

## 2019 Advent and Christmas Worship Brainstorming Summary

November 4, 2019  
2020 Theme: 20/20 Vision



**Members present:** Pastor Mary, David Booth, Deb Moon, Marie Kordecki, Carole Koch, Vicki Zuker, Ron Zuker, Lynne Richmond, Betty Kinney, Karen Post, Jim Post, Barb Gripton, Karen Booth

“Joy to the World,” a beloved Christmas classic, turns 300 this year. Composer Isaac Watt’s interpretation of Psalm 98 invites us to sing a “new song”—and it is a powerful cosmic performance of all creation being renewed and freed. Rather than “joy” being yet another word for “happiness,” we will discover that the depths of joy can be found especially in the midst of suffering, the work of justice, and the presence of compassion—all part of the coming of Jesus to this world and a message the world still so desperately needs.

### Ideas for the series:

- **Connection to 20/20 Vision:** God’s good vision for his people includes joy-full living.
- **Use Psalm 98 each week** From *Psalms for Praying* © 2007 Nan C. Merrill, Continuum International Publishing Group, [www.PsalmsForPraying.com](http://www.PsalmsForPraying.com)

O sing to the Beloved a new song, for Love has done marvelous things! By the strength of your Indwelling Presence, we, too, are called to do great things; we are set free through Love’s forgiveness and truth. Yes, your steadfast Love and faithfulness are ever-present gifts in our lives. All the ends of the earth have seen the glory of Love’s Eternal Flame. Make a joyful noise to the Beloved all the earth; break forth into grateful song and sing praises!	Yes, sing songs of praise extolling Love’s way; lift up your hearts with gratitude and joy! Let the voices of all people blend in harmony, in unison let the people magnify the Beloved! Let the sea laugh, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it! Let the waters clap their hands; let the hills ring out with joy Before the Beloved, who radiates Love to all the earth. For Love reigns over the world with truth and justice bringing order and balance to all of Creation.
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- Use a different version/translation of Psalm 98 each week.
- **Use Wreath Drama** with same people playing parts every week (hope, peace, joy, love, and Christmas candles) and then asking others to light candles and use liturgy.
- *Quote:* “As we discover more joy, we can face suffering in a way that ennobles rather than embitters. We have hardship without becoming hard. We have heartbreak without being broken.” - Desmond Tutu
- Series overview: <http://worshipdesignstudio.com/files/Scriptures%20and%20synopses%20-%20Joy%20to%20the%20World%20series.pdf>

- Series webinar with Marcia McFee: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKme9pEFNhc>

**Music:** Every form of “Joy to the World” we can think of!

- “Joy” by Bastille: <https://www.popsongprofessor.com/blog/2019/5/5/what-does-joy-by-bastille-mean>
- “A Place at the Table” - making a connection between justice and joy
- Updated “Joy to the World” <https://www.praisecharts.com/songs/details/72234/joy-to-the-world-joyful-joyful-sheet-music>
- Doxology: Sing the Advent version to the tune of “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” and the Christmas version to the tune of “The First Noel.”

**Visuals:** Natural elements in the form of trees, wreaths, holly, ivy, evergreen boughs, logs, berries, wintry flora, (white) sticks/twigs, stars, snow, birds, small furry mammals...

- Marcia McFee’s Pinterest board: <https://www.pinterest.com/worshipstudio/heaven-and-nature-sing-joy-to-the-world/>
- Lynne’s Pinterest board: <https://www.pinterest.com/lynandlid/heaven-and-nature-sing/>
- Hang “JOY” below the ledge using a wreath for the “O.”
- Ideas for wreath making parties:
  - <https://jestcafe.com/how-to-throw-a-successful-wreath-making-party/>
  - <https://adornedwithlove.com/how-to-host-a-wreath-making-party/>
  - <https://www.apartmenttherapy.com/wreathmaking-party-196921>
  - <https://www.hipgirlshome.com/blog/2012/11/28/host-a-wreath-making-party.html>
- Handmade peace, love, joy ornaments (<https://www.mabeyshemadeit.com/peace-love-and-joy-ornaments/>); photo ornaments <https://www.dropbox.com/s/1ehpey2iomv89wh/Screenshot%202019-08-10%2008.48.01.png?dl=0>; rosemary treats
- Projected images: Nature, especially time lapse motions
- Still images: <https://unsplash.com/collections/7304390/heaven-and-nature-sing-joy-to-the-world>
- Create an area for taking family photos - joy sign or Christmas card that could be stepped into.

