

Worship Resources | Advent–Epiphany 2016

THE HOLY WAY

Walking in the way of God's heart



INTRODUCTION

Advent 2016 celebrates the arrival of Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God's heart. Our invitation this year is to walk in the way of God's heart. The "way of God" has a double meaning of walking like someone else walks and walking as a journey or pilgrimage. Either usage invites worshipers to consider God's heart as the emanating energy which creates the kingdom of God. When we walk in the way of God's heart, we are co-creating the reign of God here on earth.

The lectionary texts are Year A. *Leader* has adapted worship resources originally created in 2004 and offers gratitude for those resource writers and for the Mennonite value of "recycling."



Guidelines for worship planners

The Advent–Epiphany season features six weekly movements of worship: gathering, praising, confessing/reconciling, hearing God’s Word, responding, and sending. These are essential movements of worship, but they can be expressed in many ways.

Whenever we gather as an intergenerational worshiping community to breathe in the love, grace, and righteousness of God, it is natural and good to begin with praise for our God, who is worthy and delights in our worship. Focusing on God’s holiness quickly reveals our need for confession, for inner realignment with God’s good purposes. This in turn whets our appetite for instruction, for hearing God’s Word, which in turn calls for a response of faithfulness. Strengthened by worship, the gathered family of God prepares to scatter and serve, knowing the challenges to faithfulness will increase as we do. For this reason we send one another out with words of blessing.

For the sake of simplicity, these resources organize the order of worship according to the list above, trusting that congregations will glorify God with their rich and varied expression of these movements. We recognize that not all congregations will structure their worship in a visibly categorized liturgy. However, we encourage worship planners to be deliberate about including these important movements of worship within their worship style.

Visual elements

The weekly themes are expressed visually in simple line drawings. These designs lend themselves to a variety of banner styles. If there are avid quilters in the congregation, the image may be appliquéd and filled with stuffing

to add depth and life. Layered, cut-felt designs would create a different mood, but could be equally engaging. Children could be invited to color simple line drawings of the weekly themes during worship.

These resources also offer a collection of thematically selected photos of Bethlehem taken by Doug Klassen on a recent tour. These could be projected during worship to help the Bible’s ancient words speak in relation to the current Holy Land/Middle East context.

Music

Each week includes songs for singing that reflect the movement of lectionary texts through the season. These are identified as *HWB* for *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, *STJ* for *Sing the Journey*, and *STS* for *Sing the Story*. Feel free to add, shift, or delete the music according to the worship style of the congregation.

Calls to worship

The shift from our daily individual lives into active participation in corporate worship is a deliberate shift of focus and attitude. Following the call to worship each week is candle lighting while singing “Come, Light of the World” (*STS* 3).

Praising

Each week the praise begins with the psalm reading for the week. Weekly dramatic readings are provided in the magazine following the weekly liturgies.

Confession/reconciling

The Advent–Epiphany prayers contain a deliberate movement from the individual to the corporate as we draw nearer to Christmas, for we are accountable to God not only as individuals but also as part of a collective identity. After the words of assurance is a variety of sung responses of gratitude for God’s heart, which grants both forgiveness and assurance of love.

Children’s time

Use the children’s story as an opportunity to focus on children as an integral part of the worshipping family of God. Invite children to open their hearts and wills to the loving heart, will, and story of God. The children’s time ideas in this resource choose one idea from the weekly worship resources and translate it into the world of four- to eight-year-old children. If the storyteller frames the story with a “stilling” prayer at the beginning and a short prayer of gratitude at the end, it will bless the children. It will also help the child within the listening adult draw nearer to the worship theme and the heart of God.

Sermon seeds

Since the words of the prophets and the psalms are incorporated into the calls to worship, the sermon seeds address primarily the gospel texts. These are challenging texts and require diligent exegetical work both to remain faithful to the text and to point to the birth of Christ. They bring us face-to-face with the reality of Christ's coming, which took place in the midst of struggle and tension, a stark contrast to traditional, quaint images of a sleepy, cozy little Bethlehem so often associated with Christmas. Then, as now, God was and is at work amidst the brokenness of our world.

Sending

The benediction is the same throughout the season, as a way of both offering a blessing to the congregation and echoing the previous week to connect the entire season together. The hope is that the congregation will carry God's heart with them as they leave the worship service and extend God's heart to all they encounter during the week.

