



FOUR GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS

AN INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP SERVICE FOR ADVENT OR CHRISTMAS

CHRISTMAS and GIFTS seem to go together in everyone's mind.

For many congregations the Christmas gift-giving begins early with packing shoeboxes to be sent to less fortunate children.

The gift-giving may continue as we place gifts under 'giving trees' in shopping centres and assemble food and toys into Christmas hampers.

We also prepare personal Christmas gift wish lists and try to find the 'perfect' gifts for family and friends.

An interesting development in recent years is the practice of donating money to charitable causes in the name of (and as a special gift to) family and friends.

But the greatest Christmas gift is God's gift of his Son, our Saviour.

Jesus came, bringing joy, hope, love and peace:
four gifts traditionally celebrated in Advent, the four Sundays preceding Christmas.

This service explores those FOUR GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS.

Although these notes are for a single service, portions can be used in an Advent series of services, each one focusing on one of the gifts of Christmas. Since these gifts are the same as the traditional explanation of the four Advent candles, the John the Baptist dialogues could be adapted to use in conjunction with — or in place of — an Advent candle-lighting segment in Advent worship.

GENERAL NOTES

INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP

Intergenerational worship takes seriously the idea that people of all ages are part of the worshipping congregation.

Young and old worship together. Children, youth, young adults, middle-aged adults and older adults can also take part in planning the worship, inviting people to the worship and leading the worship.

Where congregations have such ministry teams, intergenerational worship is planned through cooperation of the worship and children's/family ministry teams.

When planning an intergenerational or 'all-age' worship service aim to:

- facilitate a memorable encounter between God and the people who gather to worship him
- encourage meaningful participation, including movement and activity

- engage as many of the senses as possible — sight, sound, touch, smell
- provide some surprises and some fun
- allow interaction among worshipers
- be as inclusive as possible — consider
 - worshipers of different ages,
 - worshipers of different cultures
 - worshipers with physical and mental limitations
 - worshipers who are single or members of hurting families
 - worshipers whose gift-giving and gift-receiving experience is limited
- provide a memento to go home with worshipers to remind them of their experience.

PERMISSION

These notes have been prepared by the Resource Centre for Children's and Family Ministry of the Uniting Church (SA) to help congregations plan Christmas worship involving children and families.

You may make as many copies of the notes as needed for your worship planners. You may print text from these notes in a worship booklet or on OHTs or Powerpoint for your service.

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PROMOTION

Christmas is a time when many people who do not worship regularly consider 'going to church'. Take advantage of this willingness by giving regular worshipers resources for inviting family and friends, eg

- information about what will make this an exciting experience so they can heartily invite others to come along
- printed invitations to give to people
- wording for email or text messages of invitation people can send.

Consider advertising to the wider community through

- a banner at your church
- participation in a community Christmas pageant
- use of community bulletin board
- letter box drop: an invitation in the form of a small 'gift' to whet their appetite to come and hear about the four great gifts of Christmas.

Use the 'gifts' theme in your promotion.

Promotion of the worship service can be an intergenerational activity.

GIFTS

Gifts are the key theme of this service.

VIDEO/SLIDE SHOW Consider making a video or a slide show of still photos of people in your community preparing Christmas gifts. See the introductory paragraphs on page 1. Show this

visual reminder of *our* Christmas gift giving as people enter the worship area.

GIFTS FOR WORSHIPERS Consider giving gifts from the congregation to all who worship with you (individuals or households), eg

- a heart puzzle
- a heart shaped ornament or sun catcher, or any small heart-shaped object people can carry in their pockets as a reminder of God's Christmas gifts.
- a greeting card: *May God give you his love, his peace, his joy, and his hope at Christmas and all through the year.*

Making and wrapping these gifts can be an intergenerational project.

MUSIC

Many people love Christmas carols and other Christmas music. Some people feel saturated with Christmas music long before December 25.

Some people love singing in a congregation; others are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with group singing.

Be conscious of these different attitudes that people will bring to the service. Try to choose a mixture of 'old favourites' and some songs that may be new or less familiar.

Try to provide a range of musical styles and moods. Choose some songs to appeal to children and to 'the inner child' of adult worshipers.

Provide some opportunities for everyone to sing, but be sure to give permission for people to simply listen while others sing. You may also have one or two 'performance' items where the congregation can listen to people with special musical talents.

Your regular music team, band, choir or organist may lead the service, or you may bring together a special intergenerational group of musicians for this service.

