

MAGNIFY THE LORD WITH  
JOY THAT OVERCOMES FEAR



ADVENT WREATH  
CANDLE LIGHTING  
LITURGY



**COLUMBIA**  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

# *Magnify the Lord with Joy that Overcomes Fear*

*And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.*

*Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed  
for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name;  
indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation. (Luke 1:45-50)*

Advent is a season of holy waiting—a sacred invitation to look for light in the shadows and to lift our voices with hope, courage, and joy. At the center of this year's CTS Advent Candle Liturgy is the *Magnificat*, Mary's prophetic song of praise. This song is not a soft lullaby, but a bold declaration that God's mercy upends the powers that harm, lifts the lowly, fills the hungry, and fulfills ancient promises. We hear it anew in our own time as both a word of comfort and a call to action.

Each week's liturgy draws from the Revised Common Lectionary for Year A and pairs the readings with selected verses of O Come, O Come Emmanuel, from the Glory to God Hymnal (GTG #88). The verses are intentionally not in their traditional order, but chosen to echo the themes of the lectionary texts and the *Magnificat*. We invite you to be creative—feel free to reorder or substitute verses in ways that honor the unique context of your home, your congregation, and your community.

You may also want to consider using alternate stanzas by Maureen C. Tirabassi, which offer powerful contemporary language rooted in Advent hope. These can be found at:  
<https://giftsinopenhands.wordpress.com>

*Come, make true the stories prophets tell –so all those chained by fear find release,  
and, war forgotten, bring a world of peace.  
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel is come to birth where all God's children dwell.*

*O Come, Love's-season, to our lonely days, and guide us in our words and ways  
to be the ones whose Advent begins, with healing earth and all that live within.  
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel is come to birth where all God's children dwell.*

With deep gratitude, we give thanks to the Columbia Theological Seminary community, President Victor Aloyo Jr., the *Magnificat Circle*, graphic creator Corie Cox, and each of the gifted contributors Rev. Alex Evangelista, Rev. Elizabeth C. Goodrich '03, Rev. Rhonda M. Johnson, and Ms. Leemei Sophia Laktuhu who offered their voices, prayers, and prophetic imaginations to this resource.

May these words help communities across many places magnify the Lord with joy that overcomes fear, and may the Light of Christ meet us all with hope, peace, joy, and love.

— Rev. Shavon Starling-Louis '13, Editor  
Columbia Theological Seminary Advent Wreath Candle Liturgy 2025

# Magnify the Lord with Joy that Overcomes Fear

## Week One: Hope

Magnificat focus: "God fulfills promises"

Contributor: Rev. Alex Evangelista



### Gathering Words

Leader: Advent begins in honest longing and active trust.

We gather before the God whose hesed,

steadfast, covenantal mercy,

abides and does not let us go.

With Isaiah, we dare to ask for holy disruption in a hardened world. (Isaiah 64)

With the psalmist, we seek restoration and the shining of God's face among us. (Psalm 80:7)

With Jesus' fig-tree teaching,

we practice attention to tender signs of nearness in ordinary time. (Mark 13)

And with Mary, we magnify the One who remembers mercy and fulfills promises, forming in us a courageous hope that overcomes fear.

### Scripture Engagement

Leader: Hear from the prophet:

when systems calcify and distances harden, we pray,

"Disrupt what separates us; make your presence unmistakable among us." (Isaiah 64)

**People: Restore us, O God, let your radiance be known among us, that we may be saved.**

(Psalm 80)

Leader: From the Gospel, we receive the fig tree's wisdom:

attend to tender shoots;

read the nearness of God in small renewals and ordinary days. (Mark 13:28-37)

**People: We wait awake, alert to unveiling, attuned to mercy.**

Leader: And with Mary we confess:

God has remembered mercy and fulfilled promises. (Luke 1:54-55)

