



*For Unto Us
A Child Is Born*

Children's Christmas Program

Program Guide

Pax Domini Press © 2012

For Unto Us A Child Is Born

Introduction

For Unto Us A Child Is Born is a children's Christmas program with spoken parts, hymns, and several original musical pieces designed to be worked into a communion service at Christmas or in the final weeks of Advent. The program also includes crafts, devotions, and activities that families can use leading up to the Christmas service during the Advent season.

The program's theme centers on the antiphon for the introit for the Nativity of Our Lord, the classic prophecy from Isaiah 9: 6: "For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." The program is built around those five titles of Christ and what they mean for us. During Advent, children can make ornaments based on each of these titles that will be incorporated into the service.

Included on the CD

The CD for this program includes electronic files of the following items:

- Advent Devotions (PDF file of Devotion and Activity Book)
- Bulletin Maker (ready to import Notepad files needed to make a bulletin in conjunction with Lutheran Service Book, The Lutheran Hymnal, or Lutheran Worship, any setting involving communion; also included are a header and images for the bulletin cover)
- Christmas Service (Children's Program Guide; Music for Program; Sound Files of Music Pieces)
- Ornament Crafts (Directions and a folder with craft items)

The congregation is given full copyrights to copy any of the electronic files, as many as are necessary to produce the program within the confines of the congregation or the families of that congregation.

Files were printed in PDF format so they can be printed in booklet form, with a cover page and a blank page on the inside of the cover. They may also be printed as individual sheets.

How the program should work

At the first Sunday in Advent, the congregation should have prepared a copy of the Advent devotions and the first ornament craft kit, one per family, or one per child. After church the pastor can announce the theme for the week, for instance, "Wonderful," and explain how the Advent devotions are preparing for the final children's Christmas program. He should explain how the five titles they will be learning over the Advent season are from the antiphon for the Christmas introit, and he should explain what these words mean.

Thereafter on each Sunday, the congregation can give the new ornament craft kit that goes with that week's theme. The final Advent Sunday will have two ornaments.

At the children's Christmas service, the children can bring their ornaments, and as each title is meditated on through the children's spoken parts and music, they can present their ornaments or hold them. Or, someone with craft abilities can make larger versions of the ornaments to display before the congregation as each part is meditated upon.

Advent Devotions

Each week has a two-page meditation and a one-page activity. These should be printed off and given either to individual members or whole families (more than one child may wish to have an activity to work on. Extra copies can be made from the PDF file).

Included in the devotions are suggested Psalms and passages that families are encouraged to read during the week.

Ornament Crafts

Directions for ornament crafts are given in the Ornament Crafts folder. This may be copied for each family. Crafts require purchase of craft supplies and may need some cutting on a table saw or bandsaw.

Bulletin Maker

The bulletin for the Children's Christmas program can be easily and quickly made by simply copying and inserting the material from any of the Notepad files. The document is set up in Notepad with tab settings already set up, so that if inserted into a word processing program with tabs set at "right" toward the end of the tab setting scale – and all other tabs cleared – it MAY place the Notepad text in the proper places, pending on the user's word processing capabilities.

The image and header can be put on the cover of the bulletin. Several options are given.

Christmas Service

Print out the Children's Program Guide for each child (who can read!). This program is all they will need for the entire program. It has the musical pieces, hymns, and spoken parts in it.

The Music for Program should be printed for the musician who will lead the children in song. A piano is recommended for these songs, especially *Sing a New Song*, which was arranged for piano by Béla Bartók. Included is the music and words for three pieces not found in the hymnal: (1) *A Child is Born*, (2) *For Unto Us A Child Is Born*, and (3) *Sing a New Song*. These songs can be heard in MPEG sound files in the Christmas Service folder.

A Child Is Born is a famous Medieval Christmas piece arranged and used by Lutheran composer Michael Praetorius (1571-1621) in his Christmas mass.

For Unto Us A Child Is Born devotes one verse to each of the five titles of Christ used in the program. It is a musical piece written for this program.

Sing a New Song is a delightful Romanian Christmas carol discovered and arranged by Béla Bartók (1881-1945). Words based on the introit for Christmas have been supplied by this program. The song may seem rather difficult at first sight, but is actually a rather fun song to sing by children even at a young age.

