

2016 Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas Brainstorming Summary

October 10, 2016

Members present: Deb Moon, Joyce Mc Lellan, Brian Mc Lellan, Vicki Zuker, Ron Zuker; David Booth, Karen Booth, Barb Gripton, Marie Kordecki, Pastor Mary Ivanov, Rose Emmons, Carole Koch, Michael Boersma, Jim Post, Betty Kinney; Samuel Lutheran Church guests – Pastor Marcy Miller, Kelly, Jere, Jennifer Florip, Stacy Guajardo

“The worship we hope to develop will be rooted in Scripture, centered on Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. It will be relevant to local and emerging culture, while addressing the needs of believers and unbelievers alike. Above all, it will intentionally engage people physically, emotionally, intellectually, and soulfully.”

Felt needs: What physical, emotional, intellectual, or spiritual need are we addressing in this service so that worship is engaging and a means of making disciples? What question needs to be posed/answered so that we are making disciples?

We watched “Do You See?” (<http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/12227/do-you-see-2>) for a better understanding of how the arts in church have a long history that we need to reclaim.

“Thanksgiving and Thanks-living”

November 6, 2016: “Thanks for the Saints” 25th Sunday after Pentecost, All Saints Day

Synopsis: Saints are those who help us to know God better. As we remember them, remember our baptism, and come to the table, we’re surrounded by their witness and challenged to be saints for others.

Felt need: Follow the example of saints who model thankfulness.

Metaphor/visuals: Large stick heart from 2014. Candles sitting on wood pillars. <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/315814992595179035/>).

Activity: Holy Baptism – Keelen Dean (Celebration Service). Holy Communion.

All Saints Day possibilities: Ribbons on hearts. Read names. Light candles (family members?). Toll bells. Read memories of loved ones as the names are called. The memories could be projected like “God Moments” or incorporated into a song, below. Have friends and family stand.

Music suggestions: #711 or #2283 “For All the Saints”; #368 “My Hope Is Built”; Michael would like to arrange Audio Adrenaline’s “Sound of the Saints” for choir and children’s choir (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Oe6M6Vlot4>). Read the names and say thank you for ... (a brief memory of each person) as the music continues.



Discussion point: We'll look at examples of people at both ends of their faith journey, i.e. infants who are just being baptized and saint who have lived long and passed.

Media possibilities: We only watched the first video as a group.

- "I Choose Thankful." Length: 2:43. Free (subscription). Scripture tells us to give thanks in all circumstances. Many times it's easy to be thankful when times are good, but what about when times are difficult, or when we lose a loved one? In a hopeful and emotional form, "I Choose Thankful" reminds us to be thankful in all of those moments.
<https://journeyboxmedia.com/product/i-choose-thankful/>. **Comments:** It speaks to people in a variety of circumstances.
- "Thank You Notes." Length: 2:50. Cost: \$15.00. Using text from 1 Thessalonians 5 (rejoice always, pray continually, & give thanks in all circumstances), this poignant Thanksgiving sermon illustration video focuses on being thankful for the small and the simple.
<http://www.sermonspice.com/product/64989/thank-you-notes>
- "Reflections on Thanksgiving." Length: 3:28. Cost: \$18.00. Thanksgiving isn't just a holiday, it's a lifestyle. Often, we don't take the time to consider the richness of all the blessings in our lives--big and small. They just seem to get lost in the hustle of our day-to-day activity.
<http://www.worshipousemedia.com/mini-movies/11632/reflections-on-thanksgiving>

Scripture: Ephesians 1: 11-23 (Today's New International Version)

¹¹In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹²in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. ¹³And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

Thanksgiving and Prayer

¹⁵For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, ¹⁶I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²²And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

November 13, 2016:

26th Sunday after Pentecost

Synopsis: Pastor Mary is on vacation. Dr. Les Longden, a retired pastor and former professor of Discipleship and Evangelism at Dubuque Theological Seminary in Iowa, will preach.

Music: The hand bells are playing.

November 20, 2016: “God’s Kingdom Assignment” Christ the King Sunday, Thanksgiving

Synopsis: We’ll hear stories from those who participated in the Kingdom assignment that was given on October 16 as part of our stewardship series.

