

2009 Christmas Joy Offering

This worship resource is for use on the fourth Sunday of Advent and is adaptable to any size congregation and any worship setting. Use all or part of this suggested service for a family-inclusive service. (If your congregation will not be receiving the Offering on this Sunday, you may wish to revise the order of worship.)

Lighting of the Advent Candles Isaiah 11:6, 9B

(Invite the church “family”—members of the congregation from each generation, e.g., a person in his or her eighties, sixties, forties, twenties, and single digits—to light the candles.)

Child voice: In the days to come, says the prophet Isaiah,

Senior voice: The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid,

Youth voice: the calf and the lion and the fatling together,

Adult voice: and a little child shall lead them.

All voices: For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Congregation: Let us walk in the light of the Lord.

The participants light the candles in silence.

Opening Prayer BCW p. 177

God of grace,
your eternal Word took flesh among us
when Mary placed her life
at the service of your will.
Prepare our hearts for his coming again;
keep us steadfast in hope
and faithful in service,
that we may receive the coming of his kingdom,
for the sake of Jesus Christ the ruler of all,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn People, Look East PH No. 12

Call to Confession

The gift of God’s presence among us in Jesus Christ is freely given: we have only to open our hearts to accept it. Yet we are so accustomed to depending on our own meager resources that our faith is small and stingy and often we only succeed in prying our hearts open just a crack. In full confidence that God will lift our sin from

us if we confess it and ask God's help in turning from it, let us now unburden ourselves by confessing our sin before God.

Prayer of Confession

God, Giver of all good gifts, We constantly fail to recognize your gifts.

Our very being is your creation, yet we spend much of our lives trying to recreate ourselves as independent beings.

The creative spirit that stirs within us is your breath, but our greed and lack of trust sour that breath to restlessness, impatience, and rebellion.

You gave us the world's rich garden for our nurture and delight, and we pry open the secrets of its creatures to recreate them more to our convenience.

You gave us the gift of love and companionship, and we recreated them as domination and exploitation.

Yes, God, you even gave us your own child to walk with us and among us in human form, that we might better recognize that love. And his coming we have recreated as an occasion frantic with the longing for things, a moment for measuring love by the objects it brings us.

Forgive us, God. In Jesus' name we pray, forgive us and free us. Remove from us this blind compulsion to control, and let us accept and trust your grace as all-sufficient. Let us loosen our hold on things that we may share them with one another as signs of your grace. In the name of the one whose incarnation of that grace we celebrate this season. Amen.

Silent Reflection

Assurance of Forgiveness BCW p. 56-57

Hear the good news!
Who is in a position to condemn?
Only Christ,
and Christ died for us,
Christ rose for us,
Christ reigns in power for us,
Christ prays for us.
Anyone who is in Christ
is a new creation.
The old life has gone;
a new life has begun.
Know that you are forgiven
and be at peace.

Amen.

Hymn **What Child Is This? PH No. 53**

Prayer for Illumination

First Reading Isaiah 7:10-16

Second Reading Ps. 80

Gospel Reading Matthew 1:18-25

Sermon

Affirmation of Faith Nicene Creed

Hymn **Joy to the World! PH No. 40**

Prayers of the People

Minute for Mission

(Use this opportunity to provide information about the Christmas Joy Offering.)

Offering

Offertory

Prayer of Dedication

God,

You fill our lives with your abundant grace. When we hoard what you have given us, it rots like manna with the morning sun. When we share your abundance with others, we know the joy for which you created us. May the gifts we share today bring joy to others as our witness to your love, the love made human in your Son, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Hymn Rejoice! Rejoice, Believers PH No. 15

Charge and Blessing BCW p. 160

Whatever you do, in word or deed,
do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God through him.
May the God of peace
make you holy in every way
and keep your whole being—
spirit, soul, and body—

free from every fault
at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Alleluia! Amen.

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Texts marked *BCW* are from the *Book of Common Worship*
(Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993).

Suggestions marked *PH* are from *The Presbyterian Hymnal*
(Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990).

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