



# **A Festival of Christmas Readings and Carols**

**Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> December  
Christmas Eve**



## WELCOME TO SERVICE

O God, since you have made this most holy night  
shine with the brightness of the true Light:  
Grant that as we have known on earth  
the mysteries of that Light, we may also come  
to the fullness of his joys in heaven; through your Son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns  
with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.  
Amen.

## ONCE IN ROYAL DAVIS'S CITY

Once in royal David's city  
stood a lowly cattle shed,  
where a mother laid her baby  
in a manger for his bed;  
Mary was that mother mild,  
Jesus Christ her little child.

He came down to earth from heaven  
who is God and Lord of all,  
and his shelter was a stable,  
and his cradle was a stall;  
with the poor, and meek, and lowly  
lived on earth our Saviour holy.

And our eyes at last shall see him,  
through his own redeeming love,  
for that child so dear and gentle  
is our Lord in heaven above;  
and he leads his children on  
to the place where he is gone.

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## OPENING SENTENCES

Welcome tonight to a celebration like no other!  
**This is the night of the Holy Birth!**  
Let the love of Jesus be born in your hearts and spirits!  
**Open our hearts to receive this blessed gift, Loving God.**  
Rejoice, good friends, the Good News is here!  
**Christ our Saviour is Born! Hallelujah!**

## INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the Son  
and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

## LIGHTING OF ADVENT CANDLES

*We light the **first** Advent Candle: the candle of hope. Through the gift of God's Son, we have been given an everlasting hope based on God's grace and love.*

*We light the **second** Advent Candle: the candle of faith. Through the gift of God's Son, we have the wonderful assurance of salvation by grace through faith.*

*We light the **third** Advent Candle: the candle of joy. Through the gift of God's Son, we have been filled with joy. Jesus has showed us how much God loves us and made us God's children forever.*

*We light the **fourth** Advent Candle: the candle of peace. Through the gift of God's son, we have peace with God, and are led into the ways of peace in our relationships with others.*

*After four Sundays of preparing, our time of Christmas celebration is here! Tonight we light our last Advent Candle, the **Christ Candle**. Jesus, the Light of the World, has been born, to dwell with us and save us. Thanks be to God!*

## INTRODUCTORY WORDS

*Friends in Christ: As we gather this Christmas Eve, let us hear again the message of the angels, and in heart and mind go to Bethlehem to see the loving-kindness of our God, and the baby lying in the manger. Let us hear the story of our Saviour's birth as foretold by the prophets and narrated in the Gospels and let us thank him God with our carols of praise. But first, let us pray to God to bless our worship:*

## PRAYER OF CHRISTMAS PREPARATION

**Glorious God, who presents us with the most precious of gifts, we praise you for all your blessings in our lives. Tonight, we have come to this place in the midst of a busy time. We might not even have everything ready at home, yet we have come, because we ourselves need to be ready. Work in our hearts this night, preparing us for your presence. Work in our lives that we may reach out to others in comfort and compassion; work in our world that the darkness that has encompassed it may be dispelled by the brightness of your love. In faith and expectation we pray, amen.**

## **FIRST READING**

The First reading is taken from

**Isaiah Chapter 9 Verses 2,6 & 7 – Prophecy of the Messiah’s Birth**

The people who are now living in darkness will see a great light.

They are now living in a very dark land. But a light will shine on them.

A child will be born to us. A son will be given to us. He will rule over us.

And he will be called: Wonderful Adviser and Mighty God.

He will also be called Father Who Lives Forever and Prince Who Brings Peace.

There will be no limit to how great his authority is.

The peace he brings will never end.

He will rule on David’s throne and over his kingdom.

He will make the kingdom strong and secure.

His rule will be based on what is fair and right. It will last forever.

The Lord’s great love will make sure that happens. He rules over all.

## **COME THOU LONG EXPECTED JESUS**

**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 every nation**

**Joy of every 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**

Charles Wesley, Rowland Hugh Prichard  
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## **SECOND READING**

The Second Reading is taken from

### **Luke Chapter 1 Verses 26-38 – The Annunciation to Mary**

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, 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 favoured! 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 favour with God.

