



CHRISTMAS JOY

SPECIAL OFFERINGS

CHURCH LEADERS—PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

—prepared by the Rev. Dr. Byron Wade, General Presbyter, Presbytery of Western North Carolina

WORSHIP

“God is with us.” (Matthew 1:23)

The Perfect Gift

Revised Common Lectionary

Readings for the Fourth Sunday of Advent (Year B)

2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16

Luke 1:46b–55

Psalms 89:1–4, 19–26

Romans 16:25–27

Luke 1:26–38

Opening Hymn:

“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”

Glory to God 82

Opening Sentences

God is with us!

Let our souls magnify the Lord,

and our spirits rejoice in God our Savior.

God has looked with favor upon us.

The Mighty One has done great things for us.

Holy is God’s name!

Let us worship God.

Gathering Prayer/Prayer of Illumination

O Lord, on this day

we sing of your steadfast love

and faithfulness to every generation.

May your Holy Spirit enlighten our hearts and minds

in remembering your covenant

revealed in the words of Scripture.

Empower us in our hearing

that we may profess you as the rock of our salvation.

In the name of Christ, we pray. **Amen.**

Hymn:

“While We Are Waiting, Come”

Glory to God 92

Confession and Pardon

The goodness and graciousness of God
is from everlasting to everlasting.
Trusting in God’s grace,
let us confess our sin.

**Gracious and loving God,
your steadfast love and presence is always with us.
You are ever faithful
but we confess that we are not.
We continue to follow our own ways
instead of following you.
We treat others as strangers
instead of as people made in your image.
We hoard your resources
instead of sharing with others in need.
Forgive us, merciful God.
Restore us to a right relationship with you
through the Holy Spirit
that we may serve with joy and gladness.
We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Beloved, hear the good news!
Jesus, God-with-us, has come into the world
to save us from our sins and give us new hope.
Be assured that God’s grace is sufficient
and we can live a new life.
In Christ, we are forgiven.
Thanks be to God.

Prayers of Intercession

As we are gathered together in the house of the Lord,
let us freely offer up our supplications to God
who loves and hears us.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for the world. . . .
May we who are called to justice and peace

be instruments of your love to a world which is broken.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those in need. . . .
Let us be moved by your Holy Spirit
to take care of the needy,
feed the hungry,
clothe the naked,
strengthen the weak
and be present with those who are suffering.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our leaders. . . .
May those who govern
do so not by their own will
nor be swayed by the interests of others
but may they be led by your Holy Spirit.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the Church. . . .
May we as the gathered community
be led to not only be hearers of the Word
but to become an embodiment of Jesus
to your entire creation.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O, Lord, hear the prayers of your people.
May we rejoice in the coming of your Son,
Jesus, into the world.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Invitation to Offering

We are in expectation of receiving the perfect gift —
Emmanuel, God-with-us — in Jesus.
Let us respond with gratitude to God
by offering the gifts we have been given
through this Christmas Joy Offering.

Offertory Hymn:

“God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending”

Glory to God 716

Prayer of Dedication

Holy God, the giver of life
and all that is great and beautiful,
we thank you for the gifts of talent, time and resources,
and particularly for this Christmas Joy Offering.
As we offer these gifts back to you,
may they be used for your glory.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ,
God-with-us. **Amen.**

Invitation to the Lord's Table

Beloved, you are invited to this table.
This table is not conferred by power,
race, wealth or privilege.
The feast of the bread from heaven
and cup of salvation
is offered solely by God's grace.
Come and freely partake of God's gifts!

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Opening Dialogue ("The Lord be with you . . .") may be sung or spoken.

Great and holy God, we give you thanks
for each and every perfect gift that you have given.
It is you who created the whole world and everything in it.
We marvel at your handiwork
and are in awe of your presence
for you created humanity out of the dust and called us good.
You claimed a people as your own
and led them from enslavement to the Promised Land.
Even though we have turned away,
you never turned away from us.
You continue to lead us in the way of life everlasting.

Therefore, we sing with all the heavenly host:

The Sanctus ("Holy, holy, holy Lord . . .") may be sung or spoken.

We give you thanks for Jesus Christ, our Savior.
He came to earth as your incarnate Son,
teaching us the way of your Kingdom.
Jesus lived a life like ours but was without sin.

He healed the sick, comforted the lowly
and challenged unjust structures.
Although he died on the cross,
we rejoice at his resurrection and ascension
that we may experience new life.

The words of institution are spoken here, if not elsewhere.

We give you thanks, O Lord, that on the night of his arrest,
Jesus took the loaf of bread, blessed and broke it, saying:
“This is my body, which is broken for you.
Eat this in remembrance of me.”

We also give you thanks that on the same night,
Jesus took the cup, saying:
“This cup is the new covenant,
sealed in my blood for the forgiveness of sin.
As often as you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.”

Remembering Jesus, we break this bread and share this cup.
May we offer our lives in joyful service until he comes again.

The memorial acclamation may be sung or spoken.

Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again.

We give you thanks, O God, for the Holy Spirit.
May your Spirit be poured out on these gifts of bread and wine
so that we may be nourished and filled with your presence.
Let our lives be gifts to you, and send us out with hope
that we may be one with our neighbors, friends and loved ones
as the body of Christ in service to the world.

All blessing, honor and power
are yours, O Lord, now and forever. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer follows.

Hymn:

“My Soul Gives Glory to My God”

Glory to God 99

Blessing and Charge

As Mary found favor with God,
let us live into that same promise
rejoicing in Jesus — God-with-us —
this day and forevermore. **Alleluia!**

Go now and serve the Lord in joy and peace.
Amen.