Repeat the Sounding Joy:  
An Advent Worship Series  
Celebrating the 300th Anniversary of “Joy to the World”

Sunday, December 1, 2019 – 1st Sunday of Advent  
Overview

Worship Theme: Prepare Him Room (Hope)

Scriptures:  
Isaiah 2:1-5 – “They will beat their swords into plowshares.”  
Luke 1:26-38 – “You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.”

Hymn Focus:  
Joy to the World! The Lord is come:  
Let earth receive her King:  
Let ev'ry heart prepare him room,  
And heav'n and nature sing,  
And heav'n and nature sing,  
And heav'n and heav'n and nature sing.

Worship Elements

Worship Introduction

This morning, we enter into the season of Advent – the beginning of the Christian church year. The season of Advent invites us into a time of waiting and of expectation. We come awaiting the celebration of Christmas, the birth of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Lord, to be sure. But we also come anticipating Christ’s return, that great and glorious day when all of God’s promises will be fulfilled, and the reign of God will bring about the redemption and restoration for which our hearts, and all of creation, yearn.

This year also marks the 300th anniversary celebration of the beloved hymn, “Joy to the World.” Our worship throughout this season, will be woven together around themes that are found in the verses of this hymn. Turning our ears and our hearts to God’s Word found in Isaiah’s prophecy of a messiah to come, as well as the opening scenes in the gospel of Luke leading up to and including Jesus’ birth, we will be invited into God’s story. In addition, we will be called to share that story with a world that is hungry – hungry for the hope, love, peace and joy that we believe can be found in Christ alone.

This morning, we will hear the invitation to “let ev'ry heart prepare him room,” as we cling to the hope of this season and of our faith.
Advent Wreath Candle Lighting Liturgy

Reader 1 – On this first Sunday of Advent, we begin to light the candles in our Advent wreath. Each week, as we draw nearer to Christmas, our wreath grows brighter. This morning, we light the candle of hope. (*light 1st candle*)

Reader 2 – In the midst of dark times, the prophet Isaiah called the people of God to hope, as he wrote the following words:

“Many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.’

The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples.
They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.”

Reader 1 – Centuries later, the angel would come to Mary with another message. Hope was on the way, in the form of the child she would conceive and bear to the world, Jesus. And today, we hold onto the hope of Jesus as we prepare to celebrate His birth, and as we long for His return. Though our world often seems filled with darkness and despair, we are called to bear the light of hope in ways that pierce the darkness with the light of Christ. Let us pray.

People – Kindle hope in us, O God, that we might prepare room in our hearts and in your world for Christ to come and come again. In Jesus’ name we ask, pray and trust. Amen.

People (sing) –

Joy to the world! The Lord is come:
let earth receive her King;
let ev’ry heart prepare him room,
and heav’n and nature sing,
and heav’n and nature sing,
and heav’n and heav’n and nature sing.

Call to Worship

One: Into Mary’s ordinary life, the angel broke, announcing something new, something that would change everything.
ALL: Into our lives, and into the world, God longs to come, bringing new life, bringing hope.
One: But there’s so much to do, life is so busy.
ALL: And so much struggle in the world, so much hurt and pain.
One: Yet into the mess of the world, Jesus came, and into the mess of our lives, He still comes.
ALL: Let every heart, starting with mine, make room for the coming of Jesus this season.

Collective Prayer

ALL: Eternal and ever-present God, we thank you for meeting us in worship today. Break into our hearts as we sing and pray and listen. Give us a fresh vision of hope, for weary hearts and a hurting world. Then, help us to not only wait for the hope that you will bring, but to dedicate our lives to offering that hope in tangible ways to those whose hearts you allow us to touch. We ask it all in the name of Jesus, the hope of the world. Amen.

Offertory Invitation

Isaiah was invited to share a vision of hope that would transform the swords of division into the plowshares of provision. Mary was invited to bear to the world the hoped-for messiah, come to set people free. We are invited
to bear hope to a hurting world by giving of ourselves, and of the gifts with which we’ve been blessed. When we live generously, offering our tithes, gifts and offerings, we join Mary in saying to God, “I am your servant. May your word to me be fulfilled.”

