

A Festival of Festivals: *Celebrating the Reign of Christ in the Seasons of the Church* *A Celebrate! Worship for Every Festival⁺* **Service of Holy Communion***

Preparation notes:

This service tells the story of Christian faith by moving through the liturgical year with Scripture, song, and commentary. It encourages the use of all the colors of the liturgical calendar by either changing the paraments throughout the service or adding each color as a drape on the altar or altar rail. Additionally, various forms of movement are encouraged in the rubrics at designated times to further embody various seasons of the story.

Planning notes:

- *Children will be invited during the service to help either change the paraments or add the color of the season.*
- *A designated person will need to assist the children in the changing of the paraments or adding of a color drape to the altar, altar rail, or another visually prominent location at the appointed times.*



- *Dance ribbons for the children to use during the Entrance Hymn, O Day Full of Grace, and the Sending Hymn will either need to be made or purchased and distributed prior to the service. Any color, or multiple colors would be appropriate.*
- *A youth or adult (or several) should be designated in advance to lead the flag movement during the hymns*



Readers: *The service is enhanced by multiple readers of various ages. Some of the Scripture readings provided are included from child-friendly translations, encouraging leadership of all ages. It is preferable to have all readers chosen in advance so that the readings can be practiced prior to worship. However, readers may also be chosen for the various readings at the start of the service, if this is part of local tradition and appropriate to a given context.*

Commentary: *The commentary throughout the service functions as the sermon. For that reason, it is identified in the script in the voice of the pastor. However, congregations are encouraged to be attentive to the polity of their settings. If multiple voices reading the commentaries would enhance the worship experience, by all means, use multiple readers.*

Music: *The songs provided are suggestions that speak to or respond to the readings. The hymn, “Crown Him with Many Crowns,” carries the theme of the Christian faith, proclaimed through the liturgical seasons throughout the service. Should a different hymn be preferred, it is suggested that a hymn be chosen that can function in the same manner as. The hymn numbers are from Evangelical Lutheran Worship. Congregations are encouraged to choose sacred music that reflects the piety of their particular worshiping community. Should musical ensembles or soloists be available, congregations are encouraged to include either intergenerational ensembles or soloists and ensembles that represent a variety of ages. Congregations are encouraged to include children’s choirs or ensembles to lead any of the music that would be appropriate.*

Dancers: *This is a service that is enhanced by embodied movement. Dance and movement enhance the proclamation of any or all the seasonal hymns.*

Following the service, *the children are encouraged to each take home their dance ribbon as a remembrance of the service.*

Prelude/Gathering Music

White paraments adorn the altar and other chancel spaces as the service begins

Greeting and Welcome

P: Christ is with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Welcome to this Festival of Festivals, Celebrating the Reign of Christ through the seasons of the Church year. Christmas is one of the most well-known holidays in the life of the church and in our wider culture. Another is Easter, the holiday that brings with it the message of new life, the message that death does not win, the message of hope and resurrection that we as God's children proclaim for the whole world. Christmas and Easter are what we call "high festival days" – Jesus days -- in the life of our faith. There are other festival days in the Church too, and one of them is today, a day that we often let slip by unnoticed. Christmas has its poinsettias. Easter has its lilies, but there is really nothing visually special with which we typically mark today.

So what day is today? Today is Christ the King Sunday, or the Festival of the Reign of Christ. It's the day in which we as the people of God together proclaim that someday – a day known only to God – there will be an end to all that is painful, all suffering, all despair, all sadness, and all death. And from that day on, love will be all and fill all, and Jesus Christ shall reign as the ruler of all heaven and all earth. God will make all things new, and God's children will live forever in God's glorious presence and in perfect communion with God and with one another.

To help us catch a glimpse of that future day of promise, today we move through – step by step – the story of Love that we as Christians proclaim. We will ponder the meaning of what we call the seasons of the church year, and by so doing, we will reflect upon and participate in the story that shapes who we are as people who call ourselves followers of Jesus.

The First Reading: Jeremiah 23:5-6

"Time's coming" — God's Decree—

"when I'll establish a truly righteous David-Branch,
A ruler who knows how to rule justly.

He'll make sure of justice and keep people united.
In his time Judah will be secure again
and Israel will live in safety.

This is the name they'll give him:

'God-Who-Puts-Everything-Right.'

