



A FESTIVAL OF LESSONS & CAROLS

DECEMBER 22, 2024 + 9:30 AM

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The Festival of Lessons and Carols is a service of Christian worship traditionally celebrated on or near Christmas Eve. The story of the fall of humanity, the promise of the Messiah, and the birth of Jesus is told in nine short Bible readings or lessons from Genesis, the prophetic books and the Gospels, interspersed with the singing of Christmas carols, hymns and choir anthems.

The origin of the service can be traced back to England in the mid-1800s.

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Prelude

Magnificat III. Toni, verse 3 Heinrich Scheidemann

Opening Hymn # 56, v.1,6,7

O Come O Come Emmanuel

Lighting the Advent Wreath

Presider Be a light in the darkness, O God, and shine in our hearts today as we light the LOVE candle. May this Season of Advent be a time of joyful waiting for the coming of your Son. **Amen.**

The Bidding Prayer

Dear People of God: In this season of Advent, it is our responsibility and great joy to prepare ourselves to hear again the message of the Angels, to journey once more to Bethlehem and see the Son of God lying in a manger.

Let us hear and heed in Holy Scripture the story of God's loving purpose from the time of our creation and rebellion until the glorious redemption brought to us by the holy child Jesus; and let us look forward to the yearly remembrance of Christ's birth with hymns and songs of praise.

But first, let us pray for the needs of the whole world, for peace and justice on earth, for the unity and mission of the Church for which our Savior died, and especially for the Church in our country, in this diocese, and throughout our community.

Let us remember in Christ's name the poor and helpless, the cold, the hungry and the oppressed, the sick and those who mourn, the lonely and unloved, the aged and little children, as well as those who do not know and love the Lord Jesus Christ.

And finally, let us remember that whole multitude which no one can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom, in Jesus, we are one for evermore.

And to sum up all these petitions, let us pray in the words our Savior first taught us, saying:

**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.**

The Lessons and Carols

The First Lesson – Genesis 3:8-19

Melanie Baker

God declares the consequences of human sin.

When they heard the sound of God strolling in the garden in the evening breeze, Adam and Eve hid in the trees of the garden, hid from God.

God called to the Adam: “Where are you?”

He said, “I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked. And I hid.”

God said, “Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from that tree I told you not to eat from?”

Adam said, “Eve, the woman you gave me as a companion, she gave me fruit from the tree, and, yes, I ate it.”

God said to Eve, “What is this that you’ve done?”

“The serpent seduced me,” she said, “and I ate.”

God told the serpent: “Because you’ve done this, you’re cursed, cursed beyond all cattle and wild animals, cursed to slink on your belly and eat dirt all your life. I’m declaring war between you and the Woman, between your offspring and hers. He’ll wound your head, you’ll wound his heel.”

Thanks be to God.

Organ Selection

Lob sei dem allmächtigen Gott (Praise be to Almighty God)

J.S. Bach

The Second Lesson - Genesis 22:15-18

Marcalino Senteio

God’s promises to Abraham and Sarah that their descendants the nations of the world will be blessed.

The angel of GOD spoke from Heaven a second time to Abraham: “I swear—GOD’s sure word!—because you have gone through with this, and have not refused to give me your son, your dear, dear son, I’ll bless you—oh, how I’ll bless you! And I’ll make sure that your children flourish—like stars in the sky! like sand on the beaches! And your descendants will defeat their enemies. All nations on Earth will find themselves blessed through your descendants because you obeyed me.”

Thanks be to God.

