



GOD WITH US

A Series of Special Services for Advent

WEEK 1:
Our Potter



WEEK 2:
Our Shepherd



WEEK 3:
Our Living Branch



WEEK 4:
Our Guide



WORSHIP KIT





A Series of Special Services for Advent

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A Series of Special Services for Advent

About the Series

This Advent series for traditional worship focuses on the ways in which God is with us through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Each week will focus on a different word picture of the coming Christ found in the poetic and prophetic words of Isaiah. Services will reveal how Christ continues to be present with us even now. The theme verse for the entire series is: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us)" (Matthew 1:23). Hymns in the series include "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," "Comfort, Comfort Ye, My People" "Once He Came in Blessing," "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming," and "Prepare the Royal Highway."

- **Week 1:** Our Potter (Isaiah 64:8): God is with us as our Potter, who shapes according to his will.
- **Week 2:** Our Shepherd (Isaiah 40:11): God is with us as our Shepherd, who carries us close to his heart.
- **Week 3:** Our Living Branch (Isaiah 11:1): God is with us as our Living Branch, who died and rose to give us eternal life.
- **Week 4:** Our Guide (Isaiah 2:3): God is with us as our Guide, who leads us according to his Word.

Each service features a sermon, a children's message and prayers, along with newsletter/bulletin notices about the series.

The kit includes everything you need for each service as well as a CD-ROM (Mac/PC) with the text of the entire kit in .rtf (rich text format), newsletter/bulletin notices, hymns, visual media recommendations, contemporary music song suggestions and PowerPoint documents of all the services with images and text (along with a copyright release) for use on screens.

Ordering Information

Pre-printed bulletins, blank bulletins, and several other resources are available. Call Creative Communications for the Parish at 1-800-325-9414, or visit us on the web at www.creativecommunications.com for current pricing and availability.

Printed bulletins Order Codes:

Service 1 (Our Potter) **GSKA**

Service 2 (Our Shepherd) **GSKB**

Service 3 (Our Living Branch) **GSKC**

Service 4 (Our Guide) **GSKD**

Blank 8 1/2" x 11" bulletins Order Codes:

Service 1 (Our Potter) **GSKE**

Service 2 (Our Shepherd) **GSKF**

Service 3 (Our Living Branch) **GSKG**

Service 4 (Our Guide) **GSKH**

Blank 8 1/2" x 14" bulletins Order Codes:

Service 1 (Our Potter) **GSKJ**

Service 2 (Our Shepherd) **GSKK**

Service 3 (Our Living Branch) **GSKL**

Service 4 (Our Guide) **GSKM**

Fabric banner. 36" x 60". **GSKBR**

Promotional posters (set of 3) 11" x 17". **GSKPR**

Bulletin insert. 5 3/8" x 8 3/8" **GSKBL**

Bookmark. 2 1/2" x 7". **GSKBK**

Promotional postcard. 4 1/4" x 5 1/2". **GSKPC**

Advent and Christmas motion background for screens **GSKSM**

Signature collection **GSKSK**

Complete collection **GSKCK**

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A Series of Special Services for Advent

Week 1: Our Potter

Newsletter Notice

Join us for our Advent worship series, God With Us. Each week will focus on a different word picture of the coming Christ found in the poetic and prophetic words of Isaiah. In our worship for the first week in Advent we will remember that God is with us as our Potter, who shapes us according to his will.

Bulletin Notice

Welcome to our Advent worship series, God With Us. Each week in this series focuses on a different word picture of the coming Christ found in the poetic and prophetic words of Isaiah. In our worship for today we will remember that God is with us as our Potter, who shapes us according to his will.



A Series of Special Services for Advent

Week 2: Our Shepherd

Newsletter Notice

Join us for our Advent worship series, God With Us. Each week will focus on a different word picture of the coming Christ found in the poetic and prophetic words of Isaiah. In our worship for the second week in Advent we will remember that God is with us as our Shepherd, who carries us close to his heart.

Bulletin Notice

Welcome to our Advent worship series, God With Us. Each week in this series focuses on a different word picture of the coming Christ found in the poetic and prophetic words of Isaiah. In our worship for today we will remember that God is with us as our Shepherd, who carries us close to his heart.



A Series of Special Services for Advent

Week 3: Our Living Branch

Newsletter Notice

Join us for our Advent worship series, God With Us. Each week will focus on a different word picture of the coming Christ found in the poetic and prophetic words of Isaiah. In our worship for the third week in Advent we will remember that God is with us as our Living Branch, who died and rose to give us eternal life.

Bulletin Notice

Welcome to our Advent worship series, God With Us. Each week in this series focuses on a different word picture of the coming Christ found in the poetic and prophetic words of Isaiah. In our worship for today we will remember that God is with us as our Living Branch, who died and rose to give us eternal life.



