

thESource *Worship Service*

Celebrating Advent

by Walter Schoedel

In Advent we prepare in humility for the holy joy of welcoming God's Son. The season brings a note of repentance and rejoicing. We celebrate our renewed hope in God's presence, power and promises. Once He came. Now He comes. Yet He will come again.

To help God's people experience worship that can touch their hearts in Advent, we will want to add variety to our liturgical worship patterns. Based on Series B of Lutheran Service Book for the appointed lessons, the following suggestions can be used on Sunday morning, in a midweek Advent service, or in a group and/or family devotion.

The Silent Processional

To symbolize the penitential attitude of Advent, to begin the service a young person brings in the cross as the worshippers rise. The cross can be passed around in a small group.

The Call to Worship

Begin each service with the weekly Call to Worship.

THE FIRST WEEK

Come, let us worship and bow down before the Christ who was, and is, and is to come, for He is the Savior of the world, whom we watch, who is the hope of the ages.

THE SECOND WEEK

As we worship the Lord, let us do so in a spirit of reverence, leaving behind the ways of the world, hearing the call to repent, preparing the way of the Lord.

THE THIRD WEEK

Our God calls us to be happy in our worship. His good tidings of Christ's coming are a message of great joy for all people. May we always rejoice in the hope He brings us.

THE FOURTH WEEK

Our God calls us to worship, not for His sake, but for ours, for in worship our lives are restored. We become aware of who we are and see ourselves as people with a purpose for the present and certain hope for the future.

The Advent Hymns

THE FIRST WEEK

Come, Thou Precious Ransom, Come	Lutheran Service Book #350
Hosanna Now Through Advent	Lutheran Worship #16

THE SECOND WEEK

On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry	Lutheran Service Book #344
Ye Sons of Men, Oh Harken	Lutheran Service Book #354

THE THIRD WEEK

Rejoice, Rejoice Believers	Lutheran Service Book #515
O come, O come, Emmanuel	Lutheran Service Book #357

THE FOURTH WEEK

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus	Lutheran Service Book #338
Hark the Glad Sound	Lutheran Service Book #349

Responsive Prayer for Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Pastor: The living light, the living flames that will burn on our Advent wreath, symbolizes Jesus Christ as the living light of the world.

People: He is the light that broke forth on the world on that first Christmas when He was born in Bethlehem.

Pastor: The evergreen of the wreath represents life that is found in Jesus Christ.

People: Jesus came that we may have life and that we may have it more abundantly.

THE FIRST WEEK

Pastor: As the first candle on our Advent wreath is being lit, we hear the first call of Advent to be READY.

People: And real readiness calls us to watch Jesus Christ.

Pastor: See who He is and see what He does.

People: See what He has made us and see what He has given us.

Pastor: See that He is with us and see that He is going to come again.

People: See that He has a ministry for us to do while we are watching.

THE SECOND WEEK

Pastor: Last week we lit our first candle...

People: To call us to be watching for the coming of Jesus.

Pastor: As we prepare to light the second candle of our Advent wreath,

People: We hear the call to repent.

Pastor: Repentance shows sorrow for our sins.

People: Repentance is turning to Jesus for forgiveness.

Pastor: Repentance lets the Holy Spirit change our hearts.

People: Repentance means living a new life.

Pastor: The two living flames burning on our Advent wreath recall for us...

Men: That Advent is a time for READINESS, watching for Jesus Christ.

Women: That Advent is a call to REPENT, turning from sin to a new direction in Jesus Christ.

THE THIRD WEEK

Pastor: As we now light our third Advent candle, we hear the call to REJOICE.

People: Rejoicing in Christ the Light of the World.

Pastor: Rejoicing in the freedom that Christ brings us.

People: Rejoicing in anticipating the Christmas celebration.

Pastor: With the three candles burning on our Advent wreath, we recall their message...

Men: To always be watching for Jesus Christ.

Women: To turning from sin to God's style of living.

Youth: To finding joy and delight in the presence of Christ.

THE FOURTH WEEK

Pastor: As we now light our fourth Advent candle, we hear the call of BEING...

People: To belong to Him.

Pastor: To be partners with Him in ministry.

People: To be heirs of eternal life.

Sentences for Advent Reflection

(Speak the Advent sentence for the appropriate week of the Advent season. Spend time meditating or talking with those around you about what the sentence means for your daily life.)

Week 1: A voice calls, "Prepare the way of the Lord!" Be ready, always looking to Jesus on whom our faith depends.

Week 2: A voice calls, "Prepare the way of the Lord!" Repent...stop trying to work things out by yourself.

Repent...acknowledge your inability to keep God's law.
Repent...turn from sin to a new direction with a new allegiance to Jesus Christ.

Week 3: A voice calls, "Prepare the way of the Lord!"
Rejoice...because the Lord stands among us now.
Rejoice...because we now possess blessings of His Kingdom.
Rejoice...because the Lord will come again!

Week 4: A voice calls, "Prepare the way of the Lord!"
Remember that Jesus Christ restores you to live in God's presence.

(After a few moments, the leader will direct the worshippers to speak together:)

We remember a past experience. God did come in Christ at Bethlehem. The promise of the prophets was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus.

We recognize a present experience. God comes to us through Word and Sacrament to nourish our faith and help us experience His presence, pardon, power, promise and His purpose for our daily lives.