**Hands-on items:**

- Joy sticks, right
- Sheet music turned into decorations

**Benediction:** Movement Benediction Demonstration

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pbF8BUyRg8&feature=youtu.be>

**Resources:** There is an extensive list of adult and children’s books

at the end of PDF #18 “Sermon Fodder and Small Group Study Ideas.” These two were at the top.

- [The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World](#) with the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu



- One Thousand Gifts by Ann Voskamp

**Media possibilities:**

- “Heaven and Nature Sing – 300 Years of Joy to the World.” Length: 1:00.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=voa0Ldd7P88> **Comments:** Use this as an introduction to the series.
- “Advent Worship Collection.” Length: About 1:30-2:00 each. Cost: \$39.99 for 6 videos (normally \$16.99 each) Five beautiful worship reflection videos that focus on the themes of Advent: hope, love, joy, peace, and Christ (Advent Anthem). Perfect for responsive readings, sermon introductions, or a time of reflection during worship.  
<https://skitguys.com/videos/advent-worship-collection-3> **Comments:** Words are right on though we don’t like the setting/look always. Having said that, it does point to the true source of joy.
- “Advent Worship 3: Hope.” Length: 2:15. Cost: \$19.99. God put the hope of the world into the arms of a scared teenage girls, and it changed everything. This video helps set up an Advent service focused on hope. [www.sermonspice/product/79190/advent-worship-3-hope](http://www.sermonspice/product/79190/advent-worship-3-hope). “Advent Worship Collection 3” is available from the Skit Guys for \$30.99 for all five videos (<https://skitguys.com/videos/advent-worship-collection-3>). **Comments:** The Hope video needs narration. Betty scale: 4.5/5

**Discussion points:** 1) Karen Booth’s notes from the webinar: Happiness = Face is smiling. Joy = Heart is smiling. Being fulfilled is much more satisfying than being happy. 2) Lynne’s notes from the webinar: Have the Blue Christmas service as early in the season as possible. There is a companion cantata available from Hope Publishing which includes music and readings. Hang the greens in phases. The focus is on nature. “We’re Gonna Bring Joy to the World” was composed for this series; sing it through on week one, then use just the chorus for the rest of the series. **What do we think of when we hear “JOY”?** 1) It is not a word we often use in conversation. We tend to equate it with happiness. 2) Almond Joy. 3) It is a “churchy” word. 4) Lynne associates it with kids in Haiti who have little in the way of material goods and are so grateful for everything. 5) Giving birth to children and having grandchildren: Love is so big, deep, and immediate that it is almost overwhelming joy – even in the midst of pain. 6) We can be on the verge of tears with joy or as Lynne’s grandma would say, “filled with the spirit.” 7) We know joy when we feel it. 8) It can be a shared experience. 9) Betty’s wedding picture: Tears streaming down her happy face. Joy can’t be held in. 10) We can find joy as we mourn or remember loved ones. 11) We experience joy because of our relationships/attachments. 12) Related feelings: Super contentedness, gratitude, vulnerability. 13) Joy has a sense of action. Happiness lasts for a moment. Joy is ongoing. 14) Jim’s joy/Jesus connection: He is happy during Advent and joyous at Easter. 15) Opposites: Happiness and sadness. Joy and grief (refer to 1 Peter). Related idea: It takes a good deal of work to overcome overwhelming grief.

