



## Worship Planning Music Suggestions for the Sundays in Advent

### Preparatory Nature of Advent

The season of Advent is very similar to Lent. Both prepare believers to celebrate major festivals in the Church Year.

Both also compete with the secular world. During Lent, the thoughts of many turn to warmer weather, spring break, and the end of the school year. During Advent, the thoughts of many turn toward gifts, visiting family, and time off. While all of those things are good, the goal of both Advent and Lent is to show that those things are not the *highest* good.

Both Advent and Lent are penitential in nature. During Lent, our repentance focuses on the fact that the Son of God had to suffer and die. During Advent, our repentance focuses on the fact that Christ had to leave heaven and be born in such a humble state. Thus, the root of both is our repentance in the humiliation of Christ.

Therefore, both seasons should feel differently than the one they prepare you for. It would be odd, would it not, if Lent looked and felt just like Easter? If lilies were out and joyful hymns were sung during Holy Week, might that not be jumping the gun and stealing Easter's joyful thunder? Likewise, if we turn Advent into "Christmas-lite," we can rob our people of some of the wondrous joy that accompanies the celebration of the incarnation.

Therefore, as you plan for the worship of Advent, you will serve the Gospel and your congregation well if you let Advent serve as the Church intended it to serve since the 400's – as a somewhat quiet, contemplative season of preparation. Some ideas:

- Save the Christmas hymns until December 24<sup>th</sup>. Instead, pick only Advent hymns and adorn them; perhaps giving *just a tiny taste* of Christmas in the closing hymn on the fourth Sunday of Advent.
- Consider setting up the Christmas decorations slowly, with the tree not appearing until just days before Christmas Eve, rather than immediately following Thanksgiving.
- Just as in Lent, omit the *Gloria*. Let it not be sung for a month, and then let those joyful words fill the church on December 25<sup>th</sup>. Instead, replace the *Gloria* with a gathering rite that focuses on the preparatory nature of the season.

### The Musical Options Offered - Use What You Want and What You Can

The worship suggestions contained in this module of C13 hopefully will help you in your efforts to make Advent a time of meaningful preparation for Christmas.

We would like to stress, however, that these are all *options*. You know your church and your community. You know what would serve the Gospel well, and what would not. You know what your choirs are capable of, and what would tax them to the degree that their efforts would no longer be joyful fruits of faith.

We have tried to include pieces for different skill levels. Some are beautiful, and yet can be utilized by the average WELS church of 120 souls. Some will challenge a church of 1,000, with its plethora of musicians and singers. In addition, many of these suggestions have options that allow for adjustment based on the resources available. For example, in many cases, a piece can be performed using only piano (or organ, brass, guitars, etc.). Some can be sung by just a cantor, a small group, or a choir.

### **The Worship Folders Are Easily Modified**

The **highlighted suggestions** in this module are what you will need to use if you want to utilize the C13 worship folder templates without modification. However, the templates are offered in Microsoft Word and Publisher so they are easy to modify. Both formats make it easy to insert or delete pages. Therefore, any planning you have done so far (such as choral pieces) can be easily incorporated. In addition, any suggestions offered for the worship folder can be altered or deleted. One of the goals of C13 is to provide resources that are very flexible.

### **In This Document**

This document contains:

- Suggestions for a Gathering Rite, which can be used in place of the *Gloria*;
- Suggestions for music you can use in conjunction with the lighting of the Advent wreath candles;
- Options for a special Gospel Acclamation for the Advent season;
- Possible choir or small group anthems (just in case you haven't gotten that far in your planning yet); and
- Suggested resources, which will allow you to provide a variety of musical settings for the traditional Advent hymns contained in the C13 worship folder templates.

## GATHERING RITE

It is an ancient custom in the Christian Church to exclude the *Gloria* during the season of Advent, just as is done during Lent. The *Gloria* is set aside to mark Advent as unique. It will be sung again with great joy on Christmas Day.

So what do you do in place of the *Gloria*? Consider using a gathering rite. A gathering rite is a simple song, generally with a text that is based in Scripture. It is often antiphonal. We have suggested two possibilities. We have included one – *Awake, O Sleeper* – in the C13 worship folder templates for Advent.