The basics of the program are as follows:

After an invocation, confession, and public absolution, the children will sing the introductory and second verses of *For Unto Us A Child Is Born*, devoted to the first title of Christ, "Wonderful." Then will follow several readings from Scripture, followed by a few verses from a Christmas or Advent hymn, followed by a brief meditation on that title by the pastor. That basic format will repeat four times after the first, one for each title of Christ.

After the final meditation on the title "Prince of Peace," the six verses of *For Unto Us a Child Is Born* will be sung by the whole congregation to the more familiar tune of *On Jordan's Banks the Baptist's Cry*.

Then will follow the offering and then the preparation for communion, during which the children will sing *Sing a New Song*. They should sing the whole song with three verses, but go through these verses as long as they need to until communion is fully prepared. It is a quick song and takes about half a minute to complete, so a few times through it will not take long.

Additional Items from Pax Domini Press

The materials of this Christmas program are intended to be self-produced easily with a good printer and access to a craft store. For craft kits and color copies of booklets needed in the program, please contact Pax Domini Press at 1 (419) 324-5535, or at pax-domini.com.

The Ornament Crafts

Throughout the Season of Advent, children will make the following crafts:



1. Wonderful

The ornament exhibits all the wonders, the miracles, that Jesus performed, demonstrating His authority over sin, death, and the power of the devil.



2. Counselor

This ornament highlights the four Gospels, worked by the Holy Spirit (as a dove), by which our Lord Jesus counsels us in all wisdom.



3. Mighty God

This ornament is the orb with cross, the (globus cruciger), that symbolizes a king's authority over all things. Jesus is the Mighty God, the King of kings.



4. Everlasting Father

Jesus the Everlasting Father? Yes, when we understand the mystery of the Triune God and His oneness with the Father. "He who has seen Me has seen the Father," said Jesus.



5. Prince of Peace

At Holy Communion Jesus gives us His peace. "The peace of the Lord be with you." There we have peace with God, and with one another.

The Theme for Advent this year is the verse that serves as the basis for the historic Introit for Christmas Day, from Isaiah 9: 6: "For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Over the course of the four weeks of Advent, we will meditate on these five titles of Christ by which He is named: (1) Wonderful, (2) Counselor, (3) Mighty God, (4) Everlasting Father, and (5) Prince of Peace. Each week make an ornament that will go with these five names.

In addition, several readings and Psalms will be recommended for meditation during the week.

This week's theme...

WONDERFUL

Introduction

One of the joys we have as Christians is to "have boldness to enter" into the presence of our Holy God through the blood of Jesus Christ. (See Hebrews 10: 19.) Historically, God's people have sung Psalms of joy as they entered into God's presence. (See Psalms 95 and 100.)

The Church calls these Psalms – or other verses based on the Scriptures – *Introits*. *Introit* is Latin for "he enters." An introit generally has three parts: (1) the antiphon, a verse (usually from Psalms) sung at the beginning and end of the introit; (2) the Psalm; and (3) the *Gloria Patri* ("Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, etc.") sung just before the final antiphon.

There are traditional introits for each Sunday of the Church Year. In fact, some Sundays used to be named for the first word of the introit, in Latin. The third week in Advent, for example, is called *Gaudete*, meaning, "Rejoice!" *Gaudete* is the "rose" Sunday, the Sunday represented by the pink (or rose) candle in an Advent wreath. The rose color is a joyful break from the more penitential violet that marks the other Sundays of Advent.

The introit for Christmas Day is the famous prophecy about Christ's birth from the prophet Isaiah, from Isaiah 9: 6: "For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

This week we meditate on the title, "Wonderful."



Wonderful

"Wonderful" means just as the word says, "full of wonders." But what are wonders? In the Bible, wonders are miracles, signs of God's power in the world. When God sent the plagues upon Egypt, He said, "I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst." (Exodus 3: 20) Or when Peter preached about Jesus on the Day of Pentecost, he spoke of the "miracles, wonders, and signs" which God did through Jesus.

The prophecy from Isaiah promised that God would send a King to His people Israel. This King would be not be like any other king, like King David or King Solomon. This King would be called "wonderful." He would do miracles that only God can do!

Jesus is this great King! Jesus is God's hand doing wonders!

But Jesus doesn't just do great wonders to amaze us. Jesus does His wonders to show that He is a kind and merciful King Who rules over all our enemies for us.



Jesus defeats Satan.

Let's say someone was blind. His blindness was his enemy! Jesus came and showed that He was a more powerful King than blindness. He healed those who were blind.