**What is the relationship between JOY and HAPPINESS?** 1) Happiness is a common, fleeting, and shallow feeling. Joy is meaningful and deep. 2) Carole: Happiness hums. Joy bubbles. 3) Christ is a source of joy. 4) It is the difference between presence and presents. 5)

**Scripture:** Isaiah 2: 1-5 (CEB)

This is what Isaiah, Amoz's son, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> In the days to come the mountain of the LORD's house will be the highest of the mountains. It will be lifted above the hills; peoples will stream to it. <sup>3</sup> Many nations will go and say, "Come, let's go up to the LORD's mountain, to the house of Jacob's God so that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in God's paths."

Instruction will come from Zion; the LORD's word from Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> God will judge between the nations, and settle disputes of mighty nations. Then they will beat their swords into iron plows and their spears into pruning tools. Nation will not take up sword against nation; they will no longer learn how to make war.

<sup>5</sup> Come, house of Jacob, let's walk by the LORD's light.

**Scripture:** Romans 13: 11-14 (NRSV)

<sup>11</sup> Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is **now the moment for you to wake from sleep**. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; <sup>12</sup> the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; <sup>13</sup> let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. <sup>14</sup> Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

**Synopsis:** The season of Advent is a time of anticipation as we wait and prepare with hope for the birth of Jesus, and we're called to wait actively. Opening ourselves to a different perspective can bring a sense of hope in the midst of despair—allowing joy to creep in no matter what. Opening to the perspectives of others can shift our fear to compassion, turning swords into plows. Salvation is near, says the scripture, when we wake up, when we prepare room in our lives for new Light, new insight, new hope to enter.

**Visuals:** Wreath (symbolizes celebration, unity, and joy & life in the middle of winter)

**Children's time:** Heaven and nature focus - stars. Suggestion: Place cut out stars in the hymnals, enough for one per person, to be held up during Children's Time.

**Hands-on item:** Joy sticks for kids.

**Activity:** Holy Communion

**Media possibilities:**

**Music:** #89 "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee" or "Joyful, Joyful" by Casing Crowns; #196 "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus": "Heaven and Nature Sing" by Chuck Bell; "We're Gonna Bring Joy to the World" (Included in the "Joy" package); "Prepare Him Room" by Paul Baloche

**Choir suggestion:** "Joy Has Dawned" by Lloyd Larson (from his cantata)

**Discussion points:** 1) Advent is a period of active waiting. That sounds like a contradiction in terms. 2) Isaiah: Most people don't love prophets or what they have to say. 3) The letter to the Romans was written to a community experiencing persecution and expecting Jesus imminent return. We've lost that perspective. Loosely related note: The closest things we see to that now are bumper stickers saying, "In case of rapture this vehicle will be unmanned," and the Left Behind book series. 4) Jim is taking an online class in leading worship. He has found that some churches offer communion every week during Advent (Lent too). Our thoughts: We could offer it during a hymn at a communion station if the

elements have already been blessed, but someone needs to serve it as we receive communion, not take it.

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**December 8, 2019: “Repeat the Sounding Joy - Loving Joy”**

Advent 2

**Scripture:** Isaiah 11: 1-10 (NRSV)

<sup>1:1</sup> A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.  
<sup>2</sup> The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. <sup>3</sup> His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; <sup>4</sup> but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. <sup>5</sup> Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.  
<sup>6</sup> The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. <sup>7</sup> The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. <sup>8</sup> The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder’s den. <sup>9</sup> They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.  
<sup>10</sup> On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

**Scripture:** Matthew 3: 1-12 (NRSV)

<sup>3</sup> In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, <sup>2</sup> “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” <sup>3</sup> This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, “The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’”  
<sup>4</sup> Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. <sup>5</sup> Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, <sup>6</sup> and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.  
<sup>7</sup> But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup> Bear fruit worthy of repentance. <sup>9</sup> Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. <sup>10</sup> Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.  
<sup>11</sup> “I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with [c] the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>12</sup> His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

**Synopsis:** Music can resonate in our soul so powerfully that we can’t help but join in. That’s the vision of “Joy to the World” as the reverberating phrase urges us to “repeat the sounding joy” of the good news of Love. The prophet Isaiah offers a vision of radical love, and we’re invited to claim God’s vision and work for it.

