
AMEN

an occasional publication of the Liturgical Commission of the Diocese of New York
www.diocesenyn.org/liturgy a Advent/Christmas 2001

Greetings in Christ!

This edition of *AMEN* offers some reflections and suggestions for Advent and Christmas worship that you might find helpful in your congregation. You will find some thoughts on the uses of silence by Carol McKenna; resources and recommendations for the use of an Advent Wreath, including brief rites for lighting the candles by the Rev. Masud Syedullah; and an updated setting of the traditional Christmas Proclamation for use at a Christmas Vigil or early morning liturgy. These resources come to you with the best wishes of the Commission and the encouragement of Bishop Sisk that we as a diocese continue to explore the rich traditions and new materials available to us for our worship life. a

— The Rev. Tobias S. Haller, BSG, *Chair*

A note on the Revised Common Lectionary

With this Advent “Year A” of the three-year liturgical lectionary cycle begins, and it might be a time to explore using the Revised Common Lectionary, authorized for continued trial use by the General Convention last year. Parishes in each diocese of the Episcopal Church have been designated to make use of this lectionary, but other parishes are welcome to join in.

You won’t notice too many differences between our present BCP lectionary and the RCL until you get to the season after Epiphany, but now might be the time to begin exploring. A number of resources for worship planning and preaching are geared to this lectionary, and it is widely used in the Anglican Communion and in other churches. You can find out much more about the RCL on the web at www.episcopalchurch.org/lm/rcl.html. a

Silence in Advent

The liturgy provides numerous opportunities for communal silence, such as after the readings and at the time of the Prayers of the People. One way to mark the Advent spirit of anticipation is to make greater use of these times, and to explore other moments in and before the liturgy when a silent pause might help us enter into this Advent expectancy. This is especially true in the midst of the hustle and bustle associated with this time of year, in which the church offers an eternal perspective on the passing of times and seasons.

A quiet corner

One priest of our diocese took the following approach. Before Advent began, the priest addressed the congregation about the busyness of the coming season, and about how often it seems difficult to prepare oneself for worship as one dashes about doing other church-related business before the liturgy, and comes into worship breathless — or late!

This rector then offered that on each Sunday of Advent he would spend ten minutes in prayer and silent meditation in a quiet corner of the church before the main liturgy. (Your church may have a side chapel, or other suitable place set aside for private quiet prayer.) He invited members of the congregation to join him in this quiet time as they felt moved to do so.

This proved to be a very valuable and meaningful gathering, and the number of people joining in grew each Sunday, as more and more people came together to gather before God in holy silence, to prepare for the liturgy in an Advent spirit.

Other possibilities

Another parish introduced a moment of silence at the start of the liturgy, after the opening hymn, before the acclamation and collect for purity. This silence following the processional music was quite striking, and served to focus the congregation, standing together “at attention” for a moment, all facing the altar as one before the celebrant turned to speak the words of the opening acclamation.

A parish might extend the silence following the invitation to confession, allowing greater time for inner reflection before beginning the verbal confession. Another suitable place for an extended silence is at the Prayers of the People, after the individual petitions (in those forms providing for it) and prior to the concluding collect. The silence kept after the breaking of the Bread might also be emphasized or extended.

Few parishes will make use of all of these options, but adding one or two to the liturgical custom for the season may well prove to be of spiritual benefit. And who knows — it might continue on beyond Advent! ☩

What to do with the Advent Wreath

The use of an Advent Wreath to mark the Sundays of Advent is a tradition which has in recent years become more common in church settings. At the time of the revision of the Book of Common Prayer, few churches used the Advent Wreath, and the only mention of it in the Prayer Book is in connection with the Order of Worship for the Evening, as part of the lighting of other candles in the church (see the rubric on page 143). The *Book of Occasional Services* does not recommend additional ceremonial or verbal elaboration, whether at an evening or a morning liturgy. Certainly, in keeping with the spirit of silence in the preceding article, it is possible to allow the Advent Wreath to “speak for itself” simply by its presence in the sanctuary or near the lectern or pulpit.

However, since many parishes now use an additional verbal or ceremonial act with the Advent Wreath, prior to or at the beginning of the Sunday liturgy, the Commission has felt it important to provide a model based on the experience of one of its members in several parish settings. The Commission feels that the liturgical development of the church often best takes a “trickle up” approach by sharing such parish-developed resources, and our Bishop agrees that this should be part of our mission under his direction.

