

***Between Memory and Hope***  
**Advent Worship Series - Week 4**  
*...A Time for Revelation*

**WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES**  
 Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. It is recommended that the headings of each section of the service be included in the bulletin.

**Announcements & Offering**

***The Memory of the First Advent***

<b>HC#61 – Crown Him King of Kings</b>	HC-61	HCD5-T11
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>SB#100 – Angels, from the realms of glory</b>	TB-398 – Come and Worship (Regent Sq.)	HTD4-T12 (4 vs.)
<b>SB#113 – Joy to the world!</b>	TB-87 – Joy to the World!	HTD4-T9 (3 vs.)
<b>SB#114 – Light of the world</b>	TB-653 – Here I am to Worship	
<b>HC#146 – Here I am to Worship</b>	HC-146	HCD13-T16
<b>SB#104 – Come, Thou long expected Jesus,</b>	TB-370 – Hyfrydol	HTD1-T14 (3 vs.)
<b>SB#923 – God is with us, God is with Us</b>	TB-394 - Austria	HTD1-T2 (3 vs.)

**Call to Worship/Candle Lighting:**

**Reader 1:** This is a day of Revelation.

**Reader 2:** A day to recognize that God *is* with us!

**Reader 1:** God incarnate: the very presence of God as human, among humankind.

*[Light the four candles]*

**Reader 2:** We light this fourth candle today as a meaningful way of saying that the light of the world has come.

**Reader 1:** The light that removes darkness and doubt.

- Reader 2:** The light that has come to bring the dawning of recognition.
- Reader 1:** It is the revelation that God has not abandoned us. He has not left us to our just punishment.
- Reader 2:** For God sent his Son into the world, so that the world would not perish, but have life, and have life to the full.
- Reader 1:** We are not alone! God *is* with us!
- Reader2:** This is a day of Revelation.

<b>SB#118 – O little town of Bethlehem</b>	TB-136 – same	HTD3-T5 (3 vs.) Bethlehem
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#72 – Emmanuel</b>	HC-72	HCD6-T12
<b>HC#82 – Jesus, Name Above All Names</b>	HC-82	HCD7-T12
<b>HC#123 – Shine on Us</b>	HC-123	HCD11–T13
<b>HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty</b>	HC-219	HCD20-T19
<b>HC#220 – Incarnate</b>	HC-220	HCD20-T20

**Prayer:**

*[Piano continues to play chorus]*

In this special season of Advent we come to you, O God. Give us a vision not just of a baby in Bethlehem’s barn, but of the Lord of Lords; not only of a lad in Nazareth, but of the hope of the world; not only a rabbi teaching on a hillside and in a temple, but the revealer of yourself; not only one who climbed a cross, but one who was raised to life, who lives forevermore, our hope of life everlasting, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. (From *Invocations and Benedictions for the Revised Common Lectionary*)

**Reading:**

Amid the cacophony of praises and rejoicing, we are drawn to the calm stillness that embraces the Holy family. In this lowly stable the Prince of Peace finds comfort in the loving arms of His mother. The Lord of lords rests under the loving care of a man who will love this Child as his own. Look again and listen . . . how silently . . . the wondrous gift is given.

*(A Midnight Clear, page 61)*

<b>Drama: Imagine That</b>
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*The Hope of the Second Advent*

**Responsive Scripture:**

**Leader:** Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near. (Revelation 1:3 NIV)

**All:** Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14 NIV)

**Leader:** Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God--the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 1:1-4 NIV)

**All:** Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. (Romans 1:5 NIV)

**Leader:** You also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:6 NIV)

**All:** Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:7 NIV)

**Message – Revealing Who Jesus Is**

<b>SB#101 – As with gladness men of old</b>	TB-276 – Dix	HTD11-T3
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#120 – In the Manger</b>	HC-120	HCD10-T20
<b>HC#123 – Shine on Us</b>	HC-123	HCD11-T13
<b>HC#127 – How Deep the Father’s Love for us</b>	HC-127	HCD11-T17
<b>HC#139 – There is a Message</b>	HC-139	HCD12-T19
<b>HC#169 – Hallelujah</b>	HC-169	HCD15-T19
<b>HC#220 – Incarnate</b>	HC-220	HCD20-T20
<b>HC#226 – I Worship You</b>	HC-226	HCD21-T16
<b>Chorus – O come let us adore Him</b>	TB-496 – Adeste Fideles (chorus only)	No CD

*With an Ear for the Trumpet*

**Benediction:**

Lord Jesus, however the events in prophecy play out across the world’s stage, keep the

eyes of our spirits fixed upon you. Whatever we may encounter as the final days unfold, we ask You to provide us with patience, loyalty and discernment to remain faithful to you and You alone, until the final Amen is spoken. (*The NIV Worship Bible*, page 1671)

