

**Practica: Resources for the Liturgical Observance of an
Expanded Advent in Church and Home**

Laura E. Moore
NAAL, January 2011

So: we are proposing to expand Advent from four weeks to seven weeks.

Two questions may spring to folks' minds when they hear our proposal: So what? or, Now what?

I hope to address – or begin to address – in a practical way, the second question. It is a legitimate question, largely because our proposal leaves the lectionary untouched. It is also a legitimate question because experience suggests that clergy do not necessarily know what to do with a four-week Advent, let alone a seven-week one. (Bill's and Jill's Advent laments suggest as much, and I am sure those were not isolated liturgical travesties.)

So how can we differentiate these weeks from the weeks that precede them – Adventize them? – and connect them in an cogent way to the four weeks of Advent as those stand now? The suggestions I offer are only a beginning, and I hope they will lead to further brainstorming.

Some years ago, Robert Taft posited several stages of "the *structural* history of the eucharistic rite."¹ While he perhaps followed Dix more closely than many scholars today would, he put forward a useful theory for the purposes of this paper. Taft suggested that during the second stage, "the period

¹Robert Taft, "The Structural Analysis of Liturgical Units," in *Beyond East and West: Problems in Liturgical Understanding* (Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1984), 160.

of the unification of rites,"² "the basic common outline of the Eucharist" was fleshed out at what he calls the three "soft points" of the liturgy: before the readings, between the Liturgy of the Word and the Eucharist, and "at the communion and dismissal that follow" the eucharistic prayer.³ Taft indicated that this fleshing out invariably leads to a loss of elements from the "original core" of the rite.⁴ However, if done with thought, and care to respect the integrity of the core, may not these "soft points" be the ideal spot to introduce seasonal elements?

The western liturgies have done this – to a greater or lesser extent depending on the rite and the region – for centuries.⁵ Some recent service books have taken this propensity further by providing a greater variety of material to be used at these "soft points," particularly collects, Prayers of the People/litanies, and proper prefaces. There are also many hymns, songs, and canticles – both traditional and modern – that those planning liturgies can use.

I make suggestions with the Year B *Revised Common Lectionary* in mind. Looking at the scriptures for the seven weeks, key themes for an expanded Advent 2011 are: hope in, and watchfulness for, Jesus' second coming; faithfulness in working and waiting, repentance, rejoicing, and the revelation of

²ibid.

³ibid., 160-161.

⁴ibid.

⁵For example, the variable proper prefaces of the Roman rite.

the mystery of God. The Prayer Book collects for these Sundays work well.

However, liturgical planners might keep these two collects from the *Book of Common Worship* (PCUSA) in mind as well:

Eternal God, through long generations you prepared a way for the coming of your Son, and by your Spirit you still bring light to illumine our paths. Renew us in faith and hope, that we may welcome Christ to rule our thoughts and claim our love, as Lord of lords and King of kings, to whom be glory always. Amen."⁶

God of our salvation, you straighten the winding ways of our hearts, and smooth the paths made rough by sin. Keep our conduct blameless, keep our hearts watchful in holiness, and bring to perfection the good you have begun in us. We ask this through him whose coming is certain, whose day draws near; your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns. . . .⁷

Liturgical planners might think about Taft's "soft points" when planning liturgies for Advent: the opening/gathering rite, the Prayers of the People/litanies, proper prefaces, and closing prayers.

Opening Rite

The 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* (and other worship books as well) already has a flexible opening rite, with three possible dialogues, and several suggested hymns or chants: the Gloria "or some other song of praise," the

⁶Collect for the First Sunday of Advent, from *Book of Common Worship* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 173.

⁷Collect for the Second Sunday of Advent, *Ibid.*, 174.

Kyrie, and the Trisagion. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW)* has an opening dialogue for Evening Prayer that could work well as the opening dialogue for an Advent eucharist:

V: The Spirit and the church cry out:
 R: Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.
 V: All those who await his appearance pray:
 R: Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.
 V: The whole creation pleads:
 R: Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.⁸

Another possible opening dialogue from *ELW* is:

V: Prepare the way of the Lord
 R: All flesh shall see the salvation of God.⁹

Prayers of the People

The *BCW* has a Litany for Advent, based on the O Antiphons, which could be used to structure the various categories for which we are called to pray:

V: O Radiant Dawn, shine on those who live in darkness and the shadow of death.
 R: Come, Lord Jesus.
 V: O Emmanuel, desire of the nations and Savior of all,
 R: Come, Lord Jesus.¹⁰

A form from *Common Worship: Times and Seasons* (the latest liturgical resource from the Church of England):

⁸*Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 707.

