


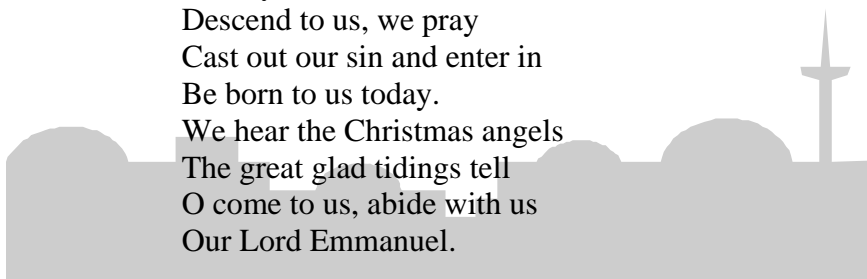
Closing Hymn: O Little Town of Bethlehem



O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.

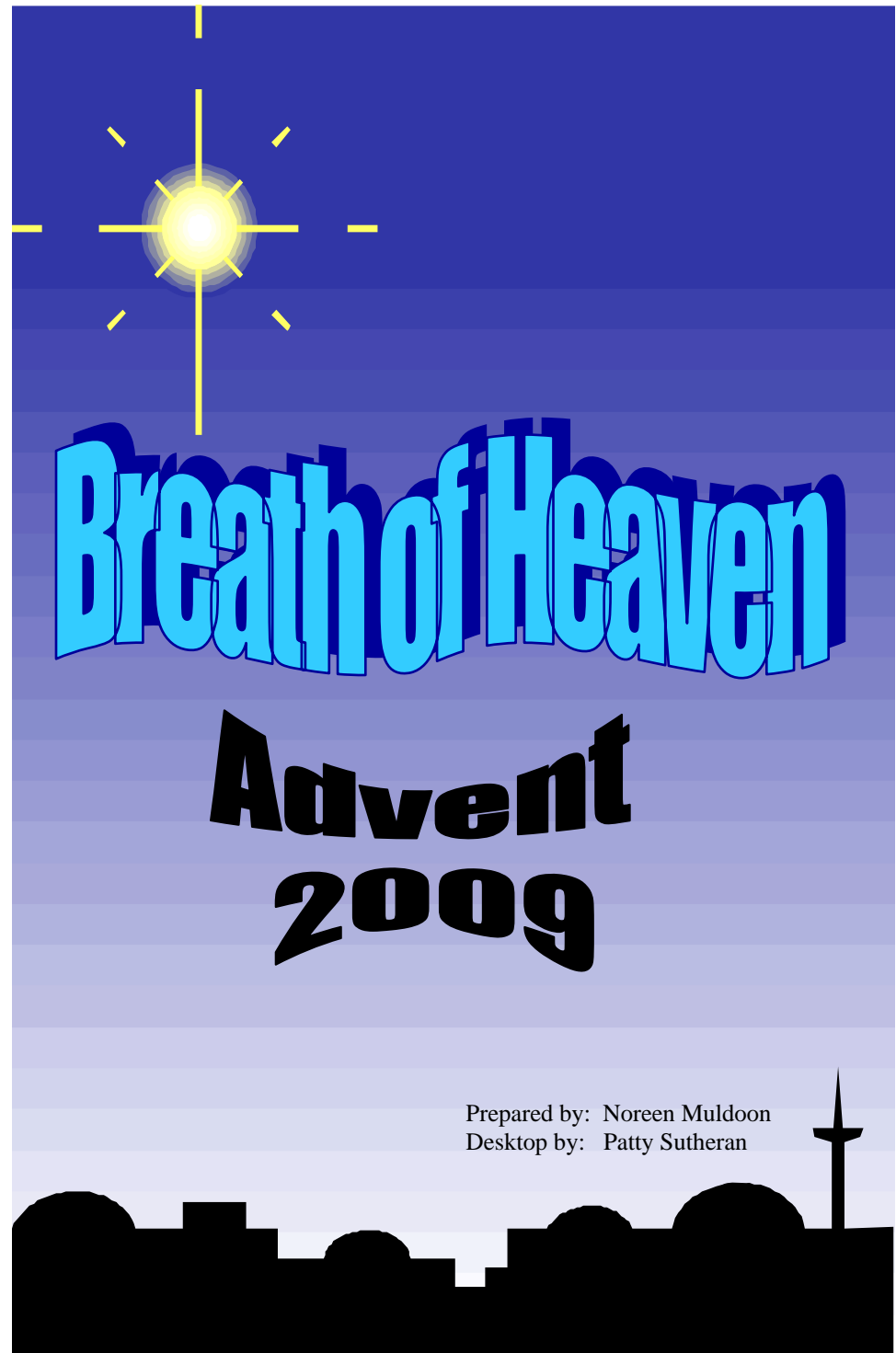
For Christ is born of Mary
And gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love
O morning stars together
Proclaim the holy birth
And praises sing to God the King
And Peace to men on earth

How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him still
The dear Christ enters in.



