

## Our Morning Star

It is the darkest time of the year. Each morning sunrise is long in coming, and the shadows stretch across the middle of the afternoon. It is no wonder that the celebration of the birth of Christ became a tradition at this time of the year. It is dark. And cold. Therefore we look for the light, not only of the Christ child but Christ yet to come, who will defeat darkness forevermore.

I always like to carry the celebration of light well past Christmas into “the season after the Epiphany.” We continue to need our faith in light that is not defeated by darkness. There are many beautiful themes of that light coming into our lives in the Bible. Some we have used in Advent: the shepherd coming, the voice crying out in the wilderness, the prince of peace. Another popular almost mystic idea is the coming of Christ as the bridegroom, with each soul decked in gladness for his coming.

We have two hymns in our hymnal with words written by Philipp Nicolai. One is in our Advent and Christmas section: *O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright*. The images and language in this hymn are powerful and beautiful. It is meant to be a love song of the soul for the bridegroom. It is full of joy and longing to be made one with Christ, looking to death with gladness. Nicolai’s other hymn, *Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying*, is one I have often used in Advent, although it is in the section for hymns of “A New Heaven and a New Earth.” Again the language speaks of fulfilled joy. Zion is “she” in this line: “She wakes, she rises from her gloom, for her Lord comes down all-glorious, the strong in grace, in truth victorious. Her Star is risen; her Light is come.”

Philipp Nicolai lived in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and knew the ravages of the Black Plague. Life was dark, often brutal, and frequently short. His hymns, however, show the soul of a lover who knew the light of loving God. We need this light and belief in our world now.

On Christmas Sunday, December 26<sup>th</sup>, we will explore the stories and histories of some of our other beloved Christmas carols and songs. The light is all around us!

by *Rev Karen Oehl*

*Now our salvation is  
nearer than when  
we first had faith.  
The night is almost  
over, the day is near.*

**Romans 13:11-12**

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