

Sing a New Song unto the Lord



Worship Resources for the Creative Church
Advent 2014

Sacred Seasons, a series of worship packets with a peace and justice emphasis,
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Sacred Seasons:



Worship Tools with an Attitude—Toward Justice, Peace & Food Security for All of God's People.

These unique resource packets are available for the liturgical year, three packets a year for \$100 (\$125 for non-US subscriptions), one packet for \$50 (\$65 outside of the US).

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Statement of Purpose

Seeds of Hope, Inc., is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for the poor and hungry

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of God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. For 23 years, the group has sought out people of faith who feel called to care for the poor; and to affirm, enable and empower a variety of responses to the problems of hunger and poverty.

Editorial Address

The Seeds of Hope ministry is housed by the community of faith at Seventh and James Baptist Church. The mailing address is: 602 James; Waco, TX 76706; Phone: 254/755-7745; Fax: 254/753-1909; E-mail: seedseditor@clearwire.net. Web address: www.seedspublishers.org.

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A Word about This Packet

In this Advent/Christmastide packet, we chose the theme “Sing a New Song unto the Lord” in order to organize the liturgy for the four Sundays around the four traditional Christmas canticles: the Magnificat (the song of Mary), from Luke 1: 46-55; the Benedictus (the song of Zechariah), from Luke 1:68-79; the Gloria (the angel’s song), from Luke 2:14; and the Nunc Benedictus (the song of Simeon), from Luke 2:38.

The idea of using the canticles was the brainchild of Guilherme Almeida, who wrote most of the liturgy in this packet. We are profoundly grateful for his labor of love and his beautiful spirit.

As always, we have had input from Deborah Harris—our longtime brainstormer, lyricist and copy editor. A new voice in this packet is that of Anita Scotti, who was helpful in brainstorming the liturgy themes and generous with her writings.

Instead of including typical sermons, we included meditations by Claire McKeever, a minister who now works for the Upper Room in Nashville, TN (and is a former Seeds intern); a Nativity prayer by Erin Conaway, who pastors the church where our office is housed and nurtures us in many ways; and a shorter homily by Cindy Weber, who pastors the Jefferson Street Baptist Church in Louisville, KY.

The cover art and art for the four Sundays in Advent, is created especially for you by Sally Lynn Askins, a member of the Seeds Council of Stewards and professor of Costume Design in Baylor University’s Department of Theatre Arts. We are also thrilled to include several pieces of art by Jesse Manning, a high school student in Bacliff, on the Gulf Coast of Texas. We think that Jesse’s art injects a refreshing insight to our collection.

We continue to be profoundly grateful for all of the people who are so generous with their time and creative gifts, and who think of us when they have written worship

materials or conceived of innovative ideas for worship themes.

We are also deeply grateful for all of you who subscribe to *Sacred Seasons*, and who make use of these gifts in your worship and work.

As always, we want you to feel free to play around with these liturgies and services, and adapt them to your congregation’s needs and resources. If you come up with something creative and different, we would love to hear about it.

The contents of this packet are your congregation’s to use freely and share with others as the need arises. We really do pray that our materials, and this packet in particular, will help you and your congregation to sing together a new song unto the Lord.

—Gratefully,
The Seeds Staff and Council of Stewards

Howard Williams, a minister who lived and worked in Birmingham, AL, until his recent death, was much beloved by the folks at Seeds. His prayer below was the inspiration for an Advent packet theme that we used 10 years ago: “A Song for Silenced Hearts.” We share it with you again with gratitude for Howard’s life and the gifts of writing he shared with our publications.

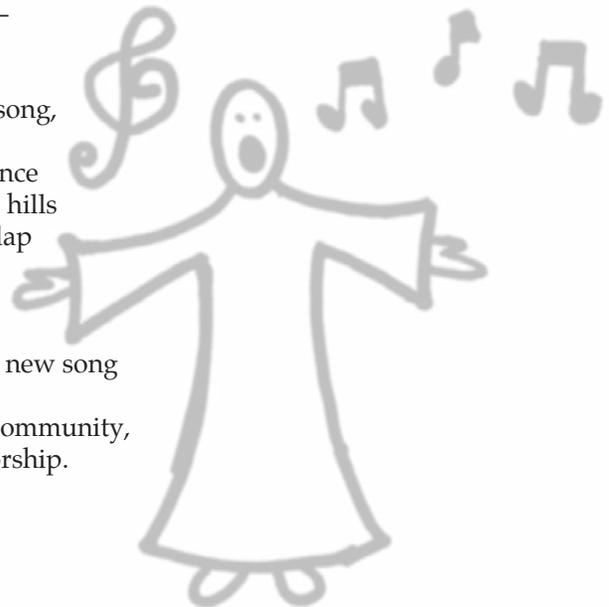
O God, in this hour, may you cause our silenced hearts to sing a new a song—

A song that comes from the melody whispered in our ears by the Spirit.

Cause us to be renewed, that our song will sing your praises— for your faithfulness and unending love.

Holy Spirit, whisper a song, a new song, that will cause us to dance with the floods and the hills as they, too, sing and clap and seas roar.

Draw near, O God, that we might sing this new song together as your people in this community, here in this place of worship.



art by Lara Luksis Davis



Week 1: Magnificat

A Liturgy for the First Sunday in Advent

by Guilherme Almeida

The canticle inspiration for this service is the Magnificat (the song of Mary), Luke 1: 46-55.

Greeting

Good morning, and welcome to worship
on this first Sunday of Advent.
Let us prepare our minds and open our hearts
to God.
Let us magnify, with Mary, the Mighty One
who has done great things for us
and whose mercy endures
from generation to generation.

Meditation of Preparation

Advent is the waiting season,
hoping to be rediscovered.
She is seasoned waiting,
wishing wisdom
and pregnant with promised life.
She is a season conceived each day.
—Joseph J. Juknialis

Call to Worship and Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Note: For each Sunday in Advent, through Christmas day, we suggest that you sing a difference verse to the hymn below (or add a verse each week) while the appropriate candles are lit. It was selected as a hymn that would be easy for the congregation to sing, but you might also consider having a solo, perhaps a cappella.

“Light the Light, the Fire of Life”
(Celebrating Grace hymnal #82)
TUNE: IL EST NÉ
WORDS: David Montoya
MUSIC: French carol, 18th century;
arr. David W. Music

Prelude

Processional Hymn
“Come, O Long-Expected Jesus”
(Chalice Hymnal #125 / Celebrating Grace hymnal #83)
TUNE: HYFRYDOL

WORDS: Charles Wesley
MUSIC: Rowland H. Prichard
Suggested arrangement: “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” by Benjamin Harlan, published by Brookfield Press (Hal Leonard) Code 08748151.

Responsive Reading from the Psalter

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

ONE: Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your might, and come to save us!
MANY: Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

ONE: O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people’s prayers? You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in full measure. You make us the scorn of our neighbours; our enemies laugh among themselves.
MANY: Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

ONE: Now let your hand rest upon the one at your right hand, the one whom you made strong for yourself. Then we will never turn back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name.
MANY: Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

ONE: The word of God, for the People of God.
MANY: Thanks be to God.

A Gift of Music “Advent Carol”

WORDS: Richard Avery
MUSIC: Don Marsh
Appropriate for a Children’s Choir or Youth Ensemble, originally published in The Avery and Marsh Songbook (Proclamation Productions Inc., Port Jervis, NY)

OR 

"Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"

WORDS: Charles Wesley, Mark A. Miller

MUSIC: Mark A. Miller

SAB with Piano/CGA 1225; Choristers Guild

New tune and arrangement of the traditional Advent Hymn; this would work well with a Youth Choir or small Adult ensemble.

Pastoral Prayer

*Reading from the
Hebrew Scriptures*
Isaiah 64:1-9

A Hymn of Testimony

"Young Mary Lived in Nazareth"

(Celebrating Grace hymnal #92)

TUNE: BALLAD OF MARY

WORDS: Rae E. Whitney

MUSIC: David W. Music

OR

"Tell Out, My Soul"

(Celebrating Grace hymnal #94)

TUNE: WOODLANDS

WORDS: Timothy Dudley-Smith (Luke 1:46-55)

MUSIC: Henry W. Greatorex, alt.

