

PART TWO

All-age service outlines

These 15 service outlines have followed the tested format of Scripture Union's *Light for the Lectionary* books and earlier material from *Light Years* and *SALT for all ages*. Some of the suggested activities may seem unusual but why not give them a go, or adapt them to fit your situation more precisely? All-age services are usually fairly creative, so one suggestion in this book may stimulate several ideas of your own.

Each service outline contains the following:

Aims: keep these in mind throughout the service to ensure that you remain focused on what you are exploring. Of course, you may wish to rephrase the aims but then, don't lose sight of your own aims. Clear aims help to evaluate a service; so afterwards, try to consider how well you communicated and then how well the children responded. What have you learned from leading this service and what might you do differently as a result?

Getting started: some background information sets the outline and its content in a wider context.

You will need: preparing for all-age services is time-consuming but this checklist should be useful. Necessary downloads are listed but alternatives are usually suggested for those who do not use the Internet. All downloads are available for free on the Scripture Union website: www.scriptureunion.org.uk/light and are listed in service order.

Beginning the service: it is important to start well. These suggestions are varied in style and if one option would not work for you, the suggestion in another service could spark an alternative idea. The Starters in Part One contain plenty of other options. Right from the start, aim to create a sense of community.

Bible reading: almost all outlines include an Old Testament and a New Testament reading, even though only one of these may be the focus of the service. Public reading of the Bible is vitally important and it needs to be done in a way that captures the attention of all present. Creative suggestions are given throughout the 15 outlines. Occasional suggestions have been given for **Bible retelling**.

Bible talk: plenty of interactivity has been built into the Bible talk, recognising that people learn in different ways. The basic framework is given but the speaker will need to adapt to their own style

and circumstances.

Prayer activity: communicating with God can be done in many different ways. The suggestions in the outlines involve activity for individuals, groups and the whole congregation. But do not forget that sometimes we need to meet with God in stillness.

Prayer of confession: church traditions vary in how much emphasis they place specifically on acknowledging our sin and seeking God's forgiveness. This is one option that may fit in with your regular style or it may be something quite different that you could explore further.

Prayer of intercession: outsiders expect Christians to pray for them and the world in need. It is valuable to include people of all ages in leading these prayers.

Ending the service: a good ending is important since it sends people into the coming week with a clear sense of what God has been saying to them and prepared to make a difference for him in his world.

Helpful extras: Music and song ideas are given. The songbooks that are used are listed on page 7 but this list is not exclusive. A

Statement of faith may not be part of your tradition but it is a useful means of drawing people together in a resolve to know and serve God. **Games** are suggested, some of which are available as free downloads. These are especially important for providing for young children and anyone whose preferred learning style is of a more active nature.

Notes and comments: extra ideas and explanation may help you in your preparation. Extra ideas, of course, are also available in Part One, in the starter suggestions, linked to the *Light* theme you are exploring.

Downloads: these are to be found for free on the Scripture Union website www.scriptureunion.org.uk/light. A download is referenced according to the volume (**AASA3.**), the month, if you were using it in the *Light* cycle (**Oct**), and then consecutive numbers (**_2**) – for example, **web ref AASA3.Oct_2**. The downloads include word documents providing necessary templates or scripts as well as PowerPoint presentations or video clips.

If you are going to use a DVD clip, check its certification and, if necessary, obtain permission from the parents of young children for them to

see the clip. You should also ensure that your church holds the relevant licence to show film clips; details of the Church Video Licence are available at www.ccli.co.uk. You may also want to use worship CDs/DVDs, such as Hillsongs Kids CD/DVDs *Superhero*, *Superstrong God* and *Great Big God*.

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Golden rules for all-age worship

The foundational key for leading effective all-age worship is thinking about it as a family time (the church family), not as a time for the children with the adults present, or as an adult worship time with the children present. It's an all-age time – a totally unique 'brand' of worship.

This three-point checklist will help you in your planning worship when all ages are present.

1. Is it appropriate?

Is what I am planning – simple and uncomplicated? It should be!

Is what I am planning – childish or embarrassing or patronising? It should NOT be.

Example: language is one thing to be really aware of. It needs to be simple and clear, although the concept may be understood on several levels.

NOT: Let's come before the Lord in penitence for our transgressions.

NOT: Now we're going to say sorry for the naughty things we've done.