**Visuals:** Lion and lamb. Evergreen tree (symbol of the everlasting love of God) and decorations (the words love, peace, joy, and photo ornaments).

**Children's time:** Heaven and Nature focus – nativity animals. Signs with Hee-haw, Moo, and Baa are used to help tell the story.

**Hands-on item:**

**Activity:**

**Media possibilities:**

**Music:** "Heaven and Nature Sing" by Chuck Bell; #213 "Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates" or "Joy of the Lord" by Rend Collective; "Joy Has Dawned/Gloria in Excelsis Deo" from the cantata or "So Will I" by Hillsong; #3059 "Love Has Come" or "Make Room" by Casting Crowns; #2279 "You Shall Go Out with Joy" or "Alive in You" by Kim Walker-Smith

**Discussion points:** 1) What can we not do that will give us joy? Cut back on Christmas preparations or shopping? 2) How does our mindset affect how we feel about this season? How do we cope with not knowing (sometimes major) plans/details when we are the ones responsible for carrying them out? 3) Isaiah 11: We usually read this vision of a peaceable kingdom closer to Christmas Eve.

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**December 15, 2019: "Make the Blessings Known - Unabashed Joy"**

Advent 3

**Scripture:** Isaiah 35: 1-10 (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup> The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
like the crocus <sup>2</sup> it shall blossom abundantly,  
and rejoice with joy and singing.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the  
majesty of Carmel and Sharon.  
They shall see the glory of the LORD, the  
majesty of our God.

<sup>3</sup> Strengthen the weak hands,  
and make firm the feeble knees.

<sup>4</sup> Say to those who are of a fearful heart,  
"Be strong, do not fear!"  
Here is your God.  
He will come with vengeance,  
with terrible recompense.  
He will come and save you."

<sup>5</sup> Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

<sup>6</sup> then the lame shall leap like a deer,  
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,  
and streams in the desert;

<sup>7</sup> the burning sand shall become a pool,  
and the thirsty ground springs of water;  
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,  
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

<sup>8</sup> A highway shall be there,  
and it shall be called the Holy Way;  
the unclean shall not travel on it,  
but it shall be for God's people;  
no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.

<sup>9</sup> No lion shall be there,  
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;  
they shall not be found there,  
but the redeemed shall walk there.

<sup>10</sup> And the ransomed of the LORD shall return,  
and come to Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;  
they shall obtain joy and gladness,  
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

**Scripture:** Luke 1: 46b-55 (NRSV)

<sup>46</sup> And Mary said,  
"My soul magnifies the Lord, <sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
<sup>48</sup> for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.  
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
<sup>49</sup> for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

- <sup>50</sup> His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.  
<sup>51</sup> He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.  
<sup>52</sup> He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly;  
<sup>53</sup> he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.  
<sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, <sup>55</sup> according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

**Synopsis:** Joy doesn't wait for struggle to be over. Mary “rejoices” during her pregnancy, a state of affairs that would have put her in a position of dishonor among her people. She sings out powerfully because she knows that this turn of events will usher in the Presence of justice for the oppressed and freedom for the captive. What happens when we join in her prophetic chorus of joy?