Visual elements

The visual elements are simple this season: an Advent wreath with four candles and a Christ candle. A congregation may use the traditional purple, pink, and white candles, or all white or all gold candles.

The props for the children's time will be set near the Advent wreath to remain throughout the season as additional visual reminders of God's heart.

Additional resources

There are instructions for two different Advent retreat days found on the *Leader* website, www.leaderonline.org. Also available is an order of worship for a "Darkest Night" service created for those individuals who may be grieving or suffering during the Advent–Epiphany season.



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PERMISSION TO PHOTOCOPY

Subscribers to *Leader* are welcome to photocopy worship materials in this section.

DOWNLOAD

Leader subscribers may download the quarterly worship resources at www.leaderonline.org/worship. The fall 2016 username is **Fall2016** and the password is **ber6477**. They are both case sensitive.



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ADAPTING WORSHIP RESOURCES

You may feel that the materials presented here don't match the way your congregation worships. Here are a few hints for adapting these resources to fit into your context.

Use these resources as you need them.

Refine, adapt, change, discard, or substitute material to fit your situation. Use the resources as a jumping-off point. They are designed to be a help, not a burden.

Don't be put off by the appearance of rigidity or formality.

These resources appear to be quite structured and formal, but they needn't be. Be creative with them. Consider, for example, how the confession might be a call and response, with the congregation responding to several readers placed in the far corners of the worship space.

Explore the theme suggested by the music recommendations.

Hymnal: A Worship Book (HWB) and its supplements, *Sing the Journey (STJ)* and *Sing the Story (STS)*, are great resources, and we recommend trying them, but not all congregations will find them useful. If you don't, look up the suggested songs, consider their lyrical and musical theme, and then pick music from your resources that goes in the same direction.

Recognize that liturgy can be subtle.

You might not print a bulletin with a section called "Words of Gathering," but chances are that someone stands up near the beginning of your worship service and says something to make people feel comfortable and worshipful. That person might want to use what we've written for the gathering time as is, or as a point from which to improvise. The congregation will be brought to worship either way.

Draw on the gifts and abilities within your congregation.

If you know a songwriter who has composed a song that really connects with your congregation's experience, by all means use it. If someone in your congregation knows a great children's story that fits the theme, disregard our recommendation and go with that. If somebody has a great idea for a visual worship focus that looks nothing like our suggestion and still expresses the theme, scrap our suggestion. If the sermon is faithful and discerning but nothing like our suggested sermon starter, that's fine too.

We hope, above all else, that our ideas can supplement and enhance the energy and creativity of your congregation, not replace or suppress them.

Advent 1

NOVEMBER 27, 2016

Scripture:

Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122; Matthew 24:36-44; Romans 13:11-14

Focus statement:

God's peace is at hand. Come, walk in the way of God's heart.

Gathering

Leader: In the nighttime of despair, we are filled with doubt.

People: **We are overwhelmed with busyness
and the compulsion to do.
We have lost our way.**

Leader: The night is almost over.
We are emerging from our doubt.

People: **O God, show us the way of your heart.**

Leader: Come quickly, to show us.

All: The dawn is nigh. Show us the way.

Song suggestions:

HWB 172 O Come, O Come, Immanuel

HWB 188 Sleepers, Wake

HWB 346 Dona Nobis Pacem

STS 3 Come, Light of the World

STS 16 Peace Before Us (verse 1)

Candle lighting while singing STS 3 "Come, Light of the World"

Praising

Advent 1 reading:

Psalm 122 (see p. 44)

Song suggestions:

STJ 31 He Came Down

STS 2 Maranatha, Come

Confessing/Reconciling

Prayer of confession:

Leader: God of peace,

People: **we yearn to walk in your way
but often choose our own path of
turmoil and pain.
Save us, Lord,
from the pride and foolishness of
choosing our own course,
that we may humbly and confidently
follow your lead,
through Jesus Christ, Amen.**

Words of assurance:

Leader: Throughout the tumult of life,
God holds you close in love.
Rejoice,
because God's wisdom is your guide,
God's compassion is your strength.
God's love is your redemption.

*All: Come, let us walk in the way of
God's heart!*

Song:

STS 17 Alleluia!