You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call 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 his father David,

and he will reign over Jacob's descendants for ever; 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 on 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.

Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month.

For no word from God will ever fail.'

'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May your word to me be fulfilled.' Then the angel left her.

### **O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM**

**O little town of Bethlehem,**

**how still we see you lie!**

**Above your deep and dreamless sleep**

**the silent stars go by:**

**yet, in your dark streets shining**

**the everlasting Light,**

**the hopes and fears of all the years**

**are met in you one night.**

How silently, how silently,  
the wondrous gift is given!  
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.

O holy child of Bethlehem,  
descend to us, we pray;  
cast out our sin, and enter in:  
be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels  
their great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us,  
our Lord Immanuel!

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### **THIRD READING**

The Third Reading is taken from

#### **Luke Chapter 2 Verses 1-7 – The Birth of Jesus**

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.

(This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)

And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.

He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

## AWAY IN A MANGER

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.  
The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay,  
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,  
But little Lord Jesus no crying He makes.  
I love Thee, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky,  
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask Thee to stay  
Close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.  
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,  
And fit us for heaven, to live with Thee there.

John Thomas McFarland, Martin Luther, William James Kirkpatrick  
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## FOURTH READING

The Fourth Reading is taken from

**Luke Chapter 2 Verses 8-16** The Shepherds Go to the Manger

And there were shepherds living out in the fields near by, 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 that will cause great joy for all the people.

Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, 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 heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.'

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.

### **ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH**

Angels we have heard on high,  
sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
and the mountains in reply,  
echoing their joyous strains:

*Gloria in excelsis Deo;*  
*gloria in excelsis Deo.*

Shepherds, why this jubilee  
why your songs of happy cheer  
what great brightness did you see  
what glad tidings did you hear:

*Gloria in excelsis Deo;*  
*gloria in excelsis Deo.*

Come to Bethlehem and see  
Him whose birth the angels sing;  
come, adore on bended knee  
Christ the Lord, the new-born King:

*Gloria in excelsis Deo;*  
*gloria in excelsis Deo.*

James Chadwick  
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### **FIFTH READING**

The Fifth Reading is taken from

**Matthew Chapter 2 Verses 1-11** – Wise Men Are Led by the Star to Jesus

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem

and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.'

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.



When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born.

'In Bethlehem in Judea,' they replied, 'for this is what the prophet has written:

“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.

He sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.'

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

### WE THREE KINGS

**We three kings of Orient are  
Bearing gifts we traverse afar  
Field and fountain moor and mountain  
Following yonder star**

**O star of wonder star of night  
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**

**O star of wonder star of night  
Star with royal beauty bright  
Westward leading still proceeding  
Guide us to Thy perfect light**

**Frankincense to offer have I  
Incense owns a Deity nigh  
Prayer and praising all men raising  
Worship Him God on high**

**O star of wonder star of night  
Star with royal beauty bright  
Westward leading still proceeding  
Guide us to Thy perfect light**

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

**O star of wonder star of night  
Star with royal beauty bright  
Westward leading still proceeding  
Guide us to Thy perfect light**

**Glorious now behold Him arise  
King and God and sacrifice  
Alleluia alleluia  
Peals through the earth and skies**

**O star of wonder star of night  
Star with royal beauty bright  
Westward leading still proceeding  
Guide us to Thy perfect light**

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### **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

**Alleluia, alleluia.  
The Word became flesh and dwelt among us,  
and we have seen his glory.  
Alleluia.**

## **John 1:1-14 – The Incarnation of the Word of God**

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and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.'

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born.

'In Bethlehem in Judea,' they replied, 'for this is what the prophet has written:

“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.

He sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.'

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

<sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

<sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

### **O HOLY NIGHT!**

**O Holy Night! The stars are brightly shining,  
it is the night of the dear Saviour's birth;  
long lay the world in sin and error pining,  
till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.  
A thrill of hope the weary soul rejoices,  
for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.**

**Fall on your knees! Oh, hear the angel voices!**

**O night divine,  
O night when Christ was born;  
O night, O Holy Night ,O night divine!**

Led by the light of faith serenely beaming,  
with glowing hearts by his cradle we stand;  
so, led by light of a star sweetly gleaming,  
here came the wise men from orient land.  
The king of kings lay thus in lowly manger,  
in all our trials born to be our friend;

He knows our need, To weakness is no stranger.  
Behold your King, before him lowly bend!  
Behold your King, before him lowly bend!