Reading from the Epistles

I Corinthians 1:3-9

Canticle

"Magnificat"

from the Taizé
Community

Gospel Reading

Mark 13:24-37

Sermon

Meditation of Response

While you walk along
your ways,
Waiting, we bedeck
ourselves:
We prepare the house,
We throw open the
shutters,
We anticipate your
arrival.

You sweep away our weariness,

Making your dwelling in us.

In you, we live again; in you, we are reborn—
In this heedless dawn.

—Jaci Maraschin, translated from the Portuguese
by Guilherme Almeida and Anita Scotti

Hymn of Response

"Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn"

(Chalice Hymnal #138)

TUNE: REJOICE, REJOICE

WORDS and MUSIC: Marty Haugen

Benediction

As you depart from this gathering of grace, remember
this:

All God's spiritual gifts are right in front of you!
And not only that, but God remains alongside you,
to keep you steady and on track until Jesus returns.

The God who started you on this holy adventure
will strengthen you to the end, for God is faithful!

God will never give up on you.

Based on I Corinthians 1:7-9

Postlude

—Guilherme Almeida, a native of Brazil, has been a music
minister for many years and is now a lecturer in Musical
Theatre at Baylor University in Waco, TX. Guilherme has a
strong interest in liberation theology and has written many
liturgies.

art by Jesse Manning



God-Bearer

by Anita Marie Scotti

O'ershadowed by the Holy One,
Trembling in her maiden blue,
Mary spoke, though doubting too:
"Here I am; Thy will be done."

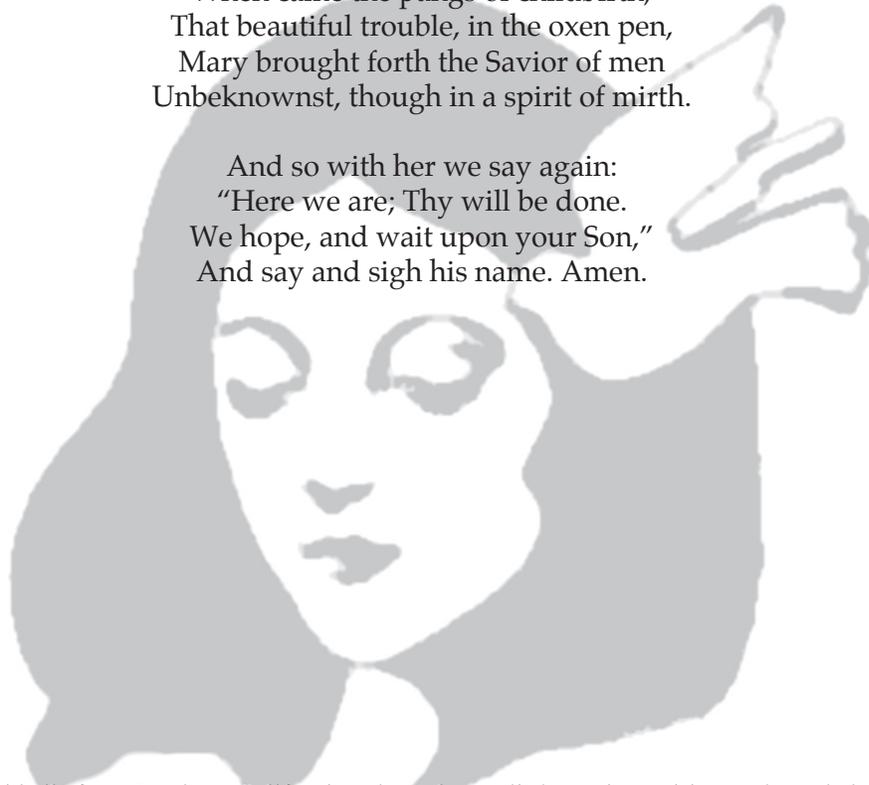
Gabriel's words did soon prove true:
That a virgin would conceive of God
To bear the bearer of staff and rod,
And so within Messiah grew.

Who can know how scared, how awed,
To carry thus the Lord Most High
Was she, who knew Him to be nigh
And felt His every shift and prod?

Could the girl, so modest, so shy,
Have dreamt the star that marked His worth,
That in Him heaven came to earth,
Or that angels whispered hushaby?

When came the pangs of childbirth,
That beautiful trouble, in the oxen pen,
Mary brought forth the Savior of men
Unbeknownst, though in a spirit of mirth.

And so with her we say again:
"Here we are; Thy will be done.
We hope, and wait upon your Son,"
And say and sigh his name. Amen.



— Anita Scotti hails from Southern California, where she studied creative writing and psychology at USC. She is also a recent graduate in biology from Baylor University in Waco, Texas, where she is a member of Seventh and James Baptist Church.

Prayer for Hope

by Claire McKeever-Burgett

What is hope if not the very act of gathering together
to give thanks and praise to God?

What is hope if not the very sight
of children gathering to learn;
adults preparing the way;
stars shining in the sky;
hungry bellies that are full;
broken hearts that mend;
tired bodies that rest;
trees decorated;
dances danced;
songs sung.

What is hope if not the very prayers we pray this day
for peace in Gaza,
for love everywhere,
for joy deep in our hearts,
our bodies,
our souls.

What is hope if not you, God,
and the promise of your Holy Child,
Jesus?

Flannery
prayed that you would teach her
what to pray.

And we pray
that, too.

Give us words.
Give us actions.
Give us hope

rooted in the promise of
of the Holy,
seeded in the ground
of Peace.

Amen.



— Claire McKeever-Burgett is Program Interpretation Manager for Upper Room Ministries in Nashville, TN, helping to tell The Upper Room's stories in compelling ways. She is an ordained Alliance of Baptists pastor and writes often at www.pastorpoet.com. She served as a Seeds of Hope intern in 2004.



Week 2: Benedictus

A Liturgy for the Second Sunday in Advent

by Guilherme Almeida

*The canticle inspiration for this service is the
"Benedictus" (the song of Zechariah), Luke 1:68-79.*

Greeting

Meditation of Preparation

Speak peace to me, Lord, and quiet my soul.
Let not the turmoil overtake me.
Speak peace to me, Lord, and soothe my spirit,
For I know that Thee will not forsake me.
Let me speak peace, with mouth and hands;
"Comfort, O comfort my people," spake Thee.
—Anita Marie Scotti

Call to Worship and Lighting of the Advent wreath

Light the Light, the Fire of Life
(Celebrating Grace hymnal #82)
IL EST NE

WORDS: David Montoya

MUSIC: French carol, 18th cent.; arr. David W. Music

For each Sunday of Advent, through Christmas day, a
different verse is used or added while the candles are lit. (See
the notes on page 5 of the first week's liturgy.)

Prelude

Processional Hymn

"Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence"

(Chalice Hymnal #124/Celebrating Grace hymnal #81)

TUNE: PICARDY

WORDS: Liturgy of St. James; tr. Gerard Moultrie

MUSIC: Trad. French carol; harm. The English Hymnal

Responsive Reading from the Psalter

Psalms 85:1-2, 8-13

Note: For the "Selah" interlude, Hebrew tradition includes
instrumental music reflective of the Psalm character. It is
suggested that the instrumentalist play once through the
song "Emmanuel" (Chalice Hymnal #134/Celebrating
Grace hymnal #120).

ONE: Lord, you were favorable to your land;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

MANY: You forgave the iniquity of your people; you
pardoned all their sin.

Selah

ONE: Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he
will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those
who turn to him in their hearts.

MANY: Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear
him, that his glory may dwell in our land. Steadfast love and
faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each
other.

ONE: Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and
righteousness will look down from the sky.

MANY: The Lord will give what is good, and our land will
yield its increase. Righteousness will go before him, and will
make a path for his steps.

ONE: The word of God, for the People of God.

MANY: Thanks be to God.

A Gift of Music

"Dona Nobis Pacem (A Prayer for Peace)"

WORDS: Traditional

MUSIC: Giulio Caccini, arr. James A. Moore

SATB, violin, keyboard / AMP 0512; Alliance Music
Publications, Inc.

This selection may be performed with various voicing: Solo,
Unison Choir, SSA, Unison with TTBB, SSA with TTBB.

