

THE TREES OF CHRISTMAS

INTRODUCTION

This worship service focuses on the Christmas tree. We all proudly display them in our homes and churches every Christmas. Our worship service takes a close look at the Christmas tree as well as several other "Christmas Trees". Our "tree" journey begins in the Garden of Eden where we learn about the "Tree of Life" and the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil". Here we learn of God's promise to send a Savior. Part two traces the "Family Tree" of God's chosen people through the Old Testament as we see that promise continue from generation to generation. The tree in part three is the "Branch of Jesse". Here we learn about the birth of Jesus. Part four presents the picture of a lonely tree standing on a hill called Calvary. Finally the tree in part five is our very own Christmas tree. Here we learn of the significance of its shape, the ornaments, lights, tinsel, etc. Our hope is to give worshipers a new appreciation of God's love and plan for his people as can be seen in the beauty of the Trees of Christmas.

VISUAL AID: THE CHRISTMAS TREE (Optional)

Because this service is all about the trees of Christmas, we recommend an ideal visual aid – a Christmas tree, placed in the center of the chancel! This tree will be decorated with four stands of lights, each lit alone during its part in the worship service. In part one the tree will be lit in all green lights – the color of life. Part two will see the tree decked out in all blue lights – the color of promise. Part three will present a tree lit in all white – the color of Christ's purity. Part four will present a tree in red – the color of sins forgiven. For the final part all the strands will be lit at the same time – showing a tree filled with the color of God's love. (Kremer Publications has these 100 strand lights available for purchase. Call 1-800-669-0887.) You will also need an electrical power strip that you can plug into and out of easily. We also suggest a lighted star with different colored lights on the top of the tree.

POEMS (Optional)

Each of the five sections begins with a short poem by the children. Delete these if not using the tree visual aid.

NARRATOR

An older child, several children, or an adult may present these parts.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Passages are clearly marked as "Scripture". Assign these to any age level, or if you have very few children, have the congregation read them.

GROUPS OF CHILDREN

The last section includes recitation by several groups of children. Feel free to assign these to mixed groups of young and old children.

SONGS

We have provided three songs that are fitting with this service – especially the theme song: "Gather Around the Christmas Tree". Feel free to use or delete these as desired.

ITEMS AVAILABLE:

Reproducible Teacher Scores and Student Scores on one CD

Sing-Along/Accompaniment CD

COMBO of the above two items

Worship Bulletins designed for this service

Sets of RED, BLUE, GREEN and WHITE lights – 100 bulbs per each color strand.

Pre-service Sing-Along song sheets

"I WISH I COULD HAVE BEEN THERE": – 28 Christmas Songs for Children of All Ages

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the trees of christmas

(Have tree completely dark – no lights burning)

PROCESSIONAL (Congregation & Children): *“Joy to the World”*

INVOCATION (Pastor)

RESPONSIVE PSALM 96 (May be chanted or spoken):

P: Sing to the Lord a new song.

CHILDREN: *Sing to the Lord a new song.*

P: Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day.

C: *Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.*

P: Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.

C: *Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it.*

CHILDREN: *Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy:*

P: For he comes to judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth.

ALL: *Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.*

PRAYER: Gracious Lord God, we gather today to reflect on the joy you sent to earth that first Christmas in the stable in Bethlehem. We thank you for your love, we praise you for your grace and mercy, and we pray that you would fill our hearts with the peace of forgiveness and the joy of knowing we will one day join you in our glorious home above. Use our children and the many trees of Christmas to present your wonderful story of salvation. In the name of our living Lord Jesus. Amen.

Introduction:

NARRATOR: It's the time of year when certain trees become very important. For many of us it begins with spending time wandering through rows and rows of pine trees until we find the one just right that we want to give center stage in our homes. And whether you have a real or an artificial tree, you probably take great time and effort rearranging your furniture, untangling colored lights, hanging precious ornaments and stringing glittering tinsel.

What would Christmas be without a Christmas tree? It stands on display so proudly, giving off light and beauty. It provides a great place for us to set our wrapped Christmas gifts, and it serves as a shelter for our precious manger crèche.

Tonight we will learn about the TREES OF CHRISTMAS. We'll discover that the Christmas tree isn't the only tree of Christmas. There are other trees that show us that God cares for us. They all tell us about God's great love for us, and his wonderful gift of life and salvation.

