

Between Memory and Hope
Advent Worship Series - Week 2
...A Time for Repentance

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

Call to Worship:

One of the more amazing aspects of the advent of the Messiah is that it went completely unnoticed by those who were expecting Him. God did not sneak into His own world. He announced His coming through the ancient prophets; He disclosed the divine characteristics that would define Him; He even revealed the name of the town where He would be born. He told us to expect Him. We heard His Word; we just didn't recognize the Word becoming flesh. We should have seen Him coming. The angels were descending from Heaven. Their destination: a field just outside a small town nestled in the foothills of the Promised Land: the city of David, Bethlehem. They would soon be joined by shepherds and kings who would be the first to heed the invitation to come and worship – worship Christ the newborn King.

(A Midnight Clear, page 36)

SB#100 – Angels, from the realms of glory	TB-398 – Come and Worship (Regent Sq.)	HTD4-T12 (4 vs.)
Additional Optional Songs		
SB#112 – It was on a starry night HC#180	TB-535 – same HC-280	No CD HCD16-T20
SB#113 – Joy to the world!	TB-87 – Joy to the World!	HTD4-T9 (3 vs.)
SB#114 – Light of the world HC#146 – Here I am to Worship	TB-653 – Here I am to Worship HC-146	No CD HCD13-T16
SB#108 – Hark! The herald angels sing	TB-270 – Hark! The Herald Angels Sing	HTD4-T5 (3 vs.)

SB#126 – The first noel the angel did say	TB-857 – The First Noel	HTD6-T18 (3 vs.)
SB#133 – Wonderful counselor	TB-859 – The Light Has Come	No CD
HC#10 – The Light Has Come	HC-10	HCD1-T10

Drama: A Matter of Principal

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: For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (Romans 15:4 NIV)

Leader: May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 15:5-6 NIV)

All: Accept one another, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. (Romans 15:6b NIV).

Leader: For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name." (Romans 15:7-8 NIV)

All: Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples. (Romans 15:10-11 NIV)

Leader: Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him." (Romans 15:12 NIV)

All: May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13 NIV)

Leader: The time has come, the kingdom of God is near.

All: Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15 NIV)

HC#123 – Shine on Us	HC-123	HCD11–T13
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#89 – Knowing You	HC-89	HCD7-T19
SB#839 – I could not do without Thee	TB-213 – Aurelia	HTD3-T3 (3 vs.)
SB#614 – O Jesus, Thou art standing	TB-213 – Aurelia	HTD3-T3 (3 vs.)
SB#878 – My Jesus, I love Thee	TB514 – Unsworth	HTD8-T18 (3vs.)
HC#120 – In the Manger	HC-120	HCD10-T20
HC#127 – How Deep the Father’s Love for us	HC-127	HCD11-T17
HC#136 – We All Bow Down	HC-136	HCD12-T16
HC#139 – There is a Message	HC-139	HCD12-T19
HC#156 – Enter In	HC-156	HCD14-T16
HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty	HC-219	HCD20-T19

Candle Lighting:

Reader 1: Hear the voice of the prophets!
God is calling us to repentance:
To turn away from our sin and to follow him.

Reader 2: For his Kingdom is near, and is now here.

Reader 1: We live in the time between:

Reader 2: Knowing in our own past times of injustice in our world; pain, suffering and war in many lands and places.

Reader 1: Proclaiming with the voices of old a coming Day of the Lord; a time of true justice, fairness, righteousness and peace.

[light the first two candles]

Reader 2: We light this second candle today as a symbol of Repentance.

Reader 1: For a time is coming when all that is done will be seen.
A time of truth, when all will be known.

Reader 2: The light will shine, and we will be known as we are.
God knows even now who is just, faithful and true.

Reader 1: The good in our lives can even now shine as a signal to call people to God.

Reader 2: The candle’s burning is a reminder:
To turn away from our sin and to follow him.

For God is calling us to repentance.

