

ABOUT THIS SERVICE

The “Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols” was first held on Christmas Eve 1918. It was planned by Eric Milner-White, who, at the age of thirty-four, had just been appointed Dean of King’s College, Cambridge, after experience as an army chaplain which had convinced him that the Church of England needed more imaginative worship. The original service was, in fact, adapted from an Order drawn up by E. W. Benson, later Archbishop of Canterbury, for use on Christmas Eve in 1880. A. C. Benson recalled: “My father arranged from ancient sources a little service for Christmas Eve—nine carols and nine tiny lessons, which were read by various officers of the Church, beginning with a chorister, and ending, through the different grades, with the Bishop.” The idea had come from G. H. S. Walpole, later Bishop of Edinburgh.

A wider frame began to grow when the service was first broadcast in 1928 and, with the exception of 1930, it has been broadcast annually, even during the Second World War, when the ancient glass (and also all heat) had been removed from the Chapel. Sometime in the early 1930’s the BBC began broadcasting the service on overseas programs. It is estimated that there are millions of listeners worldwide. From time to time King’s College receives copies of services held, for example, in the West Indies or the Far East and these show how widely the tradition has spread. The broadcasts, too, have become part of Christmas for many far from Cambridge. One correspondent writes that he heard the service in a tent on the foothills of Everest; another, in the desert. Many listen at home, busy about their own preparations for Christmas.

A revision of the Order of Service was made in 1919, involving rearrangement of the lessons, and from that date the service has always begun with the hymn “Once in Royal David’s City.” In almost every year the choice of carols has varied, and some new ones have been introduced by successive organists. The backbone of the service, the lessons and the prayers, has remained virtually unchanged. As Milner-White said, “The main theme is the development of the loving purposes of God”...seen “through the windows and the words of the Bible.”

Here at OURC, we have adapted this service for our own use. In a festive setting, this antiphonal service of Word and Song with enough narrative throughout engages both the mind and heart. This service is meant to draw us into the story of the birth of Jesus Christ of Nazareth: God’s Son, Israel’s Messiah, and our Savior. We are engaged as we hear the Scriptures read from the entire history of salvation; beginning in the Garden, moving through the Prophets, and culminating in the Gospels. In response to this great dramatic story unfolding before us, we sing some of the Church’s greatest hymnody.

O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

A FESTIVAL OF SCRIPTURE LESSONS & CAROLS

*Christmas Eve
The Year of our Lord Two Thousand Fifteen*

Oceanside United Reformed Church

The Chapel @ The Army & Navy Academy, 2605 Carlsbad Blvd., Carlsbad 92008
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United Reformed Churches in North America • North American Presbyterian and Reformed
Council • International Conference of Reformed Churches

PRELUDE

¶ *During the Prelude, please meditate on the following:*

Immensity, cloister'd in thy dear womb,
Now leaves His well-beloved imprisonment.
There he hath made himself to his intent
Weak enough, now into our world to come.
But O! for thee, for Him, hath th' inn no room?
Yet lay Him in this stall, and from th' orient,
Stars, and wise men will travel to prevent
The effects of Herod's jealous general doom.
See'st thou, my soul, with thy faith's eye, how He
Which fills all place, yet none holds Him, doth lie?
Was not His pity towards thee wondrous high,
That would have need to be pitied by thee?
Kiss Him, and with Him into Egypt go,
With His kind mother, who partakes thy woe.

—John Donne (1572–1631)

And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people. Yes; it will be that glorious and conquering name, that immortal name. St. Paul says so, for he testifies that there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby men can be saved, but the name of Jesus. But Isaiah proclaimed it before St. Paul preached it. No other name, my brethren, can conquer the globe but the name of Jesus. All men should seek that name. It shall conquer all differences between the peoples, and harmonize all conflicting views, and make us go in peace.

—Daniel Payne (1811–1893)

*OPENING CAROL—*All My Heart This Night Rejoices*

ALL my heart this night rejoices

As I hear far and near sweetest angel voices.
“Christ is born,” their choirs are singing
Till the air ev’rywhere now with joy is ringing.

Hark! a voice from yonder manger,
Soft and sweet, doth entreat, “Flee from woe and danger;
Brethren, come, from all doth grieve you,
You are freed, all you need I will surely give you.”

Come then, let us hasten yonder;
Here let all, great and small, kneel in awe and wonder,
Love Him who with love is yearning;
Hail the Star that from far bright with hope is burning!

Hither come, ye heavy-hearted,
Who for sin deep within, long and sore have smarted;
For the poison’d wounds you’re feeling
Help is near, One is here Mighty for their healing!