Felt need: Take a step towards extravagant generosity.

Metaphor/visuals: Thanksgiving abundance.

Activity: New members received.

Music suggestions: #526 “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”; #715 “Rejoice, the Lord is King”; #2197 “Lord of All Hopefulness”

Discussion points: On October 16, each member of the congregation four years and older will receive an envelope with five dollars and instructions for how to use it to build God’s Kingdom. Examples include giving it to someone in need, buying something to give away, buying supplies and making something to sell (on November 6 between services). You can add to it or join resources with another person. The reason for doing the assignment was not immediately clear to everyone, especially for such a small amount. Here are some notes from the October 16 worship planning sheet: The goals are to: 1) Do something as a congregation. 2) Show what generosity looks like. 3) Show how we each use our gifts in our own unique way. In the end, all of the money will be given away. Pastor Mary will encourage us to think about what giving it away felt like and how we can use our resources most effectively to build God’s Kingdom. She is looking for written response, pictures, and personal sharing in worship.

Media possibilities: We did not watch the media as a group.

- “Thankful Now.” Length: 1:31. Free (subscription). It doesn’t matter what stage of life we find ourselves in, there is always the danger of wasting your whole life waiting for what comes next. Then one day you wake up and realize you never really lived. Use this thought-provoking mini-movie this Thanksgiving or any service talking about thankfulness, dreams, patience, the future, or contentment. <https://journeyboxmedia.com/product/thankful-now/>
- “Thanksgiving: The Most Wonderful Time.” Length: 1:50. Free (subscription). From the stress of choosing just the right gift to the fireworks that wake your sleeping baby at midnight, we all agree: Holidays can be complicated. That’s why we love the simplicity of Thanksgiving- just a day to enjoy the presence of others, eat delicious food, and give thanks to the One from whom all blessings flow. <https://journeyboxmedia.com/product/thanksgiving-the-most-wonderful-time/>

Scripture: Philippians 4: 4-9 (Today’s New International Version)

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such

things.⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

“The First Christmas Songs”

We love Christmas songs. The radio stations know it and start playing them as soon as Halloween is over. They remind us of good memories and happy times. We love Christmas songs! But we don't pay too much attention to the first Christmas songs that Luke shares. These songs tell us of God's grace and justice that is revealed in Jesus.”

Ideas for the series:

- Choral arrangements of Scripture songs.
- Use a more contemporary Christmas song in contrast/comparison to Scripture.
- Advent readings based on contemporary Christmas songs.

Visuals/images: Music: Sheet music. Large silver and gold music notes on walls and small on trees. Instruments, especially trumpets. Radio. Long strips of white paper on walls – like a music staff – for writing. Candles and lanterns. Blue and purple drapes hanging down from the cross. Three dimensional words wrapped in lights, i.e. Blessed, Gloria, Salvation, Behold, Sing, Song, etc.

Hands-on items: Musical notes

Resources:

- <http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/4576/singing-the-christmas-story> is a model for singing the Christmas Story on Christmas Day.
- <http://www.lifeway.com/Article/sermon-christmas-mary-song-magnificat-luke-1> has messages from Life Way for all four songs in Luke 1 and 2.
- <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/christmas-carols-above-all-sing-spiritually> is a compilation of beloved Christmas songs. Note the verse 3 of “Away in the Manger” was probably written as a prayer (“Be near me, Lord Jesus...”).
- <http://www.umc.org/news-and-media/going-deeper-with-advent-by-way-of-christmas-carols1> looks at Advent using Christmas carols.

General discussion points: The songs in Luke sound very different than most Christmas music we hear on the radio or sing. Pastor Mary will compare and contrast at least one current song with scripture each week. In just a few minutes, our group thought of all these songs: “I’ll Be Home for Christmas”; “Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer”; “White Christmas”; “The Christmas Song”; “Rudolf, the Red-Nosed Reindeer”; “Here Comes Santa Claus”; “Frosty, the Snowman”; “I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas”; Mannheim Steamroller arrangements of Christmas songs; “All I Want for Christmas Is You.” 2) The birth story is only told in the gospels of Matthew and Luke.