O Holy Child of Bethlehem
Descend to us, we pray
Cast out our sin and enter in
Be born to us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell
O come to us, abide with us
Our Lord Emmanuel.

O HOLY NIGHT





Silent Night

LET US PRAY TOGETHER:

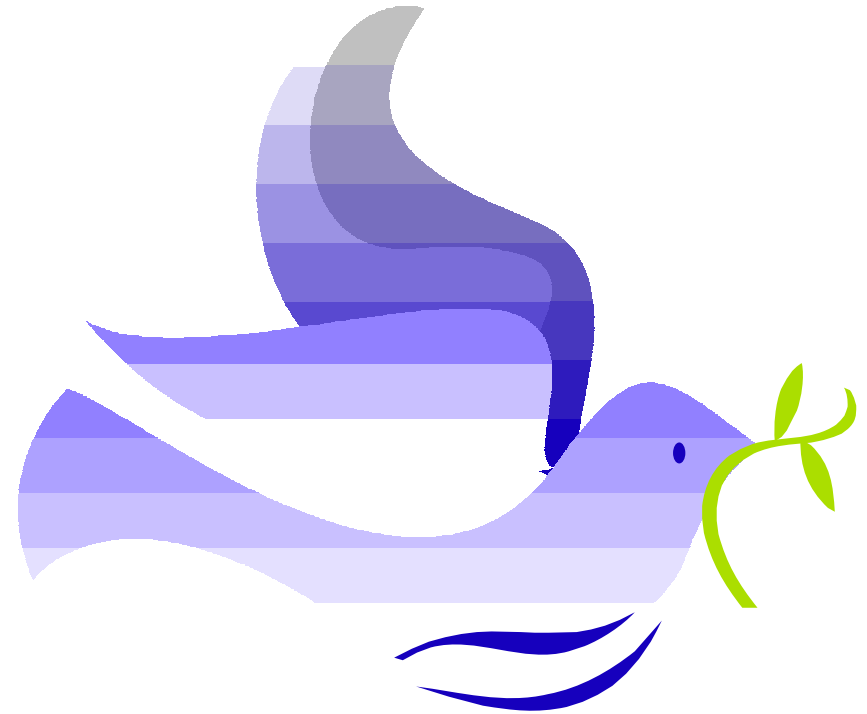
O God, the time is coming near. Prepare my heart with deep longing, desire, hope and yearning, for the birth of Mary's son. I wait now in faith, as did the prophets and saints of old. During this season, teach me how to guard my heart from noise and hurry's whirl. Show me how I might be more receptive to the inner voices calling me to create a fertile space, that becomes impregnated with heaven's fire. AMEN



O HOLY NIGHT



O HOLY NIGHT



Together We Pray:

“Here I stand and say a prayer.
Come Lord, come down, come in, come among
us.
Enter into our darkness with your light.
Come fill our emptiness with your presence.
Dispel the clouds and reveal your glory.
Come, refresh, renew, restore us.
Come Lord, come down, come in, come among
us.”

O HOLY NIGHT

Reading: Preparing our hearts for Advent.

Esther de Waal, an English historian, writes, “The Celtic approach to God opens up a world in which nothing is too common to be exalted and nothing is so exalted that it cannot be made common. This was a practice in which ordinary people in their daily lives took the tasks that lay to hand but treated them sacramentally. It is an approach to life where we allow the extraordinary to break in on the ordinary.”

We prepare for this journey for Advent, this transformation, by working on ourselves to become the thinnest places we can manage to be. Not thin in the sense of meagerness, or fashion model thin, but thin in the sense of transparency, of being as full as we can be of the love of God and let it leak out of us like crazy. Perhaps the first step is that we really should want to unearth God in our midst... (to) let the mundane become the edge of glory, and find the extraordinary in the ordinary. To find not perfection, but possibility.

So much of Advent is centered on the play and balance between the dark of winter and the frail light of candles. In waiting, in preparing for the coming of Christ we are hallowing this experience. To hallow is to make holy, to make a place both inside and outside of ourselves, a space fit for God, a space that is God-shaped.

As advent begins we are learning to breathe with God’s breath. Oh the possibilities... wait, watch, stay awake; the Lord is coming. Amen

O HOLY NIGHT

Pause for Reflection:

Group Sharing Questions:

1. What might I do to make a space fit for God, a space that is God-shaped?
2. What else might I want to share as I prepare my heart for this holy season of Advent?

Prayers of Petition:

Leader: Let us go to Bethlehem and find our kneeling place.

All: We pray to the Lord.

Leader: Let us pray that we make room in the inn of our hearts for the Christ Child.

All: We pray to the Lord.

Leader: Let us pray that we remember that Christ’s name is Emmanuel, God with us.

All: We pray to the Lord.

Leader: Let us pray to do what Mary did, and rejoice in God; to do what Joseph did, and listen to our dreams; to do what the Magi did and go to worship, and to do what the shepherds did and glorify God.

All: We pray to the Lord.

O HOLY NIGHT