### ***Awake, O Sleeper* by Francis Patrick O'Brien**

This is the gathering rite found in the C13 worship folder templates for Advent.

*Awake, O Sleeper* is a simple but beautiful song, done best on the piano. However, it can be done on organ as well. The refrain contains the line, “Prepare the way for he shall come, the Lord of glory.” This echoes the C13 theme for the four-week Advent series: PREPARE THE WAY FOR THE LORD. Thus, it is the gathering rite found in the C13 Advent worship folder templates.

This rite contains different verses for each Sunday that reflect the Scripture lessons for that week. *Awake, O Sleeper* contains verses for Year A, B and C. Therefore, if this gathering rite were appreciated, it can be used in any year in the future.

The rite also contains an optional penitential rite that incorporates the *Kyrie*. The C13 worship folder template for Advent illustrates a simple way to use it within a more complete confession of sins. If the pastor does not consider himself a strong singer, then having a cantor sing that part of the penitential rite is a fine option.

This rite can be used as is, with only the pastor, congregation, and one musician. However, it also offers countless opportunities for the saints to use their musical gifts. You can have different individuals or a small group sing the verses. You can have a choir join in on the optional choir “echo” during the refrain. You can purchase the additional instrumental part and add it in as you get closer to Christmas.

[THIS link will take you to a page where you can listen to audio samples and order the music.](#) The audio samples are heard when you click the blue sound  icons.

The first icon plays a sample of the Gathering Rite verses and refrain. Note that this sample illustrates using a choir on the verses and to sing a descant. While that is a beautiful way to use this rite, it is not necessary. The verses can be sung by a single cantor (pastor or someone else) and the refrain can be sung without descant by the congregation. It is a *very* simple piece to sing.

The second icon plays a sample of the penitential rite.

*Entrance Antiphon for Advent* by Normand Gouin

This gathering rite hearkens back to *The Lutheran Hymnal* when an antiphon, psalm verses, and the *Gloria Patri* all came after the absolution. It is a quiet piece and written in a minor key, making it a good vehicle for the penitential nature of Advent. It is intended for the organ.

Gouin's rite takes unique antiphon texts for each Sunday in Advent and sets them to the seventh-century plainsong tune *Conditor Alme Siderum*. (This is the tune for the Advent Hymn, CW031: *O Lord of Light, Who Made the Stars*.) Then each Sunday contains psalm verses from the Psalm of the Day. It is performed:

- A cantor/choir sings the antiphon
- The congregation sings the antiphon
- The cantor/choir sings a verse from the Psalm of the Day
- The congregation sings the antiphon
- The cantor/choir sings another verse from the Psalm of the Day
- The congregation sings the antiphon
- The cantor/choir sings the *Gloria Patri*
- The congregation sings the antiphon

Again, there is a variety of options. The antiphons can be sung in unison or in two-part harmony. The psalm verses can be sung in unison or in three-part harmony, with or without accompaniment. Thus, Gouin's *Entrance Antiphon for Advent* can be used in any church.

[THIS link will take you to a webpage where you can hear an audio sample and order the music.](#) Again, the sample is of a choir singing the verses and refrain in harmony. That is not necessary. It can be done in unison.

NOTE: The antiphon for Advent IV depicts Christ's birth in terms of the natural order of creation. It goes, "*Rain down the Just One, all you clouds. Bring forth a Savior, mother earth.*" The words are intended to stress the fact that the Son of God became fully human, but they could be confusing. There are two alternatives: (1) you can simply reuse the antiphon text from Advent I, or (2) you can substitute the text from any verse of CW031: *O Lord of Light, Who Made the Stars*.

## ADVENT WREATH MUSIC

It is certainly fine to have the Advent wreath lit along with the other candles before worship. However, lighting the Advent wreath separately within the worship service calls attention to its meaning.

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP: OCCASIONAL SERVICES contains spoken sequences for the lighting of the Advent candles that can be substituted for the Verse of the Day.

In our C13 worship folder templates we suggest an Advent Wreath song be sung in place of the Psalm of the Day.

### ***Advent Wreath Song* by Paul Inwood**

The C13 worship folder templates suggest replacing the Psalm of the Day with Paul Inwood's *Advent Wreath Song*, a song that builds from week to week. It is intended for the piano and has additional parts for two C-instruments, if desired.