**People: Holy is God's name.**

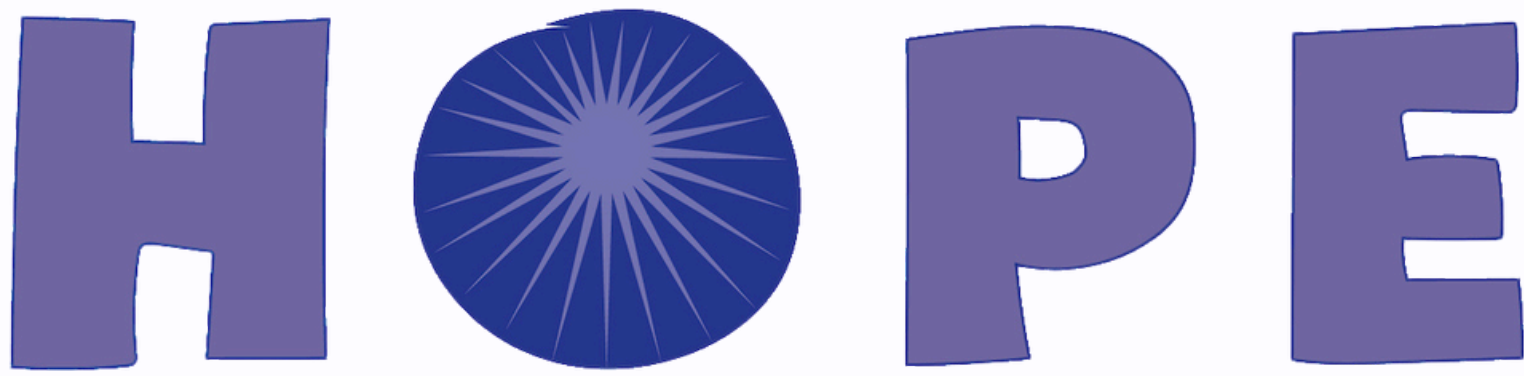
### Hymn Verse – O Come, O Come Emmanuel (GTG #88 verse 1)

All sing or say:

**O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,**

**that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.**

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**



## Candle Lighting Words

Leader: We light the first candle of Hope,  
as witness to God's faithful nearness and promise-fulfilling love.

**People: Where fear narrows our vision,  
let this light widen our sight.**

Leader: Make in us a spacious hope: watchful, courageous, and for the common good.

**People: The One who calls us is trustworthy; our hope will not be put to shame.**

*(The first (blue/purple) candle is lit.)*

## Prayer

Leader: God of enduring mercy, you do not abandon your people or your world.

Where we are exiled by despair, gather us in.

Where power hoards and harm multiplies,  
interrupt us for justice.

Teach us the fig tree's tenderness;

tune us to Mary's courage.

Awaken us to your kin-dom come,  
your unveiling in small fidelities and great liberations.

Let this season train our imaginations for your arriving presence,  
hope that organizes, hope that comforts,  
hope that risks love.

Through Jesus Christ, Light among us. **Amen.**

## Closing Acclamation

**All: Come, Lord Jesus, our Light and our Salvation.**

**Let us magnify the Lord with hope that overcomes fear!**



Rev. Alex Evangelista is a DMin Candidate at Columbia Theological Seminary. He is the pastor of Pine Shores Presbyterian Church, FL. Listen to what Advent means to Alex at [tinyurl.com/CTSAAdventMeans](https://tinyurl.com/CTSAAdventMeans)



## Magnify the Lord with Joy that Overcomes Fear

### Week Two: Peace

**Magnificat focus: God brings down the mighty, lifts the lowly**

**Contributor: Rev. Rhonda M. Johnson**

#### Gathering Words

Leader: We come to the second week of the Advent journey. Pregnant with anticipation and stillness of mind and heart, we come with a spiritual knowledge of great liberation and healing of our land.

So, as we gather in this second week, we light the candle of Peace. This peace comes not from guns, fists, or supremacist policy laid down, but from the peace that makes hearts humble, our words true and trembling, liberating voices raised no matter the circumstances!

This peace surpasses all understanding, led by an awaiting Prince of Peace. With contention all around us, we speak peace from our Creator who brings down the mighty and lifts the lowly. We speak peace, we magnify peace, and we wait for the embodiment of Peace, the Christ. Come, Jesus, come.