OR

"Blessed Is the Lord (Benedictus)"

WORDS: R. C. Sproul

MUSIC: Dan Forrest

SATB with Piano / BP1996; Beckenhorst Press, Inc.

Pastoral Prayer

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Isaiah 40:1-11

Hymn of Promise

“View the Present Through the Promise”

(*Celebrating Grace* hymnal #99)

TUNE: AR HYD Y NOS

WORDS: Thomas H. Troeger

MUSIC: Traditional Welsh melody, alt.;

harm. Luther O. Emerson

OR

“Blessed Be the God of Israel”

(*Chalice Hymnal* #135)

MERLE’S TUNE

WORDS: Michael Perry

MUSIC: Hal H. Hopson

Reading from the Epistles

II Peter 3:8-15a

Canticle

“Benedictus”

from the Taizé Community

Gospel Reading

Mark 1:1-8

Sermon

Meditation

of Response

We seek your peace, O God—

Peace within our hearts,

Peace on earth as it is in heaven.

Teach us the things that make for peace
that we may not study war any more.

We pray for our leaders

that they may desire peace—

We pray for our enemies

that they may desire peace.

—Mary Ruth Crook

Hymn of Response

“People, Look East”

(*Chalice Hymnal* #142/*Celebrating Grace*
hymnal #90)

BESANÇON

WORDS: Eleanor Farjeon

MUSIC: French folk melody

Benediction

Now we go out to sing the gospel of peace—

Let the words and the music

be heard among the people

that there may be peace in hearts and minds,
here and through all the earth. Amen.

—Mary Ruth Crook

Choral Response

“Christ Has Broken Down the Wall”

WORDS and MUSIC: Mark A. Miller

SATB, with Piano/CGA 1224; Choristers Guild

OR

“Bring Us Peace”

WORDS: Pamela Martin

MUSIC: Craig Courtney

SATB with Solo or Children, Piano/BP1799-2;

Beckenhorst Press, Inc.

Postlude

—Guilherme Almeida, a native of Brazil, has been a music minister for many years and is now a lecturer in Musical Theatre at Baylor University in Waco, TX. Guilherme has a strong interest in liberation theology and has written many liturgies.

art by Jesse Manning



The Prayer for Peace

by Claire McKeever-Burgett

*Holy God of earth and sky,
of light and dark,
of this time and last time,*

*We still pray for peace because
we still believe in miracles.*

Miracles of body and bone,
marrow and music
bread and blood
hands and feet
breath and amen.

Miracles of childlike faith
and adult wonder
of light and love
of dancing and communion
of daring and diversity.

Miracles that light the night sky
even on the darkest of nights.

Miracles that stop a warrior's hand
even in the most brutal of circumstances.

Miracles that continue to lift the voices
of the weak, the meek, the mild, the least,
the last, the lonely, the lost.

*Holy God of earth and sky
of light and dark
of this time and last time,*

*We still pray for peace because
we still believe in miracles.*

Miracles like the one that brought you to us.
Miracles like the one that heard angels sing,
"Peace on earth and goodwill to all..."
Miracles like Mary giving birth to the Holy Child,
Jesus.

*Yes, we still pray for peace because
we still believe in miracles.
Alleluia and Amen.*

—Claire McKeever-Burgett is Program Interpretation Manager for Upper Room Ministries in Nashville, TN, helping to tell The Upper Room's stories in compelling ways. An ordained Alliance of Baptists pastor, she writes often at www.pastorpoet.com. She served as a Seeds of Hope intern in 2004. This prayer for peace, Claire writes, "is helped by the words of Ann Weem's poem 'I No Longer Pray for Peace' and from an earlier prayer-poem written by Claire entitled 'I Still Believe.'"





Week 3: Gloria

A Liturgy for the Third Sunday in Advent

by Guilherme Almeida

*The canticle inspiration for this service is the Gloria
(the angel's song), Luke 2:14.*

Greeting

Meditation of Preparation

It's easy to forget that Christmas is not a party for those who smile the most. This season isn't for people who've never learned that life is hard. Christmas is for those who've known tragedy and discovered that sadness isn't the final word. Wendell Berry writes, "Be joyful, even though you have considered all the facts."

—Brett Younger, "Joy for Everyone"

Call to Worship and Lighting of the Advent wreath

"Light the Light, the Fire of Life"

(Celebrating Grace hymnal #82)

TUNE: IL EST NÉ

WORDS: David Montoya

MUSIC: French carol, 18th cent.; arr. David W. Music
For each Sunday of Advent, through Christmas day, a
different verse is used or added while the candles are lit. (See
the notes on page 5 of the first week's liturgy.)

Prelude

Processional Hymn

"Arise, Your Light Is Come"

(Celebrating Grace hymnal #87)

TUNE: FESTAL SONG

WORDS: Ruth Duck (Isaiah 60:1-2; 61:1)

MUSIC: William H. Walter

Responsive Reading

from the Psalter

Psalms 126

ONE: When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we
were like those who dream.

MANY: Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and
our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the
nations, "The Lord has done great things for them."

ONE: The Lord has done great things for us, and
we rejoiced. Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the
watercourses in the Negeb.

MANY: May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of
joy. Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.

ONE: The word of God, for the People of God.

MANY: Thanks be to God.

A Gift of Music

"Bringing in the Sheaves," Solo

WORDS: Knowles Shaw, Jay Althouse

MUSIC: George A. Minor, Arr. Jay Althouse

In the songbook *Sacred Solos for All Seasons*

This is a fresh take on the traditional Gospel song, available
through Alfred Publishing for different voice types: Medium
High 21170 or Medium Low 21173

OR

"Gloria In Excelsis"

(from Twelfth Mass)

Attributed to W. A. Mozart

SATB with Organ

Edition of your choice, consider using the Choral Public
Domain Library: <http://www3.cpd.org>.

Pastoral Prayer

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Isaiah 61:1-4; 8-11

Hymn of Testimony

"This Joy That I Have"

(The Baptist Hymnal, 1991 #94)

TUNE: THIS JOY

WORDS and MUSIC: Contemporary African American

OR

"Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts"

(Chalice Hymnal #101)

TUNE: QUEBEC

WORDS: Latin; tr. Ray Palmers, alt.

MUSIC: Henry Baker

Reading from the Epistles
I Thessalonians 5:16-24

Canticle

“Angels We Have Heard on High”
(Chalice Hymnal #155/Celebrating Grace hymnal #125)

TUNE: GLORIA

WORDS: Traditional French carol; tr.
Crown of Jesus, 1862, alt.

MUSIC: French carol melody;
arr. Edwards Shippen Barnes;
harm. Austin C. Lovelace

Gospel Reading
Mark 1:1-8

Sermon

Meditation of Response

The Hebrew prophets invited God’s people to celebrate even when things were at their worst. Six hundred years before the first Christmas, Israel was in terrible shape. Assyria, the latest in a long line of super powers, was threatening. The prophet Zephaniah [3:14-20] pointed out how bad things were. He criticized their religious foolishness, hypocritical leaders, and the way they ignored God.

Zephaniah wrote, “The people will soon walk like the blind and their blood will be poured out like the dust.” That’s not much to sing about, and yet the prophet finds hope. He concludes his book with this glorious song, this call to celebrate God’s presence: “Come, worship, sing, shout, rejoice with all your heart. For no matter what comes, God is with you. God sings and dances. God celebrates the poor being loved, the outcasts being welcomed, and the journey home that we all share.”

—Brett Younger,
“Joy for Everyone”

Hymn of Response

People, Look East (Chalice Hymnal #142/Celebrating Grace hymnal #90)

TUNE: BESANÇON

WORDS: Eleanor Farjeon

MUSIC: French folk melody

Benediction

El Cielo Canta Alegrí/Heaven Is Singing for Joy

WORDS and MUSIC: Pablo Sosa

Series *Oramos Cantando/We Pray in Song*

SATB, accompanied/G-7014, GIA Publications

OR

Glory to God in the Highest

WORDS and MUSIC: Daryl Williams,

arr. and orch. Lari Goss

Men’s Quartet (TTBB) feature with SATB, Piano/
0 80689 08827 8; Word Music

Postlude

Patience and Joy

by Anita Marie Scotti

Patience and joy, my dear heart,
That is what I wish for you:
Patience to wait on the coming of the light
Like a tremulous dawn,
Breaking in splendorous golds
Against the midwinter sky;
Joy to celebrate the perfect fulfilment
Of promises made and kept,
Antiquity, eternity renewed
In the season of waking love.
Patience and joy, my lovely one,
That is what I wish for you,
I who wait upon your repentance,
Upon your proclamation
Of the newness at your soul’s bright core
Like the fire of a scintillating star.
Patience and joy, my sacred child,
These are your challenge
And your inheritance.
Wait that you may rejoice;
Rejoice that you may wait;
Revel in the mystery of that hoping,
With overflowing patience and joy.