We look forward to a future experience. Christ will return at the end of the world to receive all believers to Himself in Paradise. He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead.

This is most certainly true.

An Advent Responsive Prayer

Watching for Christ, preparing
for Christ, rejoice in Christ,
hoping for Christ, we pray the
prayer of Advent...

O Wisdom, come and teach us.
O Lord of Strength, come and redeem us.
O Root of Jesse, come and deliver us.
O Key of David, come and rescue us.
O Day Star, come and enlighten us.
O King of the Nations, come and save us.
O Emmanuel, come and live with us. Amen.

(The service could end here with a benediction, or you could add an additional hymn and a devotion. You could also continue with the following, which can be used on its own for a midweek service, a group meeting or a family gathering.)

An Advent Prayer of Word and Song

(Based on Psalm 98 TEV)

A in Advent is Adoration

Leader: Sing a new song to the Lord; He has done wonderful things.

People: By His power and holy strength, He has won the victory.

All: (Sing the refrain from "O, Come, All Ye Faithful", Lutheran Service Book #379)

Leader: The Lord announces His victory; He made His saving power known to the nations.

People: He kept His promise to the people of Israel with loyalty and constant love for them. All people everywhere have seen the victory of our God.

All: (Sing refrain from "O, Come, All Ye Faithful")

Leader: Sing for joy to the Lord, all the earth; praise Him with songs and shouts of joy.

People: Sing praises to the Lord! Play music on the harps! Blow trumpets and horns and shout for joy to the Lord our king.

All: (Sing refrain from "O, Come, All Ye Faithful")

Leader: Roar sea, and every creature in you; sing, earth and all who live on you!

People: **Clap your hands, you rivers; you hills, sing together with joy before the Lord, because He comes to rule the earth. He will rule the peoples of the world with justice and fairness.**

All: (Sing refrain from "O, Come, All Ye Faithful")

The D in Advent is Dedication

Leader: Come let us light the four candles on our Advent Log.

People: **To see what Christ's coming means to us.**

Leader: Lighting the first candle helps us recall how God's people in the Old Testament were sustained by hope as they waited patiently for the Messiah.

People: **We, too, live in hope of His coming.**

Leader: May the Prince of Hope be with you.

People: **And with you as well.**

Leader: You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, proclaiming the Good News of peace through Jesus Christ.

People: **Jesus Christ is our only hope for peace.**

Leader: Lighting the second candle helps us remember that Jesus Christ can bring peace to our world.

People: **May His peace reign in our hearts.**

Leader: May the Prince of Peace be with you.

People: **And with you as well.**

Leader: Rejoice! The Lord is coming soon.

People: **There is everlasting joy in our hearts because of the coming of our Savior.**

Leader: Lighting the third candle helps us rehearse the Good News announced by the angels on that first Christmas.

People: **Because of Christ we can live joyful lives.**

Leader: The Prince of Joy be with you.

People: **And with you as well.**

Leader: God is love and so we love because God first loved us.

People: **The coming of Jesus Christ shows God's love at work.**

Leader: Lighting the fourth candle helps us recollect our call to share God's love everywhere.

People: **May we catch the Spirit to share God's love in Word and deed.**

Leader: The Prince of Love be with you.

People: **And with you as well.**

The V in Advent is Vindication

All: **O Father, we have a tendency to make holy days into holidays, to emphasize toys and trees and tinsel and turkey at the expense of adoration and praise of Your holy name. Forgive us for our foolish inclinations. Lead us this season to prepare Your way, proclaim Your truth, promote Your cause, and practice Your love. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.**

Leader: So be it! Amen.

All: (Sing "Hark the Glad Sound", Lutheran Service Book #349)

The E in Advent is Expression

Leader: We tell one another that our King is coming.

People: We wait patiently for the Lord.

Leader: We make room in our hearts for His presence.

People: We face each new day in hope of His promises.

All: (Sing verse 4 of "Ye Sons of Men, Oh, Hearken", Lutheran Service Book #354)

The N in Advent is Nearness

Leader: Advent is a time that points us to the past, the present and the future.

People: Once He came.

Leader: We look backward to Bethlehem in gratitude for the Christ who came.

All: (Sing verse 1 of "Once He Came in Blessing", Lutheran Service Book #333)

People: Now He comes.

Leader: We look inward to His presence as He comes in the proclamation of the Gospel, the sharing of the Eucharist, the word of forgiveness, the fellowship of the church.

All: (Sing verse 2 of "Once He Came in Blessing")

People: Yet He will come.

Leader: We look forward to the trumpet call when He will come again to judge the world with equity and receive all believers to Himself in Paradise.

All: (Sing verse 4 of "Once He Came in Blessing")

The T in Advent is Transition

Leader: We enter the new season of the Church year traveling through Advent, which calls us to get ready.

People: For the proper celebration of the birth of Jesus, for the ongoing ministry of His church, for His second coming in the clouds of heaven.

Leader: Traveling through Advent calls us to go from place to place.

People: With a song on our lips, with certainty in our minds, with courage in our souls and with joy in our hearts.

Leader: Traveling through Advent calls us to provide...

People: Food for the hungry, help for the suffering, freedom for the oppressed, hope for the despairing.

All: (Sing "Hosanna Now Through Advent", Lutheran Worship #16)

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