



# BRIGHTER

ADVENT PRAYER GUIDE

Glory to God in the  
highest heaven, and on  
earth peace to those on  
whom His favour rests.

**- LUKE 2:14**

## INTRODUCTION

This is the Christmas message the angels proclaimed the night that Jesus was born –

### **God's glory brings peace to His people.**

In the Christmas story, the angels describe a new reality made possible by the arrival of the Messiah – This truth they proclaimed wasn't just a shining moment of celebration, but the fulfillment of God's eternal promises – the glory of His incarnate love in Jesus is our peace.

The world cannot give us peace. We are surrounded by darkness, suffering, and injustice. But the birth of Jesus powerfully reveals God's glory and brings peace to those who come to Him.

*In our aching loneliness the glory of Jesus is experienced in the peace of presence.*

*In our anxious need for control the glory of Jesus calms us in the peace of wonder.*

*In our gnawing fear the glory of Jesus strengthens us in the peace of trust.*

*In our conflict the glory of Jesus heals us in the peace of unity.*

As we prepare our hearts to celebrate the coming of Jesus into our world, we affirm the truth that when Jesus is at the centre of our lives, there is *light* that shines brighter and *peace* that transcends.



# “You are not alone.”



## God's Glory Brings the Peace of His Presence

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For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

**- ISAIAH 9:6**

God's presence is our life. "In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). And yet, tragically, many don't recognize or acknowledge God's constant presence with them. Those who live without an awareness of God's presence are beset with an inescapable aching loneliness. Jesus came to earth so that we would experience in a very real way the light and glory of God's presence with us – Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14). God has been with us since the beginning of time, but when Jesus came to us in flesh, He brought us an opportunity to understand and experience the glory

of His eternal presence in a new and powerful way. As John writes in his gospel,

The Word became flesh and  
made His dwelling among us.  
We have seen His glory, the glory  
of the one and only Son,  
who came from the Father,  
full of grace and truth.

– John 1:14

This is why, hundreds of years before Jesus came to earth, the prophet Isaiah spoke to the aching lonely hearts of humankind by describing Jesus as “the Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). There is no true, deep, lasting peace that overcomes our loneliness as long as we live unaware and separated from the only true source of peace. Jesus, who reveals the glory of God’s constant presence with us, is our peace.

## PRAISE

Meditate on the names of Jesus who is present with you. Let His glory amaze you and His presence bring you peace.

Wonderful Counsellor

Prince of Peace

Mighty God

Immanuel

Everlasting Father

## PRAY

- Set regular times throughout the day when you stop and pray a prayer acknowledging God’s presence and sufficiency. *“Jesus, I know you are with me.”*
- Pray the truth of God’s presence for those who are lonely.

*“Immanuel, may \_\_\_\_\_ be aware of your loving presence with them.”*

## PARTNER

The sense of aloneness runs deep for those living in Lebanon. For the past several years the people of Lebanon have been experiencing crisis upon crisis. Many are left feeling abandoned and forgotten by God. The economic and social breakdown has been exacerbated by deep divides between the people who live in Lebanon – those of different faiths, those who came as refugees from Palestine and Syria. People feel alienated and antagonistic towards their neighbours. It is impossible to work together to rebuild communities with these animosities.

Our partners at the Lebanon Society for Education and Social Development (LSESD) are working hard to show people the grace and truth of God's glory in practical, life-giving ways. They are also committed to ministries that reconcile peoples in and through Christ's love.

Pray peace for the country of Lebanon and for the ministries of LSESD. Learn about their peacemaking work at **[ThePeoplesChurch.info/LSESD](http://ThePeoplesChurch.info/LSESD)**.

