

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF LANSING
A Congregation of the Presbyterian Church (USA)



Festival of Lessons and Carols

Christmas Eve 7:00 p.m.

December 24, 2023

www.lansingfirstpres.org

THE TRADITION OF LESSONS AND CAROLS

The service of Lessons and Carols is a relatively new tradition in the Western Christian churches. The known example of a Lessons and Carols service comes from England in 1880. Edward White Benson, then Anglican bishop of Turro, organized a 10pm service on Christmas Eve with readings and singing in an effort to keep the men of the area out of the pubs. The basic format of Benson's service is still used today. Readings from scripture alternate with hymns and anthems to tell the story of God's gift to the world in Jesus Christ.

Over time variations of the Lessons and Carols service have emerged. The most famous is the celebration of King's College, Cambridge on Christmas Eve. Broadcast worldwide on BBC radio and television, the King's College service of Nine Lessons and Carols tells the story of Christ's nativity in both word and song. Our service today is a version of the King's College celebration with some changes to the lessons more appropriate for the Advent season.

Whether on Christmas Eve or an Advent morning, the lessons read focus on the eternal promise of redemption through Jesus Christ. The story of Christ unfolds in the service, beginning with humanity's original sin. It is because we do sin that we are so in need of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. The lessons follow through the promise of God to Abraham and the visions of the prophet Isaiah proclaiming the coming of a savior of the people.

Since 1919 the service at King's College has begun with the processional hymn, "Once in Royal David's City." The first verse is sung by a solo boy chorister who is not told until just moments before the service begins that he is the soloist that year. When the service of lessons and carols is celebrated on Christmas Eve, the story of the birth of Christ is retold. On that night of nights, the community of faith awaits the coming of Christmas morning and the fulfillment of God's promise in the birth of the Christ child.

Because Advent is meant to be a season of expectation and anticipation of the miracle of Christmas, some texts surrounding the narrative of Jesus' birth are changed for an Advent service of Lessons and Carols. In their place, readings about John the Baptist and the angel's promise to Mary are read. During the season of Advent, the lessons and the carols help to focus our minds on the coming of Christ so that on Christmas Eve when we hear the story retold, our hearts and our minds are prepared for the wonderful event to unfold.

WORSHIP ON THE EVE OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY

Sunday, December 24, 2023 7:00 p.m.

+you are invited to stand if you are able
Congregational responses and unison readings are in **bold**

Kindly silence all electronic devices.

GATHERING MUSIC

Carols for Piano Four Hand

Sergei Kvitko & Megan Hagle

LIGHTING THE CHRISTMAS CANDLE

Bob Mellor, Roger Rochowiak, David Viele

Darkness is all around,

But great things happen in the dark

Seeds planted in the dark bloom into flowers.

Humans form in the dark are born.

From within the night we see a great light.

That light is the presence of God.

We greet a child, Emmanuel, God with us.

Let us live in the light of the coming of Christ.

Let us worship God!

As we light the Christ candle,

We watch for the Christmas story around us.

Emmanuel has come and is coming.

Come, all ye faithful, and worship God.



+OPENING CAROL Once in Royal David's City (vs1, solo, vs 2-4 congregation)

1 Once in roy - al Da - vid's cit - y stood a low - ly
 2 He came down to earth from heav - en who is God and
 3 Je - sus is our child - hood's pat - tern; day by day like
 4 And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own re -

cat - tle shed, where a moth - er laid her ba - by in a
 Lord of all, and his shel - ter was a sta - ble, and his
 us he grew; he was lit - tle, weak and help - less; tears and
 deem - ing love; for that child so dear and gen - tle is our

man - ger for his bed: Mar - y was that moth - er
 cra - dle was a stall; with the poor and meek and
 smiles like us he knew; and he feels for all our
 Lord in heaven a - bove; and he leads his chil - dren

mild; Je - sus Christ, her lit - tle child.
 low - ly, lived on earth our Sav - ior ho - ly.
 sad - ness, and he shares in all our glad - ness.
 on to the place where he is gone.

