

JESUS CHRIST

*Light
Of
The
World*

SOUTHERN RIVER WOMEN'S CHRISTMAS MEETING
TUESDAY DECEMBER 6, 2022

WELCOME

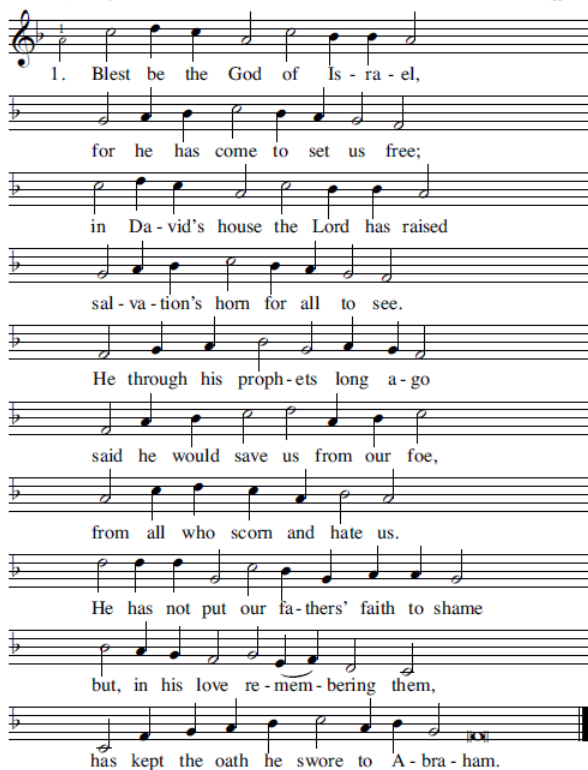
SINGING HYMN 18:1,3

HYMN 18

The Song of Zechariah
Luke 1:68-79

An Wasserflüssen Babylon

Strasbourg, 1525



1. Blest be the God of Is - ra - el,
for he has come to set us free;
in Da - vid's house the Lord has raised
sal - va - tion's horn for all to see.
He through his proph - ets long a - go
said he would save us from our foe,
from all who scorn and hate us.
He has not put our fa - thers' faith to shame
but, in his love re - mem - bering them,
has kept the oath he swore to A - bra - ham.

3. As God has promised, all our sins
will be forgiven, swept away.
He from on high in tender love
will bless us with the glorious day
on which before our very eyes
the radiant Morning Sun will rise
to shine on us forever.
From death's dark shadow he will grant release
and, when its tyranny shall cease,
will guide our feet into the path of peace.

PRAYER

READINGS ISAIAH 9:1-7
 JOHN 1:1-14; 3:16-21; 8:12-20

INTRODUCTION

Imagine yourself in a dark room, maybe during a power outage late at night. You light one candle, and it's amazing the light it gives to your dark world. When the power comes back on, that same candle doesn't seem to shine as brightly any longer. But in fact, the light it gives off hasn't changed. It's just your perception that's changed.

Now imagine a life without Jesus Christ. Hard to imagine, painful even to imagine, but try for just a moment in your mind to enter that darkness. Now, imagine what it would mean to you if Jesus Christ came and dwelt among your darkness with His Light.

What does "Jesus Christ, Light of the world" mean to you? Does it make you think about how His Light guides you? Maybe it makes you think about the battle of Light against darkness, or perhaps thoughts of Light bring you hope when everything else seems bleak. But have we gotten used to the Light of Jesus Christ shining in our lives? You see, sometimes we take the Light for granted and forget how amazing it is not to walk in darkness. And so, we can take Christmas for granted, too. What a blessing it is that tonight, as sisters, we can pause to bask in the Light and celebrate Jesus Christ – the Light of the world.

As we enter the season for advent, for preparation of our hearts for Christmas, we're going to once again see *what* the Light has rescued us from and *why* we have been taken from the darkness into this glorious Light.