You can source your music from your regular worship music source. Look for songs that mention our key gifts (love, joy, peace, hope). On page 13 is a list of songs closely related to the service theme.

Small congregations, or congregations that do not have strong musical leadership, may choose to have the congregation sing with CDs or other electronic music.

DECORATION



Decorate your church in the way you usually decorate for Christmas. The key decoration needed for this service is a pile of gift-wrapped boxes.

FOUR SPECIAL BOXES Among these gifts, you will need four special boxes to be used in the presentation. These special boxes should be easily identified by the presenters.

On the outside of each of these boxes is a large tag with the words: 'To the world; From God.'

In each box put one jigsaw puzzle piece with a key word (love, peace, joy, hope) written on it. These should be as large as possible. See the pattern on page 14.

Puzzle pieces can be cut from sturdy card, or craft foam or wood.

Consider putting sandpaper on the back of cardboard puzzle pieces so the puzzle can be assembled (flannel graph-fashion) on a board covered with a green blanket. Alternatively use blue-tack to assemble the heart puzzle on a blank wall or whiteboard.

THE OTHER GIFTS in the pile could be:

- ▶ a small gift for each household (or individual worshiper)
- ▶ a gift for each child (if that is the practice in your congregation)
- ▶ a gift for each worshiper (or household) to give to a neighbour or friend telling them about the four gifts of Christmas and/or things your congregation will be doing during the Christmas period
- ▶ contributions for community hampers that people bring to worship
- ▶ 'dummy parcels' for the visual effect only.

If your regular Christmas decorations include a nativity scene, consider how you can frame the nativity scene to give the impression that it is coming as a gift parcel.

Decorating the worship area can be an intergenerational experience. Be sure to involve children and young people in the planning, in making things, and in doing the decorating.

WORSHIP LEADERSHIP

THE WORSHIP LEADER helps set the tone — formal or informal — of the service.

Their role includes seeing that everything happens in good order. The more people who are involved in leading the service, the more important this aspect of the worship leader's role becomes. The worship leader may need to improvise some continuity comments to keep things going along smoothly.

The worship leader will be seen by visitors as the 'host' for the service — the person helping them find their way through what happens. In this role the worship leader may have to give some basic instructions as required, eg 'Let's all stand and sing the next song. The words will be on the screen'.

The Minister/Pastor or a lay person may take the role of Worship Leader. The role may be shared by two or three people (possibly including children and/or teens).

THE MUSIC LEADER introduces and leads congregational singing. This may include:

- linking the lyrics of the song to the worship theme
- directing people's attention to the words; explaining unfamiliar imagery
- suggesting actions, echo words or some other way of involving young children
- possibly making encouraging comments.

READER/S read a number of Bible passages throughout the service. One person can do all the readings, or a number of people (a variety of ages) can each do one reading.

The readers should hold a Bible) or stand at a lectern — to make it quite clear when they are reading God's word. They may have their 'script' clipped inside the Bible.

THE PREACHER presents a short address. If possible the address should be interactive and aimed at presenting a simple message to people of all ages — and all different stages of faith.

A possible sermon outline is on page 8.

JOHN THE BAPTIST is a key figure in the traditional Bible readings for Advent. He is also a key figure in this service. The 'actor' who plays the character will need to be confident and competent. He will need to be able to ad lib dialogue based on the script.

John should be costumed in the Biblical character's distinctive animal skin costume.

A HOSPITALITY TEAM is especially important when you are inviting guests to your service. Their role differs from congregation to congregation, but their main role is to ensure that each person feels welcome, comfortable and safe.

REHEARSAL

Because this service may involve a number of people in leadership roles and may be quite different from your usual worship format, you will need to have a rehearsal.

If possible plan a complete run-through in conjunction with a music practice. This will give you a chance to identify and correct any logistical problems. It will also give less experienced leaders a feeling of confidence that they can perform their roles and an understanding of how their roles tie in with the whole 'gift' they are giving to God and to the congregation.

Prayer — for yourselves, the worshipers, and the blessing of the worship experience — is an important part of the rehearsal time.



FOUR GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS

THE SERVICE

Suggestions for what to **do** are in *red italics*; suggestions for what to **say** are printed in plain type.

1. ARRIVAL

As they arrive, people are greeted by members of the hospitality team. The team help people find suitable seats and give them any information they will need about the service.

People may see and be intrigued by a large pile of presents at the front of the church. They may watch a slide show of people in the congregation preparing gifts.