+WELCOME & OPENING PRAYER

Rev. Stanley Jenkins

Let us pray:

Great God, we were on the journey with Mary and Joseph, afraid and nervous about what the future would bring. We were in the fields with the shepherds, shocked and astonished at the proclamation of the angels: Unto us a child is born, a Son is given, and authority rests on him. Through our fears we are learning to sing a new song, one that declares your glory, honor, and praise.

Help us, O God, to be active participants in your story, that we might enact justice in a society yearning for it and share the grace offered in the person and work of Christ. In the name of the One called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Amen.

+CONFESSION & LAMENT SEQUENCE

Gwen Botting

A new neighbor has arrived,

But we are too insulated to greet them.

A new neighbor has come to our door,

But we are too sequestered to receive them.

God became flesh to live among us,

But we are too arrogant to recognize it.

We segregate ourselves as if we have the power to withhold God's grace,

But our members-only policies have failed us time and time again.

Have we accepted inaccessibility, seclusion, and quarantine as best practices for living in community?

When will we learn that we are interdependent?

Forgive us, God our neighbor.

Forgive us, God our savior.

Forgive us, we pray...

Remind us who you really are and who we really are, so that, with Simeon, we might rejoice when we recognize you at last.

Amen.

When will we learn that God's grace is not something to be withheld?

When will we finally hear the good news and believe it: in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

HAND BELL MUSIC RESPONSE

Lo, How A Rose E'er Blooming Arr. Douglas Wagner Chrisann Lowe, Darin Showalter, Sergei Kvitko

INVITATION TO DISCIPLESHIP

Rev. Charles Herrick

Christ is born!

Hallelujah. Amen.

How can we receive this good news, this new birth?

By accepting God's grace in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Christ is born!

Hallelujah. Amen.

How can we receive this good news, this new birth?

By answering the invitation to follow, to work alongside Christ to transform the world.

Christ is born!

Hallelujah. Amen.

CHRISTMAS CAROL

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing (all verses)

1 Hark! The her - ald an-gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new-born king.
 2 Christ, by high - est heaven a-dored, Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord,
 3 Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the sun of righ-teous-ness!

Peace on earth and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners rec - on - ciled!"
 late in time be-hold him come, off-spring of the vir-gin's womb.
 Light and life to all he brings, risen with heal - ing in his wings.

Joy - ful, all ye na - tions, rise; join the tri-umph of the skies;
 Veiled in flesh the God-head see; hail the in-car - nate de - i - ty,
 Mild he lays his glo - ry by, born that we no more may die,

with the an-gel - ic host pro-claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"
 pleased in flesh with us to dwell, Je - sus, our Em-man - u - el.
 born to raise us from the earth, born to give us sec - ond birth.

Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new-born king!"

THE FIRST LESSON Genesis 2:4b-17, 3:8-10, 22-23

Christopher Venetis

The story of creation and humanity's fall from paradise is told.

On the day the Lord God made earth and sky before any wild plants appeared on the earth, and before any field crops grew, because the Lord God hadn't yet sent rain on the earth and there was still no human being to farm the fertile land, though a stream rose from the earth and watered all of the fertile land- the Lord God formed the human from the topsoil of the fertile land and blew life's breath into his nostrils. The human came to life. The Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east and put there the human he had formed. In the fertile land, the Lord God grew every beautiful tree with edible fruit, and also he grew the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Lord God took the human and settled him in the garden of Eden to farm it and to take care of it. The Lord God commanded the human, "Eat your fill from all of the garden's trees; but don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because on the day you eat from it, you will die!"

During that day's cool evening breeze, they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden; and the man and his wife hid themselves from the Lord God in the middle of the garden's trees.

The Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

The man replied, "I heard your sound in the garden; I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself."

He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree, which commanded you not to eat?"

The man said, "The woman you gave me, she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate." The Lord God said to the woman, "What have you done?!"

