

Planning and
Preaching for
Advent,
Christmas,
and Epiphany



Agenda

Introductions

The Seasons

Planning Time

Discussion

Finish Up



Christmas is
Coming!





Introductions

Tell us who you are.

THEN

Say one thing you love about the
Advent/Christmas/Epiphany season,

THEN

Say one thing you would change about this season if
you could.

Wesley on Advent

- Advent as a season of the church year was well-known to Wesley. In the 5th century, the “advent” of Advent was known as St. Martin’s Lent, another time of preparation for new converts to receive baptism on Epiphany.
- Advent in its current form takes the shape of anticipation. The first two Sundays of Advent have an eschatological flavor, while the Sundays three and four are oriented to the coming of the Christ Child.
- Consider reviewing Wesley’s Sermon “The Means of Grace”:
- <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/sermon-16-the-means-of-grace>
- The Advent Wreath.
- A link to the Advent Wreath liturgy is in the planning guide.



Wesley on Christmas

- Christmas was not much of a separate celebration during the 18th century, so it is the case the John never preached a “Christmas” sermon. Charles, however, did write some hymns for the season of the Nativity, some of which are in are hymnal.
- From Wesley House Cambridge: “Here, then, is a rationale for celebrating Christmas, drawn straight from the Wesleyan tradition: the incarnation is truly to be seen, and in such seeing we become lost in wonder, love and praise.”
- Check this out: <https://www.wesley.cam.ac.uk/prayer-space/methodist-recorder/seeing-the-incarnation/>
- The Advent Wreath Christ Candle



Wesley on Epiphany and Watch Night

- Epiphany means “sudden awareness.” The Epiphany of the Lord refers to arrival of the Magi for the adoration of the Christ Child, concluding the traditional twelve days of Christmas.
- Watch Night Service - only on a night with a full moon! Because it is better to have some light to walk home by. Good time for the Wesley Covenant Prayer.
- Baptisms on Epiphany.
- For Wesley, his “epiphany” was the Aldersgate experience, where he felt that he knew God through the experience of his conversion. A Wesleyan way to approach epiphany is perhaps through this lens: how have you experienced the presence and reality of the love of God?



Wesley on Epiphany and Watch Night

- Wesley encountered Watch Night services on New Year's Eve via the Moravians, and had this to say, from his Journal in 1742:

'We had the first watch-night in London. We commonly chose for this solemn service the Friday night nearest the full moon, either before or after, that those of the congregation who live at a distance may have light to their several homes. The service begins at half an hour past eight, and continues till a little after midnight. We have often found a peculiar blessing at these seasons. There is generally a deep awe upon the congregation, perhaps in some measure owing to the silence of the night...'





Additional Helpful Planning Resources

[REVISED COMMON LECTIONARY AT VANDERBILT](#)

[DIVINITY LIBRARY](#)

[TEXTWEEK](#)

[MINISTRY MATTERS](#)

[DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES](#)



Planning Time

Break out into smaller work groups to begin planning your services.

There are FOUR Sundays in Advent.

There is Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

There are TWO Sundays in Christmas. The first Sunday can become a “Watch Night” style service. The Second Sunday would be an Epiphany service, unless your church has a tradition of a separate Epiphany service.



Planning Time

This means there are SEVEN services to plan, unless you also do Christmas Day, then eight. If you do a separate Watch Night on New Years Eve, then nine and an Epiphany service on actual Epiphany, then TEN!

In your break out group, you will have 45 minutes to help each other think about themes, how and what you will preach, and how will enliven worship with new ideas and Wesleyan themes.

You will have about SIX minutes for each service, so make sure you watch the time. Your group should give time to each service.

Consult the planning guide you received by email, which includes a planning grid, all the lectionary readings, prayers, Advent Wreath readings and prayers, and other helpful tools.



Ready, Set, GO!



Discussion



Final Thoughts

Refresh through rehearsal

- *Record yourself preaching one sermon. Then watch it and see if you can adjust to make your preaching better.*



Refine delivery style

- *Pacing, tone, and emphasis*



Wesleyan Emphases

- *Remember the rich soil in which we live as Methodists.*



The value of good planning



Thank you

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