But first, a bit of context. Isaiah prophesied many years before about the Light of Jesus Christ coming into the world. In Isaiah 9:2 we read: *“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.”* Fast track some 700 years forward to when the Light became incarnate and we find Jesus referring to Himself as the Light of the world in one of His seven “I am” statements found in John. There, in chapter 8:12, we hear Jesus saying: *“I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

Jesus spoke these words while in the temple during the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:14), in an area of the temple near the place where the offerings were put (John 8:20). It is said to be a place that had four immense oil candelabras burning continually, and the glow could be seen from parts of Jerusalem—a city on a hill, a city whose light could not be hidden (Matthew 5:14). The Feast of Tabernacles was a feast designed to remind God’s people of their desert wandering days, to remind them of when the light from the pillar of fire showed them the way to go in the dark of night (Exodus 13:21). This light represented God’s presence, protection and guidance—how He never left those who were His. As Nehemiah (9:19) reflects years later: *“Because of Your great compassion You did not abandon them in the wilderness. By day the pillar of cloud did not fail to guide them on their path, nor the pillar of fire by night to shine on the way they were to take.”*

If the people of Israel followed this Light it would lead them home to the promised land. When we follow Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, we will also be led safely Home to ours.

SINGING

HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING

Hark! The Herald Angel Sings

Charles Wesley

Mendelssohn



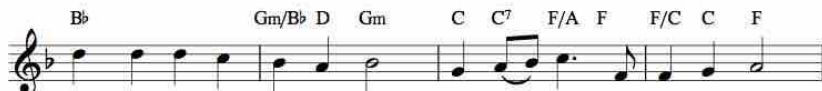
Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new-born King;
 Christ, by high - est heaven a - dored; Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord;
 Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righ-teous-ness!



peace on earth and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners re - con - ciled!"
 late in time be - hold him come, off-spring of a vir - gin's womb.
 Light and life to all He brings, risen with heal - ing in His wings.



Joy - ful, all ye na - tions rise, join the tri-umph of the skies;
 Veiled in flesh the God-head see; hail in - car-nate De - i - ty,
 Mild He lays His glo - ry by, born that we no more may die,



with an - gel - ic host pro-claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"
 pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Je - sus, our Em-man - u - el.
 born to raise us from the earth, born to give us sec-ond birth.



Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new-born King!"

JESUS CHRIST, LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Why does Jesus call Himself the Light of the world? Let's increase our understanding by looking at other places in Scripture to illuminate this saying of Jesus.

The passage we read earlier from John tells us that The Word – Jesus Christ – was there in the beginning, involved in creating the world along with His Father. Genesis 1:3 reads: *“And God said, “let there be light,” and there was light.”* There was only darkness and void before that. 2 Cor 4:6 references this part of the creation story: *“For God, Who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.”* The connection was there at creation, already before the fall into sin, the framework even then being laid for the Creator of Light to come to earth some 4000 years later. For Him to bring His Light to overpower the darkness of sin, to overpower *our* sin, and to transform our hearts by giving us knowledge of His Father’s glory.

And this gift of Light overpowering darkness was greatly needed. Because although Light was created in the beginning, *“people loved darkness rather than the light because their works were evil”* (John 3:19). Adam and Eve, and us along with them, fell into sin and darkness returned with the exile from Eden. And so, the plan of God to restore the light and purge the darkness began. This plan is evident on all the pages of the Old Testament Scriptures, and as the New Testament begins, we see the Light become incarnate, come to earth in bodily form. The Light was no longer foreshadowed, but was now with man—Immanuel—shining peace on earth.

But the plan of redemption begun so long ago, the plan to extinguish the darkness of sin, doesn't climax at the stable in Bethlehem. Indeed, the light of Christmas can never be separated from the three hours of darkness when Jesus hung on the cross, darkness that contained all the sins of the past,

present and future. All the darkness of sin was nailed to the cross in those three hours of absolute and total darkness. The reason the Light came into the world was because only Jesus could pay the price for darkness, only He could overcome darkness with His Light and restore peace between God and sinful man. It's something no one else could have done. That's why Christmas can never be separated from Easter, the cradle never separated from the cross, the darkness of the cross never separated from the Light bursting forth from the tomb, radiating to all who followed the Light of Jesus Christ and walked in that Light. The disciples didn't understand all this, even though at the transfiguration (before Jesus goes to the cross) Peter, James and John beheld the Light like never before. We read in Matthew 17:2: "and He was transfigured before them, and His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as light."

