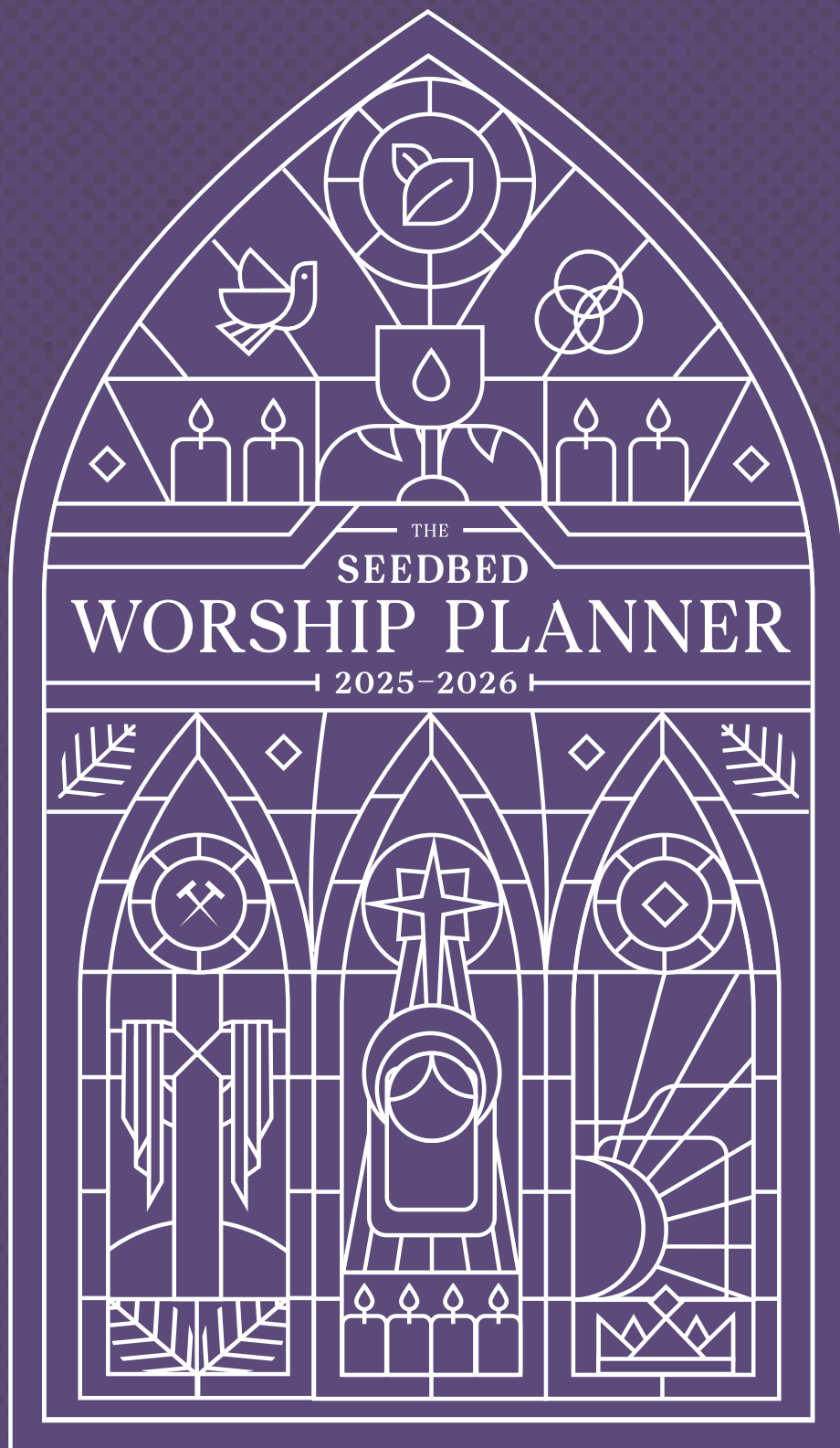




THE
SEEDBED
WORSHIP PLANNER
2025–2026



THE
SEEDBED
WORSHIP PLANNER
2025–2026



Sterling M. Allen

This book is dedicated to the glory of God
and in heartfelt gratitude to my beloved family—Jennifer, Hannah Grace, Mom, and Dad—
whose unwavering grace and understanding sustain me through the time-consuming
demands of writing, traveling, and speaking throughout the year.

