



THE GIFT OF

Joy



A SERVICE FOR CHRISTMAS EVE  
LEADER'S GUIDE

# Creative Communications Sample



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## A SERVICE FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

### CHRISTMASEVE: THE GIFT OF JOY

### NOTES AND ORDERING INFORMATION

The wondrous gift of joy comes down from heaven above in the Savior, who is Christ the Lord. The good news of great joy that the angels sang of on this holy night and the joy the shepherds felt as they ran to the Babe of Bethlehem are captured in this candlelight service for Christmas Eve that celebrates the birth of Jesus. Hymns in the service include "Joy to the World," "O Little Town of Bethlehem," "Angels We Have Heard on High" and "Silent Night." Written by Rev. Dean Nadasdy and Rev. Reed Lessing.

*Printed bulletins (8 1/2" x 11") are available. Code **FHAN***

*Blank bulletins (8 1/2" x 11") are available. Code **FHAP***

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A SERVICE FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

CHRISTMAS EVE:  
THE GIFT OF JOY

NEWSLETTER/BULLETIN NOTICES

NEWSLETTER NOTICE

We invite you to join us for a very special Christmas Eve service entitled, “The Gift of Joy,” which is part of our “From Heaven Above” worship series. The good news of great joy that the angels sang of on that holy night and the joy the shepherds felt as they ran to the Babe of Bethlehem will be captured in Scripture, song, sermon and candlelight in this touching and celebratory service.

BULLETIN NOTICE

Welcome to Christmas Eve worship! The good news of great joy that the angels sang of on this holy night and the joy the shepherds felt as they ran to the Babe of Bethlehem will wash over you as we join together in Scripture, song, sermon and candlelight to celebrate the birth of Jesus, our Gift of Joy from heaven above.



## A SERVICE FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

### CHRISTMASEVE: THE GIFT OF JOY

#### COMPLETE SCRIPT FOR WORSHIP LEADERS

- The **Theme Verse** is read aloud by the pastor at the start of the service or is read silently by the congregation before worship begins:

*I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Luke 2:10*

- If desired, an **Environmental Projection** of shepherds and angels (purchased by you from istockphoto.com) to symbolize the joy of the Luke 2 text 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:

<http://www.istockphoto.com/photo/christmas-nativity-scene-gm497838722-79347771?st=2c3f059>

- The **Opening Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Vom Himmel Hoch LM, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

“From heav’n above to earth I come to bear good news to ev’ry home;  
Glad tidings of great joy I bring, whereof I now will say and sing:

“To you this night is born a child of Mary, chosen virgin mild;  
This little child of lowly birth shall be the joy of all the earth.

“He will on you the gifts bestow prepared by God for all below,  
That in his kingdom, bright and fair, you may with us his glory share.”

My heart for very joy must leap; my lips no more can silence keep.  
I, too, must sing with joyful tongue that sweetest ancient cradlesong.

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

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

**C** Amen.

**P** Every good and perfect gift is from heaven above,

**C** Coming down from the Father of lights.

**P** We gather to celebrate the good and perfect gift of joy.

**C** God’s Word does not return empty.

**P** But accomplishes what he desires

**C** And achieves the purpose for which he sends it.

**P** So that we go out in joy

**C** And are led forth in peace.

**P** The mountains and hills burst into song.

**C** And all the trees of the field clap their hands.

**P** In the town of David a Savior is born.

**C** He is Christ the Lord.

**P** This is good news of great joy

**C** For all the people!

- **The Lighting of the Advent Wreath** is spoken responsively by the pastor and the congregation with hymn verses sung by the congregation to the tune In Dulci Jubilo 66 66 66 55, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

Now sing we, now rejoice, now raise to heav'n our voice;  
He from whom joy streameth poor in a manger lies;  
Not so brightly beameth the sun in yonder skies.  
Thou my Savior art! Thou my Savior art!

**P** On this Christmas Eve we light the Christ candle and call it Joy.

(The acolyte lights all of the candles.)

**P** Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

**C** In his great mercy he has given us an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

**P** In this we greatly rejoice

**C** And are filled with inexpressible and glorious joy.

**P** In the town of David a Savior is born.

**C** He is Christ the Lord.

**P** This is good news of great joy

**C** For all the people!

Oh, where shall joy be found? Where but on heav'nly ground?  
Where the angels singing with all his saints unite,  
Sweetest praises bringing in heav'nly joy and light.  
Oh, that we were there! Oh, that we were there!

- The **Confession and Absolution** is read responsively by the pastor and congregation with the hymn verse sung by the congregation to the tune In Dulci Jubilo 66 66 66 55, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

**P** Good and giving God, as much as we want Christmas to be the best of times, sometimes it is the worst of times.

**C** Some of us have spent too much money and we are worried sick about it.

**P** Others of us are struggling with our health, or the health of a loved one.

**C** Some are wrestling with old hurts that won't heal and new wounds that won't go away.

**P** Still others are missing loved ones this Christmas—

**C** Either because of distance, death or because of cruel design.

**P** Our hurts and lost hopes rob us of Christmas joy.

**C** And we dwell in the darkness of sin and unbelief.

**P** I bring you good news of great joy. Not for some of the people. Not for most of the people. Not for a lot of the people. This is good news of great joy for all the people. Joy and forgiveness are Christ's gifts to everyone! In the town of David a Savior is born. He is Christ the Lord. This is good news of great joy

**C** For all the people!

Now through his Son doth shine the Father's grace divine.

Death was reigning o'er us through sin and vanity.

Till he opened for us a bright eternity.

May we praise him there! May we praise him there!