A Series of Special Services for Advent

Week 4: Our Guide

Newsletter Notice

Join us for our Advent worship series, God With Us. Each week will focus on a different word picture of the coming Christ found in the poetic and prophetic words of Isaiah. In our worship for the fourth week in Advent we will remember that God is with us as our Guide, who leads us according to his Word.

Bulletin Notice

Welcome to our Advent worship series, God With Us. Each week in this series focuses on a different word picture of the coming Christ found in the poetic and prophetic words of Isaiah.

In our worship for today we will remember that God is with us as our Guide, who leads us according to his Word.



A Series of Special Services for Advent

Week 1: Our Potter

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A Series of Special Services for Advent

Week 1: Our Potter

Order of Service

Opening Hymn..... Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates

Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates! Behold, the King of glory waits;
The King of kings is drawing near; the Savior of the world is here.
Life and salvation he doth bring; wherefore rejoice and gladly sing:
We praise thee, Father, now, Creator, wise art thou!

A Helper just he comes to thee, his chariot is humility,
His kingly crown is holiness; his scepter, pity in distress,
The end of all our woe he brings; wherefore the earth is glad and sings:
We praise thee, Savior, now, mighty in deed art thou!

O blest the land, the city blest, where Christ the Ruler is confessed!
O happy hearts and happy homes to whom this King in triumph comes!
The cloudless Sun of joy he is, who bringeth pure delight and bliss.
We praise thee, Spirit, now, our Comforter art thou!

Fling wide the portals of your heart; make it a temple set apart
From earthly use for heav'n's employ, adorned with prayer and love and joy.
So shall your Sov'reign enter in and new and nobler life begin.
To thee, O God, be praise for word and deed and grace!

Redeemer, come! I open wide my heart to thee; here, Lord, abide!
Let me thy inner presence feel; thy grace and love in me reveal;
Thy Holy Spirit guide us on until our glorious goal is won.
Eternal praise and fame we offer to thy name.

Invocation

P In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Lighting the Advent Wreath

Confession and Absolution

C **Loving Father, who sent Jesus as Savior of the world, we confess that our busy doing and decorating have shrouded our Advent and caused us to close our eyes to the Christ Child. Forgive us for shaping the celebration to fit our desires. Seize us by your Spirit. Focus our eyes and hearts on the coming Christ. Inspire us with your gift, so that we shout from the housetops the Good News that in the coming Savior God is indeed with us. Make us into your joy-filled messengers, sharing your powerful message of salvation for all.**

P Jesus has promised that the sins we forgive on earth will also be forgiven in heaven. Trusting that precious promise, as a called and ordained minister of the Gospel, I confidently declare to you that, in Jesus Christ, all of your sins are forgiven and you are privileged to share that same forgiveness with all the others in your life. We are filled with Jesus' light of life so that we can shine among the people of this world like stars in the sky.

Call to Worship

P A voice cries out, "In the wilderness clear a way for the Lord;

C **make a way in the desert, a road for our God.**

P Every valley must be lifted up, and every mountain and hill leveled.

C **The rough places will become a level plain, the rugged land a wide valley.**

P The glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it at the same time.

C **For the Lord has decreed it.”**

P “Go up on a high mountain, O herald Zion!

C **Shout out loudly, O herald Jerusalem! Shout, don’t be afraid!**

P Say to the towns of Judah, ‘Here is your God!’”

C **“Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son.**

P And they shall call his name Immanuel (which means God with us).”

C **“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”**

Hymn of Praise Once He Came in Blessing

Once he came in blessing, all our ills redressing;
Came in likeness lowly, Son of God most holy;
Bore the cross to save us, hope and freedom gave us.

Still he comes within us, still his voice would win us
From the sins that hurt us; would to truth convert us
From our foolish errors ere he comes in terrors.

Thus, if thou hast known him, not ashamed to own him,
But wilt trust him boldly nor dost love him coldly,
He will then receive thee, heal thee, and forgive thee.

He who thus endureth bright reward secureth.
Come, then, O Lord Jesus, from our sins release us;
Let us here confess thee till in heav’n we bless thee.

Prayer of the Day

Children’s Message

Old Testament Reading Isaiah 64:1-9

Epistle Reading 2 Timothy 2:20-21

Gospel Reading John 6:35-40

Have thine own way, Lord, have thine own way;
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after thy will,
While I am waiting, yielded and still.

Have thine own way, Lord, have thine own way;
Search me and try me, Master, today.
Whiter than snow, Lord, wash me just now,
As in thy presence humbly I bow.

Have thine own way, Lord, have thine own way;
Wounded and weary, help me, I pray.
Power, all power, surely is thine,
Touch me and heal me, Savior divine.

Have thine own way, Lord, have thine own way;
Hold o'er my being absolute sway.
Fill with thy Spirit till all shall see
Christ only, always living in me.