Thee, dear Lord, with heed I’ll cherish,
Live to Thee, and with Thee dying, shall not perish;
But shall dwell with Thee for ever,
Far on high, in the joy that can alter never.

*BIDDING PRAYER

BELOVED in Christ, be it this Christmas Eve our care and delight to prepare ourselves to hear again the message of the angels; in heart and mind to go even to Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, and the Babe lying in a manger.

Let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God from the first days of our disobedience to the glorious Redemption brought us by this Holy Child; and let us make this Chapel glad with our carols of praise.

But first let us pray for the needs of his whole world; for peace and goodwill over all the earth; for unity and brotherhood within the Church he came to build, and especially in these United States of America.

And because this of all things would rejoice his heart, let us at this time remember in his name the poor and the helpless, the cold, the hungry and the oppressed; the sick in body and in mind and them that mourn; the lonely and the unloved; the aged and the little children; all who know not the Lord Jesus, or who love him not, or who by sin have grieved his heart of love.

Lastly let us remember before God all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore and in a greater light, that multitude which no man can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom, in this Lord Jesus, we for evermore are one.

These prayers and praises let us humbly offer up to the throne of heaven, in the words which Christ himself has taught us:

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 debts as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom and the power and glory forever. Amen.

*BLESSING

THE Almighty God bless us with his grace: Christ give us the joys of everlasting life: and unto the fellowship of the citizens above may the King of Angels bring us all.

Amen!

THE FIRST LESSON—*Genesis 3:8–15*

God tells sinful Adam that he has lost the life of Paradise but that his seed will bruise the serpent's head.

CAROL—*Hark! the Herald Angels Sing*

COME, Desire of nations, come,
Fix in us Thy humble home;
Rise, the woman's conqu'ring Seed,
Bruise in us the serpent's head.
Women: Now display Thy saving power,
Men: Ruined nature now restore;
Women: Now in mystic union join
Men: Thine to ours, and ours to Thine.
Hark! the herald angels sing:
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Adam's likeness, Lord, efface,
Stamp Thine image in its place:
Second Adam from above,
Reinstate us in Thy love.
Women: Let us Thee, though lost, regain,
Men: Thee, the Life, the inner man:
Women: O, to all Thyself impart,
Men: Formed in each believing heart.
Hark! the herald angels sing:
"Glory to the newborn King!"

OFFERING

Offertory: Joy to the World!
Pianist: Matthew Macias

*CAROL—*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,
Heavenly hosts sing: "Alleluia!"
Christ the Savior is born! Christ the Savior is born!

All a cappella:
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!

BENEDICTION

CHRIST who by his incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, grant you the fullness of inward peace and goodwill, and make you partakers of the divine nature; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always.

Amen!

POSTLUDE—*Angels We Have Heard on High*

THE SECOND LESSON—*Genesis 22:15–18*

God promises to faithful Abraham that in his seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

CAROL—*Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord*

LET the earth now praise the Lord,
Who has truly kept his word
And at last to us did send
Christ, the sinner's help and friend.

What the father most desired,
What the prophets' heart inspired,
What they longed for many-a year,
Stands fulfilled in glory here.

Abram's promised great reward,
Zion's helper, Jacob's Lord—
Him of twofold race behold—
Truly came, as long foretold.

Welcome, O my Savior, now!
Joyful, Lord, to you I bow.
Come into my heart, I pray;
Oh, prepare yourself a way!

THE THIRD LESSON—*Isaiah 7:10–14*

The prophet foretells the miraculous birth of the Savior.

CAROL—*O Come, O Come Emmanuel*

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to Thee, O Israel!

Women: O come, Thou Branch of Jesse's stem,
Men: Unto Thine own, and rescue them!
Women: From depths of hell Thy people save,
Men: And give them vic'try o'er the grave.
Women: Rejoice! *Men:* Rejoice!
All: Emmanuel, shall come to Thee, O Israel!

THE FOURTH LESSON—*Isaiah 9:2–7*

The prophet foretells the coming of the Savior.

CAROL—*Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*

LO, how a rose e'er blooming
from tender stem hath sprung,
of Jesse's lineage coming,
as men of old have sung.
It came, a flow'r-et bright,
amid the cold of winter,
when half-spent was the night.

I-sa-iah t'was fore-told it,
the rose I have in mind;
with Mar-y we be-hold it,
the vir-gin moth-er kind.
To show God's love aright
she bore to men a Sav-ior,
when half-spent was the night.

THE FIFTH LESSON—*Micah 5:2–5a*

The prophet foretells the place of the Savior's birth.

CAROL—*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 wond'ring 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 heav'n.
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Christ enters in.