**Offertory Prayer**

Lord, the apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:12, “Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.” As we offer our gifts to you this day, we lift up this bold prayer. Bless these gifts. Multiply them. Send them to be used wherever in the world your Spirit is breaking through with hope of a world yet to be. And then, we humbly ask, use us in those same ways. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

**Prayer of Great Thanksgiving** (adapted from the UM Book of Worship, Great Thanksgiving for Early in Advent)

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When our sin, and the brokenness of the world seemed to stamp out hope, your light continued to shine. You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through your prophets, who offered a vision of that day when justice shall roll down like waters and righteousness like and ever-flowing stream, when nation shall not lift up sword against, nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ, whom you sent in the fullness of time to be a light to the nations. Your own Son came among us as a servant, to be Emmanuel, your presence with us, a fulfillment of the hope for which the world still longs. The One, whom the angel announced would be great and be called Son of the Most High, humbled himself in obedience to your will and freely accepted death on a cross.

By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection, you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: “Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: “Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”
On the day you raised him from the dead he was recognized by his disciples in the breaking of the bread, and in the power of your Holy Spirit your Church has continued in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup.

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we prepare our hearts to receive Christ anew, offering ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us. And we proclaim the hope and the mystery of our faith.

**Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood and empowered by hope.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, offering hope until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and for ever.

**Amen.**

**Benediction**

May the God of hope, fill you with all joy and peace as your trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 15:13, NIV) Church, go into the world, and poke holes in the darkness, offering hope wherever you go.

**Music Suggestions**

I recommend, if possible, using “Joy to the World,” UMH 246, in its entirety, to close each service. I believe that there is power in bookending worship with a single, focus verse during the lighting of the Advent Wreath, and the song as a whole at the end. Not every pastor or congregation will find purpose and meaning in that – so use it as you see fit.

Key: UMH - The United Methodist Hymnal, TFWS – The Faith We Sing, W&S – Worship and Song

**Traditional**

- Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus, UMH 196
- People, Look East, UMH 202
- Toda La Tierra, UMH 210
- O Come, O Come Emmanuel, UMH 211
- Bread of the World, UMH 624 (Communion)
- Jesus, Joy of Our Desiring, UMH 644
- O Day of God, Draw Nigh, UMH 730
- God Almighty, We are Waiting, W&S 3047
- View the Present through the Promise, W&S 3048

**Modern/Contemporary**

- Come as You Are (Communion) – Crowder
- Seasons – Hillsong Worship
- He Shall Reign Forevermore – Chris Tomlin
- Hearts Waiting (Joy to the World) – Matt Redman
- O Come Be Born Again – Jennifer Martin
- Build Your Kingdom Here – Rend Collective
- Hope and Glory – Tim Hughes
- Kingdom Come (Lift Up Your Heads) - KXC
Visual Ideas
Here is where I confess my giftless-ness in the area of visuals. Here are a few ideas, and feel free to share more as comments, to build the community.

- Use blue and purple fabric to drape the altar table and around the worship space, with simple white lights to bring contrast. Please consider safety if lights actually come in contact with fabric.
- Keep the Advent Wreath central and visible through the season. An overall focus is the growing light that comes as we draw closer to the celebration of Christ’s birth, and His return.
- If you have folks who create banners, each week could have one banner with the theme word, and another banner with the theme phrase from the song. For example, Week 1 would have the word hope on one banner, and the words, “Prepare Him Room” on the other, each simply text on a blue/purple background that accents the paraments and/or table decorations. Another idea would be to add hope, love, joy, and peace to a banner each week of advent, culminating with the word Christ in the center.

Next Steps/Take Home Ideas

Table Tent

Each week, I’d encourage additional engagement in the theme from worship by providing, in a bulletin, or handed out following worship, a table tent (simply ½ sheet of cardstock, folded in half).

On the table tent would be the theme for each week, along with the words of the key verse from Joy to the World. Individuals/families could sing that verse at each evening meal. In addition, I would include 2-3 reminder questions around the theme, along with a mealtime prayer to offer each night that week.