SONG BY ALL CHILDREN: “Gather around the Christmas Tree” by John Hopkins (1820-1891)

Gather around the Christmas tree!
Gather around the Christmas tree!
Ever green have its branches been,
It is king of all the wooded scene;
For Christ, our King is born today!
His reign shall never pass away.
Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest!

Gather around the Christmas tree!
Gather around the Christmas tree!
Once the pride of the mountainside,
Now cut down to grace our Christmastide:
For Christ from heav’n to earth came down,
To gain, through death, a nobler crown.
Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest!

Gather around the Christmas tree!
Gather around the Christmas tree!
Every bough hangs with burden low,
They are gifts of love for us, we know:
For Christ is born, His love to show,
The greatest gift to all below.
Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna, in the highest!

part 1: the garden trees

ALL CHILDREN: **Let’s begin our long journey with a promise foretold
In the Garden of Eden where sin first took hold.
There a life-giving tree played a part in the scene
So let’s turn our tree first to a life-giving GREEN.**

(Switch on GREEN lights only.)

NARRATOR 1: Trees play an important part in many of our favorite Bible stories.

LOWER GRADES: Can you imagine how many trees Noah cut down to build the ark?

SCRIPTURE: *“Make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out.” Genesis 6:14*

LOWER GRADES: Zacchaeus climbed a tree to see Jesus.

SCRIPTURE: *“So [Zacchaeus] ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.” Luke 19:4*

LOWER GRADES: Because Jesus helped in the carpenter’s shop, he knew all about trees.

SCRIPTURE: *“Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son?” Mark 6:3*

LOWER GRADES: And Jesus cursed the fig tree that wouldn’t grow any figs.

SCRIPTURE: Jesus said to the fig tree, *“May you never bear fruit again!” Matthew 21:19*

LOWER GRADES: There are many kinds of trees mentioned in the Bible.

(Use different children to speak out:)

Almond trees
Apple trees
Cedar trees
Chestnut trees
Oak trees
Olive trees
Palm trees
Willow trees
And even Pine trees!

NARRATOR 1: But two trees become important right at the beginning of the Bible. They are the trees God placed in the Garden of Eden.

ALL CHILDREN RECITE: *“In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Genesis 2:9*

LOWER GRADES: The first tree was the **Tree of Life**.

NARRATOR 1: One tree was a good tree from which Adam and Eve were to eat and enjoy. It was named the Tree of Life. As long as Adam and Eve ate from this tree they would live forever.

LOWER GRADES: The second tree was the **Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil**.

NARRATOR 1: The other tree was a dreadful tree called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If Adam or Eve ate from this tree they would bring death on themselves. But that’s the tree they wanted! And with a bite of its fruit came God’s curse - and God’s promise.

SCRIPTURE: *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel.” Genesis 3:15*

NARRATOR 1: With the first sin came the first promise of a Savior. The one God promised here was the same one who was born in Bethlehem. And so God sent Adam and Eve out of the lovely garden for a very good reason.

SCRIPTURE: *“Man must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” Genesis 3:22*

NARRATOR 1: But that’s not the last time the Bible speaks about the **Tree of Life**. In the book of Revelation God said we will see this same tree in heaven.

SCRIPTURE: *“To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.” Revelation 2:7*

SONG (LOWER GRADES): *“Christmas Tree”* by Naomi Mahnke

With joy we see the Christmas tree,
Its base so large and broad.
The constant green of its branches
Remind us of our living God.
And as we learn the meanings
That to this tree are giv’n
The stately limbs do show us;
They’re pointed up to heav’n.

Now on this tree we see the lights,
So sparkling and so bright,
And for a brief time it helps us

To feel that all things are right
But we remember in our life
That sin and troubles swirled.
Then through God's Word we gladly turn
To Christ, the Light of the World.

part 5: the christmas tree

ALL CHILDREN: **And now that we've told you of trees long ago
That have taught us the story we all love and know
We will light up our tree with a glad Christmas cheer,
And we'll carry that glow throughout the new year.**

(Switch ON ALL strands of lights AND STAR on top.)

NARRATOR 4: There's still one tree we haven't talked about. Do you know which tree that is? It's our Christmas tree! We see it in our homes and in our church. But where did the tradition of the Christmas tree come from, and what does it mean for us?