—Anita Scotti hails from Southern California, where she studied creative writing and psychology at the University of Southern California. A recent graduate in biology from Baylor University in Waco, TX, she is a member of Seventh and James Baptist Church.

Joy: A Meditation

by John S. Ballenger

It is the third Sunday of Advent. The theme is joy. Joy. According to the dictionary:

- JOY: noun. [Middle English, fr.; Old French joie, fr.; Latin gaudia, pl. of gaudium, fr.; gaudere, "to rejoice," akin to Greek gethein "to rejoice"]
 1. the emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires, DELIGHT.
 2. the expression or exhibition of such emotion, GAIETY.
 3. a state of happiness or felicity, BLISS.
 4. a source or cause of delight.
- JOY: verb.
 1. intransitive, to experience great pleasure or delight, REJOICE.
 2. transitive, archaic, GLADDEN.
 3. archaic, ENJOY.

This is fairly clear. Locate joy on the extreme of that side of the emotional scale you deem positive, and let it be an extreme case of feeling good and happy. Smiley faces and exclamation points. As inconsistent and temporary as any emotion. Dependent on the usual variety of contextual circumstances: Is the sun out? Do you possess what you desire? Are you successful? Aren't you glad? What joy!

Then there's that choir of angels, that multitude of heavenly hosts, blazing forth in light and sound, God's: "I bring you good tidings of great joy."

And it would seem to necessarily entail somewhat more than feeling good and being glad—especially when we know more of the story—when we know more of the details through which the joy is delivered—through which the joy is made flesh—when we have a little more of the perspective God presumably had when the angels were sent to proclaim the advent of joy—a clear perspective into the details of misunderstanding and rejection—the deep pain of betrayal—physical torture and death—good tidings of great joy. Alleluia.

So it is thus within the context of our own experience of the shadows of

life (our own experience of death and betrayal, rejection and misunderstanding) that with excitement, we begin to suspect that God is redefining again—seeking to provide a consistency for us—a joy not rooted in circumstance—a joy not dependent—a joy beyond our definitions and beyond our understandings.

It is the third Sunday of Advent. The theme is joy. God bless you. Amen.

—John Ballenger is the pastor of Woodbrook Baptist Church in Towson, MD. He served for a number of years as the Seeds poetry editor.



art by Sally Lynn Askins



Week 4: Nunc Dimittis

A Liturgy for the Fourth Sunday in Advent

by Guilherme Almeida

The canticle inspiration for this service is the *Nunc Dimittis*, (the song of Simeon), Luke 2:38

Greeting

Meditation of Preparation

The Advent of Jesus is the astounding claim that love is the only way to relate—to anyone. The Advent of Jesus is God's emphatic reaffirmation that love is the way God chooses to relate to each of us.

—John S. Ballenger, "Love: A Meditation"

Call to Worship and Lighting of the Advent wreath

"Light the Light, the Fire of Life"

(Celebrating Grace hymnal #82)

TUNE: IL EST NÉ

WORDS: David Montoya

MUSIC: French carol, 18th cent.; arr. David W. Music
For each Sunday of Advent, through Christmas day, a different verse is used or added while the candles are lit. (See the notes on page 5 of the first week's liturgy.)

Prelude

Processional Hymn

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

(Chalice Hymnal #119/Celebrating Grace hymnal #79)

TUNE: VENI EMMANUEL

WORDS: Latin hymn; tr. John Mason Neale; Henry Sloane Coffin

MUSIC: Plainsong; adapt. Thomas Helmore

Responsive Reading

Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26

Note: For the "Selah" interlude, Hebrew tradition includes instrumental music reflective of the Psalm character. It is suggested that the instrumentalist play once through the song "Emmanuel" (Chalice Hymnal #134/Celebrating Grace hymnal #120).

ONE: I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.

MANY: I declare that your steadfast love is established forever; your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to my servant David: 'I will establish your descendants forever, and build your throne for all generations.'"

Selah

ONE: Then you spoke in a vision to your faithful one, and said: "I have set the crown on one who is mighty, I have exalted one chosen from the people.

MANY: "I have found my servant David; with my holy oil I have anointed him; my hand shall always remain with him; my arm also shall strengthen him.

ONE: "The enemy shall not outwit him, the wicked shall not humble him.

I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him.

MANY: "My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him; and in my name his horn shall be exalted. I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers. He shall cry to me, 'You are my Creator, my God, and the Rock of my salvation!'"

ONE: The word of God, for the People of God.

MANY: Thanks be to God.

A Gift of Music

"Emmanuel Will Come"

WORDS and MUSIC: Becky Slagle Mayo

Unison/Two part with Piano and optional 2 octaves handbells, finger cymbals and tambourine.

CGA 1227; Choristers Guild

OR

"Every Valley"

WORDS and MUSIC: Kurt Kaiser,

arr. John Purifoy

SATB, accompanied / 0 80689 06023 6,

Jubilate Music / Word Music

Pastoral Prayer

*Reading from the
Hebrew Scriptures*
II Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Hymn of Mission
"Comfort, Comfort Ye My People"
(Chalice Hymnal #122/Celebrating Grace hymnal #89)
TUNE: PSALM 42
WORDS: Johannes Olearius;
tr. Catherine Winkworth, alt.
MUSIC: Genevan Psalter

Reading from the Epistles
Romans 16:25-27

Canticle
"Nunc dimittis,"
from the Taizé Community

Gospel Reading
Luke 1:26-38

Sermon

Meditation of Response
We are called to be witnesses of God's love by the love
we extend to others; precursors of God's justice by our

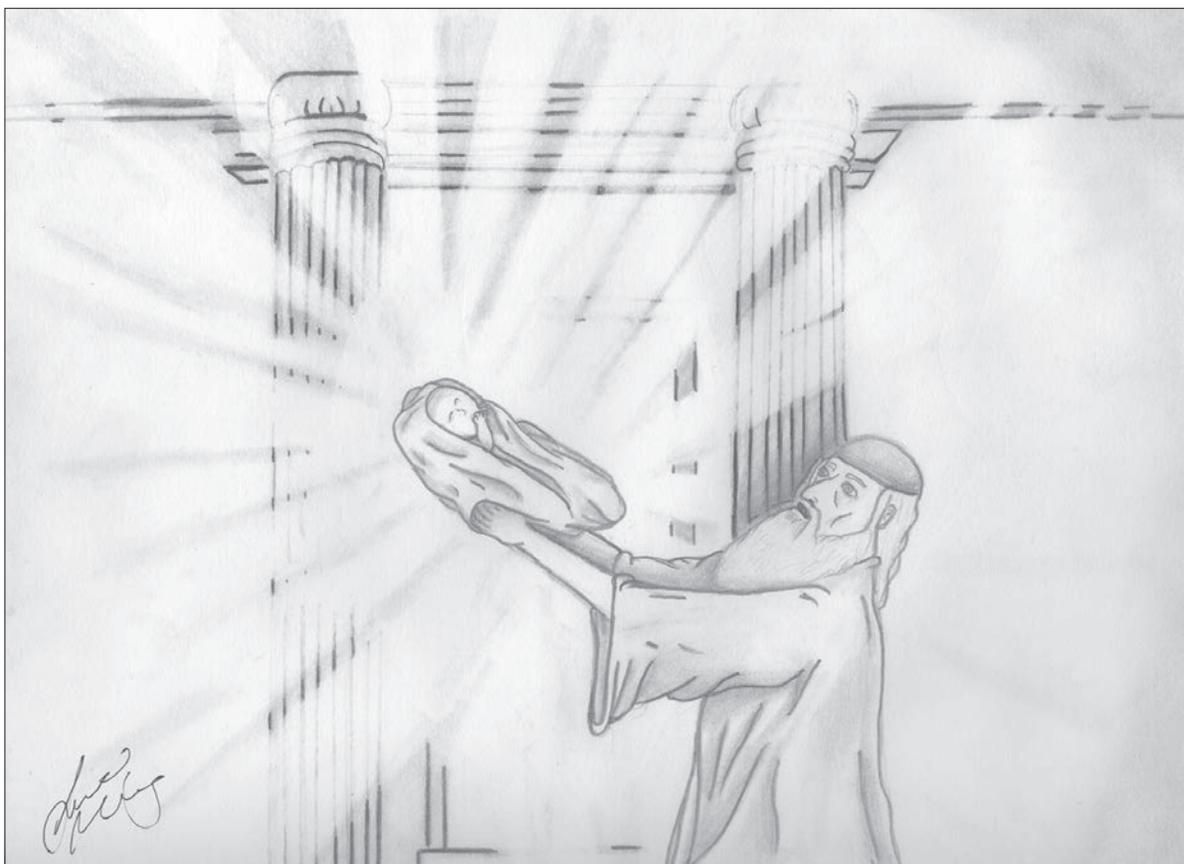
unfailing commitment to what is right and good; lamps
reflecting the light of Christ in our forgiveness, mercy and
compassion; harvesters of souls through our humble and
dedicated servanthood.
—adapted from Connections