This book is also dedicated to the Rev. Dr. Will K. Andress,
who taught me to love liturgy and hymnody as expressions of faith to God.

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CONTENTS

Preface	ix
ADVENT: AN INTRODUCTION	2
First Sunday of Advent November 30, 2025	4
Second Sunday of Advent December 7, 2025	8
Third Sunday of Advent December 14, 2025	12
Fourth Sunday of Advent December 21, 2025	16
Christmas Eve December 24, 2025	20
First Sunday After Christmas December 28, 2025	24
EPIPHANY: A SEASON OF REVELATION AND RENEWAL IN WORSHIP	28
Epiphany Sunday January 4, 2026	30
Baptism of the Lord January 11, 2026	34
Second Sunday After Epiphany January 18, 2026	38
Third Sunday After Epiphany January 25, 2026	42
Fourth Sunday After Epiphany February 1, 2026	46
Fifth Sunday After Epiphany February 8, 2026	50
Transfiguration Sunday February 15, 2026	54
ASH WEDNESDAY, LENT, HOLY WEEK, AND EASTER: A JOURNEY OF REPENTANCE, CONFESSION, AND RESURRECTION	58
Ash Wednesday February 18, 2026	60
First Sunday of Lent February 22, 2026	64
Second Sunday of Lent March 1, 2026	68
Third Sunday of Lent March 8, 2026	72
Fourth Sunday of Lent March 15, 2026	76
Fifth Sunday of Lent March 22, 2026	80

Palm Sunday March 29, 2026	84
Maundy Thursday April 2, 2026	86
Maundy Thursday Seder Dinner	90
Good Friday April 3, 2026	94
Easter Sunday April 5, 2026	104
Second Sunday of Easter April 12, 2026	108
Third Sunday of Easter April 19, 2026	112
Fourth Sunday of Easter April 26, 2026	116
Fifth Sunday of Easter May 3, 2026	120
Sixth Sunday of Easter May 10, 2026	124
ASCENSION SUNDAY, PENTECOST, TRINITY SUNDAY, AND THE PROLONGED SEASON OF PENTECOST	128
Ascension Sunday May 17, 2026	130
Pentecost Sunday May 24, 2026	134
Trinity Sunday May 31, 2026	138
Second Sunday After Pentecost June 7, 2026	142
Third Sunday After Pentecost June 14, 2026	146
Fourth Sunday After Pentecost June 21, 2026	150
Fifth Sunday After Pentecost June 28, 2026	154
Sixth Sunday After Pentecost July 5, 2026	158
Seventh Sunday After Pentecost July 12, 2026	162
Eighth Sunday After Pentecost July 19, 2026	166
Ninth Sunday After Pentecost July 26, 2026	170
Tenth Sunday After Pentecost August 2, 2026	174
Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost August 9, 2026	178
Twelfth Sunday After Pentecost August 16, 2026	182
Thirteenth Sunday After Pentecost August 23, 2026	186

Fourteenth Sunday After Pentecost August 30, 2026	190
Fifteenth Sunday After Pentecost September 6, 2026	194
Sixteenth Sunday After Pentecost September 13, 2026	198
Seventeenth Sunday After Pentecost September 20, 2026	202
Eighteenth Sunday After Pentecost September 27, 2026	206
Nineteenth Sunday After Pentecost October 4, 2026	210
Twentieth Sunday After Pentecost October 11, 2026	214
Twenty-First Sunday After Pentecost October 18, 2026	218
Twenty-Second Sunday After Pentecost October 25, 2026	222
ALL SAINTS' SUNDAY	226
All Saints' Day November 1, 2026	228
Twenty-Fourth Sunday After Pentecost November 8, 2026	232
Twenty-Fifth Sunday After Pentecost November 15, 2026	236
CHRIST THE KING	240
Christ the King Sunday November 22, 2026	242
The Great Thanksgiving	246
Sacrament of Holy Baptism	250
Scripture Index	252

PREFACE

It is with great joy and a deep sense of purpose that I present this worship planning guidebook to the Wesleyan and Methodist communities of faith. This guide is more than a collection of resources—it's an invitation to encounter the real presence of God in worship that is deeply rooted in the gospel, vibrant, and theologically rich. My hope is that these pages will spark your imagination, strengthen your faith, and equip you to lead worship that glorifies God and transforms lives through scriptural holiness.

