



Coming to Life

Worship Aids for the Living Peace Church

Praying for transformation and courage

Undertaking thoughtful study of scriptures

Actively answering Christ's call to peace

Facilitating dialogue among differing opinions

2004 Advent

Call to Worship

We come to worship the One
who came to be with us as a baby.
We come to worship the One
who grew in grace and wisdom
with the love of his earthly parents and
the support of his faith community.
We come to worship the One
who sees us as beloved children.
Let us worship our God, and give thanks
because we are children of the
Almighty God!

— Christy Waltersdorff, pastor
York Center (IL) Church of the Brethren

Interactive Peace Prayer

Shepherds saw a sign of peace in the sky.

I saw a sign of peace in _____
(example: a helpful store clerk).

I saw a sign of peace in _____
(example: a child's face).

I saw a sign of peace in _____
(example: the sun setting on the hills).

May the signs of peace inspire us to make more
such signs, in Jesus' name. Amen.

— Ron Martin-Adkins
Washington City (DC) Church of the Brethren

A Prayer During Advent

This we know Lord: Christmas comes early or it comes late, but it does come.

**It comes at the bus stop. It comes in the soupline,
or in the middle of the night.**

*Christmas comes in that still moment when we lay down our whole lives in a
small, chilly manger warmed only by the hearts of the lowly.*

And know with perfect joy that we are home.

Come, little Word, there's a weary world awaitin'.

Come, little Word, with your eyes open wide.

Come, little Word, the welcome table is ready.

Now, little Word, would be a good time.

O come, Lord Jesus. Come.

— Rose Marie Berger

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In response to the 2003 Annual Conference resolution, "A Call for a Living Peace Church," this is a resource from the Brethren Witness/Washington Office and On Earth Peace. We will be producing 3-4 issues a year and welcome original submissions as well as resource ideas from anyone in the church. Please send them in Word or WordPerfect format via e-mail to bsayler_oepea@brethren.org.

An Expectant Peace – God Waits

Sermon Reflections and Prayers for each Sunday in Advent

God waits for stones to melt, for peace to seed, for hearts to hold each other's need, and till we understand the Christ, God waits. — from *God Weeps*, by Shirley Erena Murray



What and who is it we wait for this advent season? One who does more than proclaim repentance? One who does more than talk about straight paths? Christ, the Son of God is worth waiting for, and worth getting ready for. It is time for us to proclaim something that goes beyond anything we are ready for. Someone who is far more worthy than John the Baptizer, or any of us, and yet, we need not be overwhelmed with this. Christ, the Prince of Peace can teach us so much while we wait, and while we proclaim the truth of his coming. The truth of God's peace lies in the life of the one we wait for.

1st Sunday — Mark 1:1-8

Prayer: God, get us ready. These next few weeks will fly by. Our anticipation of so much will soon give way to memory and reflection. May we prepare ourselves to be involved in the shaping of this season. One that will give life to this church, a living life of peace, that will not be contained by walls of a building or walls of physical or imposed separation. Heal our wounds through your forgiveness. Touch our spirit through your grace. Grant us a voice of truth based upon your word for our life. Wait with us God; do not grow impatient. Do not let us rest from our preparation. Grant us peace in all things. Amen.

2nd Sunday — John 1:1-10

Where is today's light amid the overwhelming darkness of our world? Can the light of God find its way through war and hunger? Can peace be revealed through this symbolic language of John alone or must it come from our living witness to its truth and justice for all people? Imagery and prose say a lot, but testimony and witness say more. Do we really testify to the light in our own living? What are ways we can be light to others? Can we be that light when we really don't know Christ? Are we perhaps part of that world that really does not know him?



Prayer: God, keep us alert these days of advent. Alert to the things around us. The places where Your light must be revealed. Give us "light" words of protest amid the wars of our land. Give us "light" words of truth in areas of justice for others. Give us "light" words of hope to those who despair and "light" words of care to those who are in torment. Help us to know better the One we are to proclaim. Help us to live witness to His holy name. Help us to move beyond symbols of light, into "living light" in the name of the One whose light cannot be overcome by darkness. Amen.

3rd Sunday — Luke 1:26-33, 46-55

As we wait in life, what exciting news has been revealed to us? Mary was blindsided with news of her miraculous pregnancy. Folks in our congregation and community have been blindsided with news of unexpected layoffs or cancer that would not let go. Our world has slammed headlong into an era of fear, anxiety, terror, and violence that leaves us sick inside. Where do we find our songs of praise? Where do we find exhortations of acceptance and excitement for a scary tomorrow? Is it blind trust? Can it be that it is a convicted faith or spirit within that will not let us do any less than sing with praise?