Sermon

Offering

Prayers

Each petition ends with following response:

P Lord, in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

Lord's Prayer and Benediction

Closing HymnCome, Thou Precious Ransom, Come

Come, thou precious ransom, come, only hope for sinful mortals!
Come, O Savior of the world! Open are to thee all portals.
Come, thy beauty let us see; anxiously we wait for thee.

Enter now my waiting heart, glorious King and Lord most holy.
Dwell in me and ne'er depart, though I am but poor and lowly.
Ah, what riches will be mine when thou art my guest divine!

My hosannas and my palms graciously receive, I pray thee;
Evermore, as best I can, Savior, I will homage pay thee,
And in faith I will embrace, Lord, thy merit through thy grace.

Hail, hosanna, David's Son! Help, Lord, hear our supplication!
Let thy kingdom, scepter, crown, bring us blessing and salvation,
That forever we may sing: Hail! Hosanna to our king!

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A Series of Special Services for Advent

Week 1: Our Potter

Complete Script for Worship Leaders

- If desired, an **Environmental Projection** is shown on a screen or on the walls of your worship space to set the tone for the service before the service begins or throughout the service at various points:

<https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/creating-jar-vase-white-clay-closeup-537960268>

- The **Opening Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Milwaukee 88 88 88 66:

Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates! Behold, the King of glory waits;
The King of kings is drawing near; the Savior of the world is here.
Life and salvation he doth bring; wherefore rejoice and gladly sing:
We praise thee, Father, now, Creator, wise art thou!

A Helper just he comes to thee, his chariot is humility,
His kingly crown is holiness; his scepter, pity in distress,
The end of all our woe he brings; wherefore the earth is glad and sings:
We praise thee, Savior, now, mighty in deed art thou!

O blest the land, the city blest, where Christ the Ruler is confessed!
O happy hearts and happy homes to whom this King in triumph comes!
The cloudless Sun of joy he is, who bringeth pure delight and bliss.
We praise thee, Spirit, now, our Comforter art thou!

Fling wide the portals of your heart; make it a temple set apart
From earthly use for heav'n's employ, adorned with prayer and love and joy.
So shall your Sov'reign enter in and new and nobler life begin.
To thee, O God, be praise for word and deed and grace!

Redeemer, come! I open wide my heart to thee; here, Lord, abide!
Let me thy inner presence feel; thy grace and love in me reveal;
Thy Holy Spirit guide us on until our glorious goal is won.
Eternal praise and fame we offer to thy name.

- The **Invocation** is spoken responsively by the pastor and the congregation:

☞ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

☞ **Amen.**

- The **Lighting of the Advent Wreath** is spoken by the pastor, while an acolyte lights one purple or blue candle on the Advent Wreath:

☞ We are in the first week of Advent that helps us recall the hope we have in Christ. In the Covenant, God told Abraham that through him all the nations of the world would be blessed. Because of that Covenant, Abraham trusted and put his hope in God. The Old Testament spoke of the coming of the Messiah, the Christ. The promised Savior would be born a king in the line of King David. He would rule the world wisely and bless all the nations. We, too, hope in God's promise to send the Messiah again to this world to establish his kingdom forever.

(An acolyte lights the first purple or blue candle.)

The gift of hope is our light shining in a dark place. As we look at the light of this candle we celebrate the hope we have in Jesus Christ. Paul tells us: "... we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:3-5).

With Abraham and Sarah and all the ancestors of old, we call you Father. Your love is revealed to us in the New Covenant, given by Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of David. Help us prepare to celebrate his birth, to make our hearts ready and to place our hope in you. Help us celebrate your promise of forgiveness and life as we seek your strength to do your will by

sharing your hope with others. We ask it in the name of the true gift of life, the Child born in Bethlehem. Amen.

- The **Confession and Absolution** is spoken responsively by the congregation and the pastor:

C Loving Father, who sent Jesus as Savior of the world, we confess that our busy doing and decorating have shrouded our Advent and caused us to close our eyes to the Christ Child. Forgive us for shaping the celebration to fit our desires. Seize us by your Spirit. Focus our eyes and hearts on the coming Christ. Inspire us with your gift, so that we shout from the housetops the Good News that in the coming Savior God is indeed with us. Make us into your joy-filled messengers, sharing your powerful message of salvation for all.

P Jesus has promised that the sins we forgive on earth will also be forgiven in heaven. Trusting that precious promise, as a called and ordained minister of the Gospel, I confidently declare to you that, in Jesus Christ, all of your sins are forgiven and you are privileged to share that same forgiveness with all the others in your life. We are filled with Jesus' light of life so that we can shine among the people of this world like stars in the sky.

- The **Call to Worship** is spoken responsively by the pastor and the congregation:

P A voice cries out, "In the wilderness clear a way for the Lord;

C make a way in the desert, a road for our God.

P Every valley must be lifted up, and every mountain and hill leveled.

C The rough places will become a level plain, the rugged land a wide valley.