Do we understand? Do we truly understand all that Jesus has done to dispel the world's darkness, *our* darkness? Do we believe that the darkness of evil never has and never will overcome or extinguish the Light of the world? Or do we maybe have our questions and doubts when we see the remnants of darkness that remain in our lives and the increasing darkness of the world around us. Is Jesus Christ really the Light of the world? Our Light? But let us find our answers, our confidence, our hope in God's Word and promises: "*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it*" (John 1:5). Jesus encourages us further, in John 16:33 (NIV): "*In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*" Take heart! Darkness has been overcome! That's the promise of Christmas. God with us, God sending His Son Jesus Christ to overcome the darkness of sin with His Light! Jesus Christ, Light of the World, coming to win the battle once and for all of Light over Darkness.

So why do we sometimes feel that we're walking in the dark when we've seen the Light? Why does it seem that the pillar of fire lighting The Way doesn't seem to burn as brightly some days and we even at times seem to lose our way? The answer can perhaps be found when we realise that we live between the "already" and the "not yet". The Light has come but won't

envelop everything completely till its complete fulfillment. And so, although the Light shines in our hearts, vestiges of darkness remain. Not only do we need to contend with the darkness of remaining sin in our hearts, not only do we need to contend with the darkness of Satan and his demons, but we also need to contend with a world that's becoming darker and darker as it rejects any Light of Jesus Christ. We are living in the end times, and we are told to expect the darkness to increase as we near the day of the Light's return. But remember: the Light of Jesus Christ can never be extinguished. He has overcome and won! We are dwelling in His Light and that means dwelling in a place where we may need to fight the darkness, but the darkness will never extinguish our light. It cannot and will not, if we remain in Christ, sharing in His Light, walking in His Light. And that means we have hope. Hope for the now. Hope for the future.

Light means purity and perfect holiness (1 John 1:5). Light means truth, exposing evil. Jesus is perfectly pure and perfectly holy. Jesus is truth and so burned away the impurity of sin, of darkness, for us. Just as darkness cannot stand before light so sin cannot stand before God. Only the Light of Jesus Christ could dispel the darkness of sin. If we have the Light of Jesus, it's impossible to walk in spiritual darkness. Just as Jesus was born to bring Light to those walking in darkness, so our rebirth with Him brings Light to the darkness of sin in our hearts. In turn, we can reflect His light to those around us, and that's what we'll look at next.

SINGING

HYMN 19:1,3

HYMN 19

The People Who in Darkness Walked
Isaiah 9:2-7

Ellacombe

Württemberg, 1784



1. The peo-ple who in dark-ness walked
have seen a glo-rious light;
now day has dawned for those who dwelt
in death's sur-round-ing night.
To hail you, Sun of Right-eous-ness,
they with re-joic-ing come
as when with joy they share the spoil
or bear the har-vest home.

3. For unto us a Child is born,
to us a Son is given,
and on his shoulders he shall bear
all power in earth and heaven.
The Wonderful, the Counsellor,
the Mighty God is he;
eternal Father, Prince of Peace
his holy name shall be.

JESUS CHRIST'S LIGHT REFLECTORS

In the Light of Jesus Christ we see ourselves as we are: sinners, in need of a Saviour. But in His light we also see who we are becoming through the Light of His Spirit: Light Reflectors! Because in His Light we see the Way, and so we can follow in His footsteps. Not only do we walk in Christ's Light, but He has also chosen to reflect His very Light through us, His children of Light (Eph 5:8). Even though our vessels may be cracked (2 Cor 4:7), that doesn't stop the Light of Christ from radiating to those around us.