HC#45 – While We are Waiting, Come	HC-45	HCD3-T15
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Prayer:

(Piano continues to play chorus)

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Grant us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Message – Turning Back to Kingdom Values

HC#139 – There is a Message	HC-139	HCD12-T19
Additional Optional Songs		
SB#153 – Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown	TB-94 – Margaret	HTD10 –T6 (4 vs.)
HC#179 – Come to Jesus	HC-179	HCD16-T19
HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty	HC-219	HCD20-T19
HC#220 – Incarnate	HC-220	HCD20-T20

With An Ear for the Trumpet

Benediction:

Lord, in Your mercy you are patient with us, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance, for You do not take pleasure in the death of anyone. Why, why, why, do we choose death rather than life? We cannot run from Your hand, so let us run to Your side and seek Your mercy while there is still time.

As we wait, help us to live holy and godly lives, to make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with You, and to grow in the grace and knowledge of You, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To You be glory both now and forever! Amen.

(The NIV Worship Bible, page 1674)

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

Week #2	
DRAMA	
A Matter of Principal	
By Martyn Scott Thomas	
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Scripture:	Matthew 2:1-12
Synopsis:	One of the Magi stops to speak with Annas before returning home.
Characters:	Caspar – one of the Magi Annas – the High Priest
Props/Costumes:	Modern dress – business suits for both men. A desk with two chairs, a telephone and accessories as needed to give the impression of a very important person’s office.
Setting:	Annas’s office.
Running Time:	3:30 minutes.

[Annas is seated behind his desk, talking on the phone.]

Annas: Who did you say was here to see me? . . . I don’t know any Caspar . . . He says we met at Herod’s last week? . . . Oh, he’s one of them . . . Well, I guess he knows I’m here now . . . Yeah, send him in, but get ready to interrupt if I buzz you. *[hangs up phone]*

Caspar: *[enters and walks up to Annas and offers his hand]* Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. I know your time is important.

Annas: *[looks up from desk but does not stand or take Caspar’s hand]* Yes, my time is important, so let’s make this as brief as possible. How may I help you, Mr. Caspar?

Caspar: *[sits opposite Annas]* You strike me as a man of great wisdom and insight, especially where your Scriptures are involved.

Annas: I’m glad that a scholar such as yourself can recognize the obvious.

Caspar: Yet, something has been troubling me since we last met.

Annas: Listen, if you’re worried about my relationship with Herod, I assure you that I have nothing but contempt for that tyrant. We were summoned by him; we had no choice but to appear. Any advice I gave him was a one time only thing. I have no desire to appear before that heathen again.

Caspar: It is not your presence before King Herod that troubles me. It is your

action involving the child, or lack thereof.

Annas: First of all, my action involving that child is none of your business. Secondly, there are claims made all the time that the king of the Jews has been born. I do not have the time to look into every nut case out there with delusions of grandeur.

Caspar: But how many of those claims have the backing of your own prophecies?

Annas: So you found a child born in Bethlehem. Let me ask you, in what palace was he born?

Caspar: We found him in a simple home. His parents told us he was born in a stable.

Annas: A stable? The king of the Jews? Why are you wasting my time? We have nothing more to discuss. Good day, Mr. Caspar. [*stands to show him out*]

Caspar: [*remains seated*] Let me ask you just one more thing. How is it that a man of your knowledge can miss something so obvious?

Annas: [*sits back down*] Listen, I'm sorry that you and your friends wasted all this time and money to travel to that hole-in-the-ground, Bethlehem, but don't accuse me of not knowing my people's history and future. Yes, the Messiah is supposed to be born in Bethlehem, but we've been waiting over 400 years and I imagine we'll wait 400 more.

Caspar: Won't you at least investigate?

Annas: There is nothing to investigate.

Caspar: Funny, but as Israel's spiritual leader, I thought you might show a little more enthusiasm for your chance at freedom from Rome.

Annas: You have a better chance of freeing us from Rome than some little brat from Bethlehem. Besides, it'll be at least twenty years or more before that baby is ready to do anything substantial.

Caspar: If he's still around.

Annas: Oh, you've heard of Herod's order.

Caspar: Yes, we have. We were warned.

