

A long time ago, there was a man, who spoke so many wise and wonderful words and whose actions brought so much healing, that people just had to follow him. The name we know him by is Jesus.

He began by gathering followers and travelled around teaching and healing and making whole. He had Good News. He told about God's New Day - a way of being together based on love and forgiveness. God's New Day brought people into a new relationship where God's light could clearly shine.

One night he took three of his followers and went up a mountain. In the darkness, the light of God's presence began to shine brightly through him.

"That's funny," thought the three, "When he taught and healed and made whole, we thought he seemed radiant. Now we see the light of God shining through him. It is very hard to tell where he stops and God begins."

And then they thought they heard a voice saying, "This is my son, the Beloved. Listen to him." And so they looked and listened even more.

(Light big candle)

Sung response: #87 refrain

"I am the light of the world! You people come and follow me!"
If you follow and love you'll learn the mystery
of what you were meant to do and be.

The man continued to teach and transform people's lives. God's New Day was becoming a gathering where God's light could clearly shine. He challenged many religious practices, and the many people associated with them, including those in power. And the light of God's presence continued to expand.

"That's funny," thought the people. "Whenever we listen to Jesus and hear what he has to say, it's like the light is also in us."

(Light candles around the main one)

Sung response:

"I am the light of the world! You people come and follow me!"
If you follow and love you'll learn the mystery
of what you were meant to do and be.

Eventually, the man crossed one too many lines, one too many times and was executed by the powerful authorities.

(Put out the main candle)

Soon after the man had been executed, the people started to notice something.

“That’s funny,” thought the people. “The light of God, as we had experienced it in Jesus, is still here, still with us.”

(Relight the main candle)

Sung response: #87

“I am the light of the world! You people come and follow me!”
If you follow and love you’ll learn the mystery
of what you were meant to do and be.

The people formed a community. They celebrated the light amongst them. They told Jesus’ stories and stories about Jesus. They anticipated that God’s New Day would well up and shine amongst them. And sometimes it did. They noticed it especially when they were helping other people or working together to create a better world.

“That’s funny” thought the people “It’s like God’s light, warming us from within and from without.”

Sometimes they told their stories in the synagogue. For a long time they met in people’s homes. Eventually, they started building places where they could meet together to create a better world.

(Light some candles around a second circle)

Sung response:

“I am the light of the world! You people come and follow me!”
If you follow and love you’ll learn the mystery
of what you were meant to do and be.

But always, there was community, and the light of God. And there was love, radiance and forgiveness.

“That’s funny,” thought the people. “It’s almost as if the light is shining through us.”

The places where the people met began to pop up all over the world. Many communities were formed, and many buildings built.

(Light candles in the windows.)

Sung response:

“I am the light of the world! You people come and follow me!”
If you follow and love you’ll learn the mystery
of what you were meant to do and be.

Sometimes, the people would get so excited about the gatherings and the places where they met that they would forget about the light.

Whenever that happened, someone would remind them of Jesus’ words:

“You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world.”

“Oh right,” thought the people. “It’s about the light, not the candle.”

“On the other hand,” said others, “if we don’t take care of the candle, how will we share the light?”

(Stack of candles)

Sung response:

“I am the light of the world! You people come and follow me!”

If you follow and love you’ll learn the mystery
of what you were meant to do and be.

And so it is, with us today.

We come together to sing and pray and tell stories.

We come together in love and forgiveness to work for greater good in the world. These things are dear to us.

We gather in a place that is dear to us too, because we have experienced God’s light and our radiance here.

We take care of the community because it is the flame and we take care of this place because it is the candle.

But always, always, always, it is about the Light and being radiant.

Hymn #87 I am the Light of the World

Adapted from Lee Spice, Gathering 2014/15.