P The glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it at the same time.

C For the Lord has decreed it."

P "Go up on a high mountain, O herald Zion!

C Shout out loudly, O herald Jerusalem! Shout, don't be afraid!

P Say to the towns of Judah, 'Here is your God!'"

C "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son.

P And they shall call his name Immanuel (which means God with us)."

C "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

- A **Hymn of Praise** is sung by the congregation to the tune Gottes Sohn Ist Kommen 66 66 66:

Once he came in blessing, all our ills redressing;
 Came in likeness lowly, Son of God most holy;
 Bore the cross to save us, hope and freedom gave us.

Still he comes within us, still his voice would win us
 From the sins that hurt us; would to truth convert us
 From our foolish errors ere he comes in terrors.

Thus, if thou hast known him, not ashamed to own him,
 But wilt trust him boldly nor dost love him coldly,
 He will then receive thee, heal thee, and forgive thee.

He who thus endureth bright reward secureth.
 Come, then, O Lord Jesus, from our sins release us;
 Let us here confess thee till in heav'n we bless thee.

- The **Prayer of the Day** is read by the pastor:

☐ God our Father and Creator, we lie in your hands like unformed clay. We have nothing in ourselves that can shape our lives and our future. “But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us” (2 Corinthians 4:7). Form us, Lord, into willing clay jars that can carry the light of God in us. Send us to offer your presence and power to those around us. In Jesus’ precious name. Amen.

- The **Children’s Message** is delivered by the pastor or other worship leader:

(In preparation, if possible, get a clay pot, like planter pot, or a picture of a plain pot—you can find a picture on Google Images).

☐ Anyone know what this is? *(Allow the children to respond.)* Yes, it’s a plain clay pot. What do you think you might find in a pot like this? *(Affirm responses.)* Do you think you might find a great treasure in this pot? *(Allow the children to respond.)* You are right—probably not. People put treasures in fancy containers. Yet it is true that as Jesus’ followers, we have a treasure in us. It is the treasure of forgiveness and the promise of heaven that God gives us as a gift because of Jesus. But we are not fancy treasure chests. St. Paul says we are “common clay pots.” Still we are very special clay pots. We do have a treasure in us—Jesus and the Good News about what he has done for us. God’s miracle is that even in us, even in people as common and plain as we might be, we carry the light of God in us, a light that can bring Jesus to those around us. So we don’t keep the treasure in us. We give it to those around us so that they will know that it is not our treasure we offer, but God’s. *(Share a prayer, asking the children to add petitions.)*

- The **Old Testament Reading**, Isaiah 64:1-9, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

Ⓟ Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence—as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil—to make your name known to your adversaries, and that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome things that we did not look for, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him. You meet him who joyfully works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways. Behold, you were angry, and we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved? We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities. But now, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Be not so terribly angry, O Lord, and remember not iniquity forever. Behold, please look, we are all your people.

- The **Epistle Reading**, 2 Timothy 2:20-21, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

Ⓟ Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

- The **Gospel Reading**, John 6:35-40, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

Ⓟ Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

- A **Sermon Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Adelaide 54 54 54 54:

Have thine own way, Lord, have thine own way;
 Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.
 Mold me and make me after thy will,
 While I am waiting, yielded and still.

Have thine own way, Lord, have thine own way;
Search me and try me, Master, today.
Whiter than snow, Lord, wash me just now,
As in thy presence humbly I bow.

Have thine own way, Lord, have thine own way;
Wounded and weary, help me, I pray.
Power, all power, surely is thine,
Touch me and heal me, Savior divine.

Have thine own way, Lord, have thine own way;
Hold o'er my being absolute sway.
Fill with thy Spirit till all shall see
Christ only, always living in me.

- If desired, this **Mini Movie** (purchased by you from Worship House Media: worshiphousemedia.com) is presented on a screen at this time to highlight the theme of the service:

<https://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/62330/potter-and-clay>

- The **Sermon** is delivered by the pastor:

¶ Once upon a time, there was a rather remarkable woman named Elouise. What made Elouise different was that she fairly glowed with the joy of her faith. While others talked about religion, Elouise lived her faith. While others complained about other people and the weather, Elouise anticipated tomorrow and looked toward a bright future. While others planned programs and fussed about the operation of the congregation, Elouise went about teaching and comforting and supporting others.

And the strangest thing happened. The more Elouise served, the more she seemed to glow. The more she did for others, the more a strange kind of light seemed to come from her. And it got brighter and brighter with each passing day.

Soon Elouise's glow was so bright that it kind of hurt people's eyes to be around her. Her light was so different from what people were used to. Most people made their own kind of portable light that shone on themselves so that others could see and admire them. But Elouise's light didn't shine on her at all. It shone from her and lit those around her. And it was so bright that it showed every blemish and fault, every age spot and scar, every imperfection they had. And, over time, Elouise became very unpopular indeed. At least to some, to some who loved the darkness of their own light.

