

“Light kindles light and flame kindles flame. When God sets the world on fire with His love, in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus and the giving of the Holy Spirit, there isn’t any less of God at the end of the process, but there’s a lot more of us.” Rowan Williams.

Candlemas is the celebration and blessing of candles associated with the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple. The Feast of the Presentation marks the moment Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple as an offering to God, their first born son. This is the moment in Luke’s Gospel when Simeon proclaims, “Lord, you now have set your servant free to go in peace as you have promised; For these eyes of mine have seen the Savior, whom you have prepared for all the world to see: A Light to enlighten the nations, and the Glory of your people Israel (Luke 2:29-32).”

Today we celebrate [Candlemas](#) in the words of Simeon, recognizing in Christ the Light to enlighten the nations. Frequently churches bless their liturgical candles at this feast and often families bring candles to be blessed and brought home. What might this tradition look like for teenagers?

## Gathering Materials

This is a 45 minute-or less activity for middle and high school youth and older. It is an appropriate stand-alone activity for youth group, Sunday school, or as part of a longer gathering.

You will need:

- Something on which to watch and listen to the 10-minute video
- Space to go off and think
- Journals, clipboards, etc to respond individually and collectively
- White board or flip chart paper with reflection questions (written but not shared until that time)
- Candles and matches. This activity really needs real flame.
- Scripture and song choices. Be sure to allow your participants to bring their own

ideas!

As [Juan Oliver](#) writes, the great feasts of the church illuminate the weeks around them. Candlemas, honoring the Light to enlighten the nations, reaches back to the beginning of Advent. Readings for this activity might include the [Collect for 1 Advent](#), the words of the [Prophet Isaiah](#), or readings from the [Gospel of John](#) or [1 John](#). [Psalm 36: 5-9](#) could be used.

## Pray, Learn, Contemplate, Share

**Gather together in prayer.** The Collect for Advent 1 reads:

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Watch this 10 minute devotion.** In it [Rowan Williams](#), 104th Archbishop of Canterbury, leads college students through a reflection on Candlemas and its meaning in our lives and our world today.

**Reflect alone and in small groups or partners.** Offer a few minutes of silence so everyone can reflect. Encourage active doodling and movement, if needed. Ask partners or small groups to think about Archbishop Williams devotion.

Possible questions might be:

- What are the places in our dark world that need light?
- What is the light *you* have to offer those dark places?
- How can you share the light?
- What do you see as light?
- Where do you need light or the Light of Christ?

**Gather back together in a large circle.** Hand out votive candles.

- Ask participants to name aloud the dark places that need God's fiery, passionate love.

- Either reading together or with a solo reader, listen to the words of Simeon while everyone lights their candles.
- When the candles are lit ask participants to share what is the light they have to offer to the world.

Complete your time together with song.- your choices range from the [Nunc Dimittis](#) to This Little Light of Mine.

Encourage everyone to take their candles home as a reminder that we are called to be light to the world.

“For God’s love there is never any person or situation beyond its reach. There are no insiders and outsiders. There only those for whose complany and well-being, God is eternally, firerally, passionate. Into that love, we step, in silence and in hope, tonight.”  
Rowan Williams 2016

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