



CHRISTMAS JOY

SPECIAL OFFERINGS

CHURCH LEADERS—PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

2018 Worship Resource

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Micah 5:2-5a; Psalm 80:1-7
Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)

Call to Worship

We come to glorify God,
to rejoice in the One who saves us.

**God comes, so we might believe,
so we might be blessed.**

Our hearts leap for joy!

For God is coming to us in a child.

**God comes for those who hunger for hope,
for those who thirst for grace.**

Holy is the One who comes in God's name,
who fulfills every promise of God.

**God comes to walk with those who follow in faith,
to bring peace to a shattered world.**

Prayer of the Day

Holy God,
scattering the proud,
you look with favor
on those the world ignores.

For you,
we wait for the One
who will feed us;

for you,
we wait for the One
who stands with us
in our loneliness and pain.

For you, we wait.

Jesus Christ,
born in a backwater town:
in you,

God fills the hunger
of our hearts;

in you,
God lifts us

from our hopelessness;
in you,
all the promises come true.
For you, we wait.

Holy Spirit,
hallower of God's people:
from you
comes faith,
so we might believe;
from you
comes belief,
so we might be blessed;
from you
come all blessings,
so we might give them away.
For you, we wait.

God in Community, Holy in One,
for you, we wait
Amen.

Call to Reconciliation

Every notion we have about power, success, wealth and achievement, God takes and tosses out the window. More importantly, God comes to us to upset our idea that we have to save ourselves. In Jesus, God comes to us, removing our sin, our failures, our expectations, so we might have life. Please join me as we pray together, saying,

Unison Prayer of Confession

Advent God, we confess we are not the people you hope us to be. The very ones you favor? All too often, we ignore them, or worse fill them with ridicule. The ones you knock off their pedestals? We continue to admire them, seeking to emulate their ways. The drumbeat for more and more? We live into that rhythm so easily, we risk being sent away empty.

Forgive us, mighty God, who comes in the weakness of a baby. Look with grace upon us, so we might see your love shining down. Help us to welcome Jesus Christ, the perfect gift for every season, into our hearts and into our lives, so we may live secure in your hope, offer peace for our world, and learn to do your will.

Silence is kept

Assurance of Pardon

God passes the heirloom of mercy down from generation to generation, always loving, always forgiving, always calling us to new life.

As we open our hearts to God, we are filled with the joy that was sung at the birth, with the hope that walked among us, with the grace which is always with us. Thanks be to God, we are forgiven! Amen.

Invitation to Offering

We have spent so much time, so much energy, trying to find just that right card, that special present, that perfect gift to offer to others. But like our God, all anyone wants from us is our grace, our hope, our joy, our love. Let us stop worrying and, like Mary, set out on the journey to God's heart, where we can offer ourselves, as well as our gifts, in this moment.

Prayer of Dedication

Holy God, look in favor on the imperfect gifts we with you in this act of worship. May they become mercy for those tossed aside by the world; may they become a family for those scattered by fear; may they become a meal for those whose stomachs are empty, and hope for those whose hearts are hollowed out by despair. This we ask in the name of the child who came to be a servant to all, Jesus.
Amen.

Invitation to the Table

Here at this table, the bitter food offered by the world is transformed into the bread of life; here at this table, the cup filled with tears of grief and fear becomes the cup of grace and hope; here at this table, everyone is invited, no one is turned away.

For this is not the minister's table; this is not the church's table, this is God's table.

All are welcome—

those who walk in faith, and those who trip over are welcome; their disbelief;

those who trust God hears their prayers, and those who long for someone to listen to their hearts,
are welcome;
those who are here every time we gather, and those who wonder what they are doing here,
are welcome.
For this is the table of grace, of joy, of love, of hope – and everyone is welcome!

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Peaceful One is with you!

And also with you!

Advent people, God looks in love upon you.

Our hearts overflow with the joy God has poured into us.

Rejoice this day in the One who comes to save.

We join in the chorus of the blessed who sing God's praises.

With patience, with gentleness,
you entered the emptiness of chaos,
God of wonder and awe,
spreading the rich soil of creation
from which sprang
flowers and fields,
vegetables and trees,
our ancestors in life.
You looked with favor upon them,
doing wondrous things for them.
But they wandered far from you,
losing themselves in the maze of thoughts
crafted by temptation and death.
You would not give up on them,
time after time sending prophets
with words of welcome and hope,
but they could not do your will.
So you sent Christ into the world,
filled with the Holy Spirit,
exclaiming with a living cry
of our salvation for all time.

With all those who trusted in what was unseen,
and those who believed the best would come,
we join our voices in singing your Advent praise:

Holy, holy, holy, God of grace and peace.

All creation waits for your purpose to be revealed.

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is the One who comes to do your will.

Hosanna in the highest!

You are holy, God of unending glory,
and blessed is Jesus Christ, hope of the world.

He came with haste, leaving your side
to set out on his journey for us.
The joy of your heart,
he came to proclaim your love;
the Word of your hope,
he came to call us home;
the fruit of your grace,
he was born to offer himself
for our salvation and freedom
from the power of sin,
making us your holy people
by his death and resurrection.

As we prepare to celebrate his birth,
as we remember the gift of his resurrection,
we would tell of that mystery we call faith:

**Christ was born,
so that we might see hope in the flesh;
Christ lived,
so that we might hear grace spoken aloud;
Christ died,
so that we might feel the breaking of God's heart;
Christ was raised,
so that we might know the promises are true;
Christ will come again,
so that we might be blessed as God's children.**

Pour out your Spirit upon the gifts of this Table
and upon your children who gather for your feast.
In this place, we are filled with the strength of hope,
so we may serve those
who hunger for goodness and grace.
Restored by the Cup of life,
we can dare to go out
to empty ourselves for those
who wander the streets of life,
unnoticed by the rest of the world.

And when your Advent has come to gather us home,
we will join with Elizabeth and Mary,
with Joseph and John the Baptist,
with our sisters and brothers from all time,
forever singing our joy to you,
God in Community, Holy in One. **Amen.**

Sending

Let us set out with haste to share God's good news.

**We will go to offer the gift of joy
to those overflowing with tears.**

Let us set out with hope to serve with Jesus.

**We will go to bring justice
to those looked down upon by the powerful.**

Let us set out with hearts filled with the Spirit.

**We will go to bring peace
to all those torn by fear and violence.**