The following brief rite for lighting the candles of the Advent Wreath was designed to take place immediately after the entrance hymn, but it might also take place at the end of a “silent time” prior

to a liturgy, such as the one described in the article above. As originally conceived, this rite was carried out by the youth of the parish, and used the pulpit near which the Wreath was placed. Parishes should feel free to adapt this rite to their own needs and custom.

A Rite for Lighting the Candles of the Advent Wreath

The Reader goes to the pulpit during the singing of the entrance hymn, and immediately following the hymn addresses the people with the following

On the First Sunday of Advent

This is the First Sunday of Advent, when the scriptures remind us of the light of Christ which rises, like the sun, upon the darkness of sin and brokenness, to shed its rays of health and wholeness — God’s salvation upon all creation. Today, the prophet Isaiah urges us to walk in the light of the Lord. As I light the first candle of the Advent Wreath, let us remember that the light of God is dawning upon us.

The Reader lights one candle of the Wreath, then returns to the pulpit.

Reader O come, thou Dayspring from on high,
and cheer us by thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death’s dark shadow put to flight. *Amen.*

On the Second Sunday of Advent

This is the Second Sunday of Advent when the scriptures remind us that the light of Christ comes to guide us towards peace. As I light the candles of the Advent Wreath, let us remember that God is faithful, and leads us into paths of peace and goodwill.

The Reader lights two candles of the Wreath, then returns to the pulpit.

Reader O God, lead us from death
to Life, from falsehood to Truth
Lead us from despair
to Hope, from fear to Trust
Lead us from hate
to Love, from war to Peace
Let Peace fill our hearts,
our world, our universe. *Amen.*

On the Third Sunday of Advent

This is the Third Sunday of Advent when the scriptures remind us of the love of God. As I light the candles of the Advent Wreath, let us remember that the light of Christ comes as a loving, healing presence to us, and to all of creation.

The Reader lights three candles of the Wreath, including the rose-colored candle if there is one, then returns to the pulpit.

Reader O God of unchangeable power and eternal light:
Look favorably on your whole creation;
carry out in tranquillity the plan of salvation;
let the whole world see and know
that things which were cast down are being raised up,
and things which had grown old are being made new,
and that all things are being brought to their perfection
by him through whom all things were made,
your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

On the Fourth Sunday of Advent

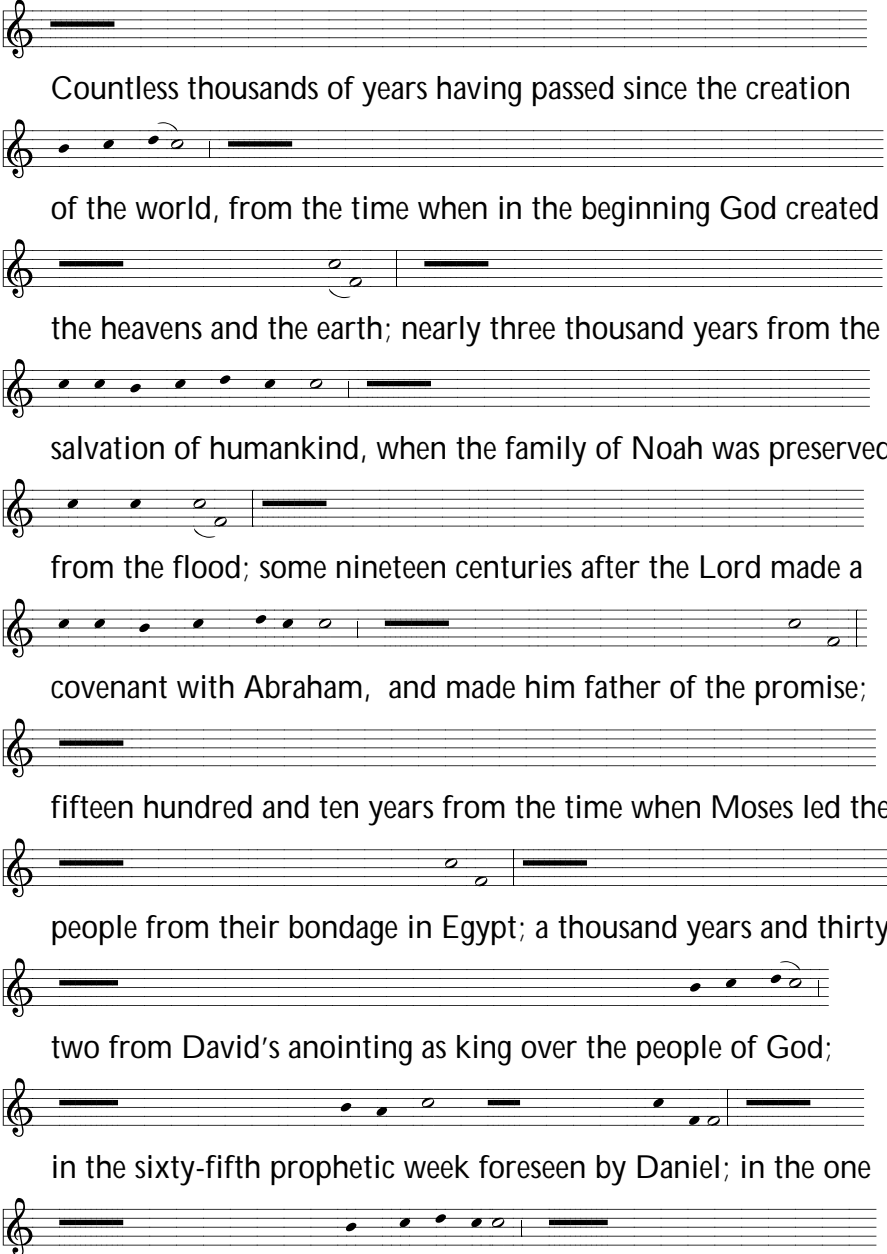
This is the Fourth Sunday of Advent when the scriptures remind us that our God is the God of joy and surprises. As I light the candles of the Advent Wreath, let us rejoice that God is among us, doing infinitely more than we could ask or imagine.