Hymn of Response
"Emmanuel, Emmanuel"
(Chalice Hymnal #134/Celebrating Grace hymnal #120)
TUNE: McGEE
WORDS and MUSIC: Bob McGee

Benediction
May you experience joy, beauty and love
Now, tomorrow and always.
For such is your spiritual birthright.
May you know their Source:
The flowing stream of radiant Light
Which has no beginning and no end,
That lives deep within you and every-One.
—Skip Londos

Postlude

—Guilherme Almeida, a native of Brazil, has been a music
minister for many years and is now a lecturer in Musical
Theatre at Baylor University in Waco, TX. Guilherme has a
strong interest in liberation theology and has written many
liturgies.



The Love of Angels

by Anita Marie Scotti

Singing hymns and lullabies,
Wiping tears from crying eyes,
This is the love of angels.

Speaking out the gospel news,
To all who hear, Gentiles or Jews,
This is the love of angels.

Feeding the hungry, protecting the weak,
Sheltering the lost, upholding the meek,
This is the love of angels.

Weeping with the ones who mourn,
Rejoicing for the saints reborn.
This is the love of angels.

Praising Him for lavish grace,
Greeting prodigals with keen embrace,
This is the love of angels.

Proclaiming Him at any cost;
Braving tempest, fire, or frost,
This is the love of angels.

Let us please and glorify Him:
Let us, 'til our eyes grow dim,
Love with the love of angels.



— Anita Scotti hails from Southern California, where she studied creative writing and psychology at the University of Southern California. A recent graduate in biology from Baylor University in Waco, TX, she is a member of Seventh & James Baptist Church.

Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings

As we stand now on the brink of Christmas, let us seek for the stillness of which the carol sings. It is not the empty stillness and loneliness which life sometimes thrusts upon us. It is the deep mystery of meaning that fills us with awe and presence and reawakens our hearts to love.

Let us indeed be joyful, for Christmas is a time of joy! But joy is not always boisterous. Isn't it, at its best and most abiding, a solemn joy that stands with its eyes aglow and its tongue silenced before the mystery of the manger?

—C. W. (Wally) Christian

Now, while the night sky is so spectacular, it is a gift of the season to look up and know that we are spirit-freed and unlimited. Not even the immense universe and the glittering stars created for us can compare to the stars in our hearts and what has been prepared for us.

—Joyce Sequichie Hifler, *A Cherokee Feast of Days*

Christianity is mainly wishful thinking. Even the part about Judgment and Hell reflects the wish that somewhere the score is being kept. Dreams are wishful thinking. Children playing at being grown-up is wishful thinking. Interplanetary travel is wishful thinking. Sometimes wishing is the wings the truth comes true on. Sometimes the truth is what sets us wishing for it.

—Frederich Buechner, *Wishful Thinking*

So Christmas comes and goes, celebrated in many ways around the world. What remains is the song and the story.

—John Shepard

Advent is the perfect time to clear and prepare the Way. Advent is a winter training camp for those who desire peace. By reflection and prayer, by reading and meditation, we can make our hearts a place where a blessing of peace would

desire to abide and where the birth of the Prince of Peace might take place.

—Edward Hays, *A Pilgrim's Almanac*

What we celebrate is our redemption in Christ and the transformation of all creation by the presence of the divine in our midst.

—*Liturgy Training Sourcebook of the Roman Catholic Church*

If
you want,
the Virgin will come walking down the road
pregnant with the holy,
and say,

"I need shelter for the night, please take me inside your heart,
my time is so close."

Then, under the roof of your soul, you will witness the sublime
intimacy, the divine, the Christ
taking birth
forever,

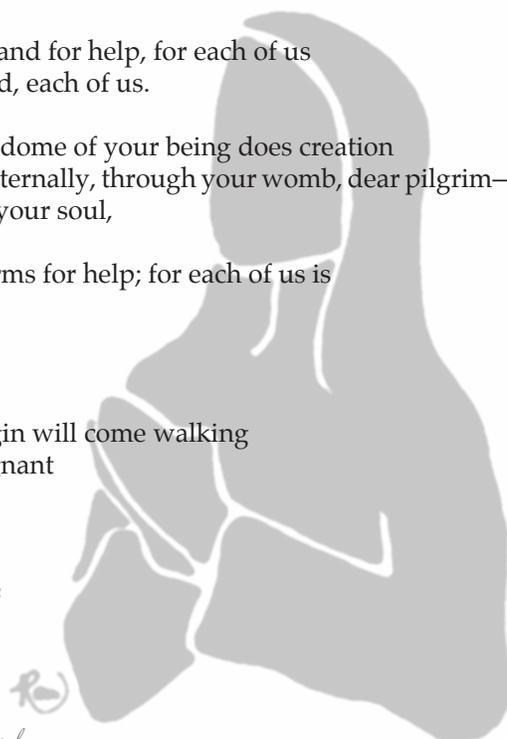
as she grasps your hand for help, for each of us
is the midwife of God, each of us.

Yes there, under the dome of your being does creation
come into existence eternally, through your womb, dear pilgrim—
the sacred womb in your soul,

as God grasps our arms for help; for each of us is
His beloved servant
never
far.

If you want, the Virgin will come walking
down the street pregnant
with Light and
sing....

—St. John of the Cross



art by Rebecca S. Ward

A Liturgy for Christmas Eve

by Guilherme Almeida

This liturgy is crafted around the Proper 1 Nativity Readings and the "O" Antiphons. The Antiphons, to be read by the congregation, are in italics.

Greeting

Meditation of Preparation

They say
that today the sun began to return,
or (in our newer scientific knowledge)
the earth began to move closer to the sun,
but how do I know this is so?
The day lengthens, but imperceptibly.
How do I know the sun has really begun to return?
How do I know she is real?
How do I know that she is who they say she is?
Is it really becoming warmer,
or are we abandoned to the darkness
and cold
and death?

It is good that we celebrate holy days at this time,
for the darkness is deep.
It is a good time of year
to watch for sunreturn.
It is a good time to listen for newborn cries.
— Katie Cook, "Solstice Song"

Call to Worship

"Light the Light, the Fire of Life"

(Celebrating Grace hymnal #82)

TUNE: IL EST NÉ

WORDS: David Montoya

MUSIC: French carol, 18th cent.; arr. David W. Music

For each Sunday of Advent, through Christmas day, a different verse is used or added while the candles are lit. (See the notes on page 5 of the first week's liturgy.)

Responsive Reading

from the Psalter

Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7; 96:1-2, 4

ONE: Let us sing to the Most High; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

MANY: Let us come to the Radiant God with thanksgiving, with gratitude let us offer our psalms of praise!

ONE: O come, let us bow down and give thanks, let us be humble before the Blessed One!

