

From
AGE *to*
AGE
the SAME

A
Service
for the
NEW
YEAR



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

P O God, there is no one like you. For you love and forgive us unconditionally, from age to age the same.

C Yet, by our sins of thought, word and deed, we have many times abandoned your Word. Despite your constant presence, we often have rejected your love toward us by being unkind, ungrateful and disobedient to you and those around us. Though you are unchanging, we have changed our ways time and time again and followed other gods like money, popularity and our earthly possessions. We confess to you that we have shifted like the sand, yet you have remained firm. Forgive us, we pray, and help us to turn to you again and again in every age to come.

(Please observe a time of self-examination to reflect on our sins.)

P I am pleased to announce to you that the Lord is steadfast and true and has kept his promise to you: Your sins are forgiven in the name of Jesus, who is the same yesterday, today and forever. You are free to live a new life in Christ in this new year and with each new day. The Lord be with you. Amen.

- The **Hymn of Response** is sung by the congregation to the tune Ratisbon 77 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:

Christ, whose glory fills the skies, Christ, the true and only Light,
Sun of righteousness, arise, triumph o'er the shades of night;
Day-spring from on high, be near; Day-star, in my heart appear.

Dark and cheerless is the morn unaccompanied by thee;
Joyless is the day's return, till thy mercy's beams I see,
Till they inward light impart, glad my eyes, and warm my heart.

Visit then this soul of mine, pierce the gloom of sin and grief;
Fill me, radiance divine, scatter all my unbelief;
More and more thyself display, shining to the perfect day.

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

P O Lord of all time, we thank you for this new day, for days of this past year and for the days to come in the new year. We look back on the blessings you have granted to us, and we glorify you for carrying us through the hard and difficult days. Help us to feel your presence with us now in the moment, and prepare our hearts to receive whatever comes our way in the future. For we know that you will guide and direct us all our days. Amen.

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

(Needed: a calendar)

☐ Happy new year, children. Can any of you tell me what this is? *(Hold up the calendar, and allow the children to respond.)* That's right! It is a calendar. What do we use a calendar for? *(Allow the children to respond.)* That's right! We use it to track the days of the year, and we use it to write in activities or events we are a part of on certain days. Tomorrow (Today) we start a new calendar year. *(Flip the pages of the calendar.)* Look at all the empty squares on this calendar. A new year usually means a lot of changes, right? In the fall, you will change to a different grade in school. Maybe you will even change schools. Your bodies will most likely grow and change this year too. We all know that the seasons change each year from winter to spring to summer to fall. So things will change from day-to-day because of what weather we are having, like what clothes we wear and whether or not we do activities inside or outside. You will change in what you know as you learn new things in your classes or at home.

But it is good for us to remember that one thing will be the same day after day in the year ahead no matter what changes are going on. Jesus will be the same. As the Bible says, "Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). That is just another way of saying our theme for this service: "From Age to Age the Same." We can count on Jesus to be with us every day of the new year. *(Point to a page in the calendar.)* In every one of the squares on this calendar, we can write "Jesus is the same" because he will be. He will love us and forgive us and care for us in the same way that he did in the last year and in all the ages that have gone by. This brings us comfort because we know that we don't ever need to be afraid of the future. Jesus will help us handle it, whatever happens. Let us pray: Dear Jesus, thank you for this new year, and thank you for never changing. Amen.

- The **Sermon Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Duke Street 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:

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun does its successive journeys run,
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore, till moons shall wax and wane no more.

To him shall endless prayer be made, and praises throng to crown his head.
His name like sweet perfume shall rise with ev'ry morning sacrifice.

People and realms of ev'ry tongue dwell on his love with sweetest song,
And infant voices shall proclaim their early blessings on his name.

Blessings abound where'er he reigns: the pris'ners leap to loose their chains,
The weary find eternal rest, and all who suffer want are blest.

Let ev'ry creature rise and bring the highest honors to our King,
Angels descend with songs again, and earth repeat the loud amen.

- The **Old Testament Reading**, Isaiah 46:3-4, 8-13, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

☐ Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been borne by me from before your birth, carried from the womb; even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save. Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, “My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,” calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it. Listen to me, you stubborn of heart, you who are far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness; it is not far off, and my salvation will not delay; I will put salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory.

- The **Epistle Reading**, Titus 2:11-14, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

☐ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

- The **Gospel Reading**, Matthew 28:16-20, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

☐ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

- The **Sermon Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune St. Denio 11 11 11 11, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above
Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all life thou givest, to both great and small;
In all life thou livest, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
And wither and perish but naught changeth thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
Thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
All praise we would render, O help us to see
'Tis only the splendor of light hideth thee.

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

P Grace, mercy and peace be with you. Blessings to you on this turning of the year! We praise Jesus today for this year now past and this year yet to come. But as we find ourselves at the threshold of the seemingly unknown, there is one thing we know for sure: Jesus will go with us.

How do we know this? We know this because of what Jesus and God the Father have done for us in the past. That is one of the roles of the New Testament and the Gospels in particular: to teach us how to trust the One who went before us, who suffered and died and rose again in our place to save us from death, sin and the devil.

And this same Jesus, who ascended into heaven ages ago, will one day return to earth to take us back to his home above, so that we can live with him forever in glory, forgiven, loved and freed for all time to dwell in peace and harmony.

