***The christmas Code***

**Advent Worship Series – Christmas Eve (*or* Christmas Day)**

***Code Word:* Jesus**

**December 24, 2022 (*or* December 25, 2022)**

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| **WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINE**SEach worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. Sermon manuscripts are included as a *sample* and not to be preached verbatim. |

***Preparation:***

This service is led by three speakers: **Leader**, **Male**, and **Female**. They should stand (or sit on stools) placed evenly across the stage with a microphone and music stand. They will read the entire Christmas Story throughout the service.

Congregation should be given a candle upon entering the chapel.

**[*Project* “Christmas Eve.QRCode”***(in Graphics file)* ***or below words on screen as people enter. Project each meeting section’s Code Word at appropriate time.*]**

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| **Code Word: Jesus*****God sent his Son to provide rescue and forgiveness for those who had ignored*** ***his existence and rebelled against his rule. That’s grace!*** |

**Call to Worship**

Our theme for this year’s Advent season is *The Christmas Code*. Each Sunday we have featured a code word to help unlock the blessings of Christ’s first coming…

If you had to summarize the Christmas story with one word, what word would you choose? Now, your word would have to capture what this story points to as the core of human need and the way God would meet that need. Do you have a word in mind? God’s response to the sin of people against his rightful and holy rule can be captured in a sing word. I wonder if you thought, “I know the word: grace.” But the single word that captures God’s response to sin even better than the word grace is not a theological word; it is a name. That name is **Jesus**.

God’s response wasn’t a thing. It wasn’t the establishment of an institution. It wasn’t some new divine program. In his infinite wisdom God knew that the only thing that could rescue us from ourselves and repair the horrendous damage that sin had done to the world was not a thing at all. It was a person…his Son…the Lord Jesus.

(*Come Let Us Adore Him*, p. 37)

Matthew 1:21 reads:

***21****“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”*

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| **SB#116/HC#140/SS#194/CF#6 – O come, all ye faithful** | TB-496 – Adeste FidelesHC-140SS-194CF-6 | HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)HCD12-T20 |
|  **Additional Optional Songs** |
| **SB#100/HC#280/SS#186/CF#5 – Angels, from the realms of glory** | TB-407 –Regent SquareHC-280SS-186CF-5 | HTD4-T12 (4 vs.)HCD26-T20 |
| **SB#104 – Come, Thou long expected Jesus** (sing 2 vs. together; no chorus) | TB-370 – Hyfrydol | HTD1-T14 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#113/SS#193/CF#2 – Joy to the world!**  | TB-87 – sameSS-193CF-2 | HTD4-T9 (3 vs.) |

***Code Word:* Son**

***Mary’s Story***

**Scripture Reading – Luke 1:26-38** *(The Voice)*

**Leader:** **26**Six months later in Nazareth, a city in *the rural province of* Galilee, the heavenly messenger Gabriel made another appearance. This time the messenger was sent by God **27**to meet with a virgin named Mary, who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David himself. **28**The messenger entered her home.

**Male:** Greetings! You are favored, and the Lord is with you! Among all women on the earth, you have been blessed.

**Leader:** **29**The heavenly messenger’s words baffled Mary, and she wondered what type of greeting this was.

**Male: 30**Mary, don’t be afraid. You have found favor with God. **31**Listen, you are going to become pregnant. You will have a son, and you must name Him “Savior,” *or* Jesus. **32**Jesus will become the greatest among men. He will be known as the Son of the Highest God. God will give Him the throne of His ancestor David, **33**and He will reign over the covenant family of Jacob forever.

**Female:**  **34**But I have never been with a man. How can this be possible?

**Male:**  **35**The Holy Spirit will come upon you. The Most High will overshadow you. That’s why this holy child will be known, *as not just your son, but also* as the Son of God. **36***It sounds impossible,* but listen—you know your relative Elizabeth has been unable to bear children and is now far too old to be a mother. Yet she has become pregnant, *as God willed it*. Yes, in three months, she will have a son. **37**So the impossible is possible with God.

