

Opening retreat for Advent 2004

Suggestions for use and occasion:

- to introduce the 2004 scriptures and theme
- to be used as preservice preparation on the first Sunday of Advent
- to be used prior to the season for worship leaders, small groups or the whole congregation

Visual suggestion: A sunset

One long piece of gold, orange or yellow with a single point of attachment high on a wall or ceiling. A central location is preferred as it allows for gathering on all sides. The piece “pools” in an expanding spiral of fabric on the floor. Added to this floor spiral are additional colors of sheer orange, red and fuchsia. The fabric spiral installation is then littered with candles of similar color on stands of varying heights. A Christ candle, the tallest white pillar, is featured prominently.

Preset

Visual installation “sunset”. Tea light candles in a basket to be taken as people enter. Scripture scripts and music as needed.

Gathering music

Suggestions, pick up tea lights as they enter

Candle lighting

“We gather today as people of ever-changing light. In this season the shadows are lengthened and the light is lowered. Come, let us preserve for ourselves a portion of the sunset.”

(retreatants light tea lights from the sunset installation, holding them lit in the palm of their hand)

Call to retreat

“Advent scriptures offer low light and long shadow. They give us a long look at ourselves and our world. From the four corners of the world may hope be proclaimed.”

Scripture

Either the congregation is divided in quadrants and equipped with the scripture arrangement or four readers proclaim from four corners of the worship space. Texts: Revelation 1:4b-8, Ephesians 1:15-23, Jeremiah 23:5-8, Colossians 1:11-20 (see below)

Changing the light

As people of Advent we know this is a “time between.” When you are ready to ponder endings, transitions, closure, completion then let go of your piece of sunset. May the change in light remind us that this is a time of waiting in between. (All tea lights and the sunset lights are extinguished. The Christ candle remains burning. Vocal, violin or flutist may play “Our darkness is never darkness” or other appropriate song of contemplation and waiting)

Zechariah’s blessing (Luke 1: 68, 76-79)

During this reading, the leader removes the Christ candle from its stand and processes it throughout the gathered people.

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. And you, God’s children, will be called prophets of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Procession of light

Tea lights are relit from the Christ candle and the light is passed from person to person. Sending from *Leader* magazine page 37.

Reading of Light from four corners

Excerpted from Revelation 1:4b-8, Ephesians 1:15-23, Jeremiah 23:5-8, Colossians 1:11-20

Revelation: Grace to you and peace from him who is and was and who is to come. To him be glory and dominion forever and ever.

All: Amen.

Ephesians: I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know the hope to which you’ve been called.

Revelation: Grace and peace to you from him who is to come.

Jeremiah: The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

Ephesians: God has seated him far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, far above every name that is named, not only in this age but in the age to come.

Revelation: To him be glory and dominion forever and ever.

All: Amen.

Revelation: Look! He is coming with the clouds! Every eye will see him and all the tribes of earth will wail.

Jeremiah: Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety.

Colossians: May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to God who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints of light.

Colossians: For in him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him all things on earth and in heaven have been brought to peace.

Revelation: “I am the Alpha and Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

All: Grace to you and peace from him who is and was and who is to come. To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.