MANY: For the Most High is our God, and we are the

people of God's pasture.

Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.

ONE: Sing to the Creator, and bless God's name above all names; sing praises to the Glorious One from day to day.

MANY: For great is the Most High God, and greatly to be praised; Reverence the God of Love above all else!

ONE: The word of God, for the People of God.

MANY: Thanks be to God.

— Adapted from Psalms 95 and 96 in the New Revised Standard Version and Psalms for Praying by Nan C. Merrill

Nativity Prayer

See the prayer by Erin Conaway on page 24.

A Gift of Music

"Gloria for a Season of Rejoicing"

WORDS and MUSIC: Calvert Shenk

SATB, Cantor, Congregation and Organ/G-3259;

GIA Publications

O Wisdom,

coming forth from the mouth of the Most High,
reaching from one end to the other,
mightily and sweetly ordering all things:

Come and teach us the way of prudence.

Canticle

"Of the Father's Love Begotten"

(Celebrating Grace hymnal #113/Chalice Hymnal #104)

TUNE: DIVINUM MYSTERIUM

WORDS: Aurelius Clemens Prudentius; tr. John Mason Neale, Henry Baker, R. F. Davis, alt.

MUSIC: Plainsong

O Adonai,

and the leader of the House of Israel,
who appeared to Moses in the fire
of the burning bush
and gave him the law on Sinai:

Come and redeem us with an outstretched arm.

Carol

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

(Celebrating Grace hymnal #127/Chalice Hymnal #150)

TUNE: MENDELSSOHN
WORDS: Charles Wesley
MUSIC: Felix Mendelssohn

A Gift of Music

"Good Christians, Now Rejoice"
WORDS: Medieval Latin Carol, tr. John M. Neale
MUSIC: IN DULCI JUBILO—German Carol,
arr. Joseph M. Martin
SATB, Congregations and keyboard

O Root of Jesse,
standing as a sign among the peoples;
before you kings will shut their mouths,
to you the nations will make their prayer:
Come and deliver us, and delay no longer.

Carol

"Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"
(Chalice Hymnal #160/Celebrating Grace hymnal #105)
TUNE: ES IST EIN ROS'
WORDS: German carol; tr. Theodore Baker; tr. Harriet
Krauth Spaeth
MUSIC: German carol, 15th cent.; harm. Michael
Praetorius

Reading from the Hebrew

Scriptures
Isaiah 9:2-7

O Key of David,
and ceptre of the
House of Israel;
you open and no one
can shut;
you shut and no one
can open:
Come and lead the prisoners
from the prison house,
those who dwell in
darkness and the
shadow of death.

A Gift of Music

"Peace Child"
WORDS: Shirley Erena
Murray
MUSIC: Colin Gobson
Unison with obligato
flute of other instrument,
and keyboard
From Collection *Let
the Peoples Sing, Vol. 3*
(edited by Marian Dolan);
Augsburg Fortress

Carol

"Gentle Mary Laid Her Child"
(Celebrating Grace hymnal #114)
TUNE: TEMPUS ADEST FLORIDUM
WORDS: Joseph Simpson Cook
MUSIC: Piae Cantiones, arr. Ernest MacMillan

Meditation

Perhaps the hardest thing to remember about Christmas is this. It celebrates the incarnation, not just the nativity. The incarnation is an on-going process of salvation, while the nativity is the once-for-all historical event of Bethlehem. We do not really celebrate Christ's "birthday," remembering something that happened long ago. We celebrate the stupendous fact of the incarnation, God entering our world so thoroughly that nothing has been the same since.

—Liturgy Sourcebook of the Roman Catholic Church

Carol

"Sleepers, Wake"
(The Hymnal 1982 #61)
TUNE: WACHET AUF
WORDS: Philipp Nicolai, tr. Carl P. Daw, Jr.
MUSIC: Hans Sachs, adapt. Philipp Nicolai,
arr. and harm. Johann Sebastian Bach

Reading from the Epistles
Titus 2:11-14

art by Jesse Manning



O King of the nations,
and their desire,
the cornerstone making both one:
Come and save the human race, which you fashioned from
clay.

Carol
"Come Now, O Prince of Peace (Ososö)"
WORDS and MUSIC: Geon-yong Lee
SATB; From Collection *Let the Peoples Sing, Vol. 3*
(edited by Marian Dolan); Augsburg Fortress

Gospel Reading
Luke 2:1-20

O Emmanuel,
our king and our lawgiver,

the hope of the nations and their Savior:
Come and save us, O Lord our God.

Carol
"Joy to the World"
(*Chalice Hymnal* #143/*Celebrating Grace* hymnal #102)
WORDS: Isaac Watts
MUSIC: George Frederick Handel, arr. Lowell Mason

Benediction
O Morning Star,
splendor of light eternal and sun of righteousness:
Come and enlighten those who dwell in darkness and
the shadow of death.

Postlude

Nativity Prayer

by Erin Conaway

Holy, infant God...

We, like your blessed parents, have been on a journey to arrive at this moment. We have been waiting and lighting candles of anticipation in our hearts and in our sanctuary, hoping beyond hope, searching for signs of peace, seeking to find joy in the midst of darkness, and feeling the warm embrace of love wrapped firmly around our insecurities and fears.

Tonight, this holy night, we, like your blessed parents, want to be close to you...we want to stare at your miraculous face as we see it reflected in creation all around us: the crisp breeze in the air, the animals scurrying about making preparations for winter, the silent strength of the stars shining so brilliantly in the clear night sky, the fallen leaves in their motley wonder.

We want to stare at your miraculous face as we see it reflected in the comfort of family found in this place—and in the faces of our neighbors whom we encounter sleeping on the street, serving in restaurants and bars, making the cars we drive and the clothes we wear, working long nights in hospitals and warehouses, teaching and caring for our children and grandchildren, harvesting crops, in the faces of those waiting and hoping for work.

We want to stare at your miraculous face in the silence of the night—the night that occurred so very long ago, and this night that is occurring as we pray. Give us eyes to see your glory, revealed to us in unexpected ways.

Transform us into faithful followers as we take another step in the direction of the star. Hear our praise and accept our meager offerings, and may the playing of our drums echo their melodious song through the gates of heaven.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for the humility of your incarnation, for the utter love of your presence among us and for the grace of our salvation. We pray these things in the strength of your name, in the hope of your faith, bathed in deep joy, filled with love and clinging to your peace. Amen.

—Erin Conaway is the pastor of Seventh & James Baptist Church in Waco, TX, where the Seeds ministry is housed.



A Liturgy for Christmas Day

by Guilherme Almeida

This liturgy is crafted around the Proper III Nativity Readings from the Revised Common Lectionary.

Greeting

Call to Worship and Lighting of the Advent Wreath

"Light the Light, the Fire of Life"

(Celebrating Grace hymnal #82)

TUNE: IL EST NÉ

WORDS: David Montoya

MUSIC: French carol, 18th cent.; arr. David W. Music

For each Sunday of Advent, through Christmas day, a different verse is used or added while the candles are lit. (See the notes on page 5 of the first week's liturgy.)

Meditation of Preparation

Welcome, Jesus, our humble gentle Saviour,
welcome to Bethlehem,
where we have loved and fought
and longed for the peace
the world can never give.

We ask for your peace, your love,
your gentleness,
and thee courage to live that way.

—from A New Zealand Prayer Book

A Gift of Music

"Go, Tell It on the Mountain"

WORDS and MUSIC: Traditional Spiritual, arr. Robert Sterling

SATB and keyboard/29237; Alfred Publishing

A Carol of Adoration

"O Come, All Ye Faithful"

(Chalice Hymnal #148/Celebrating Grace hymnal #103)

WORDS: Latin Hymn, attr. To John Francis Wade, tr. Frederick Oakeley

MUSIC: John Francis Wade

Reading from the Psalter

Psalm 98

A Contemporary Carol

"One Small Child"

(Celebrating Grace hymnal #146)

TUNE: ONE SMALL CHILD

WORDS and MUSIC: David Meece

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Isaiah 52:7-10

A Gift of Music

"Christmas Bells Are Ringing"

WORDS and MUSIC: Bob Burroughs

SATB, with handbells and Piano/4562-48;

Broadman Press (LifeWay)

A Carol of Humble Beginnings

"Infant Holy, Infant Lowly"

(Celebrating Grace hymnal #139/Chalice Hymnal #163)

TUNE: W ZLOBIE LEZY

WORDS: Polish carol, tr. Edith M. G. Reed

MUSIC: Polish folk melody

Reading from the Epistles

Hebrews 1:1-4

A Gift of Music

"Can This Be God's Son?"

