

# Sermon Starters

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## Sermon Title: “Light Shines”

- Scripture: John 1:1-5, 14
- Main Point:
  - Even in the face of fires caused by violence and hate, the light of Christ shines in the darkness. Together, we can search out the light of God’s love.
- Key Ideas/Insights:
  - Advent and the Christmas season is a time when we think of comfort and joy, when we make memories with our families and celebrate the holidays. But in 2020, the “light that shined in the darkness” was not just from the glow of Christmas decorations, but from church banners being burned by white supremacists because those churches (including at least one United Methodist church) supported racial justice.
  - It is difficult for some people to comprehend the pain caused by racism, especially if they have not personally experienced it. When the fires of hate and violence burn, it can be tempting to look away from these “lights that shine in the darkness” —or to fan them by responding with our own hatred and violence.
  - As the church, we affirm that the “light that shines in the darkness” is the light of love that drives out hate, violence, and despair. Together, we respond to God’s light by working together to listen to and understand each other’s perspective, condemning violence, protecting the vulnerable, and being willing to grow.
  - The flame of Christ’s love is within each of us. Though it may seem small at times, when we join together that flame spreads—like Christmas lights in the dark or a sanctuary during a Christmas Eve candlelight service. And the darkness shall not overcome it.
- Questions for Reflection:
  - What are your personal experiences/memories of light and darkness during the Christmas/Advent season? How do these personal experiences connect to the reality of others in the world? How might others’ experiences be different?
  - The poem from the beginning of John’s gospel can be read as saying, “the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” What are some

things that happen—in your own life and in the world, that you cannot comprehend?

- The metaphor of light and darkness has been misused—with lightness and whiteness being celebrated while “darkness” is seen as “less than” or associated with evil. How can you use this metaphor to explore different ways of thinking/being/living? What are positive and negative examples of “light” and positive/negative examples of “darkness”?
- What are the ways this scripture (and the Advent/Christmas season) can help us move from nostalgia and comfort and into transformation/growth?