<b>Vocal Benediction – SB#271 – Rejoice, the Lord is King</b>	TB-200 – Darwalls	D1-T7 (3 vs.)
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#149 – In Christ Alone</b>	HC-149	HCD13-T19
<b>HC#241 – Crown him with many crowns</b>	HC-241	HCD23-T11
<b>SB#260 – Lo! He comes with clouds descending</b>	TB-402 – Helmsley TB-406 – Praise, my soul	No CD D2-T12 (3 vs.)
<b>SB#1025 – For Thine is the Kingdom,</b>	TB-618 – same	D3-T13 (1 vs.)

<b>Week #4</b>	
<b>DRAMA</b>	
<b>Imagine That</b>	
<b>By Martyn Scott Thomas</b>	
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<b>Scripture:</b>	Luke 2:1-20
<b>Synopsis:</b>	Joseph pauses to reflect on the birth of Jesus.
<b>Characters:</b>	<b>Joseph</b> – the father of Jesus
<b>Props/Costumes:</b>	Biblical dress.
<b>Setting:</b>	Bare stage. Just outside the stable.
<b>Running Time:</b>	4:00 minutes.

*[Joseph enters slowly and silently, as if not to disturb his sleeping wife and child.]*

**Joseph:** This is not how I imagined it would be. But how could I have imagined this? Just one year ago, I was on top of the world. I had just moved into my own home, I was getting ready to open my own shop and I was engaged to a beautiful girl. I had it all planned out. The problem was, God had a different plan.

When Mary told me she was pregnant, my entire world crashed down around me. I knew there was no way the baby could be mine and I couldn't imagine Mary ever being unfaithful. Her story didn't seem possible though, so I headed home in a daze and pondered what to do.

I decided to divorce her quietly. I knew this man in the next town who could help. He assured me it would be very discreet. But, before I could carry out my plans, I had a visitor.

It was an angel of the Lord. He appeared to me in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to go ahead with your marriage to Mary. For the child within her has been conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Mary's story was true; still impossible, but true. What now? Of course I would obey the angel, but what would people say? Who would believe what we had to say when I myself was still having a hard time comprehending it all?

I had to delay the opening of my own shop. Nobody would openly do business with an adulterer. Luckily, Saul kept me on in his shop, as

long as I agreed to do my work in the back room, out of sight. Fortunately I was too good a craftsman to let go. But, my work load and pay were substantially cut back.

It had been a really tough year, but as the time approached for the birth of our son, it all seemed so trivial. We would finally have a fresh start. Then we got word of the census.

How could we get to Bethlehem and back without putting Mary's life and the life of our son in danger? She was in no condition to travel, but we had no choice. So we kept our travel to a few hours at a time and only in the daylight. It was risky for anyone to travel at night, especially someone in her condition. By the time we reached Bethlehem, we were both exhausted. We needed to find a room so we could rest and put our travels behind us.

It sounded like a good plan, but as I have learned this past year, my best plans are never enough. We couldn't find a single room anywhere in town. All we were offered was this dark, smelly stable – and for twice the normal rate for any room. Caesar wasn't the only one making money off this census.

Well, at least we'd be able to rest; or so I thought. No sooner had we settled in among the cattle and sheep and Mary winced in pain. She was in labor. How could this be happening? I was beginning to think that God was punishing us with this child rather than blessing us. Can't anything happen normally?

Then, before I knew it, our son was born. We named him Jesus – at least that went according to plan. The rest of this night has been a blur of animals, shepherds and angels.

And now they're asleep – both of them. I should be sleeping, too, but I had to gather my thoughts before I lay down. I know our lives will never be normal. I know that this is just the beginning of an amazing journey – one that I can't even imagine. But why should the future be any different than this past year? This is not how I imagined it would be. But I wouldn't have it any other way.

*[Blackout]*

***Between Memory and Hope***  
***...A Time for Revelation***  
**Advent Sermon – Week 4**

**“Revealing Who Jesus Is”**

At first glance, the Gospel text for today seems slightly out of order. It’s nearing Christmas day, and here we are reading about the conception. Yet the focus today really begins with one of our Christmas characters, Joseph, and on his reactions to news an angel delivers to him in a dream. These actions form for us a frame of understanding.

They describe a two-stage process of revelation.

The first stage for Joseph is simple recognition. The angel revealed to him that the child whom Mary, his betrothed, carried within her was conceived of the Holy Spirit. Joseph needed to recognize the presence of God in the person of this child.

The second stage for Joseph is simple action. He needed to take action based on his recognition. For Joseph, this involved staying true to his betrothal commitment, and then naming the child.

