

WHEN THE TIME HAD FULLY COME

A SERVICE FOR THE NEW YEAR



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ABOUT THIS SERVICE

This worship service for the New Year looks at the times of our experience—past, present and future—as vessels of God’s own filling ... to the full. Our celebration of Christ’s birth at Christmas gives power and purpose for growing with Christ in the new year.

This service contains: a complete order of service • a sermon • a children’s sermon • prayers • music for the accompanist

Everything you need for the service is contained on digital files with text of the entire service in .rtf (rich text format), newsletter/bulletin notices, hymns, visual media recommendations, contemporary music song suggestions and a PowerPoint document of the service with images and text (along with a copyright release) for use on screens.

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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/search/sunrise%2C+clock%2C+time](https://www.shutterstock.com/search/sunrise%2C+clock%2C+time)

- This **Now Are the Days Fulfilled** is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader with responses sung by the congregation to the tune Was Frag Ich Nach Der Welt 67 67 66 66, 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 When the time had fully come, God sent his Son.

Now are the days fulfilled, God's Son is manifested,
Now his great majesty in human form is vested.
Behold the mighty God, by whom all wrath is stilled.
The woman's promised Seed. Now are the days fulfilled.

P When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.

Now are the days fulfilled. Lo, Jacob's Star is shining;
The gloomy night had fled wherein the world lay pining.
Now, Israel, look on him who long your heart has thrilled;
Hear Zion's watchmen cry: Now are the days fulfilled.

Ⓟ When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law.

Now are the days fulfilled, the child of God rejoices;
No bondage of the Law, no curses that it voices,
Can fill our hearts with fear; on Christ our hope we build.
Behold the Prince of Peace. Now are the days fulfilled.

Ⓟ When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as children.

The days shall be fulfilled, for which our hearts are yearning,
When God's triumphant Son, in majesty returning,
Shall call us from our graves—for so God's grace has willed—
And lead us home on high. The days shall be fulfilled!

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

Ⓟ Dear God of time, you have filled the year with good things and we look forward to a year filled with even more. Thank you for the many blessings you have given us and for filling each of our days with your love and faithfulness toward us. All time is in your hands, and we treasure the time you have provided for us to learn more about you, to grow in relationships with one another and to serve you and the people around us in response to your grace. Help us to see that through the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus, time expanded for us to include eternity with you. Let us ever look forward to that time yet to come, as we enter this new year with joyful expectation. Amen.

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

Needed: a watch

Ⓟ Hello, boys and girls. We are celebrating the new year in this service, so I thought I would bring something with me. What is this? (*Show the watch and allow the children to respond.*) That's right! It is a watch. What do you use a watch for? (*Allow the children to respond.*) That's right! You use a watch to tell time. What time does the watch say it is now? (*Allow a child to say what current time the watch has.*) That's right. You are good at telling time.

People get really good at telling time in the last hours, minutes and seconds before the clock turns to midnight on New Year's Eve and a new year begins. People even like to count down the last seconds of the year out loud like this: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, Happy New Year.

It's great to be able to tell what time it is on any given day, isn't it? But we must remember that time is not something we own. It is something that is given to us by God. So we always need to

treasure and enjoy it.

How do we do that? We do that by spending time in church like you are doing right now, thanking and praising God for the time we have on this earth. We show God our appreciation for our time by praying to him and showing love to one another as he has shown love to us.

The greatest way that God showed love to us was by sending his Son Jesus to us over 2000 years ago, at just the right time, the Bible tells us. Jesus spent time on this earth and lived a sinless life and died on a cross on a day in history called Good Friday to forgive all of our sins. When he rose from the dead on Easter three days later, he made sure that our time would not end when we die. The gift of time will keep going in heaven with him. There our time will be full with perfect peace and endless excitement. There we will shout with great and lasting gladness, “Happy New Life!” Let us pray:

O God, every day is filled with your goodness. Help us to live our time on this earth for you. Open our eyes to know you more in the new year, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

- **The Old Testament Reading**, 1 Kings 8:56-61, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

Ⓟ “Blessed be the LORD who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised. Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant. The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers. May he not leave us or forsake us, that he may incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his rules, which he commanded our fathers. Let these words of mine, with which I have pleaded before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night, and may he maintain the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel, as each day requires, that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other. Let your heart therefore be wholly true to the LORD our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments, as at this day.”

- **A Meditation on Psalm 90** is sung by the congregation to the tune Tallis’ Canon LM:

O Lord of time, the hours and days, the months, the years proclaim your praise;
And centuries, millennia, all join to cry: Alleluia!

A thousand years, Lord, in your sight are like the passing of the night;
A century, when it is gone, is like the breaking of the dawn.

The child of God in wonder sees the turning of the centuries.
The years, the decades—how they fly as quickly as a passing sigh!

So teach us, Lord, to count our days that we may live them to your praise,
And pray in each millennium, O gracious Lord, thy kingdom come!

- The **Epistle Reading**, Ephesians 1:3-14, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

☐ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

- The **Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Antioch CM 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:

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive its King,
Let ev'ry heart prepare him room, and heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

- The **Holy Gospel**, John 1:1-5, 9-18, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

☐ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive

him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And 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. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”) For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.

- The **Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Antioch CM 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:

He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love,
And wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.

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

Ⓟ The turning of the year give us an annual opportunity to consider God’s gift of time. For this service we are paying special attention to the biblical concept of “the fullness of time,” a way of seeing the *times* of our experience—past, present and future—as vessels for God to fill—like goblets, perhaps—with the promise that God will fill them to the FULL. You may recognize the biblical phrase “the time in FUL-filled.” Take that literally. In God’s economy, time is not just filled, but it is FILLED FULL.

