Waiting for the hour [Emancipation]
December 31, 1862.
Carte de visite. Washington, 1863

WATCH NIGHT

MUSIC & WORSHIP RESOURCES

Monday, December 31, 2007

Leo Davis, Lectionary Team Liturgist

Worship Planning Notes

This is a service of African American congregations that began as people anticipated “watching out” for the last years of slavery. This service of watching and waiting continues. Watch Night worship is a time for reflection, testimony, and song. It is the time when we voice our determination to fully live out the year to come.

Altar Focus: A big clock with the hands struck at five minutes to midnight can be placed on an altar that has been covered with Kente cloth. When the service begins is optional.
It would be ideal to hold a church and community potluck before the service and have the service begin at 10:30 p.m.

As persons enter the sanctuary, songs from the *Sweet Honey in the Rock: Raise Your Voice!* DVD, named in the audio-visual suggestions section, can be played as background music. Songs from the DVD can also be played at various moments during the worship service. It is strongly encouraged that the DVD be utilized if the church is technically suitable. Worship leaders and media technicians should work together to use the DVD to help set the mood for the liturgical moment on the calendar—Watch Night.

During the service, instead of making New Year's resolutions, various members of the congregation should offer Covenant declarations as part of their testimonies. These declarations are commitments made to God in the presence of the community concerning the incoming year. The worship should be designed so that it is inclusive of all ages and is festive and holy.

As you review the material below, we trust that it will provide you with ideas to glorify God and uplift all who attend your service.

1. **Litany**

   **“Watch Night”**

   **Male Lay Member:** We gather with quiet invocations and fervent shouts in prayer houses built by our ancestors. It is the anniversary of freedom's eve and the beginning of a new year and our voices ache with jubilee songs; our feet are moving, our bodies are possessed, and our spirits are remembering.

   **Female Lay Member:** It was on New Year’s Day long ago, when enslaved Africans, their children, and their children’s children became irrevocably free. On the first day of January, A.D. 1863 all persons held as slaves within any state or designated part of the state were freed.

   **Youth Male:** The freedom words that were woven into sweet-grass baskets, hidden in the words of Negro Spirituals, preached aloud at campground meetings, sung to black babies in sleepy-time songs, would become the law of the land.

   **Congregation:** Alleluia! Praise the Lord.

   **Youth Female:** After 100 days of waiting, three years of a bloody civil war, and more than two centuries of servitude, in answer to the petitioner's plea: “How long my Lord, how long; truly there was a reason why,” freedom's eve became freedom's day.

   **Choir Member:** So many were gathered on that New Year's Eve in 1862. Some had skin as dark as the midnight sky, some as pale as the sand on a sea-island beach; truly there was a reason why.

   **Deacon/Elder:** Embraced by traditions from across the seas, our ancestors had the griots tell those wonderful stories of home. Truly, there was a reason why they created drum sounds with their feet, their handclaps, and their rhythm sticks that spoke of a future free of shackles. They waited and watched ‘til the morning came. They trusted the words of Lincoln when he declared that slaves: SHALL BE THEN, HENCEFORWARD, AND FOREVER FREE.

   **Minister:** They believed the words of Leviticus: It shall be a jubilee for you. And each of
you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family. But could they really have faith (this time) that the righteous would truly be blessed? For the comings and the goings of life can never be foretold.

**Congregation:** How long, my Lord, how long?

**Female Lay Member:** There was no word at midnight nor at daybreak. But past dusk on New Year’s Day came a message tapped across telegraph wires, and spoken at great mass meetings: The proclamation had been signed, Emancipation is forever, God's chosen would be free.

**Male Lay Member:** It was written: Upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice warranted by the constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

**Youth Male:** Today more than a century later, in churches, chapels, and houses of prayer, on the anniversary of freedom's eve on Watch Night we gather to welcome yet another year, and to bring jubilee while waiting anew for the midnight hour.

**Congregation:** With whispers and shouts, singing and silence, libations and thanksgiving, remembering that we were not always free.

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**2. Hymn or Anthem**

**Hymn**

(a) *O God Our Help in Ages Past.* By Isaac Watts. Arr. by William Croft. Tune, (MONOAH)

This hymn originated in the 18th century and is based on Psalm 90. It reminds the church of “help” in the past, “shelter” in the present, and our “hope” for the future.

**Hymn**


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**3. Spirituals or Traditional Songs**

(a) *My Soul’s Been Anchored in De Lord.* Arr. by Glenn L. Jones

(b) *I Want Jesus to Walk with Me.* Arr. by Moses G. Hogan

(c) *Don’t You Let Nobody Turn You ‘Round.* Arr. by Lena I. McLin

(d) *Keep Your Lamps Trimmed and Burning.* Arr. by Andrae Thomas

(e) *Oh Day Yonder Come Day.* Arr. by Bessie Jones and Bernice Johnson Reagon

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**4. Modern Songs**

The suggested selections below are designated for small to larger ensembles, with experienced vocalists.