The Reader lights four candles of the Wreath, then returns to the pulpit.

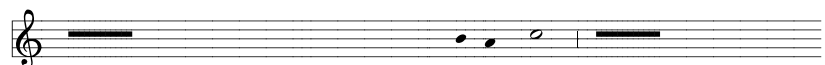
Reader O God of joy and surprises,
let every heart prepare room
to receive you,
as you come to brighten our world. *Amen.*

The Reader goes to his or her seat. The liturgy continues with the opening Acclamation and Collect for Purity.

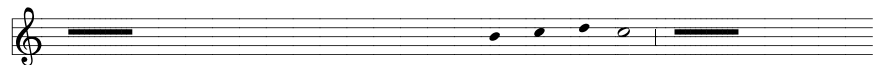
Proclamation of the Birth of Christ



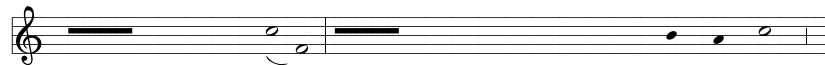
Countless thousands of years having passed since the creation
of the world, from the time when in the beginning God created
the heavens and the earth; nearly three thousand years from the
salvation of humankind, when the family of Noah was preserved
from the flood; some nineteen centuries after the Lord made a
covenant with Abraham, and made him father of the promise;
fifteen hundred and ten years from the time when Moses led the
people from their bondage in Egypt; a thousand years and thirty-
two from David's anointing as king over the people of God;
in the sixty-fifth prophetic week foreseen by Daniel; in the one
hundred and ninety-third Olympiad; seven and a half centuries



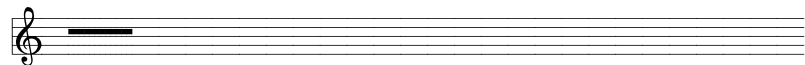
from the foundation of the city of Rome; at the mid-point



of the reign of the Emperor Caesar Augustus, when the whole



world was at peace; in the sixth and final age of the world:



Desiring to sanctify creation by the means of his coming



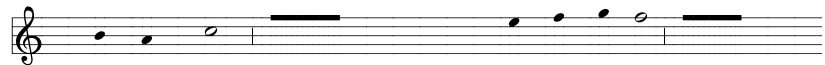
and his blessed presence, Jesus Christ the eternal God and Son



of the eternal Father, conceived by the Holy Spirit and the



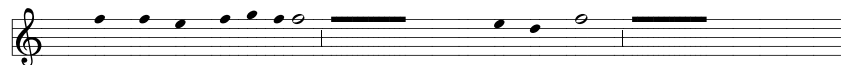
Virgin Mary, nine months having passed as he grew in his



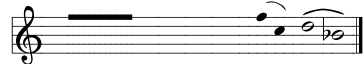
mother's womb, was born of the Virgin Mary, and for our



salvation was made man in Bethlehem of Juda.



This is the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ according to



the manner of all flesh.

This Proclamation may be used at the beginning of the Christmas liturgy. It is most appropriately sung by the Deacon, but as with the Exultet of the Easter Vigil, another person may be assigned to chant this Proclamation.