**Female:** **38**Here I am, the Lord’s humble servant. As you have said, let it be done to me.

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| **SB#113/SS#193/CF#2 – Joy to the world!**  | TB-87 – sameSS-193CF-2 | HTD4-T9 (3 vs.) |
|  **Additional Optional Songs** |
| **SB#104 – Come, Thou long expected Jesus** (sing 2 vs. together; no chorus) | TB-370 – Hyfrydol | HTD1-T14 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#111/SS#192/CF#24 – It came upon the midnight clear** | TB-133 – sameSS-192 CF-24 | HTD9-T7 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#117/CF#20 – O come, Immanuel** | TB-444 – sameCF-20 | HTD11-T8 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#118/SS#195/CF#8 – O little town of Bethlehem** | TB-136 – sameSS-195CF-8 | HTD3-T5 (3 vs.) |
| **CF#30 – O Holy Night** | CF-30 |  |

***Code Word:* Savior**

***Joseph’s Story***

**Scripture Reading – Matthew 1:18-25** (*The Voice*)

**Leader: 18**So here is the story of the birth of Jesus the Anointed. *Is quite a remarkable story*: Mary was engaged to marry Joseph, *son of David*. They hadn’t married. And yet, sometime well before their wedding date, Mary learned that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. **19**Joseph, because he was kind and upstanding and honorable, wanted to spare Mary shame. He did not wish to cause her more embarrassment than necessary. **20**Now when Joseph had decided to act on his instincts, a messenger of the Lord came to him in a dream.

**Male:**  Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to wed Mary *and bring her into your home and family* as your wife. She conceived the baby she now carries through the miraculous wonderworking of the Holy Spirit. **21**She will have a son, and you will name Him Jesus, *which means “the Lord saves*,*”* because this Jesus is the person who will save *all of* His people from sin.

**Leader:** **22**Years and years ago, *Isaiah,* a prophet of Israel, foretold the story *of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus*:

**Female:** **23**A virgin will conceive and bear a Son, and His name will be Immanuel which is a Hebrew name that means “God with us”.

**Leader: 24**Joseph woke up from his dream and did exactly what the messenger had told him to do: he married Mary and brought her into his home as his wife **25**(though he did not consummate their marriage until after her son was born). *And when the baby was born,* Joseph named Him Jesus, *Savior.*

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| **HC#220 – Incarnate** | HC-220 | HCD20-T20 |

***Code Word:* Jesus**

***The Birth of Jesus***

**Scripture Reading – Luke 2:1-7** (*The Voice*)

**Leader:** 1Around the time *of Elizabeth’s amazing pregnancy and John’s birth, the emperor in Rome,* Caesar Augustus, required everyone in the Roman Empire to participate in a massive census— 2the first census since Quirinius had become governor of Syria. 3Each person had to go to his or her ancestral city to be counted.

**Female:** 4-5Mary’s fiancé Joseph, from Nazareth in Galilee, had to participate in the census in the same way *everyone else did*. Because he was a descendant of *King* David, his ancestral city was Bethlehem, David’s birthplace.

**Leader:** Mary, who was now late in her pregnancy *that the messenger Gabriel had predicted*, 6accompanied Joseph. While in Bethlehem, she went into labor 7and gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped the baby in a blanket and laid Him in a feeding trough because there was no place for them in the inn.

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| **SB#102/SS#188/CF#16 – Away in a Manger**  | TB-511 – The manger sceneSS-188CF-16 | HTD6-T14 (3 vs.) |
|  **Additional Optional Songs** |
| **CF#15 – What Child is This?** | CF-15 |  |

***Code Word:* Liberator**

***The Shepherds’ Story***

**Scripture Reading – Luke 2:8-19** (*The Voice*)

**Leader:** 8Nearby, in the fields outside of Bethlehem, a group of shepherds were guarding their flocks *from predators* in the darkness of night. 9Suddenly a messenger of the Lord stood in front of them, and the darkness was replaced by a glorious light—the shining light of God’s glory. They were terrified!

**Female:** 10Don’t be afraid! Listen! I bring good news, news of great joy, news that will affect all people everywhere. 11Today, in the city of David, a Liberator has been born for you! He is the promised Anointed One, the Supreme Authority! 12You will know you have found Him when you see a baby, wrapped in a blanket, lying in a feeding trough.

**Leader:** 13At that moment, the first heavenly messenger was joined by thousands of other messengers—a vast heavenly choir. They praised God.

**ALL:** **14To the highest heights of the universe, glory to God!
    And on earth, peace among all people who bring pleasure to God!**

**Leader:** 15As soon as the heavenly messengers disappeared into heaven, the shepherds were buzzing with conversation.

**Male:** Let’s rush down to Bethlehem right now! Let’s see what’s happening! Let’s experience what the Lord has told us about!

