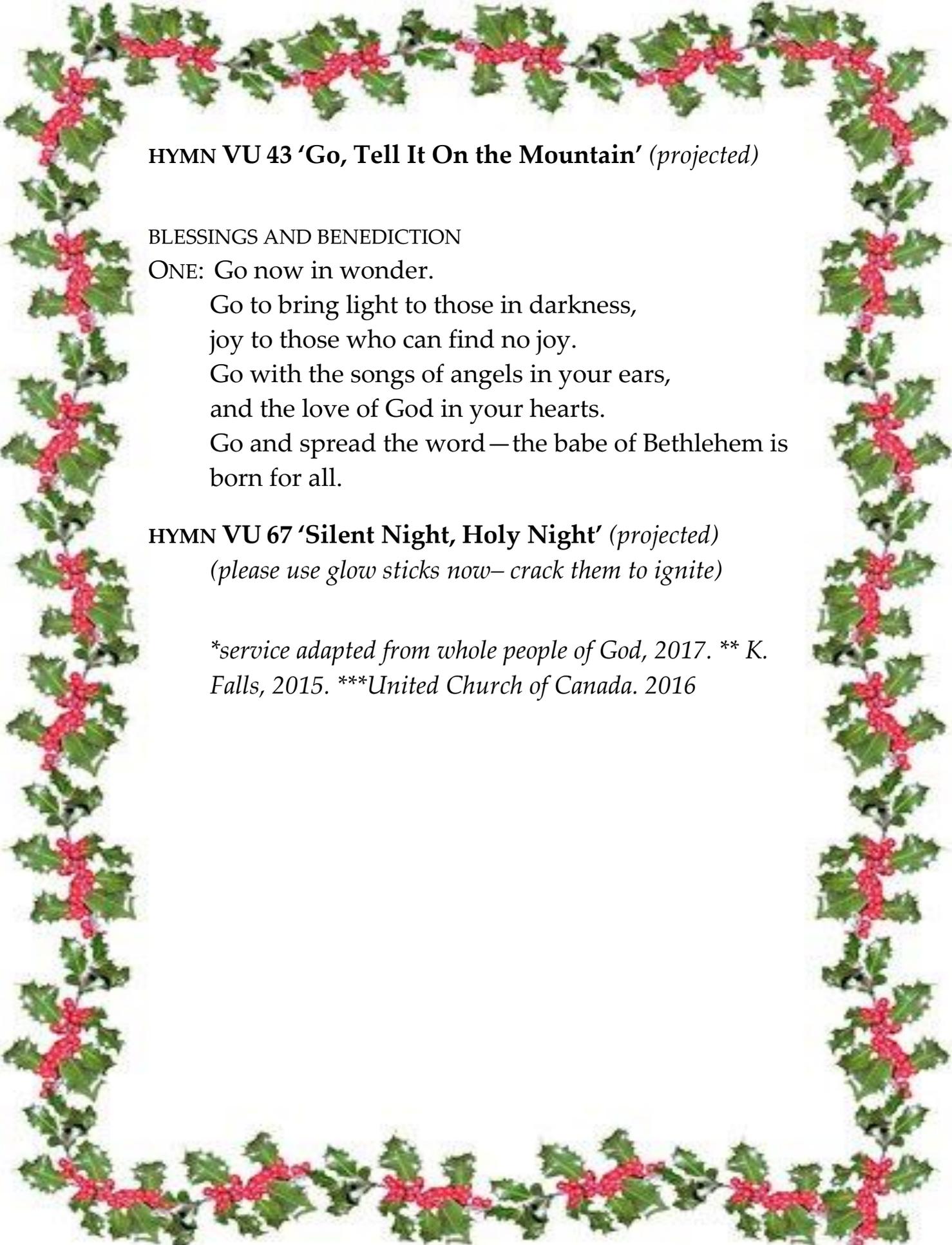
INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

ONE: Come now and kneel before the Christ child. Bring all that you are and all that you have. Offer your gifts in wonder and surprise and awe. Offer your gifts in joy and delight.

♫ **'In the Bleak Midwinter'** – VU 55 vs 4 (*projected*)

OFFERTORY PRAYER (*in unison*)

ALL: Accept these humble gifts that we bring to you tonight Holy One. May they be gifts that offer blessings to others this Christmas; the gift of love and wonder, the gift of hope, the gift of peace, the gift of joy. We offer these gifts as a response to your greatest gift: The Babe of Bethlehem.



HYMN VU 43 'Go, Tell It On the Mountain' *(projected)*

BLESSINGS AND BENEDICTION

ONE: Go now in wonder.

Go to bring light to those in darkness,
joy to those who can find no joy.

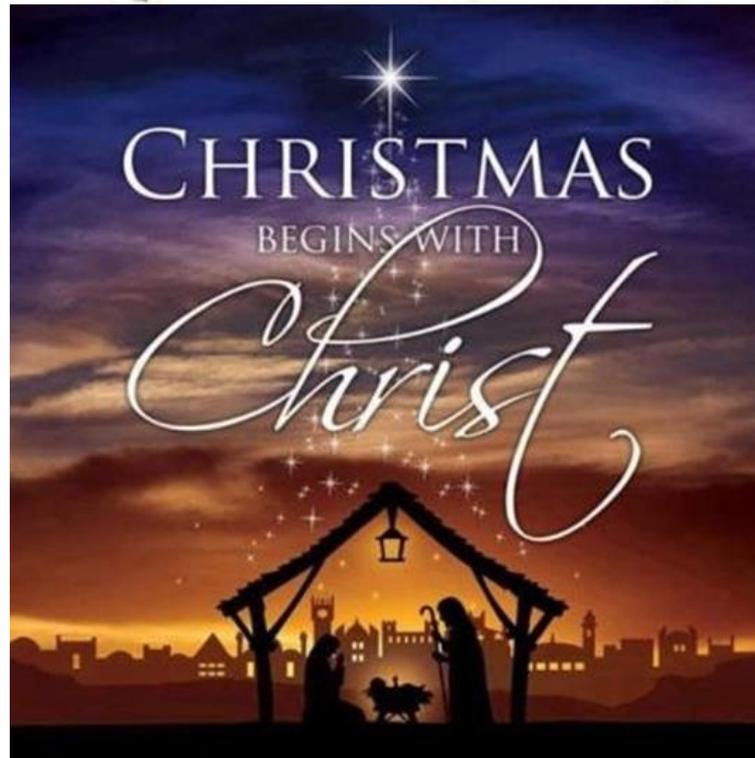
Go with the songs of angels in your ears,
and the love of God in your hearts.

Go and spread the word—the babe of Bethlehem is
born for all.

HYMN VU 67 'Silent Night, Holy Night' *(projected)*

(please use glow sticks now— crack them to ignite)

**service adapted from whole people of God, 2017. ** K.
Falls, 2015. ***United Church of Canada. 2016*



*May the light of His love
shine brightly on you this
Christmas
and carry you through the New
Year.*

Merry Christmas