Every Sunday in Advent, the song begins and ends with a refrain. The verses for each Sunday are sung in a row. Therefore, on Advent I, you sing: refrain, verse 1, refrain. On Advent II, you sing: refrain, verse 1, verse 2, refrain. On Advent III, you sing: refrain, verse 1, verse 2, verse 3, refrain.

The song is very simple, and can be sung *a capella*. Thus, it can be suggested to families that they incorporate it into their home devotions during Advent. (These devotions will be provided as part of the C13 program.) In the C13 worship folder, the Children's Message is placed right after the *Advent Wreath Song*. A child can possibly be the one to light the candles on your wreath during worship.



If you use the Advent Wreath Song, since it builds from week to week, by the fourth Sunday, the congregation will loudly and joyfully be participating in the soaring melody of the verses.

[HERE is a MP3 sampling of the song.](#)

[HERE is where you can purchase the music.](#) Note that this music is contained in a collection called RITUAL MOMENTS. There are other fine songs in the collection.

### ***Light the Candle* by Jaroslav Vajda**

Any children's or adult choir can sing this very simple piece, or the entire congregation can sing it. It can be used alone. It can be introduced softly while the Advent wreath sequence from CHRISTIAN WORSHIP: OCCASIONAL SERVICES is spoken, and then sung after the spoken sequence.

[HERE is a PDF sample of the music.](#)

[HERE is where you can purchase the music.](#)

## VERSE OF THE DAY

If you want to set Advent apart as special, a simple way to do that would be to use a new Verse of the Day during this season. Some possibilities:

### ***Advent Gospel Acclamation* by Andrew Wright**

This is a beautiful Verse of the Day, and the one featured in the C13 Advent worship templates. It has a unique verse for each Sunday in Advent that ties in with the theme. The refrain can be sung in four-part harmony or unison. It sounds good on the piano, but is really intended for the organ. The verses can also be done in unison or harmony. You can perform as follows.

- The choir introduces the “Alleluias” in unison.
- The congregation sings the “Alleluias.”
- The choir sings the verse in harmony.
- The congregation sings the “Alleluias” a final time, with the choir adding in harmony.

[You can hear a sample and order the music HERE.](#)

### ***Psalm and Gospel Acclamation for Advent* by Stephen Pishner**

Steven Pishner has set Psalm 25, the Psalm of the Day for the First Sunday in Advent, to the opening line of *Veni Emmanuel*. Pishner’s arrangement has optional parts for brass quartet and timpani. The Alleluias in the Gospel Acclamation use the same melodic structure. You use both the first Sunday in Advent, and then use just the Gospel Acclamation for the second, third and fourth Sundays. Alternatively, you can use the Gospel Acclamation all by itself on all four Sundays. Pishner has provided a verse for each Sunday.

[You can hear a sample and order the music HERE.](#)

## CHORAL PIECES

Your choir may have chosen pieces to perform during Advent already. If not, here are some options.

### *A Voice Proclaims* by John L. Bell

If you wish to have your choir sing during Advent, this musical version of Isaiah 40:3-11 certainly would serve well. It is written for SATB and requires a strong soloist and choir. The accompaniment is with keyboard, but includes the option to add in guitar and clarinet. There is also a refrain that allows the congregation to join in, a nice touch. This is a slightly more difficult piece.

[You can hear a sample and order the music HERE.](#)

### *A Voice in the Desert* by Ronald Nelson

This is another piece based on Isaiah 40. This piece is a bit simpler. Not only does it only use three voices – soprano, alto, and bass – but the parts repeat. The only accompaniment is with keyboard.

[You can hear a sample and order the music HERE.](#)

### *Make Straight in the Desert a Highway* by Carol Daw and Austin Lovelace

This is a very simple piece written for two voices. It can be performed on the organ or piano and is not hard to play or sing. The text heralds the coming of the Messiah, drawing on imagery from the book of Isaiah.

[You can hear a sample and order the music HERE.](#)

### *Two Songs for Advent* by Jacques Berthier

These are two songs that come out of the Taize Community in France. They would work well on Sunday mornings or in your midweek services. Both songs are included when you order this one piece of music.

