

# Bethlehem Peace Light

## Brief History

The Peace Light, symbolic of the Light of Christ born to the world, especially evident at Christmas, is meant to promote peace, harmony and unity among all people of the world regardless of race, ethnicity or creed. For several decades, the International Scouting movement of boys and girls have actively promoted global peace and harmony through the distribution of the Peace Light.



Picture of place where Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Israel.

The "Peace Light from Bethlehem" campaign was originally organized by the Austrian Broadcasting Company - ORF (Linz) - and was part of a large charitable relief mission - *Light into Darkness*, for children in need in Austria and abroad. Since 1986, and especially after the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe in 1989, there has been a great deal of cooperation between Scouts and Guides in many countries which has allowed the light to travel throughout Europe, such that the light is passed in over 30 European Countries and for the past 20+ years to America, Canada and Mexico.

Each year, safety permitting, a child from Upper Austria travels as a pilgrim to obtain the flame from the grotto at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, Israel where Jesus is believed to have been born. This flame was lit from the candles at the place of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem in November of this year. The Light travelled back to Austria and on December 5, it was flown overseas and landed in New York. The Peace Light travels across the country as volunteers take the flame to each other. This year, it arrived in Tempe on December 12.

In past years the light has been presented to Pope Francis, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope John Paul II, Mikhail Gorbachev, former King Hussein of Jordan, EU President Romano Prodi and other member of the European parliament, Military Chaplains, the Rector of St. Patrick's Cathedral in NY, to the families who lost children at Sandy Hook, Connecticut, and to many places around the United States. Scouts presented the Peace Light to the president of the Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky on December 14, 2022 in Kiev.

The Peace Light is a symbol of hope and reminds us that the Jesus is the light of the world.

For more information, contact parishioner Kathy Polowski through the parish office at 480-838-7474 [parish@holyspirit-tempe-az.org](mailto:parish@holyspirit-tempe-az.org).