November 27, 2016: “An Old Woman’s Song of Blessing”

1st Sunday of Advent

Synopsis: Elizabeth’s song serves as an encouragement to Mary and confirms her own hope in God’s blessings. She is the first one to call Jesus “Lord,” and her song challenges us to be those who bless others.

Felt need: To emulate Elizabeth so that we can bless others with our song.

Metaphor/visuals:

Activity: Mary and Elizabeth’s song and liturgical dance. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpLl9aUxypQ>)

We have never heard a song about Elizabeth and particularly like the older woman, Elizabeth, and younger woman, Mary, singing and dancing together. **Note after the meeting:** Karen contacted Timnath Presbyterian Church and was able to find the composer. She has giving us permission to use the music and will send it within the next few days. Potential singers: Pat Erickson, Kalie Connor, Ana Ivanov. Potential dancers: Lisa Jirikovic, Jillian Gripton, Michelle Bishop, Kalie Connor. Abby Keessen and Gabrielle Gripton dance, but will be away at school prior to Thanksgiving.

Music suggestions: “Ave Maria” (derives from Luke 1: 28) It has a flute part.

Discussion points: 1) What are some examples of words of encouragement that you have received? Drive safely. Godspeed. Bless you. Merry Christmas. Hugs. XXOO. Have a good day (or week) or nice day. I appreciate what you do. Call me if you need me. I believe in you. Thanks for everything. Have a blessed day. You are a blessing to me. 2) Mary’s life has taken a turn. She is in uncharted territory, choosing faith and truth in God.

Media possibility: “The Promise: Birth of the Messiah” Extended Trailer. Length: 0:23. Cost: Free. This is an animated musical celebration of one of the most pivotal events in all human history, the birth of Jesus Christ. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTwu4MO-IME> **Comments:** This is the same animated video we watched for Mary and Zachariah’s song. We did not watch this together, but the first 23 seconds are Elizabeth’s song.

Scripture: Luke 1: 39-45 (Today’s New International Version)

³⁹ At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³ But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!”

December 4, 2016: “A Girl’s Upside-Down Song”

2nd Sunday of Advent

Synopsis: Mary’s song is called the *Magnificat* because she magnifies the Lord. She also is clear that what God is doing in Jesus will change the world forever. Her song challenges us to see how God turns our expectations upside-down by coming to us as One who will pay special attention to those who are not the powerful, proud, or prosperous.

Felt need: To come to know the upside-down nature of God better.

Metaphor/visuals:

Activity: Holy Communion

Music suggestions: #2036 “Give Thanks”; “Mary Did You Know?” (Flash mob possibility)

Discussion points: Notice that this is only sung after Elizabeth greets Mary and hears her words of encouragement.

Media possibilities: We only looked at the second video as a group.

- “Magnificat.” Length: 1:42. Cost: \$15.00. Based on the song that Mary sings in the first chapter of Luke, Magnificat explores what it looks like when God lifts up the lowly and fill the hungry with good things. <http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/42068/magnificat>
- “I Will Magnify” from “The Promise: Birth of the Messiah.” Length: 4:18 (could be shortened). Cost: Free. Animated version of the *Magnificat*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rj4Mx7xHZ28>
Comments: We love it. The words are very clear and true to scripture. The scenery is similar to the southwest U.S. If we are going to use an animated video, it would be nice to do it each week for consistency.
- “Mary’s Song.” Length: 2:14. Cost: We own it. Last used 12/18/2011. Visual liturgy. <http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/8360/marys-song>

Scripture: Luke 1: 46-56 (Today’s New International Version)

⁴⁶ And Mary said:

“My soul glorifies the Lord ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, ⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name. ⁵⁰His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. ⁵¹He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. ⁵²He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. ⁵³He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful ⁵⁵to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.”

⁵⁶Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

December 11, 2016: “An Old Man’s Song of Thanksgiving”

3rd Sunday of Advent

Synopsis: Zechariah’s words are called the *Benedictus* because he offers a blessing after he and Elizabeth welcome their son, John. He’s grateful not only for John, but also for Jesus, whose birth fulfills the promises of God to bring salvation. What hope do we have for our children and their place in God’s Kingdom?

