



Worship Resources

Unwrapping the

Gifts

Suggestions for Advent Midweek, 2020

*The practice of holding additional evening services on Wednesdays in Advent and Lent comes out of the Ember Days. One Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday were set aside in each quarter of the year for a penitential and catechetical focus.¹ While two quarters have fallen from use, the days were expanded to the entire season of Advent and Lent. LCMS Worship offers the following suggestions for catechetical services **based on Holy Baptism**—appropriate for our Synod’s triennial mission emphasis, “Making Disciples for Life.” The good work begun in Holy Baptism and continued in daily, lifelong remembrance will be brought to completion at the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless His Word and our teaching of it, that it may bear much fruit and that fruit abide to the end.*

Services:

The following propers have been selected for use with Vespers. If Evening Prayer is used, the first hymn may be omitted. If the service of Prayer and Preaching is used, the portion of the catechism on Holy Baptism may be recited. The hymn, “All Christians Who Have Been Baptized” (LSB 596) has been intentionally repeated as the Office Hymn each week that it may be better learned. The other hymns connect to the season of Advent. Collects may be taken from the previous Sunday.

¹ See “The Treasury of Daily Prayer,” p. 21 for more information (CPH link). A simplified Latin mnemonic for remembering the Ember Weeks is, “*Lente, Pente, Luci, Cruci*”—the full weeks of Lent 1, Pentecost, St. Lucy Day (Advent) and Holy Cross Day.

December 2

Opening: 332 Savior of the Nations, Come
Psalm 121

Office: 596 All Christians Who Have Been Baptized

Reading: Matthew 28:16–20

Catechesis: Sacrament of Baptism, First Part

Closing: 350 Come, Thou Precious Ransom, Come!

December 9

Opening: 344 On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry
Psalm 25

Office: 596 All Christians Who Have Been Baptized

Reading: Acts 2:36–39

Catechesis: Sacrament of Baptism, Second Part

Closing: 346 When All the World Was Cursed

December 16

Opening: 351 Creator of the Stars of Night
Psalm 32

Office: 596 All Christians Who Have Been Baptized

Reading: Titus 3:1–8

Catechesis: Sacrament of Baptism, Third Part

Closing: 355 O Savior, Rend the Heavens Wide

December 23

Opening: 334 O Lord, How Shall I Meet You
Psalm 71

Office: 596 All Christians Who Have Been Baptized

Reading: Romans 6:1–11

Catechesis: Sacrament of Baptism, Fourth Part

Closing: 357 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Suggestions for Preaching

December 2

- The Word of God that (Who!) created us reaches out to rescue (*LSB* 332). He who holds the authority of heaven and earth, who redeemed us by His blood, now reaches out to claim us again as His own and return us to Himself.
- Holy Baptism is the Lord's command and Word in and with the water (Small Catechism), delivering Christ (with the entire Trinity) to us by His Name (Matthew 28).
- Baptism is not simply a first step or a Christian duty; it is God's action to bring us into Christ and His Church — into a lifelong status as His disciple (i.e., hearer, learner, and student of His Word). Thus, our life as a baptized Christian is learning to observe all that He entrusted to His disciples (Matthew 28), to prize the Gospel in faith and grow in love for all of life.
- Psalm 121 is used in the baptismal rite, acknowledging that through Holy Baptism the Lord blesses this “coming in” and promises to be with us even to our “going out,” i.e., our entire life, and then forevermore (v.8).
- A Christian remembers and delights in his Baptism and prizes the Triune Name of Christ given to them there (*LSB* 596:1).

December 9

- Psalm 25 confesses confidence in the Lord's faithfulness (vv. 1–3), imploring Him to remember us according to mercy and not our sins (vv. 6–7), to guard us and not let us be put to shame (vv. 16–20), to teach us and lead us (vv. 4, 8–9), until at last we are redeemed from all troubles (v. 22).
- This is why we remember and treasure Holy Baptism. It is the Lord's means of delivering His salvation to us, rescuing us from sin, death, and the devil, and bestowing eternal life (Small Catechism; *LSB* 596:2–4)
- Peter proclaims Holy Baptism as the answer for sinners who are cut to the heart and lost in their sin (Acts 2). Baptism is God's promise, His work for us.
- He gives Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. It gives the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is “for us

and our children,” that is, disciples of all ages and generations.

- While John's Baptism is not the same in every way as Christian Baptism, it was “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” In Jesus' gift of Holy Baptism, we receive the Holy Spirit and with Him every blessing of Christ (Opening & Closing Hymns), whom John proclaimed.
- Note: Treating repentance on this day overlaps with the fourth Wednesday, “what Baptism indicates.” If repentance is treated in depth here (with the Gospel reading), part 4 may focus more on the life of good works, which certainly does not exclude daily repentance.

December 16

- Note: Titus 3:4–7 is also assigned to Christmas Dawn and Christmas Day in *LSB*, in connection with the “appearing” (v. 4) of Christ our Savior. It is suggested that this text be treated in greater depth here, connecting Christ's advent to accomplish our salvation with His delivery of that salvation in Holy Baptism.
- Stanza 4 of *LSB* 596 may be highlighted in connection with the reading that the blood of Christ has justified us by grace. This work of Christ lies behind Holy Baptism and is its power, as Titus 3 says.
- The Lord's advent comes to deliver us from foolish, disobedient, straying life (v. 3) and to heal, cure, and save it (*LSB* 351:2–3). It is the powerful Word of God that (Who!) breaks through sin and death to pour out His grace and awaken new life in us by the Holy Spirit (*LSB* 355).
- Psalm 32 rejoices in the Lord's forgiveness and follows the pattern of Titus 3: It delights in “the goodness and lovingkindness of God” which leads to the good works Paul insists on for Timothy's ministry.

December 23

- The fourth part of Baptism indicates that Baptism is a lifelong gift even though it only is administered once. It indicates a daily drowning in repentance and a daily rising in faith and life (Small Catechism).

- *LSB* 334 (reprinted from Advent 1) recounts the Lord's salvation and wishes to keep it close to our hearts until the last day; the remembrance of Baptism does the same.
- Psalm 71 emphasizes the Lord's care from womb to old age. Holy Baptism's daily and ongoing significance is the reason for the church's desire to nurture and sustain disciples "for life."
- Romans 6:1–11 is an annual text in the lectionaries (Trinity 6, Baptism of our Lord). Here it may be considered in a few ways: How Baptism joins us to Christ's death and resurrection (joining us to His saving work); how Baptism indicates the daily crucifying of the flesh and rising to new life, dead to sin but alive to God in Christ; how Baptism leads us to confident hope of being united with Christ in a resurrection like His at the last day.
- The final two stanzas of *LSB* 596 treat Baptism's ongoing significance: a promise to uplift us in every sorrow, overcoming the fear of death (st. 5) and the daily indication that we have been newly created in Christ, useful to our neighbors in good works while alive in this body (st. 6).
- The final hymn (*LSB* 357) is chosen because of the tradition of the "O" Antiphons, used with the Magnificat at Vespers on the last seven days before Christmas Eve. The first stanza corresponds with December 23, "O Emmanuel."
- See the page opposite *LSB* 357 for the "O" Antiphons. They may be sung before and after the Magnificat in Vespers or Evening Prayer. For Vespers, consider *LSB* Tone B (replaces "Let my prayer be set before you" in the service); for Evening Prayer, Tone C.