Entrance Hymn:

All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name

ELW 634 vs. 1-3

All children are invited to either join in the procession, or in the absence of a procession, join in the front of the worship space and wave their flags during the singing of the Entrance Hymn, following the movements of the designated leader(s).

ADVENT

Commentary Two

L: We begin at the beginning of the church year with the season of Advent. During Advent we prepare for the radical way that Love breaks into this world by coming to us as the infant Jesus. During Advent, we are drawn into calls to wait, and watch, and prepare. As we do so, our minds and our hearts are reminded anew that the God of Love is a God of promise, a God who has looked upon the sinful, painful predicament of this world and promised to do something about it.

During Advent, amid our waiting, we are filled with expectation for what God is about to do. We prepare to receive God's gift of Love for us, and we anticipate the coming of God's Messiah into this world.

During the singing of the verse, children are chosen to help change the paraments to blue, or add a blue color drape to the altar, altar rail, or another pre-determined location

(The congregation sings together)

**Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon His throne.
Hark! How the heav'nly anthem drowns all music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing of Him who died for thee,
And hail Him as thy matchless King through all eternity.**

The Second Reading: Luke 1:26-27, 30-33

During Elizabeth's sixth month of pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to a virgin girl who lived in Nazareth, a town in Galilee. She was engaged to marry a man named Joseph from the family of David. Her name was Mary. The angel said to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary, because God is very pleased with you. Listen! You will become pregnant and have a baby boy. You will name him Jesus. He will be great. People will call him the Son of the Most High God, and the Lord God will make him king like his ancestor David. He will rule over the people of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

Congregational Hymn: *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* ELW 257, v. 1

CHRISTMAS

Commentary Three

Advent climaxes with Christmas, and in that wonderful festival, we come together to see anew that the God of Love is not only a God of promise, but God is also one whose promises come true. But there is something more to Christmas as well. Love is born. Messiah comes, but none

of this is what the world expects. Love breaks into this world to touch humanity like humanity has never been touched before. Love breaks the stillness of sin's dark night, not by the clash of a warrior's spear. Instead, the silence of sin's dark night is pierced clean through by the cry of a newborn babe.

Beneath all of the wrappings and trappings of the holiday season is the message that Love will go to any length to enter into the life that you know. Wrapped in swaddling clothes, surrounded by the earthy smells of birth and stock animals, the heir to the throne of the universe enters the world of humanity so that we might experience what Love is and dwell with God forever in God's beloved community.

That is Christmas. It is promise fulfilled. It is Love in the flesh. It is the wonderful surprise of your promise-keeping God.

During the singing of the verse, children are chosen to help change the paraments to white, or add a white color drape to the altar, altar rail, or another pre-determined location

(The congregation sings together)

**Crown Him the virgin's Son, the God incarnate born,
Whose arm those crimson trophies won which now His brow adorn;
Fruit of the mystic rose, as of that rose the stem;
The root whence mercy ever flows, the Babe of Bethlehem.**

The Third Reading: Isaiah 9:6-7a

For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onwards and for evermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Congregational Hymn:

Joy to the World

ELW 267, vs. 1 and 4

EPIPHANY

Commentary Four

+ *“Celebrate! Worship for Every Festival” liturgies are part of the Nourishing Vocation with Children Project at St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN. This liturgy was originally created by Rev. Dr. Charlene Rachuy Cox in 1991. It has been updated and adapted to this context. This full attribution must be included, along with the logos below, on any reproduction or distribution of this material, along with the attributions below about the readings.*

Thanks to Rev. Beth Gedert and the people of Zion United Church of Christ, Delaware, OH, for trying this service in a holy experiment and sharing their photo with us.

Jeremiah 23:5-6, Holy Bible, The Message
Luke 1:26-27, 30-33, Holy Bible, Easy to Read Version
Isaiah 9:6-7a, Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version.
Matthew 2:1-2, Holy Bible, Easy to Read Version
Mark 15:25-39, Holy Bible, Easy to Read Version
I Corinthians 15:20-25, Holy Bible, Contemporary English Version
Acts 2:1-11, Holy Bible, The Message
Revelation 21:1-4, Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version

**If the service does not include Holy Communion, adjust the service note about how the offering will be received and following Commentary Nine, move directly to the Revelation 21:1-4 reading.*

