

# For Review Purposes Only

## Leader's Guide



### A CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS SERVICE

*by Michael Marquardt*

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Musical settings in this kit may be duplicated for preparations and performances of this Christmas service, unless otherwise indicated.

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## A CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS SERVICE

This kit contains the following items:

1. *Leader's Guide*: includes the copy master of the service, notes on its use, a design for a service banner, and song accompaniments
2. CD: includes vocal and accompaniment tracks, text and graphic files of the service, and MIDI files of the song accompaniments
3. Sample bulletin cover

## General Service Notes

1. *The Signs of Christmas* is a children's service that proclaims the Christmas message and God's plan of salvation through the symbols and images we use in our celebration.
2. This service may be adapted easily for use with both large and small groups of children. Adult choirs and speakers may also be used as desired. Leader and Group recitations can be used with a narrator and group of children or with the pastor and congregation.
3. Note that some of the elements of the service, for example the optional opening using the "Service of Light," can be omitted. These include the paragraphs of explanation in italics.
4. Open the README file on the CD to get information on using the text and MIDI files for the service. If the CD directory shows only the audio tracks, use Windows Explorer<sup>®</sup> to open the text and MIDI files.
5. You may duplicate the copy master of the entire service or adapt the text file found on the service CD. Using the text file allows you to make changes that meet your local needs.
6. The service and hymn text (RTF) files on the CD may be used to prepare a service folder for the congregation.
7. In addition to the hymns and songs listed in the service, alternate hymns have been suggested that are found in *CW*, *CW Supplement*, and other Lutheran hymnals. Some of them may require reprint permission as indicated in the copyright information of the hymnals.
8. Practice all speaking parts for clarity, volume, and expression. Encourage students to project their voices to the back of the church. Determine where pauses should be made in the text and which words should be stressed. Then teach recitation groups to recite in an expressive style, with appropriate rhythm and inflection.

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9. Assign hymns and songs to groups as desired. You may substitute other hymns or Christmas songs, but the texts should reflect the content for that point in the service. Consider using appropriate choir settings for children or adults on the suggested hymns.
10. The CD includes vocal and accompaniment tracks of the hymns and songs in the service but not the suggested alternates. It may be used for rehearsal or for accompaniment during the service. (Note: The hymn accompaniments are not designed to accompany a large congregation.) **Since the music in the recordings is in the public domain, you may copy the recordings to writable CDs for use by multiple classrooms.**
11. You may use the MIDI files on the CD in conjunction with the HymnSoft® Player Module. Use them for rehearsal or for accompaniment during the service. See the README file on the CD for further information. You may also use them with a MIDI-compatible keyboard that reads standard MIDI files. Consult the keyboard's manual for additional information on using the files.
12. The design for the banner used in the service is provided on page 5 of this guide. Note that this can be done as one banner with all of the symbols combined or as four separate banners for each symbol. The graphic files on the CD for this kit include separate PDF outline patterns for the symbols. The banner was designed by Peter Schaewe and is used with permission.
13. Coordinated bulletin covers (8.5" x 11" and 8.5" x 14") are available. Order information follows.

## *The Signs of Christmas* Christmas Service Bulletins

Available in multiples of 50:

KT13N0400, 8.5" x 11" per 100 .....	\$8.50
KT13N0401, 8.5" x 14" per 100 .....	\$9.75

Prices are subject to change.

Available online at [www.nph.net](http://www.nph.net).

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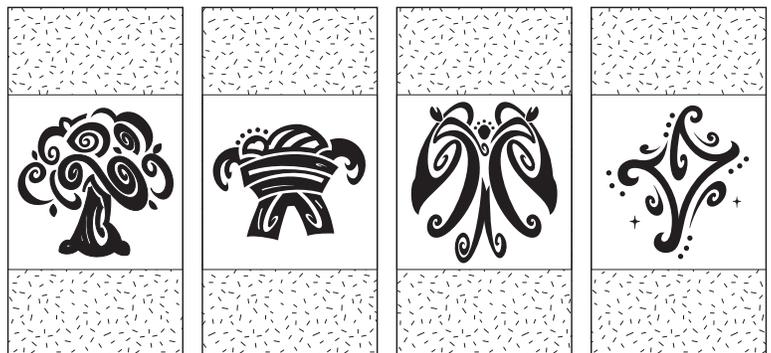
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Suggested banner

Symbols designed by Peter Schaeve. Used with permission.

Suggested alternate use  
of symbols on separate banners



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## A Children's Christmas Service by Michael Marquardt

The liturgical color for Christmas is white, which is a symbol of the Godhead, purity, and joy. For this reason, the paraments and the Chrismos on the tree are white. You will also find gold trim, which stands for royalty, riches, and victory.