WORDS: J. Paul Williams

MUSIC: Lloyd Larson

SATB with keyboard/BP1436; Beckenhorst Press, Inc.

A Carol of Strength

"Once in Royal David's City"

(Chalice Hymnal #165/Celebrating Grace hymnal #104)

TUNE: IRBY

WORDS: Cecil F. Alexander

MUSIC: Henry J. Gauntlett

Christmas Homily

See "Birthing God's Realm" by Cindy Weber, below.

Gospel Reading

John 1:1-14

A Gift of Music

"Gloria"

WORDS: Traditional liturgical, Luke 2:14

MUSIC: Deuel V. Duarte

From Collection *Let the Peoples Sing, Vol. 3* (edited by Marian Dolan);

Augsburg Fortress

A Carol of Celebration

"He Is Born"

(*Celebrating Grace* hymnal #106)

TUNE: IL EST NÉ

WORDS: Trad. French Carol

MUSIC: French Carol, 18th cent.

Benediction

Go forth in peace, and may the Son of God, the Child of Mary, born in the stable at Bethlehem, be born again in us this day, so that, through us, the world may know the wonder of God's love.

—adapted from *A New Zealand Prayer Book*

Postlude

Birthing God's Realm

a Christmas Homily by Cindy Weber

Powers chatter in high places.

—from Bruce Cockburn's song "Pacing the Cage"

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituracaa and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene. That year, in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas...the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

Powers chatter in high places, but the Word of the Lord comes to one living along the margins of power, to one dwelling in the wilderness, to John the son of Zechariah.

Powers chatter in high places....

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria...And all went to be enrolled, all to their own city...And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

Powers chatter in high places, but the revolution is birthed among the lowly—quietly, patiently, painfully, slowly, unseen altogether but for angels and shepherds—but birthed, nevertheless, gloriously and forever birthed.

Powers chatter in high places, stake their claims, stage their wars, count their spoils, but somewhere along the margins, somewhere along the edges, two women sit and knit and rub each other's feet and pregnant stomachs, and hope and dream and sing subversive songs:

*God has shown strength with God's arm,
the mighty are put down from their thrones,*

(continued)



art by Sally Lynn Askins

*the hungry are filled with good things,
the rich are sent empty away....*

Powers chatter in high places, stake their claims, stage their wars, count their spoils, but somewhere along the margins, a little girl, on the way home from school, in the back seat of my car, sings a song she heard in church:

*Don't you know, we're talkin' about a revolution,
it sounds like a whisper.*

*Don't you know, we're talkin' about a revolution,
it sounds like a whisper.*

*While they're standin' in the welfare lines,
cryin' at the doorsteps of those armies of salvation,
wastin' time in the unemployment lines,
sittin' around, waitin' for a promotion.*

*Don't you know, we're talkin' about a revolution,
it sounds like a whisper.*

*Cause finally the tables are starting to turn,
talkin' bout a revolution...*

—Tracy Chapman, "Talking about a Revolution"

I hear her sing this, and join in. I know that she doesn't know what it means. But I also know that one day she will. Powers chatter in high places—greedy, gluttonous voices determine the value of human life in measures of oil. Powers chatter in high places—busy, bossy voices urge us to measure the value of our lives by what we own, by what we drive, by how we look. Powers chatter in high places—pious, proud voices....

Powers chatter in high places, but it's there, on the margins, in the homes and hearts of the humble, that the revolution is being birthed. It's there, on the edges, that God's radical realm is taking hold. It there, in the wildernesses, in those places of struggle-to-make-do, in those places of not-enough, in those places of I-can't-handle-this-alone, in those places of help-me-Jesus-help-me-Jesus, that God is able to move and breathe most freely.

We can turn on the TV, open the newspaper, listen to the radio every morning of our lives to hear big news, important news. But somewhere on the margins, every morning of our lives, there is something taking place that is far more important—somewhere someone is singing a subversive song, someone is demanding justice, someone is speaking truth, someone is waging peace, someone is beginning to love him or herself, someone is laying down arms, someone is coming out of the closet, someone is putting down his bottle forever, someone is giving her heart to Jesus, someone is standing up for someone else, someone is organizing others, someone is joining a community, someone is listening for God's voice, someone is pulling down the walls, someone is preparing the way for the Lord.

Maybe it's me. Maybe it's you.

—Cindy Weber is the pastor of Jefferson Street Baptist Church (affectionately known as "Jeff Street") in Louisville, Kentucky.

Resources for Children's Sermons & Activities

Throughout the 16 years we have produced *Sacred Seasons*, the Seeds editors have called on two people, Mary Meadows and Mark McClintock, a great deal, and both have been extremely generous with their resources from experience in children's ministry. Below are our favorites from the writings they have shared with our readers over the years. All of these are available on our website: www.seedspublishers.org/worship. If you have trouble accessing anything, email seedseditor@clearwire.net or call 254-755-7745, and we will be delighted to help.

- Mark McClintock, "Are Your Hands Cold?" a children's emphasis for the beginning of Advent, Advent 2000, p. 12
- Mark McClintock, "The Christmas Gift," a children's sermon, Advent 2002, p. 12
- Mark McClintock, "What Christmas Is About," a

dialogue for children, Advent 2004, p. 21

- Mark McClintock, "The House of Another's Shoes," a drama for children, Advent 2010 p. 17
- Mary Meadows, "Who Could Believe Such a Story?," a drama led by children and youth, Advent 2001, p. 11
- Mary Meadows, "Lessons & Carols for Children," Advent 2001, p. 15

Children's ministers have suggested using the theme of lights throughout the season, using candles, Christmas tree lights, flashlights, etc. Ask the children if they ever wake up at night in the dark. Turn out the lights in the sanctuary briefly, then talk to them about how that felt. Talk to them about the lighting of the Advent candles, and what each one represents. This year, you could talk to them about the canticles around which each of our Sundays is organized.

art by Sharon S. Rollins

A Liturgy for Epiphany

by Guilherme Almeida

Greeting

Meditation of Preparation

The Child we seek doesn't need our gold.
On love, on love alone he will build his kingdom.
His pierced hand will hold no scepter,
his haloed head will wear no crown;
his might will not be built on your toil.
Swifter than lightening he will soon walk among us.
He will bring us new life and receive our death,
and the keys to his city belong to the poor.

—Gian Carlo Menotti

Call to Worship

ONE: Blest be the King whose coming
is in the name of God!

MANY: For Him let doors be opened,
no hearts against Him barred!

ONE: Not robed in royal splendor,
in power and pomp, comes He;

MANY But clad as are the poorest, such His humility!
—Frederico José Pagura

Processional Carol

"Carol of the Little Star"

WORDS and MUSIC: Douglas E. Wagner
Two-Parts with keyboard and handbells/S-5782; The
Sacred Music Press

A Reading from the Psalter

Psalms 72:1-7, 10-14

A Carol of Wonder

"We Three Kings" (Celebrating Grace hymnal #151/
Chalice Hymnal #172)

TUNE: KINGS OF ORIENT

WORDS and MUSIC: John H. Hopkins, Jr.



Pastoral Prayer

A Gift of Music

"Alleluia, Little Child"

WORDS: Claire Cloninger
MUSIC: Don Cason, Bruce
Greer, Gary Rhodes, arr. C.
Barney Robertson
Two-Parts with
keyboard/301-0343167 Word
Music

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Isaiah 60:1-6

A Carol of Gladness:

"As with Gladness"

(Chalice Hymnal #173/Celebrating Grace hymnal #150)

TUNE: DIX

WORDS: William C. Dix

MUSIC: Conrad Kocher, adapt. William Henry Monk

A Gift of Music

"Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies"

WORDS: Charles Wesley

MUSIC: T. Frederick H. Candlyn

SATB with Organ/CM622 Carl Fischer, Inc.