John Wesley, a guiding light for our tradition, famously declared, “The best of all is, God is with us.”¹ For Wesley, worship was not simply a gathering of people; it was a sacred meeting where heaven and earth converge. Worship is a moment when God's presence becomes tangible, when we are reminded of His nearness and power. In this spirit, Wesley called for worship that was heartfelt, engaging, and life-changing. For Wesley and the primitive Methodists, worship is an act that entangles both the individual worshipper and the gathered community of believers with the Holy Spirit. Each Sunday should remind worshippers of the anticipation of Advent, the joy of the resurrection on Easter, and the powerful experience of Pentecost and its profound impact on the kingdom. This guide seeks to carry that legacy forward, helping worship leaders craft services that reflect the majesty of God and the urgency of the gospel.

Worship, as Wesley taught, is far more than a weekly routine. It is a way of life—a continual offering of ourselves to God. His words, “Let your soul be filled with so entire a love to Him that you may love nothing but for His sake,” captures the essence of worship as both an event and a daily practice.² This guide invites you into that rhythm, where every element of worship connects our everyday lives with the eternal purposes of God.

The underlying structure of this guide is grounded in the fourfold pattern of worship: Entrance, Word, Table/Response, and Dismissal. This sacred biblical rhythm reflects the gospel's movement: we gather in joy, hear the Word proclaimed, respond with gratitude and sacrament, and are sent out as Christ's disciples to assist in transforming the world into God's kingdom. This framework shapes our worship and forms us as people of grace, mission, and hope.

In honoring the liturgical calendar, this guide also helps root us in the grand narrative of salvation. From Advent's anticipation to Easter's triumph, from Pentecost's empowering fire to the remembrance of saints, the liturgical year invites us to live in rhythm with God's story. Each season provides a unique opportunity to immerse ourselves in the life of Christ and deepen our discipleship as individuals and communities.

Central to this guide is the use of the Revised Common Lectionary (Year A), which provides a balanced diet of Scripture across the year. This tool ensures that congregations engage with

1. John Wesley, quoted in *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 430.

2. John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (London: Epworth Press, 1952), 109.

the breadth of God's Word while allowing flexibility for local contexts. As we plan worship shaped by Scripture, we join in shaping hearts and minds for faithful living. A. W. Tozer reminds us, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."³ Preaching and worship, informed by the lectionary, call us to encounter God and respond faithfully.

As the author of this worship planner, I have made some decisions as pertains to when liturgical feast days are celebrated (i.e., Epiphany) and what particular Scripture passages to include. For a full understanding of the lectionary and its many options, please consult Vanderbilt Divinity Library's website for the full Revised Common Lectionary. One editorial item to note: On rare occasions, due to space limitations, we have truncated printed Scripture passages using an ellipsis in lieu of the full text. All Scripture titles are complete; it is just in the printing of the text where reductions were made.

Worship is inherently participatory. It is not something done *for* us but something we do *with* God and each other. As the late Dr. Robert E. Webber, one of my favorite worship theologians of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, wrote, "Worship is a verb."⁴ This guide offers practical tools and theological insights to help you craft worship that invites active engagement, drawing your congregation into a deeper experience of God's presence.

The sacraments hold a central place in our Wesleyan worship tradition. For John Wesley, Baptism and Holy Communion were "means of grace," outward signs of God's divine agency in our lives. Baptism celebrates our entrance into the covenant community, while Communion nourishes us in our faith and strengthens our unity in Christ. As the Global Methodist Church continues its work to approve official liturgies, this guide includes suggested liturgies for Holy Communion and Baptism to serve congregations in this interim period. These resources are rooted in Wesleyan theology and designed to draw worshippers into the mystery and grace of God's work.