## Gathering

### Processional Hymn

“Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful” (CW 55)

Alternate: “The Snow Lay on the Ground” (*Let All the People Praise You*, page 274)

*The Christ candle is the white candle at the center of an Advent wreath that symbolizes the arrival of the Light of the world, Jesus Christ. Tonight it is brought forward in the processional as a visual representation of Christ's advent, or coming.*

### Optional Opening of the Service

“Service of Light” (CW pages 54-56)

### Optional Psalm

Psalm 98 (CW page 103 or CWS page 53)

### Service Introduction

Bells. Christmas trees. Ribbons and bows. Stars. Wreaths. Lights. Holly. Mistletoe. We see these things all around us, and they all tell us it is Christmastime. You may have many of these items in your homes. Perhaps you even have an Advent wreath or a nativity scene set up in your living room. There are so many images that remind us of Christmas, and without them Christmas seems almost empty. But what do they all mean? The church has a rich heritage of symbolism tracing back to the beginning of the world. Look around at our church building and consider the many images that surround us. They initially serve as reminders, but upon further inspection they teach us truths about God and his Word.

Educational psychologists tell us that we learn best if all of our senses are engaged in the learning process. At Christmas we hear the familiar music and the Christmas story, taste the food, smell the lit candles, see the lavish adornments, and greet our family and friends. Our service tonight focuses on how God speaks to us through the many visual

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symbols that he has given us through the ages to remind us of the history of his people, to instruct us in his plan of salvation, to support our understanding of his truths, and to beautify our worship.

*[Optional] Tonight you already saw the Christ candle brought to the front of the nave and placed on the Advent wreath to symbolize the coming of Christ at Christmas. You have seen incense offered, just as the Old Testament believers did, to symbolize our prayers rising to the Father, and because of Jesus our prayers are pleasing to him. You also see special banners that display images and symbols, which have special meaning at Christmas.*

As you worship tonight, take special note of these symbols and signs that we are given to focus on Christ's birth at Bethlehem.

## Part One: The Tree

### **Narration**

The Christmas tree is easily one of the most recognizable symbols of the Christmas season. Some believe that Martin Luther may have been the first to set up an evergreen tree in his home and decorate it with candles. The tree as a symbol for Christmas, however, goes all the way back to the beginning of time when God placed two special trees in the Garden of Eden: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

God gave special instructions to Adam and Eve regarding these trees: Don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or you will die. One day in the garden, Satan, in the form of a serpent, tempted Adam and Eve to eat from this tree. Adam and Eve both ate fruit from the tree and had to answer to God for their sin. But before God told them of the consequences, he first gave them a promise. This was the first promise of the Savior, who would be born to pay for that sin in the garden as well as the sins of the entire world. This promise was found in God's curse on Satan, who would be defeated by the Savior's death on another tree.

### **Recitation**

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel. (Genesis 3:15)

### **Narration**

God's plan for the Savior is like a red thread woven through the fabric of the Old Testament, reminding believers of the Messiah and his work for them. God used animal sacrifices as special symbols to show that their Savior's life had to be offered in death for their own in order to rescue them from eternal punishment. He also had them burn incense during their prayers to show them that those prayers did rise to God, like the smoke of the incense, and that he heard their cries for help.

The Holy Spirit spoke through the prophet Isaiah about another tree. He was speaking of the promised Messiah. But the picture doesn't stop with a tree. He also speaks of the work the Messiah would do on earth. This Prince of peace would return his people to the state of perfection that they had in the Garden of Eden.

### **Responsive Reading**

**Leader:** A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;

**Group:** from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

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L: The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—

G: **the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,**

L: the Spirit of counsel and of power,

G: **the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD—and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.**

L: He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,

G: **or decide by what he hears with his ears;**

L: but with righteousness he will judge the needy,

G: **with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.**

L: He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;

G: **with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.**

L: In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples;

G: **the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.** (Isaiah 11:1-4,10)

## Song

“Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel” (CW 23)

Alternate: “My Soul in Stillness Waits” (CWS 703)

## Narration

The first chapter of the gospel of Matthew shows how Jesus’ family tree grew from the seed of Adam and Eve to its sturdy trunk in Abraham, Jacob, and David, all the way to the branches of Joseph and Mary. In the first chapter of Luke, we hear how Mary, an ordinary young woman, received a visit from an extraordinary messenger.

## Recitation

In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary.

The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.

But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”

“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin.”

The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God.”

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” Then the angel left her. (Luke 1:26-38)

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## **Narration**

Mary rushed to see her cousin Elizabeth and tell her the news. Elizabeth, however, was not the only one to hear this announcement and rejoice.

## **Recitation**

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!" (Luke 1:41,42)

## **Narration**

On hearing Mary's news, Elizabeth was overjoyed. Her unborn son, whom we know as John the Baptist, leaped with delight. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth prophesied. And Mary, whom we have come to think of as quiet and introspective, burst forth in a song of her own.