Prayer of Gratitude

Reading from the Epistles

Ephesians 3:1-12

A Carol of Praise

"O Morning Star"

(Chalice Hymnal #105)

TUNE: WIE SCHÖN LEUCHTET

WORDS and MUSIC: Philipp Nicolai

A Gift of Music

"Come to the Light"

WORDS: Eileen Berry

MUSIC: James Koerts, orch. Richard A. Nichols

SATB with keyboard/277558 SoundForth



Gospel Reading
Matthew 2:1-12

Sermon

Meditation of Response

Marvel with me that, in the beginning, even as God swept over the darkened face of the formless void of the earth and its deep waters, God gave voice to an Idea. "Let there be light"; and there was light. Then, in the fullness of time, even as spiritual darkness shrouded a lonely and hollow world, God chose that light to lead wise seekers to the One who would give voice to God's Idea of love and mercy and justice and redemption.

What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.
—Deborah E. Harris

Hymn of Response
"Shine, Jesus, Shine"

(Celebrating Grace hymnal #156)

TUNE: SHINE

WORDS and MUSIC: Graham Kendrick

Benediction

See the benediction by Katie Cook, on page 32

Postlude

The Magus (Melchior) by Anita Marie Scotti

Crowning blazes set among the spheres,
Stars captivate philosophers and fools.
Lying on the rooftop in the arid wind,
Studying their prophetic paths so many nights,
Those wild fires I have come to know
Not as impossible flames in a dark celestial sea,
But, as pinpricks in a tattered veil, they
Let through the mitigated glory of a god,
Laying aside his sun-gilt mantle, as to rest,
And putting it to shame with purer light.

My mind was thick with dust and webs,
So like a thirsting tongue, craving
Portents of rain in the desert sky,
When I was struck by the holy aspect
Of an unhitched star rising in the west,
Foretoken of deity streaming down.
What manner of king am I who waits
At the mercy of the stars' fated course
When this one striking star beckons
With oracular fire toward the manifest lord?

What prayer shall I bring there?
A bowl of tears to lay before him,
The only flood produced of my dry reign.
What offering but fragrant *olibanum*?
The ordinary is wondrously undone.
Send for provisions and swift mounts,
Quicksilver Arabians and far-ranging camels,
For I will be gone; the star does not tarry,
The horizon shimmers like water and I
Shall not be sated 'til I have drunk my fill.

Having poured out my adoration,
And, thus emptied, being quenched,
I doubt if I shall travel twice that star-lit track.
A different road is fitting for a changed heart
Which cannot return the way it came.

—Anita Scotti hails from Southern California, where she studied creative writing and psychology at the University of Southern California. A recent graduate in biology from Baylor University in Waco, TX, she is a member of Seventh and James Baptist Church.



My Eyes Have Seen Your Salvation

A Dramatic Reading for Three People and Congregation

by Deborah E. Harris

FIRST READER: When I'm reading the Bible and certain individuals are mentioned only briefly, it's all too easy to overlook the real dimension of their humanity and the depth of their spirituality.

Sometimes a few sentences or a couple of paragraphs in Scripture sum up a lifetime of "waiting for the light," and I find it helpful to read between the lines a bit.

I have long been intrigued by Simeon and Anna noted in connection with the day Mary and Joseph brought their young son to the temple in Jerusalem.

Simeon, a devout and righteous man who had been promised through the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah.

And the prophet Anna, an 84-year-old widow who never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. I have imagined they might have said and sung something like the following:

SIMEON: I am an old man. But in this moment, I am as a young boy in my heart—leaping with delight and praising my God who has kept a sacred promise to me. I have seen the Lord! The Holy Redeemer who brings consolation to Israel. And as I hold the Christ Child in my arms, so now my life rests peacefully in your arms, O God. For my eyes have seen Your salvation!

*The silence has been
broken with music that
rings true,
And all my deepest
longings put into words
by You;
In my heart I know it—*

*You are the Holy One,
Redeemer of the people, Jehovah's only Son.*

*For my eyes have seen Your salvation,
Which You have prepared for all women and men;
This Light of divine revelation,
A Holy Child born in Bethlehem.*

LEADER, SIMEON, AND CONGREGATION:

*Yes, my eyes have seen Your salvation,
And now by Your grace I can say,
"This Savior of hope for all nations
Is reborn in my heart today."*

ANNA: The years of waiting seem as one day now that I have seen Him! How I wish my dear husband were here to share my joy. There were days when the loneliness and silence within these temple walls seemed to suffocate me. And times when my own weakness and self-doubt battled hard against my commitment. Yet God, in mercy, sustained me. And

art by Jesse Manning



now the truth is so clear to me: through these years my heart has been prepared to recognize You, Lord Jesus. You are heaven's resounding "YES!" to all my prayers. For my eyes have seen Your salvation!

*The waiting now is over; my strength has been renewed,
And every prayer I've offered is answered "yes" in You;
So now my heart rejoices, and my spirit sings —
You are my own Messiah and my King of Kings!*

*For my eyes have seen Your salvation,
Which You have prepared for all women and men;
This Light of divine revelation,
A Holy Child born in Bethlehem.*

LEADER, ANNA, AND CONGREGATION:
Yes, my eyes have seen Your salvation,

*And now by Your grace I can say,
"This Savior of hope for all nations
Is reborn in my heart today."*

FIRST READER: Again this season we join Simeon and Anna in waiting for Your light and in praying, "Come, Thou long-expected Jesus! Set us free from our fears, release us from our sins. For You are the hope of all the earth and the joy of every longing heart." Amen.

—Deborah Harris is a freelance editor, writer, and lyricist who lives in Waco, TX. She serves as corresponding secretary for the Seeds of Hope Council of Stewards and volunteers as the Seeds copy editor and Slogan Queen. She originally wrote this piece as a part of the musical "Make His Praise Glorious," published by Word Music.

Simplicity, Shopping & the Feast of St. Nicholas

An Advent Project for Youth

Here's an idea for a youth Advent project. You could tell the youth about the real St. Nicholas, the patron saint of children, whose feast day is Dec. 6. You could encourage the youth to plan a "simplicity" project for Advent in his name.

Although little is actually known about the historical Nicholas, a fourth-century bishop of Myra in Lycia, he is remembered for his benevolence.

He is said to have rescued three girls from lives of prostitution by providing dowries for them, and he is remembered for bringing gifts to poor children. Some stories say he put the gifts in the children's shoes.

Edward Hays writes in *A Pilgrim's Almanac* that it is fitting that the feast of St. Nicholas comes at the beginning of Advent, toward the beginning of the Christmas shopping season. Hays says that Nicholas is also hailed as the patron saint of shoppers and reminds us to keep it simple enough to fit in a shoe.

One gift that could fit in a shoe, or in a Christmas stocking, is a note that

speaks of one of our most precious gifts, the gift of time. Such a "St. Nicholas" note might read: "The gift I give to you is half an hour of quality conversation each night right after the dishes are done." Or "The gift I give to you is one Saturday a month to be with you and do whatever you want to do."

The youth might want to make stockings for older members of your congregation and write similar notes to them.

Here's another idea: to go along with the simplicity theme, you could show the movie *What Would Jesus Buy?* by Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping. (No; we're not making that up.) You could get it from Netflix or a community library.

The film, which is funny and poignant, is a "street theatre" project that could help the youth explore the realities of commercialism and how it affects others in the world.

—Historical information is from *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* and *the Westminster Dictionary of Church History*.



Benediction

by Katie Cook

Let us go in peace now;
For our eyes have seen God's salvation.

We have stood, dumbstruck,
before the manger.

We have exchanged glances with the shepherds
and looked, sheepishly, out of the corners of our eyes
at the wise men.

We have listened, with terror and delight,
to the messengers with their extraterrestrial song.

We, who have walked so often and so long
in terrible darkness,
have been flooded with holy light.

Let us go in peace now;

We have brought our gifts to the manger—
and for some of us it was merely our broken selves—

but now, like the shepherds,
we must go back to our fields;

like the magi,
we must go home another way.

Let us go in peace now;

May this Holy Child guide our steps
into the new year,

And give us the courage
to give birth to God's realm.



art by Sally Lynn Askins