Families could also be invited to light their own Advent wreath at the center of a dinner table.
Repeat the Sounding Joy:
An Advent Worship Series
Celebrating the 300th Anniversary of “Joy to the World”

Sunday, December 8, 2019 – 2nd Sunday of Advent

Overview

Worship Theme: Our Songs Employ (Love)

Scriptures:  Isaiah 11:1-10 – “The wolf will live with the lamb…and a little child will lead them.”
Luke 1:39-45 – “In a loud voice, [Elizabeth] exclaimed, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear.’”

Hymn Focus: Joy to the World! The Lord is come:
Let all their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

Worship Elements

Worship Introduction

This morning, as we continue traveling through the season of Advent, on our way to celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, we also continue in our worship celebrating the 300th anniversary of one of the most well-known Christmas carols, “Joy to the World.” We will join our hearts and voices, along with the prophet Isaiah, and Elizabeth to employ all of our songs in praise to God. And the fields, rocks, hills and plains – all of creation – will echo those songs of love for our savior, whose birth we commemorate, and whose returning we anticipate.

Advent Wreath Candle Lighting Liturgy

Reader 1 – Last week, we lit the candle of hope, as we sought to prepare room in our hearts and in God’s world for the coming of Christ. As we continue through the season of Advent, our wreath brightens as we light today the candle of love. (light 2nd candle)
Reader 2 – The prophet Isaiah foretold a kingdom of love, ushered in by the coming messiah, in which, “The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.” (11:6)

Reader 1 – Centuries later, a pregnant Mary would visit her cousin Elizabeth, who was even further along with the child who would grow to be John the Baptist. The moment Mary arrived, the child within Elizabeth leaped for joy – somehow knowing the promised reign of love was closer than ever. Today, as followers of Jesus, we are called to bear the light of love to a world which appears to be consumed by anger, hatred and division. May our presence in the world stir it to an awareness of and openness to Jesus’ reign, in which no one is unloved. Let us pray.

People – Kindle love in us, O God, that our whole lives might be employed to sing songs of Jesus’ reign and rule. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

People (sing) –

Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns:  
let all their songs employ;  
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

Call to Worship (using words from “Come, Christians, Join to Sing, UMH 158)
One: Come, Christians, join to sing, loud praise to Christ our King.  
ALL: Let all, with heart and voice, before his throne rejoice.  
One: Come, lift your hearts on high, let praises fill the sky.  
ALL: Alleluia! Amen!

Collective Prayer
ALL: God of love, as the baby in Elizabeth’s womb leapt when in the presence of the Savior to come, let our hearts be filled as we encounter you in worship today. May we be so filled with the love that comes from knowing Jesus, that our very lives might sing of your goodness and grace. May love be that for which we are known in the world. We pray in Christ’s name. Amen.

Offertory Invitation
How great is the love that God has lavished upon us, that we should be called the sons and daughters of God! And that is what we are! (1 John 3:1) In our living, and in our giving, we are called to reflect the generosity and love of the God who has called and claimed us as sons and daughters. When we give, and when we share the love in tangible ways, we help others see what Jesus is like.

Offertory Prayer
Receive these gifts, O God, given from hearts grateful for having experienced your love in life-changing ways. We pray that you would guide the use of these and all of our gifts, that seeds of love might be sown here, and over all the earth – that your kingdom may come in fulness, and that your will may be done here on earth as it is already in heaven. We offer these gifts and our lives in the name of Jesus, the Love who came down at Christmas. Amen.

Benediction
Sisters and brothers, you have been formed in love by the Father. You have been redeemed by love through the Son. You have been filled with love by the Holy Spirit. Go now in the power of that same love to change the world, one heart at a time.
Music Suggestions

I recommend, if possible, using “Joy to the World,” UMH 246, in its entirety, to close each service. I believe that there is power in bookending worship with a single, focus verse during the lighting of the Advent Wreath, and the song as a whole at the end. Not every pastor or congregation will find purpose and meaning in that – so use it as you see fit.

In addition, there are quite a few Advent and seasonal Christmas songs that would fit more than one week. Based on what you may have used for the first week, below are additional possibilities focused on the theme of love.