**Visuals:** Rosemary (connection to the Virgin Mary; aka friendship plant; remembrance herb) and apples

**Children's time:** Heaven and nature focus – “Jolly Holly” (holly leaves with a Christmas joke written on each).

**Hands-on item:** Holly leaves

**Activity:**

**Media possibilities:** Clip from “Christmas Vacation” where Clark Griswold starts singing “Joy to the World” as he prepares to light his house in front of his family.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ian6NyXpszw> or

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e2I-tIDV-4>

**Music:** “Heaven and Nature Sing” by Chuck Bell; #3149 “For Everyone Born (Justice and Joy)” or “Joy” by Housefires; #216 “Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming”; Let It Rise” substituting “joy” for “glory”

**Choir possibility:** “There'll Be Joy in the Morning on That Day/Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee” from the cantata or any “Magnificat”

**Discussion points:** 1) Joy is not dependent on circumstances. 2) Examples of joyful people: Rose Emmons, Ron Zuker, Helen Riehl, Edna Gilbert, Edie White, many kids, Clark Griswold. 3) Joyful joy is another way of saying unabashed joy. 4) Today's readings include Isaiah's vision of making a way in the desert and Mary's Song (the Magnificat). 5) Is joy ever sad? No. Joy doesn't wait for struggle to be over (highlighted above).

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**Monday, December 16, 2019 at 7:00 pm: “Elusive Joy”**

Blue Christmas

**Scripture:** Psalm 30:5b (NRSV)

Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning [mourning].

**Scripture:** Luke 2: 1-7 (NRSV)

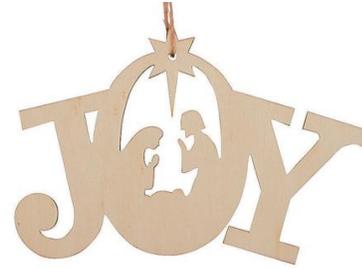
<sup>2</sup> In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup> All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup> Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup> He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her

firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

**Scripture:** John 19: 25b-27 (NRSV)

...standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

**Synopsis:** The holidays can be a difficult time for those who are dealing with any loss, and any word about joy can seem, at first, especially difficult to withstand. Joy might indeed be elusive. But the phrase from the Psalmist, "joy comes in the morning" could also be "joy comes in the mourning." Joy is not about denying suffering, but rather embracing the depths of all of life's emotions so that we feel the heights as well. Joy is possible when we understand suffering as a part of our call to compassion and love. This service will allow for sacred grief and for a sparking of the flames of hope and gratitude.



**Visuals:**

**Hands-on item:** Joy ornament. The wooden one shown here is from Oriental Trading (\$7.39/dozen). It can be painted.

**Activity:** Lighting candles, prayer station

**Media possibilities:**

- "God with Us" by Fred Purpose. Length: 2:46. Cost: \$18.00. This video is a cry out to go God in prayer to come into the difficulties in life. **Comments:** We didn't watch this as a group. <https://www.easyworship.com/media/sermonvideos/41281/God-With-Us>

**Music:** "Worn" by Tenth Avenue North; "Joy to the World"; #211 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"; #230 "O Little Town of Bethlehem"; #700 "Abide with Me" or "Lord from Sorrows Deep I Call" by Matt Papa and Matt Boswell; "Beautiful Tree" sung to the tune of "Away in a Manger"

**Discussion points:** 1) If you have never attended a Blue Christmas service, consider doing so and inviting others. 2) A Grief Share participant shared that s/he isn't sure what is happening, but finds it helpful. 3) Joy is deeper than feeling good (or feeling better). 4) The circumstances around Jesus' birth were difficult. Image Mary's feelings as a terrified teenage learning of her pregnancy outside of marriage.

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**December 22, 2019: "Make the Nations Prove - Peaceful Joy"**

Advent 4

**Scripture:** Isaiah 7: 10-16 (NRSV)

<sup>10</sup> Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, <sup>11</sup> Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. <sup>12</sup> But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test. <sup>13</sup> Then Isaiah said: "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? <sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and

shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. <sup>15</sup> He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. <sup>16</sup> For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

**Scripture:** Matthew 1: 18-25 (NRSV)

<sup>18</sup> Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah [i] took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. <sup>20</sup> But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: <sup>23</sup> “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” <sup>24</sup> When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, <sup>25</sup> but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

**Synopsis:** Emmanuel means “God with us.” We continue to yearn for “Emmanuel” with those who have come before us –for God to become so present that God’s peace, truth, love, and justice reign among all the world and bring balance to what feels out-of-sorts. Psalm 98 names the joyful expression of all creation as the response to the news that the Prince of Peace, Emmanuel, is coming at long last.