**Leader:** 16So they ran into town, and *eventually* they found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in the feeding trough. After they saw the baby, 17they spread the story of *what they had experienced and* what had been said to them about this child. 18Everyone who heard their story couldn’t stop thinking about its meaning. 19Mary, too, pondered all of these events, treasuring each memory in her heart.

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| **SB#126/SS#197/CF#19 – The first Noel the angel did say** | TB-857 – The first NowellSS-197CF-19 | HTD6-T18 (3 vs.) |
|  **Additional Optional Songs** |
| **SB#111/SS#192/CF#24 – It came upon the midnight clear** | TB-133 – sameSS-192 CF-24 | HTD9-T7 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#132/CF#4 – While shepherds watched their flocks by night**  | TB-123 – sameCF-4 | HTD11-T14 (4 vs.)  |
| **SS#187/CF#17 – Angels we have heard on high** | SS-187CF-17 | No HT CD |
| **SS#190/CF#22 – God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen** | SS-190CF-22 |  |

***Code Word:* Ruler**

***The Magi’s Story***

**Scripture Reading – Matthew 2:1-12** (*The Voice*)

**Leader:** Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem, in the province of Judea, at the time when King Herod reigned. *Not long after Jesus was born,* magi, wise men or seers from the East, made their way from the East to Jerusalem. These wise men made inquiries.

**Female:** These men from the East come looking for the One who has been born who will save His people from sin.

**Male:** 2Where is this newborn, who is the King of the Jews? When we were far away in the East we saw His star, and we have followed its glisten and gleam all this way to worship Him.

**Leader:** 3King Herod began to hear rumors of the wise men’s quest, and he, and all of his followers in Jerusalem, were worried. 4So Herod called all of the leading Jewish teachers, the chief priests and head scribes, and he asked them where *Hebrew tradition claimed* the long-awaited Anointed One would be born. 5*An ancient Hebrew* prophet, *Micah,* said this:

**Male:** 6But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
        are no poor relation—
  For from your people will come a Ruler
        who will be the shepherd of My people Israel.

**Leader:** From that prophecy we learn that the Savior would be born in the town of Bethlehem, in the province of Judea. This information in hand, Herod orders the wise men to come to his chambers in secret; and when they arrive, Herod quizzes them.

**Female:** 7Herod called the wise men to him, demanding to know the exact time the special star had appeared to them. 8Then Herod sent them to Bethlehem.

**Male:** Go *to Bethlehem* and search high and low for this *Savior* child; and as soon as you know where He is, report it to me so that I may go and worship Him.

**Leader:** 9-10The wise men left Herod’s *chambers* and went on their way. The star they had first seen in the East reappeared—*a miracle that, of course,* overjoyed and enraptured the wise men. The star led them to the house where Jesus lay; 11and as soon as the wise men arrived, they saw Him with His mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped Him. They unpacked their satchels and gave Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

**Female:** 12And then, *just as Joseph did a few months before,* the wise men had a dream warning them not to go back to Herod. *The wise men heeded the dream. Ignoring Herod’s instructions,* they returned to their homes in the East by a different route.

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| **SB#118/SS#195/CF#8 – O little town of Bethlehem** | TB-136 – sameSS-195CF-8 | HTD3-T5 (3 vs.) |
|  **Additional Optional Songs** |
| **SB#101/CF#3 – As with gladness** | TB-276 – DixCF-3 | HTD11-T3 (4 vs.) |
| **SB#129/CF#7 – We three kings of Orient are** | TB-915 – sameCF-7 | HTD11-T12 (3 vs.) |

***Code Word:* Jesus**

**Lighting of Advent Candle – The Christ Candle**

**[Relight the first four candles]**

**Reader 1:** On this Christmas Eve we light all four candles in our Advent wreath, and we are reminded of the **faith**, the **hope**, the **joy**, the **love** of his coming. Tonight, we light the **Christ Candle**; we rejoice that the promise of God has been fulfilled in the coming of the Baby born in a manger.

**Reader 2:** Emmanuel, God with us, a promise kept, a child.

**Reader 1:** This child created the world. This child existed before anything or anyone. This child was God. His becoming human was not a twist of fate, or a punishment from a higher being; it was a choice. God chose to give up everything—to become nothing.