Music is another vital element of worship. Drawing from the rich heritage of Charles Wesley's hymns, alongside contemporary and choral selections, this guide offers a variety of musical resources to complement your worship planning. Charles Wesley's hymns, often called "theology set to music," continue to inspire and unite believers in heartfelt praise and prayer. Selections from Seedbed's hymnals, *Our Great Redeemer's Praise* and *O For a Heart to Praise My God*, are included to enrich your services with expressions of both tradition and innovation. For those using previous denominational hymnals or non-denominational hymnals like *The Celebration Hymnal*, you can easily find most of the hymns included from *Our Great Redeemer's Praise* using the First Line Index in those hymnals of antiquity.

Dr. Constance Cherry, a worship theologian reminds us, "Worship is a grand drama in which God is the central actor, and we, as worshippers, are participants, not spectators."⁵ Every element of worship, from the call to worship to the benediction, offers an opportunity

3. A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1961), 1.

4. Robert Webber, *Worship Is a Verb* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 1.

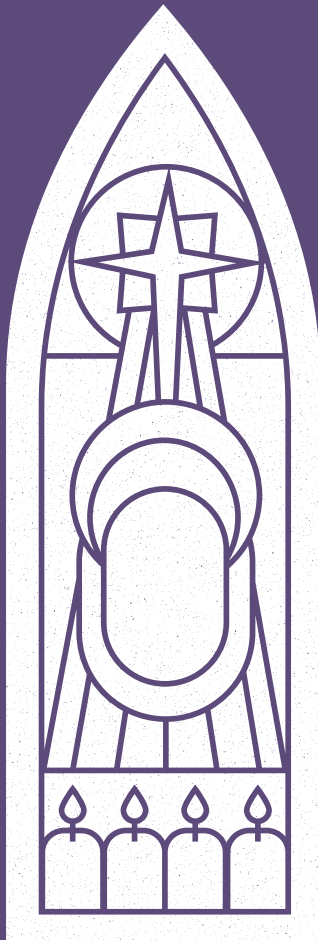
5. Constance Cherry, *The Worship Architect* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 43.

to proclaim Christ's love and magnify God's glory. Planning worship is a sacred task—a partnership with the Spirit in creating space for transformation and renewal. Worship planning is not to be done on your own but instead through prayer and reflection, allowing the Holy Spirit and resources like this planning guide to prepare God-honoring worship that will be both invitational and life-changing.

As you lead your congregation, may this guide inspire and equip you to embrace worship planning as a ministry of grace and creativity. Imagine your community gathered in holy expectancy, their hearts lifted in praise, their lives touched by the Word and Sacrament, and their beautiful feet ready to run and share the gospel message. Let this vision fuel your work, and may your efforts bear fruit in lives that are renewed and grounded in the love of Christ.

Grace and peace to you as you lead and serve in the name of Jesus Christ, our King and Savior.

The Rev. Dr. Sterling M. Allen, editor
Seedbed Publishing
Soli Deo Gloria



Advent: An Introduction

Advent, a term derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning “coming” or “arrival,” marks a deeply significant season in the Christian calendar. Spanning the four weeks leading up to Christmas, it is a time of preparation and anticipation, inviting believers to reflect on the dual meaning of Christ’s coming: His humble birth in Bethlehem and His promised return as the eternal King and righteous Judge.

At its heart, Advent is a season of hope. The lighting of each candle on the Advent wreath symbolizes drawing nearer to the light of Christ, breaking into the darkness of the world. The circular wreath of evergreen reminds us of God’s unending love and the eternal life offered through Jesus. Each candle represents a key theme—hope, peace, joy, and love—serving as weekly reminders of the transformative power of God’s promises.

The spirit of Advent aligns closely with the teachings and hymns of John and Charles Wesley, who emphasized heartfelt devotion and practical holiness. Charles Wesley’s hymn “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” captures the yearning and anticipation of this sacred season, expressing both the hope of Christ’s first coming and the longing for His return. For the Wesleys, worship wasn’t just an act of celebration; it was a means of grace—a way to encounter God’s presence and be transformed by it. Their influence reminds us that Advent is not simply about looking back or waiting passively; it is a season of active preparation, personal renewal, and missional living.