Hymn # 398

I Sing the Almighty Power of God

The Third Lesson Isaiah 9:2-7

Margaret Harkins

Isaiah proclaims the lasting rule of a king, from the line of David.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.
For those who lived in a land of deep shadows— light! sunbursts of light!
You repopulated the nation, you expanded its joy.
Oh, they're so glad in your presence! Festival joy!
The joy of a great celebration, sharing rich gifts and warm greetings.
The abuse of oppressors and cruelty of tyrants—
all their whips and clubs and curses—
Is gone, done away with, a deliverance
as surprising and sudden as Gideon's old victory over Midian.
The boots of all those invading troops,
along with their shirts soaked with innocent blood,
Will be piled in a heap and burned, a fire that will burn for days!
For a child has been born—for us! The gift of a son—for us!
He'll take over the running of the world.
His names will be: Amazing Counselor, Strong God, Eternal Father, Prince of
Wholeness.
His ruling authority will grow, and there'll be no limits to the wholeness he brings.
He'll rule from the historic David throne over that promised kingdom.
He'll put that kingdom on a firm footing and keep it going
With fair dealing and right living, beginning now and lasting always.
The zeal of GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies will do all this.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn # 65

Prepare the Way, O Zion

The Fourth Lesson - Isaiah 11:1-9

Vincent Ahonkai

The prophet declare that Christ's rule will bring peace.

A green Shoot will sprout from Jesse's stump,
from his roots a budding Branch.

The life-giving Spirit of GOD will hover over him,
the Spirit that brings wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit that gives direction and builds strength,
the Spirit that instills knowledge and Fear-of-GOD.
Fear-of-GOD will be all his joy and delight.

He won't judge by appearances, won't decide on the basis of hearsay.
He'll judge the needy by what is right, render decisions on earth's poor with
justice.

His words will bring everyone to awed attention.
A mere breath from his lips will topple the wicked.
Each morning he'll pull on sturdy work clothes and boots,
and build righteousness and faithfulness in the land.

The wolf will romp with the lamb, the leopard sleep with the kid.
Calf and lion will eat from the same trough, and a little child will tend them.
Cow and bear will graze the same pasture, their calves and cubs grow up
together,
and the lion eat straw like the ox.
The nursing child will crawl over rattlesnake dens,
the toddler stick his hand down the hole of a serpent.
Neither animal nor human will hurt or kill on my holy mountain.
The whole earth will be brimming with knowing God-Alive,
a living knowledge of God ocean-deep, ocean-wide.

Thanks be to God.

Bell Choir Selection

Rejoice, rejoice! Cathy Mocklebust

The Fifth Lesson – Luke 1:26-35, 38

Erin Gaul

The angel Gabriel visits the Blessed Virgin.

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to the Galilean village of Nazareth to a virgin engaged to be married to a man descended from David. His name was Joseph, and the virgin's name, Mary. Upon entering, Gabriel greeted her:

Good morning! You're beautiful with God's beauty,
Beautiful inside and out! God be with you.

She was thoroughly shaken, wondering what was behind a greeting like that. But the angel assured her, "Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus.

He will be great, be called 'Son of the Highest.'
The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David;
He will rule Jacob's house forever—
no end, ever, to his kingdom."

Mary said to the angel, "But how? I've never slept with a man."

The angel answered,

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Highest hover over you; Therefore, the child you bring to birth will be called Holy, Son of God. And did you know that your cousin Elizabeth conceived a son, old as she is? Everyone called her barren, and here she is six months pregnant! Nothing, you see, is impossible with God."

And Mary said, "Yes, I see it all now: I'm the Lord's maid, ready to serve. Let it be with me just as you say."

Then the angel left her.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn # 265 v.1-3 (Verse 2 sung by Choir) *The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came*

The Sixth Lesson – Luke 2:1, 3-7

Sam Frenkel

St. Luke tells of the birth of Jesus.

About that time Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Empire. This was the first census when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone had to travel to his own ancestral hometown to be accounted for. So Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David's town, for the census. As a descendant of David, he had to go there. He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant.

While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the hostel.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn # 66, v. 1-3

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

The Seventh Lesson – Luke 2:8-16

Walt Unangst

The Shepherds go to the manger.

There were shepherds camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises: "Glory to God in the heavenly heights, peace to all men and women on earth who please him."

As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherds talked it over. "Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us." They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the

manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the shepherds were impressed.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn # 93, v.1-3

Angels, from the Realms of Glory

The Eighth Lesson – Matthew 2:1-12

Brenda Weir

The Magi are led by the star to Jesus.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem village, Judah territory—this was during Herod’s kingship—a band of scholars arrived in Jerusalem from the East. They asked around, “Where can we find and pay homage to the newborn King of the Jews? We observed a star in the eastern sky that signaled his birth. We’re on pilgrimage to worship him.”

