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# FLAMES

*for the*

# FAITHFUL

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A SERIES OF SPECIAL SERVICES FOR ADVENT



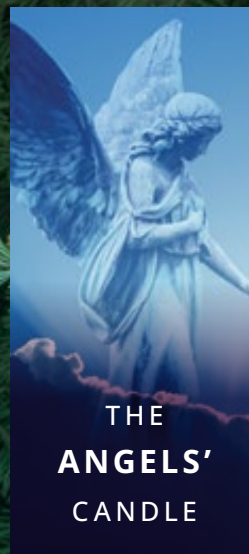
THE  
**PROPHECY**  
CANDLE



THE  
**BETHLEHEM**  
CANDLE



THE  
**SHEPHERDS'**  
CANDLE



THE  
**ANGELS'**  
CANDLE



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## ABOUT “FLAMES FOR THE FAITHFUL”

The Advent service series *Flames for the Faithful* takes its themes from traditional designations of candles in the Advent wreath: Prophecy Candle, Bethlehem Candle, Shepherds’ Candle and Angels’ Candle. Sermons are provided both as monologs for a single preacher ... and in a dramatic format involving four readers, the same four interacting for each service, each representing one of the Advent candles: The “Prophecy” voice brings God’s Word to bear. The “Bethlehem” and “Shepherd” voices deal with preparedness and involvement. The “Angel” voice keeps everything in cosmic perspective.

For each service, the series contains: a complete order of service • a sermon • a children’s sermon  
• prayers • music for the accompanist

Everything you need for each service is contained on digital files with text of the entire series 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.



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## WEEK 1: THE PROPHECY CANDLE

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## WEEK 1: THE PROPHECY CANDLE

### ORDER OF SERVICE

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Lighting One Candle .....Melody: Away in a Manger 11 11 11 11

In darkness enshrouded, the world waits for light  
To shatter the shadowy darkness of night.  
To greenery circled, the faithful draw near  
And longingly listen, God's message to hear.

**L** Send out your light and your truth, O Lord; let them be our guide.

**C** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And God said, "Let there be light!"

**L** Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

**C** Did not our hearts burn within us while he spoke to us and opened the Scriptures for us?

ℓ “Let the prophet who has my word speak my word faithfully,” says the Lord. “Is not my word a fire?”

One candle is burning—through darkness shines light,  
As prophets were yearning for God’s holy might.  
To people in darkness came promises new—  
The promise of Jesus is faithful and true.

ℓ Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.

☛ **For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples.**

ℓ But the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you.

☛ **Jesus Christ is the light of the world, the light no darkness can overcome.**

ℓ Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Oh, keep us, Lord Jesus, in your mighty care  
As for your arrival your people prepare.  
The flames for the faithful, Lord, let them burn bright,  
That hearts of all people in faith may ignite.

Prayer of the Day

Children’s Sermon

First Lesson .....Deuteronomy 18:15-18

—*The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet—*

ℓ Jesus Christ is the light of the world, the light no darkness can overcome.

☛ **So we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed.**

ℓ You will do well to be attentive to this, as to a lamp shining in a dark place,

☛ **until the day dawns and the daystar rises in our hearts.**

Psalm 126 .....Melody: Veni Emmanuel 88 88 88

*(In this styling, phrases of the hymn interrupt the reading of the Psalm. The tune is introduced before the reader’s first line. The final chord of each phrase is held softly over the spoken words.)*

ℓ When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.

Unto the Lord I lift my soul;  
I trust in God to make me whole.

☞ Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy.

My voice with joy is raised to sing:  
“The Lord has done a wondrous thing!”

☞ The LORD has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.

Let all on earth his glory tell,  
The Holy One of Israel!

☞ Restore our fortunes, O LORD, just as the rain brings water back to dry riverbeds.

Unto the Lord I lift my soul;  
I trust in God to make me whole.

☞ May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

My voice with joy is raised to sing:  
“The Lord has done a wondrous thing!”

☞ Those who wept as they went out carrying the seed will come back singing for joy, carrying their sheaves.

Let all the earth his glory tell,  
The Holy One of Israel!

Second Lesson..... Hebrews 3:1-6

—A prophet even greater than Moses—

What the fathers most desired,  
What the prophets’ hearts inspired,  
What they longed for many a year  
Now in Jesus Christ draws near.

Holy Gospel..... Luke 1:5-25

Brightly does the candle shine,  
Symbol of the Light divine.  
Let not sin o’ercloud his light;  
Ever be our faith thus bright.