Recognition and action: the two stages of Revelation.

The Evangelists – the Gospel writers – worked through a similar process. The work for Matthew, for example, required first recognizing the presence of God working in and through the kings of Israel in the time of Isaiah. Matthew understood that this picture of another young mother and child represented God’s bringing to bear upon the people of God the divine will through human means. The institution of kings in the history of Israel as the people of God was an adaptation to the people’s circumstances. The king was intended to be the person through whom God’s will would continue to be made known and enacted in the earthly kingdom of God’s people.

Yet many times this simply didn’t happen. The prophets often challenged the royalty, declaring that the kings acted upon their own intentions, and did not follow God’s desires. Throughout the history of both Israel and Judah, we read of kings who either acted with fidelity to God’s heart, or did not.

Isaiah’s words were the means for Matthew to bring to bear upon his own time the recognition that God was once again acting through humans in a way that would express the divine will and give life to the divine presence on earth. This time, we understand this child to be more than a human king. This child was and is divine.

Even Matthew, the Gospel writer, first needed to recognize this truth. Then he was able to act upon it, and to record this revelation for us.

In a similar way, we might turn to Paul, in writing to the believers in Rome. This time, it

was not the conception of Jesus that is in question, but the resurrection. Once again, however, we see the writer making the connection with the kings of ancient Israel. Paul first recognizes that God is working through human means to reveal the divine will and presence. Paul also recognizes that this person Jesus was and is more than human: like Matthew, and like Joseph, Paul understands that God is revealing to the people of God that Jesus was and is the Son of God. Jesus' humanity and divinity are revealed to us. Paul's many magnificent letters are filled with the result of his taking action on this recognition. Paul's letters are the result of the revelation through the resurrection. It was Paul's letters, which predated the Gospels by several years, that lay the ground work for many new believers in churches across many countries. The truth that today we recognize as the incarnation came to Paul through the revelation of the resurrection.

For Joseph, Matthew and Paul, recognition and action are put together. In each of these examples, we see that the message is clear. Both Resurrection and Incarnation speak of God's remembering his human creation. God has not forgotten or abandoned his people. Nor has he decided to stop working through human means in revealing his presence to a world in need of salvation that comes through his presence.

In fact, it is God's amazing decision to work through people that continues to stagger us. Sometimes this awesome message is so hard to grasp that we deny it is a reality. Who am I that God should work through me to reveal the presence of God in Christ? But don't you imagine both Joseph and Mary saying those words? Who were they? And what about Paul? The very one persecuting the followers of Jesus was the very human vessel God used to reveal the truths of the Incarnation and thus power of the Resurrection. Paul was first in line to say that he ought to have been last and the least. And God worked wonders once Paul recognized and then revealed Jesus.

What about us today? Where does recognition and action come into play for the continuing people of God, which includes the part of the Church that is this corps? Another way of asking the same question is to say, where is the presence of God, where is Messiah – incarnation of the divine – now, today?

When Paul tells the believers in Rome that they, too, belong to the people of God, he is calling upon them to recognize their place in continuing the prophets' work. That means, especially, recognizing that Jesus is to be revealed in the lives of the people of God. And it means that once we realize that Jesus can be revealed in what we do and say in this community of believers, that we ought then to act upon that revelation.

*You are the body of Christ.* The Incarnation is continuing: Christ born in you, human beings, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Do you recognize the presence of the divine? How will you act upon that revelation in these in-between times?

Allow the recognition that a very old sign – a new birth – can and should be applied for us today by the empowering realization that God wants to continue to work through human means: through you! And then take action. Let that be a compelling force for good work through extending the good news of God's promise to others. Today is a day

for revealing who Jesus is!

***BETWEEN MEMORY AND HOPE***  
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**Children's Message**

“Send the news!”

It's almost Christmas Eve! All the preparations for Christmas are just about finished: decorating, shopping, sending cards. Have any of you gotten Christmas cards yet? What do you do at home with the cards you get from family and friends?

One nice thing to do is to hang them up with a string, or on a shelf, and look at all the pretty pictures. Another great idea is to collect all the cards in a basket, and to keep them on a table for several weeks *after* Christmas. Each day after the New Year, your family can take a card out of the basket and read it again. Then you can remember that person or family in prayer together.

That can be an important part of keeping Christmas alive for longer than just one day. And it helps us to remember that all of these preparations we make for celebrating Christmas aren't even the most important parts of this season. Remembering each other with thoughts of love and acts of prayer are more important than buying candy or having parties.

When the gospel writer was trying to tell us how the baby Jesus would be the fulfillment of God's promises about the Messiah, he described a picture using words from the old prophets: Look for a baby to be born to a virgin...a son called Immanuel, which means God is with us.

