



A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

A Resource Created for
The USA Eastern Territory by



Christmas

TIME



Purpose

Christmas "Time" is a dramatic reading for Christmas Eve candlelight services. Using various scripture references from the infancy narratives (Matthew 1-2 and Luke 2) it makes the following points: At Christmas, we should...

- Take time to wait
- Take time to watch
- Take time to wonder
- Take time to witness
- Take time to worship

Listeners are asked to consider their own relationship with *time*. So often, the ticking of the clock reminds us of the things we have failed to get done, or the many things we have left to do. Schedules dominate our lives, and every passing hour is packed with frantic activity. At no time is this more true for people than Christmas!

Yet time is the great equalizer. Every person, rich or poor, gets the same 24 hours in a day. The Christmas "Time" reading reminds us that, it was to this busy world, that Jesus entered time and history. His entry into our "*time*" to save us from sin is a never-ending source of joy to all Christ's followers. While we cannot stop time, or even slow time for that matter, we can change how we use time. Christmas Eve affords us the time to slow down our activities and reflect on Christ's coming into the world as a babe in Bethlehem.

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Length

Christmas "Time" is written to be performed with no breaks in the narrative. Each section is bridged by a carol. It is between 45-50 minutes in length.

Cast

Emcee

Speaker 1

Speaker 2

Speaker 3

Speaker 4

Select readers from the congregation who read well and possess good diction. Readers must announce and project their voices as to be heard by the audience. While not a play, readers should nonetheless "perform" their lines to communicate the gospel message behind the words. It is best that the speakers represent a broad demographic of people in the corps, therefore, cast speaking parts with diversity in mind. The emcee delivers the introduction, and bridges between the four elements of Christmas "Time", culminating with a homily on *worship*.

Scripture

All scripture references are from the NIV unless stated otherwise.

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Music

The majority of the songs or carols are taken from the new Salvation Army Song Book, 2015 edition. If you do not have access to the new song book, the words and music can be easily found from other sources.

Musical accompaniment should be small and simple, to free up as many musicians in the corps as possible to attend the candlelight service with their families. A small brass ensemble, or a pianist and guitar player will do just fine. There are some optional solo pieces that may be performed as well.

AV Requirements

Depending upon your corps' capabilities, there are slides that correspond with each of the five points, plus a title slide. An animated Christmas "Time" logo, and several videos are also available for viewing. (see Other Resources) The words to the carols can be displayed on the keynote slides, provided. After each homily begins, it is recommended that you fade to black until the next slide is needed. If you choose to not use electronic visual displays, you will need to provide the words to the carols by way of a song sheet or printed bulletin (see Other Resources).

Each of the five cast members will require a microphone. If this is not possible, they can share one microphone between them. For the times when they are all required to speak, they must ensure that they project their voices to be heard through the one mic. During the homilies when each member is speaking alone, the center mic is to be used. Scripts should be printed off and put in a black duo-tang or folder that each cast member will read from.

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Platform (Stage)

Platform should be cleared of any clutter with seats only for the cast members and musicians. For the lighting of the Advent Wreath, you may want to use fresh candles for the four Sundays of Advent. A tall white candle in the center will serve as the Christ Candle. Your regular Christmas platform decorations and lights would be most appropriate to decorate the stage. Overhead lighting should be minimal.

Candle Lighting

Appoint a designated person(s) to light the Advent Wreath candles at the appropriate times. The same person(s) can also be responsible for lighting the Christ Candle as well as the individual candles held by the members of the congregation. You may wish to appoint a young person, and an older person to do this, symbolizing the multiple generations of worshippers (young and old) present in your corps and further making the link between *time* and *worship*.

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Resources

If your AV capabilities allow it, please download the following sound effect clip.

- Ticking Clock Sound Effect

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9hlpjiGDq4>

If not, you can use a hand bell, or chime, to represent the ticking of the clock or the passing of time.

The following two songs (optional) are not found in the Salvation Army Song Book and are available here.

- Past 3 A Clock

http://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Hymns_and_Carols/Images/Woodward-Cambridge/027.jpg

- I Wonder as I Wander

<http://www.free-scores.com/download-sheet-music.php?pdf=50286>

Other Resources Include:

- Christmas "Time" Animated Logo
- Program Cover
- Upside Down Christmas Tree Video - Can be used to substitute a solo item.
- Christmas Scripture Video - Great as a prelude video, or can be used to substitute a solo item.
- Keynote Presentation (powerpoint slides) - widescreen and regular