When word of their inquiry got to Herod, he was terrified—and not Herod alone, but most of Jerusalem as well. Herod lost no time. He gathered all the high priests and religion scholars in the city together and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?”

They told him, “Bethlehem, Judah territory. The prophet Micah wrote it plainly: It’s you, Bethlehem, in Judah’s land, no longer bringing up the rear. From you will come the leader who will shepherd-rule my people, my Israel.”

Herod then arranged a secret meeting with the scholars from the East. Pretending to be as devout as they were, he got them to tell him exactly when the birth-announcement star appeared. Then he told them the prophecy about Bethlehem, and said, “Go find this child. Leave no stone unturned. As soon as you find him, send word and I’ll join you at once in your worship.”

Instructed by the king, they set off. Then the star appeared again, the same star they had seen in the eastern skies. It led them on until it hovered over the place of the child. They could hardly contain themselves: They were in the right place! They had arrived at the right time!

They entered the house and saw the child in the arms of Mary, his mother. Overcome, they kneeled and worshiped him. Then they opened their luggage and presented gifts: gold, frankincense, myrrh.

In a dream, they were warned not to report back to Herod. So they worked out another route, left the territory without being seen, and returned to their own country.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn # 115

What Child is This

The Ninth Lesson – John 1:1-14

Dave Prezuhy

John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation.

The Word was first,
the Word present to God,
God present to the Word.
The Word was God, in readiness for God from day one.
Everything was created through him;
nothing—not one thing!— came into being without him.
What came into existence was Life, and the Life was Light to live by.
The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness; the darkness couldn't put it out.

There once was a man, his name John, sent by God to point out the way to the Life-Light. He came to show everyone where to look, who to believe in. John was not himself the Light; he was there to show the way to the Light.

The Life-Light was the real thing:
Every person entering Life he brings into Light.
He was in the world, the world was there through him,
and yet the world didn't even notice.
He came to his own people, but they didn't want him.
But whoever did want him, who believed he was who he claimed
and would do what he said,
He made to be their true selves, their child-of-God selves.

The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.
We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son,
Generous inside and out, true from start to finish.

Thanks be to God.

Bell Choir Selection

O Waly, Waly arr. Kevin McChesney

The Advent Collects

Let us pray.

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and forever. **Amen.**

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

The Advent Blessing

May Almighty God, by whose providence our Savior Christ came among us in great humility, sanctify you with the light of his blessing and set you free from all sin. **Amen.**

May the One whose second coming in power and great glory we await, make you steadfast in faith, joyful in hope, and constant in love. **Amen.**

May you, who rejoice in the first Advent of our Redeemer, at the second coming be rewarded with unending life. **Amen.**

And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you forever. **Amen.**

Blessing

May the Father, who has loved the eternal Son from before the foundation of the world, shed that love upon you his children. **Amen.**

May Christ, who by his incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, fill you with joy and peace. **Amen.**

May the Holy Spirit, by whose overshadowing Mary became the God bearer, give you grace to carry the Good News of Christ. **Amen.**

And the blessing of God Almighty, the one in three and three in one, Be upon you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Hymn # 74

Blest Be the King Whose Coming

Sending

Presider: Go in peace, live in hope, focus on joy, and make real the love of our creator in our world. Alleluia. Alleluia.

People: **Thanks be to God! Alleluia, Alleluia.**

Postlude *Magnificat III. Toni, verse 3* Heinrich Scheidemann

*Immediately following our worship, please join us in the Parish Hall
for the Church School pageant and luncheon.*

Greening of the church will follow.



Christmas Eve
December 24

4:30 PM
Candlelight Service for All Ages
with Communion

7:00 PM
Candlelight Service
with Communion and Choir

Christmas Day
December 25

10:00 AM
Communion Service

Join us as we celebrate our Savior's birth.
We encourage you to invite a friend or neighbor to come along!



Church of the Messiah, Gwynedd
messiahgwynedd.org