

SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS
FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

Full Service Text

December 24th, 2023



MARTIN LUTHER
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
St. Louis, MO

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314-914-6457

ORDER OF SERVICE

This service is an adaptation of the Christmas Carol Service traditionally held at King's College, Cambridge, England, on December 24th.

Hymn ----- Peace Came to Earth CWS 707 (Congregation)

1. Peace came to earth at last that chosen night
When angels clove the sky with song and light
And God embodied love and sheathed his might-
Who could but gasp: Immanuel!
Who could but sing: Immanuel!

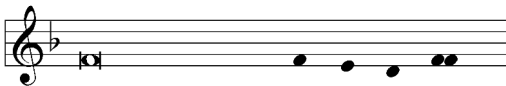
2. And who could be the same for having held
The infant in their arms and later felt
The wounded hands and side, all doubts dispelled-
Who could but sigh: Immanuel!
Who could but shout: Immanuel!

3. You show the Father none has ever seen,
In flesh and blood you bore our griefs and pain,
In bread and wine you visit us again-
Who could but see: Immanuel!
Who could but thrill: Immanuel!

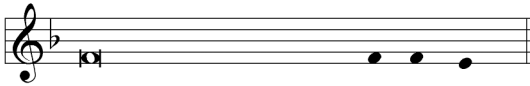
4. How else could I have known you, O my God!
How else could I have loved you, O my God!
How else could I embrace you, O my God!
Who could but pray: Immanuel!
Who could but praise: Immanuel!

Opening verses are from the Service of Light (CW p. 54)

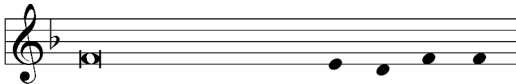
Stand.



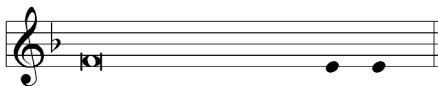
M: Jesus Christ is the light of the world,



C: the light no darkness can o-ver-come.



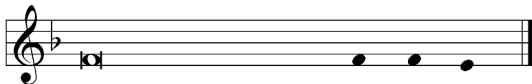
M: Stay with us, Lord, for it is eve-ning,



C: and the day is almost o - ver.



M: Be our light and scat - ter the dark-ness,



C: and hear our evening hymn of praise.



1 O gra - cious Light, Lord Je - sus Christ, In you the

2 Now sun - set comes, but light shines forth; The lamps are

3 Wor - thy are you of end - less praise, O Son of



Fa - ther's glo - ry shone. Im - mor - tal, ho - ly,

lit to pierce the night. Praise Fa - ther, Son, and

God, life - giv - ing Lord; Where-fore you are through



blest is he, And blest are you, his on - ly Son.

Spir - it: God Who dwells in the e - ter - nal light.

all the earth And in the high - est heav'n a - dored.

EXHORTATION AND PRAYER

M: Dear people of God, in this Christmas season, it is our duty and delight to hear again the message of the angels and, in heart and mind, to go to Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us—the Christ Child lying in a manger.

Let us read and learn in Holy Scripture the story of the loving purposes of God from the first days after our fall into sin to the glorious redemption brought to us by this holy child.

But first, let us pray for people all over the world who would delight with us to know the good news of Jesus Christ and who would join with us in singing his praises. Let us pray for the people of this city and for all those in our own congregation.

And, because this would please our Lord, let us remember in his name the poor and helpless, the cold, the hungry and the oppressed, the sick and those who are sad, the lonely and the unloved, and the elderly and the little children. We especially remember all those who do not know the Lord Jesus, those who do not love him, and those who by sin have grieved his heart of love.

Finally, let us remember before God all those who rejoice with us in heaven, who live in greater light than we, that multitude which no one can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, who died in faith, and who live before the throne of God and praise him each day in his temple. We confess that we are united with them as we are united with one another.

To sum up all these petitions, let us pray as Christ himself taught us.

C: 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.

Be seated.

NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS

First Lesson ----- Genesis 3:8-15

The Seed of the woman will crush the serpent's head

They heard the voice of the LORD God, who was walking around in the garden during the cooler part of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

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

The man said, "I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself."

God said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?"

The man said, "The woman you gave to be with me—she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

The LORD God said to the woman, "What

have you done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

The LORD God said to the serpent:

Because you have done this,
you are cursed more than all the livestock,
and more than every wild animal.
You shall crawl on your belly,
and you shall eat dust all the days of your
life.