Key: UMH - The United Methodist Hymnal, TFWS – The Faith We Sing, W&S – Worship and Song

Traditional
- People, Look East, UMH 202
- Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates, UMH 213
- Love Came Down at Christmas, UMH 242
- O Day of Peace That Dimly Shines, UMH 729
- There’s a Song in the Air, UMH 249
- Where Charity and Love Prevail, UMH 549
- A Star Shone Bright, W&S 3051
- Love Has Come, W&S 3059

Modern/Contemporary
- Adore Him, Hillsong Worship
- Noel – Chris Tomlin
- Midnight Clear (Love Song) – Chris Tomlin
- Newborn King – Bryan Brown, Jeff Pardo
- Advent Hymn – Christy Nockels

Visual Ideas
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- Keep the Advent Wreath central and visible through the season. An overall focus is the growing light that comes as we draw closer to the celebration of Christ’s birth, and His return.
- If you have folks who create banners, each week could have one banner with the theme word, and another banner with the theme phrase from the song. For example, Week 1 would have the word hope on one banner, and the words, “Prepare Him Room” on the other, each simply text on a blue/purple background that accents the paraments and/or table decorations. Another idea would be to add hope, love, joy, and peace to a banner each week of advent, culminating with the word Christ in the center.

Next Steps/Take Home Ideas

Table Tent
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On the table tent would be the theme for each week, along with the words of the key verse from Joy to the World. Individuals/families could sing that verse at each evening meal. In addition, I would include 2-3 reminder questions around the theme, along with a mealtime prayer to offer each night that week.

Families could also be invited to light their own Advent wreath at the center of a dinner table.
Repeat the Sounding Joy:
An Advent Worship Series
Celebrating the 300th Anniversary of “Joy to the World”

Sunday, December 15, 2019 – 3rd Sunday of Advent

Overview

Worship Theme: His Blessings Flow (Joy)

Scriptures: Isaiah 35:1-10 – “The desert and the parched land will be glad, the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.”
Luke 1:46-55(56) – “My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior…His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.”

Hymn Focus: No more let sins or sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground;
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.

Worship Elements

Worship Introduction
This Advent season, we are connecting the words of Joy to the World with themes of longing and waiting, faith and trust. The words of the prophet Isaiah, and the experience of those who experienced firsthand the coming of Jesus that first Christmas have led our way, along with the lyrics of that hymn, first published 300 years ago – in 1719. Isaac Watts, who wrote those lyrics, was inspired by the words of Psalm 98, including these: “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.” In a world filled with a whole bunch of noise, we are invited to fill the earth with praise and joy. That’s where we turn our hearts today.

Advent Wreath Candle Lighting Liturgy

Reader 1 – As we’ve walked through the first two weeks of Advent, we lit the candles of hope and love. Hope invites us to prepare room for a Savior. Love challenges us to employ songs proclaiming Jesus’ reign. This morning, our wreath grows brighter still, as we light the candle of joy. (light 3rd candle)
Reader 2 – The prophet Isaiah paints a picture with these words from God, recorded in chapter 35, verses 1 and 2, and verse 10. “The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy... and those the Lord has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.”

Reader 1 – Centuries later, Mary would sing, “My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” Though uncertainty lay ahead, and her own life would bear its share of grief, she rejoiced at the unfolding of God’s plans for rescue and restoration, as all of creation will one day again burst into bloom as God designed. As Christians, we are invited to live in ways that allow others to catch a glimpse of that great and glorious day when gladness and joy will overtake all of God’s children, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. Let us pray.

People – Kindle joy in us, O God, that your blessings would flow throughout creation, and that your plan of rescue and restoration might unfold through our lives. May our community, nation and world look a little more like the kingdom of heaven because we are here. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

People (sing) –

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground;
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.

Call to Worship Based on Psalm 98:7-8
One: Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.
ALL: Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy;
One: Come together, sisters and brothers in Christ, to fill the earth with songs of joy.
ALL: May our worship this day glorify the Lord, as we rejoice in God our Savior.