⁹*Ibid.*, 61. This is a Gospel Acclamation for the Second Sunday of Advent.

¹⁰*BCW*, 166-167. I have included the entire litany in a handout.

In joyful expectation of his coming to our aid
we pray to Jesus.

Come to your Church as Lord and judge.

We pray for...

Help us to live in the light of your coming
and give us a longing for your kingdom.

Maranatha:

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Come to your world as King of the nations.

We pray for...

Before you rulers will stand in silence.

Maranatha:

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Come to the suffering as Saviour and comforter.

We pray for...

Break into our lives,
where we struggle with sickness and distress,
and set us free to serve you for ever.

Maranatha:

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Come to us as shepherd and guardian of our souls.

We remember...

Give us with all the faithful departed
a share in your victory over evil and death.

Maranatha:

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Come from heaven, Lord Jesus, with power and great glory.

Lift us up to meet you,

that with [N and] all your saints and angels
we may live and reign with you in your new creation.

Maranatha:

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Silence is kept.

Come, Lord Jesus, do not delay;

give new courage to your people,
who trust in your love.

By your coming, raise us to share in the joy of your kingdom
on earth as in heaven,

where you live and reign with the Father and the Spirit,
one God for ever and ever.

Amen.

Watchful at all times,
let us pray for strength to stand with confidence
before our Maker and Redeemer.
That God may bring in his kingdom with justice and mercy,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That God may establish among the nations
his sceptre of righteousness,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That we may seek Christ in the Scriptures
and recognize him in the breaking of the bread,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That God may bind up the brokenhearted,
restore the sick
and raise up all who have fallen,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That the light of God's coming may dawn
on all who live in darkness and the shadow of death,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That, with all the saints in light,
we may shine forth as lights for the world,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

We commend ourselves and all for whom we pray
to the mercy and protection of our heavenly Father:

Silence is kept.

Almighty God,
as your blessed Son Jesus Christ
first came to seek and to save the lost;

so may he come again to find in us
 the completion of his redeeming work;
 for he is now alive
 and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 God for ever and ever.

Amen.¹¹

Another prayer from *BCW* could be used to conclude the Prayers of the People, or as the closing prayer for the eucharist as a whole:

Strengthen us, O God, in the power of your Spirit, to bring good news to the poor, and lift blind eyes to sight, to loose the chains that bind, and claim your blessing for all people. Keep us faithful in your service until Christ comes in final victory, and we shall feast with all your saints in the joy of your eternal realm. Through Christ...."¹²

Confession

An option from *BCW*:

God of the future,
 you are coming in power to bring all nations under your rule.
 We confess that we have not expected your kingdom,
 for we live casual lives, ignoring your promised judgment.

We accept lies as truth,
 exploit neighbors,
 abuse the earth,
 and refuse your justice and peace.

In your mercy, forgive us.

¹¹*Common Worship: Times and Seasons* (London: Church House Publishing, 2006), np. The material is freely available (with some restrictions on use) at <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/worship/downloads/pdf/tandsadvent.pdf>. Accessed 1 January 2011.

¹²*BCW*, 171.

Grant us wisdom to welcome your way,
and to seek things that will endure
when Christ comes to judge the world.¹³

Proper Prefaces

Proper prefaces are tricky. They need to be theologically rich yet succinct. A West African priest has composed two Advent prefaces for a Nigerian context. I admire him for trying, but I think he tries to do too much in one brief preface. One of the two is:

Jesus: the shoot from the stock of Jesse:

Introductory dialogue

Father all powerful and ever-living God,
the I Am who Am,
the One God immortal and invisible,
to you be honour, praise and glory forever more.
Before ever the world was made
You decreed in advance that we should be your adopted sons and
daughters
in accordance with the good pleasure of Your will for the praise and the
glory of Your name.
The sin of our first parents never frustrated your loving plan for us,
You rather, devised a means of claiming your people by manifesting your
love to your chosen people Israel.
You shielded them like precious gold.
Even when they rejected you and followed other gods, your love for them
became even more profound.