Felt need: Teach our children about Jesus.

Metaphor/visuals:

Activity: Flash mob or processional for “We Are Marching”

Handout: Candy cane (letter J). Chocolates (not sure how this fits).

Music suggestions: #2235 “We Are Marching” (Flash mob possibility); #2173 “Shine, Jesus, Shine”; Crosby, Still, and Nash’s “Teach Your Children Well”

Discussion points: 1) Zechariah’s song points the way to Jesus. It is similar to Mary’s song. 2) Questions to ponder: What hope do we have for our kids? What is Christmas really about? If we asked our kids, would they say God’s salvation or Santa? 3) Marie: At the “Teach the Children” Christmas event for kids, they learned about the different symbols of Christmas. She will pass that

information along to Worship. 4) On a related note: We have the Chrismons from Lakeside. Could we incorporate them into Children's Time? 5) Pastor Marcy and Jere: Samuel Lutheran Church has done a Blessing of the Children for their confirmands. They (parents) make a sign of the cross on the kids' foreheads while standing around the baptismal font. There is a good deal of power and ownership in this activity.

Media possibility: "Zechariah's Benedictus: His Name is John." Length: 3:05. Cost: Free. Animated version of the scripture from "The Promise: Birth of the Messiah."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTwu4MO-IME> **Comments:** Great! Zechariah reminded some of us of Gaston in Disney's Beauty and the Beast.

Scripture: Luke 1: 67-79 (Today's New International Version)

⁶⁷ His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

⁶⁸ "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

⁶⁹ He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David ⁷⁰ (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), ⁷¹ salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us—⁷² to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant, ⁷³ the oath he swore to our father Abraham: ⁷⁴ to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

⁷⁶ And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, ⁷⁷ to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, ⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven ⁷⁹ to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."

⁸⁰ And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.

December 18, 2016: "Yes, Angels Really Do Sing!"

4th Sunday of Advent

Synopsis: With the appearance of angels comes amazing glory – a spectacle like we can't imagine! The experience that the shepherds have, including hearing the angels' song, causes them to go and see for themselves that there is reason for great joy – for them and for all people. When we see and hear "good news," what do we do? How do we respond?

Felt need: Sing like the angels, taking the good news to all people.

Metaphor/visuals: Angels.

Activity (Jim & Michael): Flash mob of angels singing "Gloria!" Have singers seated with the congregation initially. Stand up and join in one-by-one. They could take off a coat and reveal white clothes and/or wings. Alternate plan: Have a few people dressed that way when they arrive at church; it would create a sense of anticipation. It would be great to have youth, kids, and choir participate.

Hands-on item: Postcard for inviting people to Christmas Eve and Christmas Day worship.

Music suggestions: #236 "While Shepherd Watched Their Flocks"; # 238 "Angels We Have Heard on High"

Media possibilities: We only watched the first video as a group. The second clip is from the same animated movie as the other three.

- “Light Is Born.” Length: 1:53. Cost: Free (with subscription). This is a creative telling of the Angel’s proclamation of Jesus’ birth to the shepherds to help make it real for our age. <https://journeyboxmedia.com/product/light-is-born/> **Comments:** This is a contemporary take on the story. It does give us ideas for staging, i.e. a bright, stage light (Frauenthal or MCC) on a rheostat, fog machine (Party City or Dave’s partner). It received mixed reviews.
- “Glory to God.” Length: 4:24. Cost: Free. Animated version of the scripture from “The Promise: Birth of the Messiah.” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= MvTWac4Cow](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MvTWac4Cow) **Comments:** This is from the same animated movie as the previous three weeks.

Scripture: Luke 2: 8-20 (Today’s New International Version)

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen which were just as they had been told.

Dec. 24, 2013 at 5 & 11 pm: “Sing a New Christmas Song”

Christmas Eve

Synopsis: The birth of Jesus forever changed the world. Isaiah proclaims that God’s authority rests on him, and the psalmist calls us to sing a new song because of what God is doing to bring salvation. We hear the same Christmas songs each year, but what new song do we need to sing? How will we declare God’s work to everyone?