Reading that again and again is even better than re-reading a Christmas card. This is a message that's really alive. Jesus was born a real live human being. And that thought is a living reminder every day that God is with us. Every time we treat each other like Jesus would, we keep alive that message too: God is with us! So send *that* news to somebody today!

*Prayer*

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**Supplemental Materials**

**Benediction<sup>1</sup>**

“Go from this place and may Christ, Emmanuel, God with us, go with you this day, and always.”

**A Prayer for the Day<sup>1</sup>**

*(Pastoral Prayer, alternate Invocation or Benediction, or after the Candle Lighting)*

“Almighty God, you have given your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and to be born of a pure virgin; you have wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; and grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with you and the same Spirit be honor and glory, now and forever. Amen.”

**Offertory Prayer**

*The Word was with God, and the Word was God, and the Word became flesh and dwelt among mankind.* O Incarnate Word, we pray you receive these gifts and our lives as a pledge to be your people, your body, your church. May your Holy Spirit so fill and move us that by our lives together God may be glorified, and all people come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Affirmation of Faith**

We believe in God the Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, the man in whom God was incarnated, who was born of the virgin Mary, who in his life proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of God, who healed and restored new hope and faith, who was charged, tortured, condemned and at last suffered death on a cross, but by God’s creative power on the third day was raised from death. His death on the Cross became our redemption from sin and disobedience, a redemption offered to us by grace, through faith, and which we can receive or reject.

*Salvation Story Study Guide, p. 125*

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Divine Hours: Prayers for Autumn and Wintertime*, compiled by Phyllis Tickle. New York: Doubleday, 2000.

## Call to Worship

*A Choric Reading: "Immanuel"*<sup>2</sup>

- Reader 1:** A sign shall be given  
**Reader 2:** A virgin will conceive  
**Reader 3:** A human baby bearing Undiminished Deity  
**Reader 1:** The glory of the nations  
**Reader 2:** A light for all to see  
**Reader 3:** And hope for all who will embrace reality
- Unison:** Immanuel  
**Reader 1:** Our God is with us  
**Reader 2:** And if God is with us...  
**Unison:** ...who could stand against us?  
**Reader 3:** Our God is with us  
**Unison:** Immanuel
- Reader 1:** For all those who live in the shadow of death a glorious light has dawned.  
**Reader 2:** For all those who stumble in the darkness: behold your light has come!
- Unison:** Immanuel  
**Reader 3:** Our God is with us  
**Reader 1:** And if God is with us...  
**Unison:** ...who could stand against us?  
**Reader 2:** Our God is with us  
**Unison:** Immanuel
- Reader 3:** So what will be your answer? Oh will you hear the call...  
**Reader 1:** ...of Him who did not spare His son, but gave him for us all?  
**Reader 2:** On earth there is no power  
**Reader 3:** There is no depth or height  
**Reader 1:** That could ever separate us from the love of God in Christ.
- Unison:** Immanuel  
**Reader 2:** Our God is with us  
**Reader 3:** And if God is with us...  
**Unison:** ...who could stand against us?  
**Reader 1:** Our God is with us  
**Unison:** Immanuel

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<sup>2</sup> Arranged from an original poem in *The Promise: A Celebration of Christ's Birth: Prayers, Reflections and Songs*, by Michael Card. Nashville, TN: Sparrow Press, 1991.

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**Scripture Study**

**Revelation**

The recognition that a sign from long ago applies in a new situation is behind the readings for today. The realization that an old promise has meaning and power for today can be the compelling force for extending the good news of that promise to others.

*Isaiah 7:10-16*

God chooses the sign for the reluctant king: a child born, whose stages of growth and development become markers for the judgment actions that will soon take place in the life of the nation and their neighbors.

*Romans 1:1-7*

The writer points to the lineage of Jesus, connecting the birth of the Christ to the human king David, and connecting the Christ to God through the revelation of the resurrection, that Jesus is the Son of God. All this, he explains, means that we have the authority of the prophets to extend the revelation, of who Jesus is, to all people everywhere.

*Matthew 1:18-25*

The Evangelist renews the “child of promise” sign from Isaiah’s time to point us to the revelation of his birth as a means of demonstrating that the life of this child Jesus is the continuing (and fullest) promised presence of God; and of God’s ongoing involvement in the nation and its neighbors. God has not forgotten or abandoned his creation.

*For a call-to-worship or benediction:*

*Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19*

A Prayer: for God to not withdraw his mighty and powerful saving presence from his people forever. The plea for God to once again bless a son on the throne is answered in the form of Messiah’s birth. God’s face brings salvation; acting on this revelation is an every-person challenge and mission.