



December Offering Materials 2007 – Instruction Sheet

Liturgy: Throughout the month of December, United Methodist churches across the Virginia Annual Conference are asked to receive the annual UMFS December Offering. As a service to you, we provide these worship resources for your use. This year's UMFS December Offering theme is "**Forever Present**" reflecting the scripture passage Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." (NRSV)

The text is a part of concluding instructions and encouragement to the gathered community. It reminds them that even in the basic things of life both good and bad that God remains a constant presence. At UMFS, our work may seem different than the work of the local church, but we too are concerned with building an encouraging community that reflects the forever-present nature of God.

- We work to help children find forever homes and families
- We are determined to find permanent positive solutions for children and youth especially in terms of healthy relationships
- We are committed to finding strengths within young people with emotional or behavioral issues so that they can find meaningful outlets of expression and vocations.

This Advent and Christmas season, we hope that you will reflect on people and places and beliefs in your own life that are constant and that you will also claim the forever present nature of God. Join us as we discover again ways that God is forever present in the world from yesterday, to today, and into tomorrow in the familiar stories of Advent and Christmas.

Letter from Bishop Kammerer

Included in this packet is a letter from Bishop Kammerer, please review and share with your parishioners. You have permission to copy and use this letter in local church publicity efforts.

Posters: Please place the enclosed posters in church locations that will be highly visible to church members.

Stories about the children and families of UMFS: Five different stories, in formats suitable for copying are enclosed. You may wish to use them as inserts in your worship bulletins. You may also consider using the text in bulletin or newsletters prior to, during, and after December.

December Offering bulletin insert and pew envelope:

- The envelope will fit in the pew rack. In addition, there are inserts that we hope you will use in your worship bulletins each Sunday in December. Our supply of envelopes and bulletin inserts is limited, but if you need additional copies, please contact Bethanie Constant (see Questions).

Options for Giving

Option 1 - Send your donations directly to UMFS

- Those wishing to make a contribution need to **complete the information form**, place this form with their check inside the envelope, stamp the envelope, and mail to UMFS. This information form is vital because it allows us to thank those who faithfully support UMFS.
- All documents will be available by December online at: http://www.umfs.org/december_offering.xhtml
- Checks should be made payable to UMFS.

Option 2 – Go Through Your Church to the Conference Office

- Parishioners can make checks out to their respective church, please put on the Memo line of the check "UMFS December Offering." These checks are taken up in an offering and sent to the conference treasurer.
- By request of the Conference Treasurer and UMFS – please have your church treasurer **complete a one-page log** for individual donor information. Send the log to the conference office, and then it will be passed to UMFS, OR your church treasurer can send the log directly to UMFS. This form is attached in this packet. Please fill this out completely. This information form is vital because it allows us to thank those who faithfully support UMFS.



First Sunday of Advent (December 2, 2007) Forever Present in Light and Darkness

Scripture: *“The Lord will give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel, which means God with us.” (Isaiah 7: 14, NRSV)*

Call To Worship:

One: On this first Sunday of Advent, we light the candle of hope.

Many: Hope is our assurance that God will finish what God has started.

One: Hope is our confidence that God will be faithful and forever present.

Many: The kingdom of God is drawing near. May we prepare our hearts with God’s peace, God’s justice, and God’s love.

Response (all singing):

Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee O Israel. (UMH, p. 211)

Lighting the Advent Wreath

Long before Jesus was born, people were being called by a faithful God to have faith and to follow, to come to the mountain of the Lord. This first candle is one of hope. As we light this candle, may God’s light shine in our darkness and show us the way of salvation.

Hymns:

I Want To Walk As A Child Of The Light United Methodist Hymnal, page 206

Light of the World The Faith We Sing, page 2204



Second Sunday of Advent (December 9, 2007) Forever Present in a Shepherd's Care

Scripture: *“He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms and carry them in his bosom and gently lead the mother sheep.” (Isaiah 40: 9, 11 NRSV)*

Call To Worship:

One: On the second Sunday of Advent, we light the candle of peace.
Many: This candle reminds us that Jesus came to bring peace and good will.
One: Christ comes as a shepherd, caring for each sheep in the fold.
Many: The kingdom of God is drawing near. May we prepare our hearts with God's peace, God's justice, and God's love.

Response (all singing):

Rejoice, Rejoice. Emmanuel shall come to thee O, Israel (UMH, p. 211)

Lighting the Advent Wreath:

The way of the Lord is being prepared in our hearts. All the promises of God are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He is our hope, today and forever. Jesus we pray, guide our feet into the path of peace. May the word sent from God through the prophets lead us to the way of salvation.

Hymns:

It Came Upon A Midnight Clear #218, United Methodist Hymnal
Together We Serve #2175, The Faith We Sing



Third Sunday of Advent (December 16, 2007) Forever Present in Times of Joy

Scripture: *Rejoice and put your trust in God, creator of heaven and earth, whose faithfulness and justice extends through all time. God compassionately lifts up those who are bowed down and oppressed, imprisoned and hungry; upholding the defenseless and casting down the oppressors. Let us rejoice and praise God who will reign forever, for all generations. (based on Psalm 145: 6-10)*

Call To Worship:

One: On this third Sunday of Advent, we light the candle of joy.
Many: This candle reminds us of the angel's good news of great joy told to the shepherds.
One: May the joyful promise of your presence, O God,
Many: Make us rejoice in our hope of salvation.
Response (all singing):
Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel. (UMH, p. 211)

Lighting of the Advent Wreath:

When Jesus was born, the angels said that His coming was good news of great joy for all people. Because Christ has come to us, we can live every day in the joy of the Lord. We give thanks for lives transformed through your abiding presence.

Hymns:

He Is Born #228, United Methodist Hymnal
One Holy Night in Bethlehem #2097, The Faith We Sing



Fourth Sunday of Advent (December 23, 2007) Forever Present in a Loving Parent

Scripture: “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us.” (1 John 3:1, NRSV)
“Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2: 19, NRSV)

Call To Worship:

One: On this fourth Sunday in Advent, we remember God’s love in sending Jesus into the world.

Many: This candle reminds us that God sent the baby Jesus because God loves us. God also provided earthly parents for Jesus.

One: We wait in hope and peace, and with joy;

Many: For the coming of Jesus, God’s Son, God’s forever present.

Response (all singing):

Rejoice, Rejoice. Emmanuel shall come to thee O Israel. (UMH, p. 211)

Lighting of the Advent Wreath:

O God, when we think of Christmas, we think of love and lights and gifts and happy times. But, most of all we think of Jesus, born in a manger with Mary and Joseph caring for him. We thank you for the gift of Jesus for the whole world.

Hymns:

What Child Is This

#219, United Methodist Hymnal

The Snow Lay On The Ground

#2093, The Faith We Sing



Christmas Eve (December 24, 2007) Forever Present---Emmanuel

Scripture: “Jesus said, ‘I am the light of the world, anyone who follow me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’” (John 8: 12, NRSV)

Call To Worship:

One: The time of waiting is over.
Many: Tonight we celebrate Jesus’ birth.
One: We remember that Jesus is the light of the world.
Many: God’s presence with us forever—Emmanuel.
Response (all singing):
Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel. UMH, p. 211)

Lighting the Advent Wreath and Christ Candle:

Tonight we relight al the candles—Hope, Peace, Joy, Love. Jesus shines in the darkness making it light and showing us the path to new life. This is the greatest gift of all.
May Emmanuel, God with us, make us ready to receive and share this gift.

Hymns:

O Come All Ye Faithful #234, United Methodist Hymnal
Jesus Name Above All Names #2071 The Faith We Sing