Felt need: Sing a new Christmas song.

Metaphor/visuals:

Activity: Holy Communion. Candle lighting.

Music suggestions: #218 “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear”; #240 “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

Discussion points: The 5:00 pm service will include a pick-up pageant with children. The 11:00 pm service will probably include bells and choir.

Media possibility: “A Great Light.” Length: 3:27. Cost: \$17.98. Three children in dire circumstances prepare for an honored guest. Set to the text of Isaiah 9, this encourages us to wonder anew at the strange and beautiful arrival of our Savior. <https://skitguys.com/videos/item/a-great-light>

Comments: Powerful and unexpected message of salvation for all. The video did not speak to everyone. The children are captivating. Notice that the kids try to clean themselves up for their visitor, but can't do it without Jesus' help. Could we act it out? It needs an introduction, especially for kids. It would be best to show it once at the beginning of worship and again later in the service (and Christmas morning). It reminded Pastor Marcy of the story, "Ragman" by Walter Wangerin (https://www.csh.rit.edu/~ding/ragman_by_walter_wangerin_ir1.htm and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q6paKdR9dIE>), and Stacy of "The Little Match Girl" by Hans Christian Anderson.

Scripture: Psalm 96 (Today's New International Version)

¹ Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. ² Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. ³ Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. ⁴ For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. ⁵ For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens. ⁶ Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary.

⁷ Ascribe to the LORD, all you families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. ⁸ Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts. ⁹ Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth. ¹⁰ Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns." The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.

¹¹ Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it. ¹² Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy. ¹³ Let all creation rejoice before the LORD, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness.

Scripture: Isaiah 9: 2-7 (Today's New International Version)

² The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. ³ You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. ⁴ For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. ⁵ Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

December 25, 2016 at 10:00 am: "Our Christmas Song"

Christmas Day

Synopsis "Merry Christmas" is our greeting, but Isaiah tells us that "God reigns" is the truth of what happens at Christmas. God reigns, and God chooses to bring salvation – wholeness – to the ends of the earth. It is not just for us or for some, but God wants everyone to know peace, good news, and the joy of new life.

Felt need: Share the peace, good news, and joy of new life that comes when we know that God reigns.

Metaphor/visuals:

Activity: Singing Christmas songs.

Music suggestions (Mary Scott): #246 “Joy to the World”; #224 “Good Christian Friends, Rejoice”; #251 “Go Tell It on the Mountain”; “Our God Reigns”

(<http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/4576/singing-the-christmas-story>)

Media possibility: “A Great Light.” Length: 3:27. Cost: \$17.98. Three children in dire circumstances prepare for an honored guest. Set to the text of Isaiah 9, this encourages us to wonder anew at the strange and beautiful arrival of our Savior. <https://skitguys.com/videos/item/a-great-light>

Scripture: Isaiah 52: 7-10 (Today’s New International Version)

⁷ How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!”

⁸ Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the LORD returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes.

⁹ Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem.

¹⁰ The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

Scripture: Psalm 98 (Today’s New International Version)

¹ Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.

² The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations.

³ He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

⁴ Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; ⁵ make music to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing, ⁶ with trumpets and the blast of the ram’s horn— shout for joy before the LORD, the King.

⁷ Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

⁸ Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy; ⁹ let them sing before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.

Jan. 1, 2017 at 10:00 am: “A Song of Trust for the New Year”^{1st} Sunday after Christmas Day

Synopsis: Simeon has waited, hoped, and trusted that God would deliver on God’s promises of a Savior. He greets Jesus – Emmanuel – and knows that “God is with us.” He praises God and claims that God comes in Jesus for all people. **How do we find ourselves in a new year – looking back at those “God moments” that have sustained us, trusting that God walks with us into the future and confident of God’s promises and purposes for us?**

Felt need: Is bolded, above.

Metaphor/visuals:

Activity: Communion.

