

a service of

Lessons & Carols

~ Christmas Eve 2020 ~



HARVEST
Presbyterian Church
Jacksonville, NC

The ‘Lessons and Carols’ format for our Christmas Eve service is borrowed from an English tradition begun in the late 1800s. This format was adopted by King’s College at Cambridge University in 1918, where it grew in popularity. Today, the Lessons and Carols format has been adopted by many Christian churches around the world.

This simple service is constructed around nine Scripture readings – or ‘lessons’ – which trace God’s plan of redemption throughout history, beginning in the Garden of Eden and ending with Christ’s final salvation of his people. As a sign of our corporate submission to and dependence upon God’s Word, at the conclusion of each lesson, the reader states, ‘The Word of the Lord,’ to which the congregation responds in unison, ‘Thanks be to God.’

Each lesson is then accompanied by a hymn – or ‘carol’ – of similar theme that seeks to emphasize an aspect of this redemption in a musical setting. This year, instead of singing or receiving all of these carols as musical pieces, some will be read as poetry, thus allowing us to experience them in a fresh way. The service as a whole is designed to encourage participants to personally enter in to the glorious drama of redemption that finds its focus in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

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A Service of Lessons & Carols
Harvest Presbyterian Church
- 2020 -

The Musical Prelude

<i>Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus</i>	Rowland Hugh Pritchard
<i>What Child is This?</i>	Traditional English Melody
<i>O Come All Ye Faithful</i>	John Francis Wade
<i>Joy to the World!</i>	George Frederick Handel

The Welcome

The Invocation *

from The Book of Common Worship

Father in heaven, whose mercy we praise in the yearly remembrance of the birth of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord: grant that as we welcome our Redeemer, his presence may shed abroad the light of heavenly peace and joy, both in our hearts and in our homes. Make known unto all men, by your Word and Spirit, the gospel of his blessed incarnation, whereby you have clearly revealed your love for the world. Help us to so celebrate his birth – in humility and gratitude – that our keeping of Christmas may be a memorial of Christ, a blessing to our souls, a benefit to our fellowman, and a thanksgiving unto you for your unspeakable gift of the Savior. Through the merits of the same Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, forever blessed. Amen.

*congregation please stand, if able

The First Lesson

Genesis 1.1 & 31; 3.6-15

[in which God creates all things, mankind falls into sin, and the LORD promises a Redeemer to bruise the serpent's head]

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ... And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

[a reading]

Come, Thou Redeemer of the earth,
And manifest Thy virgin birth:
Let every age adoring fall;
Such birth befits the God of all.

Begotten of no human will,
But of the Spirit, Thou art still
The Word of God in flesh arrayed,
The promised fruit to man displayed.

O equal to the Father, Thou!
Gird on Thy fleshly mantle now;
The weakness of our mortal state
With deathless might invigorate.

Thy cradle here shall glitter bright,
And darkness breathe a newer light,
Where endless faith shall shine serene,
And twilight never intervene.

O Jesu, virgin-born, to Thee
Eternal praise and glory be,
Who with the Father we adore,
And Holy Spirit evermore.

Ambrose of Milan, d. 397
Translated by John Mason Neale, d. 1866

The Second Lesson

Genesis 12.1-3 & 17.3-8

[in which God promises Abraham that in his seed
all the nations shall be blessed]

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

And God said to him, "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Second Carol

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

[congregational song]

Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art,
Dear Desire of ev'ry nation, joy of ev'ry longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king,
Born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;
By thine all-sufficient merit, raise us to thy glorious throne.

Words: Charles Wesley, 1744

Tune: Rowland Hugh Pritchard, 1855

The Third Lesson

2 Samuel 7.4 & 8-16; Isaiah 7.14 & 9.6-7

[in which the prophets foretell the coming of the Messiah
through the line of King David]

The word of the LORD came to Nathan, ... "Go and tell my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.'"

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Third Carol

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

[congregational song]

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.

O come, thou Rod of Jesse, free thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell thy people save, and give them vict'ry o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Words: Latin Hymn, 12th cent.; trans. by J.M. Neale, 1851

Tune: Plainsong, 13th cent.; arr. by Thomas Helmore, 1856

The Fourth Lesson

Isaiah 11.1-9

[in which the reign of the Christ is described]

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Fourth Carol

Lo, How A Rose E'er Blooming

[a reading]

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'ret bright, amid the cold of winter,
When half spent was the night.

Isaiah 'twas foretold it, the rose I have in mind;
With Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright she bore to men a Savior,
When half spent was the night.