The Lord God said, "The human being has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil."

Now, so he doesn't stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever, the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to farm the fertile land from which he was taken. He drove out the human. To the east of the garden of Eden, he stationed winged creatures wielding flaming swords to guard the way to the tree of life.

MUSIC RESPONSE

Christmas Gift by Sergei Kvitko

Sergei Kvitko

THE SECOND LESSON Isaiah 9: 2, 6-7

Pr. Bob Hagle

The prophet foretells the coming of a savior.

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned. He will be named

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

There will be vast authority and endless peace for David's throne and for his kingdom, establishing and sustaining it with justice and righteousness now and forever.

The zeal of the Lord of heavenly forces will do this.

CHRISTMAS CAROL *remain seated.*

Love Has Come (all verses)

Capo 3: (D) (Bm7) (Em7) (A)
 F Dm7 Gm7 C

1 Love has come: a light in the dark - ness!
 2 Love is born! Come, share in the won - der.
 3 Love has come and nev - er will leave us!

(D) (Bm7) (Em) (A7) (D)
 F Dm7 Gm C7 F

Love shines forth in the Beth - le - hem skies. See, all
 Love is God now a - sleep in the hay. See the
 Love is life ev - er - last - ing and free. Love is

(A) (D) (Bm) (D) (A) (G) (D)
 C F Dm F C B^b F

heav - en has come to pro - claim it; hear how their song of
 glow in the eyes of his moth - er; what is the name her
 Je - sus with - in and a - mong us. Love is the peace our

(Em7) (F#7) (G) (A) (Bm) (A7)
 Gm7 A7 B^b C Dm C7

joy a - ris - es: Love! Love! Born un - to you, a
 heart is say - ing? Love! Love! Love is the name she
 hearts are seek - ing. Love! Love! Love is the gift of

(D) (A) (G) (A) (D) (A) (A7) (Dsus) (D)
 F C B^b C F C C7 Fsus F

Sav - ior! Love! Love! Glo - ry to God on high.
 whis - pers. Love! Love! Je - sus, Em - man - u - el.
 Christ - mas. Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

THE THIRD LESSON Isaiah 11:1-2, 6-9

Rev. Stanley Jenkins

The prophet foretells the promised Kingdom of God.

A new branch will grow from a stump of a tree; so a new king will come from the family of Jesse. The spirit of the Lord will rest upon that king. The Spirit will give him wisdom and understanding, guidance and power. The Spirit will teach him to know and respect the Lord. Then wolves will live in peace with lambs, and leopards will lie down to rest with goats. Calves, lions, and young bulls will eat together, and a little child will lead them. Cows and bears will eat together in peace. Their young will lie down to rest together. Lions will eat hay as oxen do. A baby will be able to play near a cobra's hole, and a child will be able to put his hand into the nest of a poisonous snake. They will not hurt or destroy each other on all my holy mountain, because the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the sea is full of water.

OFFERING

Please place your offering in the plate as the ushers come by.

CHORAL RESPONSE

It Came Upon A Midnight Clear
arr. Valerie Capers w/Ben English, soloist

Chancel Choir


THE FOURTH LESSON Luke 1:26b-35, 38

Gwen Botting

The angel Gabriel visits the young Mary.