Hearing God's Word

Children's time:

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Somewhere Today: A Book of Peace by Shelley Moore Thomas (Albert Whitman, 2002); the representation of a hand (a paper cutout or plaster mold).

OPENING:

When it is dark at night, it is hard to see things clearly. When the birth of Jesus approaches, we can see more clearly what God is doing, which reveals God's heart.

READ STORY.

Place representation of hand on the table, explaining that, as in the story, we may spread peace with our hands.

CLOSING:

God brings us peace that we can spread peace to others. In the light of this day we can see God's heart for peace.

Old Testament reading:

Isaiah 2:1-5

New Testament reading(s):

Matthew 24:36-44; (Romans 13:11-14)

Sermon seeds:

We live in a world that seems increasingly violent and where people live in fear and despair. In such a world, a text like Isaiah 2 is almost absurd, yet it is our message and is as relevant as ever. Consider pointing to evidence that Jesus is at work in the world and in your community, making peace.

Responding

Song of response:

HWB 178 Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

Prayers of the people

Sending

Benediction:

Come! Walk in the ways of God's heart.

The dawn is breaking!

Christ is coming to free us from despair.

He will show us the way.

Advent 2

DECEMBER 4, 2016

Scripture:

Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19; Matthew 3:1-12; Romans 15:4-13

Focus statement:

God's harmony is at hand. Come, walk in the way of God's heart.

Gathering

Leader: In the nighttime of fear,
we build walls and fences.

People: **Rather than showing hospitality,
we keep the stranger away.**

**We forget the truth
that God's love is for everyone.**

Leader: O God, show us the way of your heart.

All: Come quickly, show us.

Song suggestions:

HWB 183 On Jordan's Banks the Baptist's Cry

HWB 175 O Savior, Rend the Heavens

HWB 211 Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

STS 8 Wild and Lone the Prophet's Voice

Candle lighting while singing *STS 3* "Come, Light of the World"

Praising

Advent 2 reading:

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19 (see p. 44)

Song suggestion:

STJ 61 How Can We Be Silent

Confessing/Reconciling

Prayer of confession:

Leader: God of harmony,

People: **we yearn to walk in your way but
often choose our own path of tur-
moil and pain.**

**Save us, Lord, from the pride and
foolishness of choosing our own
course, that we may humbly and
confidently follow your lead,
through Jesus Christ, Amen.**

Words of assurance:

Leader: Throughout the tumult of life,
God holds you close in love.
Rejoice,
because God's wisdom is your guide,
God's compassion is your strength.
God's love is your redemption.

*All: Come, let us walk in the way of
God's heart!*

Song suggestion:

STJ 15 Santo (Holy)

Hearing God's Word

Children's time:

MATERIALS NEEDED:

a bundle of sticks tied together; "A Bundle of Sticks" (Aesop fable retold by Angie Clemens, below)

OPENING:

Last Sunday we discussed how God's heart longs for peace. Today we will see what else God longs for.

TELL STORY:

A farmer had three children, who were always arguing. One day the farmer called his children together and gave the oldest one a bundle of sticks. "Can you break this bundle of sticks in two?" he asked. The oldest child tried but couldn't break the sticks. The farmer then asked the middle and youngest children to try, but neither of them could break the sticks either. The father took the bundle back and untied the string around the sticks. Giving each child one stick, he asked them to break the sticks. Working together, the children were able to do things they couldn't do alone.

Hold up the broken sticks during the closing statement and add them to the table.

CLOSING:

This is how God wants us to work together: together in harmony. God's heart longs for harmony.

Old Testament reading:

Isaiah 11:1-10

New Testament reading(s):

Matthew 3:1-12; (Romans 15:4-13)

Sermon seeds:

John the Baptist came proclaiming the nearness of the kingdom of heaven, an altered state of reality marked by a new way of relating. Note the altered state of reality described also in Isaiah 11. The kingdom of heaven reveals God's nature and heart, involving a radically different way of being. John's call to repentance, to prepare the way of the Lord, is a call to live into the kingdom of heaven by walking toward God's heart. Consider how this new way of relating might be lived in the congregation and in the community.

Responding

Song of response:

HWB 187 Let the Heavens Be Glad

Prayers of the people

Sending

Benediction:

Come! Walk in the way of God's heart.

The dawn is breaking!