• The **Prayer of the Day** is offered by the pastor:

**P** Heavenly Father, may the birth of Jesus—announced by the angels, witnessed by the shepherds and marveled at by the magi—empower us on this holy night to be filled with joy, an inexpressible and glorious joy; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

• The **Children's Sermon** is delivered by the pastor or other worship leader:

**P** Don't you just love all of the Christmas carols? We hear them at the mall, on TV and on the radio. What is your favorite Christmas carol? (*Let the children respond.*) How many would say their favorite Christmas carol is "O Little Town of Bethlehem"? How about "Silent Night"? I bet some of you would say, "Away in a Manger." I have another question for you. What is one word that you hear over and over again in Christmas carols? (*Let the children respond.*) I often hear the word *joy*. Don't you? "Joy to the World." "O Come, All Ye Faithful, joyful and triumphant." "Joyful, all ye nations rise. Join the triumph of the skies." Did you know that our Christmas carols actually continue the first

Christmas carol? It was the choir of heavenly angels who sang the first joyful song of Christmas. They announced to the shepherds out in the fields that in the town of David a Savior is born. He is Christ the Lord. And this is good news of great joy that is for all the people! Jesus is a Savior because he was born in a cradle to die on a cross. He did it for your sin and mine. Jesus is a Savior because he rose again on the third day. Jesus is a Savior because he is coming again to make everything perfect! That's why we sing for joy on Christmas. What is joy? Joy is Jesus first. Others second. Yourself last. The first letters of those three phrases spell joy: J-O-Y. Jesus is first because Christmas is all about Jesus! It's his birthday! Others are second. We love other people because Jesus first loves us. Yourself is last. We put ourselves last when we serve others before we serve ourselves. Joy to the world. The Lord has come! Merry Christmas! Amen.

- The **Old Testament Reading**, Isaiah 55:10-13, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

¶ For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the Lord, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

- The **Epistle Reading**, 1 Peter 1:3-9, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

¶ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

- The **Gospel Reading**, Luke 2:1-20, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

¶ And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of

the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

- The **Sermon Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Gloria 77 77 and refrain, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

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 heavenly song?  
Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

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

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

<http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/3617/a-child-is-born>

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

“I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.” Luke 2:10

- Ⓟ Among Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen’s many plays is *Emperor and Galilean*. Written in 1873, the play depicts the life of Julian, who ruled the Roman Empire in 361-363 AD. Julian tried to replace the newly established state religion of Christianity with the old worship of the Greek and Roman gods. In an 8-hour play (no wonder it never gets produced!) Ibsen tracks the emperor’s degeneration from a young Christian to a pagan Caesar.

At one point in the play Ibsen has Julian say, “Have you looked at these Christians closely?...They brood their lives away; unspurred by ambition; the sun shines for them but they do not see it; the earth offers them its fullness, but they desire it not; all their desire is to renounce and suffer, that they may come to die” (Quoted I, English in William Barclay, *In the Hands of God*. New York: Harper & Row, 1966, p. 66).

This description of dour Christians lingered perhaps with Ibsen himself, and today critics of the Christian church frequently point to our lack of joy. Millennials charge Christians with being quick to judge, ever ready to tell people what they’re doing wrong. I once heard a woman describe her pastor who is “so solemn he looks like he just stepped out a Nyquil commercial.” It is unfortunate that to some even at Christmas we Christians may look more like Ebenezer Scrooge than an angel with “good news of great joy.” A pastor’s eight year-old son once asked him on the way to church on Christmas Eve, “Dad, are you going to let us enjoy Christmas this year or are you going to try to explain it all again?” Ouch! No wonder the New Testament calls on us to “rejoice” no less than 73 times.

Some of us might say that we Christians have a right to be miserable. We have been sensitized to sin. We see it all around us. We see people making bad decisions. We see children starving and Christians suffering persecution. Evil thrives. Families disintegrate. The world is falling apart. Sins have become norms. We see our own sins, ever before us, like a dirty mirror that has us looking worse every day! If Christians don’t lament all this darkness, who will? If we won’t carry the world’s heavy burden of sin, who will?

And just there, right there, sin makes us miserable. Right where sin becomes our burden, a Christmas angel comes with good news. Trumping our desire to carry the burden of sin ourselves is the great news that Jesus has come to do it for us. He has taken sin seriously. He has carried the full consequences of our sin, dying in our place. To look and act as if we bear the sins of the world is to cheapen His sacrifice and tarnish His victory.

This was no ordinary birth announcement that first Christmas. This was a sin-crushing, death-defeating universal news alert: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11). It was news of great joy! The joy was so contagious that the shepherds,

Tune.....Stille Nacht irregular



- The **Closing Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Stille Nacht irregular. [If desired, candlelighting may take place during this hymn, at which time individual candles are lit from the Christ Candle and the lights in the church are dimmed. Parishioners should be cautioned not to tip lighted candles. Candles are extinguished once the hymn ends.]:

Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright  
Round yon virgin mother and child. Holy infant, so tender and mild,  
Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight;  
Glories stream from heaven afar, heav'nly hosts sing, Alleluia!  
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!

Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light  
Radiant beams from thy holy face with the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

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## A SERVICE FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

### CHRISTMAS EVE: THE GIFT OF JOY

### 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.

“Jesus” by Brian White, Glenn Packlam, Ian Eskelin and Tony Wood

“He Shall Reign Forevermore” by Chris Tomlin and Matt Maher

“Trading My Sorrows” by Darren Evans

“Your Name” by Glenn Packlam and Paul Baloche

“Light of the World” by Matt Redman

“Mary, Did Your Know?” by Buddy Greene and Mark Lowry

“While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks” by Andrew Peterson

“Joy” by Jason Ingram, Pete Kipley and Phil Wickham