

your gracious goodwill to all people on earth, for he is God with us, Immanuel, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

THE BLESSING

M: May he who by his incarnation gathered things earthly and heavenly into one, fill us with such joy that comes with the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life.

And the blessing of God Almighty – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – be upon you and remain with you always.

C: Amen.

Please be seated.

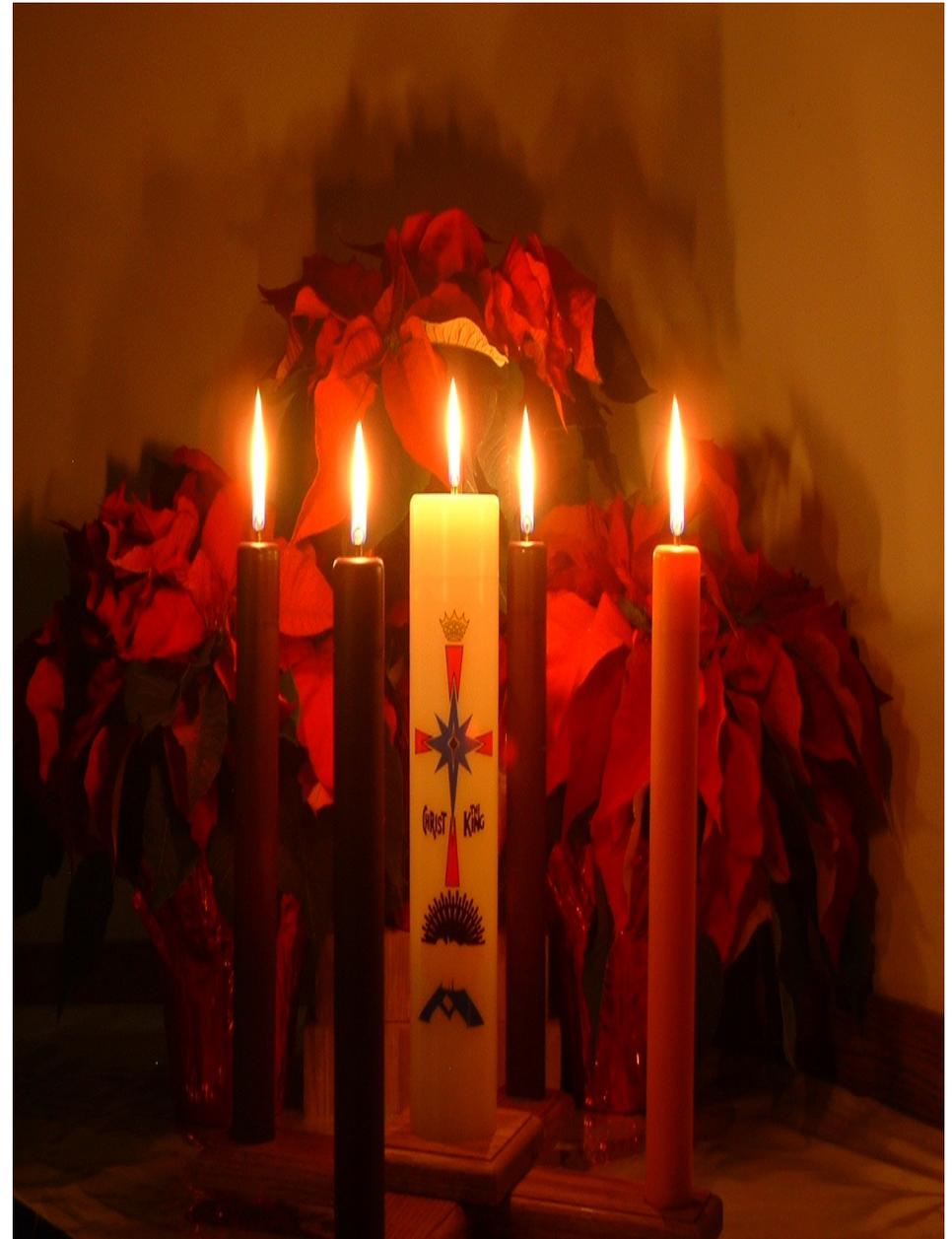
SOLO O Jesus Christ, Thy Manger Is

O Jesus Christ, Thy manger is
My paradise at which my soul reclineth.
For there, O Lord, Doth lie the Word Made flesh for us;
here-in Thy grace forth shineth.

Thou Christian heart, whoe'er thou art,
Be of good cheer and let no sorrow move thee!
For God's own Child, in mercy mild,
Joins thee to Him—how greatly God must love thee!

**Join us tomorrow morning at 10:00 a.m. for
our Christmas Day worship.**

Merry Christmas!



**A Service of Lessons and Carols
Christmas Eve 2015**

A Service of Lessons & Carols

About this service:

Tonight's service is an adaptation of the Christmas Carol Service traditionally held at King's College, Cambridge, England, on December 24th.

Lessons and Carols was first held on Christmas Eve, 1918. The lessons for tonight have been used for almost 100 years to recall God's promise to send a Savior, as well as that promise's fulfillment.

HYMN: CW 50 (vs. 1-3)

Once in Royal David's City

Please stand.

EXHORTATION AND PRAYER

M Dear people of God, in this Christmas season, it is our duty and delight to hear again the message of the angels and, in heart and mind, to go to Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us – the Christ Child lying in a manger.

Let us read and learn in Holy Scripture the story of the loving purposes of God from the first days after our fall into sin to the glorious redemption brought to us by this holy child.

But first, let us pray for people all over the world who would delight with us to know the good news of Jesus Christ and who would join with us in singing his praises. Let us pray for the people of this town and for all those in our own congregation.

