

THE Promise OF Advent

The Promise of Advent: Preparing for a Season of Hope During Unparalleled Times

Episode 1 – Worship, Music, and Ritual: Reimagining Advent Church Services

Watch this episode on demand and download related resources [here](#).
Register for future episodes and find out more about this series [here](#).

Host:

- Rev. Adam Hamilton, Senior Pastor

The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, Leawood, Kansas

Panelists:

- Rev. Dr. Gerald C. Liu, Assistant Professor of Worship and Preaching
Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey
- Dr. Marcia McFee, Author and Worship Designer

Worship Design Studio, San Anselmo, California

- Raymond Trapp, Director of Music

Vanderveer Park United Methodist Church, Brooklyn, New York

Episode Recap:

Advent and Christmas services hold some of our most treasured spiritual memories. Yet this year, we may not be able to celebrate in these same ways. In this episode our panelists discussed with Adam Hamilton practical ideas for celebrating Advent and Christmas with your church communities and your neighborhoods.

We began our conversation by discussing simple ways to engage with your congregations this Advent and Christmas. Some of these ideas included:

- Marcia McFee reminded us that worship is a three-dimensional experience, and that sitting in front of a flat screen isn't immersive. She suggested encouraging worshippers to imagine that the entire room they're sitting in is surrounded by an Advent wreath. Then select four corners or areas in the "wreath" to place your Advent candles and light them during services or other moments of spiritual reflection.
- Raymond Trapp uses the virtual aspect of our current circumstances as an opportunity to select hymns and songs that he knows have particular meaning to specific people. He lets those people know he chose that song with them in mind.

THE Promise OF Advent

Continued from previous page.

- Gerald Liu believes this year helps us to pare down during what would typically be a very busy time. We can spend more time in reflection. Pastors can ask people to reflect on what preparing for Advent means to them, record their thoughts, and incorporate these testimonies into Advent worship services.
- Many churches are recording “virtual choirs” where you see every individual’s recording as they sing. Similarly, you can share a video collage of people and families lighting their Advent candles at home.

Many churches have some members who are not connected digitally because of their age and/or resources. Ideas for engaging these people included:

- Prayer phone-trees are always a good idea.
- Begin a Christmas card ministry in preparation for Advent and send handwritten notes to these people during Advent and Christmas.
- Write a prayer or provide scripture for people to use in their personal reflection at home. Send these by mail. Ask your members to mail their favorite scriptures to each other as a way to minister to each other during this season.
- For some families who are able to safely gather, there is an inter-generational opportunity for grandchildren to help their grandparents worship, for example.

Christmas services are a popular time for visitors. Panelists discussed ideas for connecting with our neighborhoods and communities during this time.

- Marcia has written a Park, Porch, and Sidewalk Sing program for churches that is adaptable to your situation. For examples, churches with large yards can meet together on a night and sing – in socially distanced, CDC-approved ways – to the people who pass by. You may use luminaries and other sorts of decorations to create the space.
- At Raymond’s church, they sing on their steps every year at Christmas. This year they are coming up with some creative ideas to accomplish this neighborhood tradition and might use screens with pre-recorded singing and have those on the steps.
- Gerald shared a story of when he was a pastor in the UK, his church held a Christmas Eve communion service in a local pub.
- You could create a scavenger hunt in your community one night where you create public altars throughout the neighborhood for people to find and then mediate in that spot with a unique message at each altar.

Resources for hymns and music include:

- [The Hymn Society](#)
- [Christian Copyright Licensing International](#)
- [Christian Copyright Solutions](#)

Continued on the next page.

THE Promise OF Advent

Continued from previous page.

This year – with all its pain – has created an opportunity for us to literally be light in the world. COVID-19 may have kept us out of our buildings, but that doesn't stop us from sharing hope with the world.

One of the youths in Raymond's congregation, Janelle, created this acronym for inspiration during this time:

W-O-R-S-H-I-P — When Our Reality Seems Hard, Invoke Praise.

Our panelists reminded us that during the time of Jesus' birth, there was great unrest with a census, violence, and political divisions. We should reclaim a spirit of creativity this Christmas as we share the hope of Christ with the world and incarnate God's light and love.



Amplify Media is a streaming service allowing churches large and small unlimited video access in order to discover, customize, and share diverse resources that encourage deeper discipleship and equip churches to pursue their mission with greater impact.

Find out more, browse resources, and sign up for your 14-day free trial at [AmplifyMedia.com](https://www.AmplifyMedia.com).