



CHRISTMAS JOY

SPECIAL OFFERINGS

CHURCH LEADERS—PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Worship Resource 2021

“A Gift Opens Doors.” Proverbs 18:16

December 19, 2021

Theme: “A Gift Opens Doors.” – Proverbs 18:16

Revised Common Lectionary Texts

Micah 5:2–5a

Luke 1:46b–55 or Psalm 80:1–7

Hebrews 10:5–10

Luke 1:39–45

Opening Sentences

For the gift of this day,

We thank you, O Lord!

For the gift of this breath,

We thank you, O Lord!

For the gift of this church,

We thank you, O Lord!

Though we are many,

because of you,

we are one body.

So, we thank you, O Lord!

On this day,

with one voice,

as one body,

let us worship God.

Opening Prayer

Blessed Trinity, you alone are good and perfect. You give what the world cannot give: life itself.

Open heaven’s doors that we may glimpse your glory today and see how you intend us to live.

Let your light shine into our hearts that we might know your peace. May our worship of you

transform us and prepare us to share your gifts with the world. **Amen.**

Hymn #314

“Longing for Light (Christ, Be Our Light)”

Call to Confession

Christ’s light shines for all the world to see,

yet sin prevents us from seeing God’s kingdom in all its glory.

God’s gift of salvation is at hand,

yet forgiveness seems an impossible dream.

Trusting God's promise of love and mercy, let us turn to the Lord, naming the obstacles in our path to right relationship with God.

Prayer of Confession

Psalm 80:3, 7

**Holy One, Holy Three, every good and perfect gift comes from you,
yet we are not gracious receivers.**

We confess the ways that we have scorned your gifts:

we consume your blessings

without expressing our gratitude.

we hoard your abundance,

closing the door in the face of a needy world,

refusing to share with neighbors and strangers alike.

we ignore your invitation to salvation

and try to save ourselves.

Forgive us, O Lord.

Humble us to see the truth of who we are,

and who you call us to be.

Then, restore us, O God;

let your face shine, that we may be saved.

(... silent confession ...)

Assurance of Pardon

Proverbs 18:16

God's gift of Creation opened the door to life.

God's gift of Jesus Christ opened the door to salvation.

God's gift of forgiveness has opened the door each time our sinfulness and brokenness threatened to block the path and lock the door.

God's gracious giving offers us one more chance after one more chance.

Friends, believe the good news: In Jesus Christ you are forgiven today and every day.

In Jesus Christ you are forgiven — again!

Thanks be to God! Amen.

Response to Pardon, Hymn #646

"Sing Out, My Soul"

Prayer for Illumination

Jesus Christ, light of the world, open our hearts to receive your word this day.

Holy Spirit, sustaining fire, illumine the gifts God offers in the word today.

Eternal God, source of all glory, call us away from distractions that we might turn our eyes and ears to you.

Amen.

Suggested Preaching Text

Luke 1:39–55

Combining the canticle and Gospel readings will beautifully illumine the intention of the Christmas Joy Offering. Because God gave them good gifts, Mary and Elizabeth's hearts sing and "magnify" the Lord. In the midst of their abundance, the women remember God's promises for other "lowly" people. This passage inspires generosity and hope.

Suggested Sermon Illustrations

[“The Eye of the Beholder”](#) by Mike Ferguson (Presbyterian News Service); Nov. 2, 2021.

[“All of Life Is a Gift”](#) by Elizabeth Hagan (Christian Century); Nov. 16, 2015.

[“Nothing Stays the Same”](#) with the Rev. Paul Timothy Roberts Sr. (president of Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary); published by the Theological Education Fund; July 19, 2021

[Children’s Sermon](#) by Charlotte Nance-Allbright for the 2021 Christmas Joy Offering

[A gift opens the way and ushers the giver into the presence of the great.](#) (Proverbs 18:16 NIV) prepared by students at the Presbyterian Pan American School.

Response to the Word, Hymn

“How Great Our Joy”

This hymn is not in *Glory to God*. It may be found in *Lift Up Your Hearts, Worship and Rejoice, The Worshiping Church* and dozens of other denominations’ hymnals or

pcusa.org/christmasjoy/resources. (An alternative Hymn #100 “My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout” can be found in *Glory to God*.)

Affirmation of Faith

from “Belonging to God: A First Catechism” (Questions 1–5)

Who are you?

I am a child of God.

What does it mean to be a child of God?

That I belong to God, who loves me.

What makes you a child of God?

Grace — God's free gift of love that I do not deserve and cannot earn.

Don't you have to be good for God to love you?

No. God loves me in spite of all I do wrong.

How do you thank God for this gift of love?

I promise to love and trust God with all my heart.

How do you love God?

By worshiping God, by loving others, and by respecting what God has created.

Prayers of the People

Luke 1:39–55

Our souls magnify you, O Lord!

Our spirits rejoice in Christ, our Savior,

for you have done great things, and holy is your name!

Thank you, God, for the lowly saints who have done great things in your name, and whose testimonies inspire us today:

For Miriam who danced
after you scattered the Egyptians into the sea;
For David who was guided by your hand
and defeated the proud enemy;
For Ruth and Naomi who were lifted up from scarcity
into a place of abundance;
For Micah who knew injustice
and yet dared to prophesy of your coming justice;
For Mary and Elizabeth,
whose faithfulness brought joy in the face of change;

Our souls magnify you, O Lord!
**Our spirits rejoice in Christ, our Savior,
for you have done great things, and holy is your name!**

We long to see the world with your eyes, finding hope and joy in the midst of impossible situations,

yet our hearts are heavy with the cares of the world.

We pray for the lowly who are desperate for a sign of your care:

for those who are hungry, that they may be filled;

for those who are poor, that they may know the riches of heaven;

for those who are grieving, that they may be comforted;

for the broken in body or spirit, heart and mind, that they may find healing.

We trust that we are all safe in your hands and saved from whatever threatens us today.

Our souls magnify you, O Lord!

**Our spirits rejoice in Christ, our Savior,
for you have done great things, and holy is your name!**

O Lord, you have done great things in our life and in the life of the world,

yet we continue to see evil afoot,

pushing pride into the hearts of leaders;

pulling the powerful even higher;

and making the rich richer.

So, we are bold to pray not only for ourselves, our friends and family,

but also for communities, institutions and the nations:

we pray for places of division and warfare, that they would know your peace.

we pray for the Church, that we would act as one body, united by one faith.

we pray for the world, that we would reject other rulers and claim your Lordship.

Because we know that your kingdom is at hand,

and we trust that your will will be done,

Our souls magnify you, O Lord!

Our spirits rejoice in Christ, our Savior!

For you have done great things, and holy is your name.

Hear us as we pray together the prayer that Jesus Christ taught us, saying, **“Our Father ...”**

Invitation to Stewardship

Just as God’s gifts have opened doors in our lives, let us respond with generosity as we share from our abundance in hopes of opening doors to God’s mission and ministry here and around the world.

Sending Hymn #150

“As with Gladness Men of Old”

Charge

Go forth from this place

with ears open to hearing God’s Spirit in the world.

Then call out to others, “Blessed be!”

so that God's presence is magnified
and everyone can know the goodness of the Lord.

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