“Oh, it doesn’t matter,” said Elouise. “For every person who hides from the light, another finds the way. Perhaps some are tired of trying to make their own light or tired of trying to stand in the twilight of their own goodness. Perhaps they have found the darkness too deep and too frightening. Here they find the way—not mine—it is not my light—but God’s.”

Of course, Elouise’s story is a parable. We do not actually glow when we do the good that God would have us do. Let’s face it, we could never manage our lives if we did glow with the good that we were able to do. It would not be long before we would begin to compare ourselves with each other. “I’m not as bright as I could be,” we would say to ourselves, “But at least I am brighter than that other guy there who calls himself a Christian.” And soon we would be in a brightness contest, trying to be the brightest and best so that others would admire us. But that’s not the way the story goes. Elouise glowed with her goodness. But she did not make the light. She could not. Neither can we.

Indeed, God has made us to live our faith. He has shaped us, like a potter shapes a piece of clay, to be the followers of Jesus we were meant to be. But no matter how you measure it, we are not treasures. We note what St. Paul said, “We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (2 Corinthians 4:7 NIV). “Jars of clay” or common clay pots—not very glamorous. Not very notable. Not even able to argue with the Potter about what kind of pot we want to be. But pots we are. God’s pots. Shaped by his hand. Made according to his will.

And God does not mean us to remain empty. Empty is our natural state. And we can work very hard to put something of meaning in ourselves. But for all our work and will, we end up with a pot full of nothing. Isaiah says: “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6 NIV). That’s the best we can do. That empty space in the pot that we are, we cannot fill with anything of value.

And yet God has made us to be carriers of his gifts. Though we cannot fill ourselves with anything, God in Christ seeks to fill us with treasure. Unearthly treasure. Treasure we cannot create or sustain. Again as Paul says: “But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us” (2 Corinthians 4:7 NIV). Indeed we are common clay pots. We have nothing of value of ourselves. But we have an unearthly treasure in us. A glowing, miraculous, wondrous, treasure—a treasure that we have the privilege of offering to all those around us, especially to those who are still empty, broken and lost in the darkness. The treasure is Jesus Christ. He is the gift that God offers. And amazingly he dwells in us. Paul reminds us: “Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life” (Philippians 2:15b-16 NIV).

We are shaped by the hand of God, created by him and redeemed by Jesus Christ for the purpose of offering God’s treasure—forgiveness and life. What an amazing gift!

The story is told about the mother who took her young son to visit a great cathedral. The lad looked around in amazement. “Mother, who are those people in the windows all around us?” “They are God’s saints,” she replied. “I get it,” he said. “Saints are people who the light shines through.”

We are God’s saints, redeemed by Jesus Christ, shaped by the hand of God, filled with the Spirit so that the light of God’s grace can shine through us and light all those who remain in darkness. We are God’s stars lighting up the sky. Go! Shine! Amen.

- The **Offering** is collected at this time. If desired, this **Audio Track** (purchased by you from Worship House Media: worshiphousemedia.com) is presented at this time for reflection on the theme of the service:

<https://www.worshiphousemedia.com/audio-tracks/39978/the-potters-hand>

- The **Prayers** are offered:

Each petition ends with the following response:

P Lord, in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

+

P Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead and Christ will give you light. Let us pray that the light of Christ will be our continual guide in all our daily actions. Lord, in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

P Cast away the works of darkness and fill us with the treasure of your light. Let us pray that the light of Christ will illuminate our foolish and sinful ways, and give us true repentance for our sins. Lord, in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

P You created us to be the ones filled with your presence and shaped according to your will so that we will share the treasure of your indwelling Christ. Lord, in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

P You are the light of the world, and so let your light shine through us to all. Let us pray that the light of Christ will give us a greater vision and make us communities of light. Lord, in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

Ⓟ “Because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death” (Luke 1:78-79), Let us pray that the light of Christ will shine through us and enter the hearts of all who live in grief, despair, deprivation and depression. Lord, in your mercy,

Ⓒ **Hear our prayer.**

Ⓟ Light has come into the world, but those who do evil hate the light. Let us pray that the light of Christ will shine through us and inflame the hearts of all those who prefer to live in darkness and ignore the truth as revealed in the Babe of Bethlehem and the Christ at Calvary in his loving and sacrificial death for all. Lord, in your mercy,

Ⓒ **Hear our prayer.**

Ⓟ The Lord will be in us and be our everlasting light, and our days of mourning shall be ended. Let us pray that the light of Christ, shining in his resurrection, will brighten our paths when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death and in our last moments on earth. Lord, in your mercy,

Ⓒ **Hear our prayer.**

Ⓟ Amen.

- The **Lord’s Prayer** is spoken in unison.
- The **Benediction** is spoken responsively by the pastor:

Ⓟ Now may the light of Christ shine in us. May he continue to shape us and fill us with the treasure of his presence and may almighty God, Father, Son and Spirit bless and keep us now and always. Amen.

