

"Jesus Christmas" Worship Resources

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1. Advent Prayers

Any Week in Advent

O God, You who come in the dark of night,
Shine upon us at the dawn of this new day
And light our way.

Come to us as you did to Zechariah so many Advents ago
And silence our doubts,
Come to us as you did to Elizabeth and heal
What is barren in us
Come to us as you did to Mary and overshadow
Our fears, and birth within us
Your saving grace.
Come to us as you did to the Shepherds and surprise us
With Your songs from heaven,
Come to us as you did to the Wise Men and cause
Us to bring our gifts to the manger/

Come to us and help us to prepare for Christ's coming/
Bring remembrance Your covenant love
To us and our descendants,
Give us the knowledge of Your salvation
And forgive us our sin,
Teach us to lift up the lowly remembering
Your cradled humility,
Shower us with Your tender mercy that we
Might serve you in joy.

(From Linda Vance, Pastor of Salem UMC, Waukesha)

Any Week in Advent

As we await the Savior's coming, may we go in heart and mind to Bethlehem and find our kneeling place. In the name of that One who bowed to You in complete obedience. Amen.

Any Week in Advent

Creator God, in the midst of this broken and fearful world it is often hard to find Christ. In this time of preparation let us raise our heads out of the sands of war, the swarms of disease and pollution, degradation of poverty, hunger and violence, the inhumanity of racism, and find Christ in the joys of our lives, the kindnesses of others, the bread we share. Dear Lord, let this Advent lead us

to celebrate a true Jesus Christmas, creating Joy for others. Amen.

Any Week in Advent

Advent is a time of prophetic prayers. Whenever we pray for justice and for Peace we engage in a prophetic act that embraces the whole world. It is an act of Holy Boldness to cover the whole world with God's grace and mercy.

Dear Lord, the world in which I live often frightens me into prayer. I see persons hungering and thirsting for nourishing food and clean water when Living Bread and Everlasting Water abounds around them. I see persons and families torn apart by war and violence. The celebration of your birth is another chance to make real to the world Your presence - Your food for life - and Your peaceful life - which is a love for everyone. Give me the strength to share your love with those around me; Help me to honor your birth as reminder of your life for others; Let my gifts reflect the truth of Jesus in my Christmas. Amen.

Any Week in Advent

Advent is a time of Spiritual formation if we but use it to separate ourselves from the empire that surrounds us into the life of being in the paradise we seek.

Dear Lord, help us. Choosing paradise is not easy. Advent is preparation for paradise. In this paradise we pay extraordinary attention to the will of God. We have respect for one another. We follow the Great Commandment and love one another. We seek frantically to love the world out of its bigotries, out of its inhumanity to join you in healing the sick, feeding the hungry, freeing the oppressed, loving the children - loving the world. As we seek paradise in this Advent season we thank You for the opportunity to remember and celebrate your birth that we may begin anew our search for paradise. With your love we begin our lives in paradise this day. Amen.

2. Advent Candle Lighting Litanies

Advent Candle Lighting Liturgies for "A Jesus Christmas", Year B, Revised Common lectionary

First Sunday in Advent -- November 30th

Leader: Our savior is coming, the one whose birth has been foretold.

Congregation: Lord, let your face shine on us, that we might be saved.

Leader: We come remembering we are made rich not by material things but "by Christ our savior, in speech and knowledge of every kind."

Congregation: Lord, let your face shine on us, that we might be saved.

Leader: On this First Sunday of Advent we light this Advent candle as preparation to offer him a gift of our hearts alone.

Congregation: Lord, let your face shine in us, that we might be saved.

Second Sunday in Advent -- December 7th

Leader: As we hurry on towards Christmas, our lists of things to do get longer and time gets shorter.

Congregation: Lord, help us remember, especially in this season, that it's not all about me.

Leader: We remember John the Baptist who confessed "I am not worthy to stop down and untie the thong of {Jesus'} sandals."