Sermon

“Comfort, comfort ye my people,  
Speak ye peace,” thus saith our God;  
“Comfort those who sit in darkness,  
Mourning ’neath their sorrows’ load.

Speak ye to Jerusalem  
Of the peace that waits for them.  
Tell her that her sins I cover  
And her warfare now is over.”

Yea, her sins our God will pardon,  
Blotting out each dark misdeed;  
All that well deserved his anger  
He no more will see nor heed.  
She hath suffered many a day,  
Now her griefs have passed away;  
God will change her pining sadness  
Into ever springing gladness.

Hark, the herald’s voice is crying  
In the desert far and near,  
Calling sinners to repentance,  
Since the Kingdom now is here.  
O that warning cry obey!  
Now prepare for God a way;  
Let the valleys rise to meet him  
And the hills bow down to greet him.

Make ye straight what long was crooked;  
Make the rougher places plain.  
Let your hearts be true and humble,  
As befits his holy reign.  
For the glory of the Lord  
Now o’er earth is spread abroad,  
And all flesh shall see the token  
That his Word is never broken.

Offering.....concludes with this stanza:

Now let the glad tidings of great joy be heard:  
Fulfilled in Christ’s birth is the prophets’ sure word.  
O God, send your Spirit, fresh gifts to impart;  
Let faith be ignited in each waiting heart.



Prayers and the Lord's Prayer

Parting Praise.....Melody: Wachet Auf PM

Ⓛ Let your loins be girded and your lamps be lit; be like those who are waiting for their master to return.

Six-winged seraphs now implore us  
To join their high angelic chorus,  
Sing, "Holy, holy, holy Lord!"  
All on earth, proclaim the story  
Of God's high, universal glory;  
In heav'n and earth be God adored.  
The yearning world awaits;  
Lift up your heads, O gates.  
Sing hosanna. Let anthems swell:  
"Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!"

Benediction

Closing Stanza .....Melody: Away in a Manger 11 11 11 11

O God, with your glory you once filled the night,  
And now we behold in Christ Jesus the light.  
May his presence brighten each pathway we take  
Until in his glory at last we awake.



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## WEEK 1: THE PROPHECY CANDLE

### 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:

[shutterstock.com/image-photo/candles-burning-night-white-dark-lights-779378176](https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/candles-burning-night-white-dark-lights-779378176)

- **The Lighting of the Advent Wreath** takes place with an acolyte lighting one purple (or blue) candle, the Prophecy Candle.

- The **Opening Litany** includes hymn verses sung by the congregation to the tune *Away in a Manger* 11 11 11 11, intersperses with lines spoken responsively by the worship leader and the congregation:

In darkness enshrouded, the world waits for light  
 To shatter the shadowy darkness of night.  
 To greenery circled, the faithful draw near  
 And longingly listen, God’s message to hear.

ℒ Send out your light and your truth, O Lord; let them be our guide.

**℣ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And God said, “Let there be light!”**

ℒ Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

**℣ Did not our hearts burn within us while he spoke to us and opened the Scriptures for us?**

ℒ “Let the prophet who has my word speak my word faithfully,” says the Lord. “Is not my word a fire?”

One candle is burning—through darkness shines light,  
 As prophets were yearning for God’s holy might.  
 To people in darkness came promises new—  
 The promise of Jesus is faithful and true.

ℒ Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.

**℣ For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples.**

ℒ But the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you.

**℣ Jesus Christ is the light of the world, the light no darkness can overcome.**

ℒ Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Oh, keep us, Lord Jesus, in your mighty care  
 As for your arrival your people prepare.  
 The flames for the faithful, Lord, let them burn bright,  
 That hearts of all people in faith may ignite.

- The **Prayer of the Day** is spoken by the worship leader:

ℒ As one candle is lit and our hearts are brightened by its glow, dear Lord, help us to remember with fondness the prophets of old who foretold your coming among us to be our Savior. Let us continue the work of the prophets, proclaiming to those around us your coming among us at Christmas. Let us be beacons of light in this dark world as we beckon others to be drawn to the Light of your love and care for us unto eternity. In your gracious name we pray. Amen.

- The **Children’s Sermon** is delivered by the worship leader:

*This sermon may be delivered by a “prophet” or “prophetess.” Sandals, a shawl, an alb and a rough-hewn walking stick are probably all that would be needed to complete a costume.*

ℒ Are you ready to listen to the Advent wreath?