#### Scripture Engagement

Leader: Hear the words that bring peace from the prophet Isaiah:

**People: "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God." (Isaiah 40:1)**

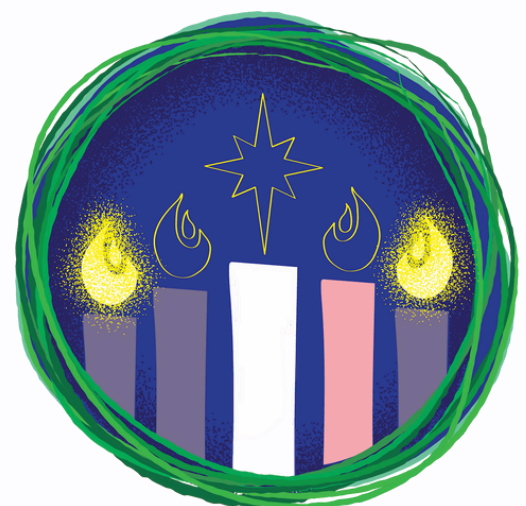
We hear Mary, proclaiming her message of peace:

**People: "Our Creator has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble." (Luke 1:52)**

#### Hymn Verse – O Come, O Come Emmanuel (GTG #88 verse 7)

All sing or say:

**O come, Desire of nations, bind  
all peoples in one heart and mind;  
bid envy, strife, and discord cease;  
fill the whole world with heaven's peace.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**



# PEACE

## Candle Lighting Words

Leader: We light the first candle of Hope,  
as witness to God's faithful nearness and promise-fulfilling love.

**People: Where fear narrows our vision,  
let this light widen our sight.** *(The first (blue/purple) candle is lit.)*

Leader: We light the candle of Peace

**People: Peace that cannot be seen by eyes or felt by human hands.**

Leader: But peace that lives within us that is the promise of a liberation birthing, truth telling God in flesh. *(The second (blue/purple) candle is lit.)*

**People: For the Mighty one has lifted us up, beyond our humble state, above and beyond our foes and for all generations to call us blessed.**

## Prayer

Leader: We wait with expectation for a God that brings love to our being,  
truth to our lips and a stirring in our hearts until the manifestation of peace comes.  
We wait with anticipation and lament, courage, and longing  
for peace that shows itself to our spirits  
and surpasses a world that does not understand.  
This peace we long for, and as our Peaceful Prince, we bid you come. **Amen.**

## Closing Acclamation

**All: Come, Lord Jesus, our Light and our Salvation.  
Let us magnify the Lord with hope and peace that overcomes fear!**

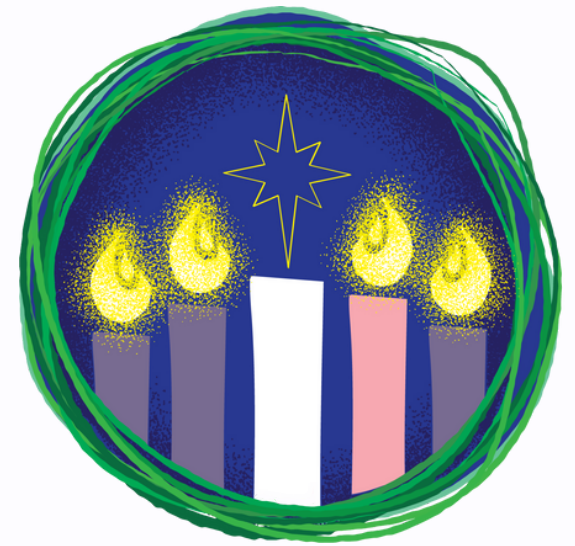


Rev. Rhonda Johnson is a Columbia Theological Seminary DMin Candidate and currently serves as Administrative Assistant for the CTS Office of Academic Affairs.  
Listen to what Advent means to Rhonda at [tinyurl.com/CTSAAdventMeans](https://tinyurl.com/CTSAAdventMeans)

**Magnify the Lord with Joy that Overcomes Fear**  
**Week Three: Joy**  
**Magnificat focus: "My spirit rejoices in God my Savior"**  
**Contributor: Rev. Elizabeth Cole Goodrich '03**

**Gathering Words**

Leader: We light the candle of Joy today  
- because, even now, in these turbulent days,  
the light shines in darkness,  
and the darkness did not,  
and will never, overcome it.