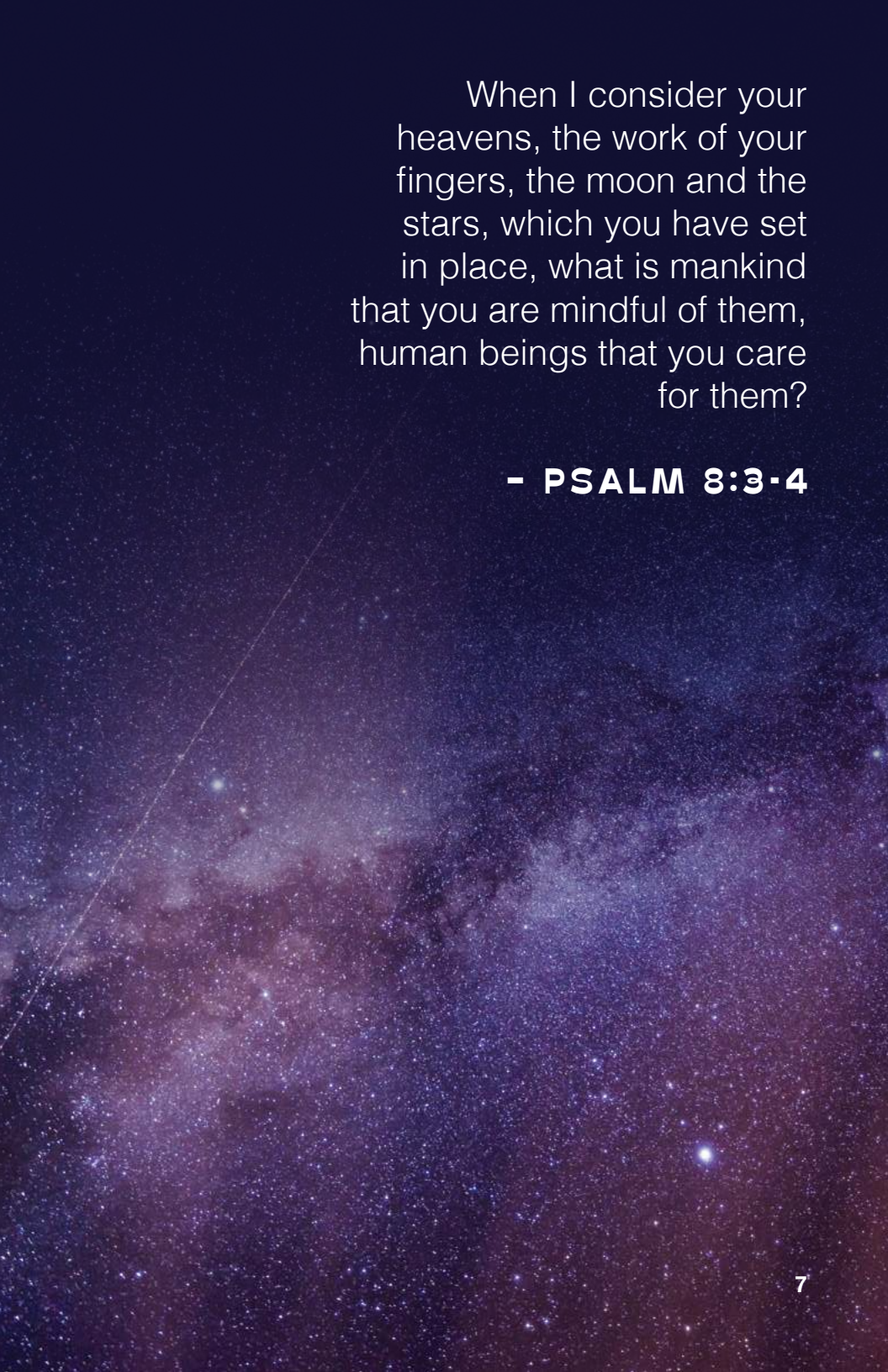
## PRACTICE

Every special celebration you plan for this Christmas can be a wonderful opportunity to be a peacemaker, by simply inviting someone who may be experiencing loneliness to share it with you.

This coming weekend, we will be gathering as a community for Songs of Hope and our Christmas Market. Prayerfully consider who you can invite and ask them to join us this Christmas!



Scan to learn more! Or Visit  
**[ThePeoplesChurch.ca/Christmas](http://ThePeoplesChurch.ca/Christmas)**



When I consider your  
heavens, the work of your  
fingers, the moon and the  
stars, which you have set  
in place, what is mankind  
that you are mindful of them,  
human beings that you care  
for them?

**- PSALM 8:3-4**

# “Do not be anxious about anything.”

## God's Glory Brings the Peace of Wonder

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And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”



When we fail to acknowledge the truth and power of God's glory and sovereignty in our lives and our world, we are left with the impossibly heavy burden of thinking we are in control – and our peace is gone.

