



Advent Worship resources for 2019

In this Advent Season – I continue to invite you to reflect on the Scriptures that Jesus would have known by heart.

First, a reminder from scripture to remind God’s people about who God is and the promise God has made to Love and to be present with God’s people throughout all generations.

“I am God Almighty: walk before me and be blameless . . . I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.” -Genesis 17: 1, 7 (NRSV)

Second, a prayer that reminds us of the response we are to give to God’s generous gift of creation, hope, and life.

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.” – Deuteronomy 6: 4 – 7

May this journey be one of hope and discovery as together we Walk with Jesus.

Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball

Advent Calls to Worship

(feel free to use any Sunday)

L: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One.

P: Praised be God's glorious sovereignty throughout all time.

All: Let us worship our God

L: God Almighty is your God and our God – a God who will never leave us for forsake us.

P: Jesus is a part of God's Covenant with God's people.

L: As we now prepare to step into this Advent anew, timeless stories will become rooted and connected not somewhere far off, but to the here and now.

P: In this Advent journey, we seek to enter the Bible, the living, breathing Word of God, and seek to become a part of it. On this pilgrimage, we will take the ancient and yet contemporary Biblical story and approach it as a seeker, a pilgrim – traveling, listening, looking, talking, experiencing.

L: We will seek to feel and experience God's presence anew.

P: And, walking with Jesus – we will seek to hear God's Word and God's call on our lives in new and renewed ways with excitement, passion, hope, joy, and response!

All: Let us worship our God and Savior!

L: The family tree of Jesus included men and women who were imperfect people – just like us.

P: Through these imperfect people, God worked to fulfill the promise to be our God and claim us as God's people, ultimately gifting this world and God's people with a Messiah, a Redeemer, Jesus the Christ.

L: As you walk with Jesus, ponder these questions: In what ways have we departed God's will for our life, individually and as the Church?

P: How is God calling us today? Can we hear our Savior calling?

All: Help us to hear and to follow. Let us worship the Lord!

L: Advent is a time to prepare and to remember – God continuously makes all things new!

P: In this time of preparation and remembrance, may our hearts, minds, and spirits be opened anew to God's guidance.

All: Here I am, Lord. Send me!

L: I want to walk as a child of the light.

P: I want to follow Jesus.

All: Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus!

The words to Hymn 206 - **I want to walk as a Child of the Light** could be an opening song for each gathering your Church has this Advent Season. Maybe one verse for each week and repeat the 4th verse on the 4th week of Advent.

For additional Opening Worship resources: Visit: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/wvumc/albums> for pictures from the Bishop's trip to the Holy Land.

You may want to use these pictures as a visual call to worship, or a call to prayer, or other liturgical moment in weekly worship.

Please refer to the Walking with Jesus Advent Small Group Study for reflections and questions that relate to specific pictures taken in the Holy Land.

Calls to Worship and prayers for the Sundays in Advent

Advent 1:

Call to Worship based on Isaiah 2: 1- 5

L: In the days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the highest of the mountains.

P: Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord!

All: Let us walk in the paths and light of our God!

Prayer based on Psalm 122

God of love and mercy,
thank you for your great gift of love, Jesus Christ,
and your promise to provide us with all that we need.

Merciful God, sometimes what we want and what we need are different things
and because of this and because of challenges that work to block out your light and hope, we are fully aware
that not all your children
can bask in joy or peace during this season.

We pray for peace within all walls. There are so many walls currently in Bethlehem – the place of Jesus' birth.
Walls that are guarded that keep people out and keep other walls that are intended to keep people in. Walls
that are signs of an occupied land and people. Walls that proclaim warnings. But there are also
walls within our own homes, and walls – physical, spiritual, emotional, and political - that surround each city
and town.

We pray that during this season of Advent, that you would help us to walk more consistently with you that we
might help to build bridges and relationships instead of walls and fear. Help us to share your promise to be our
God and your invitation for us to be your people. Help us to more boldly and compassionately share the Good
News of our Savior with others.

May we be moved to greater care and action in your name.

We pray this in the powerful name of Jesus Christ, who walks with us as we seek to walk with him. Amen

Prayer of Confession (inspired by Romans 13: 11-14)

God of light and life,
you set before us today
the challenges of laying aside the works of darkness;
of putting on the light of Christ;
of being watchful and prepared for your coming in our midst
in the person of Jesus Christ.

As the people of God in this place,
we know that a crucial part of our witness
is in revealing Christ to the world
through the way we love and care for one another.

Forgive us when people do not see any evidence in us
of the One who is to come.
So many people, young and old, grope helplessly:
in the gloom of despair and suffering,
yearning for the light of hope to dawn in their lives.
Remind us that the light of Christ shines through people like us.

Merciful God,
cleanse our hearts and minds of all that hinders us
from loving you and loving our neighbor.
So that our lives radiate faith active in love,
as we watch and wait for your breaking into our world once more
in the person of Jesus Christ. Amen

~ written by Moira Laidlaw, and posted on Liturgies Online. <http://www.liturgiesonline.com.au/>

Advent 2

Call to Worship

based on Isaiah 11: 1-10

L: Seeking to prepare our hearts minds and spirits for walking more closely with Jesus –

P: Fill us with your Spirit of wisdom and understanding, counsel and strength, and a greater knowledge of you so that in our journey, we will be enabled to multiply the knowledge and love of our God.

