

Do Not Be Afraid.

I Bring You Good News!

A Children's Christmas Service

We are living in an age where fear has come to the forefront in many lives, young and old. Although Scripture repeats the words "do not fear" more than a hundred times, we need to be reminded of it every day. Throughout the Bible, as well as in the Christmas story, we see people like Mary and the shepherds struck with fear until they realized the comfort and assurance of God's love. This service for preschool through grade 8 looks at the problem of fear from Eden to today. Throughout the service the message, "Do not be afraid. I bring you Good News!" is heard.

The program includes narration, recitation, and suggestions for congregational songs. Children's songs may be chosen by your staff or you can choose from a list of over 60 children's Christmas songs that Kremer has available. Feel free to make any changes to this program necessary to help it fit your particular situation.

THE NARRATION

There are parts included for two narrators. Feel free to use any number of children for these parts.

RECITATIONS

Recitation sections always include Bible verses that reinforce the narrator's point.

BANNER

Artwork has been provided to make a full size church banner.

WORSHIP BULLETIN

Although a preprinted worship bulletin for this service is not available, this file includes the artwork so you might print our own service folder covers in black and white.

ABOUT THE SONGS

Congregational songs are suggested. There are also place markings for children's songs. Feel free to let your staff choose these songs or if you would like to explore alternative kids' songs, Kremer Resources has available 60 Christmas songs from past children's Christmas services. Visit the Kremer website at www.kremerresources.com and click through to CHRISTMAS & WORSHIP SERVICES > 23 CHRISTMAS SERVICES > OTHER CHRISTMAS PRODUCTS > SHEET MUSIC AND MP3 dropdown. Each song comes with reproducible sheet music, singer, and accompaniment MP3. Cost is \$9.99 per song.

PERMISSION

As with all Kremer Christmas services, you are granted permission to videotape or share this worship service via the Internet. If possible, we do ask that Kremer be given recognition as publisher.

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Processional Hymn: "From Heaven above to Earth I Come"

Invocation

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

P: Gracious Lord God, we live in a sinful world that brings with it many fears. We fear for our homes, our health, and our country. Yet in your great wisdom, you see the daily struggles we encounter and assure us that all things are under your divine control. Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true light. Grant that as we have known on earth the wonder of that light, we may also behold him in all his glory in the life to come, where there will be no more fear; through your only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Call to Worship

(from the Song of Zechariah; Luke 1:68-74)

P: Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,

C: because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

P: He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David

C: as he said through his holy prophets of long ago,

P: salvation from our enemies

C: and from the hand of all who hate us—

P: to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant,

C: the oath he swore to our father Abraham:

P: to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,

C: and to enable us to serve him without fear.

PART ONE: **Where Fear Began**

Children's Song

All Children: When God had made the world,
Before the awful fall,
When everything was good and pure
There was no fear at all!

N1: All of us know what it is like to be afraid. As children, our fears can be over little things, like monsters under the bed, the dark, or dentists. When we get older, our fears became more complex, like rejection, job loss, or...dentists.

N2: Did you know that Gustave Eiffel, designer of the Eiffel Tower, was afraid of heights? And not to be outdone, Thomas Edison, the man who invented the light bulb, was afraid of the dark. Lists have been made of what people are most afraid of. Number 1 on the list is fear of speaking in front of a group of people. Number 2 is fear of heights. Number 3 is fear of going to the dentist and number 4 is fear of snakes. Number 5 is the fear of flying, and 6 is fear of spiders and insects. Number 7 is a fear of tight spaces. This is called claustrophobia. Number 8 is the fear of mice, number 9 is a fear of dogs, and number 10 is the fear of thunder and lightning.

N1: Fears are called phobias. Arithmophobia is the fear of numbers and Scolionophobia is the fear of school. Are any phobias on your list? Certainly there are others that could be added like fear of being lost from your parents, fear of dying, fear of loneliness, or fear of becoming ill.

N2: Sometimes we learn to get over our fears; sometimes we learn to live with them. Some of our fears are completely irrational; others are well founded. But we all have fear; it is a universal experience of the human race.

N1: But it wasn't always so. When God created the world, there was no fear. Creation, the human race, and God lived together in perfect harmony. Moses wrote about this at the end of the first chapter of Genesis:

Recitation: *"God saw all that he had made, and it was very good."* (Genesis 1:31)

N2: In God's perfect creation, there was no reason for fear. It wasn't until the first sin that fear entered the world. We see it first expressed in the words and actions of Adam and Eve:

Recitation: *"Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, 'Where are you?' He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid.'" (Genesis 3:8,9)*

N1: Adam and Eve's fear was legitimate; they surely remembered God's warning:

Recitation: *"You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."* (Genesis 2:17)

N2: But what Adam and Eve did with their fear was the complete opposite of what they should have done. Instead of running from God, they should have been running to him. Though their sin destroyed God's good creation, it did not destroy the goodness of God himself. We see this in the way God responded to their sin with this promise to send a Savior:

Recitation: *"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)

N1: God was not going to let sin, guilt, and fear separate him from his children, from us. His Son would come to destroy the barrier of sin between us, inviting us back to a relationship with God that is founded not on fear, but on his unconditional love.