The shepherds heard the story, proclaimed by angels bright,
How Christ, the Lord of glory, was born on earth this night.
To Bethlehem they sped and in the manger found him,
As angel heralds said.

This flow'r, whose fragrance tender with sweetness fills the air,
Dispels with glorious splendor the darkness ev'rywhere.
True man, yet very God; from sin and death he saves us
And lightens ev'ry load.

O Savior, child of Mary, who felt our human woe;
O Savior, King of glory, who dost our weakness know,
Bring us at length, we pray, to the bright courts of heaven
And to the endless day.

*German hymn, ca. 1500, translated by:
Theodore Baker (stanzas 1-2, 1894)
Harriet R. Spaeth (stanzas 3-4, 1875)
John C. Mattes (stanza 5, 1914)*

The Fifth Lesson

Luke 1.26-38

[in which the angel Gabriel salutes the blessed virgin Mary]

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy – the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Fifth Carol

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence, no. 193

[congregational song]

The Sixth Lesson

Luke 2.1-7

[in which Luke tells of the birth of Jesus, the Christ]

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Sixth Carol

Of the Father's Love Begotten

[a reading]

Of the Father's love begotten ere the worlds began to be,
He is Alpha and Omega, he the Source, the Ending he,
Of the things that are, that have been, and that future years shall see,
Evermore and evermore!

O that birth forever blessed, when the virgin, full of grace,
By the Holy Ghost conceiving, bore the Savior of our race;
And the babe, the world's Redeemer, first revealed his sacred face,
Evermore and evermore!

This is he whom heav'n-taught singers sang of old with one accord,
Whom the Scriptures of the prophets promised in their faithful word;
Now he shines, the long-expected; let creation praise its Lord,
Evermore and evermore!

[reading continues ...]

O ye heights of heav'n, adore him; angel hosts, his praises sing;
All dominions, bow before him and extol our God and King;
Let no tongue on earth be silent, ev'ry voice in concert ring,
Evermore and evermore!

Christ, to thee, with God the Father, and O Holy Ghost, to thee,
Hymn, and chant, and high thanksgiving, and unwearied praises be,
Honor, glory, and dominion, and eternal victory,
Evermore and evermore! Amen.

Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, d. 413
Translated by J.M. Neale, 1854 & Thomas Baker, 1859

The Seventh Lesson

Luke 2.8-20

[in which the shepherds learn of Messiah's birth and go to see him]

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

The Seventh Carol

What Child is This?, no 213

[congregational song]

The Homily

Revelation 22.20

“Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

The Offering

[All contributions given this evening will go directly to our church’s Deacon Fund, through which we seek to serve the mercy ministry needs of our community.]

The Eighth Lesson

Matthew 2.1-11

[in which the wise men are led by the star to Jesus]

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’”

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may

come and worship him." After listening to the king, they went on their way.

And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Eighth Carol

As with Gladness Men of Old

[a reading]

As with gladness men of old did the guiding star behold;
As with joy they hailed its light, leading onward, beaming bright;
So, most gracious God, may we evermore be led to thee.

As with joyful steps they sped to that lowly cradle-bed,
There to bend the knee before him whom heav'n and earth adore;
So may we with willing feet ever seek thy mercy seat.

As they offered gifts most rare at that cradle rude and bare;
So may we with holy joy, pure, and free from sin's alloy,
All our costliest treasures bring, Christ, to thee, our heav'nly King.

Holy Jesus, ev'ry day keep us in the narrow way;
And when earthly things are past, bring our ransomed souls at last
Where they need no star to guide, where no clouds thy glory hide.

In the heav'nly city bright need they no created light;
Thou its light, its joy, its crown, thou its sun which goes not down;
There forever may we sing alleluias to our King.

William Chatterton Dix, 1860

The Ninth Lesson *

1 Corinthians 15.20-27 & 54-57

[in which the Second Adam triumphs and God's people rejoice]

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.

For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?

Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Ninth Carol *

Joy to the World!, no. 195

[congregational song]

The Lord's Blessing *

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

2 Corinthians 13.14

Harvest Presbyterian Church (pca)

harvestpres.com | 910.353.9888

In-Person Worship: Sundays at 9 & 10:45

Live-streaming at [facebook.com/harvestpresjax](https://www.facebook.com/harvestpresjax)

*Harvest Presbyterian Church exists by the providence and grace of God
to develop & equip God's people for their calling
to glorify & enjoy God in all of life through
worship, nurture & service*

Meeting Location:

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