I will put hostility between you and the
woman,
and between your seed and her seed.
He will crush your head,
and you will crush his heel.

Lesson 1 Hymn ----- From Heaven Above to Earth I Come

CW 38

1. (Choir) "From heav'n above to earth I come
To bear good news to ev'ry home;
Glad tidings of great joy I bring,
Whereof I now will say and sing:

2. (Choir) "To you this night is born a child
Of Mary, chosen virgin mild;
This little child of lowly birth
Shall be the joy of all the earth.

3. "This is the Christ, our God most high,
Who hears your sad and bitter cry;
He will himself your Savior be
From all your sins to set you free.

4. "He will on you the gifts bestow
Prepared by God for all below,
That in his kingdom, bright and fair,
You may with us his glory share.

5. "These are the signs which you shall mark:
The swaddling clothes and manger dark.
There you will find the infant laid
By whom the heav'ns and earth were made."

6. *(Men)* How glad we'll be to find it so!
Then with the shepherds let us go
To see what God for us has done
In sending us his own dear Son.

7. Come here, my friends, lift up your eyes,
And see what in the manger lies.
Who is this child, so young and fair?
It is the Christchild lying there.

8. *(Instruments Only)*
Welcome to earth, O noble Guest,
Through whom the sinful world is blest!
You came to share my misery
That you might share your joy with me.

9. *(Women)* Ah, Lord, though you created all,
How weak you are, so poor and small,
That you should choose to lay your head
Where lowly cattle lately fed!

10. Were earth a thousand times as fair
And set with gold and jewels rare,
It would be far too poor and small
A cradle for the Lord of all.

11. Instead of soft and silken stuff
You have but hay and straw so rough
On which as King, so rich and great,
To be enthroned in royal state.

12. And so it pleases you to see
This simple truth revealed to me:
That all the world's wealth, honor, might
Are weak and worthless in your sight.

13. *(Children)* Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,
Prepare a bed, soft, undefiled
Within my heart, made clean and new,
A quiet chamber kept for you.

14. My heart for very joy must leap;
My lips no more can silence keep.
I, too, must sing with joyful tongue
That sweetest ancient cradle song:

15. Glory to God in highest heaven, Who unto us his Son has given!
While angels sing with pious mirth A glad new year to all the earth.

Second Lesson ----- Genesis 22:15-18

God's promises to Abraham

The Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, "I have sworn by myself, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will bless you greatly, and I will multiply your descendants greatly, like the stars of

the sky and like the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the city gates of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

Lesson 2 Hymn ----- Where Shepherds Lately Knelt

CW 54

1. *(Children)* Where shepherds lately knelt and
kept the angel's word,
I come in half-belief, a pilgrim strangely stirred;
But there is room and welcome there for me,
But there is room and welcome there for me.

2. *(Children)* In that unlikely place I find him as
they said:
Sweet newborn Babe, how frail! and in a manger
bed,
A still, small voice to cry one day for me,
A still, small voice to cry one day for me.

3. How should I not have known Isaiah would be
there,
His prophecies fulfilled? With pounding heart I
stare:
A child, a son, the Prince of Peace for me,
A child, a son, the Prince of Peace for me.

4. Can I, will I forget how Love was born, and
burned
Its way into my heart unasked, unforced, un-
earned,
To die, to live, and not alone for me,
To die, to live, and not alone for me?

Third Lesson ----- Isaiah 9:2,6,7

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great Light

The people walking in darkness have seen a great
light.
For those living in the land of the shadow of
death, the light has dawned. ...
For to us a child is born.
To us a son is given.
The authority to rule will rest on his shoulders.
He will be named:
Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God,
Everlasting Father,

Prince of Peace.
There will be no limit to his authority
and no end to the peace he brings.
He will rule on David's throne and over his king-
dom,
to establish it and to uphold it with justice and
righteousness
from now on, into eternity.
The zeal of the Lord of Armies will accomplish
this.

Lesson 3 Hymn ----- Once in Royal David's City

CW 50

1. *(Boys)* 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.

2. *(Choir)* 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.

3. But 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,
As he leads his children on
To the place where he is gone.

4. Not in that poor, lowly stable
With the oxen standing by
Shall we see him, but in heaven,
Set at God's right hand on high.
Then like stars his children crowned,
All in white, his praise will sound.