Christ is coming to set us free from chaos.

He will show us the way.

Advent 3

DECEMBER 11, 2016

Scripture:

Isaiah 35:1-10; Psalm 146:5-10 or Luke 1:46-55; Matthew 11:2-11; James 5:7-10.

Focus statement:

God's healing is at hand. Come, walk in the way of God's heart.

Gathering

Song suggestions:

HWB 110 Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing

HWB 180 The Angel Gabriel

HWB 184 Hark! The Glad Sound

HWB 400 Santo, santo, santo (Holy, Holy, Holy)

STS 7 Come, Come Emmanuel

Call to worship:

Leader: In the nighttime of sorrow,
we become impatient and lose hope.

People: **Our joy disappears,
and our songs become silent.
We forget the truth
that God will and restore all of creation.**

All: *Come! Walk in the way of God's heart!*

Candle lighting while singing *STS 3* "Come, Light of the World"

Praising

Advent 3 reading:

Psalm 146:5-10 and Luke 1:46-55 (see p. 45)

Song suggestion:

STS 12 Magnificat

Confessing/Reconciling

Prayer of confession:

Leader: God of healing,

People: **we yearn to walk in your way but
often choose our own path of tur-
moil and pain.
Save us, Lord, from the pride
and foolishness of choosing our
own course, that we may humbly
and confidently follow your lead,
through Jesus Christ, Amen.**

Words of assurance:

Leader: Throughout the tumult of life,
God holds you close in love.
Rejoice,
because God's wisdom is your guide,
God's compassion is your strength.
God's love is your redemption.

All: *Come, let us walk in the way of
God's heart!*

Song suggestion:

STJ 15 Santo (Holy)

Hearing God's Word

Children's time:

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Jon and the Little Lost Lamb by Jane Latourette (Concordia, 1965—part of the Arch Book collection); a small stuffed sheep

OPENING:

Last week we learned that God loves harmony. Let's find out what else is close to God's heart.

READ STORY.

Hold up stuffed sheep during closing statement and add to the table.

CLOSING:

God cares for everyone in many different ways, just as the shepherd cared for each sheep, even the lost one. We can see God's healing heart.

Old Testament reading:

Isaiah 35:1-10

New Testament reading(s):

Matthew 11:2-11; (James 5:7-10)

Sermon seeds:

One of the signs of the kingdom is Jesus' ministry of healing (note Matthew 11:4-5). People in our times also need healing, whether it be physical, emotional, or spiritual. In the sermon preparation, think about signs of Jesus' healing in the congregation. As we anticipate the dawning of God's day, how can the congregation share God's healing heart with the world?

Responding

Song of response:

HWB 181 My Soul Proclaims with Wonder

Prayers of the people

Sending

Benediction:

Come! Walk in the way of God's heart.

The dawn is breaking!

Christ is coming to free us from pain.

He will show us the way.

Advent 4

DECEMBER 18, 2016

Scripture:

Isaiah 7:10-16; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; Matthew 1:18-25; Romans 1:1-7

Focus statement:

God's restoration is at hand. Come, walk in the way of God's heart.

Gathering

Songs suggestions:

HWB 24 Grace to You and Peace

HWB 173 Savor of the Nations, Come

HWB 186 Fling Wide the Door, Unbar the Gate

HWB 200 Where Is this Stupendous Stranger?

HWB 201 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

STS 1 Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness

STS 5 Open My Ears, Open My Eyes

STS 14 Prepare the Way of the Lord

Call to worship:

Leader: In the nighttime of our longing,
we find ourselves far from God's presence.

People: **Even though we yearn to see God's face,
our daily burdens and distractions
keep us from coming near.
We forget that the truest joy
comes from being in God's presence.**

All: *Come! Walk in God's presence.*

Candle lighting while singing *STS 3* "Come, Light of the World"

Praising

Advent 4 reading:

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 (see p. 46)

Song suggestions:

HWB 177 Creator of the Stars of Night

HWB 211 Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

Confessing/Reconciling

Prayer of confession:

Leader: God of restoration,

People: **we yearn to walk in your way but
often choose our own path of tur-
moil and pain.
Save us, Lord, from the pride
and foolishness of choosing our
own course, that we may humbly
and confidently follow your lead,
through Jesus Christ, Amen.**

Words of assurance:

Leader: Throughout the tumult of life,
God holds you close in love.
Rejoice,
because God's wisdom is your guide,
God's compassion is your strength.
God's love is your redemption.