Collective Prayer
Joy-giving God, we come to worship You today. Help us to come as we are. If our hearts are already filled with joy, let us come with thanksgiving. If this week, or this month, has been “one of those,” let us come to be renewed. If life is confusing, hard and hurtful, let us simply come to be held. However we come, may we meet you in these moments. We pray in the name of Jesus, who came so that we might know You. Amen.

Offertory Invitation
The prophet Isaiah speaks of a day when those whom God has redeemed and rescued will gather – entering God’s presence with singing, with gladness and joy – all in response to what God had done in their lives. When we worship, when we give cheerfully and generously, we become a part of that beautiful picture Isaiah painted. May our giving today bear witness to that joy.

Offertory Prayer
Redeeming and Restoring God, you have blessed us in order to be a blessing. May these gifts that we offer in worship and joy today, along with the lives that we lead all of our tomorrows, help your blessings flow from our hearts to the people and places that need them the most. We thank you for the privilege of being even a small part of what you are doing in the world, and we join creation in rejoicing in your goodness. Amen.

Benediction
May you experience joy this week in ways that put a skip in your step and a song in your heart. May the people that you meet sense a joy in you that is there because you know what it means to be rescued and redeemed. May the places you go this week shine a little brighter with joy because you will have been there. And, all the while, may you know that God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, goes with you each step of the way.
Music Suggestions

I recommend, if possible, using “Joy to the World,” UMH 246, in its entirety, to close each service. I believe that there is power in bookending worship with a single, focus verse during the lighting of the Advent Wreath, and the song as a whole at the end. Not every pastor or congregation will find purpose and meaning in that – so use it as you see fit.

In addition, there are quite a few Advent and seasonal Christmas songs that would fit more than one week. Based on what you may have used for the first two weeks, below are additional possibilities focused on the theme of joy.

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Traditional

- All People That on Earth Do Dwell, UMH 75
- My Soul Gives Glory to My God, UMH 198
- Tell Out, My Soul, UMH 200
- Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming, UMH 216
- Good Christian Friends, Rejoice, UMH 224
- En El Frio Invernal (Cold December Flies Away), UMH 233

Modern/Contemporary

- Hymn of Joy – Chris Tomlin
- O Rejoice – Hillsong Worship
- Joy Has Dawned Upon the World – Keith and Kristyn Getty
- Joy (Unspeakable Joy) – Chris Tomlin

Visual Ideas

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Repeat the Sounding Joy:  
An Advent Worship Series  
Celebrating the 300th Anniversary of “Joy to the World”

Sunday, December 22, 2019 – 4th Sunday of Advent

Overview

Worship Theme: He Rules the World (Peace)

Scriptures:  
Isaiah 7:10-16 – “Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign; the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Emmanuel.”  
Luke 1:(57-66)67-79 – “…to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

Hymn Focus:  
*He rules the world with truth and grace,*  
and makes the nations prove  
the glories of his righteousness  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders, wonders of his love.

Worship Elements

Worship Introduction  
This morning, we continue to sing and pray our way through the season of Advent, with the carol “Joy to the World,” ringing in our hearts. It is important, however, that we also acknowledge the reality of the world in which we live. A toxic political culture threatens to divide us rather than unite us to work for the common good. Fear of the other, which can easily devolve into hatred, sets up an us vs. them mentality that can lead to isolation, anger, and, all too often, violence.

But the God who we worship, comes to us in Emmanuel – Jesus, God With Us – also known as the Prince of Peace. Jesus, whose birth we will celebrate in just a few days, and whose return we long for, rules a kingdom toward which we are called to work. The same one who Zechariah prophesies would, “guide our feet into the path of peace,” would one day proclaim on a hillside, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

Today, we are reminded that He rules the world with truth and grace.
Advent Wreath Candle Lighting Liturgy

Reader 1 – The candles of hope, love and joy have been lit over the first three Sundays of Advent. Hope invites us to prepare room for a Savior. Love challenges us to employ songs proclaiming Jesus’ reign. Joy calls us to allow the blessings of God to flow through us onto the world. Today, our wreath grows ever brighter with the candle of peace. (light 4th candle)

Reader 2 – The prophet Isaiah foretells the birth of Jesus Christ in the promise of God recorded in chapter 7, verse 14, “the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Emmanuel.” God’s people longed for peace, and God promised nothing less that God’s own presence to bring that peace.