Congregation: Help us to be humble like John the Baptist, and show others the way to Jesus.

Leader: We light the second Advent Candle in memory of all the ones who humbly pointed the way to Chris.

Congregation: Help us remember, especially in this season Lord, that it's not all about me but all about you.

Third Sunday in Advent -- December 14th

Leader: We come in joyful anticipation as the time of our Savior's coming fast approaches.

Congregation: My whole being shall exult in my God.

Leader: Paul commands: "Rejoice always" and we gladly obey. We have joy because of Christ, not because of Christmas presents and holiday parties.

Congregation: My whole being shall exult in my God.

Leader: We light this third advent Candle, knowing that "those who go out weeping...shall come home with shouts of joy...."

Congregation: My whole being shall exult in my God.

Fourth Sunday in Advent -- December 21st

Leader: We eagerly await the coming of the child who turns our world upside down.

Congregation: The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

Leader: Like Mary, we rejoice that God revealed in Christ fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty.

Congregation: The Mighty One has done great things for us, and holy is his name.

Leader: We light this fourth Advent Candle, knowing that the Christ child still has the power to scatter the proud and lift up the lowly today. His kingdom is

coming ever closer.

Congregation: The Mighty One has done great things for us, and holy is his name.

(by Marianne Cotter)

3. Advent Children's Stories

Children's Stories for "A Jesus Christmas"

Advent 1 Nov 30th, 2008

Sermon theme: "Shiny New!" Ask the children to think of things that may be shiny and new (a newly minted coin, a new bike, a new book). Then ask the children to describe what they feel like when they get something that is "shiny new" (excitement, wonder, happiness). Relate these feelings to the scripture, that God's face shines on us through the birth of Jesus. Invite the children to make coin banks and collect coins at church and at home (this could be done a couple weeks ahead of time). The coins will then be combined to purchase something "shiny new" for a child or children in need, either in the community or through an organization, such as Heifer Project or UMCOR.

Scripture theme: "Lord, let your face shine on us, that we might be saved."
(Psalm 80)

Advent 2 December 7, 2008

Sermon theme: "A free Gift" Ask the children if there are gifts that don't cost any money. If they can't think of any, then give some suggestions. Invite them to describe how it feels to give or receive a free gift; is it different than a gift that costs money? Then tell about John the Baptizer, a man who had many followers, but showed his humility in not feeling worthy to untie the thongs of Jesus' sandals. Invite the children to make Christmas cards for shut-ins. Explain that sometimes the best gifts we can give are given to those people who we may not know well and therefore are not expecting gifts-what a wonderful surprise!

Scripture theme: "I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals." Mark 1)

Advent 3 December 14, 2008

Sermon theme: "Inside Out" Show the children an object that looks ugly or plain from the outside (a kiwi fruit, a coconut, and agate). Pass the object(s) around so that the children can touch and look closely. Then cut or open up the object

to reveal the sweet fruit, or as in an agate, the beautiful colors inside. Recount a time when as a child you had to do something that you were dreading-either because you were afraid of doing it (such as apologizing to a friend for saying something hurtful or visiting someone in the hospital) or that you thought you couldn't do (such as a new household chore). You had bad feelings inside, such as fear, anger, or guilt. After it was over though, you realized that you felt good about what you had done. Sometimes the hardest things we have to do (that seem plain or ugly on the outside), make us feel the best when it's all over (the sweet fruit inside).

Scripture theme: "Those who go out weeping shall come home with shouts of joy." (Psalm 126)

Advent 4 December 21, 2008

Sermon theme: "Upside down". Hand cutouts to the children: lower case b, number 6, frowning face. Ask them what they are. Then ask them to turn them upside down-they become something else! Talk about Jesus' message, which is sort of "upside down": the poor are rich; the hungry are fed; the slaves are free; the weak are strong. Jesus shows us that what the world tells us to do is not necessarily what Jesus wants us to do. Invite the children to each make a little book to keep in a special place that, through words or pictures, will remind them to treat others as Jesus has taught us.