- The **Closing Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune *Meinen Jesum Lass’ Ich Nicht* (Darmstadt) 78 78 77:

Come, thou precious ransom, come, only hope for sinful mortals!
Come, O Savior of the world! Open are to thee all portals.
Come, thy beauty let us see; anxiously we wait for thee.

Enter now my waiting heart, glorious King and Lord most holy.
Dwell in me and ne’er depart, though I am but poor and lowly.
Ah, what riches will be mine when thou art my guest divine!

My hosannas and my palms graciously receive, I pray thee;
Evermore, as best I can, Savior, I will homage pay thee,
And in faith I will embrace, Lord, thy merit through thy grace.

Hail, hosanna, David's Son! Help, Lord, hear our supplication!
Let thy kingdom, scepter, crown, bring us blessing and salvation,
That forever we may sing: Hail! Hosanna to our king!

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A Series of Special Services for Advent

Week 1: Our Potter

Scripture Readings

- The **Old Testament Reading**, Isaiah 64:1-9, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

Ⓔ Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence—as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil—to make your name known to your adversaries, and that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome things that we did not look for, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him. You meet him who joyfully works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways. Behold, you were angry, and we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved? We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities. But now, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Be not so terribly angry, O Lord, and remember not iniquity forever. Behold, please look, we are all your people.

- The **Epistle Reading**, 2 Timothy 2:20-21, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

Ⓟ Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

- The **Gospel Reading**, John 6:35-40, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

Ⓟ Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

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A Series of Special Services for Advent

Week 1: Our Potter

Children's Message

- The **Children's Message** is delivered by the pastor or other worship leader:

*(In preparation, if possible, get a clay pot, like planter pot,
or a picture of a plain pot—you can find a picture on Google Images).*

- ☐ Anyone know what this is? *(Allow the children to respond.)* Yes, it's a plain clay pot. What do you think you might find in a pot like this? *(Affirm responses.)* Do you think you might find a great treasure in this pot? *(Allow the children to respond.)* You are right—probably not. People put treasures in fancy containers. Yet it is true that as Jesus' followers, we have a treasure in us. It is the treasure of forgiveness and the promise of heaven that God gives us as a gift because of Jesus. But we are not fancy treasure chests. St. Paul says we are "common clay pots." Still we are very special clay pots. We do have a treasure in us—Jesus and the Good News about what he has done for us. God's miracle is that even in us, even in people as common and plain as we might be, we carry the light of God in us, a light that can bring Jesus to those around us. So we don't keep the treasure in us. We give it to those around us so that they will know that it is not our treasure we offer, but God's. *(Share a prayer, asking the children to add petitions.)*



A Series of Special Services for Advent

Week 1: Our Potter

Sermon

- The **Sermon** is delivered by the pastor:
 - Once upon a time, there was a rather remarkable woman named Elouise. What made Elouise different was that she fairly glowed with the joy of her faith. While others talked about religion, Elouise lived her faith. While others complained about other people and the weather, Elouise anticipated tomorrow and looked toward a bright future. While others planned programs and fussed about the operation of the congregation, Elouise went about teaching and comforting and supporting others.

And the strangest thing happened. The more Elouise served, the more she seemed to glow. The more she did for others, the more a strange kind of light seemed to come from her. And it got brighter and brighter with each passing day.

Soon Elouise's glow was so bright that it kind of hurt people's eyes to be around her. Her light was so different from what people were used to. Most people made their own kind of portable light that shone on themselves so that others could see and admire them. But Elouise's light didn't shine on her at all. It shone from her and lit those around her. And it was so bright that

it showed every blemish and fault, every age spot and scar, every imperfection they had. And, over time, Elouise became very unpopular indeed. At least to some, to some who loved the darkness of their own light.

“Oh, it doesn’t matter,” said Elouise. “For every person who hides from the light, another finds the way. Perhaps some are tired of trying to make their own light or tired of trying to stand in the twilight of their own goodness. Perhaps they have found the darkness too deep and too frightening. Here they find the way—not mine—it is not my light—but God’s.”

Of course, Elouise’s story is a parable. We do not actually glow when we do the good that God would have us do. Let’s face it, we could never manage our lives if we did glow with the good that we were able to do. It would not be long before we would begin to compare ourselves with each other. “I’m not as bright as I could be,” we would say to ourselves, “But at least I am brighter than that other guy there who calls himself a Christian.” And soon we would be in a brightness contest, trying to be the brightest and best so that others would admire us. But that’s not the way the story goes. Elouise glowed with her goodness. But she did not make the light. She could not. Neither can we.