Shepherds are generally a humble people. They don't live with illusions of grandeur or power. The night that Jesus was born was not the first or the last night the shepherds spent out in nature under the vast starry sky. Daily, they experienced the truth that nature declares for those who are listening and watching,

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies  
proclaim the work of His hands.

– Psalm 19:1

Perhaps it is because of this humility, so nurtured by creation all around them, that the shepherds dared to believe in a Saviour who came to them in the form of a helpless babe. This kind of faith, and the peace it brings are much more elusive to those of us who are disconnected from the rhythms and reminders of nature all around us.

Many of us are insidiously deceived by the lie that we are responsible for our own destinies and carry the weight of forging our own future. This illusion of control brings with it a gnawing anxiety as we grapple with a constant realization of our own helplessness. That is why so many find a brief respite from anxiety out in nature – by the seashore, in the forest, or lifting our eyes to the vast star-filled sky.

But what God offers by sending us a Saviour is much more than a brief respite... He wants us to dwell constantly in the awe of His glory – a glory of majesty and power that takes the burden of control from us and leaves in its place the deep peace of wonder and worship.

## PRAISE

Step out and spend some time encountering the splendour of God's creation. Or look through your photos and videos to revisit a memory where you experienced the beauty and wonder of creation – perhaps it was in your own neighbourhood or somewhere across the globe. Delight in the wonders of the God they reflect. Give thanks!

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory.

– Isaiah 6:3

## PRAY

- Thank God for the beauty and the truth of creation all around us. Ask Him to open your eyes to what creation declares of His power and majesty.
- Actively relinquish your desire to control – your circumstances, your relationships, your future. Ask God for forgiveness for your pride and for the gift of humble faith.
- Pray that we will be living examples of people who believe in a Creator who is actively involved in our lives and world.

## PARTNER

Indigenous followers of Jesus have retained a very strong Creator-centered understanding and appreciation for nature. Their deep respect for creation is one of the many gifts they offer to the Body of Christ.

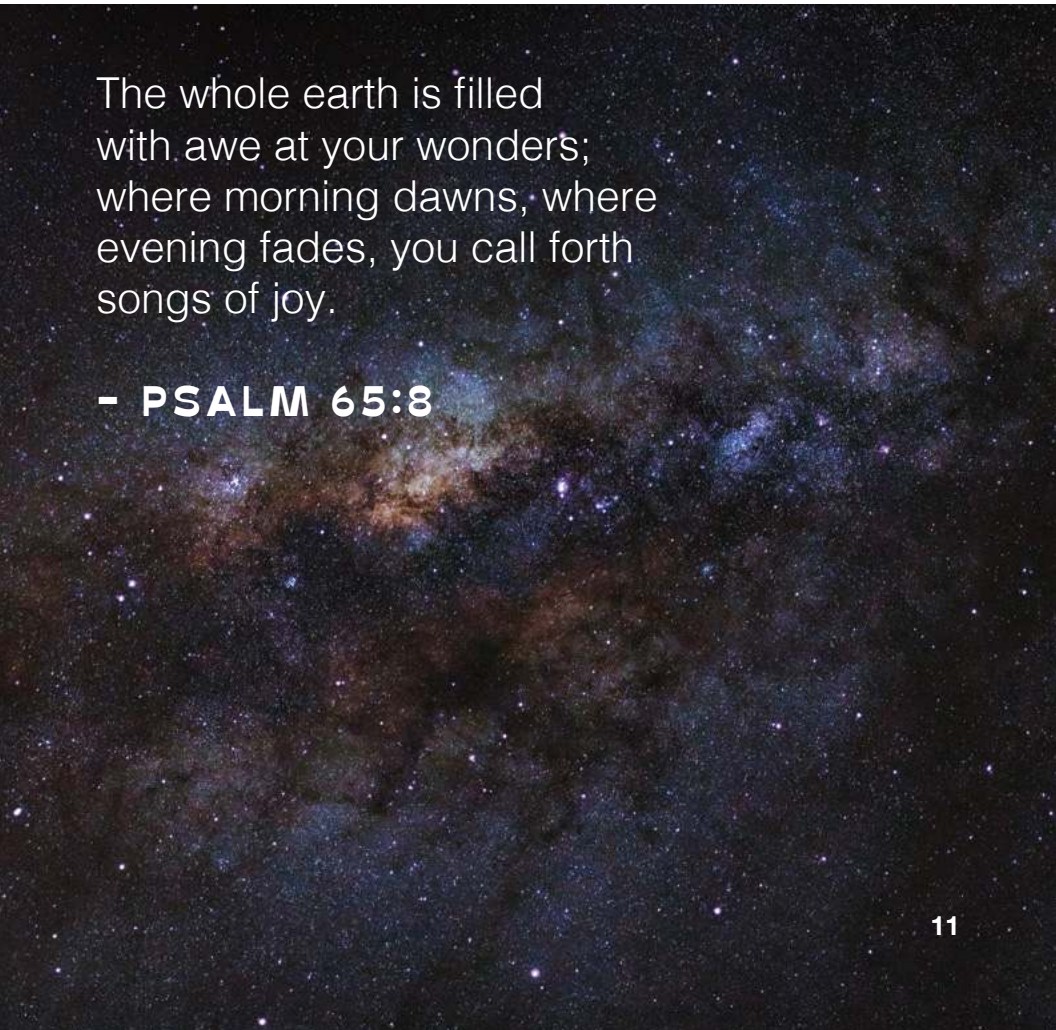
Our partners at iEmergence are actively ministering as peacemakers among Indigenous peoples of Canada. Reconciliation is only possible as Indigenous people experience their cultural identity deeply embedded in Jesus (Creator Sets Free). Peace will emerge among us as Indigenous people feel valued and supported in their journey of well-being and together we find common ground with fellow Jesus followers in culturally safe communities.