You disposed the minds of your people for His coming through cleansing
by baptism and preaching by John the Baptist. We are full of
expectations at His birth at Christmas as we prepare through prayer,
sacrifice, gestures of charity to our brothers and sisters and in reunion
with our families, friends, may our hearts be filled with joy and praise as
we join the choirs of angels in heaven and our ancestors' in singing your

¹³BCW, 167-168.

unending hymn of praise....¹⁴

Another, from *ELW*, is more workable:

"It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom you will also make all things new in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness." Therefore....¹⁵

Times and Seasons provides seven (!) Advent proper prefaces (included in the handout).

Closing Prayers

An option from *ELW*:

Gracious and holy God, give us diligence to seek you, wisdom to perceive you, and patience to wait for you. Grant us, O God, a mind to meditate on you; eyes to behold you; ears to listen for your word; a heart to love you; and a life to proclaim you; through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.¹⁶

Another from *BCW*:

Strengthen us, O God, in the power of your Spirit, to bring good news to the poor, and lift blind eyes to sight, to loose the chains that bind, and claim your blessing for all people. Keep us faithful in your service until Christ comes in final victory, and we shall feast with all your saints in the joy of your eternal realm. Through Christ....¹⁷

¹⁴Patrick C. Chibuko, "New Prefaces For The Liturgical Season Of Advent," *African Ecclesial Review* 39 (1997): 327-328. Perhaps we can discuss why this does or does not work?

¹⁵*ELW*, 181.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁷*BCW*, 171.

Blessings

Two options are provided in the *Book of Occasional Services*.¹⁸

¹⁸*Book of Occasional Services* (New York: Church Pension Fund, 2004): 22-23. These are included in the handout.

An Order of Worship for the Evening

Neil Alexander emphasizes liturgical structures in his reflections on the liturgical future of the church. As the church ponders further liturgical revision, he suggests that the best way forward is to “establish clear liturgical structures and provide a wide variety of liturgical materials, all of which are in the best sense texts of the tradition, approved for use and carefully crafted to be used within those structures.”¹⁹ This seems to be the direction the churches are choosing to go, with the Church of England’s *Common Worship: Times and Seasons* being a fine recent example.

“An Order of Worship for the Evening,” Alexander notes, is intentionally designed exactly this way. It is – in my opinion – one the underused gems of the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*. This Order is ideal for use both in the home and with evening events in the parish, because of its beauty and its great flexibility. In this part of the paper, I will provide examples of how it may be used specifically for Advent, using texts gleaned from the resources used above, as well as material from the *Book of Occasional Services* of the Episcopal Church. In the interests of space and cogency I have chosen to focus my suggestions on two Advent metaphors – light and expectant waiting – but others are certainly possible and encouraged.

¹⁹J. Neil Alexander, “Embrace the Happy Occasion: Prayer Book Revision in Light of Yesterday’s Principles, Today’s Questions, and Tomorrow’s Possibilities,” in *Leaps and Boundaries: The Prayer Book in the 21st Century*, ed.

An Order of Worship for the Evening

(with specific suggestions and adaptations for Advent)

The church or room is dark, or partially so, when the service is to begin.

All stand, and the Officiant greets the people with these words.

People Prepare the way of the Lord
All flesh shall see the salvation of God.²⁰

or

People Come, thou long-expected Jesus
Born to set your people free.²¹

One of the following, or some other Short Lesson of Scripture appropriate to the occasion or to the season, may then be read:

Isaiah 60:19-20 (the Lord will be your light)
Luke 12:35-37 (be ready and waiting)
Romans 13:11 (wake out of sleep)²²
Romans 13:12 (put on the armor of light)²³
Revelation 22:20 ("Surely, I come quickly.")²⁴
Isaiah 7:14 (a virgin shall conceive)²⁵

The Officiant then says the Prayer for Light, using any one of the following or some other suitable prayer, first saying

Paul V. Marshall and Lesley Northup (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 1997), 186.