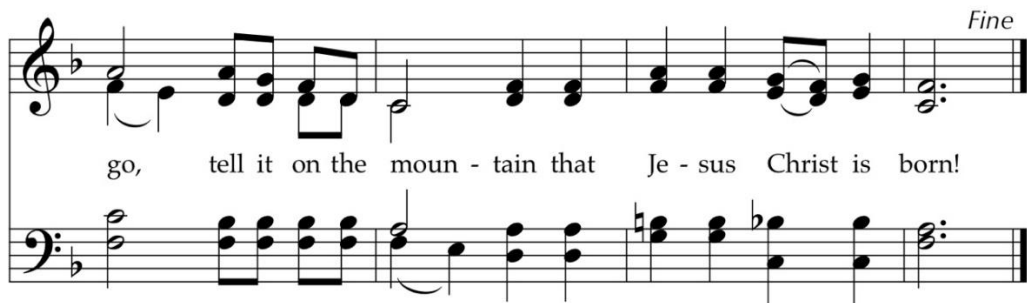
During Elizabeth's sixth month of pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin. She was engaged to marry a man named Joseph from the family of David. Her name was Mary. The angel came to her and said, "Greetings! The Lord has blessed you and is with you." But Mary was very startled by what the angel said and wondered what this greeting might mean. The angel said to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary; God has shown you his grace. Listen! You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of King David, his ancestor. He will rule over the people of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will never end." Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen since I am a virgin?" The angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you. For this reason the baby will be holy and will be called the Son of God. Mary said, "I am the servant of the Lord. Let this happen to me as you say!" Then the angel went away.



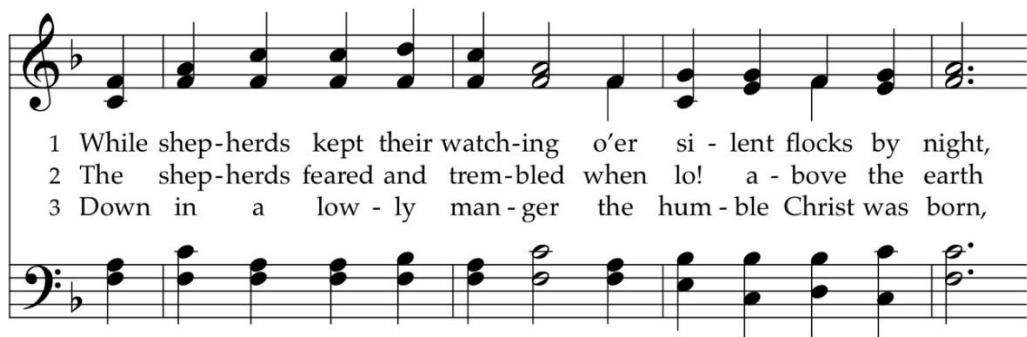
Refrain 



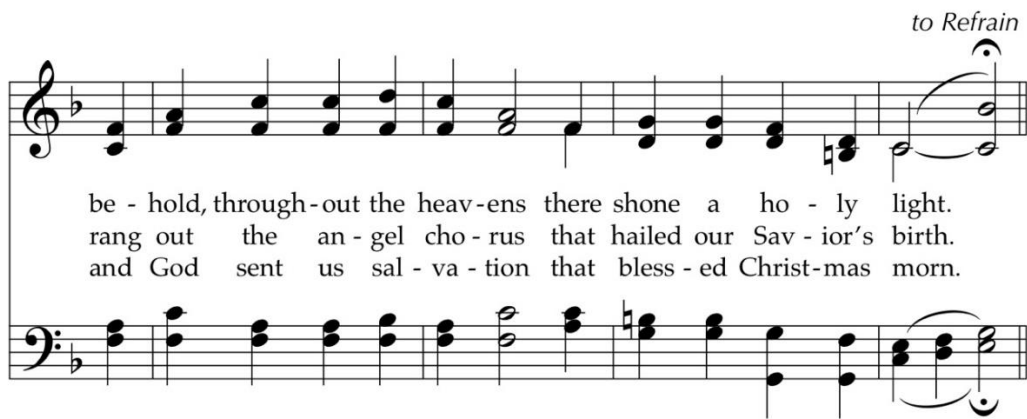
Go, tell it on the moun-tain, o-ver the hills and ev - ery - where;



go, tell it on the moun - tain that Je - sus Christ is born!



1 While shep-herds kept their watch-ing o'er si - lent flocks by night,
2 The shep-herds feared and trem-bled when lo! a - bove the earth
3 Down in a low - ly man - ger the hum - ble Christ was born,



to Refrain

be - hold, through-out the heav-ens there shone a ho - ly light.
rang out the an - gel cho - rus that hailed our Sav - ior's birth.
and God sent us sal - va - tion that bless - ed Christ-mas morn.