Pray for the ministry of iEmergence by learning more about their good work of peacebuilding at **[ThePeoplesChurch.info/iEmergence](http://ThePeoplesChurch.info/iEmergence)**.

## PRACTICE

Try not to complain about the weather, but rather make a point of sharing with others your wonder and thanks for the beauty of winter.

As part of your Christmas celebrations, invite a neighbour to go for a walk and share with them the joy and wonder of God's creation!



The whole earth is filled  
with awe at your wonders;  
where morning dawns, where  
evening fades, you call forth  
songs of joy.

**- PSALM 65:8**

# “Do not be afraid.”

## God’s Glory Brings the Peace of Trust

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“Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.” Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God...”

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.”

**- LUKE 1:28-30,38**



Fear is the thief of peace. Many of the decisions we make, or don't make – many of the relationships we have or don't have – too much of our lives are controlled by fear. It has always been this way since our relationship with a loving God was broken, and sin



entered our world – resulting in violence, injustice, and suffering. There is much to fear, but that is not how God would have us live. From Genesis to Revelation, the God who loves us repeats again and again, “Do not be afraid”.

In the Christmas story, God reveals His glory to a desperate people living in darkness and fear, and yet each time He appears, He needs to say, “Do not be afraid”. It is sad that when the God who is our refuge, defender, and protector shows up in all His glory, we are afraid in His presence, because fear has become our default response – even to love. We must learn to trust God as Mary did when her momentary fear is cast away by a deep trust in the love and provision of a promise-keeping God. As we regularly worship Him in His glory, we will no longer be afraid of His glory, but will find deep peace in trusting His presence and His promise.

## PRAISE

Spend time in worship by listening to the song “Mary Did You Know?”

Meditate on the invitation Jesus still gives to those who trust Him.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.  
I do not give to you as the world gives.  
Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not  
be afraid.

– John 14:27

## PRAY

- What has God asked of you recently that has caused you to be afraid? Ask Him to help you trust Him enough to say “I am the Lord’s servant...May your word to me be fulfilled”
- Think of someone who you know is experiencing fear. Pray about how you can be a peacemaker for them by encouraging them to trust in God’s promise and provision.

## PARTNER

It is not easy to be a follower of Jesus in the region of North Africa where our partners minister. They are doing ground-breaking work to bring about peace among warring tribes in their region. Glorious miracles of reconciliation are occurring as people come to know and trust Jesus – the Prince of Peace.

And yet, despite the peace they bring to this nation, the government officials have recently called our partners before a judicial board threatening retaliation for their religious propaganda.

