

AWAITING THE ALREADY
Advent Worship Series – CANDLE LIGHT SERVICE
Preparing for Christ
December, 2020

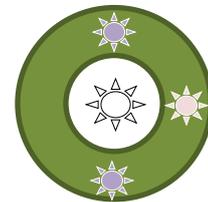
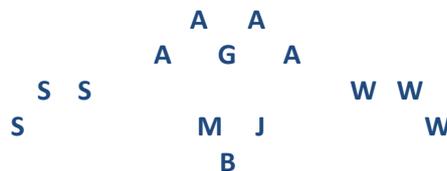
WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES

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.

This service is a variation on a service of light – the opposite of a Tenebrae service. A variety of candle lengths and colors will be placed on various kinds of fabrics at different heights for interest. Each candle symbolizes a character in the narrative. Candles will be lighted during the service as specified by the program notes included in this copy of the service.

The following candles should be placed (see diagram below) on a table in the platform area in preparation for the service:

- **Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus** candles are placed on a muslin or burlap fabric (PYTLOVINA) in the center of the table.
Mary – light blue candle in simple ceramic candleholder
Joseph – royal blue candle in simple ceramic candleholder (same as Mary's)
Baby Jesus – white votive candle (bigger round scented candle in glass holder) in a clear round candleholder
- The **Angel** candles (4) are yellow, placed in crystal candleholders on a glittery gold fabric directly behind the Mary and Joseph candles.
The **Gabriel** candle is like the Angel candles, but taller.
- The **Shepherd** candles (3) are a variety of shades of green, placed in wooden candleholders on a green shade of fabric. These are placed to the left of the Angel candles.
- The **Wise Men** candles (3) are a variety of shades of purple, placed in silver candlesticks on a fabric of red velvet. These are placed to the right of the Angel candles.
- **Advent Wreath** candles will be lighted near end of service.



Four (4) **Readers** will be needed to lead the service.

[NOTE: Everyone in congregation should receive a small candle upon entering the chapel.]

[Full lights as service begins. Four Readers stand across front of platform.]

Call to Worship:

Reader 1: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

Reader 2: *The earth was formless and empty,*

Reader 3: *and darkness covered the deep waters.*

Reader 4: *And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.*

Reader 2: *Then God said, "Let there be light,"*

Reader 3: *and there was light.*

Reader 1: *And God saw that the light was good.*

Reader 2: *Then he separated the light from the darkness." (Genesis 1:1-4, NLT)*

Reader 3: So you see, from the beginning,

Reader 4: there was light and darkness,

Reader 3: good and...well...not good.

Reader 1: Light was good,

Reader 2: darkness was evil.

Reader 3: Light was warm,

Reader 4: darkness was cold.

Reader 1: Light was God,

Reader 2: darkness was life without God.

Reader 3: And now for over 400 years,

Reader 1: it seemed like the world was becoming a darker place.

Reader 4: No one heard from God anymore—

Reader 2: they were left in a cold, dark world

Reader 3: seemingly all alone.

Reader 1: When would the light break through?

Reader 2: The shepherds were the first to see the light.

Reader 3: In the middle of a cold, dark night,

Reader 4: the skies exploded with the light of the heavens

Reader 2: as angels appeared and sent them on the journey of a lifetime,

Reader 3: to see a baby in a manger.

Reader 1: The wise men saw the light.

Reader 2: A star like no other led them on a different journey

Reader 3: to see the same child,

Reader 4: the promised Messiah.

Reader 1: Thirty years later, a voice calls out in the wilderness,

Reader 2: "Prepare the way for the Lord's coming! Clear the road for him!"

Reader 3: Many thought that John was the light,

Reader 4: but he pointed them to another.

Reader 2: The light they saw in him was only a reflection of a greater light.

Reader 1: Everyone carries a light in their soul,

Reader 2: but it is the source of that light that determines how brightly it shines.

Reader 3: The world is dark and cold.

Reader 1: And just like that night 2000 years ago,

Reader 2: it needs a light to break through.

Prayer:

Eternal and most holy God, we praise and honor you as we gather in the name of your dear Son, Jesus. During this Advent season we sense your nearness in the songs we sing and in the words we hear from Holy Scripture.

May your light and peace radiate about us and within us as we worship you today. We praise and thank you for this house of worship and this body of your church. In expectation and joy, we worship you now and each day until Jesus returns to claim his own. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

[All lights are dimmed — DARKNESS except for decorative lights/candles in the room, Christmas tree, etc.]

A Reading from the Prophets

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7, Micah 5:2

Reader 1:

²The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.
⁶For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:2, 6-7, NIV)

Reader 2:

²“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans of Judah,
out of you will come for me
one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of old,
from ancient times.” (Micah 5:2, NIV)

Readings from the Gospels

Reader 1: Luke 1:26-38 (NIV) – The Birth of Jesus Foretold

²⁶In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

³⁴ “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

³⁵ The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail.”

³⁸ “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

Reader 2: Matthew 1:18-25 (NIV) – Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

*[While congregation sings, **Gabriel** candle and **Mary and Joseph** candles are lighted.]*

Reader 1: Luke 2:1-7 (NIV) – The Birth of Jesus

¹ In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)

³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

[While congregation sings, **Baby Jesus** votive candle is lighted.]

Reader 2: Luke 2:8-14 (NIV) – Angels Appear to the Shepherds

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

[While congregation sings, the **Angel** candles are lighted. House lights go up a notch.]

Reader 1: Luke 2:15-20 (NIV) – The Shepherds Go and See

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

[While congregation sings, the **Shepherd** candles are lighted. House lights go up one notch.]

Reader 2: Matthew 2:1-11 (NIV) – The Wise Men Bring Their Gifts to Jesus

¹ After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

Reader 1:

⁶ “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;

for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.”

Reader 2:

⁷Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

⁹After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

*[While congregation sings, the **King** candles are lighted. House lights go up to full light.]*

The Lighting of the Christ Candle

Reader 3: Rejoice, people of God! The light has come into the world.

Reader 4: With the company of heaven and with sounds of great joy, you come to us. This is the time of light and resplendent joy.

Reader 3: The prophet Isaiah proclaimed a time when those who walked in the shadows would see a great light. A light would shine and a child would be born to us. The evangelist Luke painted the nativity sky and repeated the heavenly song of the angels, “Glory, peace on earth and goodwill!” John declared that this great light is Christ, the Word made flesh. This great light lives among us. By it we behold God's glory—full of grace and truth. At Christ's nativity, we now rejoice.

All: God, our Life and Light, thank you for coming this night to us. Thank you for touching all heaven and earth with your splendor. In every corner of the world, shine this night with your peace. In every corner of our hearts, shine this night with your grace. Amen.

[Advent Wreath candles: Relight the first four candles; then light the Christ Candle in the center of the wreath while saying:]

Reader 4: On this most holy day we light all four candles in our Advent wreath, and we are reminded of the Preparation, Expectation, Proclamation, and Revelation of His coming. As we light the Christ Candle, we rejoice that the promise of God has been fulfilled in the coming of the Baby born in a manger.

All: Gracious and Mighty King, we celebrate your goodness to us as we join the triumph and joy of Christmas. As your love has been revealed in all of its

fullness, we pray that love may abound in our hearts during this special day. Grant us the spirit of Christ that we may live in the fullness of his character every day. In His name we pray. Amen.

The Passing of the Light

[Congregation will move to form a large circle around the room. Candles will then be lit during the singing of Silent Night.]

Leader: As you light the candle of the person next to you, you are declaring “Jesus Christ is the Light of my life.”

Benediction:

Believe: for light is now in the world.