THE FIFTH LESSON Mark 1:4-8

Rev. Charles Herrick

John proclaims that the one foretold by the prophets is at hand.

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

CHORAL RESPONSE*Sing Lullaby by Heather Sorenson*

Chancel Choir

*Soloist, Cecily English***THE SIXTH LESSON** Luke 2:1-20

Pr. Bob Higle

The birth of Christ.

In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. Everyone went to their own cities to be enrolled. Since

Joseph belonged to David's house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David's city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom.

Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified.

The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you— wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, "Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors."

When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.

+CHRISTMAS CAROL

O Little Town of Bethlehem (verses 1 and 2)



1 O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie!
2 For Christ is born of Mar - y and, gath - ered all a - bove,
3 How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly, the won - drous gift is given!
4 O ho - ly child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray;



A - bove thy deep and dream - less sleep the si - lent stars go by.
while mor - tals sleep, the an - gels keep their watch of won - dering love.
So God im - parts to hu - man hearts the bless - ings of his heaven.
cast out our sin and en - ter in; be born in us to - day.



Yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the ev - er - last - ing light;
O morn - ing stars, to - geth - er pro - claim the ho - ly birth,
No ear may hear his com - ing, but in this world of sin,
We hear the Christ - mas an - gels the great glad ti - dings tell;



the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.
and prais - sing to God the king, and peace to all on earth.
where meek souls will re - ceive him, still the dear Christ en - ters in.
O come to us; a - bide with us, our Lord Em - man - u - el!



CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Rev. Stanley Jenkins

CHORAL RESPONSE

The Shepherds' Carol arr by Dan Forrest

Chancel Choir

John testifies to the light of Christ.

In the beginning there was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were made by him, and nothing was made without him. In him there was life, and that life was the light of all people. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overpowered it. There was a man named John who was sent by God. He came to tell people the truth about the Light so that through him all the people could hear about the Light and believe. John was not the Light, but he came to tell people the truth about the Light. The true Light that gives light to all was coming into the world! The Word was in the world, and the world was made by him, but the world did not know him. But to all who did accept him and believe in him he gave the right to become children of God. They did not become his children in any human way – by any human parents or human desire. They were born of God. The Word became human and lived among us.

+CLOSING CAROL

Silent Night, Holy Night (all verses)

As the hymn begins, the candles of those standing on the aisles will be lit.

Please pass the light to your neighbor in your row with the words, "The Light of Christ."

1 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! All is calm, all is bright
 2 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Shep - herds quake at the sight;
 3 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Son of God, love's pure light
 4 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Won - drous star, lend thy light;

'round yon vir - gin moth - er and child! Ho - ly In - fant, so ten - der and
 glo - ries stream from heav - en a - far, heav - en - ly hosts sing "Al - le - lu -
 ra - diant beams from thy ho - ly face, with the dawn of re - deem - ing
 with the an - gels let us sing Al - le - lu - ia to our

mild, sleep in heav - en - ly peace, sleep in heav - en - ly peace.
 ia: Christ the Sav - ior is born; Christ the Sav - ior is born!"
 grace, Je - sus, Lord, at thy birth, Je - sus, Lord, at thy birth.
 King: Christ the Sav - ior is born; Christ the Sav - ior is born.

+POSTLUDE

Joy to the World (verses 1 and 4)

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re - ceive
 2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their songs
 3 No more let sins and sor - rows grow, nor thorns in - fest
 4 He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the na -

her king; let ev - ery heart pre - pare him room,
 em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
 the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings flow
 tions prove the glo - ries of his righ - teous - ness

and heaven and na - ture sing, and heaven and na - ture
 re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing
 far as the curse is found, far as the curse is
 and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his
 and heaven and na - ture sing,

sing, and heaven, and heaven and na - ture sing.
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
 found, far as, far as the curse is found.
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

heaven and na - ture sing,