²⁰*ELW*, 61. When items are taken from a source than the 1979 *BCP*, I will footnote them.

²¹*Hymnal 1982*, 66.

²²*Common Worship: Times and Seasons*, 43.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵*Ibid.*

Let us pray.

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Eternal God, through long generations you prepared a way for the coming of your Son, and by your Spirit you still bring light to illumine our paths. Renew us in faith and hope, that we may welcome Christ to rule our thoughts and claim our love, as Lord of lords and King of kings, to whom be glory always. *Amen.*²⁶

*The candles at the Altar are now lighted, as are other candles and lamps as may be convenient. An Advent wreath may also be lighted at this time.*²⁷

During the candle-lighting, an appropriate anthem or psalm may be sung, or silence kept.

The following hymn, or a metrical version of it, or some other hymn, is then sung

O Gracious Light *Phos hilaron*

O gracious Light,
pure brightness of the everliving Father in heaven,
O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed!

Now as we come to the setting of the sun,

²⁶Collect for the First Sunday of Advent, *BCW*, 173.

²⁷*Times and Seasons* includes two sets of prayers: *Times and Seasons*, 49-57, included in the handout. *BCW* has a form as well, included in the handout. ChurchYear.net also provides Advent wreath resources and prayers: <http://www.churchyear.net/adventwreath.html>. Accessed 1 January 2011.

However, when used within the context of this Order, simply lighting the number of candles corresponding to the week of Advent is probably sufficient in most instances. A rubric in *The Book of Occasional Services* notes that when the lighting of the Advent Wreath takes place in the church, "no special prayers or ceremonial elaboration beyond what is described on page 143 of the Prayer Book is desirable." *BOS*, 30.

and our eyes behold the vesper light,
we sing your praises, O God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

You are worthy at all times to be praised by happy voices,
O Son of God, O Giver of life,
and to be glorified through all the worlds.

or

Creator of the Stars of Night (*Hymnal 1982*, 60)
Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus (*Hymnal 1982*, 66)
Be Thou My Vision (*Hymnal 1982*, 488)
I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light (*Hymnal 1982*, 490)

The Lord's Prayer

Suggested Blessings/Dismissals/Closing Prayers

Gracious and holy God, give us diligence to seek you, wisdom to perceive you, and patience to wait for you. Grant us, O God, a mind to meditate on you; eyes to behold you; ears to listen for your word; a heart to love you; and a life to proclaim you; through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. *Amen.*²⁸

Strengthen us, O God, in the power of your Spirit, to bring good news to the poor, and lift blind eyes to sight, to loose the chains that bind, and claim your blessing for all people. Keep us faithful in your service until Christ comes in final victory, and we shall feast with all your saints in the joy of your eternal realm. Through Christ....²⁹

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you, scatter the darkness from before your path, and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory; and the blessing....³⁰

People Our Lord says, "I am coming soon."
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.
May the Lord, when he comes, find us watching and waiting.

²⁸*ELW*, 145.

²⁹*BCW*, 171.

³⁰*Times and Seasons*, 41.

People Amen.³¹

People With love and compassion,
Come, Lord Jesus.

People With judgment and mercy,
Come, Lord Jesus

People In power and glory,
Come, Lord Jesus.

The *BCP* suggests a variety of ways this service may continue – with Evening Prayer or the Eucharist, as a complete office in its own right, or “it may be followed by a meal or other activity. . . .”³² For the purposes of this paper, I have assumed that it will be followed by a meal or a church event, and so have concluded the service as above.

I hope these resources suggest how to begin to design rich Advent liturgies that will embrace the beauty and tension of the season and perhaps pull us out of the rut of thinking of Advent as solely a season for “getting ready for Christmas” (as Bill’s rector kept insisting).³³ These are only a beginning, but I hope they provide some grist for the mill.

³¹*Times and Seasons*, 41.

³²1979 *BCP*, 112-113.

³³I suppose, canonically, we are limited in how we may supplement the Prayer Book.

Appendix of Additional Resources:

<http://www.cofe.anglican.org/worship/liturgy/commonworship/resources/downloads/pdftexts.html>

<http://www.churchyear.net/adventprayers.html>

<http://www.churchyear.net/adventwreath.html>