Prayer based on Psalm 72

Dear God,

Thank you for working your plan through your chosen king from the line of David, Jesus Christ. All of history finds your will and purpose in him. When we attempt to walk this journey of life without him, we are lost. We again, wait expectantly for Jesus to be born anew into our hearts and lives, that we might better fulfill your ministry and mission instead of focusing on our own wants and desires. Forgive us when we expect human politicians, community leaders, or ministers in the Church to meet our needs and fill our heart longings like the Son of David.

We thank you for disrupting our world and ideas by bringing Jesus to us in great humility, as an infant born to a family just barely making it. We thank you for disrupting our world and ideas when Jesus power and our salvation comes through the laying down of his life for us. We praise you because you gave a way for our sin to be dealt with without destroying and condemning us with the world.

Give us thankful and generous hearts to honor and worship you, Lord Jesus. As the rain renews the earth, please renew us.

Let the name of Jesus be praised in this your Church and among your people now just on Sundays, but every day of the week. We have been blessed by you, and you send us to bring blessing to all the peoples of the earth by walking with you and teaching others what you have taught. In the darkening days of this winter season, let the Advent light and warmth of your name rise within us. Open our lips, dear Lord, and we shall declare your praise! May it be so. Amen.

Advent 3

Call to Worship based on Isaiah 35: 1 – 10

L: The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom.

P: In our walking, let us rejoice with joy and singing!

L: Strengthen weak hands; make firm feeble knees.

P: Be strong; do not fear. Here is your God!

All: Let us worship our God with joy!

Prayer

Mary's prayer and our prayer (Luke 1: 46 – 55 ERV)

Almighty and Loving God,

"I praise the Lord with all my heart.

⁴⁷ I am very happy because God is my Savior.

⁴⁸ I am not important,

but he has shown his care for me, his lowly servant.

From now until the end of time,

people will remember how much God blessed me.

⁴⁹ Yes, the Powerful One has done great things for me.

His name is very holy.

⁵⁰ He always gives mercy

to those who worship him.

⁵¹ He reached out his arm and showed his power.

He scattered those who are proud and think great things about themselves.

⁵² He brought down rulers from their thrones

and raised up the humble people.

⁵³ He filled the hungry with good things,

but he sent the rich away with nothing.

⁵⁴ God has helped Israel—the people he chose to serve him.

He did not forget his promise to give us his mercy.

⁵⁵ He has done what he promised to our ancestors,

to Abraham and his children forever."

Thank you, God, for your love that never ends and seeks to bring joy to your people who seek to walk with you in every generation. Great is your faithfulness, and we your people are thankful. Amen

Advent 4

Call to Worship Based on Isaiah 7: 10 – 16

L: The Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel.

P: We have seen the sign and prepare for his coming.

All: We come to prepare and to open ourselves once again to receiving God's great gift of Love, Immanuel, God with us! Thank you for walking with us as we seek to walk with you!

Responsive prayer -

Psalm 80 from Psalms for Praying by Nan Merrill

L: Eternal Listener, give heed to your people,
You, who are our Guide and our Light!
You, who dwell amidst the angels, shine forth into the heart of all nations! Enliven your people with compassion that peace and justice might flourish.

**P: Restore us, O Holy One;
Let your face shine upon us,
Teach us to love.**

L: Gentle Teacher, help us to turn to You in prayer,
Fasting from our negative thoughts.
In your steadfast love, You weep with our tears,
That rise from fear, doubt, and illusion.
You uphold us when we feel the sting of pride,
When our anxiety threatens to paralyze us.

P: Restore us, O Holy One; Let your face shine upon us; teach us to love!

L: You companion us through the wilderness,
through the shadows created by fear.
You plant your Seed into each heart.
You uproot the weeds of our sin,
You cultivate the soil of our goodness.
Truly, in You, we become like a tiny acorn,
holding the secrets of a mighty oak.

You nourish us with the food of Love, with streams of Living Water.
Be our strength as we break down walls that separate and divide;
let not fear pluck away the gifts we would share.

Roll away the stones that become obstacles to growth to producing a bountiful harvest. Restore us, O Holy One!
Let your face shine upon us; teach us to love!

Receive our gratitude, O Heart of all hearts!
Look upon us and see what Love can do;
Rejoice in the new birth that You create!

Be glad where your Seed has found fertile soil.
How much more the return of one healthy plant than ten thousand useless weeds!
May those who have borne the fruit of love
radiate your Spirit into the world!
May we always walk and co-create with You;
Receive the gratitude of our hearts as we share in the Great Plan!

P: Restore us, O Holy One! Let your face shine upon us; teach us to love!

Christmas Eve or Christmas Day

CHRISTMAS CREED FROM LATIN AMERICA

I BELIEVE in Jesus Christ and in the power of the Gospel which began in Bethlehem
I BELIEVE in the One whose Spirit glorified a small village, of whose coming the shepherds saw the
sign, and for whom there was not room in the inn.

I BELIEVE in the One whose life changed the course of history, for whom the kings of the earth had no power,
and who was not understood by the proud.

I BELIEVE in the One to whom the poor, the oppressed, the discouraged, the afflicted, the sick,
the blind, the leprous, gave welcome and accepted as Lord and Savior.

I BELIEVE in the One who with love changed the hearts of the proud and with his life showed that it is
more important to serve than to be served and that the greatest glory is giving your life for others.

I BELIEVE in peace, which is not the absence of war, but justice among all people and nations
and love among all.

I BELIEVE in reconciliation, forgiveness, and the transforming power of the Gospel.

I BELIEVE that Christmas is strength and power, and that the world can change if with humility
and with faith we kneel before the manger.

I BELIEVE that I must be the first one to do so.

Anonymous
Translated by Joyce Hill, Retired missionary