



VOLUME 1



## Resources Preview

Theme: Why Wait?!

*Upon purchase and before October 26, 2023, you will receive access to the full Advent in a Box resource webpage that will provide prayers, liturgical suggestions, song selections, ideas for children youth and family, graphics, and marketing materials.*

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## Sermon Themes:

*Sermon prompts for Gospel and Isaiah passages (both drawn from the Revised Common Lectionary). Both options contain prompts and preaching helps.*

### OPTION 1: Gospel Focus

**Week 1: Come Now**

Mark 14:24-37

**Week 2: Comfort Now**

Mark 1:1-8

**Week 3: Lament Now**

John 1:6-8, 19-28

**Week 4: Peace Now**

Luke 1:26-38

### OPTION 2: Isaiah Focus

**Week 1: Come Now**

Isaiah 64:1-9

**Week 2: Comfort Now**

Isaiah 40:1-11

**Week 3: Lament Now**

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

**Week 4: Peace Now**

Isaiah 9:2-7

# Sermon Prompt Sample

*Week 1, Isaiah Focus*

*by Rev. Dr. Adam White*

## **SCRIPTURE**

Isaiah 40:1-11

## **TITLE**

Comfort Now

## **INTRO**

The opening words of Isaiah 40 might easily be misheard as a gentle suggestion. They are not. A voice from the void issues a command with the weight of legal decree. The long-silent God speaks again. Once this policy of comfort is mandated it needs to be announced and implemented. Now. In God's imperative, the situation is changed: God's people have suffered long enough, and God is acting to comfort God's people.

## **CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING**

God is addressing a crisis. The Judean community experienced a catastrophic loss of structure and institution which had given their community identity. We are also living in a time of institutional loss, change, and deconstruction. What does it mean to offer comfort to those who are presently mourning such losses? Where is comfort to be found now?

Especially during the winter we may think of comfort as coziness or contentment—what some Scandinavians call *hygge*. When it's cold outside, we may seek this in fires, warm drinks, and thick fleece blankets because we know the danger of sub-zero temperatures. How would it look in your context to consider what brings comfort, and what are the dangers lurking nearby from which we need respite?

God's imperative in Isaiah 40 is plural. It's a "y'all comfort." It's an open casting call for heralds—for those who will run ahead announcing God's decree as loudly as possible. What is the church's role in heralding the promise of God's comfort in a world where suffering and injustice are an unrelenting force?

## **IF I WERE PREACHING**

Years ago I attended a college football game that ended in a successful "Hail Mary." The team I was cheering for was behind and the outcome was going to come down to one heave of desperation by a back-up quarterback. Of course, my seat was on the opposite side of the field from the action. Still, I remember the play and the hush that fell as it ended. Then for a split-second there was unknowing. What had happened? A thunderous roar rippled through the stands. You could feel it in your bones. We'd won.

Great news can travel fast if we take up the call to bear it. The world is waiting for news that births hope and peace within us. Can we give comfort now? If I were preaching this week, I'd consider those moments where good news ripples through the world. I'd dig into that sense of joy and promise that comes when a good and right outcome is secured for people who have endured difficulty and injustice.

# Liturgy Samples

*Week 1, Isaiah Focus*

## **Confession & Forgiveness**

Come, now, Holy One! Prepare our bodies, minds, and hearts as we adopt a posture of repentance and prayer. Hear us, as we confess our sin and receive your forgiveness. Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

*(Pause for reflection)*

Compassionate God, we confess that we have not been faithful to you and to your ways. We have stirred up your anger through our unwillingness to practice love in all our doings. We are unclean and need you to restore us. We have gone our own way, falling like the autumn leaves which are blown away. Amen.

Alleluia! Christ + is with us. Hear this good news. Your sins are forgiven. God continues to accomplish awesome deeds that we do not expect. In God's loving hands we are molded into what God calls us to be. Amen.

## **Prayer of the Day**

Benevolent God, your grace astounds us! You have torn open the heavens and come down in the person of Jesus. You have made your name known to us. No eye has seen and no ear has heard of one who is greater than you! We bow low in worship today. Amen.

## **Opening Litany - Advent Wreath**

By the light of this first candle we are roused from our sinful ways, crying out, "Come now, blessed Jesus!" We are hopeful for a world that is full of your grace. Use us to share your love, calling others to recognize that we are your beloved people, clay in your hand, useful for your purposes. Help us to make your name known near and far. Out of hearts overflowing with thanksgiving, we seek to do your will. Amen.

Questions? Reach out to [support@churchanew.org](mailto:support@churchanew.org)