

Season of Christmas

Crafting the Liturgy — Seasonal Planning Page

The season of Christmas is a joyful season and often a favorite for many. The Good News of Christ's birth reminds us of new beginnings, the precious love of God, and the gift of salvation that came to us in an innocent and helpless infant. This baby is God come down to take on human flesh and blood! What better news is there than to know that God loved the world he created so much, that he sent his Son to redeem the creation and restore humanity to a right relationship?

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE SEASON

The following are some ideas for helping to make the season distinct and memorable. Congregations are free to adapt these suggestions, or follow the local customs of the congregation.

Liturgical Color

The color for the season of Christmas is white or gold.

Alternate Worship Texts

Consider using the alternate prayers and texts for worship in the short season of Christmas, especially if you used a well-known setting during Advent. A bit of variety in the liturgy can keep the worshiping community attentive and can even spark deeper thinking about worship.

The Worship Space

Decorate the worship space in a festive way that reflects the celebratory nature of the season. The use of symbols of Christ, along with gold and white colors, can create a regal-looking space that points to the King of kings. Lots of light, including candlelight, reminds worshipers of the Light of the World who dispels all darkness.

The Gathering

The use of the Kyrie and Gloria are recommended for Christmas. As an alternate for the Hymn of Praise, use the beloved hymn "Angels from the Realms of Glory" (LBW 50, LSB 367, ELW 275, REC 126, SOLA 126) throughout the Christmas season.

The Word

Consider using the hymn "Thy Word" (CCLI #14301) during the Christmas season to emphasize the wisdom of God that comes among us in the Word who became flesh.

For inspiration in this Christmas season, check out Martin Luther's Christmas Book. This small book is a collection of the Reformer's thoughts on the shepherds, angels, the manger scene and more. (ISBN# 0806635770)

Consider preaching a short series on the scripture lessons from Isaiah:

- Isaiah 9:2-7 — Israel is brought from darkness to light.
- Isaiah 52:7-10 — Israel has been redeemed.
- Isaiah 63:7-14 — Israel has received her Savior.

The Offertory

Use the praise song "Christmas Offering" by Paul Baloche (CCLI# 7005509) for the offertory during Christmas. Even if your congregation doesn't know the song, it could be played by the musician during the offering. A downloadable copy of the music can be purchased for \$3.99 at www.sheetmusicplus.com/search?Ntt=christmas+offering

REMINDERS FOR THE SEASON

- ✱ Make sure you have the candles you need for candlelight services.
- ✱ Choose the special music you will use for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, and begin preparing for those services.
- ✱ Have musicians begin prelude music at least 15 minutes before Christmas Eve worship begins in order to help the congregation center themselves for the Holy Night.
- ✱ If you do the chorale reading for the Nativity of Our Lord (found on the Christmas page of SOWeR), make sure you have lectors signed up to read and give them the readings early so they can practice together.
- ✱ Consider using the Service of Lessons and Carols (found on the Seasonal Christmas Page of SOWeR) if the pastor takes a Sunday off after Christmas. It is a moving service that is appropriate for laity to lead.
- ✱ Consider hosting an intergenerational New Year's Eve party at your church. Have a short prayer service for the new year.
- ✱ Invite older adults to present the children's messages during Christmas. It is a wonderful way to connect the young with those who are older and wiser in their faith.

COMMEMORATIONS

Dec. 29: David (c. 1040 – c. 970 BC). King David was from the tribe of Judah, a descendant of Ruth and one of the 12 sons of Jesse who lived in Bethlehem. Jesus is a descendant of David.

Jan. 2: J. K. Wilhelm Loehe (February 21, 1808 – January 2, 1872) — Pastor

LESSER FESTIVALS

Dec. 27: St. John, Apostle and Evangelist (c. 6 AD – c. 101 AD) — John was the brother of James and one of the "Sons of Thunder," a son of Zebedee the fisherman. The Gospel of John, the epistles of John and the Book of Revelation have all been attributed to him in Church tradition. While other apostles were martyred, it is thought that John lived to an old age, perhaps on the island of Patmos where Revelation was penned.

The readings for that day are:

Revelation 1:1-6
Psalm 116:10-17
1 John 1:1 - 2:2
John 21:20-25