*Prepare the Way of the Lord* - Not only does this song capture the theme of our Advent worship series, but also it is fun to sing. It is a simple refrain that can be sung repeatedly as a canon (where half the church begins slightly after the other half). There is a secondary canon, comprised of just “Alleluias.” It has parts for woodwinds. It is so simple that little children can learn to sing it quickly.

The piece can be used as recessional music after one Sunday, sung by the adult or children's choir as people walk out.

[You can listen to a sample of it HERE.](#)

*Wait for the Lord* - This is an ostinato chorale. The choir can introduce the refrain in four-part harmony. The congregation is encouraged to join in. Then, as the refrain is sung

repeatedly, sung verses are superimposed on the chorale. All the verses come from Scripture lessons for Advent.

This piece maybe sung during distribution of the Lord's Supper as the repetitive nature of it would allow people to sing, even as they were standing in line, waiting to be ushered up. This can teach that the way we "wait for the Lord" to come on Judgment Day is through the use of the Means of Grace.

[You can listen to a sample of it HERE.](#)

[You can order the music HERE.](#)

### ***Advent Benediction*** by Valerie Shields

This is a clever, short little piece by Valerie Shields. It takes the Aaronic Benediction and sets it to music. The response, instead of an Amen, is the last line of *Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel*. The piece is intended for the keyboard, but has options for an additional C-instrument and handbells.

It can be used a number of ways. It can be sung entirely by a choir at the close of the Fourth Sunday in Advent. Alternatively, it can be used every Sunday. The pastor can sing the benediction, with the congregation responding in song: "Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel."

[You can listen to the entire piece HERE.](#)

[You can view a PDF preview of the entire piece and purchase it HERE.](#)

### ***Prepare the Royal Highway*** arranged by Ronald Nelson

This is one for churches with a stronger choir. It is a concerto on the Swedish folk tune and text, found in CHRISTIAN WORSHIP SUPPLEMENT as hymn 702. The choir introduces the hymn in verse one. The congregation joins in for verse 2. Verse 3 is a creative interpretation of the melody, sung by the choir. The congregation joins in for Verse 4, with the choir adding a descant.

[You can view a PDF and order the music HERE.](#)

### ***Prepare the Royal Highway*** arranged by Kenneth Kosche

This is another version of the hymn above. It still requires SATB but is simpler than the Nelson version. Unlike the version above, it does not include the assembly, but is just for the choir.

[You can listen to it HERE.](#)

[You can order the music HERE.](#)

## HYMN ACCOMPANIMENT

The following hymns are found in the C13 worship folder templates for Advent:

CW2 – Savior of the Nations, Come  
CW25 – The King Shall Come  
CW9 – Jesus, Your Church with Long Eyes  
CW12 – Hark the Glad Sound! The Savior Comes  
CW16 – On Jordan’s Bank  
CW14 – Arise, O Christian People  
CW21 – Hosanna to the Coming Lord  
CW23 – Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel  
CW51 – I Am So Glad When Christmas Comes

These are classics, favorites of your people. Why not adorn them? Consider playing some of them, or at least verses of some of them, to new arrangements. (The melody is the same, but the harmony is different.) Some possibilities:

*The Creative Hymnodist: Advent and Christmas* by Kenneth Kosche

This is a collection of well-known tunes from some of the most popular Advent and Christmas hymns. The settings are very simple, but creative and can be used as an alternative setting while the hymn is being sung, as an offertory, or as Communion music.

[You can order the music HERE.](#)

*Alternate Hymn Accompaniments: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, and General* by Edward Meyer

Again, this collection takes popular hymn tunes and re-works the accompaniment, while retaining the melody. This collection can be used on any type of keyboard: piano, organ, electric piano, etc.

[You can order the music HERE.](#)

*Introductions and Alternate Accompaniments for Piano, Volume 1*

This is a wonderful collection of piano pieces offered by Augsburg Fortress, where almost every hymn in their hymnal is reset to piano. Some settings are probably more conducive to an offertory, but most are quite lovely and marvelous to sing along with. In many cases, this collection offers more than one setting for a hymn. If you choose to go with an all-piano service for your midweek Advent worship, this book would be very helpful.

[You can order this music HERE.](#)