

Worship Service Notes

Leader/Order of Worship	Notes	Time
Greeters – Ushers	2 ushers situated at each set of double doors (6) and 1 each at the single doors (2). 6 additional ushers between aisles to gauge seating. There are a total of 14 ushers.	
Prelude – Musical Ensemble, which includes electric keyboard, drums and guitar	To be played until devotion begins	3 Minutes
Devotion – Will be lead by the Deacons (male and female)	As is customary in this church, the Deacons will be situated in the front of the pulpit facing the audience. They will stand from one end of the pulpit to the other. There will be a chair to the right facing the audience, that will be used by the deacons for pray. Most of the black churches that I have attended don't have kneeling benches.	15 Minutes
Procession of Ministers	Ministers will process from the right entrance on the right side of the pulpit facing the audience. This will occur during the time when the last hymn of the devotion period is sung (AAHH 563)	
Invocation – Pastor	The Pastor will appeal to the Holy Spirit to come into the place of worship and guide us to a place where we can experience God.	2 minutes
Hymn – Congregation	The Pastor begins this song and invites the congregation stand and join in.	3 Minutes
Welcome	The welcome message will come from the microphone that is situated to the left of the pulpit facing the audience. See the attached welcome.	1 Minute
Opening Prayer – Minister	Prayer - O God, distant yet near, we gather as witnesses to your promises that if we seek you with all our hearts, we will find you. Be among us this night. Hear the confessions of our mouths and the yearnings of our hearts. Help us change the narrowness of our vision that we may be able to see your work. Make us new again with your holy grace. Grant us the maturity to accept your many gifts in humility and to use them with faithfulness. Grant to us your spirit that our worship may have integrity and energy, ever witnessing to your holy presence in our lives. We praise and give thanks to you, through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen. ¹	2 Minutes

¹ www.ucc.org/worship.ways/advent-christmas/07behold,anewthing.pdf.

	The prayer will be given from the pulpit.	
Youth for Christ and Young Adult Choir	These choirs will sing from the choir stand that is behind the pulpit and exit out immediately when finished while music is still playing	5 Minutes
Story Teller	Will tell his story from the pulpit. The story will tell about how the slaves gathered together to hear the good news that they would be free.	3 Minutes
Dance – African Heritage Dancers & Drummers	The drummers will be in the bandstand and the dancers will be in the front center of the pulpit, facing the audience. The dancers will dance to a song that deals with suffering, struggle and deliverance	3 Minutes
Senior Choir	Will sing from the choir stand and exit immediately when finished while music is still playing	3 Minutes
Poet	Will recite the poem “Watch Night” from the pulpit. See the attached poem.	3 Minutes
Male Chorus	Will sing from the choir stand and exit immediately at the end of the song while music is still playing.	3 Minutes
Mimes	Will mime to the song _____. They will perform from the pulpit.	3 Minutes
Violinist	Will play from the left side of pulpit facing the audience. Near the bandstand.	3 Minutes
Offering & Offertory Prayer	Handled by the Deacons and Ushers as usual. Deacon Israel Brown will bless the offering.	5 Minutes
Mass Choir	Will sing from the choir stand and be seated in the choir stand when they have finished singing.	3 Minutes
Testimonies	Will come from the microphone to the right of the pulpit facing the audience.	15 Minutes
Prayer – Pastor	From the pulpit	1 Minute
Sermon – Pastor	See the attached sermon outline	25 Minutes
Hymn 414 – Pastor	Will be lead by the Pastor when his sermon is complete	3 Minutes
Watchman and Ushers	Ushers will begin by dimming the lights slowly. When the lights are off completely, except for the sidelights on the wall, Deacon Alexander Smith will call out to the Watchman and everyone will get on their knees (this is understood in the black church – that we are to be in a posture of prayer when the new year comes in). See the attached script.	1 Minute
Pastor’s Remarks and Invitation	Both will come from the pulpit, but the Pastor will walk down to the center of the floor with the	10 Minutes

	other ministers with arms outstretched.	
Benediction/Blessings of the food	Will come from the Pastor.	1 Minute

WELCOME

Good Evening. Will all of our visitors please stand. On behalf of our Pastor, _____ and the _____ Church family we welcome you to this our Watch Night Service. It is our desire that you will join in and celebrate with us as we commemorate the night when the Emancipation Proclamation was signed, but more importantly a time when we came to the stark realization that man may chain our bodies, but they can never chain our souls. Why? Because we are God’s children. Amen. We encourage you to come back and fellowship with us at anytime, here at Mt. Ephraim Baptist Church.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Lord, we bless this evening, for your grace and your mercy, your glory and your power. We bless you for the abundant provision that is evident in our lives. Now Father, as we present our tithes and offerings on this day, recognizing that we are merely stewards of your resources, we ask that you will bless these gifts so that they may be used for your kingdom’s sake. This we ask in Your Son Jesus’ name, Amen.