Prayer: God, move us into song. Give us a melodious voice of love, compassion, hope, and praise. For you, but not just for you! Let us sing for our sisters. Let us proclaim justice for our brothers. Let us lift up the birth of new life and the wisdom of our elders. Let us be excited about the possibility of peace even as the ravages of war torment us. Let us proclaim healing in the midst of the most painful of disease. According to your promise to us all, let us live in faith. Know, O God, we truly magnify your name. Amen.





4th Sunday — Matthew 1:18-23

Is God really with us? Gabriel seemed certain this would be the case. This child named Emmanuel would fulfill all the things the prophets had predicted. Has this been the

case? Just how do we see God with us? Are we so caught up in our waiting that we cannot see God in Christ all around us? Explore the people of your family, your church, and your community who are truly Emmanuel. How do others find Emmanuel? Could we be Emmanuel for them - or are we frightened, as was Joseph – perhaps to the point where we are not even willing to risk the “public disgrace” this might bring?

Prayer: God, we are almost there. Oh sure, the calendar says Christmas is almost here, but we mean more than that. We are almost to a point where we are actually believing, living, and sharing the message of what this season really means. Recognizing that peace on earth can be more than just a phrase. That our waiting and preparing is for more than a seasonal holiday; it is for the developing and shaping of our commitment to your call on our lives. It is for our recognition that we are your peace and it is our imperative that we be that peace for others. Joseph was not disgraced by his calling. Celebrate with us God that neither are we. For indeed, you are with us! Amen.

Christmas Eve/Day — Luke 2:1-20

The waiting is over. What now? The shepherds and the angels went to see first hand. They knelt down and worshipped. They sang songs of proclamation. Later the wise came and brought gifts. Sounds like church doesn't it? Praying, singing, making our offering. But there are other pieces to the Bethlehem celebration. Signs and symbols for something more. This King, this Prince of Peace, this Messiah was born in a cave. Surrounded by common shepherds and hosts of angels. Something is different here. Is it time for our church to be different? Sure, praying and singing and giving are important, but it must go further. What is the “good news of great joy for all people” for today? This child grew up to deliver some pretty powerful messages. Are these messages part of the songs we are to sing? Are the models of peace Jesus taught part of the prayers we are supposed to live out for all people? Are the greatest gifts we can give to honor the Prince of Peace gifts that help bring justice into the lives of all? Are we the angels and shepherds of today? Is it time to get over being terrified of the message and begin to “be not afraid” in our proclamation?

Prayer: God, help us celebrate. Even as we tremble before the mighty truth of this season of birth, let us celebrate. For we have recovered our excitement through the re-telling of the story. These last few weeks have indeed flown by. Our anticipation has turned into joy. Joy to the world, your son is alive. Bless us God as we move forward in his presence. Carry us from this day into the next. Use us as your voice for justice and peace. Guide us in this journey. Strengthen us, as we grow weak. Forgive us as we falter. Sustain us in your truth. Thank you God for these few weeks of Advent. Thank you God for the many more to come. Amen.



— Phil Jones, director
Church of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office

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Coming to Life: Worship Aids for the Living Peace Church

Invitations to Give

Under the Christmas tree, I found a gift that said,
Do not open until Christmas.”
Inside was a piece of paper that said,
Peace on Earth, good will to all.”
I think Christmas comes everyday.
What will we give this day?

— Ron Martin-Adkins
Washington City (DC) Church of the Brethren

(based on Romans 5:1-11)
As we yearn for God’s peace in this world,
may our giving serve as an act of worship to God.
May our giving also help to bring peace of mind,
peace within the church, and
peace within the global community.

— David Leiter, pastor
Friendship (MD) Church of the Brethren

The scriptures tell us that wise men from the east came to see the child Jesus. They brought with them expensive gifts, treasures worth a great deal of money. These wise men knew that only the best would be good enough for this child who would be the Messiah.

Today let us bring our best to Jesus. Let us give what we have to the glory of God. Jesus doesn’t want our gold, frankincense, or myrrh; he wants our hearts, our minds, our loyalty, and our love. Let us give generously to the One who gave his all for us.

— Christy Waltersdorff, pastor
York Center (IL) Church of the Brethren

Benediction

All: Hallelujah!
Leader: A child has been born that will bring peace to all the nations.
All: Hallelujah!
Leader: Justice and righteousness will flow like streams of living water.
All: Hallelujah!
Leader: Let us go into the world spreading these visions of hope.
All: Hallelujah!

Hymn #1059 (Hymnal Supplement) *Hallelujah! We sing your praises!*

— Barb Saylor, co-director
On Earth Peace

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