LAS POSADAS

(SERVICE OF SHELTER FOR THE HOLY FAMILY)

*In the Hispanic tradition of Latin American countries, especially in Mexico, one of the oldest celebrations is Las Posadas. It was created by the Augustinian Father Diego de Soria about 1587 to introduce Christianity to the New World, and now it is revised by United Methodists Carlos Avendano, Raquel M. Martinez, and Roberto Escamilla. This celebration takes place during Advent, from December 16 through December 23, with a special service on December 24 (A Christmas Eve Service of Las Posadas). It is a preparation for, and anticipation of, the birth of the Savior, commemorating the nine months when Mary carried the infant Jesus in her womb and emphasizing his coming again and the need of all persons for repentance and God's mercy. Las Posadas is a Christian, biblical, and evangelistic service out of the Hispanic culture.*

*Well ahead of time, eight homes of church members are chosen in different areas for the eight nights prior to Christmas Eve. These homes should be willing to have a house party, including a piñata to be broken by a child. The piñata represents the devil, who cannot be recognized, and therefore the child is blindfolded. The child is fighting against evil with the rod of virtue, symbolized in the stick provided to break the piñata. When the child perseveres to the end, the glory of God will come down on everyone, as shown by the candy hidden within the piñata. The homes may also offer cups of hot chocolate, coffee, apple cider, or punch; buñuelos (thin, fried pastry); tamales; hot doughnuts; sweet rolls; all kinds of avocado and other dips; or other refreshments. Each family should also visit neighbors and invite them to Las Posadas.*

*On the appointed day, people meet at the corner near the home to be visited. In small communities this procession of pilgrims would walk from one home to another, but in large communities it could be a car caravan. Traditionally, persons carry lighted candles and sing as they walk. In the lead may be Mary, seated on a donkey, with Joseph. Children, possibly dressed as shepherds and the magi, accompany the procession. Then, in procession, the people approach the darkened house and proceed with the following service:*

*Knocking on the door, a person begins:*

Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking;

if you hear my voice and open the door,

 I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.

 (REVELATION 3:20)

*People outside the home say:*

Who will give lodging to these pilgrims

 who are weary of traveling the roads?

We have come exhausted from Nazareth.

I'm a carpenter, by the name of Joseph.

In the name of the heavens, I beg you for lodging,

 my beloved wife can no longer travel.

*People inside the home answer:*

Although you tell us that you are weary,

 we do not give lodging to strangers.

We don't care what your name is; let us sleep.

We are telling you that we will not let you enter.

 *People outside say:*

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him;

 yet the world did not know him.

He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.

But to all who received him, who believed in his name,

 he gave power to become children of God.

 (JOHN 1:10, 12)

*People inside say:*

Who are the children of God?

*People outside say:*

All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

 (ROMANS 8:14)

*People inside say:*

To what does the Spirit of God guide us?

People outside say:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,

 and with all your soul, and with all your mind.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

 (MATTHEW 22:37, 39)

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,

 generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self–control.

 (GALATIANS 5:22–23a )

*People inside say:*

How do we know we love the Lord and have faith?

*People outside say:*

What good is it, my brothers and sisters,

 if you say you have faith but do not have works?

Can faith save you?

If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food,

 and one of you says to them,

 "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,"

and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?

So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

 (JAMES 2:14–17)

*People inside switch on all the lights and say:*

Lodging we will give you with much happiness;

enter, good Joseph; enter with Mary.

 *The doors of the home open, and all enter.*

 *People inside say:*

Enter, holy pilgrims. Receive this corner

 not of this humble home, but of our hearts.

*Host family offers the following prayer:*

God all–powerful,

 grant that we may rid ourselves of the works of darkness,

and that we may invest ourselves with the weapons of light

 in this life to which your Son, Jesus Christ,

 with great humility came to visit us;

so that in the final day,

 when he returns in majestic glory to judge the living and the dead,

we shall rise to eternal life through Jesus Christ,

 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

now and for ever. **Amen.**

*The people may sing one or more of the following hymns in* UMH:

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| --- | --- |
| 217 Away in a Manger | 222 Niño Lindo (Child So Lovely) |
| 243 De Tierra Lejana Venimos  (From a Distant Home) | 219 What Child Is This |

*A member of the host family or another person reads Psalm 80 (*UMH *801) and one of the following:*

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| December 16 | Malachi 3:1 –6a | Mark 1:1 –8 |
| December 17 | Malachi 4:1 –6 | Luke 1:5 –17 |
| December 18 | Isaiah 62:1 –12 | Luke 1:26 –38 |
| December 19 | Isaiah 11:1 –10 | Luke 1:39 –56 |
| December 20 | Isaiah 35:1 –10 | Luke 1:57 –66 |
| December 21 | Isaiah 42:1 –9 | Matthew 3:1 –12 |
| December 22 | Isaiah 9:2 –7 | Matthew 1:12 –17 |
| December 23 | Zephaniah 3:14 –20 | Luke 1:67 –80 |

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