Or does that sound strange—to listen to a wreath? Wreaths aren’t for listening to, you might think. Wreaths are for looking at. And, in the case of this Advent wreath, wreaths are for adding a little light to the room. There are candles on this wreath. And already one is flickering. That one candle is already driving the darkness away.

Did you know that it has a name? In fact, that candle is named after ME. I am one of God’s ancient prophets. Prophets like me shouted, “LISTEN!” to God’s people long, long ago. We had been given God’s word to share. And so we shouted, “LISTEN!” And sometimes people did listen. And sometimes they didn’t listen. (I think most of the time people didn’t listen ... but that hardly mattered—we had a job to do and we did it, regardless of the result!) Sometimes the word we had to share was a call to come back to God—to stop sinful ways and to start acting like God’s children. Sometimes the word we had to share was a word of promise and hope—promise that God was staying connected to his people (even if times seemed hard), and hope that God had a special future in store. “LISTEN!” we shouted. “Hear God’s word!”

The first candle on the Advent wreath is called “The Prophecy Candle.” It’s supposed to remind you of me. It’s supposed to shout “LISTEN!” every time it catches your eye.

There is a lot to listen to this time of year. Oh, there are all the “sounds of the season” ... carols and bells and “ho-ho-hos.” TVs and holiday movies make their noise, too. But this candle is asking you to listen to the word of the Lord. God has something to say. In fact, what God has to say is so important that what God has to say actually became a human being. God sent his Word to us! God sent his Son—a Savior, Christ, the Lord.

Sounds important, doesn’t it? So, LISTEN! Just like the candle tells you to!

- The **First Lesson**, Deuteronomy 18:15-18, is spoken by the worship leader:

ℓ The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, “Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.” And the LORD said to me, “They are right in what they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.”

- A **Litany** is spoken responsively by the worship leader and the congregation:

ℓ Jesus Christ is the light of the world, the light no darkness can overcome.

☞ **So we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed.**

ℓ You will do well to be attentive to this, as to a lamp shining in a dark place,

☞ **until the day dawns and the daystar rises in our hearts.**

- **Psalm 126** is spoken by the worship leader with hymned responses sung by the congregation after each line to the tune *Veni Emmanuel* 88 88 88:

*(In this styling, phrases of the hymn interrupt the reading of the Psalm. The tune is introduced before the reader’s first line. The final chord of each phrase is held softly over the spoken words.)*

ℓ When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.

Unto the Lord I lift my soul;  
I trust in God to make me whole.

ℓ Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy.

My voice with joy is raised to sing:  
“The Lord has done a wondrous thing!”

ℓ The LORD has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.

Let all on earth his glory tell,  
The Holy One of Israel!

ℓ Restore our fortunes, O LORD, just as the rain brings water back to dry riverbeds.

Unto the Lord I lift my soul;  
I trust in God to make me whole.

ℒ May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

My voice with joy is raised to sing:  
“The Lord has done a wondrous thing!”

ℒ Those who wept as they went out carrying the seed will come back singing for joy, carrying their sheaves.

Let all the earth his glory tell,  
The Holy One of Israel!

• The **Second Lesson**, Hebrews 3:1-6, is spoken by the worship leader:

ℒ Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

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

What the fathers most desired,  
What the prophets' hearts inspired,  
What they longed for many a year  
Now in Jesus Christ draws near.

• The **Holy Gospel**, Luke 1:5-25, is spoken by the worship leader:

ℒ In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years. Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and

your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared." And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time." And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute. And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home. After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, "Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people."

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

Brightly does the candle shine,  
Symbol of the Light divine.  
Let not sin o'ercloud his light;  
Ever be our faith thus bright.

- The **Monolog Sermon** can be delivered by the worship leader here OR the Dramatic Sermon (appearing after the Monolog Sermon) can be performed at this time by four readers:

☐ Listen! If the message of Advent could be expressed in only one word, that word might well be "listen." Especially if the message of the first candle on the Advent wreath had to be expressed in one word, that word would say it very well: "Listen!" Even as the first candle flickers to light, the Advent wreath seeks to get our attention. Listen!

The first candle on the wreath is sometimes called the Prophecy Candle. I know that when we hear the word "prophecy," most often we think about foretelling the future, and that is part of what today's message is all about—but only part of it. While God's prophets in ancient times did foretell the future now and then, that was not their primary task. Their primary task was to preach—to speak the Word of God for the people of God.