We join with Mary and the prophets who came before her  
as we magnify the Lord with Joy that overcomes fear.

**Scripture Engagement**

Leader: Hear these words from the Psalmist:  
When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dream.

**People: Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with shouts of joy;**

Leader: Then it was said among the nations,  
"The Lord has done great things for them." (Psalm 126:1-3)

**People: The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.**

Leader: And these words, from the Gospel according to John:  
All things came into being through him,  
and without him not one thing came into being.

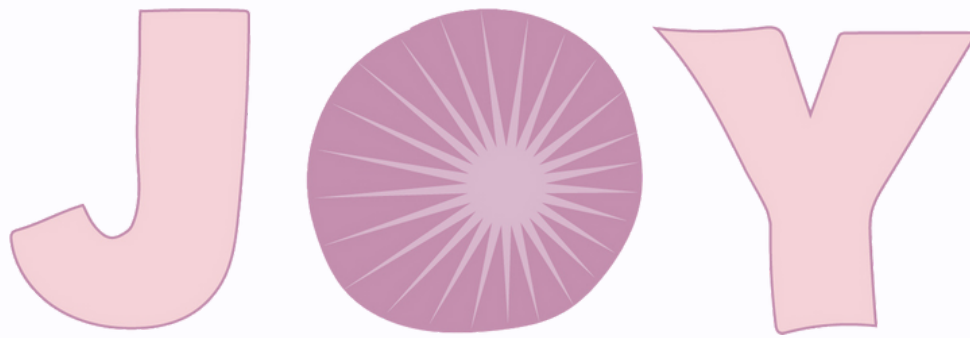
**People: What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.  
(John 1:3-4)**

**Hymn Verse – O Come, O Come Emmanuel (GTG #88 verse 3)**

All sing or say:

**O come, O come, thou Lord of might,  
who to thy tribes on Sinai's height  
in ancient times didst give the law  
in cloud and majesty and awe.**

***Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.***



## Candle Lighting Words

Leader: We light the first candle of Hope,

**People: Where fear narrows our vision,**

**let this light widen our sight.** *(The first candle (blue/purple) is lit.)*

Leader: We light the candle of Peace.

**People: Peace that lives within us that is the promise of a liberation birthing, truth telling**

**God in flesh.** *(The second candle (blue/purple) is lit.)*

Leader: We light the candle of Joy.

**People: We will bring the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.**

Leader: You shall be called priests of the Lord,  
you shall be named ministers of our God.

**People: With prophets and apostles, and with all the saints, we rejoice in the Lord.**

*(The third (pink) candle is lit.)*

## Prayer

Leader: Lord of All and Savior of each one of us, grant us Joy.

The Joy that is contentment and delight,

and the Joy that comes from the assurance you are at work

in us, through us, and in spite of us, because you so love the world.

In this season of Joy, we watch and we wait,

we marvel and we wonder. Come quickly. **Amen.**

## Closing Acclamation

**All: Come, Lord Jesus, our Light and our Salvation.**

**Let us magnify the Lord with hope, peace, and joy that overcomes fear!**



Rev. Elizabeth C. Goodrich '03 is a Columbia Theological Seminary alum and the current Chair of the Board of the Trustees for CTS.

Listen to what Advent means to Elizabeth at

[tinyurl.com/CTSAAdventMeans](https://tinyurl.com/CTSAAdventMeans)