Worship is central to Advent, guiding believers on a spiritual journey through the season. Through corporate worship, Christians gather to fix their hearts and minds on the profound truths of the season: that Christ came to save us and will come again. Worship offers time to meditate on Scripture, sing hymns of expectation and joy, and partake in the Eucharist. It creates a sacred space that shifts focus away from the distractions of the world and toward the anticipation of Christ's coming. In these moments, waiting becomes an active, faith-filled practice, deepening the believer's connection to God and fostering unity with others through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Advent is also a season of reflection and repentance. Just as John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus by calling people to repentance, Advent invites believers to reset their hearts and minds. This season encourages an inner renewal, reminding us of our need for God's grace and calling us to realign our lives with His purposes. Worship during Advent provides an atmosphere of reverence and humility, helping believers encounter God in transformative ways. From Isaiah's prophecies to Mary's *Magnificat*, the Scriptures immerse us in God's unfolding story of salvation, inspiring awe, community, and a renewed sense of purpose.

The Wesleys' emphasis on both personal holiness and social action resonates deeply during Advent. John Wesley's teaching on grace and sanctification calls believers to embody Christ's love through tangible acts of service, reflecting the hope,

peace, joy, and love of the season. Just as Wesleyan theology emphasizes a faith that works through love, Advent challenges Christians to extend God's grace into the world through acts of charity, justice, and compassion. Worship serves as both a reminder and a call to action, urging believers to live out the transformative truths of the gospel.

Advent ultimately leads to the celebration of Christmas—often marked by candlelight services on Christmas Eve—when God's promise is fulfilled in the birth of Jesus. Even as this moment is one of great joy, Advent keeps hearts anchored to the ongoing hope of Christ's second coming. This dual focus gives the season its profound depth, blending joy with reflection and expectation with fulfillment.

Advent is meant to be a journey—a sacred pause in the rhythm of life that draws believers closer to the mystery of God's love and redemption. Worship is the foundation of this journey, providing structure and focus that keep hearts aligned with the true meaning of the season. As Charles Wesley so beautifully expressed, "Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king," Advent becomes a time to renew our faith in the King who came to save and will come again to reign. Through worship, believers not only celebrate the miracle of Jesus's birth but also prepare themselves for His glorious return. Advent becomes more than a date on the calendar; it becomes a season of transformation, inviting all to hope, prepare, and rejoice in the presence of Emmanuel—God with us.



First Sunday of Advent

11.30.25

COLOR: PURPLE
OR BLUE

SCRIPTURE READINGS

- Isaiah 2:1–5
- Psalm 122
- Romans 13:11–14
- Matthew 24:36–44

ISAIAH 2:1-5

This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw
concerning Judah and Jerusalem:
In the last days

the mountain of the LORD's temple
will be established
as the highest of the mountains;
it will be exalted above the hills,
and all nations will stream to it.

Many peoples will come and say,

“Come, let us go up to the
mountain of the LORD,
to the temple of the God of Jacob.
He will teach us his ways,
so that we may walk in his paths.”
The law will go out from Zion,
the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
He will judge between the nations

and will settle disputes for many peoples.
They will beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not take up sword
against nation,
nor will they train for war anymore.

Come, descendants of Jacob,
let us walk in the light of the LORD.

PSALM 122

I rejoiced with those who said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the LORD.”
Our feet are standing
in your gates, Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is built like a city
that is closely compacted together.
That is where the tribes go up—
the tribes of the LORD—
to praise the name of the LORD
according to the statute given to Israel.
There stand the thrones for judgment,
the thrones of the house of David.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
“May those who love you be secure.
May there be peace within your walls
and security within your citadels.”
For the sake of my family and friends,
I will say, “Peace be within you.”
For the sake of the house of the
LORD our God,
I will seek your prosperity.