And if the prophets' job was to speak—it follows that the people's job was to listen. We're back to that word again, for in the sense of preaching, prophecy continues to take place—right here, in this very church, week after week: God's Word is proclaimed for God's people. The task of prophecy continues even in our day. The job of a prophet is to speak God's Word for God's people.

And the job of God's people is to listen. The first candle on the Advent wreath calls us to that task, and the rest of the candles will continue to echo that call all through the season.

For example, the second candle on the wreath is called the Bethlehem Candle, for when the Word became flesh ("the Word," please notice—what God has to say)—when the Word became flesh, it happened first at Bethlehem. The first time Jesus' human voice was heard, it rang out there at Bethlehem, a newborn voice, an infant cry, a baby's first try to communicate. And that's worth listening to. For what the prophets long proclaimed, what ages and ages of faithful folk had waited for—for the Word of God to break the silence of the centuries and fill the world with hope—was happening in Bethlehem.

Was Bethlehem prepared? Are we? The light of prophecy is about to flicker there anew, in those dark streets, to fill the world with hope. One wants to call out, "Listen, Bethlehem!"

The third candle on the Advent wreath, the pink one, is the Shepherds' Candle, and it too urges us to listen. For when the Word made flesh was first proclaimed ("the Word," please notice—what God had to say)—it was shepherds who were chosen to hear good tidings of great joy, shepherds working the very hillsides where David had once tended his flock—the most famous shepherd of them all—and written his psalms, the Word of God in poetry: "My soul takes refuge in you, O Lord, until the destroying storms pass by. I cry to God Most High; he will send from heaven and save me. My heart is steadfast, O God. I will sing and make melody. For your steadfast love is as high as the heavens; your faithfulness extends to the clouds."

That was a psalm of David, the shepherd. And now a new song is about to be sung, a new message proclaimed in heavenly choruses: the end of fear, beginning of joy; the prophets' promises fulfilled—in shepherds' terms: the Son of David coming in the name of the Lord, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, the Good Shepherd laying down his life for the sheep. And by that message the third candle seeks to turn our fear into joy. It is a message well worth hearing. Listen!

The fourth candle on the Advent wreath is the Angels' Candle. For when the Word became flesh ("the Word," please notice—what God has to say), it was angels who were sent to say it ... to shepherds ... at Bethlehem—the Word of God proclaimed, fulfilled: "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 Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

Listen! That is the message as the first candle begins to glow, lighting the way to all the rest.



Listen! For here in God's Word is a light that shines beyond the bounds of Bethlehem, beyond the hillsides of the shepherds. He is the Word of God proclaimed for all the world to hear—a message of HOPE.

If you want another word to summarize the message of Advent, especially the first candle, that word could well be HOPE. The Bible very consciously connects HOPE with the Word of God: "The Scriptures were written," the Bible says, "to teach and encourage us by giving us HOPE." The biblical concept of HOPE means to have something to look forward to: "The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all. So we are filled with HOPE, as we wait for the glorious return of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." The biblical concept of HOPE means to have something to look forward to: "O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord this is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem. Hope in the Lord!" The biblical concept of HOPE means to have something to look forward to: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living HOPE through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." "May the God of HOPE fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in HOPE."

Something to look forward to. A future! And what a future it is! That's what prophecy is all about, to help us be ready for the future—God's future! This is only the first candle; there is more to come of the grace of God, of the message of Advent, of the HOPE with which God brightens the way before us ... into the future, a future that just promises to get brighter and brighter ... brighter than an Advent wreath, brighter than the Christmas star, as bright as heaven itself, where Advent wreaths will not be needed anymore, where "there is no need for sun or moon, for the glory of the Lord is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb of God."

Listen! For that is the voice of prophecy, the Word of God for the people of God, the Advent message of HOPE.

- In place of the Monolog Sermon above, the **Dramatic Sermon** can be performed at this time by four readers:

*In broad general terms, each of the four voices in the dramatic sermons represents one of the candles on the Advent wreath. Therefore, it is strongly suggested that the same four readers participate in all the services, always in the same roles.*

*1 represents the voice of Prophecy, featured in the first sermon and then frequently serving that same function (recalling the Old Testament Word of God) in the others.*

*2 speaks for Bethlehem in the second service, and often deals with the theme of preparedness and "right here, where we live" in other services.*