# Magnify the Lord with Joy that Overcomes Fear

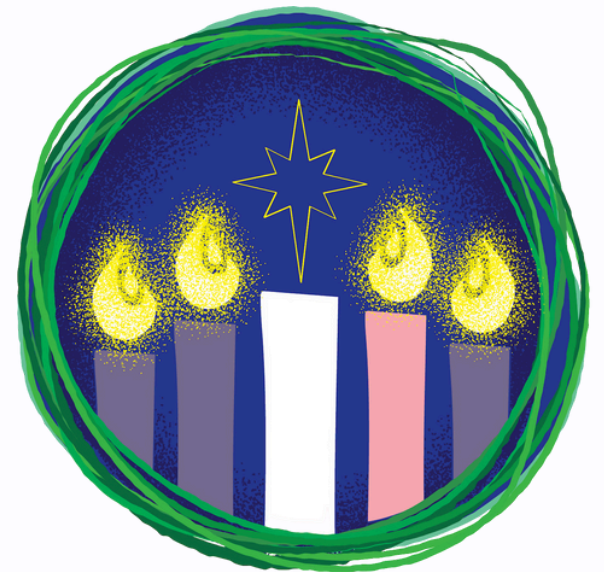
## Week 4: Love

**Magnificat Focus: "His mercy is from generation to generation"**

**Contributor: Leemei Sophia Laktuhu**

### Gathering Words

Leader: Beloved community, today we light the candle of Love.  
Not love as sentiment but love as sacred presence.  
Love that begins in God,  
Love that finds its way into flesh and promise,  
Love that chooses the humble and lifts the weary.  
Let us love one another, for love is born of God.  
To dwell in love is to dwell in God,  
and to know the One who first loved us.  
We magnify the Lord with joy that overcomes fear.



### Scripture Engagement

Leader: Hear these words of promise from the prophet Nathan, spoken to David:  
"Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me;  
your throne will be established forever." (2 Samuel 7:16)

And hear Mary's song of mercy:

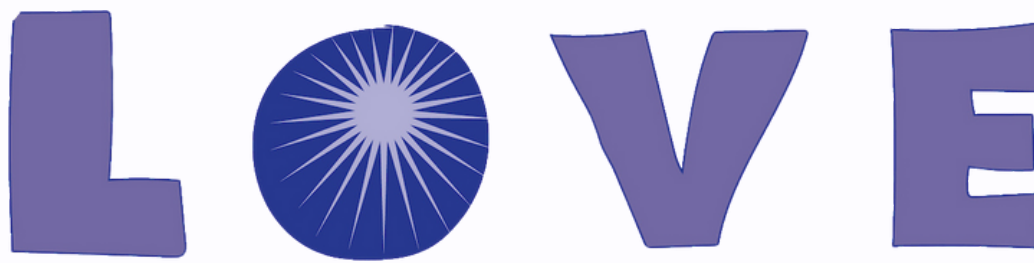
"His mercy extends to those who fear him,  
from generation to generation.

He has helped his servant Israel, in remembering to be merciful." (Luke 1:50, 54)

### Hymn Verse – O Come, O Come Emmanuel (GTG #88 verse 6)

All sing or say:

**O come, Thou Dayspring, from on high,  
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**



## Candle Lighting Words

Leader: We light the first candle of Hope,

**People: Where fear narrows our vision,**

**let this light widen our sight.** *(The first candle (blue/purple) is lit.)*

Leader: We light the candle of Peace.

**People: Peace that lives within us, that is the promise of a liberation birthing,  
truth-telling God in flesh.** *(The second candle (blue/purple) is lit.)*

Leader: We light the candle of Joy.

**People: We will bring the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.**

*(The third (pink) candle is lit.)*

Leader: We light the candle of Love.

**People: In a world longing for compassion, the light of God's love and mercy shines.**

Leader: With Mary we rejoice in the God who remembers.

**People: God's mercy flows through all generations, unbroken and sure.**

*(The fourth candle (blue/purple) is lit.)*

## Prayer

God of Love, in this Advent season, we long for love to take root in our hearts and overflow from your mercy into a world aching to be held. As we light this candle, kindle in us a love that lifts the lowly, that welcomes the stranger, that remembers your mercy from generation to generation. With hearts filled with love for one another, help us magnify you with joy that overcomes fear. Lord Jesus, let your love cast out all fear. **Amen.**

## Closing Acclamation

**All: Come, Lord Jesus, our Light and our Salvation.**

**Let us magnify the Lord with hope, peace, joy, and love that overcomes fear.**



Leemei Sophia Laktuhu is a graduating MAPT student at Columbia Theological Seminary. She is active in the Office of Worship Life and the International Student Association. Listen to what Advent means to Leemei Sophia at [tinyurl.com/CTSAAdventMeans](https://tinyurl.com/CTSAAdventMeans)