UPPER GRADES: Some say the history of the modern Christmas tree dates back to Germany in the 1500's. Perhaps it was Martin Luther who set up the first fir tree inside his house at Christmas time.

NARRATOR 3: Small candles, glass balls, tinsel, and the "Star of Bethlehem" were often used to decorate the tree.

NARRATOR 2: Some feel the Christmas tree came from another tree called the Paradise Tree on which apples were hung.

NARRATOR 1: Regardless of its history, the Christmas tree still holds much symbolism for us today.

(Said slowly and deliberately)

CHILDREN GROUP 1: The green of the Christmas tree reminds us of the life Jesus gave to me.

CHILDREN GROUP 2: The shape of the Christmas tree points my eyes to heaven, where I will one day be with Jesus.

CHILDREN GROUP 3: The tree reminds me of the tree in the Garden of Eden, where sin began, and where God promised us Jesus.

CHILDREN GROUP 4: The lights on the Christmas tree remind me that Jesus is the Light of the World.

CHILDREN GROUP 1: The tinsel on the Christmas tree reflects the love of Jesus.

CHILDREN GROUP 2: The ornaments on the Christmas tree remind me of the many blessings God has given to me.

CHILDREN GROUP 3: The gifts under the Christmas tree remind me of the best gift God gave me in the Bethlehem stable.

CHILDREN GROUP 4: The wood of the Christmas tree reminds me of the Calvary tree.

ALL CHILDREN: The Christmas tree gives us a place to gather at Christmas to hear the story of God's wonderful love.

BENEDICTION

SONG - RECESSIONAL: "O Christmas Tree" ("O Tannenbaum")
O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum, Wie treu sind deine Blätter!
O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum, Wie true sind deine Blätter!
Du grunst nicht nur zur Sommerzeit, Nein, auch im Winter, wenn es schneit.
O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum, Wie true sind deine Blätter!

O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, O tree of green unchanging.
O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, O tree of green unchanging.
Your boughs, so green in summer time, Do brave the snow of winter time.
O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, O tree of green unchanging.

O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, You set my heart a-singing.
O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, You set my heart a-singing.
Like little stars, your candles bright Send to the world a wondrous light.
O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, You set my heart a-singing.

O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, You come from God, eternal.
O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, You come from God, eternal.
A symbol of the Lord of Love Whom God to man sent from above.
O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, You come from God, eternal.

Gather Around the Christmas Tree

Hopkins

Chords: B \flat C F B \flat C F C Dm Gm F C7 F F

Voice

Piano

1. Gath-er a-round the
2. Gath-er a-round the
3. Gath-er a-round the

Chords: C7 F Dm F Gm F F Dm

Pno.

Christ-mas tree! Gath - er a-round the Christ-mas tree! Ev - er green have its
Christ-mas tree! Gath - er a-round the Christ-mas tree! Once the pride of the
Christ-mas tree! Gath - er a-round the Christ-mas tree! Ev - 'ry bough hangs with

Chords: Gm C7 F Dm G7 C F C Em

Pno.

branch - es been, It is king of all the wood - land scene; For Christ, our King, is
moun - tain - side, Now cut down to grace our Christ - mas tide; For Christ from Heav'n to
bur - den low, They are gifts of love for us, we know; For Christ is born, His

Gather Around the Christmas Tree

2/4

A Dm B \flat G7 C F7 B \flat C F

The first system of music features a vocal line in the upper staff and a piano accompaniment in the lower staff. The vocal line begins with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand. The key signature has one flat (Bb), and the time signature is 2/4.

born to - day! His reign shall nev - er pass a - way. Ho - san - na, Ho -
earth came down, To gain, through death, a no - ble crown. be - low
love to show, The great - est gift to all

Pno.

18 B \flat C F 1.2. C7 Dm Gm F C7 F Last time C7 Dm Gm F C7 F

The second system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. It includes a first ending (1.2.) and a 'Last time' section. The vocal line has a half note G4, quarter notes A4, B4, and C5, followed by a repeat sign and a final note G4. The piano accompaniment follows the same chord structure as the first system.

san - na, Ho - san - na, in the hight - est! san - na, in the hight - est!

Pno.

18 1.2. Last time

The third system shows the piano accompaniment for the second system, including the first ending and 'Last time' sections. The right hand plays chords, and the left hand plays a simple bass line. The system concludes with a double bar line.