BUT: We're going to spend some time saying sorry to God for the things we've done wrong. (Simple, uncomplicated language that connects with everyone.)

2. Is it moving at the right pace?

Variety is crucial, (fast-moving and busy, reflective and still) and it is not necessarily older people who like stillness and vice versa!

As a general rule, aim for one activity to last no longer than 7 minutes.

3. How much interaction is there?

Option 1: interaction between the leader and congregation

Option 2: interaction amongst the congregation

Option 3: interaction between the congregation and God

Interaction should never be forced upon anyone and should never be forced or artificial for the sake of 'doing something'. Never separate an activity into say 'a song for the children' for that will alienate adults. Instead, for example, say, 'We'll sing another song now.'

Examples: movement; singing and making music (and repetition helps the youngest to the oldest join in); stories; puppets; sign language; using all the senses; mime; construction/craft; engaging with symbols and artefacts; humour and emotion.

As a service leader

- Remember that you are leading people together into God's presence
- Be enthusiastic and enjoy yourself
- Prepare well and work with others
- Never be apologetic for what you are leading

This has been adapted from Golden rules for all-worship by Jo Squires
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Mary waits and waits

Advent/December

Light series: Christmas Praise!

Light readings: Luke 1,2

Aims: to see how Mary, as a Jew, waited for the Messiah, and then waited for Jesus' birth

to recognise that in Advent we also wait for Jesus' return

Readings: Isaiah 9:6,7; Luke 1:26–45

Getting started

Not surprisingly, this Advent service, as part of the *Light Christmas Praise!* series, looks at the early part of the nativity story. The secular world uses the term 'Advent' to mark the beginning of the final run up to Christmas. This is characterised by Advent calendars and candles which begin on 1 December, whatever the date the Church recognises as Advent Sunday. There is no real distinction between Advent and Christmas, between waiting and celebrating. Christians, on the other hand, recognise the value of discovering God in the waiting, an essential part of this annual celebration. Mary waited and waited, for a long nine months and, in effect, much longer since as a Jewish woman she had been waiting for the coming of the Messiah all her life. Elizabeth, her cousin, was also caught up in this waiting.

The material for this service uses the visual theme of a wrapped present to connect with the worldly preoccupation with gifts and shopping at this time of the year. Research shows that people on the fringe of the Church are more willing to attend worship in December than at any other time of year. This provides a great opportunity to welcome people of all ages, but particularly families, to a well-planned, informal time of worship where they will feel comfortable. May you be able to provide this for your congregation.

You will need:

- a beautifully wrapped present
- a version of Isaiah 9:6, available as a download **web ref AASA3.Dec_1** for **Beginning the service**
- cards with the 11 missing names from the Gospel reading or a version of Luke 1:26–45 downloaded from **web ref AASA3.Dec_2** for the **Bible reading**
- strips of paper and pens to use for the game of 'Consequences' for the **Bible talk**
- two completed Bible story consequences which can be downloaded from **web ref AASA3.Dec_3** for the **Bible talk**
- materials for the four prayer areas in the **Prayer activity**



Beginning the service

With: a beautifully wrapped present; on display, a copy of Isaiah 9:6 – the CEV version below is also available as a download from **web ref AASA3.**

Dec_1

Display your wrapped present. (An image of it could be projected onto a screen instead.) Point to the present and ask who gets excited about opening Christmas presents. Remind everyone that it is not yet time to open presents. There is still a lot of waiting to be done until Christmas Day. There is a lot about waiting in today's service, but reassure everyone that there is not too much waiting or hanging about involved!

Explain that many Christians use the season of Advent, the four weeks leading up to Christmas, to prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus and to remember that they are also waiting for the day when Jesus will return to earth as a glorious King.

Learn Isaiah 9:6, part of the Old Testament passage for this service, as an extended *Learn and remember* verse. This verse explains that Jesus came as a baby, but would also be a mature and holy ruler. The leader could read the italicised type; the women and girls could proclaim the section in regular type, the men and boys could reply with the words in bold type. Practise saying it several times.

*A child has been born for us.
We have been given a son.*

Who will be our ruler.

