



CHRISTMAS JOY
SPECIAL OFFERINGS

CHURCH LEADERS—PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Worship Resource 2017

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Christmas Eve, Year B

First Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7

Psalter: 96:1-13

Second Reading: Titus 2:11-14

Gospel Reading: Luke 2:1-14

Call to Worship (based on Isaiah 9:2-7)

One: *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.*

All: We have come to follow the light, even if it blinds us.

One: *For a child has been born for us, a son given to us.*

All: We have come to praise a God who would choose vulnerability over invincibility.

One: *His name is Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

All: We have come to worship Emmanuel—God-with-us: in light, in flesh, in joy!

Prayer of the Day (based on Psalm 96 and Luke 2)

Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice
for you have come to us this night in the form of an infant:
vulnerable, messy, and full of promise.
Before your birth was declared to the nations,
it was announced to ordinary shepherds working the night shift.
Help us too to look up and hear the angels' glorious refrain
of peace and good will.
Make your holy presence known to us
in song and prayer,
in Word and Sacrament;
then send us out with gratitude and joy
to declare the good news that Love has come to save us;
through Jesus Christ, Lord of all creation. **Amen.**

Call to Confession (based on Titus 2:13)

The wait is over! For the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, is here!

With joy and confidence, let us confess our sin.

Prayer of Confession (based on Titus 2:11-14 and Luke 2:1-14)

God of Grace, your appearance surrounds us, but we are distracted by worldly passions and miss signs of your salvation. You have instructed us to not fear, but we are threatened by uncertainty and by what little control we have over our lives, so we cling to our possessions, privilege, and small-minded priorities. Forgive us, we pray, and reveal to us a better way of living, that we might be reflections of your holiness, godliness, and zeal for goodness, through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon (based on Isaiah 9:2-7)

One: The yoke of bondage has been lifted from our shoulders!

All: Glory to God in the highest!

One: With the authority to forgive and the grace to heal, our freedom is secured!

All: Glory to God in the highest!

Thanks be to God for this indescribable gift!

Call to Offering

Mr. Rogers said, "We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It's easy to say, *'It's not my child, not my community, not my problem.'* Then there are those who see a need and respond." With joy, let us see and respond to children we might not know, to communities near *and* far, and to problems of the world with the gifts of our life and labor.

Prayer of Dedication

God of Hosts, bless this offering that we have freely and joyfully given to this church and the people and places of the Church around us. Your generosity allows us to gather coins and dollars, time and talents, passion and peace to help proclaim Emmanuel! Our old and our young have reached into their pockets, perhaps their stockings, and their hearts to offer a Christmas gift back to you. May our gifts be purposed with love toward the people of the world, who in Christ's birth are all made descendants of the House of David. With one voice let us say, **Amen.**

Invitation to the Table

At this table, there is no need for registration. Here, we are undocumented; we are skeptics; we are church regulars; we are weary; we are astonished. We will come from Uptown*, from the 'burbs, from different denominations, from Grandma's house, and from down the street. We will gather here as shepherds and angels, eager to greet the Prince of Peace. Here at this table, we will experience an expansive manger whose generosity creates more and more room for the children of the world. Whether we have been turned away from the inn or celebrated like a prince, in this modern-day manger scene, we are united as one by the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation. So come—a Christmas feast awaits!

*To make this more personal to your congregation, consider adding your own geographical nomenclature. For instance, you could change Uptown to Fishtown (Philly), Far West (Austin), or Coke Road (Winnsboro, TX).

Prayer after Communion

Adonai, you called us from the hills and valleys and we gathered to feast on the beauty and brightness of your love. We gathered with imperfect people and called it perfect because Christ brought us here as one body. Just as the manger scene was messy with birth, animals, and earth, this table now lies messy before us, a sign that new life has begun. Send us out from this table back to the hills and valleys eager to proclaim the good news of Love made real. Amen.

Charge & Benediction

Our worship is over, but our service has only just begun—so go out into the world changed by the joy of light and empowered by the hope held in darkness. Get messy, shepherd the Good News, and join the heavenly hosts proclaiming peace. As you do, may you know the blessings of God the Giver, the grace of Christ the Messiah, and the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Glory to God in the highest! **Amen.**