## **Song**

"Song of Mary," *Magnificat* (CW page 57)

Alternate: "My Soul Now Magnifies the Lord" (CW 274)

*In the Latin language, which at one time was the official language of the church, the first word of Mary's song is Magnificat, which means "to glorify."*

## Part Two: The Manger

### **Narration**

A nativity scene makes a lovely Christmas decoration and reminds us of the true meaning of Christmas. At the center of any nativity scene is a manger, a feedbox. That bed for the Creator of the universe was not the ideal place for a newborn. But it was the perfect start in life for our Savior. It was a picture of the humility that he took on himself all through his life—a picture of his submission to God's law and the laws of men.

The account of Jesus' birth begins in Luke chapter 2, with Mary and Joseph obeying the law of the Roman emperor that the population of the entire empire should be counted.

### **Recitation**

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:1-7)

### **Song**

"Away in a Manger" (CW 68—alternate melody)

Alternate: "A Stable Lamp Is Lighted" (CWS 706)

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## **Narration**

The King of kings and Lord of lords humbled himself by taking on the form of a human. God be praised that this “riches to rags” story turns into a “rags to riches” story for us sinners. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, wrote:

## **Recitation**

When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “*Abba, Father.*” So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. (Galatians 4:4-7)

## **Song**

“God Loves Me Dearly” (*Let All the People Praise You*, page 93)

Alternate: “Let Us All With Gladsome Voice” (CW 64)

or “Infant Holy, Infant Lowly” (*Let All the People Praise You*, page 152)

## Part Three: The Angel

### **Narration**

Scripture speaks of angels throughout its pages. They are God’s messengers. God sent angels to people to announce important news. Angels visited Abraham to tell him that he and his wife, Sarah, would have a baby boy in their old age. The angel Gabriel announced the birth of John to Zechariah and Elizabeth. Later he proclaimed to Mary that she was to be the mother of the Savior. After the birth in the manger, angels made an announcement to shepherds at work in the fields.

### **Recitation**

There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.” (Luke 2:8-14)

### **Song**

“Angels We Have Heard on High” (CW 63)

Alternate: “Peace Came to Earth” (CWS 707)

### **Recitation**

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

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When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

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

## Song

“Silent Night! Holy Night” (CW 60)

Alternate: “Where Shepherds Lately Knelt” (CW 54)

## Part Four: The Star

### Narration

Stars seem to appear everywhere at Christmas. You can find them on the tops of Christmas trees, on wrapping paper, cut out as cookies, even in the eyes of children when they hear and recite the Christmas story. Certainly the Christmas lights on houses and the candles in the Advent wreath can remind us of stars too. The Bible’s many references to stars often point to Jesus. God led Abraham outside one night and had him gaze upon the stars.

### Recitation

“Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” (Genesis 15:5)

### Narration

Part of that covenant with Abraham was that the promised Savior would be one of those descendants that God promised him. In the book of Numbers, Moses wrote:

### Recitation

I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near.

A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. (Numbers 24:17)

### Narration

We know from the book of Revelation that the star spoken of is Jesus, as Jesus himself says in the last chapter of Scripture:

### Recitation

“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.” (Revelation 22:16)

### Narration

God put a special star in the sky for Magi from the East to lead them to the newborn Savior. Matthew wrote in his gospel:

### Recitation

They went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. (Matthew 2:9-11)

## Song

“Go, Tell It on the Mountain” (CW 57)

Alternate: “I Am So Glad When Christmas Comes” (CW 51)

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## **Narration**

The apostle Peter wrote in his second letter that we have the word of the prophets, which is certain. The star that the Magi followed is for us too. It directs us to the Scriptures.

## **Recitation**

We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. (2 Peter 1:19)

## **Narration**

Until that day dawns, when the Morning Star rises for us and all believers and our eyes at last shall see him, may we, his children, who will be crowned like the stars, sound his praises, not only in this festive season but every day throughout our lives.

## **Optional Song**

“Once in Royal David’s City” (CW 50)

*Note that this hymn summarizes the thoughts of the previous section.*

## **Offering**

### **Prayers**

L: Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true light. Grant that as we have known on earth the wonder of that light, we may also behold him in all his glory in the life to come; through your only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

G: Amen.

### **The Lord’s Prayer**

### **Optional Song**

“Song of Simeon” *Nunc Dimittis* (CW page 61)

*The beginning phrase of Simeon’s song in Latin is Nunc Dimittis, which means “Now dismiss.” Simeon sang this song as he held the 40-day-old Jesus in his arms and thanked God that he was able to see with his own eyes God’s promise fulfilled in his lifetime. We share in his joy that we are able to see the baby Jesus through our eyes of faith.*

### **Blessing**

L: The grace of our Lord (✙) Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

G: Amen.

### **Recessional Hymn**

“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” (CW 61)

Alternate: “Joy to the World” (CW 62)