Truly He taught us to love one another;  
His law is love, and His gospel is peace.  
Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother,  
and in His name all oppression shall cease.  
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we,  
let all within us praise His holy name.

Christ is the Lord! O praise His name forever!  
His power and glory evermore proclaim!  
His power and glory evermore proclaim!

Adolphe Charles Adam, John Sullivan Dwight, Placide Cappeau  
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### JOY TO THE WORLD

Joy to the world the Lord is come  
Let earth receive her King  
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room  
And heav'n and nature sing  
And heav'n and nature sing  
And heav'n and heav'n and nature sing

Joy to the earth the Savior reigns  
Let men their songs employ  
While fields and floods  
Rocks hills and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy  
Repeat the sounding joy  
Repeat repeat the sounding joy

No more let sins and sorrows grow  
Nor thorns infest the ground  
He comes to make His blessings flow  
Far as the curse is found  
Far as the curse is found  
Far as far as the curse is found

He rules the world with truth and grace  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of His righteousness  
And wonders of His love  
And wonders of His love  
And wonders wonders of His love

George Frideric Handel, Isaac Watts  
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### OFFERING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, you are the giver of all good gifts.  
In this season of giving, we offer you these gifts  
as an expression of our thanks for the greatest gift of all,  
your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

### PRAYERS

*Part A – right side of church (lectern side)*

*Part B – left side of Chapel (piano side)*

- A. We have celebrated Christmas with Mary and Joseph.  
B. We have rejoiced with the angels and the shepherds.  
A. We have celebrated the birth of Christ Jesus, our Lord.  
B. Lord, you came to live among us, caring, loving and healing us.  
A. Make us your arms, your hands and your feet.  
B. Use us to care for your people.  
**All Lord Jesus, be with us.**

- A. Lord, you bring peace with God and pardon.  
B. Bring peace to our hearts and love to our homes.  
A. Guide the nations; let there be justice; let there be hope.  
**All Lord Jesus, be with us.**

B. Lord, you blessed the home of Mary and Joseph.

A. Bless our homes this Christmas and make our families a blessing to others.

B. You were born in a stable, then driven out as a refugee.

A. Shelter the homeless.

B. Open our hearts to those in need.

**All Lord Jesus, be with us.**

A. Lord, you were born among the poor.

B. You experienced hurt and pain and disappointment.

A. Strengthen the weak.

B. Care for the sick.

A. Comfort those who are suffering.

**All Lord Jesus, be with us.**

B. Lord, you bring joy to all people.

A. Be a friend to the lonely.

B. Lift up the depressed.

A. Your birth brings new life to the world.

B. Give life and health to all babies,

A. to the unborn, and to those who are born this night.

B. Go with the dying into their darkness,

A. and lead them to resurrection.

**All Lord Jesus, be with us.**

B. Be with us tonight and always.

A. Be with us as we journey through this life and when our life here ends,

B. so that we may see your glory in heaven,

A. and with the angels and all your people,

B. praise the heavenly Father,

**All now and forever. Amen.**

A: We pray together the Lord's Prayer.

**All Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.**

## **BLESSING**

May God bless you this Christmas  
With the light he gave to the wise men,  
With the joy he gave to the angels,  
With the hope he gave to the shepherds,  
And with all the love and the peace that Jesus brings.  
**Amen.**

## **SILENT 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 Your holy face  
With the dawn of redeeming grace  
Jesus Lord at Your birth  
Jesus Lord at Your birth**

**Silent night holy night  
Wondrous star lend thy light  
With the angels let us sing  
Alleluia to our King  
Christ the Savior is born  
Christ the Savior is born**

Franz Xaver Gruber, John Freeman Young, Joseph Mohr; ©

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**Merry Christmas to you  
and your family**