The Jews were meant to shine God's Light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 49:6), except they stumbled over the Cornerstone themselves (Mark 12:10) and so failed in their mission. In fact, it is because of their very failure, even in spite of it, that the gospel went to the Gentiles (Romans 11:11). And we can be so thankful for that. Because we *are* the Gentiles, we *are* those grafted branches that Paul speaks about. We walk in the Light because of grace, because of mercy. Let's never forget that as this knowledge helps to keep us humble as we reach out to others walking in darkness, realising we were also rescued from it, even though we deserved not to be.

John 12:36 reads: *"Believe in the Light so that you may become children of Light" walking as children of Light* (Eph 5:8), growing toward the Light, reflecting it more and more as we shine as lights and declare the Light in this dark world, holding firmly to the word of life (Phil 2:15), not stumbling over the Cornerstone, not rejecting the Cornerstone, but being illuminated by Him, trusting in Him, building on Him, receiving Light from the Father of lights through Him (James 1:17).

And so, equipped with oil in our lamps to light our way, we are called to share His Light to those still walking in darkness. Individually, but also communally as church of Southern River. Our church is to be a spiritual house where we are living spiritual stones in its wall. May our church be a beacon to the lost, a place where Jesus' Light beckons others to join us, a

city on a hill, beaming the love of God into our neighbourhood. And isn't it wonderful that — by the grace of God — we could witness so much Light in our church building this past Sunday? What a sign of the power of God's light transformation we could behold in the profession of faiths and baptisms. No, our church is not perfect. But that doesn't stop God from using us to shine His Light, dispelling the darkness. That's the power of Jesus Christ — Light of the world!

But sometimes we hide our light (Matthew 5). We do this by being quiet when we should speak, by going along with the crowd and blending into the darkness of the world, by bypassing opportunities the Light places on our paths. Or we let the busyness of our lives distract us from filling our lamps from the illuminating Light of The Word and so our light grows dim and we're not able to light our own path, much less showing light to another's path. Do you feel guilty when you consider the level of oil in your lamps? Because guilt does nothing, changes nothing. Asking Jesus Christ to fill our lamps, fill our hearts with His transformative Light will do something! Fill your lamps from the oil His Word and Spirit provide. Ask, and He will fill you, making you His Light reflector, so you can shine brightly for Him and lead others to Him!

Why do we need to reflect the Light of Jesus Christ? Peter tells us: we're a *"a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession"* (1 Peter 2:9 NIV). That's who we are and to Whom we belong! And who we are and to Whom we belong determines what we do and how we live. Peter continues by explaining what we are to do: *"That you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."* Jesus came to glorify His Father by proclaiming Who His Father was. May we, as we wait for our entrance into the eternal Kingdom of Light, be busy doing the same. Let's let our *"light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven"* (Matthew 5:16 NKJV).

Proclaiming to the darkness who the Light of the world is can have mixed results. Some wonderful results, as we've been privileged to witness in our church, but also some sad results. John 3:19,20 warns us: *"And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed."* But our job as light bearers is not to *give* our light to others. We can't do that. We couldn't give Light to ourselves either. If it weren't for God's mercy and grace, we would still be in darkness. But we *can* hold out the light to others and show them what it's like to walk in the light. Christmas provides ample opportunity to do just that.

One day, darkness will be dispelled forever and there will only be Beautiful Light everywhere. As we wait for that Great Day, we see signs of increasing darkness around us. But let that not frighten or surprise us, because we know that this means the Day of the Light's return is closer (1 Thess 5:4). Instead, may it urge us to ensure we have oil in our lamps (Matthew 25:4), and so burn brightly for Jesus Christ in the midst of the present darkness.

The Light of Jesus Christ did not stop at coming to Bethlehem as a baby with a star lighting the way. The Light of Jesus Christ did not leave us when He ascended to Heaven (Matthew 28:20), but today radiates in us and through us until the Light will return on the clouds of heaven. And then we'll dwell eternally in that Light, as we'll reflect more on after our next hymn.