**Reader 2:** This child was a King. A King in a dirty stable, wrapped in rags—but a King with a plan.

**Reader 1:** This child would bring **faith**, even in the midst of great suffering and trials—a faith that assures his followers that he is in control even when it feels like nobody is.

**Reader 2:** This child would bring **hope**. Not just a wish, but the confidence that God would defeat Satan, that good would win over evil.

**Reader 1:** And this child would bring **joy**, for he would deliver us.

**Reader 2:** This child would bring l**ove**—a love that would never be taken away, a love that is beyond our understanding.

[Betsy Arkema, New Era Reformed Church in New Era, Michigan.]

**[Light center “Christ” candle]**

**Prayer:**

O God of love, you have brought us together tonight and blessed us with your very self. Open

our eyes to the light of Christ which glows in the darkness of a world engulfed in apathy, pain

and loss; a world separated from you. Speak to us now that we may hear the good news of your

salvation. Bring us into the wonder of your presence. Fill us with that light and carry it out with

us into our lives. Amen.

**Devotional – Code Word: Jesus**

**The Spreading of the Light**

[*Congregation will move to form a large circle around the room. Congregation lights their candles, originating from the Christ Candle during the singing of Silent Night* or *The Light Has Come.*]

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| **SB#124/SS#196/CF#25 – Silent night! Holy night!**  | TB-842 – Stille NachtSS-196CF-25 | HTD4-T15 (3 vs.) |
| **Additional Optional Songs** |
| **SB#133/HC#10 – Wonderful counselor (The Light Has Come)** | TB-859 – same HC-10 | No HTHCD1a-T20 |

**Benediction**

**Believe:** for light is now in the world.

**Believe:** for God has become one of us.

**Believe:** for Love is born in each of us.

**Believe:** for the manger is full.

**Believe:** it is as the prophets said.

**Go and believe:** the blessings of Christmas…of family, of friends and of God be with you today. Amen.

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***The christmas Code***

**Advent Devotional – Christmas Eve (*or* Christmas Day)**

***Code Word:* Jesus**

**December 24, 2022 (*or* December 25, 2022)**

**By Major Peter Mount**

***God sent his Son to provide rescue and forgiveness for those who had ignored***

***his existence and rebelled against his rule. That’s grace!***

**TITLE: *Code Word:* Jesus**

**SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 1:1-3**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Are you listening?

[Share an illustration of Bad/Good listening. (e.g.) As a kid I was a bad listener; I now have kids that do exactly the same things I did as a kid when it comes to not listening!]

**Read: Hebrews 1:1-3**

**ARE YOU LISTENING?**

Are we *truly* listening? God is speaking! And we see this in Hebrews 1:1. In the Old Testament, God spoke through our forefathers, and He spoke through prophets.

**READ verse 2.** One thing I love about scripture is the fact that scripture is a meta narrative, from the very beginning—from God as Creator—to that moment where we messed it up. He knew what it would take to bring us into right relationship with Him. He knew it would take a perfect sacrifice and He knew it would take His Son, the One with whom He made the whole of the universe.

**ARE YOU LOOKING?**

Let's just take a minute here. This baby, Jesus, who comes to Earth, *“is the radiance of God's glory”* (v. 3). Have you ever had a chance to walk in nature, on your own, in silence, just to look and listen? You can't but wonder and marvel at God's glory! Have you seen in person (or a picture of) the Grand Canyon or Niagara Falls? Looking at either of these works of creation, even artistry, you cannot deny the glory, splendor, and power of God. When you consider the power of the water or the depth of the canyon, it’s amazing! But the glory and power of God is more magnificent than that! *Jesus, God’s Son, is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.*

**CHALLENGE:**

Are you *listening*? Because if we hear the words of Jesus, what do we hear? We hear the sustaining and powerful words of God! Are you *looking*—for His radiance and wonder?

[*Take this opportunity to share the gospel with those who are in attendance, challenging them to not just see a little Baby Jesus, but a powerful living Jesus who transforms lives!*]

**The Spreading of the Light**

[*Instruct congregation to move to form a large circle around the room. Congregation lights their candles, originating from the Christ Candle during the singing of Silent Night* or *The Light Has Come.*]

**Benediction**

**Believe:** for light is now in the world.

**Believe:** for God has become one of us.

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**Believe:** for the manger is full.

**Believe:** it is as the prophets said.

**Go and believe:** the blessings of Christmas…of family, of friends and of God be with you today. Amen.

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