Indeed, God has made us to live our faith. He has shaped us, like a potter shapes a piece of clay, to be the followers of Jesus we were meant to be. But no matter how you measure it, we are not treasures. We note what St. Paul said, “We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (2 Corinthians 4:7 NIV). “Jars of clay” or common clay pots—not very glamorous. Not very notable. Not even able to argue with the Potter about what kind of pot we want to be. But pots we are. God’s pots. Shaped by his hand. Made according to his will.

And God does not mean us to remain empty. Empty is our natural state. And we can work very hard to put something of meaning in ourselves. But for all our work and will, we end up with a pot full of nothing. Isaiah says: “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6 NIV). That’s the best we can do. That empty space in the pot that we are, we cannot fill with anything of value.

And yet God has made us to be carriers of his gifts. Though we cannot fill ourselves with anything, God in Christ seeks to fill us with treasure. Unearthly treasure. Treasure we cannot create or sustain. Again as Paul says: “But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us” (2 Corinthians 4:7 NIV). Indeed we are common clay pots. We have nothing of value of ourselves. But we have an unearthly treasure in us. A glowing, miraculous, wondrous, treasure—a treasure that we have the privilege of offering to all those around us, especially to those who are still empty, broken and lost in the darkness. The treasure is Jesus Christ. He is the gift that God offers. And amazingly he dwells in us. Paul reminds us: “Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life” (Philippians 2:15b-16 NIV).

We are shaped by the hand of God, created by him and redeemed by Jesus Christ for the purpose of offering God's treasure—forgiveness and life. What an amazing gift!

The story is told about the mother who took her young son to visit a great cathedral. The lad looked around in amazement. "Mother, who are those people in the windows all around us?" "They are God's saints," she replied. "I get it," he said. "Saints are people who the light shines through."

We are God's saints, redeemed by Jesus Christ, shaped by the hand of God, filled with the Spirit so that the light of God's grace can shine through us and light all those who remain in darkness. We are God's stars lighting up the sky. Go! Shine! Amen.

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A Series of Special Services for Advent

Week 1: Our Potter

Prayers

- The **Prayers** are offered:

Each petition ends with the following response:

P Lord, in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

+

P Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead and Christ will give you light. Let us pray that the light of Christ will be our continual guide in all our daily actions. Lord, in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

P Cast away the works of darkness and fill us with the treasure of your light. Let us pray that the light of Christ will illuminate our foolish and sinful ways, and give us true repentance for our sins. Lord, in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

P You created us to be the ones filled with your presence and shaped according to your will so that we will share the treasure of your indwelling Christ. Lord, in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

P You are the light of the world, and so let your light shine through us to all. Let us pray that the light of Christ will give us a greater vision and make us communities of light. Lord, in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

P “Because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death” (Luke 1:78-79), Let us pray that the light of Christ will shine through us and enter the hearts of all who live in grief, despair, deprivation and depression. Lord, in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

P Light has come into the world, but those who do evil hate the light. Let us pray that the light of Christ will shine through us and inflame the hearts of all those who prefer to live in darkness and ignore the truth as revealed in the Babe of Bethlehem and the Christ at Calvary in his loving and sacrificial death for all. Lord, in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

P The Lord will be in us and be our everlasting light, and our days of mourning shall be ended. Let us pray that the light of Christ, shining in his resurrection, will brighten our paths when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death and in our last moments on earth. Lord, in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

P Amen.



A Series of Special Services for Advent

Week 3: Our Living Branch

Contemporary Music Song Suggestions

- The following song suggestions can be used for a more contemporary worship service in place of the more traditional hymns included in this kit. Rights to use these songs in the service must be purchased by your parish through CCLI or other copyright licensing agencies.

“God With Us” by Jason Ingram and Leslie Jordan

“I Am the Vine” by John Michael Talbot

“Abiding in the Vine” by David Baroni

“Branches” by Blair Sanders, Jonathan Cole Novak, Jonathan Prickett, Josh Coad and Rachel Coad

“Rooted in God’s Love” by Jay Stocker

“I Will Delight” by John Andrew Schreiner and Walt Harrah

“Family Tree” by Jason Houser and Matthew West

“Spirit of the Living God” by Jacob Sooter and Mia Fieldes

“Only a God Like You” by Tommy Walker



A Series of Special Services for Advent

Week 4: Our Guide

Music Guide

Veni Emmanuel LM and refrain	142-143
Gloria 77 77 and refrain	144-145
Bereden Väg För Herran 76 76 77 66	146-147
CWM Rhondda 87 87 877	148-149
Contemporary Music Song Suggestions	150

Tune.....Veni Emmanuel LM and refrain

The image displays a musical score for the hymn 'Veni Emmanuel LM and refrain'. The score is written for piano and is organized into four systems, each consisting of a treble and bass clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is common time (C). The first system begins with a common time signature and a first-measure rest in both staves. The second system starts at measure 6. The third system starts at measure 11. The fourth system starts at measure 16. A large, diagonal watermark reading 'Creative Communications Sample' is overlaid across the center of the page, partially obscuring the musical notation.