Reader 1 – Centuries later, Zechariah would prophesy that his own son, who we know as John the Baptist, would grow to point his world to the presence of God with us in the person of Jesus. Jesus, Emmanuel, would “shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, [and] guide our feet into the path of peace.” Today, it often feels like we are still living in a land and time of great darkness, as hatred and violence continue to plague our streets, nation and world, and addiction, poverty, strife and illness in body and mind claim too many lives, too many relationships. Yet we who claim the name of Christ are called to continue to follow Jesus in the ways of peace, and to work for the peace that will allow every nation to prove the glories of Christ’s righteousness and the wonders of his love. Let us pray.

People – Kindle peace in us, O God, and guide our feet to work for the peace you long to bring into fulness in your world. May we continue to join you in this work until your kingdom of peace and justice reign in fulness. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

People (sing) –

He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love

Call to Worship
One: Come together in worship to seek the glory of God.
ALL: We come together, hoping to encounter the presence of God.
One: In song, in prayer, in spoken word, we proclaim the promise of God.
ALL: May we leave this place today, committed anew to join in the mission of God.

Collective Prayer
Lord, we come today seeking peace. Our lives are hectic and harried. Our communities seem filled with bitterness and strife. Our world seems overcome with war and rumors of war. We ask that you would meet us here, speaking peace to our hearts. Fill us with the courage to work for peace in our homes, our neighborhoods and your world. Then, send us out as peacemakers, as we follow the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Offertory Invitation
Our waiting in this season of Advent is not passive – simply sitting around until Jesus returns in victory, and the kingdom where he rules with truth and grace is a reality. We wait; and we go where the Spirit leads. We worship; and we work. We listen for God’s voice; and we proclaim a world that is yet to be. We pray; and we give. We offer our gifts and our lives, our waiting and our working, in thanks to God, and in solidarity with the mission of God revealed and fulfilled in Jesus.

Offertory Prayer
Accept these gifts, O God, as a sign of our thanks and our commitment. Take each gift and every giver and continue to reveal your kingdom rule of peace and love. These gifts we offer are yours. And so are our lives. Use them as you will. We pray in the name of Christ, and in the power of the Spirit. Amen.
**Benediction**

*Phil. 4:4-9 (From The Message, Eugene Peterson)*

Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, revel in him! Make it as clear as you can to all you meet that you’re on their side, working with them and not against them. Help them see that the Master is about to arrive. He could show up any minute!

Don’t fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God’s wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It’s wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.

Summing it all up, friends, I’d say you’ll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse. Put into practice what you learned from me, what you heard and saw and realized. Do that, and God, who makes everything work together, will work you into his most excellent harmonies.

OR

As you go forth into the week and into God’s world, seek peace and speak peace. As you walk in those places and situations where you are led, trust that Christ is with you, guiding your feet. As you work for peace, however you can, know that the Spirit is present to embolden and uphold you.

And now, The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. Amen.

**Music Suggestions**

I recommend, if possible, using “Joy to the World,” UMH 246, in its entirety, to close each service. I believe that there is power in bookending worship with a single, focus verse during the lighting of the Advent Wreath, and the song as a whole at the end. Not every pastor or congregation will find purpose and meaning in that – so use it as you see fit.

Key: UMH - The United Methodist Hymnal, TFWS – The Faith We Sing, W&S – Worship and Song

**Traditional**

- Hail to the Lord’s Anointed, UMH 203
- Blessed be the God of Israel, UMH 209
- It Came Upon the Midnight Clear, UMH 218
- Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light, UMH 223
- Behold a Broken World, UMH 426
- For the Healing of the Nations, UMH 428
- A Star Shone Bright, W&S 3051
- Welcome to Our World, W&S 3067
- Here Is Peace, W&S 3123
- Come, Emmanuel, W&S 3130

**Modern/Contemporary**

- Peace Has Come – Hillsong Worship
- Peace Upon the Earth – Hillsong Worship
- Love Came Down – Jesus Culture (Kim Walker-Smith)
- By Our Love – Christy Nockels
- Welcome to Our World – Chris Rice
- Prince of Peace – Hillsong United
- Heal Our Land – Kari Jobe
- King of Heaven – Hillsong United
Visual Ideas
Here is where I confess my giftless-ness in the area of visuals. Here are a few ideas, and feel free to share more as comments, to build the community.