All: *Come, let us walk in the way of
God's heart!*

Song suggestion:

HWB 101 Alleluia

Hearing God's Word

Children's time:

MATERIALS NEEDED:

A Chair for My Mother by Vera B. Williams (HarperTrophy, 1984); a small chair

OPENING:

Last week we talked about healing, and today we explore restoration. Restoring something means trying to put something back to the way it used to be. Many times things need to be restored after something bad happens to them.

READ STORY

Add small chair to the table display.

CLOSING:

Many kinds of things might need restoration—toys, furniture, even feelings and friendships. God longs for restoration.

Old Testament reading:

Isaiah 7:10-16

New Testament reading(s):

Matthew 1:18-25; (Romans 1:1-7)

Sermon seeds:

A universal human experience is the deep desire to be in the presence of those most dear to us. Time spent away from loved ones can seem like an eternity, even as the day of reunion draws near. So it is this Sunday. God's day is indeed imminent, yet our longing for it only grows. Draw from experiences of longing to evoke a deep desire for God's presence as well as God's heart desire, and the certainty that our full restoration to God's presence is imminent.

Responding

Song of response:

HWB 172 O Come, O Come, Immanuel

Prayers of the people

Sending

Benediction:

Come! Walk in the way of God's heart.

The dawn is breaking!

Christ is coming to free us from alienation.

He will show us the way.

Christmas Day

DECEMBER 25, 2016

Scripture:

Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 148; Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)

Focus statement:

Jesus is born! Come, walk in the way of God's heart.

Gathering

(Sing as many of the congregation's favorite Christmas carols as you are able to include.)

Song suggestions:

HWB 191 O Little Town of Bethlehem

HWB 192 On This Day Earth Shall Ring

HWB 193 Silent Night, Holy Night

HWB 194 Away in a Manger

HWB 195 It Came upon a Midnight Clear

HWB 211 Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

STS 19 Jesus, Jesus, Oh, What a Wonderful Child

STS 22 There Were Angels Hov'ring Round

STS 25 A Stable Lamp Is Lighted

STS 27 Sing a Different Song

STS 28 Holy Child within the Manger

Call to worship:

Leader: Rejoice in the Lord! The fullness of time has come.

People: **As the earth brings forth its shoots,**

Leader: so God sent the Son, born into humanity,

People: **to show us God's heart.**

All: *Alleluia! Alleluia!*

Candle lighting while singing *STS 3* "Come, Light of the World"

Praising

Christmas reading:

Psalm 148 (see p. 47)

Song suggestion:

HWB 197 Angels We Have Heard on High

Confessing/Reconciling

Prayer of confession:

Leader: Incarnate God,

People: **we yearn to walk in your way but
often choose our own path of tur-
moil and pain.**

**Save us, Lord, from the pride
and foolishness of choosing our
own course, that we may humbly
and confidently follow your lead,
through Jesus Christ, Amen.**

Words of assurance:

Leader: Throughout the tumult of life,
God holds you close in love.
Rejoice,
because God's wisdom is your guide,
God's compassion is your strength.
God's love is your redemption.

All: ***Come, let us walk in the way of
God's heart!***

Song suggestion:

HWB 204 Gloria

Hearing God's Word

(Combine children's time with the sermon.)

A simple retelling of the first Christmas Day. The preacher might talk about the ways the Advent season has unfolded in the life of the congregation.

Responding

Song of response:

HWB 209 Oh, How Joyfully

Prayers of the people

Sending

Benediction:

Leader: From where we are
to where you need us,

All: *Jesus, lead us on.*

Leader: From the security of what we know
to the adventure of what you will reveal,

All: *Jesus, lead us on.*

Leader: To refashion the fabric of this world
until it resembles the shape of your kingdom,

All: *Jesus, leads us on.*

Leader: Because good things have been prepared
for those who love God,

All: *Jesus, lead us!*

Epiphany

JANUARY 1, 2017

Scripture:

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14; Matthew 2:1-12; Ephesians 3:1-12

Focus statement:

God's day of radiance is at hand. Come, walk in the way of God's heart.

