



Worship Service: New Year's Sunday

Helpful Elements:

Christmas hymnal and sing-along recordings

White table covering

Advent stand and electric candles

Nativity scene (separate table)

Welcome: Welcome! Thank you for being here today to share in our time of worship and fellowship. My name is ____ and I'll be leading our worship time today. Today is the first Sunday after Christmas, the fifth Sunday of Advent, and it's also the eve of the New Year.

(Turn on the candles of Hope, Love, Joy, Peace, and the Christ Candle – or have someone in the front row “light” them.)

Today and through next week, we light the candle of Hope (purple), the candle of Love (purple), the candle of Joy (pink), the candle of Peace (purple), and the white candle, the Christ candle, which symbolizes Light – remembering the hope, love, joy, peace, and light that Christ brought into the world.

Please join me as we open with a special prayer for the new year.

Opening prayer:

Creator God, at the start of this New Year
when thoughts turn again to beginnings, starting afresh:
Be with us as we gaze into the distance
of new mornings and evenings,
of hopes and dreams,
opportunities for service,
challenges and uncertainties.
Take our fears and turn them into strengths.

Take our lack of faith and empower us
through the Spirit who breathes life into this world
whose presence is reflected in the icy chill of winter's breath
as well as the comforting warmth of a summer breeze.
Walk with us into this New Year of opportunity. Amen.¹

Hymns:

Joy to the World

O Come O Come Emmanuel

Angels from the Realms of Glory

First reading: Philippians 3:7-14. This is the apostle Paul writing to the new believers in Philippi:

⁷ Whatever gain I once had, I [now count] as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For Christ's sake I have suffered the loss of all things. [I consider them garbage,] in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith. ...

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or [have already reached my goal], but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

We Three Kings

Second reading: Revelation 21:1-5. This is part of a vision given to the apostle John, as recorded in the very last book of the Bible.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new

¹ Modified from http://www.faithandworship.com/Prayers_Winter.htm

Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. God will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." ⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

Angels We Have Heard on High

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

Interactive Homily: Here we are at the eve of the New Year! Let's think more about what that means in our lives of faith.

- What's a common practice around this time of year?
 - Making resolutions.
- How would you describe a resolution?
 - A goal or commitment, something you want to do or accomplish.
- What are some resolutions you've made in the past?
 - Exercise more, talk less, write down something you're grateful for every day, keep in touch with friends more regularly ...
- What can keep you from fulfilling those well-intentioned resolutions?
 - Laziness.
 - Priorities change.
 - Forgetfulness. When life gets busy, you don't remember the resolution.
 - Too hard, or it doesn't seem as important.
- What can help you to keep a New Year's resolution?
 - Other people! Having an accountability buddy.
 - Putting reminders where you'll see them.
 - Being motivated by health or other needs.
- The apostle Paul, while he was in prison, has a strong resolution: he is determined to look forward to the promises of God (Phil. 3:13-14):
 - "...One thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

- How much can we change the past, what lies behind?
 - Not at all. It's fixed.
- However, what are God's promises today for what lies ahead?
 - Revelation 21: "...God himself will be with [us] as [our] God. He will wipe away every tear..., and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away ... Behold, I am making all things new."
- God has a glorious future in store for us! But does that mean we simply ignore our circumstances here and now?
 - No! Look at Paul: When he wrote to the Philippians, Paul was in prison; his circumstances were terrible. And yet where did he put his focus?
 - What lies *ahead*: "I press on."
 - Like Paul, we can rely on God for strength to do what we need to do today, with the vision of reaching what God will do in the future.
- And when does the future start?
 - RIGHT NOW. Every moment is a moment into the future, so every moment is a new chance to trust and follow God.

... Let's take a moment to silently pray and reflect on the new year and seeking to be filled with God's strength as we work and wait.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, in your love and mercy, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord's prayer together:

Lord's Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Hymn: Go Tell it on the Mountain

Third Reading: A New Year's Poem by William Arthur Ward

Another fresh new year is here ...

Another year to live!

To banish worry, doubt, and fear,

To love and laugh and give!

This bright new year is given me

To live each day with zest ...
To daily grow and try to be
My highest and my best!

I have the opportunity
Once more to right some wrongs,
To pray for peace, to plant a tree,
And sing more joyful songs!

Hymns:

This Little Light of Mine
Silent Night

Fourth Reading: Quotes for the New Year

Let our New Year's resolution be this: We will be there for one another as fellow members of humanity, in the finest sense of the word. –former Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson

Resolution One: I will live for God. Resolution Two: If no one else does, I still will. – American revivalist preacher, philosopher, and theologian Jonathan Edwards

Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step. –preacher and civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr.

Nourish beginnings, let us nourish beginnings. Not all things are blest, but the seeds of all things are blest. The blessing is in the seed. –Muriel Rukeyser, Jewish-American poet and political activist

If you are young and you drink a great deal it will spoil your health, slow your mind, make you fat – in other words, turn you into an adult. –American political satirist and journalist P.J. O'Rourke

And a funny New Year's prayer for one and all

Dear Lord, so far this year I've done well. I haven't gossiped, I haven't lost my temper, I haven't been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish, or overindulgent. I'm very thankful for that. But in a few minutes, Lord, I'm going to get out of bed, and from then on, I'm probably going to need a lot more help. Amen.

Hymns:

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

Here We Come A-Wassailing (*this song was sung by carolers as a blessing to the households they visited; listen for the blessings in the song!*)

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymns:

We Wish You a Merry Christmas

Doxology