And, because this pleases our Lord, let us remember in his name the poor and helpless, the cold, the hungry and the oppressed, the sick and those who are sad, the lonely and the unloved, and the elderly and the little children. We especially remember all those who do not know the Lord Jesus, those who do not love him, and those who by sin have grieved his heart of love.

Finally, let us remember before God all those who rejoice with us in heaven, who live in greater light than we, that multitude which no one can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, who died

NINTH LESSON: John 1:1-5,10-14

O Little Town of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, The silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth The everlasting Light.
The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, And gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep Their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together Proclaim the holy birth
And praises sing to God, the King, And peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently, The wondrous Gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming, But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still, The dear Christ enters in.

EXTINGUISHING OF THE CANDLES

M: Our hearts look to Christ, the Light of the world, who came at Bethlehem.
Our hearts look to Christ, the Light of the world, who comes to us in his Word.
Our hearts look to Christ, the Light of the world, who will come again.

C: **Amen.**

We extinguish our candles.

PRAYER FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

M: When all was still in the middle of the night, your eternal Word, O Lord, descended from the almighty throne to dwell among us.
May we receive him in the peace of forgiven hearts and proclaim

Son of Adam Son of heaven
Given as a ransom
Reconciling God and man
Christ our mighty Champion!
What a Saviour what a Friend
What a glorious mystery
Once a babe in Bethlehem
Now the Lord of history

OFFERING: Moved by God's love in Christ, we offer him our first and best gifts, purely out of thanks to him.

ADDRESS

LIGHTING OF CANDLES **THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION**

As the organ begins to play, the pastor lights his candle from the Christ candle. The ushers light their candles from the pastor's candle, and proceed to offer light to the first person in each pew. Please tilt the unlit candles to light them from the lit candles.

After all the candles are lit, pastor will invite everyone to stand and sing.

Silent Night! Holy Night

Silent night! Holy night! All is calm, all is bright,
Round yon virgin mother and child. Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night! Holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar; Heav'nly hosts sing, Alleluia;
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!

Silent night! Holy night! Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

in faith, and who live before the throne of God and praise him each day in his temple. We confess that we are united with them as we are united with one another.

To sum up all these petitions, let us pray as Christ himself taught us.

C: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Please be seated.

THE SEED OF THE WOMAN WILL CRUSH THE SERPENT'S HEAD

FIRST LESSON: Genesis 3:8-15

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

The man said, "The woman you put here with me-- she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,

"Cursed are you above all the livestock

and all the wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly

and you will eat dust

all the days of your life.

And I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
And you will strike his heel."

HYMN: CW 42 (vs 1-3) Come, Your Hearts and Voices Raising

GOD'S PROMISES TO ABRAHAM

SECOND LESSON: Genesis 22:15-18

The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

HYMN: CW 41 (vs 1-4) Let All Together Praise Our God

A GREAT LIGHT TO BREAK THE DARKNESS

THIRD LESSON: Isaiah 9:2,6,7

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned...

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

CHOIR:

Joy Has Dawned

Joy has dawned upon the world
Promised from creation
God's salvation now unfurled
Hope for every nation
Not with fanfares from above
Not with scenes of glory
But a humble gift of love
Jesus born of Mary

Sounds of wonder fill the sky
With the songs of angels
As the mighty Prince of Life
Shelters in a stable
Hands that set each star in place
Shaped the earth in darkness
Cling now to a mother's breast
Vulnerable and helpless

Shepherds bow before the Lamb
Gazing at the glory
Gifts of men from distant lands
Prophecy the story
Gold a King is born today
Incense God is with us
Myrrh His death will make a way
And by His blood He'll win us

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

SEVENTH LESSON: Matthew 1:18-25

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"--which means, "God with us." When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

HYMN: CW 54 (vs. 1,3,4)

Where Shepherds Lately Knelt

THE SHEPHERDS VISIT THE MANGER

EIGHTH LESSON: Luke 2:8-20

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

HYMN: CW 52

On Christmas Night All Christians Sing

A BRANCH FROM THE STEM OF JESSE

FOURTH LESSON: Isaiah 11:1-9

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of power,
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD—
and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.
He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;
but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.
Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.
The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will
lead them.
The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw
like the ox.
The infant will play near the hole of the cobra,
and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest.
They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the wa-
ters cover the sea.

HYMN: CW 61

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

A SHEPHERD BORN IN BETHLEHEM

FIFTH LESSON : Micah 5:2-4

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans of Judah,
out of you will come for me
one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of old,
from ancient times.
Therefore Israel will be abandoned
until the time when she who is in labor gives birth,
and the rest of his brothers return
to join the Israelites.
He will stand and shepherd his flock
in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they will live securely, for then his greatness
will reach to the ends of the earth.

HYMN: CW 53 (vs. 2,3,5,6) To Shepherds as They Watched by Night

THE ANGEL GABRIEL VISITS MARY

SIXTH LESSON: Luke 1:26-35, 38

In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be

afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

The Magnificat (*The Song of Mary*) *Sung by soloist*

My soul proclaims...My soul proclaims...My soul proclaims
My soul now glorifies, my spirit sings in God my Savior.
For he is mindful of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed.
My soul proclaim the greatness of the Lord.
For the Mighty one has done great things and holy is his name.
His mercy touches all who live in reverence and fear
from generation to generation.
He has done mighty deeds; he has scattered
those who are proud within their thoughts.
He's brought down rulers from their thrones and lifted up the meek.
He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich are empty.
My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.
For he has come to Israel to remember mercy
The promise made to Abraham to his sons forever.