

A Service of Advent Lessons and Carols

Prelude

All stand to sing

Hymn

Welcome and Announcements

The Bidding Prayer *All remain standing as the Officiant says*

Beloved in Christ, as we await the great festival of Christmas, let us prepare ourselves so that we may be shown its true meaning. Let us hear, in lessons from Holy Scripture, how the prophets of Israel foretold that God would visit and redeem the waiting people. Let us rejoice, in our carols and hymns, that the good purpose of God is being mightily fulfilled. Let us celebrate the promise that our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, will bring all people and all things into the glory of God's eternal kingdom. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor hear and see the Gospel.

First, let us pray for the world God so loves, for those who have not heard the Good News of the Gospel, or who do not believe it; for those who walk in darkness and in the shadow of death; and for the Church in this and every place, that it may be freed from all evil and fear, and may in pure joy lift up the light of the love of God.

These prayers and praises let us humbly offer to God, in the words that Christ himself taught us:

All say together

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Officiant continues

May the Lord, when he comes, find us watching and waiting, now and at all times. *Amen.*

All may be seated

The First Lesson *Genesis 3:8-14—Adam and Eve rebel against God*

They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate."

The Second Lesson *Isaiah 40:1-11—God calls on us to prepare for redemption*

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." A voice says, "Cry out And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass; their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers; the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers; the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arm and carry them in his bosom and gently lead the mother sheep.

All stand to sing
Hymn

All are seated

The Third Lesson *Jeremiah 31:31-34—A new covenant is promised*

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another or say to each other, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.

The Fourth Lesson *Baruch 4:26-5:9—Look East because salvation is at hand*

Look toward the east, O Jerusalem, and see the joy that is coming to you from God. Look, your children are coming, whom you sent away; they are coming, gathered from east and west, at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing in the glory of God. Take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction, O Jerusalem, and put on forever the beauty of the glory from God. Put on the robe of the righteousness that comes from God; put on your head the diadem of the glory of the Everlasting; for God will show your splendor everywhere under heaven. For God will give you evermore the name, "Righteous Peace, Godly Glory." Arise, O Jerusalem, stand upon the height; look toward the east, and see your children gathered from west and east at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing that God has remembered them. For they went out from you on foot, led away by their enemies; but God will bring them back to you, carried in glory, as on a royal throne. For God has ordered that every high mountain and the everlasting hills be made low and the valleys filled up, to make level ground, so that Israel may walk safely in the glory of God. The woods and every fragrant tree have shaded Israel at God's command. For God will lead Israel with joy, in the light of his glory, with the mercy and righteousness that come from him.

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The Fifth Lesson *Isaiah 11:1-9—The Spirit of the Lord will rest on the Holy One*

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

The Sixth Lesson *Zephaniah 3:14-18—The Lord will be among us*

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it.

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The Seventh Lesson *Luke 1:26-38—An angel announces that Mary will bear a son*

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For

nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

All stand to sing

Hymn

During the hymn, an offering is received and brought forward. At the end of the hymn, the Officiant and people say together

All things come of thee, O Lord, and of thine own have we given thee.

All remain standing for

The Responsory and the Collect for Advent

Officiant Stir up your power, O Lord,

People And with great might come among us.

Officiant Stir up your love, O Lord;

People And with tender strength, make us worthy to serve you.

Officiant Stir up your truth, O Lord;

People And with the breath of your Spirit, give us courage to live it.

Officiant The Lord be with you.

People And also with you.

Officiant Let us pray.