WATCH NIGHT

"The Lord will watch over your coming and going, both now and forevermore."

Psalm 121:8

i.

We gather
 with quiet invocations and fervent shouts
 in prayer houses built by our ancestors.
 it is the anniversary of freedom's eve,
 the beginning of a new year;
 and our voices ache with jubilee songs
 our feet moving, our bodies possessed
 our spirits remembering.
 It was on new year’s day
 long ago
 when enslaved Africans,
 their children,
 and their children's children
 became irrevocably free.

*"On the 1st day
 of January, A.D. 1863,
 all persons held as slaves
 within any State
 or designated part of a State*

*the people whereof
shall then be in rebellion . . ."*

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.

"Alleluia.

Praise the Lord."

ii.

Then freedom's eve became freedom's day
(after 100 days of waiting,
three years of a bloody civil war,
more than two centuries of servitude)
as an answer to the petitioner's plea:

"How long, my Lord, how long?"

Truly there was a reason why,
so many were gathered
on that new year's eve in 1862:
skins dark as the midnight sky,
and pale as the sand on a sea island beach.
Truly there was a reason why,
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 hand-claps, and their rhythm sticks;
spoke of a future free of shackles,
waited and watched till the morning came.

They trusted the words of Lincoln:

*"Shall be then, thenceforward,
and forever free."*

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 goings of life
can never be foretold.

"How long, my Lord, how long?"

iii.

There was no word at midnight,

nor at daybreak.
but past dusk on new year's day came a message:
tapped across telegraph wires,
spoken at great mass meetings.
the proclamation had been signed.
emancipation was forever.
God's chosen would be free.
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."*

iv.

Now, more than a century later,
in churches and chapels and houses of prayer,
on the anniversary of freedom's eve,
on watch night:
we gather
to welcome yet another year;
to bring in the jubilee.
Waiting anew for the midnight hour
with whispers and shouts,
singing and silence,
libations and thanksgiving.
Remembering that we were not always
free.

Watchman and Deacon Script

The lights are out and at 11:59 this is what follows

Deacon: Watchman, Watchman, what time is it?

Watchman: The time has come upon us, its 1 minute before midnight.

Everyone will stay on their knees praying until the lights are back on at 12:01 AM.

SERMON OUTLINE

Revelation 21:1-6

Title: New Beginnings

- I. The earth as we know it will not last forever. There will be a culmination of God's work in the world - God will create a new and eternal earth
- II. God is working at this very moment in history to make all things new for us.
- III. Our forefathers faced many challenges some dangerous, some thought to be unchangeable
- IV. How they survived
 - a. They had faith and hope in God
 - b. They knew that in the new Jerusalem they would have eternal life with Jesus. The former things will pass away
 - i. Where God is there is no death, sorrow, pain or tears
 - ii. There is peace security and love
 - iii. God's will accomplished
- V. No matter what we are going through, God has the last word
 - a. Be encouraged
 - b. Don't give up – the victory is at the end
 - c. The things that have hampered our personal relationships with God will be destroyed
- VI. Gods plan of salvation will be complete and the redeemed will be with him in a new creation one day

The sermon, hymns, prayers, etc. are tied together by the themes of faith, hope and thankfulness. In this service we honor the past and look towards a better future, a future where all the suffering will be over.

Annotated Bibliography

Abbingtion, James and Linda H, Hollies, *Waiting to Go*, Chicago: GIA Publications, 2002. To help with the African-American perspective on Watch Night/New Year's Eve Service. Included in this book was information on the focus of the service, the altar focus and hymns, spirituals and gospel selections.

Bone, Daniel L. and Mary J. Scifres, *Prepare – A weekly Worship Planbook for Pastors and Musicians*, 2005-2006, 2005. This book provided guidance on scriptures that could be utilized during the Watch Night/New Year's Day services. It also has information about suggested images that could be used in the service.

Carpenter, Rev. Delores, *African American Heritage Hymnal*, Chicago: GIA Publications, 2001. This was a very helpful resources as I searched for songs that would be relevant for a Watch Night Service. I found a variety of songs, some which weren't mentioned in the book *Waiting to Go*.

www.ucc.org/worship/ways/advent-christmas/07behold,anewthing.pdf. This website provided information on the tradition of Watch Night and gave ways to explore the celebration. In addition, it gave a sample sermon and the *Watch Night* poem.

www.wsbrec.org/blackfacts/watchnight.htm. This website also gave some of the historic aspects of the Watch Night Service. It also provided insight into the importance of the service for African-Americans.

www.ncccusa.org/nmu/mce/new_years_eve.pdf. This website, although it has historical errors, does have helpful historical information. It also provides an outline for the service.