**Visuals:** Mistletoe (passing the peace used to be kiss of peace; symbol of love and friendship)

**Children’s time:** Heaven and nature focus – snow. Paper snowflakes with a different trait, attribute, or interest written on each one.

**Hands-on item:** Hershey’s holiday kisses or hanging mistletoe ornament  
(<https://feelingsofjoy.com/post/133353044060/merry-mistletoe>)

**Activity:** Baptism of the Stamy twins at 9:00 am

**Media possibilities:**

**Music:** Emmanuel, Emmanuel (UMH 204); “Heaven and Nature Sing” by Chuck Bell; #211 “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” or “What a Beautiful Name” by Hillsong’ #204 “Emmanuel, Emmanuel” or “Emmanuel” Songselect #5601640; #3052 God Rest Ye Merry Gentle(folk)” or #251 “Go Tell It on the Mountain” or “Did You Feel the Mountains Tremble” by Delirious

**Choir possibilities:** “Mary Had a Baby, My Lord” from the cantata or “Breath of Heaven (Mary’s Song)

**Resource:**

**Discussion points:** 1) Make sure the photo area is ready by today. 2) What brings peace? The quiet of snow – as long as the snow blowers aren’t out. Taking time to enjoy the season. Remembering why we do all the stuff. Wearing “life is good” apparel. Letting go of baggage. Going to church on Christmas Eve, especially lighting candles and singing “Silent Night.” Spending time with family. 3) Isaiah 53 offers the promise of Emmanuel. Matthew 1 is about Joseph learning his son will fulfill that promise.

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**Tues., Dec. 24, 2019 at 6:00 pm & 11:00 pm: “The Lord Is Come - Incarnate Joy”**

Christmas Eve

**Scripture:** Isaiah 52: 7-10 (NRSV)

How beautiful upon the mountains  
are the feet of the messenger who  
announces peace,  
who brings good news,  
who announces salvation,  
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."  
<sup>8</sup> Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,  
together they sing for joy;  
for in plain sight they see  
the return of the LORD to Zion.

<sup>9</sup> Break forth together into singing,  
you ruins of Jerusalem;  
for the LORD has comforted his people,  
he has redeemed Jerusalem.  
<sup>10</sup> The LORD has bared his holy arm  
before the eyes of all the nations;  
and all the ends of the earth shall see  
the salvation of our God.

**Scripture:** Psalm 96 (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup> O sing to the LORD a new song;  
sing to the LORD, all the earth.  
<sup>2</sup> Sing to the LORD, bless his name;  
tell of his salvation from day to day.  
<sup>3</sup> Declare his glory among the nations,  
his marvelous works among all the peoples.  
<sup>4</sup> For great is the LORD, and greatly to be  
praised;  
he is to be revered above all gods.  
<sup>5</sup> For all the gods of the peoples are idols,  
but the LORD made the heavens.  
<sup>6</sup> Honor and majesty are before him;  
strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.  
<sup>7</sup> Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,  
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.  
<sup>8</sup> Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;  
bring an offering, and come into his courts.

<sup>9</sup> Worship the LORD in holy splendor;  
tremble before him, all the earth.  
<sup>10</sup> Say among the nations, "The LORD is king!  
The world is firmly established; it shall  
never be moved.  
He will judge the peoples with equity."  
<sup>11</sup> Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth  
rejoice;  
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;  
<sup>12</sup> let the field exult, and everything in it.  
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy  
<sup>13</sup> before the LORD; for he is coming,  
for he is coming to judge the earth.  
He will judge the world with righteousness,  
and the peoples with his truth.