- The **Opening Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Veni Emmanuel LM and refrain:

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

O come, our Wisdom from on high, who ordered all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

O come, O Key of David, come, and open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

O come, our Dayspring from on high, and cheer us by your drawing nigh,
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

O come, Desire of nations, bind in one the hearts of all mankind;
Oh, bid our sad divisions cease, and be yourself our King of Peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

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Musical notation for measures 1-5. The score is in treble and bass clefs with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The melody in the treble clef begins with a quarter rest, followed by a dotted quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The bass clef accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note pattern: G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4.

Musical notation for measures 6-10. The melody continues with a dotted quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The bass clef accompaniment continues with the eighth-note pattern, including a measure with a dotted quarter note G3 and an eighth note A3.

Musical notation for measures 11-16. The melody features a dotted quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The bass clef accompaniment continues with the eighth-note pattern, including a measure with a dotted quarter note G3 and an eighth note A3.

Musical notation for measures 17-21. The melody continues with a dotted quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The bass clef accompaniment continues with the eighth-note pattern, including a measure with a dotted quarter note G3 and an eighth note A3.

- A **Hymn of Praise** is sung by the congregation to the tune Gloria 77 77 and refrain:

Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains:
Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heav'nly song?
Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

See within a manger laid Jesus, Lord of heav'n and earth!
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid, sing with us our Savior's birth.
Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

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Measures 1-5 of the piece. The music is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The right hand starts with a whole rest in the first measure, followed by a half note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The left hand starts with a whole rest in the first measure, followed by a half note G3, a quarter note A3, and a quarter note B3. The piece concludes with a final chord of G4-B4-D5 in the right hand and G3-B3-D4 in the left hand.

Measures 6-9 of the piece. The right hand plays a half note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The left hand plays a half note G3, a quarter note A3, and a quarter note B3. The piece concludes with a final chord of G4-B4-D5 in the right hand and G3-B3-D4 in the left hand.

Measures 10-13 of the piece. The right hand plays a half note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The left hand plays a half note G3, a quarter note A3, and a quarter note B3. The piece concludes with a final chord of G4-B4-D5 in the right hand and G3-B3-D4 in the left hand.

Measures 14-17 of the piece. The right hand plays a half note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The left hand plays a half note G3, a quarter note A3, and a quarter note B3. The piece concludes with a final chord of G4-B4-D5 in the right hand and G3-B3-D4 in the left hand.

- A **Hymn of Response** is sung by the congregation to the tune Bereden Väg För Herran 76 76 77 66:

Prepare the royal highway; the King of kings is near!
Let ev'ry hill and valley a level road appear!
Then greet the King of glory foretold in sacred story:
Hosanna to the Lord, for he fulfills God's Word!

God's people, see him coming: your own eternal king!
Palm branches strew before him! Spread garments! Shout and sing!
God's promise will not fail you! No more shall doubt assail you!
Hosanna to the Lord, for he fulfills God's Word!

Then fling the gates wide open to greet your promised king!
Your king, yet ev'ry nation its tribute too should bring.
All lands, bow down before him! All nations, now adore him!
Hosanna to the Lord, for he fulfills God's Word!

His is no earthly kingdom; it comes from heav'n above.
His rule is peace and freedom and justice, truth, and love.
So let your praise be sounding for kindness so abounding:
Hosanna to the Lord, for he fulfills God's Word!

The image displays a musical score for the tune 'CWM Rhondda 87 87 877'. The score is written in a two-staff system, with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The music is presented in four systems, each consisting of a pair of staves. The notation includes various note values (quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes), rests, and chordal accompaniment. A large, semi-transparent watermark reading 'Creative Communications Sample' is overlaid diagonally across the middle of the page.

- The **Closing Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune CWM Rhondda 87 877:

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land.
I am weak, but thou art mighty; hold me with thy pow'rful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more;
Feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain, whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through.
Strong deliv'rer, strong deliv'rer, be thou still my strength and shield;
Be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death and hell's destruction, land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs of praises, songs of praises, I will ever give to thee;
I will ever give to thee.

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A Series of Special Services for Advent

Week 4: Our Guide

Contemporary Music Song Suggestions

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“God With Us” by Jason Ingram and Leslie Jordan

“I Will Follow” by Chris Tomlin, Jason Ingram and Reuben Morgan

“Lead Me” by Chris Rodriguez, Paige Elizabeth Lewis and Rachel Lampa

“Guiding Light” by Paul Baloche

“Lead Me Guide Me” by Monica Brown

“Make a Way” by Jason Ingram and Jon Egan

“God Will Make a Way” by Don Moen

“One Way” by Joel Houston and Jonathan Douglass

“You Are the Way” by Pat Sczebel

“Follow You” by Ed Cash, Jack Mooring and Leeland Mooring