



The INSTITUTE for
WORSHIP &
OUTREACH

WORSHIP SUGGESTIONS

Season of Advent, Year A

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

The Institute for Worship and Outreach is providing this seasonal resource to aid parish pastors in their worship planning. Many other worship planning resources are available, including, but not limited to, what can be found at the Synod's Commission on Worship [home page](#). So why add one more? The specific purpose of this resource is to give parish pastors ideas and resources that are:

- **Accessible.** We aim to provide musical suggestions with which just about any congregation with any level of musical talent can work.
- **Supplemental.** We don't aim to reinvent the wheel or duplicate what's being done elsewhere. For example, you won't find a full array of hymn suggestions, since those can be found in the recently-revised [Planning Christian Worship](#) series. Most often, suggestions for musical settings of the psalm of the day will not mention any of the *Christian Worship* resources (hymnal, new service settings booklet, supplement), since we assume pastors are aware of those.
- **Practical.** We aim to give you ideas, resources, even bulletin material that you can easily use. Feel free to copy and paste as much as you want.

SEASONAL FOCUS: ADVENT

Advent is a season of urgency. Paul pleads with us to "wake from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed." However, the urgency of Advent does not lead to doubt or worry. Instead, the promises God gives us fill us with confidence as we await our Savior's return. His commands (Wake up! Repent! Be patient! Don't be afraid!) are connected to his certain promises. As a result, we prepare for Immanuel's coming both urgently and eagerly.

SEASONAL MUSIC

Consider using the following resources on each of the Sundays in Advent:

Gathering Rite: [Awake, O Sleeper, Francis Patrick O'Brien](#). In the second lesson for Advent 1, Year A, Paul encourages believers, "The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed." The refrain for this Advent Gathering Rite makes use of that imagery. It the verses of the gathering song for Year A tie in beautifully with each week's theme. Please note: if you use this piece, you probably want to use the first lessons from *Christian Worship* (prophecies from Isaiah) rather than the narratives from *CW: Supplement*. The verses of the gathering song all make use of language from those Isaiah prophecies.

[Advent Gathering Song, James Chepponis](#). The fourth Sunday in Advent, Year A, gives God's people an opportunity to hear the prophecy (and its fulfillment) that the virgin's son would be called Immanuel, God with us. This advent gathering song makes use of that name for the Savior in its refrain, "Come, come, Emmanuel."

Verse of the Day: [Psalm and Gospel Acclamation for Advent, Stephen Pishner](#). The Alleluia refrain makes use of the tune VENI, EMMANUEL. The resources includes verses for each of the Sundays in Advent, although they don't exactly line up with the verses assigned in *Christian Worship*. The congregation sings the refrain. A choir or soloist sings the verse.

[Verses for the Sundays in Advent, David Cherwien](#). Alleluia refrain is a call and response between choir/leader and congregation.

Advent Wreath: *Christian Worship: Occasional Services* a responsive reading for each of the four weeks that explains the significance of the candles on the Advent wreath. The candles are lit following the responsive reading, which serves as a great opportunity for your choir to sing its anthem.

ADVENT 1

Focus: Wake up! Those who walk in the light will live.

During the season of Advent, we prepare our hearts for Christ's arrival. This week we are reminded that no one knows the day or time of that arrival. We cannot wallow in the darkness of sin or we will be swept away in judgment. No, because the day is coming, we must always be ready. Let us wake up and walk in the light of the Lord.

Lessons: First Lesson: Isaiah 2:1-5
Because the day is coming, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Second Lesson: Romans 13:11-14
Because the day is nearer now than ever, let us wake from our slumber.

Gospel: Matthew 24:36-44
Because the day comes unexpectedly, let us always be ready.

Psalm: Psalm 18
Musical Suggestions:
Aside from *Christian Worship*, very few settings of this psalm exist. Consider using Psalm 122, which most lectionaries make use of, as a substitute. [The Lyric Psalter](#), a one-volume set for Year C of the lectionary, includes a very accessible setting.

Verse: Revelation 22:20
Musical Suggestions:
See above under "Seasonal Music."

Anthem: [Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus, Robert Hobby](#). Can be sung SATB or two-part.