**Scripture:** Luke 2: 8-20 (NRSV)

<sup>8</sup> In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup> to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"  
<sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." <sup>16</sup> So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

**Synopsis:** “Joy to the World, the Lord is come!” We celebrate the world-altering truth of the inbreaking, indwelling, incarnation of the Holy One among us. It changes our lives, our outlook, and our world forever - and offers us “deep joy.” This is not simply happiness, which can be fleeting, but the promise that - no matter what - God is with us, God is seeking to be born in us again, and God will sustain us for the long haul.

**Visuals:** Holly (prickly leave like the crown of thorns) and cranberries (red symbolizes spilled blood and lifeblood of birth)

**Children’s time:** Heaven and nature focus – people.

**Hands-on item:**

**Activity:**

**Media possibilities:**

- “Advent Worship: Advent Anthem.” Length: 2:13. Cost: \$16.99 individually. Is available as part of the “Advent Worship Collection” (see page 3). A powerful call to worship film that will stir the hearts within the church to celebrate the birth of Christ. **Comments:** We like this. <https://skitguys.com/videos/advent-anthem>
- “God Became Flesh.” Length: 2:01. Cost. \$18.00. This mini movie presents a picture of the story of the birth of Jesus Christ from above, not only offering a unique perspective on the Biblical events but also emphasizing the incredible reality of how the Son stepped down from His heavenly throne to dwell among His people. **Comment:** Like the different perspective. <https://www.ignitermedia.com/products/52074-god-became-flesh>
- “God with Us” by Igniter Media. Length: 1:45. Cost: \$20.00. Two thousand years ago, God came to dwell among us. Experience the moments leading up to Christ’s birth in a way that makes the Christmas story, frozen in time, more real today. **Comments:** Karen found this after the brainstorming. It is worth watching. <https://www.easyworship.com/media/sermonvideos/96024/God-With-U>

**Music:** “Heaven and Nature Sing” by Chuck Bell; #246 “Joy to the World” or “Joy to the World (Unspeakable Joy)” by Chris Tomlin; #234 “O Come All Ye Faithful”; #239 “Silent Night”

**Choir possibility:** “Jesus, Joy of the Highest Heaven/Away in a Manger/What Child Is This?” from the cantata or “Noel” by Chris Tomlin and Lauren Daigle

**Discussion points:** 1) The 6:00 pm service will have a pick up pageant. The young chimers will play too. The 11:00 pm service will offer Communion. There will be candle lighting and “Silent Night” as both services. 2) Make sure we have enough candles.

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**December 29, 2019 at 10:00 am:** “Wonders of His Love - Compassionate Joy” Christmas 1

**Scripture:** Isaiah 63: 7-9 (NRSV)

I will recount the gracious deeds of the LORD, the praiseworthy acts of the LORD, because of all that the LORD has done for us, and the great favor to the house of Israel that he has shown them according to his mercy, according to the abundance of his steadfast love. <sup>8</sup> For he said, “Surely they are my people, children who will not deal falsely”; and he became their savior <sup>9</sup> in all their distress. It was no messenger or angel but his presence that saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

**Scripture:** Psalm 148 (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD!  
Praise the LORD from the heavens;  
    praise him in the heights!  
<sup>2</sup> Praise him, all his angels;  
    praise him, all his host!  
<sup>3</sup> Praise him, sun and moon;  
    praise him, all you shining stars!  
<sup>4</sup> Praise him, you highest heavens,  
    and you waters above the heavens!  
<sup>5</sup> Let them praise the name of the LORD,  
    for he commanded and they were created.  
<sup>6</sup> He established them forever and ever;  
    he fixed their bounds, which cannot be  
    passed.  
<sup>7</sup> Praise the LORD from the earth,  
    you sea monsters and all deeps,  
<sup>8</sup> fire and hail, snow and frost,