His names will be

Wonderful Adviser and Mighty God,

Eternal Father and Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6

Bible reading

Luke 1:26–45

With: cards displaying the following names: Gabriel, Nazareth, Galilee, Joseph, David, Mary, Jesus, Elizabeth, Israel, Judea, Zechariah; a version of the reading in Word, and also a digital version with the names missing, to be completed by the click of a mouse. They are all available as a download from **web ref AASA3.Dec_2**

The reading from Luke 1:26–46 has come with all the names missing. Explain that everyone will need to help fill in the gaps. Provide all the names on sheets of card. Either ask 11 helpers to come to the front to hold up the cards when asked or, if appropriate, challenge several active children to run to the front to find the correct card and hold

it up once someone has given the right answer. Alternatively, project the reading showing the gaps for the missing words, with the blanks filled in once the answer has been identified.

Read the passage, pausing whenever a name needs to be supplied. Some names will come quickly, others may need a clue or two.

Bible talk

With: a strip of paper and pens for each person to complete a short game of 'Consequences'; two completed strips for demonstration purposes, one for the angel Gabriel and one for Mary, as hard copy on an acetate or flip chart, a version of which can be downloaded from **web ref AASA3.Dec_3**

Have you ever played the game 'Consequences', or 'What happened next?' Explain that everybody has a long strip of paper, which is passed around a group. Everyone fills in a category and then passes it on to the next person so that at the end, there is a basic storyline. In this service, you are going to play a simplified version. Give out a strip of paper and a pen to every person or small group of people. (The leader could complete a sample one to show how it is done.)

Everyone should write down someone's name – suggest the name of a child in the church. (Some people might prefer to draw pictures instead of writing.) Fold the paper over (but unless you can organise this, do not pass them around).

Add another person's name and fold the paper over.

Add the next category – where they met.

The final category is, 'The consequence was...'

At the end, when everyone has filled in their strip, collect in a few to read out. Explain that it takes quite a long time to play the game, so if you were to read out everyone's piece of paper you would be waiting a long time to find out what the 'consequence' would be.

The **Bible reading** was about a whole string of consequences: one thing happened which led to something else. Use the digital consequences or create your own hard copy on a flip chart or acetate.

- It starts with God sending whom? (The first fold displays 'Angel Gabriel'.)
- Where did God send Gabriel? (Unfold 'was sent to Nazareth'.)

- Whom did the angel find in Nazareth? (Unfold 'where he found Mary'.)
- What was Mary doing? (Unfold 'who was waiting'.)

Show the whole sentence.

The consequence of the angel going to Nazareth was that he met Mary. She was a Jewish girl and she had been waiting for a very special day when the Messiah, a very special king, would come from God to help all Jewish people. Mary would have known the same *Learn and remember* verse that we learned earlier. Say the verse again.

A child has been born for us.

We have been given a son.

Who will be our ruler.

His names will be:

Wonderful Adviser and Mighty God,

Eternal Father and Prince of Peace

Isaiah 9:6

Mary was waiting for the Prince of Peace to be born. But what was the consequence of Mary waiting? She was told by the angel that she would have a baby.

Turn to the second consequence strip.

- After the angel had left her, where did Mary go? (Unfold 'Mary went to the hill country'.)
- Whom did Mary visit? (Unfold 'to see Elizabeth'.) Check that everyone knows who Elizabeth is.
- When Mary and Elizabeth got together, there were two amazing consequences. First, what happened to the baby Elizabeth was expecting? (Unfold 'Elizabeth's baby jumped for joy'.)
- Then what did Mary and Elizabeth do? (Unfold 'They praised God'.)

Show the whole storyline.

Say the *Learn and remember* verse again to see if you too can praise God as a consequence of knowing that God not only came to Mary more than two thousand years ago, but he has come to us and will come again. That is the true meaning of Advent.

If you have not already done this, light the relevant number of candles on the Advent ring.

Prayer activity

Set up four prayer areas, one based on each letter of W-A-I-T. Invite everyone to visit as many of the prayer areas as they choose. Indicate how much time will be available for the activity. If possible, quietly play a Taizé chant, or similar, as background music.

In the **W**ait area, provide a lit candle or a beautifully wrapped present. Psalm 33:20 should be displayed on a card: 'We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield' (NIV). Someone could read out the verse and invite everyone to sit silently to wait for God to speak in the quiet.

In the **A**doration, or praise, area, invite everyone to think of one word to describe God. These words can then be written up onto a large sheet of paper. Help children to decide on their chosen word, and then to record it on the paper. Some of the titles for Jesus from Isaiah 9:6 would be appropriate. Display Psalm 34:3 on a card: 'Glorify the Lord with me: let us exalt his name together' (NIV).'