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The Advent Blessing *Said by the Officiant*

May Almighty God, by whose providence our Savior Christ came among us in great humility, sanctify us with the light of his blessing and set us free from all sin. *Amen.*

May he whose second coming in power and great glory we await, make us steadfast in faith, joyful in hope and constant in love. *Amen.*

May we, who rejoice in the first Advent of our Redeemer, at his second Advent be rewarded with unending life. *Amen.*

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon us and remain with us for ever. *Amen.*

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Welcome and Announcements

The Bidding Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

The First Lesson *Genesis 3:8-14—Adam and Eve rebel against God*

The Second Lesson *Isaiah 40:1-11—God calls on us to prepare for redemption*

Hymn

The Third Lesson *Jeremiah 31:31-34—A new covenant is promised*

The Fourth Lesson *Baruch 4:26-5:9—Look East because salvation is at hand*

Hymn

The Fifth Lesson *Isaiah 11:1-9—The Spirit of the Lord will rest on the Holy One*

The Sixth Lesson *Zephaniah 3:14-18—The Lord will be among us*

Hymn

The Seventh Lesson *Luke 1:26-38—An angel announces that Mary will bear a son*

Hymn with Offertory

*During the hymn, an offering is received and brought forward. At the end of the hymn, the
Officiant and people say together*

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The Responsory and the Collect for Advent

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Hymn

Notes for Advent Lessons and Carols

The Advent Service of Lessons and Carols may be led by a lay Officiant wearing a cassock and surplice.

Inviting a different reader for each reading helps get people to the service! You might also invite representatives from the community (elected officials, first responders, school administration or teachers, etc) to be readers—that's a wonderful way to include the whole town in your service.

The hymns may be traditional, or Taize music, or anthems (pieces performed by guest musicians). The sample liturgy has a hymn after every pair of readings, but you are welcome to do a hymn after each reading, though you may wish to do just a few verses of each hymn. If you are unsure of being able to have musicians at all, you might simply include two verses of "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" after every pair of readings - it's a hymn folks should be able to sing a cappella, and is familiar to just about everyone!

If you wish to include a homily, you can insert it between the Seventh Lesson and the hymn.

I recommend printing each reading in large type and placing them in a binder on the lectern for your readers.

I included seven readings in the sample liturgy. *The Book of Occasional Services* offers these guidelines for selecting readings for the service, which you can also find [here](#):

Traditionally, nine lessons are read, but it is acceptable to use fewer. The lesson from the third chapter of Genesis is always included.

Genesis 2: 4b-9, 15-25

God creates man and woman to live in obedience to him in the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 3: 1-22 or 3: 1-15

Adam and Eve rebel against God and are cast out of the Garden of Eden.

Isaiah 40: 1-11

God comforts his people and calls on them to prepare for redemption.

Jeremiah 31: 31-34

A new covenant is promised which will be written in our hearts.

Isaiah 64: 1-9a

God is called upon to act and to come among us.

Isaiah 6: 1-11

God reveals his glory to the prophet and calls him to be his messenger.

Isaiah 35: 1-10

The prophet proclaims that God will come and save us.

Baruch 4: 36--5: 9

The Scribe Baruch urges the people to look East because salvation is at hand.

Isaiah 7: 10-15

God promises that a child shall be conceived who will be known as "God with us."

Micah 5: 2-4

The one who is to rule Israel will be born in the village of Bethlehem.

Isaiah 11: 1-9

The Spirit of the Lord will rest upon the Holy One.

Zephaniah 3: 14-18

The Lord will be among us; we are summoned to rejoice and sing.

Isaiah 65: 17-25

God promises a new heaven and a new earth.

One of the following readings from the gospel may, if desired, be used to end the lessons.

Luke 1: 5-25

An angel announces to Zechariah that his wife Elizabeth will bear a son.

Luke 1: 26-38 or 1: 26-56

The Angel Gabriel announces to the Virgin Mary that she will bear the Son of the Most High.

Hymn Suggestions:

The Hymnal 1982

Hymns 53-76–Advent

Hymns 263-270–Annunciation (most are rarely sung, but folks might know 265, “The angel Gabriel”)

Taize

[Wait for the Lord](#)

[In the Lord I’ll be ever thankful](#)

[The kingdom of God](#)