Scripture theme: "He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. " (Luke 1)

(by Laura Nordstrom, Stoughton United Methodist Church)

4. Other Prayers for "A Jesus Christmas"

A Christmas Prayer (formerly published in "This Week Magazine", Milwaukee Journal)

Let us Pray;

That strength and courage abundant be given to all those who work for a world of reason and understanding

That the good that lies in every person's heart may day by day be magnified;

That people will come to see more clearly not that which divides them, but that which unites them;

That each hour may bring us closer to a final victory, not of nation over nation, but of humanity over our own evil and weaknesses;

That the true Spirit of Christmas -- its joy, its beauty, its hope and above all, its abiding faith may dwell among us; and

That the blessings of peace be ours, the peace to build and grow, to live in

harmony and sympathy with others and to plan for the future with confidence in Your eternal love. Amen.

A Christmas Prayer by Robert Louis Stevenson

Loving Father, Help us remember the birth of Jesus,
that we may share in the song of the angels,
the gladness of the shepherds,
and worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world. Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting. Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning make us happy to be thy children, and Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

At Present Opening Time Lord Jesus, Wise men traveled for miles to bring you the first Christmas presents. So may we, too, remember with thankful hearts the love that comes with each present we open. We also thank you for the amazing love you have for each of us, and we thank you for the many gifts that you give us. Amen.

A Reflective Christmas Prayer Father God, When your precious Son became a tiny baby in a stable in Bethlehem in poverty and simplicity, you changed our world. As we imagine those surroundings, we join with the shepherds and the wise men in wonder and praise. We thank you for our material lives, praise you for our spiritual lives, and trust in you for our eternal life. Amen.

(<http://www.prayerguide.org.uk/christmas.htm>)

Christmas Gift Prayer Thank you, God for the wonderful gift of your son, Jesus, as we celebrate His birthday. Help us to remember Him as we give and receive gifts, taking time to pray for each person and for those who have nothing. Help us, Lord, to fill this Christmas with you and with your love, peace and joy.

Amen.

Christmas Manger Prayer O God, whose mighty Son was born in Bethlehem those days long ago, lead us to that same poor place, where Mary laid her tiny Child. And as we look on in wonder and praise, make us welcome him in all new life,

see him in the poor, and care for his handiwork the earth, the sky and the sea. O God, bless us again in your great love. We pray for this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

(<http://prayer-and-prayers.info/christmas-prayers/>)

Let me not wrap, stack, box, bag, tie, tag, bundle, seal, keep Christmas.

Christmas kept is liable to mold.

Let me give Christmas away, unwrapped, by exuberant armfuls.

Let me share, dance, live Christmas unpretentiously, merrily, responsibly with overflowing hands, tireless steps and sparkling eyes.

Christmas given away will stay fresh-even until it comes again."

-- Let Me Not Keep Christmas Linda Felver

A Book of Christmas, Nashville: Upper Rooms, 1988, p. 48

Christmas Eve Prayer Give us, O God, the vision which can see Your love in the world in spite of human failure. Give us the faith to trust Your goodness in spite of our ignorance and weakness. Give us the knowledge that we may continue to pray with understanding hearts. And show us what each one of us can do to set forward the coming of the day of universal peace. -- Frank Borman, Apollo 8 space mission, 1968

(<http://www.godweb.org/christmasprayers.htm>)

Looking for a Merry Christmas? Are you ready to pray for one?

Christmas is a glorious time of year! God brings us face to face once again with His design for and redemption of mankind. His intentions toward us are for life live abundantly. His plans for the kingdom are victorious!

But for many people, the holidays can be filled with unrealistic expectations. Old hurts are sometimes revisited and new ones inflicted. Hope can go deferred and result in heartsickness (Proverbs 13:12). In the midst of the tinsel and lights and shopping, let's remember what the season is really about! Let's pray for a spirit of all things Christmas for ourselves and our loved ones.