Or let's say someone was cursed by sin. His sin was his enemy! Jesus came and showed that He was a more powerful King than sin. He forgave those who were sinful.

Or again, let's say someone was possessed by a demon. This demon was a fierce enemy. Jesus came and cast these demons out, because He is more powerful than any demon.

Finally, let's say someone had died. Death was his enemy! Jesus is more powerful than even death! He raised the dead even as He Himself is risen.

These are the wonders that Jesus does. He frees us from our three greatest enemies: sin, death, and the devil.

Advent: A Violet Season

Traditionally Advent is a violet or royal blue season. The paraments that hang on the liturgical furnishings and pastor's vestments will be violet or royal blue. Why is this?

First, even though many people may be busy shopping and going to parties, we must remember that Advent is a penitential season. That means it is a time for prayer, confession, humility, and reflection on God's Word. Penitential seasons are violet (like Lent). The violet color reminds us of the blood that Jesus shed so that we might be free.

Second, violet is the color of royalty (as is royal blue), and Advent emphasizes that Jesus is the Coming King. But why is violet a royal color?

It is because in the ancient world, purple dye was the most costly to produce. It was made from the mucus of a rare Mediterranean shellfish.



Reading for this week:

Matthew 8-9 has several accounts of Jesus' miracles, His wonders. Read a portion of these two chapters every night. After reviewing one of the miracle events, discuss whether that wonder showed Jesus' authority over sin, death, or the devil.

Psalms to read:

77, 96, 105, 107, 135, 136

Activity: Name the Wonder!

Match up the pictures that are on the ornament with the following Bible accounts:



John 11: 1-44

John 2: 1-11

Luke 5: 17-26



Matthew 14: 23-33

Mark 16: 1-8

Matthew 14: 13-21



Luke 17: 12-19

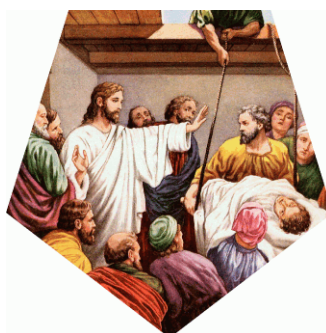
Mark 8: 22-26

Matthew 8: 23-27



Matthew 8: 28-34

Luke 14: 2-4



Sample Music for Program

A hymn based on the five titles of Christ in the antiphon, including an introductory verse and one verse per title:

For un - to us a Child is born. A light breaks forth like ear - ly morn! And
 And "Won - der - ful His name is called. His signs and won - ders have en - thralled. The

un - to us a Son is giv'n. His right - eous king - dom shall be - gin.
 de - vil, sin, and death re - treat. For - e - ver crushed be - neath His feet.

Another hymn based on a Romanian Carol arranged by Bela Bartok, with words suited to the introit that goes with the antiphon for the Nativity.

Sing a new song all the earth: Glo - ry to the Lord in high - est hea - ven!
 Bless His name: pro - claim good news: Wor - thy is the Lamb Who has re - deemed us!
 Sing a new song to the Lord: Ho - ly, Ho - ly, Ho - ly, His sal - va - tion!

Sing of His sal - va - tion, won - ders in the morn - ing.
 Oh de - clare His won - ders a - mong all the na - tions.
 His right hand has gained Him vic - tr'y for His peo - ple.

An example of spoken parts and hymn for one part from the children's program:

Part I: Wonderful

A group of children chants:



For un - to us a Child is born. A light breaks forth like ear - ly morn! And
And "Won - der - ful His name is called. His signs and won - ders have en - thralled. The
un - to us a Son is giv'n. His right - eous king - dom shall be - gin.
de - vil, sin, and death re - treat. For - e - ver crushed be - neath His feet.

A child reads the following verse:

Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men!

A child reads the first passage:

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew: Then great multitudes came to [Jesus], having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them. So the multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.

A child reads the second passage:

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew: When John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."

Hymn A Great and Mighty Wonder

A great and mighty wonder, A full and holy cure: The virgin bears the infant With virgin honor pure!
Proclaim the Savior's birth: "To God on high be glory And peace to all the earth!"

The Word becomes incarnate And yet remains on high, And cherubim sing anthems
To shepherds from the sky.

Proclaim the Savior's birth: "To God on high be glory And peace to all the earth!"

Meditation: His Name Shall Be Called "Counselor" Minister