    stormy wind fulfilling his command!  
<sup>9</sup> Mountains and all hills,  
    fruit trees and all cedars!  
<sup>10</sup> Wild animals and all cattle,  
    creeping things and flying birds!  
<sup>11</sup> Kings of the earth and all peoples,  
    princes and all rulers of the earth!  
<sup>12</sup> Young men and women alike,  
    old and young together!  
<sup>13</sup> Let them praise the name of the LORD,  
    for his name alone is exalted;  
    his glory is above earth and heaven.  
<sup>14</sup> He has raised up a horn for his people,  
    praise for all his faithful,  
    for the people of Israel who are close to him.  
Praise the LORD!

**Scripture:** Matthew 2: 13-23 (NRSV)

<sup>13</sup> Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” <sup>14</sup> Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, <sup>15</sup> and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son.”

<sup>16</sup> When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. <sup>17</sup> Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: <sup>18</sup> “A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.”

<sup>19</sup> When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, <sup>20</sup> “Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child’s life are dead.” <sup>21</sup> Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. <sup>22</sup> But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. <sup>23</sup> There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, “He will be called a Nazorean.”

**Synopsis:** As we live in the joy of Christmas, we encounter the rest of the story - a fearful and vengeful ruler who has it out for the newborn “King” Jesus and takes it out on the children of the land. The cruelty of the story is hard to fathom, and we’re challenged to consider what it means to live joyfully and seek justice in the midst of a world in pain.

**Visuals:** Ivy has to cling to something to support itself as it grows. This reminds us that we need to cling to god for support in our lives.

**Children’s time:** Heaven and nature focus – angels.

**Hands-on item:**

**Activity:**

**Media possibilities:**

- “Let Your Light Shine.” Length: 2:51. Cost: \$19.99. A man dares his friend to leave his Christmas light up all year and, in turn, his friend realizes that living for Jesus isn’t something that just happens once a year. Perfect for Christmas, New Year’s or any time during the year. [www.sermonspice/product/21945/let-your-light-shine](http://www.sermonspice/product/21945/let-your-light-shine) **Comments:** Use this as a reminder that the story doesn’t end with Christmas.
- “Refugee” by David Brymer Music. Length: 6:22. Cost: Free. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPDvOVsENSk>. **Comments:** We did not watch this as a group.

**Music:** #3149 “A Place at the Table”; “Heaven and Nature Sing”; #238 “Angels We Have Heard on High” or “Hark, the Herald Angels Sing”; #2179 “Ubi Carita (Live in Charity)”; #3062 “Spirit-Child Jesus”

**Choir possibility:** “When Jesus Was a Refugee”  
<http://www.gbod3.org/musicdownloads/DamonDan-WhenJesusWasaRefugeeSTJAMESINFIRMARY.pdf>

**Discussion points:** 1) The story doesn’t end after Jesus’ birth and the reality is pretty ugly. How many of us would rather “box up Christmas” on December 26? Matthew 2 recounts the horrible story of the death of the infants. We need to be reminded to go and live joyfully. 2) “The Work of Christmas” by Howard Thurman is shown below. Living joyfully goes hand in hand with seeking justice. 3) Can you have a joy without faith? Galatians lists joy as one of the fruits of the spirit. It may be that joyful people haven’t made the connection between their joy and God’s grace without an active faith. It is up to us to help make that connection. 4) Living is hard. 5) Ron Zuker is a great example of peaceful joy.

When the song of the angels is stilled,  
 when the star in the sky is gone,  
 when the kings and princes are home,  
 when the shepherds are back with their flocks,  
 the work of Christmas begins:  
 to find the lost,  
 to heal the broken,  
 to feed the hungry,  
 to release the prisoner,  
 to rebuild the nations,  
 to bring peace among the people,  
 to make music in the heart.

*The poem “The Work of Christmas” is from Howard Thurman’s The Mood of Christmas and Other Celebrations.*