1. LOVE - Lord, help us follow the way of love - let the love of Christ compel us (1 Corinthians 14:1; 2 Corinthians 5:14).
2. JOY - Restore the joy of Your salvation to us; let us experience the joy of Your presence (Psalm 51:12; 16:11).
3. PEACE - Let Your peace rule and guard our hearts; give us more of You - You are our peace (Colossians 3:15; Philippians 4:7; Ephesians 2:14).
4. HOPE - Enlighten the eyes of our heart so that we may know the hope You called us to (Ephesians 1:18).
5. FAVOR - Let Your favor rest on us (Luke 2:52).
6. LIFE - Shine Your light of life on us; help us to walk in it (Job 33:30; Psalm 56:13).
7. SALVATION - Help us to fear You so we can unlock the treasure of Your salvation (Isaiah 33:6).
8. SELFLESSNESS - Keep us from self-seeking attitudes that reject truth (Romans 2:8).
9. GENEROSITY - Make us rich in ways that result in generosity on our part so You will be praised (2 Corinthians 9:11).

10. RECEIVING - Help us receive Your kingdom, Your Spirit, and Your grace (Daniel 7:18; John 20:22; Romans 5:17).

11. SEEKING - Encourage us to seek Your face with all our hearts (Deuteronomy 4:29; Psalm 27:8).

12. PRAISE - We ascribe glory to Your name, Lord; we come before You in worship for You are holy (1 Chronicles 16:28-29).

from the publishers of Pray! magazine. Subscribe online at www.praymag.com

WHAT ARE YOU GIVING THIS YEAR?

Have you done your Christmas shopping yet?

Here are some great gift ideas!

To a Friend ?	Loyalty
To an Enemy ?	Forgiveness
To your Boss ?	Service
To your Child ?	A good example
To your Father ?	Honor
To your Mother ?	Gratitude and Devotion
To your Spouse ?	Love and Faithfulness
To Yourself ?	Respect
To All Humanity?	Charity
To God?	Your Life.

(<http://www.holytrinitynewrochelle.org/yourti93648.html>)

5. Helpful web sites for more information

A wealth of materials and ideas are available from Alternatives for Simple Living (www.Simpleliving.org). They have a multitude of resources including booklets for congregations on how to celebrate a noncommercial Christmas (quantity discounts available). They also have a noncommercial Christmas pageant. Go to their web site and explore. See below for an overview of Alternatives from their web site.

"Alternatives is a nonprofit organization that equips people of faith to challenge consumerism, live justly and celebrate responsibly. Started in 1973 as a protest against the commercialization of Christmas, our focus is on encouraging celebrations that reflect conscientious ways of living. Throughout our 30-year history, we have led the movement to live more simply and faithfully. We have developed many different resources, organized an annual Christmas Campaign ("Whose Birthday Is It, Anyway?"), held the Christmas Gift Contest, led numerous workshops, and reached countless people with the message of simple, responsible living. By becoming a Member, you can help us challenge the way our consumer society continues to usurp our holy days and to exploit people and the environment. With your help, more and more people can experience the joy that comes from celebrating and living in ways that

affirm all.

ALTERNATIVES for Simple Living * 0038 Deer Path Rd * PO Box 3804 * Dillon, CO 80435-3804 * 800/821-6153 * 970/468-AfSL (2375) * 970/333-9032 - cell * 970/513-6883 - fax * Alternatives@SimpleLiving.org * www.SimpleLiving.org
"Equipping people of faith to challenge consumerism, live justly and celebrate responsibly"

A 501-c-3 nonprofit educational organization. Donations are tax deductible.

One final resource:

<http://www.buynothingchristmas.org> (a Canadian Mennonite web site) offers many ideas for creative noncommercial Christmas celebrations