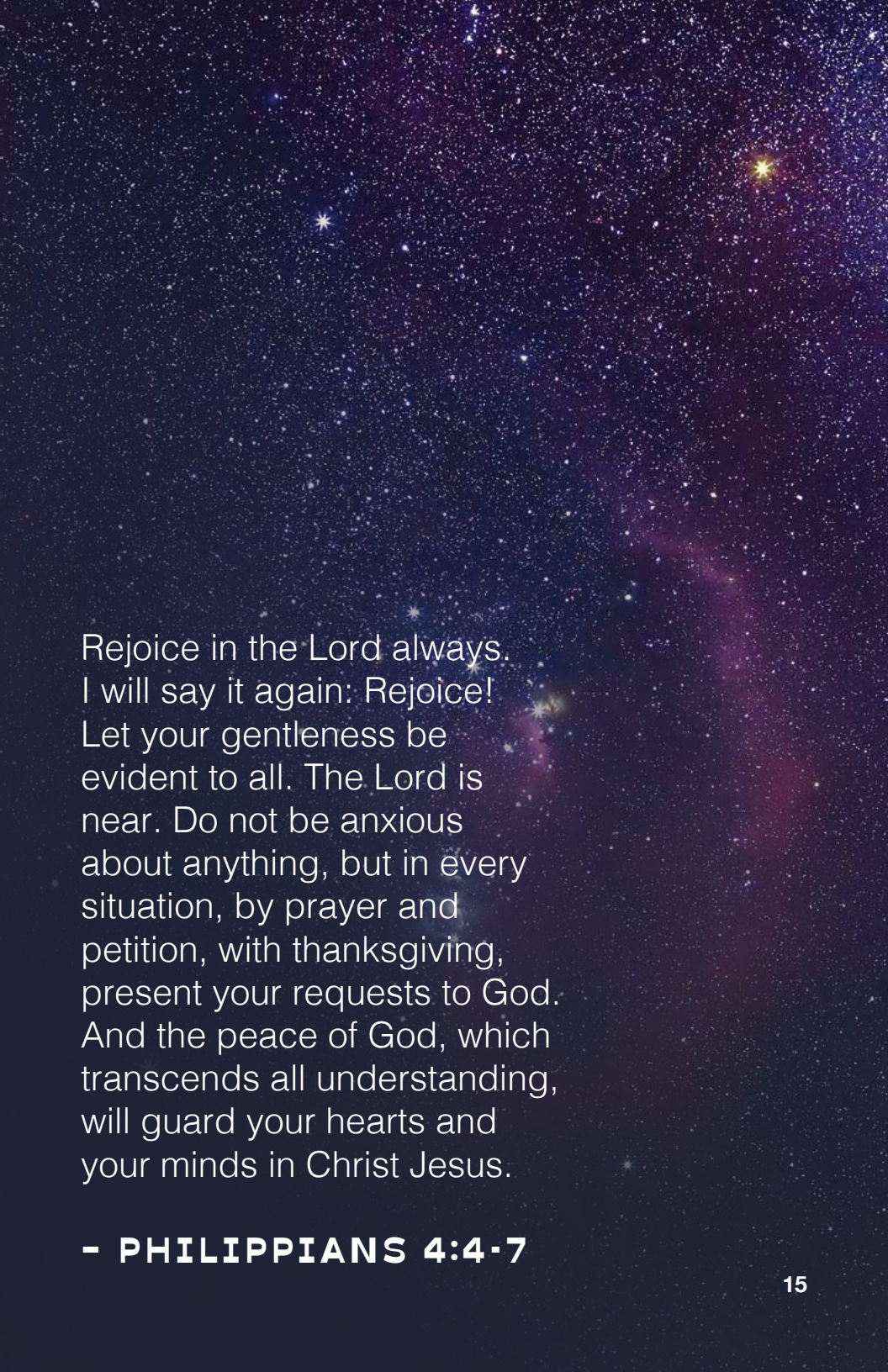
Our missionary responded to this upcoming trial by saying, *“I feel that the Lord wanted to take this matter up to a higher level. In all the mess I was rejoicing because maybe God wanted to let these people know about Him”*.

Due to security concerns, there are no public links to our partners’ ministry. But we ask for your prayers – that God’s glory would be revealed, and that the peace of Jesus would continue to reign in our partners’ hearts and in their region.

## PRACTICE

Think about a verse from God’s Word that has recently encouraged you and share it on social media or with those around you.