- Use blue and purple fabric to drape the altar table and around the worship space, with simple white lights to bring contrast. Please consider safety if lights actually come in contact with fabric.
- Keep the Advent Wreath central and visible through the season. An overall focus is the growing light that comes as we draw closer to the celebration of Christ’s birth, and His return.
- If you have folks who create banners, each week could have one banner with the theme word, and another banner with the theme phrase from the song. For example, Week 1 would have the word hope on one banner, and the words, “Prepare Him Room” on the other, each simply text on a blue/purple background that accents the paraments and/or table decorations. Another idea would be to add hope, love, joy, and peace to a banner each week of advent, culminating with the word Christ in the center.

Next Steps/Take Home Ideas

Table Tent
Each week, I’d encourage additional engagement in the theme from worship by providing, in a bulletin, or handed out following worship, a table tent (simply ½ sheet of cardstock, folded in half).

On the table tent would be the theme for each week, along with the words of the key verse from Joy to the World. Individuals/families could sing that verse at each evening meal. In addition, I would include 2-3 reminder questions around the theme, along with a mealtime prayer to offer each night that week.

Families could also be invited to light their own Advent wreath at the center of a dinner table.
Repeat the Sounding Joy:  
An Advent Worship Series  
Celebrating the 300th Anniversary of “Joy to the World”

Tuesday, December 24, 2019 – Christmas Eve

Overview

Worship Theme: Repeat the Sounding Joy (Christ)

Scriptures:  
Isaiah 9:2-7 – “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.”

Luke 2:1-14(15-20) – “The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.”

Hymn Focus: All Four Verses, focused on “repeat the sounding joy.”

Worship Elements

Worship Introduction

By this time tomorrow, gifts will be unwrapped, paper will be trashed, and for many, it will seem like Christmas is over. However, if we focus our celebration on the gift that we have in Jesus, Christmas is not the end, it’s only the beginning. The gift of Jesus in our world changed everything, and the gift of Jesus in our lives does the same. So, bring yourself fully into this place, and fully into these moments. Hear again the great good news of Jesus’ birth, bask in the glory of the angels’ announcement, and kneel with the shepherds at the manger of the King. O come, all ye faithful, come and behold him. O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Advent Wreath Candle Lighting Liturgy

Reader 1 – As we have made our way through the season of Advent, we have lit candles representing, hope, love, joy and peace. Hope invites us to prepare room for a Savior. Love challenges us to employ songs proclaiming Jesus’ reign. Joy calls us to allow the blessings of God to flow through us onto the world. Peace guides us to work for the rule and reign of Christ, here and now. Tonight, we light the Christ candle, culminating our season of preparation by coming together for celebration. (light Christ candle)
Reader 2 – The prophet Isaiah foretold of the day when, “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.” The dawn of that day broke into the world in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, whose birth we celebrate tonight, and tomorrow on Christmas Day.

Reader 1 – That dawn broke for the shepherds working the night shift, as the glory of God appeared in a company of angels proclaiming the news that a Savior was born — good news of great joy and a gift of peace for all people. After meeting the tiny Savior for themselves, the shepherds returned to their fields, to repeat the sounding joy that Jesus, the promise and presence of God had come. Tonight, as we worship, and in the days ahead, may our lives, too, repeat the sounding joy. Let us pray.

People – Glory to you, O God, who came to be with us in Jesus, about whose birth we join the angels to sing. Kindle in us all the hope, the joy, the love and the peace that come from meeting Jesus not only in the manger, but in every moment and every place in which we find ourselves. Amen.

People (sing) –

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the world, the Savior reigns!
Let all their songs employ;
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground;
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness,
and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love,
and wonders, and wonders of his love.