They may hear music, perhaps instrumentalists play songs that will be used later in the service.

They may greet and be greeted by other worshippers around them with a handshake or pat on the back.

2. GREETING & INVOCATION

WORSHIP LEADER: Christmas is just [a month or 10 sleeps, or whatever] away. What better way could there be to begin this time of excitement and preparation than coming here in worship — to receive and share God's Christmas gifts.

We worship today in God's name:
'Father' who gives all good gifts;
'Jesus' his Son; his greatest gift to the world
'the Holy Spirit' who helps us recognise, appreciate and share his gifts.

3. OPENING SONG:

MUSIC LEADER *invites people to join the singing group in a familiar Christmas song.*

Alternatively sing a song that introduces the four gifts, eg 'Give me joy in my heart'. If using a screen, you might put a ♥ symbol where the word 'joy' occurs in the first verse and tell people to sing 'joy' when they see the symbol.

Second verse, sing 'love' when they see the symbol, etc.

4. BIBLE READING

WL: The Bible is God's special book for us. It's in the Bible that we find the story of the first Christmas.

Our first Bible reading today is about something that happened not long before Jesus was born on the first Christmas.

READER *reads this summary of Luke 1:5-17.*

The priest Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth were good people. They pleased God by obeying all that he had commanded. But both Zechariah and Elizabeth were already old and they did not have any children.

One day Zechariah was chosen to go into the Lord's temple to burn incense, while the people stood outside praying.

All at once an angel from the Lord appeared to Zechariah. Zechariah was confused and afraid when he saw the angel. But the angel told him:

Don't be afraid. God has heard your prayers. Your wife Elizabeth will have a son, and you must name him John. His birth will make you very happy, and many people will be glad. Your son will be a great servant of the Lord. The power of the Holy Spirit will be with him from the time he is born.

John will lead many people in Israel to turn back to the Lord their God. Because of John, parents will be more thoughtful of their children. And people who now disobey God will begin to think as they ought to. That is how John will get people ready for the Lord.

5. UNPACKING THE GIFTS

The following section involves John the Baptist interacting with a number of people from the congregation. In a small congregation people can stand at their seats and speak their lines. In a larger building that requires amplification, the speakers will have to be at the front, near a microphone. The designations (child, teen, etc) are suggestions only.

An adult as John the Baptist (dressed in a rough animal skin costume) enters and walks to front.

WL: Who are you?

JOHN THE BAPTIST: I'm John, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth. That's my story you're reading. I'm also a cousin of Jesus.

WL: What are you doing here today?

JB: I'm doing what I always do. Telling people: Get ready. Jesus is coming. Jesus is coming soon. Jesus is coming to you again at Christmas.

JB *directs the following question to individuals in the congregation who have been prepared to take part in the dialogue. JB points to each one and ask:)* Will you be ready this Christmas? . . . What about you? . . . Will you be ready? . . . Are you? . . .

BAND LEADER: No worries. We'll be ready. We'll have our songs practiced.

PREACHER: Yes. I'll be ready. I have my messages almost written.

OLDER PERSON: I'll have my cards all sent.

TEEN: I'll have my presents wrapped — I guess.

CHILD: We're gonna have our Christmas tree up.

YOUNG ADULT MALE: I suppose we'll have to put a wreath on our door.

YOUNG ADULT FEMALE: Oh, wow! I still have to organise clothes for the parties.

CHILD: We'll set out the manger scene.

JB: Will you be ready for *Jesus*?

YOUNG ADULT: What do you mean?

JB: To be ready for Jesus, you have to make room in your hearts for the gifts he brings you.

YOUNG ADULT: What gifts?

5A. LOVE

JB: I'm glad you asked. Let's have a look.

JB *takes the first large wrapped gift box and reads the tag: 'To the world; From God.'*

JB *calls an older person by name: [Tillie], will you come and represent 'the world'.*

JB AND TILLIE *open the box to find a large puzzle piece with the word 'love'.*

JB *holds up the shape so that everyone can see and read the word.*

JB: God's first gift at Christmas is . . .

'TILLIE' AND CONGREGATION: *read* 'Love'.

JB: I wonder if there's room in our heart for God's love.

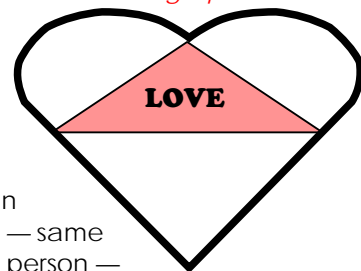
'TILLIE' and JB *place the puzzle piece inside the heart shape on a flannel graph or other display area.*

JB: It fits fine in this heart.

