

Worship Plan - Church Year A 2022-2023



Nativity of our Lord - Christmas Eve - 12/24/2022

SERIES THEME

A SAVIOR IS BORN

The first Christmas sermon was preached to a small congregation consisting entirely of shepherds. The preacher was an angel. The message of his sermon? “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you.”

That is a heavy word: Savior. It says as much about us as it does about this child. If the angel had said “a teacher has been born” or “a mentor has been born,” it would mean that within us exists the potential to fix all that is wrong with the world. It would mean we just need a bit of help: a coach, a mentor, a source of inspiration. But the angel said, “A Savior has been born.” If one needs saving, it means he is totally helpless—completely lost—doomed, without outside intervention. That is how God the Father viewed us: helpless, lost, doomed. So, he sent more than a coach. He sent his only Son to be our Savior.

After December 25 the secular world is done with Christmas. But for the Church, the season of Christmas has just begun. For twelve glorious days—The Twelve Days of Christmas—we will ponder the nativity of the Son of God. We will celebrate what that nativity means. A Savior is born!

NOTE: In a worship folder, it might be wise to list all the themes, highlighting each successive week's theme. This lets people see the larger arc of the series.

*A Savior is Born to Change the World
A Savior is Born to Dwell Among Us*

*A Savior is Born to Be the True Son
A Savior is Born for All the Nations*

THEME OF THE DAY

A SAVIOR BORN TO CHANGE THE WORLD

Families cherish their Christmas traditions. Year after year, they decorate the tree with the same ornaments, play the same music, bake the same Christmas cookies. Without asking, family members know when they will open presents. If you try to change your family's Christmas traditions, you just might pick a fight! When it comes to family Christmases, people generally don't like things to change.

Because our celebration of Christmas is so steeped in unchanging traditions, it might be easy for us to miss that the Nativity of the Son of God meant radical change for the world. The birth of the Christ child meant that nothing in the world would ever be the same. We even divide history into the events that occurred “Before Christ” (BC) and after “Anno Domini” (AD), Latin for “Year of our Lord.”

Christmas traditions are wonderful. But make no mistake about it. Christmas is all about change. The Lord God came to change the world by becoming part of the world. Because we are part of the world, that means Christmas changes us too. This Christmas Eve, we see how.

FIRST READING

Micah 5:2-5a – The prophet foretold that out of a little town called Bethlehem would come one who would bring peace to the world.

SECOND READING

Titus 2:11-14 – The grace God showed us in sending his Son not only changes our lives now but also changes our eternal destiny.

GOSPEL

*** Luke 2:1-20 – This child's birth changed man's relationship with God. Sinful man is hostile to God. Because of what this child would do, a holy God is now at peace with man.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:

local choices

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:

346 - Angels We Have Heard on High

Psalm of the Day:

96

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:

Alleluia. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:

service may or may not include GA

Hymn of the Day:

329 - All My Heart Again Rejoices

additional hymn for Family Service: 340 - Away in a Manger

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:

353 - Joy to the World

Closing Hymn:

337 - Silent Night

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

Notes for the conservative service:

Traditional favorites have been chosen, subject to adjustment for the various services.

Notes for the ambitious service:

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023



Nativity of our Lord - Christmas Day - 12/25/2022

SERIES THEME

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After December 25 the secular world is done with Christmas. But for the Church, the season of Christmas has just begun. For twelve glorious days—The Twelve Days of Christmas—we will ponder the nativity of the Son of God. We will celebrate what that nativity means. A Savior is born!

THEME OF THE DAY

A SAVIOR BORN TO DWELL AMONG US

For centuries on Christmas Day the Church has read chapter one of St. John’s Gospel. There, in just a few simple words, Scripture describes the indescribable: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). The word God had spoken in the Garden, promising to send a Savior who was part of mankind, came true. God himself became flesh and blood—to be born under law, to suffer, and to die that he might redeem us.

The Greek word translated “made his dwelling” can also be translated “pitched his tent.” That word describes a temporary dwelling place. God came into our broken world to dwell for a time, so that one day we might go to God’s perfect home and dwell for all eternity.

Unlike those Christmas Eve shepherds, we cannot see Christ with our eyes. Yet still he dwells among us. For he is the Word made flesh. As we listen to the Word today, we truly are hearing the voice of Christ. As we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, we partake of his true body and blood. In Word and sacrament, still today, our Savior dwells among us, feeding our faith, preparing us for our true home.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 52:7-10 – The prophet foretold that the Lord would dwell among us, laying bare his arm, rolling up his sleeves and doing what was necessary to bring the good news of salvation to the ends of the earth.

SECOND READING

*** Hebrews 1:1-9 – In the past God sent angels and prophets as messengers to his people. In these latter days, God speaks to us through his Son who came to dwell among us.

GOSPEL

John 1:1-14 – The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:

local choices

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:

354 - O Come, All Ye Faithful

Psalm of the Day:

98

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:

Alleluia. But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:

service may or may not include GA

Hymn of the Day:

358 - Of the Father's Love Begotten

or

366 - O Rejoice, All Christians, Loudly

or

352 - Joy Has Dawned

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:

347 - Angels from the Realms of Glory

Closing Hymn:

350 - Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

352 - Joy Has Dawned

Notes for the conservative service:

The Hymn of the Day (358) is perhaps not a universal favorite but fits well with the sermon text selected. The Alt HotD (366) may still be fairly well known and has an easier chorale type setting than the version in CW 93.