Annas: Well, I guess we'll find out how important that baby really is, won't we? If he can escape Herod's grasp, then maybe I'll consider paying the family a visit.

Caspar: I hear your words, but I know your heart. You're threatened by that child. You wish Herod to succeed.

Annas: [*stands again to show him out*] Good day, Mr. Caspar.

Caspar: [*stands*] I just don't get it. The long-promised Messiah could be here and you won't take the time to even investigate.

Annas: It's a matter of principal, Mr. Caspar. I'm the principal and that's all that matters. A Messiah would just get in the way of my position.

Caspar: And that's what it's all about.

Annas: I'm glad that a scholar such as yourself can recognize the obvious.

[*Blackout*]

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Advent Sermon – Week 2

“Turning Back to Kingdom Values”

There is a principle in physics that describes the natural tendency of any organized body to fall apart. That principle is called “entropy” [en'-tro-pē]. When things that start out organized begin to break down, we call that entropy. The molecules of an atom have a natural tendency to fly apart, destroying the atom's integrity. Planets circling the Sun have a natural tendency to break their orbit and fly out into space, destroying the operation of the solar system. Only other, superior, forces override entropy to maintain the order.

We are like that, too. Any group of people organized for any purpose seems to fall apart. Imagine a group of children in a classroom. It's hard to hold them together for very long. Think about a teen group's game time. It starts out well, but soon, one or two teens drop out, and before long the “group” has dissolved into little cliques of twos and threes, and often, the odd-one out. Or reflect on a newly organized adult study group. The first week's lesson time is great. Everyone is there and involved. But by week three, there are a few absent, and by week ten, hardly anyone has energy to continue.

Even the Church as a whole is like that. What starts off well seems to fall apart. And every so often, there needs to be a time of correction, a concerted effort to return to the organizing focus that brought the group about in the first place. The people of God – from long before Israel was a nation and throughout Christian history – have needed times of reform.

In Isaiah, we read of a time when the kingdom values instituted in the people of God had broken down. God's prophet came to speak of a time when God would “organize” or “re-form” the body. The Psalm is a prayer that the king would retain these values, primarily of peace and justice, wholeness and rightness. The effects of entropy were often evident within the waning Kingdom of Israel. Often they were in need of leaders who would bring them back to kingdom values. One of those times was the very time that Jesus was born.

It was a time when the people of God were no longer led by a king in the line of David's throne. It had been a few hundred years since there had been any king like that – good or bad – and most of them even then had been contributing to the breakdown of the kingdom of the people of God on earth.

By the time of Jesus' birth, the land of Israel had seen a string of different kinds of leaders, and most of them installed by conquering foreign powers. The religious leadership of the time was at an uneasy alliance with Rome's hand-picked rulers. And the High Priests were forced into political deals to stay in power. One of our Christmas

story characters was just such a person. His name is Annas.

The vision of the kingdom Annas maintained as High Priest did not make room for the spirit of God to move freely. Instead, Annas tightened his grip and control, and by his decisions maintained the inward focus that kept many like him from seeing the new thing God was doing when Jesus was born; the new thing God was doing when Jesus began his ministry.

As with atoms and solar systems, church study groups and even kingdoms, it takes a stronger force to keep it together. Unlike particles of matter and planets, however, we believe that people have a free will. What can keep the body of Christ together? Christ remaining at the center. The body falls apart when that which orbits the center wants to break away from the center.

Is it possible that God would have reinvigorated the kingdom of Israel if Annas and others like him in the ruling council had embraced the message the Jesus brought? We'll never know. But we do know that the same forces of entropy that pulled God's people apart in Annas' time can still exert powerful pressure on God's people today.

In Romans, we read of the body of Christ, already starting to fall apart – so that Paul is urging them to resist the pull of entropy. He offers some surprising advice in chapter 15, starting with verse five. There we find that we can keep Christ in the center of our fellowship by adopting the attitude of Christ in our relationships with one another.

How would Christ act toward the person next to you? Not only the person you like: but the person who talks about you when you're not around; the one who promised to help you with a project, but then didn't show up; the person who you know has cheated to try to get ahead at work.