ROMANS 13:11-14

And do this, understanding the present
time: The hour has already come for you to
wake up from your slumber, because our
salvation is nearer now than when we first
believed. The night is nearly over; the day
is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds

of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

MATTHEW 24:36-44

But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

“Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

TRADITIONAL HYMNS

OUR GREAT REDEEMER’S PRAISE

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” – 162

“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” – 163

“Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence” – 169

O FOR A HEART TO PRAISE MY GOD

“Celebrate Immanuel’s Name” – 33

CONTEMPORARY SONGS

“Build My Life” by Pat Barrett

“Living Hope” by Phil Wickham

“Way Maker” by Sinach

CHORAL ANTHEMS

“E’en So, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come” by Paul Manz (GIA Publications)

“People, Look East” arr. Malcolm Archer (MorningStar Music)

“Advent Cry” by Joseph Martin (Shawnee Press)

“I Was Glad” by C. H. H. Parry (Jubilate Music Group)

SERMON TITLES AND SUMMARIES

“The Mountain of the Lord” – Explore the vision of peace and unity in Isaiah 2, calling the congregation to hope in God’s future restoration.

“Walking in the Light” – A reflection on Romans 13 and the urgency of living faithfully as Christ’s return draws near.

“Ready or Not, Here He Comes” – Matthew 24 challenges us to stay spiritually alert in anticipation of Christ’s return.

CALL TO WORSHIP

LEADER: Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, where God's peace reigns and His truth is taught.

PEOPLE: We come to learn His ways and walk in His paths.

LEADER: The time is near to awaken from sleep; salvation is closer than when we first believed.

PEOPLE: Let us put on the armor of light and walk in the Lord's peace.

LEADER: Come, let us worship the one who calls us to live as children of the day.

ALL: We come to worship and walk in the light of Christ!

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of light and truth, we confess that we have walked in darkness. We have turned away from Your ways and sought our own paths. Forgive our complacency and lack of urgency in following You. Renew our hope in Your eternal promises and guide our steps to walk in Your radiant light, so that we may live an illuminated life with Christ. We pray this in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

LITURGY: WEEK I—HOPE

LEADER: Today we light the first candle of Advent, the candle of Hope. In the midst of uncertainty, we hold fast to the promise that our hope is in the Lord.

SCRIPTURE READING: "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." (Isa. 9:2)

LEADER: As we light this candle, we remember that Jesus is the hope of the world.

PEOPLE: May this flame remind us to place our trust in the promises of God, who is faithful to redeem and restore.

LEADER: Let us pray. Lord of hope, as we begin this Advent season, kindle in us a remarkable hope. Help us to trust in Your promises and share the light of Your hope with those around us.

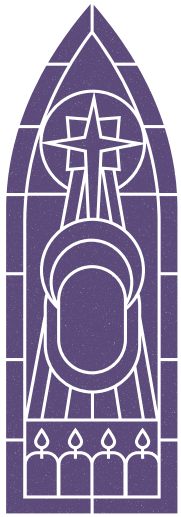
PEOPLE: Amen.

LEADER: We light the first candle for hope.
(Light one purple candle.)

LEADER: Come, Lord Jesus, our hope.

PEOPLE: Shine in our hearts and in our world!

Sing the refrain of "Jesus, the Light of the World" from O for a Heart to Praise My God No. 35 twice.



Second Sunday of Advent

12.07.25

COLOR: PURPLE
OR BLUE

SCRIPTURE READINGS

- Isaiah 11:1–10
- Psalm 72:1–7, 18–19
- Romans 15:4–13
- Matthew 3:1–12

ISAIAH 11:1–10

A shoot will come up from the
stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of might,
the Spirit of the knowledge and
fear of the LORD—
and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

He will not judge by what he
sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;
but with righteousness he will
judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions
for the poor of the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod
of his mouth;

with the breath of his lips he
will slay the wicked.
Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and
the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.
The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
The infant will play near the cobra's den,
and the young child will put its hand
into the viper's nest.
They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be filled with the
knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as
a banner for the peoples; the nations will
rally to him, and his resting place will be
glorious.

PSALM 72:1–7, 18–19

Endow the king with your justice, O God,
the royal son with your righteousness.
May he judge your people in righteousness,
your afflicted ones with justice.

May the mountains bring
prosperity to the people,
the hills the fruit of righteousness.
May he defend the afflicted
among the people
and save the children of the needy;
may he crush the oppressor.
May he endure as long as the sun,
as long as the moon,
through all generations.