Hymns: [Savior of the Nations, Come, Jonathan Kohrs](#). This setting of a stanza not found in *Christian Worship* could be inserted into the congregation's singing of this classic Latin hymn written by St. Ambrose.

ADVENT 2

Focus: Repent! Those connected to the Branch bear fruit.

During the season of Advent, we prepare our hearts for Christ's arrival. This week we see how that preparation takes place, namely, through repentance. Repentance is nothing more than turning away from sin and turning toward Jesus. Jesus is the living Branch that grew up out of a dead stump. Connected to him, we will inevitably and abundantly produce good fruit.

Lessons: First Lesson: Isaiah 11:1-10
David's family tree had been cut down to a stump, but from it a branch would grow and bear fruit.

Second Lesson: Romans 15:4-13
The fruit of faith comes only from the Branch of Jesse.

Gospel: Matthew 3:1-12
John urges the people to produce the fruit of repentance and warns of God's ax for those who do not.

Psalm: Psalm 130
Musical Suggestions:
[Psalm Songs, Vol. 3](#). Part of a comprehensive three-volume set. Very interesting setting with a "bluesy" feel to it.

Verse: Luke 3:4,6
Musical Suggestions:
See above under "Seasonal Music."

Anthem: [There Shall Come Forth a Shoot from Jesse, Hal Hopson](#).

ADVENT 3

Focus: Be patient! Those who wait on the Lord will see salvation.

During the season of Advent, we prepare our hearts for Christ's arrival. This week we are reminded that while we wait for his return, our patience will be tested. Appearances will deceive. The wicked will seem to prosper and the righteous will seem to suffer. However, the coming of the kingdom of God completely changes that. In Christ, reality is brought to light and the darkness of doubt is dispelled.

Lessons: First Lesson: Isaiah 35:1-10
God promises that the coming of his kingdom would bring reality to sight.

Second Lesson: James 5:7-11
James urges patience until the Lord's coming.

Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11
John and his disciples doubt because appearances deceive.

Alternate Psalm: Psalm 146
Musical Suggestions:
[Psalm 146, James Chepponis](#). Includes three refrain texts, one specifically for Advent.

Verse: Matthew 11:10
Musical Suggestions:
See above under "Seasonal Music."

Anthem: [Waiting for the Promise, Lloyd Larson](#). Beautifully captures the mindset of God's people (whether Old Testament or New) as they wait for Christ's advent.

ADVENT 4

Focus: Don't be afraid! Those who trust his promises have peace.

During the season of Advent, we prepare our hearts for Christ's arrival. As Christmas nears, we focus especially on his first arrival as Immanuel, God with us, God in human flesh. That arrival was the fulfillment of hundreds of promises God had made and the foundation of our peace of mind and peace with God. Just as God always has, he will keep every promise he has made to us.

Lessons: Alternate First Lesson: Isaiah 7:1-14,(15-17)
In his time of fear, Ahaz doubted one of God's promises and, as a result, was given another.

Second Lesson: Romans 1:1-7
The gospel Paul preached was the fulfillment of all of God's promises.

Gospel: Matthew 1:18-25
An angel urges Joseph not to be afraid; everything was happening exactly as promised.

Psalm: Psalm 24
Musical Suggestions:
Consider reading selected verses of Psalm 24 and singing selected stanzas of "Lift Up Your Heads, You Mighty Gates" (CW 3,4), which makes use of imagery from the psalm. You could also have your choir prepare [Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates, Jonathan Kohrs](#), which includes the congregation in the singing of the same hymn.

[The Psalter: Psalms and Canticles for Singing](#). Makes use of tune from *Christian Worship* 363.

Verse: Matthew 1:23
Musical Suggestions:
See above under "Seasonal Music."

Anthem: [Come to Us, Emmanuel, Carmen Scialla](#). For SATB voices, but very accessible.

Special Rite: *Christian Worship: Altar Book* includes a prayer that incorporates the Great O Antiphons of Advent and the stanzas of "Oh, Come, Oh, Come Emmanuel." It could be used in place of the psalm or hymn of the day. Without the hymn stanzas it could serve as the Prayer of the Church.