SINGING LORD, THE LIGHT OF YOUR LOVE IS SHINING

192 Lord, the Light of Your Love Is Shining

Shine, Jesus, Shine

Capo 2: (G) (C) (G) (D) (G)
A D A E A

1 Lord, the light of your love is shin - ing, in the
2 Lord, I come to your awe - some pres - ence, from the
3 As we gaze on your king - ly bright - ness, so our

(C) (G) (D) (C) (D)
D A E D E

midst of the dark - ness, shin - ing; Je - sus, Light of the
shad - ows in - to your ra - diance; by the blood I may
fac - es dis - play your like - ness; ev - er chang - ing from

(Bm7) (Em7) (C) (D) (Bm7)
C#m7 F#m7 D E C#m7

World, shine up - on us; set us free by the truth you now
en - ter your bright - ness. Search me, try me; con - sume all my
glo - ry to glo - ry, mir - rored here may our lives tell your

(Em7) (F) (Dsus)(D) (F) (Dsus)(D)
F#m7 G Esus E G Esus E

bring us. Shine on me; shine on me.
dark - ness. Shine on me; shine on me.
sto - ry. Shine on me; shine on me.

Refrain (G) (D) (Em) (C) (G) (Am7) (C) (D7) (C) (D)
A E F#m D A Bm7 D E7 D E

Shine, Je - sus, shine; fill this land with the Fa - ther's glo - ry.

(G) (D) (Em) (C) (G) (Am) (Am/G) (F) (D7sus)(D7)
A E F#m D A Bm Bm/A G E7sus E7

Blaze, Spir - it, blaze; set our hearts on fire.

(G) (D) (Em) (C) (G) (Am7) (C) (D7) (C) (D)
A E F#m D A Bm7 D E7 D E

Flow, riv - er, flow; flood the na - tions with grace and mer - cy.

(G) (D) (Em) (C) (G) (Am) (D7) (G)
A E F#m D A Bm E7 A

Send forth your word, Lord, and let there be light.

ETERNAL LIGHT DWELLERS

One Great Day the Light will come to take His light reflectors to His eternal Kingdom of Light and darkness will be dispelled completely and forever. Rev 21 (:10,14,22-23) reads: *“And He carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city of Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God...and the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb....And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.”*

In the meantime dear sisters, as we wait for God’s time to fully come, let’s arise and shine, for His Light has come. The glory of the LORD has risen upon us (Isaiah 60:1), His face is shining upon us (Numbers 6:25) urging us forward to the consummation of His eternal Kingdom of Light, a Kingdom where there will be no darkness, where the Lord will be our Everlasting Light (Isaiah 60:20). It will be a place where we shall be like Him (1 John 3:2), dwelling in His Light for all eternity.

Looking forward to this Day of Beautiful Light gives us hope—hope for the eternity of Light set before us, already shining now. Do you see it?

SINGING

SILENT NIGHT! HOLY NIGHT

140 Silent Night! Holy Night

SILENT NIGHT Irregular

Joseph Mohr, 1818

Franz Gruber, 1818

1. Si - lent night! Ho - ly night! Through the dark-ness beams a light,
 2. Si - lent night! Ho - ly night! Dark - ness flies, and all is light!
 3. Si - lent night! Ho - ly night! Guid - ing Star, O lend thy light!
 4. Si - lent night! Ho - ly night! Won - drous Star, O lend thy light!

Yon - der, where they sweet vig - ils keep O'er the Babe who, in si - lent sleep,
 Shep - herds hear the an - gels sing: "Hal - le - lu - jah! hail the King!
 See the east - ern wise men bring Gifts and hom - age to our King!
 With the an - gels let us sing Hal - le - lu - jah to our King!

Rests in heav - en - ly peace, Rests in heav - en - ly peace.
 Je - sus the Sav - ior is here! Je - sus the Sav - ior is here!"
 Je - sus the Sav - ior is here! Je - sus the Sav - ior is here!
 Je - sus our Sav - ior is here! Je - sus our Sav - ior is here!

CONCLUSION

The Light that was there in the beginning with God was also there in the Old Covenant showing Israel the way to go. This same Light came into the New Covenant world to put an end to the darkness of sin. And now the Light is preparing a place of eternal light for all of those who walk in His Light. Jesus Christ is the risen Son that will never set but will shine for all eternity.

