

*This collection of gospel acclamations is dedicated to Carol Carver
in gratitude and affection.*

Gospel Acclamations – Advent through Transfiguration
by John Ferguson

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When I was asked if I would like to do a setting of the cycle of Advent-Christmas-Epiphany acclamations, my first reaction was, “Wow, what an opportunity! I’ve already experimented with some verses using handbells; this is a chance to do the whole thing.” Now that the project is completed, my reaction is, “Wow, this was a big job!” Yet it has been a rewarding challenge to design something that would work well in a multiplicity of performance situations and also be accessible enough that almost any congregation could undertake incorporation of such a resource into its worship life, especially for these seasons that are so rich in significance for our lives of faith.

To assist in enabling the realization of these settings, here are a few observations and suggestions. The settings have many possible options for implementation. Do be creative and feel free to experiment and adapt to meet local needs.

1. Each acclamation begins and ends with the alleluias for the season. The proper verse for the day is sandwiched in the middle.
2. Two options are provided for the proper verses: either SATB choir, or unison choir/cantor.
3. Children’s or youth choirs could sing the verses, perhaps using only the cantor’s line. This is not just for adults. What a great teaching opportunity to “unpack” a bit of the significance of the text as it is being learned, relating it to the Sunday when it will be sung.
4. Organists can be creative in devising colorful registrations to “paint” the texts.
5. Dynamics are not provided to encourage directors to respond not only to the mood of a specific service but also to the performing resources as well.
6. In the Christmas and Epiphany verses, use bells or organ, never both simultaneously. If bells are not available, a piano or keyboard can substitute. Remember to play an octave higher than written since bells sound an octave higher than written.
7. Consider having the congregation and choir sing the refrain together, choir (if SATB) in parts, congregation in unison.
8. Consider printing the text of the verses in the service folder when choir or cantor sings them to be sure the text is heard clearly. Printing the text also serves to assist in “cueing” the congregation for the repeat of the refrain at the end of the verse.
9. Above all, fear not. These settings were designed to be accessible for all and should not require a major investment of rehearsal time in order for them to fulfill their goal of enriching worship. When preparing the verses, think text stress, look for the important words. Then the shifting metric patterns will feel very natural.

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Alleluia Refrain for the Sundays of Advent

$\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 120$

Part I and/or cong.

Al - le - lu - ia,

Part II (opt.)

Al - le - lu - ia,

Ped. (16' to man.)

1 *To proper verse* 2
al - le - lu - ia. al - le - lu - ia.
al - le - lu - ia. al - le - lu - ia.

Scripture Index

Page	Scripture Reading	Sunday
6	Psalms 85:7	First Sunday of Advent-AB
17	Psalms 98:3	Second Sunday of Christmas
28	Jeremiah 1:7,8	Fourth Sunday after Epiphany-B
38	Lamentations 3:22	Eighth Sunday after Epiphany-A
9	Matthew 1:23	Fourth Sunday of Advent-A
18	Matthew 2:2	Epiphany of Our Lord
19	Matthew 3:17	Baptism of Our Lord
32	Matthew 4:14	Sixth Sunday after Epiphany-A
27	Matthew 4:16	Fourth Sunday after Epiphany-B
31	Matthew 4:19	Fifth Sunday after Epiphany-C
23	Matthew 4:23	Third Sunday after Epiphany-A
45	Matthew 5:10	The Holy Innocents, Martyrs
43	Matthew 5:10	Stephen, Deacon and Martyr
26	Matthew 5:12	Fourth Sunday after Epiphany-A
30	Matthew 8:17	Fifth Sunday after Epiphany-B
8	Matthew 11:10	Third Sunday of Advent-ABC
24	Mark 1:15	Third Sunday after Epiphany-B
39	Mark 2:17	Eighth Sunday after Epiphany-B
10	Luke 1:38	Fourth Sunday of Advent-BC
12	Luke 2:10,11	Nativity of Our Lord
49	Luke 2:30,31	Presentation of Our Lord
7	Luke 3:4,6	Second Sunday of Advent-ABC
33	Luke 4:15,17	Sixth Sunday after Epiphany-B
25	Luke 4:18	Third Sunday after Epiphany-C
36	Luke 4:18	Seventh Sunday after Epiphany-B
34	Luke 6:23	Sixth Sunday after Epiphany-C
37	Luke 6:35,37	Seventh Sunday after Epiphany-C
41	Luke 9:35	Transfiguration of Our Lord
6	Luke 21:28	First Sunday of Advent-C
20	John 1:4	Second Sunday after Epiphany-A
44	John 1:14	John, Apostle and Evangelist
21	John 1:41,17b	Second Sunday after Epiphany-B
22	John 2:11	Second Sunday after Epiphany-C
29	John 8:12	Fifth Sunday after Epiphany-A
42	Acts 1:8	Andrew, Apostle
47	Acts 1:8	Confession of Peter
48	Acts 2:32	Conversion of Paul
46	Philippians 2:10	Name of Jesus
40	Philippians 2:15,16	Eighth Sunday after Epiphany-C
16	Colossians 3:15,16	First Sunday of Christmas-ABC
35	1 John 2:5	Seventh Sunday after Epiphany-A