That is the big picture. That is the sweeping story of salvation that we are a part of even now, in this modern era, in this age of history over 2000 years beyond the birth of Christ. That's over 2000 trips around the sun on this revolving planet of ours. That's 730,000 rotations of the

Earth as it is in orbit. We are a moment, a speck, a flash in the grand scheme of things. Yet, we have a God who cares deeply for us and makes sure that we are taken care of to everlasting life. We have a place in the family of God, in the rich tapestry of his people, in the fabric of God's pattern and plan. And the thread that weaves through all the years, all the ages, all the stages is the faithfulness of God.

From age to age, God did not abandon his people. Going all the way back to the Garden of Eden, he did not leave Adam and Eve to completely fend for themselves after the Fall into sin. He wove garments of animal skins for them to wear. He allowed crops to grow and rivers to run to sustain them, even as Adam and Eve labored by the sweat of their brow, toiling over and nurturing the land that was entrusted to them by God. They were blessed to bear children to carry on the human race, whom God had put in charge of creation. God did not let humanity die out when it disobeyed. He let it continue out of love.

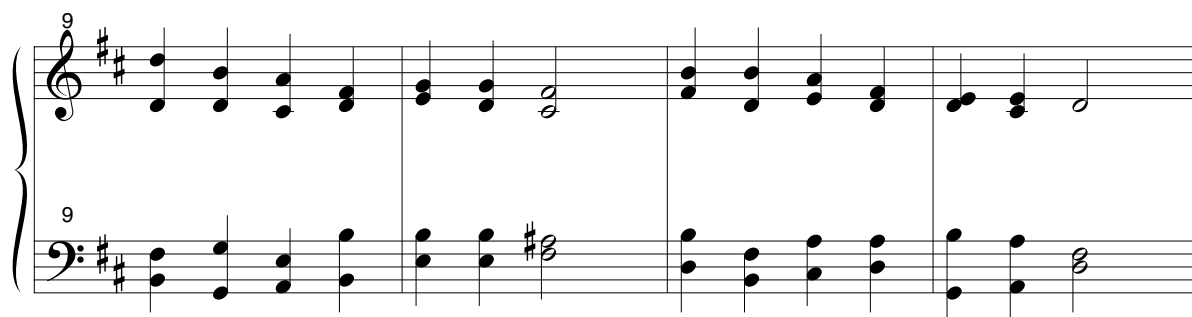
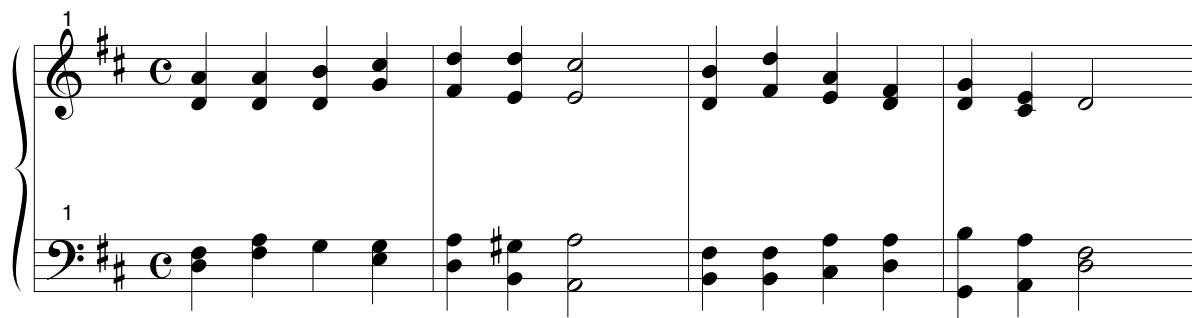
Then we think of the age of the Tower of Babel. People were building a structure to themselves for themselves and became far too powerful. Yet, God did not destroy his people then and there. He gave them different languages and scattered them throughout the earth. The people he loved were given another chance to begin again in new places with new ways of communicating. They grew and developed and thrived for a time.

Until they forgot about God again and were evil in the sight of the Lord. It was in this age that God truly wanted to destroy all people with a flood. But his heart went out to a God-fearing man named Noah and his family. He told Noah to build an ark to hold him and his family and two of every type of animal on earth. After Noah built the ark and put his family and the pairs of animals in it, God sent a flood for 40 days and 40 nights that swept nearly everything on earth away. But the ark withstood the flood and landed safely on dry ground. Noah and his family and all the animals inside emerged alive. God let them remain to return to living on earth to follow God. And God was there to guide them.

Like he guided Abraham and Sarah in their old age to move from the land where they were living to a new land that God showed to them. There, Sarah gave birth to Isaac while she was well beyond what were typically childbearing years. Through the birth of his miracle boy, God did expand the family of God again, as many as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. God helped them put down roots in the land. Isaac's son Jacob, who was later named Israel, would go on to have 12 sons, and the families of these sons became the 12 tribes of Israel. One of those sons, Joseph, moved all the families of Israel to Egypt for safety during a famine.

Until the Israelites became slaves to the Egyptians. So in the age of the Exodus, God called Moses to lead his people out of slavery to the Promised Land after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. God persevered with his people through this period, when they often would disobey him or murmur against him or go their own way. He gave them manna and quail to

Tune.....Ratisbon 77 77 77



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