As we approach the Christmas season and remember that God gave His people a dawning Light (Isaiah 9), a Light of revelation to the Gentiles (Luke 2:32/Acts 13:47), a Light of knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus (2 Cor 4:6), the Light of the world (John 8:12), let us rejoice. For unto us a Child is born (Isaiah 9:6), to us a Son is given. In Him was life, and that life was the Light of all mankind (John 1:4). May we shine like stars as we hold out this Light to the world around us (Daniel 12:3).

Our precious reality as Christians, of being in Christ, is that we receive His Light through forgiveness of our dark sins and through rebirth into eternal Light. We live as Christians by walking in the holiness and truth of His Light and we reflect His light to those who are still walking in darkness.

We are part of His inextinguishable Light, are children of Light (1 Thess 5:5) and nothing can separate us from His Light (Romans 8:39). So, let's dwell in Him, and with Him, leaning into the Light He gives, and following Him as He guides us safely Home.

May Jesus be the Light of our World this Christmas, and may the New Year 2023 see us all in Southern River shining brightly for Him as we await His return.

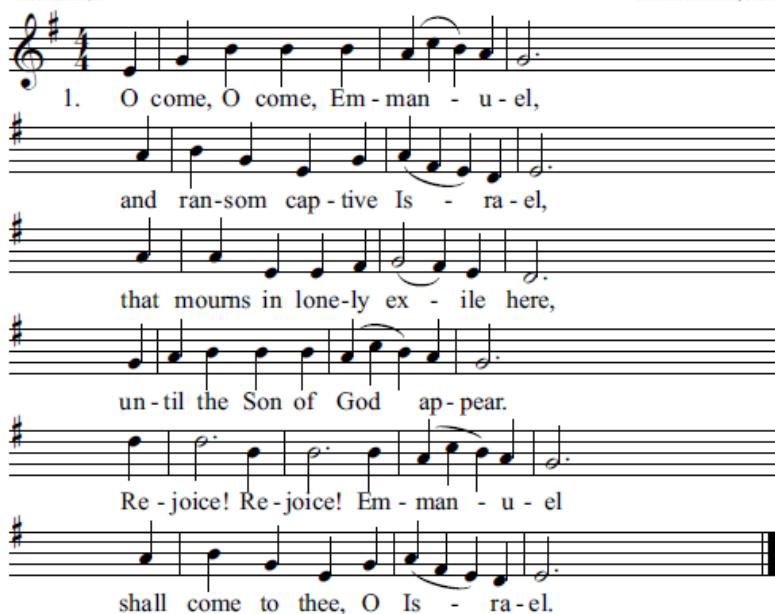
SINGING HYMN 16:1-5

HYMN 16

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Veni Emmanuel

Thomas Helmore, 1856



1. O come, O come, Em-man - u - el,
and ran-som cap - tive Is - ra - el,
that mours in lone-ly ex - ile here,
un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
Re - joice! Re - joice! Em - man - u - el
shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el.

2. 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.
3. O come, thou Branch of Jesse's stem,
regard thine own and rescue them;
from depths of hell thy people save,
and give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.
4. O come, thou Dayspring from on high
and comfort us by 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.
5. O come, thou who hast David's key,
save us, that we eternally
in paradise regained may dwell;
forever shut the gates of hell.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

INTERVAL

BIBLE QUIZ

PLACEMENT OF LIGHT TEXTS ON BRANCHES

SINGING HYMN 22:1,2 FOLLOWED BY CLOSING IN PRAYER

HYMN 22

The Song of Simeon
Luke 2:29-32

Nunc dimittis

Geneva, 1551

1. Now let your ser-vant, Lord,
ac-cord-ing to your word,
de-part in ex-ul-ta-tion;
now I in peace may rest:
my eyes have seen at last
your won-der-ful sal-va-tion:

2. Lord, you have graciously prepared for all to see a light for revelation to Gentiles far and near, and glory bright and clear to Israel, your nation.