For the **I**ntercessions area, supply sheets of paper and pencils for people to write or draw their prayer requests. Provide a small basket for the completed prayers so they can be gathered together and offered to God. On a card, display Jeremiah 33:3: 'Call to me and I will answer you' (NIV).

To enable everyone to say **T**hanks to God, display on a card, 'Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures for ever' (Psalm 118:1) (NIV). Provide a parcel wrapped in plain paper, and sheets of shiny stars or stickers that say 'Thank you'. Invite everyone to think of one particular thing for which they want to thank God, and then place a sticker on the parcel as a way of thanking God.

At the end of this time, as everyone returns to their seats, bring the **A**doration praise sheet, the basket of **I**ntercessory prayers and the **T**hanks prayer parcel covered in stickers to the front. Explain that all these prayers, as well as the silent prayers from the **W**aiting area, will now be offered to God as everyone says the Lord's Prayer together.

Prayers of intercession

Show the consequences from the **B**ible talk and highlight the following points as a way in to prayer:

Angel Gabriel: Pray for everyone who brings God's message to others, which could be anyone who shares the good news of Jesus.

Nazareth: Pray for all who live in Nazareth today, where life is especially difficult. Pray particularly for the few remaining Christians there, who wait for God to come to rescue them.

Mary: Pray for all people who, like Mary, wait on the Lord to hear him speak into their lives.

Waiting: Pray for everyone waiting for news in the run up to Christmas – news of family members and friends, the results of medical tests, of examinations, or of possible redundancy.

Baby: Pray for everyone who is excited as they wait for Christmas that they may know true joy, and not disappointment.

They praised God: Pray that everyone in church will be able to praise God this Advent-time.

Ending the service

Remind everyone that there are always consequences when God sets something in motion. Mary had been waiting for the Messiah to come, and then she found herself waiting for a special baby to be born. The consequence of today's story was that Elizabeth praised God, after she too had been waiting a long time. Will we be praising God on Christmas Day after so much waiting? We have to wait for Christmas, and we have to wait for Jesus to return as the Prince of Peace and our King.

Helpful extras

Music and song ideas

'Soon and very soon' is an easy song for even non-readers to join in (ts 460) and includes praise in response to seeing the King; occasional visitors to church may not be clear of the distinction between Advent and Christmas, so they may feel more comfortable if at least one traditional carol is included. A suitable carol would be 'O little town of Bethlehem' (SOF 420); an appropriate Taizé song to play during the **Prayer activity** would be 'Wait for the Lord' (SOF 1575). *Carol Praise*, published by HarperCollinsPublishers, contains many new carols and fresh arrangements of older carols. It includes Graham Kendrick's song on Mary's response to the angel, 'Let it be to me'.

The *Learn and remember* song 'God has a plan' based on I John 4:9 from the *Bitesize Bible Songs* CD is appropriate to use with this service, acknowledging that God sent his son into this world. It can be purchased as a download from www.scriptureunion.org.uk/light.

Game

'Pass the Parcel' is a game based on waiting for a turn, as well as linking with this service's visual theme of presents. The layers of the game could contain the different names needed to complete the **Bible reading** (in which case ensure the game is played before it), or with the different 'Consequences' answers used in the **Bible talk**.

Notes and comments

The 'Pass the Parcel' game could be played as a gathering activity for children in the few minutes before the service starts.

A hymn or song of praise would be suitable to follow on from the **Bible talk** to encourage people to respond with praise before moving into a time of prayer.

Stars or stickers that say 'Thank you' for use in the **Prayer activity** can be obtained from stationery or birthday shops.

If you have any Advent traditions, such as lighting an Advent candle or opening an Advent calendar, do incorporate that into the service.

To develop the **Prayers of intercession** and the theme of waiting for God to set things in motion, you could encourage anyone who is waiting for something specific to share their experiences.

It may be overdoing the 'Consequences' game idea, but one alternative **Prayer activity** would be to ask everyone to write on a strip of paper the following phrases. After each phrase, they pass the strip around a group, so that everyone ends up with a prayer composed by several people. The phrases are: a name that addresses God; something that God has done that you are thankful for; a promise of God; a request for him to set something in motion; a final request for patience as we wait.