Music suggestions (Michael Boersma): #196 "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"; #2071 "Jesus, Name above All Names": "Lord, Let Your Servant God in Peace" sung to "Amazing Grace"

(<http://media.umcom.org/gbod/sibfiles/Gillette-Lord,LetYourServantGoInPeace,AMAZINGGRACE.pdf>)

Discussion points: Simeon trusted in God (verse 29). He could die happy knowing God's promised had been fulfilled.

Media possibility: "The Way in a Manger." 5:26. Free (with subscription). From seven different perspectives comes the story of one baby whose arrival would forever change the world. The Way in a Manger is perfect for connecting your congregation with the reality of the birth of Christ, as told by Simeon, Joseph, Herod, the Magi, the Innkeeper, Mary, and a Shepherd.

<https://journeyboxmedia.com/product/the-way-in-a-manger/> **Comments:** We did not preview this as a group. There's really only one short clip about Simeon.

Scripture: Luke 2: 25-35 (Today's New International Version)

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

²⁹ "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. ³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel."

³³ The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, ³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

Hymn Note on "Lord, Let Your Servant Go in Peace"

This hymn of trust was inspired by Simeon's canticle found in Luke 2:29-32. Simeon was a devout Jew who received a promise from the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah. When Jesus' parents brought their baby to the Temple, Simeon saw Jesus, took him in his arms, and praised God by offering this simple song. This song is sometimes called *Nunc dimittis* from its first words in Latin; it is used daily as a part of the Compline/Night/Close of Day prayers in the liturgy of hours (just as canticles of Zechariah and Mary are used daily in the morning and evening prayers), included in the ecumenical *Book of Common Worship/Daily Prayer* by the Presbyterian Church (USA).

The first verse of the hymn praises God with a paraphrase of the opening words of the ancient song and moves to the present day, giving thanks that we too have seen God's grace -- so we know that all will be well. While later verses acknowledge the problems of life, we are people of faith who know God's love that will make all things right in the end.

The second verse recognizes that there is "suffering, pain and death." Thomas G. Long writes: "In the place of worship, we cannot pray or sing faithfully without our words being full of the sorrows and joys of life" (*Testimony: Talking Ourselves into Being Christian*, page 47). In the face of such, we sing because God's love revealed in Jesus is transforming everything.

The third verse recognizes that, despite our best efforts, there is much in this life that we do not understand; we lack the means to change the world to our wills. When faced with incurable illness and

death, we affirm that ultimate healing will come in God's promised gift of everlasting life-- when death will be no more and every tear will be wiped away.

The final verse returns to the story of Christmas, the promise of God-with-us, that Simeon's song follows in Luke 2. Matthew's gospel ends with Jesus' Great Commission sending his followers out into the world to serve and to remember what he has taught, including that he is with us always (Matthew 28:16-20). Earlier Jesus comforts his followers before his death with the promise that he goes to prepare a place for us in his Father's house (John 14) so that we will be with him.

"Lord, Let Your Servant Go in Peace" was written on the first week anniversary of the death of Carolyn's mother-in-law, [Louise Gillette](#). Louise was a loving wife, mother, mother-in-law, grandmother and an enthusiastic supporter of Carolyn's hymn writing from the very beginning. This hymn was first sung at her funeral at the request of Louise's husband of fifty-nine years, Jerry, on December 2, 2010.

Lord, Let Your Servant Go in Peace

1. "Lord, let your ser - vant go in peace; your
 2. Through all the sor - row, pain and death, we
 3. There's much we can - not un - der - stand, nor that
 4. Lord, let your ser - vants dai - ly know that

Word has been ful - filled." Be - cause we've seen your
 dare, O God, to sing. For you once sent your
 or - der, nor con - trol; we place our lives in -
 we are not a - lone; and may we find, wher -

sav - ing grace we know that all is well.
 son to earth, and that changed eve - ry - thing.
 to your hands and trust you'll make us whole.
 e'er we go, you'll lead us safe - ly home.

Alternate tune: *ST. PETER*, *United Methodist Hymnal*, no. 549

WORDS: Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, 2010 (Luke 2:29-32; Matthew 28:16-20; John 14) AMAZING GRACE
 MUSIC: 19th cent. USA melody; harm. by Edwin O. Excell, 1900 CM

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