*CHRISTMAS PRAYER—*Liturgy of Heidelberg, 1563*

ETERNAL and Almighty God,

we give you most hearty thanks that in your great love, you graciously pitied us,
who were doomed to eternal death for our sins.

You ordained your only begotten Son, before the foundation of the world,
to be our Mediator and Savior;

you promised him to our first parents in Paradise, after their deplorable fall;
you sent him into the world at the appointed time to assume our flesh and blood
and to be made in all things like us, except for sin.

We praise you, that by his death he destroyed him who had the power of death, the
Devil,

and delivered us from bondage to the fear of death to the freedom of being sons of God,
from the kingdom of Satan and darkness to the kingdom of Christ's light.

Fill us with your grace

to rightly know Jesus Christ your Son;

to love him that we completely surrender ourselves to him;

to count everything in the world as nothing for the excellency of knowing him;

to cling to him with true faith;

to rejoice in all the tribulations of this life;

and finally to attain the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen!

*CHRISTMAS PRAYER—*Book of Common Prayer*

ALMIGHTY God, who gave us your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as
at this time to be born of a pure virgin: grant that we, being regenerate and made your
children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through our
Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Spirit forever, one God, world
without end.

Amen!

*THE TENTH LESSON—*John 1:1–14*

St John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation.

CAROL—*Hark! the Herald Angels Sing*

Hark! The herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!”
Women: Joyful, all ye nations rise,
Men: Join the triumph of the skies;
Women: With th’angelic host proclaim,
Men: “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”

Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King!”
Christ, by highest heav’n adored;
Christ the everlasting Lord;
Late in time, behold him come,
Offspring of a virgin’s womb.
Women: Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Men: Hail th’incarnate Deity,
Women: Pleased as man with men to dwell,
Men: Jesus our Emmanuel.

Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King!”
Hail the heav’n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Ris’n with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die.
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King!”

THE SIXTH LESSON—*Luke 1:26–38*

The angel Gabriel salutes the Blessed Virgin Mary.

CANTICLE—*My Soul Doth Magnify the Lord*

MY soul doth magnify the Lord; in him my spirit doth rejoice.
For he beheld my low estate, and in his love made me his choice.

All generations from henceforth shall now my blessedness proclaim,
For he has done great things to me; Mighty and holy is his Name.

His mercy shall abide on them that fear the Lord from age to age;
He has revealed his mighty arm, routing the haughty in their rage.

He has abased the mighty ones, exalted those of low degree;
He filled the hungry souls with good, and smote the rich with poverty.

He helped his servant Israel, in honor of his mercy sure;
E’en as he spake to Abraham and to his seed forevermore.

THE SEVENTH LESSON—*Luke 2:1–7*

St Luke tells of the birth of Jesus.

CAROL—*What Child Is This*

What Child is this who, laid to rest on Mary’s lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste, to bring him laud, the Babe, the Son of Mary.

Why lies he in such mean estate, where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christians, fear, for sinners here the silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce him through, the cross be borne for me, for you.
Hail, hail the Word made flesh, the Babe, the Son of Mary.

So bring him incense, gold and myrrh, come peasant, king to own him;
The King of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone him.
Raise, raise a song on high, the virgin sings her lullaby.
Joy, joy for Christ is born, the Babe, the Son of Mary.

THE EIGHTH LESSON—*Luke 2:8–16*

The shepherds go to the manger.

CAROL—*While Shepherds Watched*

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,

All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.

Fear not! said he, for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind.
Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.

“To you, in David’s town, this day
Is born of David’s line
A Savior, who is Christ the Lord,
And this shall be the sign.

The heavenly Babe you there shall find
To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
And in a manger laid.

Thus spake the seraph and forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of angels praising God on high,
Who thus addressed their song.

All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace;
Good will henceforth from heav’n to men
Begin and never cease.

THE NINTH LESSON—*Matthew 2:1–12*

The wise men are led by the star to Jesus.

CAROL—*We Three Kings*

We three kings of Orient are;

Bearing gifts we traverse afar,
Field and fountain, moor and mountain,
Following yonder star.

Refrain: O star of wonder, star of light,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light.

Born a King on Bethlehem’s plain
Gold I bring to crown him again,
King forever, ceasing never,
Over us all to reign.

Refrain

Frankincense to offer have I;
Incense owns a Deity nigh;
Prayer and praising, voices raising,
Worshipping God on high.

Refrain

Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume
Breathes a life of gathering gloom;
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
Sealed in the stone cold tomb.

Refrain

Glorious now behold Him arise;
King and God and sacrifice;
Alleluia, Alleluia,
Sounds through the earth and skies.

Refrain