Call to Worship (based on Psalm 98)

One: Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things;
ALL: His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.
One: The Lord has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations.
ALL: He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.
One: Christ is born today!
ALL: Repeat the sounding joy!
Collective Prayer

ALL: When all things in silence lay, and the night was in the midst of her course, your Word leaped down from your royal throne, O God. So we rejoice and give you praise, that your Word may live in us, and that we may glorify you for ever. Amen. (based on Wisdom of Solomon 1814, Orthodox liturgy, published in The Book of a Thousand Prayers, © 1996, 2002 by Angela Ashwin)

OR

ALL: No matter what gifts we may receive, they all pale in comparison to the gift of Jesus. In one tiny little package, You gave the world everything that it needed. And You gave us peace, hope, love and joy. Tonight, we come, to kneel at the manger, and to celebrate the best gift ever. Meet us here in these holy moments. In Christ we pray. Amen.

Offertory Invitation

The hymnwriter, Jane Marshall, penned these words, “What gift can we bring, what present, what token? What words can convey it, the joy of this day? When grateful we come, remembering, rejoicing, what song can we offer in honor and praise?” We have gathered, hearts filled with gratitude for the gift of Jesus Christ, whose birth we celebrate tonight. We have worshiped the newborn king with our songs, with our prayers, and in hearing again the great good news of his birth. Now, we worship with our gifts.

Offertory Prayer

Receive these gifts, O God, as we join the shepherds in worship. Use these gifts, and the lives that we live from this night on, that others might hear the invitation to come and behold, to be changed by the gift of Jesus, and to repeat the sounding joy to a world crying out for hope, love, joy and peace. Amen.

Prayer of Great Thanksgiving (adapted from The United Methodist Book of Worship, The Great Thanksgiving For Christmas Eve, Day, or Season)

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

You created light out of darkness and brought forth life on the earth. You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through your prophets.

In the fullness of time you gave your only Son Jesus Christ to be our Savior, And at his birth the angels sang glory to you in the highest and peace to your people on earth.

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. At his coming, the hope of your promise came to life. The restoration of joy began in Jesus ushering in a kingdom of love, whose sovereign is the Prince of Peace.

By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection, you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

As your Word became flesh, born of woman, on that night long ago, so, on the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: “Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: “Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we prepare our hearts to receive Christ anew, offering ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us. And we proclaim the hope and the mystery of our faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood. Empower us to be the presence of Christ and signs of hope, joy, love and peace in all the places you lead us.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, offering hope until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Benediction

As the shepherds returned to their fields, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, we, too, cannot simply stay here and worship at the manger. So, go, returning to those places God has planted you, and repeat the sounding joy of the angels’ words – “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom God’s favor rests.”

Music Suggestions

While I have recommended through Advent closing the service with Joy to the World in entirety, Christmas Eve is different. The congregation, if you so choose, would sing all four verses of Joy to the World during the Advent Wreath lighting, which would take place early in the service. I would recommend, in a traditional setting, opening with O Come, All Ye Faithful, and closing with Go, Tell it On the Mountain, using other songs in whatever ways your congregation finds meaningful. Advent is over, and Christmas is finally here (well, technically not until tomorrow, but we’ll go with it) – so, now is the time to sing Christmas songs!

Key: UMH - The United Methodist Hymnal, TFWS – The Faith We Sing, W&S – Worship and Song

Traditional

- O Come, All Ye Faithful, UMH 234
- While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks, UMH 236
- Angels, We Have Heard on High, UMH 238
- Silent Night, UMH 239
- Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, UMH 240
Once in Royal David’s City  
Go, Tell it on the Mountain, UMH 251  
God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen, W&S 3052  
Jesus, Jesus, Oh, What a Wonderful Child, W&S 3060  
On Christmas Night, W&S 3064

Modern/Contemporary  
Arrival – Hillsong Worship  
Jesus is Here – Travis Cottrell  
He Shall Reign Forevermore – Matt Maher  
Behold the Savior – Meredith Andrews  
His Name Shall Be – Matt Redman  
When Hope Came Down – Kari Jobe

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