May he be like rain falling on a mown field,
like showers watering the earth.
In his days may the righteous flourish
and prosperity abound till the moon
is no more. . . .

Praise be to the LORD God,
the God of Israel,
who alone does marvelous deeds.
Praise be to his glorious name forever;
may the whole earth be filled with his glory.
Amen and Amen.

ROMANS 15:4-13

For everything that was written in the past
was written to teach us, so that through
the endurance taught in the Scriptures and
the encouragement they provide we might
have hope.

May the God who gives endurance and
encouragement give you the same attitude
of mind toward each other that Christ
Jesus had, so that with one mind and one
voice you may glorify the God and Father of
our Lord Jesus Christ.

Accept one another, then, just as Christ
accepted you, in order to bring praise to
God. For I tell you that Christ has become
a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's
truth, so that the promises made to the
patriarchs might be confirmed and,
moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify
God for his mercy. As it is written:

"Therefore I will praise you among
the Gentiles;
I will sing the praises of your name."

Again, it says,

"Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people."

And again,

"Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles;
let all the peoples extol him."

And again, Isaiah says,

"The Root of Jesse will spring up,
one who will arise to rule over the nations;
in him the Gentiles will hope."

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and
peace as you trust in him, so that you may
overflow with hope by the power of the
Holy Spirit.

MATTHEW 3:1-12

In those days John the Baptist came,
preaching in the wilderness of Judea and
saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven
has come near." This is he who was spoken
of through the prophet Isaiah:

"A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.'"

John's clothes were made of camel's hair,
and he had a leather belt around his waist.
His food was locusts and wild honey.
People went out to him from Jerusalem
and all Judea and the whole region of the
Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were
baptized by him in the Jordan River.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees
and Sadducees coming to where he was
baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of
vipers! Who warned you to flee from the
coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping
with repentance. And do not think you can
say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our
father.' I tell you that out of these stones



THE SEEDBED WORSHIP PLANNER

2025–2026

The Seedbed Worship Planner 2025–2026 is a vital resource for pastors and worship leaders seeking to shape worship that draws people into the transformative story of Christ. More than a calendar or guide, it is a formational tool that fosters participation in the rhythms of the Christian year, rooting the church's life in the narrative of God's redeeming work through Scripture, song, sermon, and other liturgical acts. Dr. Allen has done important and thoughtful work in crafting this resource, weaving together theological insight and practical guidance to support church leaders in the weekly work of worship planning.

Dr. Jonathan Powers | *Associate Professor of Worship*
Asbury Theological Seminary

As I travel throughout our connection, I note that the single most requested resource is a guide to worship. Our churches and pastors hunger for creative and dependable worship resources that help them make the most of corporate worship. With this guide, they will find so much more than they hope for. This is a gift to the church. Thanks be to God!

Bishop Carolyn Moore | *Global Methodist Church*

Dr. Sterling Allen has assembled significant resources for local church worship in this planner. Following an adapted lectionary, it will give worship leaders significant options for Spirit-filled, passionate Wesleyan worship.

Bishop Scott J. Jones | *Global Methodist Church*
Pastor-Theologian in Residence | *Wesley House of Studies* | *Truett Theological Seminary*

As I spend time with pastors and laity across our church, I experience a deep desire among God's people to worship passionately. As one who pastored local churches, I understand the need for relevant tools from a biblical and Wesleyan foundation to support that desire. *The Seedbed Worship Planner* is the answer to that need. Dr. Sterling Allen has offered a gift that will benefit every church from the most liturgical to the most modern. Pastors, worship leaders, certified lay ministers, and all who lead others into passionate worship will benefit from this resource that encourages Jesus's followers as they pursue the depths of worship.

Bishop Mark Webb | *Global Methodist Church*

Dr. Sterling M. Allen, a leading Charles Wesley scholar, is the senior pastor at Cornerstone Global Methodist Church in Houston, Texas, and serves as adjunct faculty at Baylor University Truett Theological Seminary Wesley House of Studies for the Pastoral Studies Program. As an ordained elder in the Global Methodist Church, Dr. Allen has served in various capacities as a worship leader, musician, and pastor for more than twenty-six years in large church settings in Texas, Louisiana, and Georgia.



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