Fourth Lesson ----- Isaiah 11:1-9

A Branch from the stem of Jesse

A shoot will spring up from the stump of Jesse,
and a Branch from his roots will bear fruit.

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him:
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the
LORD.

He will be delighted with the fear of the LORD.
He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
nor will he render decisions based on what he
hears with his ears,
but with righteousness he will judge the poor,
and he will render fair decisions in favor of the op-
pressed on the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath from his lips he will put the

wicked to death.
Righteousness will be the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his hips.
The wolf will dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard will lie down with the young goat,
the calf, the young lion, and the fattened calf to-
gether,
and a little child will lead them.
The cow and the bear will graze together,
and their young ones will lie down together.
The lion will eat straw like the cattle.
The nursing child will play near a cobra's hole,
and the weaned child will put his hand into a
viper's den.
They will not hurt or destroy anywhere on my
holy mountain,

for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the
LORD,

as the waters cover the sea.

Lesson 4 Hymn ----- Behold, a Branch Is Growing

CW 47 (Congregation)

1. Behold, a Branch is growing
Of loveliest form and grace,
As prophets sang, foreknowing;
It springs from Jesse's race
And bears one little flow'r
In midst of coldest winter,
At deepest midnight hour.

2. Isaiah had foretold it
In words of promise sure,
And Mary's arms enfold it,
A virgin meek and pure.
Through God's eternal will
This child to her is given
At midnight calm and still.

3. 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.

4. This flow'r, so small and tender,
With fragrance fills the air;
His brightness ends the darkness
That kept the earth in fear.
True God and yet true man,
He came to save his people
From earth's dark night of sin.

5. O Savior, Child of Mary, Who felt our human woes,
O Savior, King of glory, Who conquered all our foes,
Bring us at last, we pray, To the bright courts of heaven
And to the endless day.

Fifth Lesson ----- Luke 1:26-35,38

The angel Gabriel visits Mary

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin pledged in marriage to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly fa-

vored! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women."

But she was greatly troubled by the statement and was wondering what kind of greeting this could be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, because you have found favor with

God. Listen, you will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to 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 his father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will never end.”

Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”

The angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon 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. ...

Then Mary said, “See, I am the Lord’s servant. May it happen to me as you have said.” Then the angel left her.

Lesson 5 Hymn ----- The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came CW 24 (Congregation)

1. The angel Gabriel from heaven came,
His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;
“All hail,” said he to meek and lowly Mary,
“Most highly favored maiden.” Gloria!

2. “I come from heav’n to tell the Lord’s decree:
A blessed virgin mother you shall be.
Your Son shall be Immanuel, by seers foretold,
Most highly favored maiden.” Gloria!

3. Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head;
“To me be as it pleases God,” she said.
“My soul shall praise and magnify his holy name.”
Most highly favored maiden, Gloria!

4. Of her Immanuel, the Christ, was born
In Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,
And Christian folk throughout the world
will ever say,
“Most highly favored maiden.” Gloria!

Sixth Lesson ----- Matthew 1:18-25 *The birth of Jesus*

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. His mother, Mary, was pledged in marriage to Joseph. Before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her husband, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her. So he decided to divorce her privately. But as he was considering these things, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because

the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

All this happened to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: “Look, the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son. And they will name him Immanuel,” which means, “God with us.”

When Joseph woke up from his sleep, he did

as the angel of the Lord had commanded him. He took Mary home as his wife, but he was not inti-

mate with her until she gave birth to her firstborn son. And he named him Jesus.

Lesson 6 Hymn ----- Away in a Manger

CW 68 (Children's Choir)

1. 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.

2. The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky,
And stay by my side until morning is nigh.

3. Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay Close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care, And take us to heaven to live with you there.

Seventh Lesson ----- Luke 2:1-20

The shepherds visit the manger

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governing Syria. And everyone went to register, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the town of Nazareth, into Judea, to the town of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was from the house and family line of David. He went to be registered with Mary, his wife, who was pledged to him in marriage and was expecting a child.

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

There were in the same country shepherds staying out in the fields, keeping watch over their

flock 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. For behold, I bring you good news of great joy, which will be for all people: Today in the town of David, a Savior was born for you. He 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." Suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude from the heavenly army, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward mankind."