Magnify the Lord with Joy that Overcomes Fear

## Christmas Eve: Christ Candle

**Magnificat focus: God's promise embodied in Christ**

Contributor: Rev. Shavon Starling-Louis '13

### Gathering Words

Leader: On this holy night,  
we gather in awe and wonder.  
The waiting gives way to glory.  
The promise takes on flesh.  
The Word becomes Light among us.  
We have lit candles of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love,  
each flame a testimony to God's unfolding story.  
Tonight, we light the Christ Candle,  
rejoicing that the long-awaited One has come to dwell with us.  
Like Mary, we magnify the Lord with joy that overcomes fear.



### Scripture Engagement

Leader: Hear the prophet's song:

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined." (*Isaiah 9:2*)

**People: Hear the Gospel's wonder:**

**"Do not be afraid; for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:  
to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord."**  
(*Luke 2:10-11*)

Leader: Hear the apostle's witness:

"The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all." (*Titus 2:11*)

**People: And with Mary we sing:**

**"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." (*Luke 1:46-47*)**

### Hymn Verse – O Come, O Come Emmanuel (GTG #88 verse 3)

All sing or say:

**O come, thou Wisdom from on high,  
who orderest all things mightily:  
to us the path of knowledge show;  
and teach us in her ways to go.**

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**



### Candle Lighting Words

Leader: We light the Christ Candle,  
remembering that God's promise is now revealed in the face of Jesus.

**People: The Light has come,  
and the darkness cannot overcome it.**

Leader: Emmanuel, God with us, shines in the world.

**People: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace among all.**

*(The Christ Candle is lit, and all other candles are relit.)*

### Prayer

Leader: God of glory and promise fulfilled,  
on this holy night we marvel at your coming  
A child born in a manger,  
the Logos-Wisdom-Word made flesh,  
the Light that no darkness can extinguish.  
Shine in our hearts and through our lives,  
so that Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love may take on flesh in us too.

Teach us to magnify you with joy that overcomes fear.  
Through Christ, the Light of the World. **Amen.**

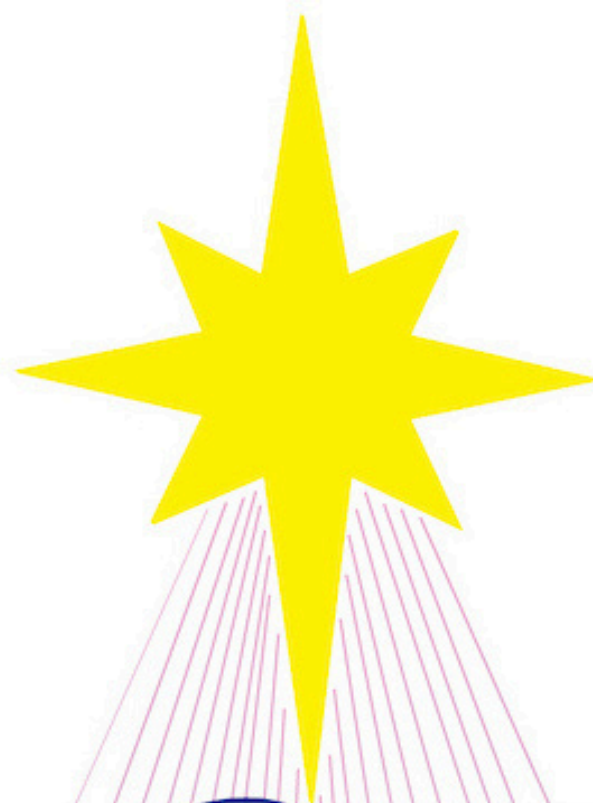
### Closing Acclamation

**All: Come, Lord Jesus, our Light and our Salvation.  
Let us magnify the Lord with life in Christ that overcomes fear.**



Rev. Shavon Starling-Louis '13 is an alum of Columbia Theological Seminary and currently serves as Campus Minister at CTS.  
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AND MARY SAID, "MY SOUL MAGNIFIES THE  
LORD, AND MY SPIRIT REJOICES IN GOD MY  
SAVIOR. (LUKE 1:45)