

Office of Disciples Women

# Christmas Program: Awake! Awake! Prepare the way of the Lord!

**2009 General Programs**

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Indiana Region



## **Awake, Awake! Prepare the way of the Lord!**

“as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,  
‘The voice of one crying out in the wilderness;  
“Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,  
Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
And the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth;  
And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”  
(Luke 3:4-6)

### **Purpose:**

In today’s society, we find ourselves running from one thing to the next. This program is intended to help us focus on the ways that we might prepare ourselves for the coming of the Messiah, God with us. Let us step outside of time for this brief moment and focus on God.

### **Suggestions for the leader:**

- Materials needed: Bible (The scripture will be read several times, and it is fine to have different versions to read from. However, I suggest using the same version for all three readings of the Lectio Divina exercise.), paper for participants, art supplies (pencils, crayons, markers, water colors, clay – you pick what you would like to have available), worship space (purple, blue or white cloth and a candle), a board or paper to write a group list on.
  - Before beginning, ask someone to: read the introduction to the group, lead the call to worship, to read the scripture during worship, to read the meditation or offer a short one of their own, to read the offering invitation and prayer, to lead or play the hymns, to lead the benediction.
  - It might be nice to have some music playing softly in the background during the response time to the scripture. If you choose to have music playing, it is best to use instrumental music. The words can get in the way of reflection for some people.
- Light the candle to begin the program.



### **Introduction:**

Awake, Awake! What are we waiting for? Time will not stop and things will not settle down to give us the time we need to prepare for the Messiah. Life can hit us from all directions. Our lives are filled with appointments, work, school, church, meetings, children’s activities. We can make calls while at the store or on the road. We can send an e-mail or text message. Many of us find ourselves in the midst of chaos and tight schedules too frequently, especially around the holiday season. How then do we find time and room for the coming of the Christ child? How are we able to, “prepare the way?”

### **Lesson:**

Begin by reading the text Luke 3:1-6.

How are we able to, “prepare the way?” There are many places where preparations need to be made, but the most overlooked is how we prepare ourselves. Society seems to tell us, that as women we must give of ourselves to others and that it is selfish to take time to focus on ourselves. If we merely give during this time of our church year, we will miss the opportunity to welcome Christ. We must find a way to awake to God’s presence, to find the space for the Christ child, and to prepare ourselves to welcome God with us.

**Exercise – Lectio Divina**

Lectio Divina (sacred reading) is a Spiritual Discipline where we read scripture to listen for God’s word to us. Rather than study, it is a time of listening. Lectio Divina is a process of reading and reflecting. Have someone read Luke 3:4-6 aloud while others listen. Before beginning, offer a moment for everyone to get comfortable, to close their eyes or find some focal point (mine is always the candle). Ask participants to listen for one word or phrase that particularly touches them in the passage. Following the reading, give a couple of minutes of silence and then read the same passage again, after asking participants to listen for a word or phrase that particularly jumps out at them. Again, offer a couple of minutes of silence following the reading. Now read the passage a third time, and this time ask participants to listen for what God is telling them in this exercise today.

After a few minutes of silence, invite participants to pick up any art supplies that they would like to work with and offer time to creatively respond in some way. Most of us have not been asked to be creative or “crafty” since graduating grade school, but encourage the women to reach beyond their comfort zone. This is an opportunity to reflect further on their encounter with this text from Luke. Possible reflections might include journaling, writing a poem or a Psalm, coloring or drawing a picture, using watercolors or clay. There is no right or wrong way to respond. Allow 15 or 20 minutes for response time. If you need to, adjust the time to fit your program.

Now, ask the group to break up into twos or threes and share what words or phrases spoke to them in the different readings. Share what they created as they reflected on the passage from Luke. Ask them how they feel God is speaking to them through this exercise.

If there is time, come back together as a large group and see what insights others would like to share about their experience of Lectio Divina today. Make a list of the ways that participants recognize they can prepare for the coming of Jesus this season. Some thoughts might have been prompted from the exercise, some might have come from the small group discussion, and some might be generated as a part of this sharing exercise.

**Worship:**

**Call to Worship:**

Leader: Awake, Awake, Deborah.

Women: **Awake and sing a song.**



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Leader: Awake, Awake, Mary.

Women: **Awake to the blessing you have received.**

Leader: Awake, Awake, sisters.

Women: **Awake and prepare to receive the Messiah, God with us.**

### Opening Prayer:

God of time and space, you created all things and chose to live among us, be with us now in this time of worship. We pause today to hear the words of John as he prepared for the coming of Jesus. We hear his words to us, that we are to prepare the way as well. Help us to create space to find peace within us. Help us to make room for you. Amen.

### Hymn:

“Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn” (Chalice Hymnal #138)

### Scripture:

Luke 3:1-18

### Meditation:

What are the ways that we can prepare? We pause today to look within ourselves to seek the space to prepare for the coming of the Christ child. As mothers, wives, daughters, aunts, grandmothers - how might we prepare our families? What does that mean for my family? As a member of this community of faith, how might I help to prepare this congregation for the coming of the Messiah, God with us? How might I help to prepare the world for this birth? Are there valleys to be filled or mountains to be made low? Who do I encounter in the valley today? We find our brothers and sisters in the Democratic Republic of Congo who find themselves in the middle of a war over their countries rich mineral resources. We find our brothers and sisters in Bosnia who seek to rebuild their lives after years of being displaced and traumatized through war in the early 1990s. Who do I know that has mountains before them, so large that they can't cross over? African Americans who seek justice in their day-to-day lives? Women who seek to provide for their children as they fight for rights within their work place? Who do you do you see? What are the ways that we can prepare? What are the ways that we can help others to prepare?



### Offering:

During this time of giving and receiving, we give our gifts to the Christ child. This babe to be born into our world of brokenness, we give to seek wholeness. This child who comes in peace and love, we give to seek peace. Let us give our gifts to God.

### Offering Prayer:

Gracious God, we give thanks for the birth of your son, who lives and works among us.

Take these gifts that we give this day to find peace, love and wholeness for all of your children on earth. Amen.

**Hymn:**

“People, Look East” (Chalice Hymnal #142)

**Benediction:**

Leader: Awake, Awake, sisters.

Women: **Awake to the voice in the wilderness.**

Leader: Awake, Awake, sisters.

Women: **Awake to the mountains and valleys that need leveling out.**

Leader: Awake, Awake, sisters.

Women: **Awake and prepare to receive the Messiah, God with us.**

Leader: Go in peace and seek the Christ child.

**Potential service projects:**

During this season of gift giving, why not give the gift of food to those who are hungry. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) through Week of Compassion supports many growing projects throughout the world with the Foods Resource Bank. The Foods Resource Bank (FRB) is a Non-Government Organization that works on behalf of 15 member organizations, of which Week of Compassion and Church World Service are a part. Week of Compassion funds over 20 projects that work to help communities produce enough to feed themselves and to share or provide money for their families. Bosnia, Haiti and Palestine are just three of the countries where people are getting a chance to eat and live better lives. Gifts can be given to Week of Compassion and marked for Foods Resource Bank. To learn more, go to [www.weekofcompassion.org](http://www.weekofcompassion.org) or [www.foodsresourcebank.org](http://www.foodsresourcebank.org).