

# ADVENT PRAYER SERVICE

## Longing for Light in the Darkness

### Needed:

- Advent Wreath
- Matches
- CD player
- CD's or musical accompaniment
- Tapers (optional)

*"What came to be through  
God was life, and this life  
was the light of the human  
race; the light shines in the  
darkness, and the darkness  
has not overcome it."*

*-John 1:4-5*



### Invitation to Prayer:

[Lower the lights, or begin in darkness. Pause for some minutes and allow the silence to enfold those present. While still in darkness, play an instrumental piece of music appropriate to Advent.]

### Suggestions:

- CD: December (Artist: George Winston)
- CD: Solstice – Piano Solos or CD: Christmas Eve (Artist: David Lanz)
- CD: Peace (Artist: Jim Brickman)

### Introduction:

**Leader:** During the season of Advent, we are called to seek the light of Christ, even in the midst of darkness. We are invited to face the darkness in our own lives and in the world around us. The prophets assure us that the darkness will not overcome us. They call us to watch for the light. We are called to wait, to hope, to trust in promises made.

As we make this Advent journey in faith, we invite God's light to dispel the darkness. We ask for the grace to set down all those burdens that darken our hearts as we search for the light. We ask for the gift of attentiveness that we may truly see God's loving presence within and among us. And we ask for renewed faith that we might be light for others.

### Opening Prayer:

**Leader:** Let us Pray:

**All:** God who dispels all darkness,  
Come to be with us, in each one of our situations;  
Come to live among us, live with us and in us;  
Come to fill the distances that divide and separate us;  
Come to reconcile us with You and with one another.

God of Light, open our hearts to the mystery of your love and the invitation of your grace. Let our complacency give way to conversion and our judgments to compassionate acceptance of others. Turn oppression to justice and transform conflict to peaceful accord. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who draws near, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.



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## Lighting of the Advent Wreath:

*A designated person is selected to light the advent wreath using a taper.*

*[Optional Tapers: Once the wreath is lit, the light can then be passed to the assembly until all the tapers are lit. Wait until all tapers are lit before continuing with the readings below. You may wish to have instrumental accompaniment during this time.]*

**Reader 1:** As we light the Advent Wreath we bring to mind all the people and the places in the world that are in need of light this day: (pause)

**Reader 2:** We bring to mind those places in the world where families and countries are torn apart by conflict, violence, or war, and ask for the light of peace to break through the darkness. (pause)

**Reader 1:** We bring to mind all those places in the world where people have been forced from their homes and are separated from their families and ask for the light of hope to break through. (pause)

**Reader 2:** We bring to mind all those places in the world where people are suffering from disease or illness, and ask for the light of healing to break through. (pause)

**Reader 1:** We bring to mind all those places in the world where people are held captive by poverty, hunger, and isolation and ask for the light of freedom and abundant life to break through. (pause)

**All:** May our prayers encircle the world and offer light in places of darkness. May we work as one body to bring justice for the poor and peace for the afflicted. Enkindle hope in our darkened world and announce the dawn of your kingdom once again. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

## Song:

*Christ Be Our Light* (Artist: Bernadette Farrell, CD: Christ Be Our Light)

**Leader:** [at the conclusion of the song say:] Please extinguish your candles. (turn lights up)



## Reading: Jeremiah 33:14-16

**Reader:** A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah

The days are coming, says the LORD,  
when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah.  
In those days, in that time, I will raise up for David a just shoot;  
he shall do what is right and just in the land.  
In those days Judah shall be safe and Jerusalem shall dwell secure;  
this is what they shall call her: "The LORD our justice."

The Word of the Lord



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## **Advent**

by Roger Hutchison, used with permission.

Roger writes of Advent, "This painting, for me, came out of a sense of waiting—of expectation. Mary is soon to give birth to Jesus. She is searching, watching, waiting. The star in the sky is also watching—waiting.

The world is in a place of waiting—a place of fear and war. We await the Christ-child. We are hungry for peace and understanding."

