

Christmas Eve Worship Service ¹
December 24, 2010

Prelude	“The First Noel”
* Call to Worship	
* Opening Prayer	
* Opening Hymn	“Once in Royal David’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 mean, and lowly,
Lived on earth our Savior 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 Heav’n above,
And He leads His children on
To the place where He is gone.

¹ This is the order of worship for the Christmas Eve 2010 service at Faith Presbyterian Church in Newtown, Pennsylvania. The structure of this service was based on guidelines provided and suggestions given in an online article (see http://www.reformedworship.org/magazine/article.cfm?article_id=11); and the Scripture readings, while primarily following the text of the ESV, are infused here and there with renderings from the NKJ or, less frequently, the NIV.

THE SERVICE OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS

First Lesson

Genesis 3:8-15

God announces in the Garden of Eden that the seed of the woman shall crush the serpent's head.

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 seed and her Seed. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

Carol

"O Come, O Come, Immanuel"

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, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,
And be Thyself our King of Peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Second Lesson

Genesis 22:15-18

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

And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said:

“By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your Seed shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

Carol

“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.

Third Lesson

Isaiah 9:2-7

Christ's birth and kingdom are foretold by Isaiah.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in a land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

For unto 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 Almighty will accomplish this.

Carol

“Of the Father’s Love Begotten”

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!

This is He Whom seers in old time
Chanted of with one accord;
Whom the voices of the prophets
Promised in their faithful word;
Now He shines,
The long expected,
Let creation praise its Lord,
Evermore and evermore!

Christ, to Thee with God the Father,
And, O Holy Ghost, to Thee,
Hymn and chant with high thanksgiving,
And unwearied praises be:
Honor, glory, and dominion,
And eternal victory, evermore and evermore!

Fourth Lesson

Micah 5:2-4

The prophet Micah foretells the glory of Bethlehem.

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah,
yet out of you shall come forth for me One who is to be Ruler over Israel,
whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.

Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when
she who is in labor has given birth;
then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel.

And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they shall dwell secure, for his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.

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.

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.

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 the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!

Fifth Lesson

Luke 1:26-28

The angel Gabriel salutes the 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.

But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will be with child and give birth to 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.

Special Music

Sixth Lesson

Matthew 1:18-23

Matthew tells of the birth of Jesus.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way.

When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name JESUS, for he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

Carol

"Good Christian Men, Rejoice"

Good Christian men, rejoice with heart and soul, and voice;
Give ye heed to what we say: News! News!
Jesus Christ is born today;
Ox and ass before Him bow; and He is in the manger now.
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!

Good Christian men, rejoice, with heart and soul and voice;
Now ye hear of endless bliss: Joy! Joy!
Jesus Christ was born for this!
He has opened the heavenly door, and man is blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!

Good Christian men, rejoice, with heart and soul and voice;
Now ye need not fear the grave: Peace! Peace!
Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all, to gain His everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!

Seventh Lesson

Luke 2:8-16

The shepherds go to the manger.

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.

And the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all 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, 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, goodwill toward men!”

So it was, when the angels went away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.”

And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.

Carol

“The First Noel”

The first Noel
The angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds
In fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay
Tending their sheep,
On a cold winter’s night
That was so deep.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel,
Born is the King of Israel.

So let us all
With one accord
Sing praises to
Our heavenly Lord;
That hath made Heaven
And earth of naught,
And with His blood
Mankind hath bought.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel,
Born is the King of Israel.

Eighth Lesson

Matthew 2:1-11

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.

Carol

“As With Gladness Men of Old”

As with gladness, men of old
Did the guiding star behold
As with joy they hailed its light
Leading onward, beaming bright
So, most glorious Lord, may we
Evermore be led to Thee.

As they offered gifts most rare
At that manger 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 heavenly King.

Ninth Lesson

John 1:1-14

John unfolds the great mystery of the incarnation.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. The true light, which gives light to every man, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Christmas Message*Rev. Jules Grisham**“Of the Father’s Love Begotten”***Prayer**

*** Closing Hymn**

“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!
Joyful, all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With th’angelic host proclaim,
Christ is born in Bethlehem!

Refrain

*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.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail th’incarnate Deity,
Pleased with us in flesh to dwell,
Jesus our Emmanuel.

Refrain

Hail the heav’nly 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.

Refrain

*** Blessing**