READER: *reads:*

1 John 4:7-11.

The apostle John *(nodding to JB)* — same name, different person — wrote about Jesus' gift of love.



My dear friends, we must love each other. Love comes from God, and when we love each other, it shows that we have been given new life. We are now God's children, and we know him.

God is love, and anyone who doesn't love others has never known him.

God showed his love for us when he sent his only Son into the world to give us life.

Real love isn't our love for God, but his love for us. God sent his Son to be the sacrifice by which our sins are forgiven.

Dear friends, since God loved us this much, we must love each other.

SONG LEADER *introduces a song with a love theme, eg Love came down at Christmas (TAC 47) If you are using a screen, you may want to use illustrations of the Christmas story to accompany the song.*

5B. PEACE

JB: There's more.

JB: *takes the second large wrapped gift box and reads the tag:* 'To the world; From God'.

JB *calls a middle aged person:* [Graeme], will you come and represent 'the world'.

JB AND 'GRAEME' *open the box to find a large puzzle piece with the word 'peace'.*

JB *holds up the shape so that everyone can see and read the word.*

JB: God's second gift at Christmas is . . .

GRAEME AND CONGREGATION *read* 'Peace'.

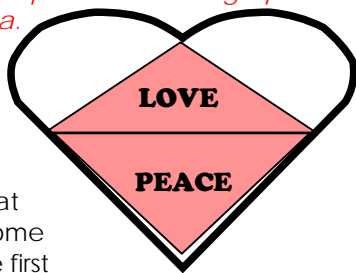
JB: I wonder if there's room in our heart for God's gift of peace.

'GRAEME' and JB *place the puzzle piece inside the heart shape on a flannel graph or other display area.*

JB: It fits fine in this heart.

READER *reads*
Luke 2:14:

Luke reported that angels sang to some shepherds on the first Christmas. They sang about the gift of peace.



'Praise God in heaven! Peace on earth to everyone who pleases God.'

READER *reads John 14:27:*
Before he died, Jesus said:

'I give you peace, the kind of peace that only I can give. It isn't like the peace that this world can give. So don't be worried or afraid.'

SONG LEADER *introduces congregational singing of a song with a 'peace' theme, eg: No longer strangers.*

5C. JOY

JB: There's still more.

JB *takes the third large wrapped gift box and reads the tag:* 'To the world; From God.'

JB *calls a young adult:* [Melissa], will you come and represent 'the world'.

JB AND 'MELISSA' *open the box to find a large puzzle piece with the word 'joy'.*

JB *holds up the shape so that everyone can see and read the word.*

JB: God's third gift at Christmas is . . .

'MELISSA' AND CONGREGATION *read* 'Joy'.

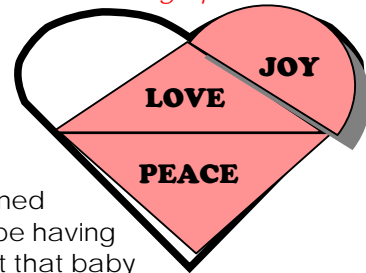
JB: I wonder if there's room in our heart for God's gift of joy.

'MELISSA' and JB *place the puzzle piece inside the heart shape on a flannel graph or other display area.*

JB: It fits fine in this heart.

READER *reads*
Luke 1:46-49:

When Mary learned that she would be having a baby and that that baby was Jesus, she spoke about the gift of joy.



Mary said: 'With all my heart I praise the Lord, and I am full of joy because of God my Saviour.

God cares for me, his humble servant. From now on, all people will say God has blessed me.

God All-Powerful has done great things for me, and his name is holy.'

SONG LEADER *introduces congregational singing of a song with a joy theme. Or a group of children sing, eg: Little Children, can you tell.*

5D. HOPE

JB: There's one more.

JB *takes the fourth large wrapped gift box and reads the tag:* To the world, from God.

JB *calls a child:* [Caleb], will you come and represent 'the world'.

JB AND 'CALEB' *open the box to find a large puzzle piece with the word 'hope'.*

JB *holds up the puzzle piece so that everyone can see and read the word.*

JB: God's fourth gift at Christmas is . . .

