

“Let Your Little Light Shine”
The Rev. Lauren McDonald
Bruton Parish Church – Williamsburg, VA
Epiphany 5 – February 8, 2026
Isaiah 58:1-14, Psalm 112:1-9, 1 Corinthians 2:1-12, Matthew 5:13-20

The Psalmist wrote, “**Light** shines in the darkness for the upright; the righteous are merciful and full of compassion.” (Psalm 112:4)

The prophet Isaiah preached, “If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your **light** shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.” (Isaiah 58:9-10)

Jesus preached, “You are the **light** of the world. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives **light** to all in the house. In the same way, let your **light** shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16)

Martin Luther King, Jr. preached, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only **light** can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.”

Yesterday in her speech to Diocesan Convention Bishop Susan said, “In its place of darkness, the world is groaning and longing to see **light**. We as followers of Jesus here in this corner of God’s Kingdom have been given a faith that will move mountains...a faith that will transform the world. We have been given the **light** that the world longs to see.”

Light is one of the themes of the season of Epiphany, and clearly in our readings today.

Light is what our world needs now: the light of truth, the light of hope, the light of love.

Jesus calls us to let our light shine before others. So, what does that mean exactly?

For the Psalmist it means showing mercy and compassion.

For Isaiah it means listening to God who is telling him to shout to the people about how they're getting it all wrong. They're spending their time in fasting and humbling themselves before God and then wondering why God doesn't answer them. God says that fasting and humbling themselves is not acceptable if they're just going to keep fighting with each other and oppressing those who work for them.

Instead, God says they need to "loose the bonds of injustice, undo the thongs of the yoke, let the oppressed go free, share their bread with the hungry, bring the homeless into their house; and cover the naked. When they do those things, *then* their "light shall break forth like the dawn." (Isaiah 58:

Jesus tells his listeners that they are the light of the world. He doesn't say *try* to be the light, *work really hard* so that you can be light; he says you *are* light. Created in the image of God, our very being is light. As the people of God, we help bring light to the world. As we experience God's love in our lives, so we go forth into our workplaces, our schools, our families, our clubs, our organizations, everywhere that we go, we have the opportunity to share God's love with others.

Let your light so shine before others.

My friends, I have seen your light. This week it has been shining brightly as you welcomed the stranger, fed the hungry, clothed those who needed it, and offered hospitality to our guests and each other at the winter shelter. Key leaders and a host of volunteers worked together with one another and others in our community. King of Glory passed the torch to us, and we passed the torch to St. Bede's. We worked together to provide good food, warm and safe shelter (literally from the ice and snow,) and above all respect, dignity, and love.

I have seen your light shine hosting the winter shelter and in all the Loaves and Fishes ministries – filling backpacks of food for children, collecting for the food pantry, transporting unused food from businesses that can't use it to those who can use it, cooking, baking, shopping for groceries, delivering food, all of it wrapped in our prayers and love to those who need to be fed.

I have seen your light shining through our guide ministry as you share not only the history of this building but the story of the living church here today that shines forth the light of Christ to all who come through her doors.

I have seen your light shining through music, through the offerings of our choirs and the numerous candlelight concerts that we have through the year. Music is its own kind of light that draws in people who might not otherwise step inside this church.

Canterbury shines a light for the students at William and Mary, helping them find a home away from home, a place where they gather for faith and fun and fellowship.

At a time when so many people their age are leaving the church, they are welcoming people in, sharing that love with their fellow students.

I have seen your light shining at the Parish Shop, through the creativity and labor of those planning the book sales, jewelry sales, and heavenly treasures, all of this raising friends and funds to give to Mission and Outreach, and I have seen the committee's light shining as they deliberate how best to distribute the resources we have been given that we might serve those in need and do the most in our community and the world.

I have seen your light shining through the eyes of our children who know they are loved both as they come down that aisle during the peace and when they see the beaming smiles and run into the arms of Ms. Meghan and their teachers and choir director and caregivers.

I have seen your light shining as you serve on boards and committees working to make wise choices on how we move into the future together, serving God, each other, our community, and the world. I have seen your lights shining on each other as you care for those among us who are hurting, grieving, sick, or suffering in any way.

I've seen your light shining as you pray for one another and for our world.

And if you are visiting with us today, you may think I don't see it, but I see your light. You've come through these doors. You've been welcomed in, and you are going to take some light out with you. And we are so glad you are shining your light with us this morning.

I have seen the lights of those who do not know they are being seen as they carry out all kinds of duties and loving acts. There's no way to mention them all. But know that even when I'm not seeing you, our father in heaven is.

I share the stories of the light I see to remind you of who you are – the people of God in this place, and I invite you to share these stories and your stories –not to show how great we are as Bruton Parish but to let our light shine. We don't need to hide it.

When was the church there for you when you needed it?

Where do you experience joy in your ministries?

What you drew you in these doors to begin with and then what kept you coming back?

How does this place, this community, nurture your faith in God and enable you to shine brightly in the world?

After the peace and before the choir sings their anthem, there is something called the Offertory sentence. The prayer book has a list of possible Offertory Sentences (p. 343 Rite 1, 376 Rite 2.) Here at Bruton, much of the time, we use the one that says, "Walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself for us an offering and sacrifice unto God." Frankly, it's a pretty easy one to memorize, so many of us use it.

During this season of Epiphany, this season of light, Father Bill asked us to put a different Offertory Sentence, and he very kindly put it in the bulletin. "Let your light so shine before all people, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

Beloveds, darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that. We have been given the light that the groaning world is longing to see. We are light. So let your light shine!

(Song)

“This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine...”