Mercy. Forgiveness. Restoration.

We also find that we can keep Christ at the center when we assume the servant role. This, too, is following the example of Christ. What would it mean to serve the person next to you? Not only the one who will say nice things to you or give you some kind of reward in return: but the one who is not any better than you; the one who says nasty things in return; the one who can do nothing for you in return.

These simple and inter-related ideas are easy to say, but difficult to sustain: act toward one another with the servant-like attitude of Christ. This is how the Christian church can maintain its integrity, and not only hold together, but grow.

But what do we often do instead? We maintain our own self-serving attitudes. Revenge. Grudges. Keeping our distance. "I will not serve...it's *their* turn for once!" What does this lead to? The disintegration of the body. Falling apart. It is entropy.

The Roman text begins and ends with a word about "hope." But if hope – including the

hope for a better world – is to be a real hope, and not mere wishful thinking, then hope must be enacted. Hope must be put into action.

Romans 15.12 refers back to Isaiah in saying that the actions of Messiah brought real hope for the world through real action that was displayed in an attitude of servant hood.

If we are to be the body of Christ, a community of believers with Christ at our center, then we need to have and maintain the attitude of Christ. It is a willingness to serve others that is drawn from a desire to see them grow that produces the servant-attitude of Christ.

For many of us, this requires turning away from old patterns of living: self-serving, self-protecting. And to turn *towards* the ways of Christ. Or, as Romans 15.12 indicates, a display of genuine belief. Turning away from the paths that lead to death and turning towards the path that embodies true life is the very definition of “Repentance.”

Dieter Zander picks up on this revitalized way of understanding repentance. He begins by reflecting about the words of Jesus in Mark 1.15: The time has come....The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!

My former definition of repentance – “to be very sorry” – doesn’t make much sense in this passage. No one can be very sorry for not having known something that has just been announced as news. One can, however, change in response to news. This change in direction is in fact, the core meaning of the Greek word translated *repent*: “to turn around from the way you are going.” And what about “the kingdom of God”? This potent phrase played almost no role in the gospel I was used to. Yet it seemed to be nearly the whole substance of Jesus’ proclamation: the arrival of a different kind of life, under the reign of a present and powerful God who, according to another version of Jesus’ good news in Luke 4, was intent upon restoring, healing, redeeming, and reconciling all of creation (vv. 16-21). Now this was (and is) good *news*, because news is crucial information about the *present*. Information about the past we call history, and information about the future we call prediction. But Jesus brought good *news* – important information for today.¹

If you’re ready for that kind of “life-changing immediacy” – for that kind of turning around – receive the word that God is ready and able to give you that kind of life, *today*. It is keeping Christ and the values of the Kingdom at the center of our lives, individually and corporately, that will maintain this part of the body as a living shining witness to the power of God today, between memory and hope.

¹ Dieter Zander, “The Gospel Revisited,” *Discipleship Journal*, Issue 139 (Jan/Feb 2004), pp. 42-47.

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Children's Message

“Clear the way!”

Some of us will be taking trips in a few weeks, to visit family and friends who live in other places. Some of them are far away, some are just across town. Much of that travel will involve driving on the roads from here to there. And it's not unusual at this time of the year for the roads to be covered with snow or ice, or for the salt and snow plows to have made big pot-holes where patches have been cut out.

Have you ever traveled on roads like that? It can be kind of fun bouncing around when you're sitting on the back seat of a car that is driving over bumps and holes. Or sliding in circles in a parking lot. But it's not much fun for the driver, or very much good for the car, and it's really not safe at all for anyone in the car. Ice and holes in the road can cause accidents.

What can we do? When there is snow and ice on the roads, the salt trucks and snow plows need to clear a path. And if there are pot holes, other road builders need to come and put patches in the road to smooth out the rough spots.

In a way, the danger of snow-blocked and damaged roads is similar to the danger of a blocked and damaged heart. When our relationship to God is not clear, it can be dangerous for our spiritual lives.

People of God long ago spoke about making our hearts clear like the roads in winter time. They said that we need to turn away from the sin that can block us from knowing God, because God loves us and wants us to know him. To repair our relationships with one another, because God wants us to love one another.