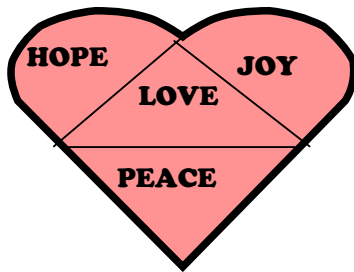
'CALEB' AND CONGREGATION *read 'Hope'.*

'CALEB' and JB *place the puzzle piece inside the heart shape on a flannel graph or other display area.*

JB: It fits fine in this heart.

READER *reads Titus 2: 1,143*

The Apostle Paul wrote in a letter to Titus:



We are filled with hope, as we wait for the glorious return of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. He gave himself to rescue us from everything that is evil and to make our hearts pure. He wanted us to be his own people and to be eager to do right.

SONG LEADER *introduces congregational singing of a song with a 'hope' theme, eg: Mary's Child.*

JB *reviews the gifts by referring to the completed heart puzzle: Love, Peace, Joy, Hope. Those are four amazing gifts of Christmas. They are enough to fill up every person's heart.*

Will you be ready?

JB *exits.*

6. MAKING ROOM/SERMON

A preacher may use this segment as the basis for a short sermon. Alternatively it can be presented as written.

PREACHER: Christmas is generally a happy time, a time for celebration and gifts. But people often feel sadness at Christmas time, too.

There was something really sad about the very first Christmas. Listen as [name] reads the story.

You may show pictures of the Christmas story from Luke as it is read; or even have costumed people form a tableau.

READER *reads Luke 2:1,3*

About that time Emperor Augustus gave orders for the names of all the people to be listed in record books. . . . Everyone had to go to their own home town to be listed.

PREACHER: Homecomings and family reunions can be great fun. But there was no choice here. That's sad. Imagine *everyone* having to pack up and go back to their home town. Some of them probably had to leave farms or businesses. Some of them may have been sick . . . or pregnant.

But there is something even sadder:

READER *reads Luke 2:4-7*

So Joseph had to leave Nazareth in Galilee and go to Bethlehem in Judea. Long ago Bethlehem had been King David's home town, and Joseph went there because he was from David's family.

Mary was engaged to Joseph and travelled with him to Bethlehem. She was soon going to have a baby.

And while they were there, she gave birth to her firstborn son. She dressed him in baby clothes and laid him on a bed of hay, because there was no room for them in the inn.

PREACHER: ' . . . because there was no room in the inn.' I find that incredibly sad.

'There was no room.'

No room for a baby — any baby — is heart-breaking.

'And there was no room' for *this* baby — God's unimaginably great and generous gift to the world — his own Son.

This baby brought with him Love and Joy and Peace and Hope. He came with those gifts for his parents, so they could cope with a newborn child when there was no room for them in the inn.

This baby brought Love, Joy, Peace and Hope to the people who visited him as a baby so that they could tell people about God's gift.

READER *reads Luke 2:16,20*

The shepherds hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and they saw the baby lying on a bed of hay.

As the shepherds returned to their sheep, they were praising God and saying wonderful things about him.

PREACHER: This baby brought those same gifts to people he met as he grew up and became a preacher and healer.

Jesus brings Love, Joy, Peace and Hope to the people who have room for him in their hearts this Christmas.

Are we ready? Do we have room for Jesus' and his gifts?

Indicate the pile of gifts at the front of the church.

I imagine you will somehow find space in your homes for any Christmas gifts you receive.

Maybe you have already been doing some cleaning up at your house to make room for them. Maybe you will have to shift some things around to make room for them.

Maybe you will have to get rid of some old stuff to make room for new gifts.

Consider making the following section more visual by using the same jigsaw heart as used in UNPACKING THE GIFTS activity, filling it up with puzzle pieces representing things mentioned in the following paragraph. If you do so, make sure that the 'fear' piece is the same size and shape as the 'love' piece.

PREACHER: In a way, it's a bit like that with our hearts.

Our hearts may be full of things like: greed, selfishness, pride, hate, fear. They may be so full of these things that there isn't room for Jesus and his gifts.

If our hearts are full like that, this is a good time to get rid of some of this stuff to make room for God's Christmas gifts.

And the amazing thing is that when we are ready to get rid of this old stuff, Jesus will help us make room for him and his gifts. I know that sounds strange, but listen to what the Bible says:

READER reads from 1 John 4:18 (NCV)

Where God's love is, there is no fear, because God's perfect love drives out fear.

If you are using the puzzle image, demonstrate the love puzzle piece forcing out (one Bible version uses 'expelling') the fear-piece in the heart.