Gathering

Song suggestions:

HWB 185 Hail to the Lord's Anointed

HWB 190 'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime

HWB 192 On This Day Earth Shall Ring

HWB 207 Niño lindo (Child So Lovely)

HWB 221 Hail the Bless'd Morn

STS 29 Brightest and Best

STS 30 Arise, Your Light Is Come!

STS 32 Oh, Beautiful Star of Bethlehem

Call to worship:

Leader: Day has dawned!
The light of Christ has come into the world.

People: **We see God's radiance in creation
and in our lives.
We rejoice in God's boundless riches
given for all.
We worship and adore our Savior,
Christ the Lord.**

All: *Come! Let us walk in the way of God's heart!*

Candle lighting while singing **STS 3** "Come, Light of the World"

Praising

Epiphany reading:

Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14 (see p. 48)

Song suggestions:

HWB 185 Hail to the Lord's Anointed

HWB 220 Worship the Lord in the Beauty

Confessing/Reconciling

Prayer of confession:

Leader: Radiant God,
People: **we yearn to walk in your way but
often choose our own path of tur-
moil and pain.
Save us, Lord, from the pride
and foolishness of choosing our
own course, that we may humbly
and confidently follow your lead,
through Jesus Christ, Amen.**

Words of assurance:

Leader: Throughout the tumult of life,
God holds you close in love.
Rejoice,
because God's wisdom is your guide,
God's compassion is your strength.
God's love is your redemption.
All: *Come, let us walk in the way of
God's heart!*

Song:

STS 17 Alleluia!

Hearing God's Word

Children's time:

MATERIALS NEEDED:

paper bag with a candle; "Who Will Fill the House" (folk tale, below)

OPENING:

For this Sunday, begin with the story.

A farmer had three sons. The two older sons always bragged to the younger son about how much stronger they were. When the boys grew up, the farmer built a brand-new house and said, "Whoever can fill this house will be the one who owns it."

The oldest son was sure he could fill it. He brought in a horse, a cow, and a pig, but they only took up one corner of the house.

The second son smiled to himself because he was sure he would win the house. He brought in bale after bale after bale of hay, but the bales filled only half the house.

Now it was the youngest brother's turn. He brought in a small sack. His brothers laughed and laughed when they saw it. He then took a candle out of the sack and lit it, and soon the whole house was filled with light.

So in the end the youngest son got the house.

Hold up candle during the closing statement and add it to the table.

CLOSING:

As we have drawn closer to God's heart each Sunday of Advent, we've seen many good things appear: peace, harmony, healing, restoration, salvation. Now we celebrate God's heart on earth through his Son, Jesus Christ.

Old Testament reading:

Isaiah 60:1-6

New Testament reading(s):

Matthew 2:1-12; (Ephesians 3:1-12)

Sermon seeds:

This is a Sunday to celebrate God's heart embodied by Jesus Christ. Consider the message of God's heart desiring the people throughout Scripture and into today. Epiphany is a call to share the light, not keep it to ourselves. The magi came from another land and another religion. Isaiah envisions the nations coming into the light of God's reign through Jesus. Paul celebrates the welcoming of the Gentiles into God's community. We are all invited to follow in the way of God's heart.

Responding

Song of response:

HWB 213 Let All Together Praise Our God

Prayers of the people

Sending

Benediction:

Leader: Come! Walk in the way of God's heart.
The dawn is breaking!
Christ has come to set us free.
He will show us the way. Alleluia!

Psalm Readings

for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, 2016–17

Advent 1

Psalm 122

(Note: Use three readers: a child, a youth, and an adult, at the front of the sanctuary; may also be done as a congregational responsive reading.)

Child: I was glad when they said to *me*, “Let us go to the house of the Lord!”
Youth: I was glad when they said to *me*, “Let us go to the house of the Lord!”
Adult: I was glad when they said to *me*, “Let us go to the house of the Lord!”
Child: Standing on holy ground;
Youth: bound firmly together;
Adult: we give thanks to the name of the Lord!
All: And together we will pray for peace.
Child: peace within these walls;
Youth: peace within our family and friends;
Adult: peace within ourselves.
All: In the house of God, we give thanks to the name of the Lord!