Song: "All Mankind Fell in Adam's Fall"

PART TWO: Living with Fear

All children: With sin came thoughts of fear;
Throughout God's Word it's found.
Yet during the good times and the bad
God's strength was all around.

This part has been removed in this sample copy.

PART THREE: "Do Not Be Afraid"

All Children: "Fear not," the angel said
With a voice quite strong and bold.
That message, kept for many a year,
Could finally now be told!

N1: When the time came for God to fulfill his promise, he sent angels to announce his plan to those who would play a role. Even though this message was long-awaited news, it was received at first with fear. When an angel appeared to Zechariah to announce he would have a son, he was gripped with fear and doubt. But the angel spoke these words to him:

Recitation: *“Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son. . . He will . . . make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”* (Luke 1:12,17)

N2: God chose Mary to be the mother of the Savior. When the angel Gabriel announced this news to her, she was legitimately afraid of how she, and unmarried woman, could have such a child. Again, the angel spoke to her fear:

Recitation: *“Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. . . . The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.”* (Luke 1:30-31,35)

N1: When Joseph, her fiancé, learned of Mary’s pregnancy, he faced fears of his own. He now had grounds to doubt the fidelity of the woman he loved, as well as reasons to fear for his own reputation. As he was considering the possibility of a quiet divorce, God sent an angelic vision to reassure him:

Recitation: *“Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”* (Matthew 1:20,21)

N2: The events leading up to Jesus’ birth provided new fears. A government edict forced Mary and Joseph to travel at the height of her pregnancy. When they arrived at Bethlehem, there was no suitable place for them to stay, much less deliver a baby. Far from home, sheltering in a barn, and laying the Christ-child in a feeding trough, Mary and Joseph could not have imagined a less peaceful night.

N1: But on this silent, holy night, heavenly peace flowed not from a picture perfect plan, but from a perfectly kept promise. The Christ-child born into the world is our heavenly peace, our redeeming grace, and the remedy to our ultimate fear.

Recitation: *“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.*

“So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.”

Congregation Song: “Silent Night”

N2: There's an old saying that "no news is good news." It assumes that news is more likely to be bad than good, so it's better not to receive any. Some people, understandably, are afraid to receive any news, expecting of the worst. But our hearts long for good news.

N1: On the night of Jesus' birth, the first to hear the news was a group of shepherds outside Bethlehem. At first, they received the news with fear:

Recitation: *"There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified."* (Luke 2:8,9)

N2: Here, again, we find familiar words of comfort, spoken to them by the angel:

Recitation: *"The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.'"* (Luke 2:10-12)

Recitation: *"Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.'"* (Luke 2:13,14)

N1: This was the good news for which their hearts were longing, for which all mankind had been waiting. The shepherds' fear turned to joy, as they sought out this good news:

Recitation: *"When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.'"*

Recitation: *"So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told."* (Luke 2:15-20)

N2: Imagine the joy of the shepherds, as they excitedly shared the news that dispelled their fear. This same joy is ours; ours to receive, and ours to share. Christ has come, and all is well.

Children's Song

PART FOUR: Freedom from Fear

All children: Now we can find new hope
When we face fears today,
For God, whose promise never fails,
Takes all our fears away.

N1: From Abraham, to Mary, and to us, God has repeated these words: “Do not be afraid.” What is it about these words that gives them power over our deepest fears? The apostle John writes about it in his first letter:

Recitation: *“God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. . . . There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear.”* (1 John 4:16,18)

N2: At the root of God’s word is his defining quality: his perfect love for us. We remember this every time we hear these familiar words:

Recitation: *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* (John 3:16)

N1: God’s perfect love is unshakable, and has the power to drive out all our fears. The Savior’s birth is proof of that love, proof that God keeps every promise. When we struggle with fear and guilt over our sin, God speaks to us from John’s first letter:

Recitation: *“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”* (1 John 3:1)

N2: When we feel lost and alone, fearful of the uncertainties of life, Jesus reassures us with these words:

Recitation: *“Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”* (Matthew 28:20)

N1: And when we are afraid to face the future, Jesus reminds us of the future he has prepared for us:

Recitation: *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”* (John 14:1-3)

N2: Whatever fears we face, God’s love is greater than them all, and gives us courage to trust him joyfully.

NI: And that joy could clearly be seen in the comforting words spoken by the angel on that great morning we call Easter.

Recitation (All children): *“The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.’”*
(Matthew 28:5,6)

N2: The day is coming when all our fears will be gone because we too shall rise just as Jesus promised.

Congregation Song: “He Will Hold Me Fast” (CW2)

Prayer and Lord’s Prayer

Benediction

P: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.

C. Amen.

Children’s Song

Announcements

Recessional: “Joy to the World”