Then go on to use the other gifts to shove out the other old/hurtful things filling the heart.

PREACHER: That's how Jesus helps you make room for his gifts.

7 CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

WL: If you'd like to ask Jesus to help you make room for his Christmas gifts, you can join in this prayer.

You may have the words on a screen (or in a handout) for everyone to read aloud with the prayer leader, or people can echo the prayer leader.

PRAYER LEADER: Dear Jesus,
when our hearts are full of greed . . . selfishness . . . pride . . . hate . . . and fear
there is no room for your good gifts.
We are sorry about this and want to change.

We know that you came to earth as a baby;
you lived a perfect life of love, joy, peace,
and hope;
you died on a cross
to take away all the bad things in our hearts.

Please take them away now
so that we will really be ready for Christmas
and your wonderful gifts.
Amen.

MINISTER/WL: Jesus has taken away all your sins, your greed, selfishness, pride, hate, fear. Jesus gives you his good gifts to take their place.

PREACHER: But those old things: greed, selfishness, pride, hate, fear, won't just lie down like puzzle pieces on the floor. They keep trying to come back into our hearts.

There are still going to be times when greed and selfishness will sneak back into our hearts and we do greedy things.

There will still be times when pride and hate sneak back in and we do mean things.

There will be times when fear sneaks back in and we don't trust God's.

When these things happen, we can remember that God loves us, God forgives us, and God gives us his gifts — no matter what.

At this point you may want to give each person a heart-shaped memento that they can keep in their pockets as a reminder of God's love and his Christmas gifts.

8. OFFERING

WL explains the procedure for giving and receiving offerings. Assure guest that members give monetary gifts for the work of the church,

but that guests are not expected/required to participate.

SONG LEADER *introduces a song to be sung while the offering is collected, eg 'God give you joy' Simpson or the old children's song 'Come into my heart'.*

9. PRAYERS

(1) OFFERING PRAYER

PRAYER LEADER: Dear Lord, you are the gift-giver at Christmas and always.

Accept our offerings of money as our thank-you for all the gifts you give us. Use our gifts so that other people can find out about you and about the gifts you offer them. Amen.

2) PRAYERS ABOUT GOD'S GIFTS

*It would be really great if four individuals (different ages) or small groups (eg families or friendship groups) each thought about, wrote, and prayed one **short** prayer.*

Each prayer begins: Lord, I/we want to talk to you about love (or peace, joy, hope) and what it means in our life this Christmas time.

If they wish, the prayers could be read, sung, danced, mimed, or illustrated.

- LOVE
- PEACE
- JOY
- HOPE

SUMMARY PRAYER

PRAYER LEADER: Dear Lord, today we thank you for your special gifts: love, peace, joy, and hope.

Help us to accept your gifts.

Help us to live with these gifts in our heart throughout this whole Christmas season.

Help us share these gifts by the way we treat people — our families, our friends, our neighbours, and others. Amen.

10. ANNOUNCEMENTS

WL: Makes any brief announcements that are necessary and of interest to everyone worshipping — not just members. Include:

- invitation to any after-service fellowship
- invitation to future worship and fellowship opportunities
- explanation of procedures for distribution of any gifts for worshipers

11. BLESSING

WL: God give you his love, his peace, his joy, and his hope this Christmas. Amen.

12. CLOSING SONG/DANCE

Consider closing with the song 'Jesus put this song into our hearts'.

You might use just the first verse; sing it four times, substituting the words peace, joy, hope (for love) in repeats.

If possible, invite everyone to

- *stand,*
- *join hands with the person next to them,*
- *hold their joined hands up*
- *and dance their way out of the church as you sing.*

You will need to have a number of 'aisle-' or 'section-' leaders prepared to lead the dancing/procession.

Alternatively, choose a familiar Christmas or Advent song.

BIBLE PASSAGES

Quotations are from the Contemporary English Version (CEV) unless otherwise noted.

THE GIFT OF PEACE

May the LORD be good to you and give you peace." Numbers 6:26

He said to the people, 'Let's build walls and defense towers for these towns, and put in gates that can be locked with bars. This land still belongs to us, because we have obeyed the LORD our God. He has given us peace from all our enemies.' 2 Chronicles 14:7

Pray that our LORD will make us strong and give us peace. Psalm 29:11

A child has been born for us.
We have been given a son
who will be our ruler.