On the road of life, from where we are now, to where God wants us to be, God is calling for us to clear the way!

Prayer

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Supplemental Materials

Invocation²

“O Lord, our God and Savior, come among us in this worship hour. Open our minds to understand your purpose for each of us. Open our hearts to make a ready response to your voice. Give us understanding of your will, and the courage and commitment to follow Jesus, who said, ‘I am coming to do your will, O God.’”

“May we heed the message to repent and bring forth fruits that show true repentance. Increase our love for you, O God, and for one another, we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

Benediction

“May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 15.5-6)

A Prayer for the Day³

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

“Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Grant us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.”

Offertory Prayer

Take us, O Creator God, and these our gifts, for use in building in your Kingdom, in making your holy name known here and everywhere, all for calling all humankind to repentance and right relationship with you. Amen.

Affirmation of Faith

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, through whom a change of heart toward God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and the new birth are brought about; who gives assurance of salvation and strength for obedience; who grants us power over sin, love over fear, and life over death; who sanctifies the believer and preserves him blameless until the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.

Salvation Story Study Guide, p. 129

² These may be reprinted for use in the worship service when this notice is included: “From *Invocations and Benedictions for the Revised Common Lectionary*, compiled and edited by John M. Drescher. Copyright © 1998 by Abingdon Press. Used by Permission.”

³ From *The Divine Hours: Prayers for Autumn and Wintertime*, compiled by Phyllis Tickle. New York: Doubleday, 2000.

Call to Worship

Leader: Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things.
Blessed be his glorious name forever; may his glory fill the whole earth.

Response 1: We have caught the vision splendid of a world which is to be.
When the pardoning love of Jesus freely flows from sea to sea.

Response 2: When all men from strife and anger, greed and selfishness are free.
When the nations live together in sweet peace and harmony.

Leader: Give the king your justice, O God;
May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice.

Response 1: We would help to build the city of our God, so wondrous fair;
Give our time, bring all our talents, and each gift a beauty rare.

Response 2: Powers of mind, and strength of purpose, days of labor, nights of strain,
That God's will may be accomplished, o'er the kingdoms he shall reign.

Leader: Give the king your righteousness, O God;
May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance
to the needy, and crush the oppressor.

Response 1: Founded on the rock of ages, built upon God's promise sure,
Strengthened by the cords of service, we shall stand firm and secure.

Response 2: When the Father, Son and Spirit crown our labors with success,
Men and angels then uniting shall God's mighty love confess.

Leader: In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound.

Unison: Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things.
Blessed be his glorious name forever; may his glory fill the whole earth.
Amen and amen.

from Psalm 72; and S/A song #83: Doris Rendell

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Scripture Study

Repentance

The themes from last Sunday are carried forward in these readings, with the Gospel reading holding the key of repentance. The New Testament passages rely heavily on Old Testament words and images, which again capture the hope to be embodied by the reign of Messiah: an in-between times ethic of right living.

Isaiah 2:1-5

The belief expressed in this vision, that the Temple in Jerusalem would once again be the focal point for worship and teaching, is by now a familiar concept, as are the images that describe the coming Prince of Peace: no more war, swords turned into plowshares, spears made into pruning hooks. The lesson is this: live now in the light of this coming reality.

Romans 15:4-13

The writer urges the congregation to adopt the characteristics of Christ in their treatment of one another: to live in harmony and mutual acceptance. By this witness to non-believers will God be glorified, and the kingdom reign extended.

Matthew 3:1-2

John appears as the voice of the Old Testament prophets, renewing the vision and voice of Isaiah I calling the people to repentance as the necessary condition to reforming the “people of God.” His words of judgment recognize that just as the kings of Israel and Judah sat on the throne but did not truly reign, so too are Israel’s leaders exhibiting a lack of inner appearances to reveal the righteous among them.

For a call-to-worship or benediction:

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

A prayer: asking God to endow the king with true kingdom values; that the king would rule with fairness and truth, and show concern for the weakest member.