That is what we celebrate at the turning of the year. We start by looking at the past.

PAST

The year now drawing/drawn to a close—can you already begin to determine all that God has filled it with? Have you taken the TIME (since TIME is the topic at hand) to review the past year—to count its blessings?—to measure its disappointments? Can you see the hand of God at work throughout the closing year, filling your time to the full?

In our Old Testament reading, King Solomon took the TIME to acknowledge God’s past blessings. He did so in the form of a prayer, recognizing God’s promises FULFILLED. “Not one of them has failed,” Solomon prayed.

While you are reviewing the past year (and I hope you take the time to do that), it may be in order to look back even farther, to look back over your whole life, if you can, to see how God has FILLED that time—all of it—with his promises ... and then FILLED it FULL with his blessings ...

Beginning perhaps with the promises made at your Baptism:

- That God would be your heavenly Father, and you a beloved child, as we heard in our Epistle reading: “He chose us in him before the foundation of the world.”
- That Christ would be your Savior: “In him we have redemption through his blood,” the Epistle went on, “the forgiveness of our trespasses.”
- That the Holy Spirit would be our constant Helper: “You ... were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance,” the Epistle assured us, “to the praise of [God’s] glory.”

The turning of the year gives us an opportunity to see how FULL that year has been ... and those that went before it ... FILLED with the promises of God ... FUL-filled in Jesus Christ. “The time *has* FULLY come.”

PRESENT

“When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son,” our worship continues to impress upon us, “born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as children.”

That’s talking about Christmas, isn’t it? The PRESENT, therefore, where we are right now.

How FULL has this Christmas season been for you? I suppose we could talk about all the activities we’ve been through—company, parties, services, meals, gatherings, presents ...

But the real purpose of the season (lest we forget) is that it is to be FILLED with JESUS! Again, the Epistle reading made that very point: What God set forth in Jesus Christ, it said, is “a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in HIM, things in heaven and things on earth.”

Perhaps it is no accident that our calendar—our marking of TIME—has its “hinge,” so to speak—its turning point—at the birth of Christ, which we have just celebrated again. What we celebrate this season is precisely the bringing together of past and future, B.C. and A.D., in the coming of Jesus Christ. In the very celebration of Christmas, there is a “fullness” that “unites all things in him.”

So ... are your holidays filled with Jesus? So many other things seek to fill them, things that avoid Christ or ignore him, as though the season is about snowfall and reindeer and warm memories.

Today’s Gospel reading snaps us back to the point, doesn’t it? “All things were made through HIM,” it said ... “and without him was not any thing made that was made.” The holidays are

filled with Jesus Christ ... or they are empty! (And we might notice that one translation of the biblical concept of *empty* is “in vain.”)

What fills the present and makes it meaningful—what *must* fill it—is what we just days ago beheld in the manger, Jesus Christ!

FUTURE

And so, from the vantage point of the *past*, in which God’s promises have been fulfilled ... and the *present*, which God has filled to the full with Jesus Christ, born among us, in our midst ... we may look forward to the *future*, the year ahead, the years ahead.

And what we may observe is that THE TIME WILL BE FILLED!

- Filled with the blessing of God, as the past has been, as Solomon was so eager to lead us in confessing: the past has been filled with the blessings of God. Take the TIME this New Year’s, if you haven’t yet, to begin counting them. The past has been filled with God’s blessing.
- The future, therefore, ought to be filled with our *response* to those blessings. Again, Solomon shows us the way: “[God will] incline our hearts to him,” Solomon led us in praying, “to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments.”

Solomon prayed that in the future God would maintain his servant (Solomon, the king) and his people (that involves all of us) “as EACH DAY requires”—filling the time with praise and service to God, a day at a time ... and so a year at a time ...

UNTIL ... God’s time for us will be FUL-filled, filled to its absolute overflowing fullness, in the endlessness of eternity. If we have pictured time like a vessel—a goblet, perhaps—being filled until it is full ... now picture God tipping that goblet over ... and what flows out is a *river* ... widening into a *lake* ... growing into an *ocean* at last—ETERNITY! Life everlasting with the Lord who loved us from before the foundation of the world, who joined us here a baby born in Bethlehem, who conquered death at last to wash away the final barrier, whose Spirit has been piloting us our whole journey through ... until the ocean of eternity opens before us in endless blessing.

Then, at last, the time is FULLY come!

- A **Creedal 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:

With angel choirs we join to raise
 To God the Father highest praise,
 By whose strong Word all things were made.
 The wonders of his love displayed.

By love God's Son was sent to earth,
 Child of wondrous virgin birth.
 For sinners all, that life he gave
 And rose triumphant from the grave.

The Spirit of the Lord draws near
 To sanctify God's people dear.
 Where Christ's forgiving pow'r is known
 The wonders of God's love are shown.

Most wonderful of all—believe
 That life eternal they receive
 Who place in Jesus Christ their faith;
 With him they too shall conquer death.

- The **Offering** is collected at this time. If desired, this **Mini Movie** (purchased by you from Worship House Media: worshiphousemedia.com) is presented on a screen at this time for reflection on the theme of the service, followed a hymn sung by the congregation to the tune Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring 87 87 D, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/101513/how-will-you-use-your-time

followed by:

Father, for the year now ending offer we our songs of praise;
 For each blessing of your sending grateful hearts and voices raise.
 For your mercies, strong and tender; for your guidance through the year,
 Songs of gratitude we render and with fervent hope draw near.