His names will be
Wonderful Advisor
and Mighty God,
Eternal Father
and Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

Suddenly many other angels came down from heaven and joined in praising God. They said: 'Praise God in heaven! Peace on earth to everyone who pleases God.' Luke 2:13,14

Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms and praised God, "Lord, I am your servant, and now I can die in peace, because you have kept your promise to me. With my own eyes I have seen what you have done to save your people, Luke 2:28-30

Jesus said: I give you peace, the kind of peace that only I can give. It isn't like the peace that this world can give. So don't be worried or afraid. John 14:27

God has done it all! He sent Christ to make peace between himself and us, and he has given us the work of making peace between himself and others. What we mean is that God was in Christ, offering peace and forgiveness to the people of this world. And he has given us the work of sharing his message about peace. Corinthians 5:18,19

I pray that the Lord, who gives peace, will always bless you with peace. May the Lord be with all of you. 2 Thessalonians 3:16

I pray that God will be kind to you and will keep on giving you peace! 1 Peter 1:2

THE GIFT OF JOY

I know the best thing we can do is to always enjoy life, because God's gift to us is the happiness we get from our food and drink and from the work we do. Ecclesiastes 3:12,13

The LORD is our God, and he has given us light! Start the celebration! March with palm branches all the way to the altar. Psalm 118:27

Young women and young men, together with the elderly, will celebrate and dance, because I will comfort them and turn their sorrow into happiness. Jeremiah 31:13

God had made the people very happy, and so on that day [dedication of the city wall] they celebrated and offered many sacrifices. The women and children joined in the festivities, and joyful shouts could be heard far from the city of Jerusalem. Nehemiah 12:43

Mary said: 'With all my heart I praise the Lord, and I am glad because of God my Saviour. Luke 1:46,47

But the angel said [to the shepherds], "Don't be afraid! I have good news for you, which will make everyone happy. Luke 2:10

When you accepted the message, you followed our example and the example of the Lord. You suffered, but the Holy Spirit made you glad. 1 Thessalonians 1:6

I was very glad to learn that some of your children are obeying the truth, as the Father told us to do. 2 John 1:4

THE GIFT OF HOPE

God says: I will bless you with a future filled with hope—a future of success, not of suffering. Jeremiah 29:11

And endurance builds character, which gives us a hope that will never disappoint us. All of this happens because God has given us the Holy Spirit, who fills our hearts with his love. Romans 5:4,5

My prayer is that light will flood your hearts and that you will understand the hope that was given to you when God chose you. Then you will discover the glorious blessings that will be yours together with all of God's people. Ephesians 1:18

All of you are part of the same body. There is only one Spirit of God, just as you were given one hope when you were chosen to be 11 God's people. Ephesians 4:4

God our Father loves us. He is kind and has given us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope. 2 Thessalonians 2:16

Jesus treated us much better than we deserve. He made us acceptable to God and gave us the hope of eternal life. Titus 3:7

We are given a much better hope, and it can bring us close to God. Hebrews 7:19

Praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is so good, and by raising Jesus from death, he has given us new life and a hope that lives on. 1 Peter 1:3

THE GIFT OF LOVE

. . . Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and to return to the Father. He had always loved his followers in this world, and he loved them to the very end. John 13:1

Jesus said: But I am giving you a new command. You must love each other, just as I have loved you. John 13:34

I have loved you, just as my Father has loved me. So remain faithful to my love for you. John 15:9

Now I tell you to love each other, as I have loved you. John 15:12

God has given us the Holy Spirit, who fills our hearts with his love. Romans 5:5

May the Lord make your love for each other and for everyone else grow by leaps and bounds. That's how our love for you has grown. 1 Thessalonians 3:12

God's Spirit doesn't make cowards out of us. The Spirit gives us power, love, and self-control. 2 Timothy 1:7

We know what love is because Jesus gave his life for us. That's why we must give our lives for each other. 1 John 3:16

. . . Love comes from God, and when we love each other, it shows that we have been given new life. We are now God's children, and we know him. God is love . . . God showed his love for us when he sent his only Son into the world to give us life. Real love isn't our love for God, but his love for us. . . If we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is truly in our hearts. 1 John 4:7-12

A real love for others will chase those worries away. The thought of being punished is what makes us afraid. It shows that we have not really learned to love. 1 John 4:18

We love because God loved us first. 1 John 4:19

GOD'S GREATEST CHRISTMAS GIFT

Our God has given us a mighty Savior from the family of David his servant. Luke 1:69

God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die. John 3:16

But the gift that God was kind enough to give was very different from Adam's sin. That one sin brought death to many others. Yet in an even greater way, Jesus Christ alone brought God's gift of kindness to many people. Romans 5:15

Sin pays off with death. But God's gift is eternal life given by Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:23

You were saved by faith in God, who treats us much better than we deserve. This is God's gift to you, and not anything you have done on your own. Ephesians 2:8

Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father who created all the lights in the heavens. He is always the same and never makes dark shadows by changing. He wanted us to be his own special people, and so he sent the true message to give us new birth.