(a) *Restoring the Years.* By Donald Lawrence

(b) *For Every Mountain.* By Kurt Carr

(c) *Jesus, You Brought Me All the Way.* By Kenneth W. Louis

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**5. Offertory Song or Instrumental**
Organ Offertory
Go Down Moses. Arr. by Fela Sowande

6. Song or Instrumental for the Period of Prayer
Meter Hymn
(a) Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee. By Charles Wesley. Arr. by Evelyn Simpson-Curenton

Instrumental
(b) Awesome God. By Rich Mullins

7. Congregational Songs or Songs for Praise Teams
The following selections would be best performed by a small ensemble (e.g. a Praise Team), with a vocally suitable worship leader. The hymn singing should lend itself to congregational participation at the direction of the worship leader.
(a) New Season. By Israel Houghton and Derrick W. Thomas
(b) Your Latter Will Be Greater. By Israel Houghton and Derrick W. Thomas
(c) I Call You Faithful. By Bobby Price and Kevin Walker
(d) Order My Steps. By Glenn Burleigh
(e) Hold to God’s Unchanging Hand. By Jennie Wilson, refrain by F. I. Eiland
(f) I Don’t Feel No Ways Tired. By Curtis Burrell

8. Invitational Song or Instrumental
Speak to My Heart. By Donnie McClurkin
This song can be used as an instrumental or vocal solo selection.

9. Benediction Song or Instrumental
My Tribute. By Andraé Crouch

10. Audio Visual Suggestions
American Masters: Sweet Honey in the Rock: Raise Your Voice!
# 2 I Remember, I Believe
# 7 In the Morning When I Rise
#13 Ballad of the Broken Word/Give the People Their Right to Vote!
#14 Prayer 2 the ONE
#15 Women Gather
#16 Nature Song
#17 Intro-Run
#18 Run
#19 Come Unto Me
#20 Old Ship of Zion
11. Other Recommendations
For additional worship recommendations for Monday, December 31, 2007, please see the Cultural Resource area of this website.

Cites and Additional Information for Music and Material Listed

1. Watch Night: Written by Karen Hurst, Philadelphia, PA. Used with permission

2. Hymn or Anthem
Hymns
Location: GIA Publications, Inc.
7404 South Mason Avenue
Chicago, IL 60638
Phone: 1-800-442-1358
Online location: www.giamusic.com
3. Spirituals or Traditional Songs
(a) My Soul’s Been Anchored in De Lord. Arr. by Glenn L. Jones
Location:
J. W. Pepper & Sons Incorporated
2480 Industrial Boulevard
Paoli, PA 19301
Phone: 1-800-345-6296

Online location: www.jwpepper.com

(b) I Want Jesus to Walk with Me. Arr. by Moses G. Hogan
Location:
J. W. Pepper & Sons Incorporated
Phone: 1-800-345-6296
Online location: www.jwpepper.com

(c) Don’t Let Nobody Turn You ‘Round. Arr. by Lena J. McLin
Location:
J. W. Pepper & Sons Incorporated
Phone: 1-800-345-6296
Online location: www.jwpepper.com

(d) Keep Your Lamps Trimmed and Burning. Arr. by Andrae Thomas
Location:
J. W. Pepper & Sons Incorporated
Phone: 1-800-345-6296
Online location: www.jwpepper.com

(e) Oh Day Yonder Come Day. Arr. by Bessie Jones and Bernice Johnson Reagon
Location:
J. W. Pepper & Sons Incorporated
Phone: 1-800-345-6296
Online location: www.jwpepper.com

4. Modern Songs
(a) Restoring the Years. By Donald Lawrence
Location:
NTIME MUSIC COMPANY
4913 Albemarle Road #103
Charlotte, NC 28205
Phone: 704-531-8961

Online location: www.ntimemusic.com

(b) For Every Mountain. By Kurt Carr
5. Offertory Song or Instrumental
Go Down Moses. Arr. by Fela Sowande
Location:
Lois Fyfe Music
2814 Blair Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37212

Online location: sales@loisfyfemusic.com

6. Song or Instrumental for the Period of Prayer
(a) Father I Stretch My Hands to Thee. By Charles Wesley. Arr. by Evelyn Simpson-Curenton
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. #128

(b) Awesome God. By Rich Mullins
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. #126

The New National Baptist Hymnal 21st Century Edition. #44

7. Congregational Songs or Songs for Praise Teams
(a) New Season. By Israel Houghton and Derrick W. Thomas
Location:

(b) Your Latter Will Be Greater. By Israel Houghton and Derrick W. Thomas
Location:

(c) I Call You Faithful. By Bobby Price and Kevin Walker
Location:
NTIME MUSIC COMPANY
Phone: 704-531-8961
Online location: www.ntimemusic.com
(d) Order My Steps. By Glenn Burleigh  
Location:  
   African American Heritage Hymnal. #333  
   The New National Baptist Hymnal 21st Century Edition. #526

(e) Hold to God’s Unchanging Hand. By Jennie Wilson, refrain by F. I. Eiland  
Location:  
   African American Heritage Hymnal. #404  
   African Methodist Episcopal Hymnal. #513  
   The Hymnal of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. #248  
   The New National Baptist Hymnal 21st Century Edition. #51  
   The New Progressive Baptist Hymnal. #248  
   Yes, Lord! Church of God in Christ Hymnal. #406

(f) I Don’t Feel No Ways Tired. By Curtis Burrell  
Location:  
   African American Heritage Hymnal. #414  
   Lead Me, Guide Me: The African American Catholic Hymnal. #159  
   Yes, Lord! Church of God in Christ Hymnal. #364

8. Invitational Song or Instrumental  
Speak to My Heart. By Donnie McClurkin  
Location:  
   NTIME MUSIC COMPANY  
   Phone: 704-531-8961  
   Online location: www.ntimemusic.com

9. Benediction Song or Instrumental  
My Tribute. By Andraé Crouch  
Location:  
   African American Heritage Hymnal. #111

10. Audio Visual Suggestions  
American Masters: Sweet Honey in the Rock: Raise Your Voice!  
Location:  
   Phone: 1-800-531-4727
Online location: www.shoppbs.org