Be creative – you can use the verse to craft a card for someone or add a meaningful image when you share it online. Use the hashtag **#TPCChristmas** and tag **@TPCToronto** to share your post with our church family!



Rejoice in the Lord always.  
I will say it again: Rejoice!  
Let your gentleness be  
evident to all. The Lord is  
near. Do not be anxious  
about anything, but in every  
situation, by prayer and  
petition, with thanksgiving,  
present your requests to God.  
And the peace of God, which  
transcends all understanding,  
will guard your hearts and  
your minds in Christ Jesus.

**- PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7**

# “Make them one as We are One.”

## God's Glory Brings the Peace of Unity

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After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him.”

When King Herod heard this, he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

**- MATTHEW 2:1-3**

Our world has always been divided among nations and ethnicities. Conflicts arise even among neighbours and families. That is why it is so significant that the





Christmas story records the visit of Magi who travel from a far away nation to come and worship the Christ Child. Their coming should have been a sign of peace, a glimpse of the glory that will one day be given to Jesus.

“All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord; they will bring glory to your name.”

– Psalm 86:9

Instead of bringing glory to God by welcoming these visitors and worshipping Christ together with them, Herod grasps for power which is not his. The result is violence and tragedy – it always is.

Our unity in Jesus brings glory to God. Jesus tells us that our unity is how the world will know and believe that God loves them.

“I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

– John 17:22-23

And yet tragically we, like Herod, still become disturbed when visitors come seeking the Saviour. Our lack of unity as followers of Jesus causes many to turn away from God in disappointment and disbelief.

As a Church, our prayer is to bring glory to God by living out peace and reconciliation with Him and one another – in response to Jesus’ prayer for us.

Together, we are on a journey to live into the oneness that the Gospel has already brought us into and to celebrate the beauty of Christ shining brightly through our diverse cultures, generations, and perspectives.

## PRAISE

Think of two nations or people groups that are at war and read this passage in faith over their conflict to acknowledge that Jesus is indeed Lord over all nations and peoples.

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

– Revelations 7:9-10

## PRAY

- Pray for the spirit of unity in The Peoples Church, and throughout God's global body.
- Pray for peace over the conflicts raging throughout the world. That wars would cease throughout the earth in the name of Jesus.
- Pray that we would always welcome people who come seeking Jesus.

## PARTNER

The people of Colombia have experienced too much violence and conflict, and yet in 2014 just as their nation was experiencing a break from the conflict, hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans poured into their country seeking refuge. Our partners in Colombia welcomed the Venezuelans and brought glory to God as they opened their doors to worship Jesus together with those seeking refuge.

As conflict and violence is once again on the rise in Colombia, tensions are increasing between those who were born in Colombia, and those who have come seeking refuge. Our partners are active peacemakers

seeking blessing and wellbeing for all. Peace and reconciliation are not easily achieved or maintained among people who have experienced so much violence and conflict in their lives – only Christ can bring this reconciliation.

Learn about our partners and their ministry in Colombia and Venezuela so that we can support them in their important ministry of peacemaking.

**ThePeoplesChurch.info/LAM-Hernan-Rosa**  
**ThePeoplesChurch.info/LAM-Daniel-Helen**

This is what it means to be peacemakers – incarnate examples of Christ's forgiveness and love.

## PRACTICE

- Christmas is a wonderful opportunity to welcome someone from another country who has not yet experienced a Canadian Christmas and to learn from their holiday traditions and celebrations.
- Actively learn about and participate in our church's Make Us One initiative as we seek to reflect God's glory through our sincere unity in Christ. Learn more at **ThePeoplesChurch.ca/Make-Us-One**.

As we graciously receive guidance and inspiration from our partners to deeply understand our shared ministry of reconciliation, we too have the opportunity to join their work by giving generously this Christmas.

You can support the peace and reconciliation work of our five partners by designating your financial gift to our **Christmas – Global Mission Fund**.

To give, simply text **PeoplesGive** to the number **77-9-77** or visit **ThePeoplesChurch.ca/give**.

This Christmas, we remember and celebrate that Christ's church is global, and He desires for us to live in the truth of our unity and the connectedness of His kingdom.

Peace I leave with you;  
my peace I give you.  
I do not give to you as  
the world gives.  
Do not let your hearts  
be troubled and do  
not be afraid.

**- JOHN 14:27**



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