James 1:17,18

Praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is so good, and by raising Jesus from death, he has given us new life and a hope that lives on. 1 Peter 1:3

God has given you new birth by his message that lives on forever. 1 Peter 1:23

We have everything we need to live a life that pleases God. It was all given to us by God's own power, when we learned that he had invited us to share in his wonderful goodness. 2 Peter 1:3

God doesn't take back the gifts he has given or forget about the people he has chosen. Romans 11:29

SONGS

The following are suggestions of songs that could be used in the worship service. Choose from these or others in your regular music source/s. If people from different ethnic backgrounds worship with you, ask them to provide suggestions from their tradition.

Just one source is listed for each song, but many can be found in various resources.

100 Favourite Christmas Carols (FC)

All Together (AT)

All Together Again (ATA)

All Together Everybody (ATE)

All Together OK (ATOK)

The Australian Worship Collection (AWC)

The Australian Worship Collection, book 2 (AWC2)

JOY

I have heard of your fame,

Reuben Morgan (AWC #30)

Joy to the world, Isaac Watts (FC #44)

Little children, can you tell, unknown (FC #47)

The trees of the field (Psalm 55)

Stuart Dauerman (ATA #196)

While my sheep (Echo Carol),

Theodore Baker (FC #92)

HOPE

Born in the night, Geoffrey Ainger

(FC #14)

Mary's child, Geoffrey Ainger (#141)

There is hope beyond, Geoff Bullock (AWC2 #78)

PEACE

Deep peace, Robin Mann (ATOK #400)

No longer strangers, John Vivisaaker (ATA #144)

Peace, Annette Fechner (ATOK 406)

Peace be with you, Annette Fechner (ATOK #410)

Shelter, Geoff Bullock (ATOK #368)

Shalom (Peace), traditional (ATA #195)

LOVE

He can make a way where there isn't a way, C&R Fragar (AWC #17)

Jesus, fill me with your love,

Geoff Bullock (AWC #56)

Lord, I come to you, Geoff Bullock

(AWC #68)

Love came down at Christmas,

Christina Rosetti (FC #53)

You gave me love, Reuben Morgan (AWC2 #96)

Your love keeps following me,

Russell Fragar (ATOK #352)

Your love is higher than the mountains, Geoff

Bullock (AWC #140)

COMBINED (two or more gifts)

A Child of God, Annette Fechner

(ATOK 398)

God give you joy, Grace Simpson

(ATE #294)

Hark the herald angels sing,

Charles Wesley (FC #34)

I've got peace like a river, traditional (AT #70) Create verses for the other gifts.

Jesus put this song into our hearts,

Graham Kendrick (ATE #258)

Create your own versions of verse 1 for the other gifts.

Jesus, what a beautiful name,

Tanya Riches (AWC #60)

May the Lord bless you today,

Sharny Russell-Schlencker (ATOK 408)

O little town of Bethlehem, Philips Brooks

Pass my love around, David Yantis

(AT #93)

This love, this hope, Geoff Bullock

(AWC #110)

ESPECIALLY FOR LITTLE CHILDREN

Give me joy in my heart, keep me singing

. . . Sung to the tune of the verse of *Give me oil in my lamp* (AT #85) Create your own verses for all four gifts.

God gives, Rod Boucher (ATA #109)

This song can set the scene for all God's gift-giving.

If making up your own verses, you could use: God gives hope to us . . . , God gives joy to us . . .

Little children, can you tell (author unknown)

www.cyberhymnal.org

Choose appropriate verses.

Love, Love, Love! Lois & Herbert Brokering (I'm

God's Child #12)

Create your own verses for the other gifts.

Put on love, Mary Lou Walker

(ATOK 390) Create verses for the other gifts

HEART PATTERN

Use the pattern for the service.

You may also use it to make a light catcher or Christmas tree decoration by printing it on clear (or coloured) plastic. Punch a hole and add a ribbon loop. These can be given as gifts to all who worship with you.