Advent 2

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

(Note: A solo reader will read the text. A quartet will respond at the appropriate time with HWB 101 “Alleluia.” Although this is clearly a coronation psalm, it is not hard to project one step further to these words being descriptive of the coming Messiah.)

Reader: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
who alone does wondrous things!
Blessed be God’s glorious name forever,
and may the glory of the Lord fill the whole earth.

Response: **HWB 101 “Alleluia”**

Reader: And in all the earth, the one who comes will
judge with righteousness,
extend justice to the poor,
and bring deliverance to the needy.

Response: **HWB 101 “Alleluia”**

Reader: And in all the earth, the one who comes will
be like the rain that falls on the mown grass
and like the showers that water the earth.

Response: **HWB 101 “Alleluia”**

Reader: Righteousness will flourish and peace will abound.
Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel!
May God’s glory fill the whole earth!
Amen and Amen.

Advent 3

Psalm 146:5-10 and Luke 1:46-55

(Note: The words of Mary's Magnificat will be interspersed with the psalm. The text can be read by two solo voices, or by the congregation and a "Mary.")

Congregation: Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the Lord their God.

**Mary: My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.**

Congregation: Our hope is in the one who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them.

**Mary: For the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is God's name.**

Congregation: Our hope is in the one
who keeps faith forever;
who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry;
who sets the prisoners free;
who opens the eyes of the blind;
who lifts up those who are bowed down;
who loves the righteous;
who watches over the strangers;
who upholds the orphans and the widows.

**Mary: The Lord has shown mercy from generation to generation;
lifted up the lowly and filled the hungry with good things.**

Congregation: The way of the wicked God brings to ruin.

**Mary: The Lord has shown strength with his arm;
has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;
brought down the powerful from their thrones;
and sent the rich away empty.**

Congregation: The Lord will reign forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.

**Mary: God has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and Sarah and to their descendants forever.**

Congregation: Praise the Lord!

Advent 4

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

(Note: This psalm lends itself to a more traditional leader/congregation response.)

Leader: Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
you who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth!

**People: Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.**

Leader: Let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,
the one whom you made strong for yourself.

**People: Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.**

Leader: We will never turn back from you;
give us life, and we will call upon your name.

**People: Restore us, O God;
Let your face shine, that we may be saved.**

Christmas

Psalm 148

All readers: Praise the Lord!

Reader 1: Praise the Lord from the heavens!
Reader 2: Praise the Lord in the heights!
Reader 3: Praise the Lord, all you angels!
Reader 4: Praise the Lord, all you hosts!
Reader 1: Praise the Lord, sun and moon!
Reader 2: Praise the Lord, all you shining stars!
Reader 3: Praise the Lord, you highest heavens!
Reader 4: Praise the Lord, you waters above the heavens!
Reader 1: Praise the Lord from the earth . . .
Reader 2: sea monsters and all deeps;
Reader 3: fire and hail;
Reader 4: snow and frost;
Reader 1: mountains and all hills;
Reader 2: fruit trees and all cedars;
Reader 3: wild animals and all cattle;
Reader 4: creeping things and flying birds!
Reader 1: Kings of the earth and all people;
Reader 2: princes and all rulers of the earth;
Reader 3: young men and women alike;
Reader 4: old and young together!

All readers: Let them praise the name of the Lord!

Let them praise the name of the Lord!

Reader 1: For the name of the Lord is exalted!
Reader 2: God's glory is above earth and heaven!
Reader 3: (*with great deliberation*) God has raised up a horn for the faithful!

(Readers increase the volume of each line.)

Reader 4: Praise the Lord!
Readers 1, 4: Praise the Lord!
Readers 1, 2, 4: Praise the Lord!

All readers: Praise the Lord!

Epiphany

Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14

(Note: Since verses 1–7 of Psalm 72 were also used in Advent 2, the emphasis here is on the new verses, 10–14, which fit well with Epiphany themes. If your congregation has someone who knows sign language, this passage would lend itself well to interpretation through sign language. If not, a solo voice can read the litany expressively.)

Reader: Like rain that falls on newly mown grass
and showers that water the earth,
righteousness will flourish and peace will abound.
The kings of Tarshish render tribute to the King of kings.
The kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts,
and all kings fall down before the Prince of Peace.
For God delivers the needy,
takes pity on the weak, and saves the poor.
From oppression and violence God redeems their lives,
and precious is their blood in God's sight.