This sense of searching, waiting and watching captures the spirit of Advent, the season in which we long for both our celebration of Jesus birth at Christmas and for his return in glory. We wait for the Light of the World.

## **Psalm II9: 105-112**

*Please alternate sides. All recite or sing the response.*

**R:** Your Word, O God, is a light for my path

**Side One:** O, God, Your word is a lamp for my feet,  
a light on my path.

I have sworn an oath and have resolved to keep your just  
commandments.

**R.**

**Side Two:** I am utterly afflicted;

O Lord, give me life according to your word.  
Accept my offerings of praise, Yahweh,  
and teach me your ways.

**R.**

**Side One:** My life is in your hands always,

I do not forget your law.

Though the wicked try to ensnare me,  
I have not strayed from your precepts.

**R.**

**Side Two:** Your instructions are my inheritance forever;

they are the joy of my heart.

I devote myself to honoring your statutes, forever.

**Side One:** Glory be to God our Creator, to Jesus the Christ, and to  
the Holy Spirit who dwells in our midst,

**Side Two:** As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,  
world without end, Amen.

## **Musical Reflection:**

Advent Hymn, sung by those assembled or CD musical  
reflection

### CD Song Suggestion:

Song: *Breath of Heaven* (Mary's Song) (Artist: Amy Grant,  
CD: Mosaic- 2007)

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## Story for Reflection & Connection:

(from Walter J. Burghardt )

**Reader:** The day after Thanksgiving the *New York Times* told of a 33-year-old local cab driver whose shoulder-length hair was tied in a ponytail. About five years ago, this cabby “prayed to God for guidance on how to help the forgotten people of the streets who exist in life’s shadows.” As he recalls it, God replied: “Make eight pounds of spaghetti, throw it in a pot, give it out on 103rd Street and Broadway with no conditions, and people will come.” He did, they came, and now he goes from door to door giving people food to eat.

I am not asking you to stuff the Big Apple with spaghetti. But a New York cabby can bring light into your Advent night. He prayed to a God who was there; he listened; he gave the simple gift God asked of him; he gave “with no conditions”; and people responded. Here is your Advent: Make the Christ, who has come, a reality, a living light in your life and in some other life. Give of yourself . . . to one dark soul . . . with no conditions.

### Questions for Reflection:

- How are you being called by God this Advent to be a living light for others?
- What is the Word that God is inviting you to act upon with ‘no conditions’?

## Prayer Intentions:

**Response:** Hear us, O God.

**Leader:** We pray now for the needs of all those gathered here. Please offer your prayers of petition and respond, “Hear us, O God.”



*O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear.*  
—Advent Hymn

## Closing Prayer:

**Leader:** Let us Pray,

*Emmanuel,*

Our world waits in darkness longing for Your light.  
In the midst of darkness, enkindle our hope.

As we long for lasting peace in the midst of war,  
Be with us.

As we long for families to be reunited, Be with us.

As we long for enemies to be reconciled, Be with us.

As we long for cures and healings, Be with us.

As we long for decent jobs and economic security,  
Be with us.

As we long for love and community, Be with us.

Fulfill the deepest longings of your people and  
Dispel the darkness in our hearts and in our world.

Let your Word ignite the hope the world needs  
to bring to life your love and justice.

***Amen.***

## Concluding Song:

Advent hymns of your choosing or see suggestions below

### Suggestions:

For Youth & Young Adults in upbeat mode:

- Song: God With Us –(note beautiful message, great lyrics) (Artist: MercyMe, CD: All That is Within Me (2007),
- Song: The Promise (Artist: Michael W. Smith, CD: It’s A Wonderful Christmas-2007)
- Song: Emmanuel (Artist: Steve Angrisano, CD: Christmas Child
- Song: Emmanuel (Artist: Amy Grant, CD: Amy Grant: The Collection)

For Adults in meditation mode:

- Song: Emmanuel (Artist: Bob Dufford, CD: Gentle Night- 1977)
- Song: Go Light Your World (Artist: Kathy Troccoli, CD: Greatest Hits)