Notes for the ambitious service:

Or the new Getty hymn (352) has a straightforward melody that even if new shouldn't require very much in the way of introduction.

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023



First Sunday after Christmas - 1/1/2023

SERIES THEME

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THEME OF THE DAY

A SAVIOR IS BORN TO BE THE TRUE SON

Christmas holidays mean family time. Extended family travel and visits. Meals are prepared, gifts given, memories are made. The memories might not all be good. Sometimes, Christmas dinners end in fights. Sometimes, hurt feelings keep family from coming together during the holidays. The painful reality is that we sinners fail our families, and our families fail us.

God knows what that’s like. He, too, wanted his children to be everything he hoped for them to be. But he was sorely disappointed. That’s why he made a plan. God the Father sent Jesus to be the son that he always wanted—reciprocal in love, perfect in obedience, unwavering in devotion. Jesus came to be everything that God wanted from us.

By coming to be the true Son of the Father, Jesus gives us rights to be redeemed sons and daughters—sons just like Jesus with the rights, the relationship, and the privileges of heirs.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 63:7-9 – The kindness of the Lord is seen in this. When his children turned away from him, he sent a Savior to redeem them.

SECOND READING

Galatians 4:4-7 – Since we have been redeemed by God’s true Son, we are now able to call God “Father.”

GOSPEL

*** Matthew 2:13-23 – God’s plan was to save the world by having his true Son serve as our substitute, dying on the cross. And so God saves his true Son from an early death.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:

Setting 3 (a small group may still sing the "verses" of the Gloria as the congregation sings the refrain?) and non-communion ending of the service; or this service might be a good place for a break and just have a service of the Word in which 349:1,2 could serve as a song of praise to replace the Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:

333 - O Little Town of Bethlehem

Psalm of the Day:

2

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:

Alleluia. Sing to the Lord a new song; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:

Setting 3

Hymn of the Day:

355 - Let All Together Praise Our God

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:

364 - Love Has Come

Closing Hymn:

334 - I Stand beside Your Manger Here

or

356 - God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

364 - Love Has Come

Notes for the conservative service:

364 is a new text, but the carol tune of "Bring a Torch, Jeanette Isabella" should be familiar to many and may not require introduction

Notes for the ambitious service:

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023



Epiphany of our Lord - 1/6/2023

SERIES THEME

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THEME OF THE DAY

A SAVIOR IS BORN FOR ALL THE NATIONS

The twelve days of Christmas culminate with the celebration of the Epiphany of our Lord. We commemorate the day when magi from afar worshiped the Christ Child. Before that day, Jesus had been worshiped by individuals of Jewish descent: the shepherds, elderly Simeon, the prophetess Anna. But Scripture said the coming Savior would be God’s gift to all nations. Epiphany proves that God keeps his promises, as he miraculously led foreigners to worship their Savior. Thus, Epiphany is sometimes called the Gentile Christmas. (The celebration of Epiphany likely precedes that of Christmas. Evidence of the Festival of Epiphany dates to Clement of Alexandria at the end of the second century.)

Epiphany continues to play out to this very day. God worked through a special star to bring the magi into the presence of their Savior—for Christ’s glory and the magi’s blessing. Likewise, God has controlled time and space to bring you into the presence of your Savior—for Christ’s glory and your blessing. Thus, the magi were only the first in a long line of Gentiles who would join Israel in worshipping Jesus as King. Indeed, a Savior is born for all the nations! Come, let us adore him!

FIRST READING

Isaiah 60:1-6 – The prophet foretold that one born king of the Jews would draw kings from distant nations to the light of his glory.

SECOND READING

Ephesians 3:2-12 – St. Paul explains that people of all nations are united together as complete equals in the Savior’s kingdom of grace.

GOSPEL

*** Matthew 2:1-12 – Magi from the east were the first in a long line of Gentiles who would join Israel in worshipping Jesus as King.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:

CW 21 Evening Prayer??

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:

371 - A Child Is Born in Bethlehem

or

376 - Rise Up and Shine

Psalm of the Day:

72

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:

Alleluia. 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.
Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:

evening service may or may not include GA

Hymn of the Day:

370 - How Lovely Shines the Morning Star

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:

372 - As with Gladness Men of Old

Closing Hymn:

374:1,2,4 - The Star Proclaims the King Is Here

or optional evening hymns if this service is held on Friday night

791 - Round Me Falls the Night

793 - Jesus, Tender Shepherd, Hear Me

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

371 - A Child Is Born in Bethlehem

791 - Round Me Falls the Night

793 - Jesus, Tender Shepherd

Notes for the conservative service:

376 - optional opening hymn sings the OT lesson and is familiar with the FOREST GREEN tune

Notes for the ambitious service:

371 - is a new text, but the carol tune of "Bring a Torch, Jeanette Isabella" should be familiar to many and may not require introduction

If this service is held on Friday night, the two evening hymns would likely need introduction. 791 (new tune for old text) would require introduction. 793 is a straightforward melody with refrain and may need some but perhaps not as much introduction.