

## Opening Prayer for Joel and Beth to read (Arise Shine)

*OK, perhaps the title of this prayer is a little restrictive! You might want to find children - or adults - with different names to read this prayer.*

*It was one of those miserable, grey early winter/ late autumn mornings when no one wanted to be at church - especially as the heating had failed by then and we knew that we would be huddled around the Calor gas fire.*

*Traditionally, we image darkness negatively. God is light, evil is dark. We wanted to turn this on its head and begin to re-claim the darkness. In the Hebrew Scriptures there are numerous references to God being in the darkness; the darkness being the potential out of which God's creation grows.*

*Worship is not always a joy and a delight. But it is always worship.*

Arise shine...  
But it's still dark!

For the people walking in darkness...  
Stumbling more like!

Prepare the way...  
Hang on a minute – its not even advent yet!

I know it's still dark and only November...  
So how come you're using advent readings?

But it's exciting, things are happening in the darkness...  
What things?

Bonfires light up the sky and fireworks have exploded with colour and energy.  
On a clear night you can see far into space and wonder at the mystery of life.  
It's snugly and warm and safe being tucked up round the telly on a cold, dark night.  
New life is growing, kicking, turning, just waiting to be born.  
People are dreaming big dreams of fairness and peace.  
And the Christmas lights are lighting up the shops and the city centre.

So darkness is exciting and magical  
So darkness is mysterious and the place for secrets to be hidden  
So darkness is cosy and warming and snugly

Have we ever thanked God for the dark?  
No, Maybe we should!

**Thank you.**

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