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Now let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph,

and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they told others the message they had been told about this child. And all who heard it were amazed by what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds

returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Lesson 7 Hymn ----- To Shepherds as they Watched by Night

CW 53 (Congregation)

1. To shepherds as they watched by night
Appeared a host of angels bright;
“Behold the tender babe,” they said,
“In yonder lowly manger laid,

2. “At Bethlehem, in David’s town,
As Micah did of old make known.
It is the Christ, your Lord and King,
Who will to all salvation bring.”

3. Oh, then rejoice that through his Son
God is with sinners now at one;
Made like yourselves of flesh and blood,
Your brother is th’ eternal God.

4. What harm can sin and death then do?
The true God now abides with you.
Let hell and Satan storm and rave,
Christ is your brother—you are safe.

5. Not one he will or can forsake;
His cov’nant he will never break.
Let ev’ry scheme the tempter try,
You may his utmost pow’rs defy.

6. You shall and must at last prevail.
God’s own you are; you cannot fail.
To God forever sing your praise
With joy and patience all your days.

Eighth Lesson ----- Matthew 2:1-12

The magi worship the newborn King

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, when Herod was king, Wise Men from the east came to Jerusalem. They asked, “Where is he 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 alarmed, and all Jerusalem with him. He gathered together all the people’s chief priests and experts in the law.

He asked them where the Christ was to be born. They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, because this was written through the prophet:

You, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are certainly not least among the rulers of Judah: because out of you will come a ruler, who will shepherd my people, Israel.”

Then Herod secretly summoned the Wise

Men and found out from them exactly when the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. When you find him, report to me, so that I may also go and worship him."

After listening to the king, they went on their way. Then the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them, until it stood still over the place where the child was. When they saw the

star, they rejoiced with overwhelming joy. After they went into the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother, they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Since they had been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route.

Lesson 8 Hymn ----- O Jesus Christ, Thy Manger Is

TLH 81 (CW 40)

1. *(Choir)* O Jesus Christ, Thy manger is
My paradise at which my soul reclineth.
For there, O Lord,
Doth lie the Word
Made flesh for us; herein Thy grace forthshineth.

2. He whom the sea And wind obey
Doth come to serve the sinner in great meekness.
Thou, God's own Son,
With us art one,
Dost join us and our children in our weakness.

3. Thy light and grace Our guilt efface,
Thy heavenly riches all our loss retrieving.
Immanuel,
Thy birth doth quell
The power of hell and Satan's bold deceiving.

4. Thou Christian heart, Whoe'er thou art,
Be of good cheer and let no sorrow move thee!
For God's own Child,
In mercy mild,
Joins thee to Him;-how greatly God must love thee!

5. Remember thou What glory now
The Lord prepared thee for all earthly sadness.
The angel host
Can never boast
Of greater glory, greater bliss or gladness.

6. *(Choir)* The world may hold Her wealth and
gold;
But thou, my heart, keep Christ as thy true
Treasure.
To Him hold fast
Until at last
A crown be thine and honor in full measure.

Ninth Lesson ----- John 1:1-14

The mystery of the incarnation

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him everything was made, and without him not one thing was made that has been made. In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. The light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man, sent from God, whose name was John. He came as an eyewitness to testify about the light so that everyone would believe through him. He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light.

The real light that shines on everyone was

coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not recognize him. He came to what was his own, yet his own people did not accept him. But to all who did receive him, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. They were born, not of blood, or of the desire of the flesh, or of a husband's will, but born of God.

The Word became flesh and dwelled among us. We have seen his glory, the glory he has as the only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Lesson 9 Hymn ----- Silent Night! Holy Night!

CW 60 (Congregation)

*During the introduction to this hymn
ushers will light candles from the center aisle.*

Please pass the light to others in your pew.

This signifies the light of Christ, passed on by the sharing of the Gospel.

1 (*German*). Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht
Alles schläft; einsam wacht
Nur das traute hochheilige Paar.
Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!

1 (*second time*). 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.

2. 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!

3. Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Candles may be extinguished after the hymn

Offering

Stand.

Online giving option:
mluther.org/give



*Offerings support the spread
of the Gospel here and around the world.*

Prayer

M: O God, who makes us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of your only Son, Jesus Christ, grant that as we joyfully receive him as our Redeemer, so we may with sure confidence behold him when he shall come to be our judge, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

Blessing

M: May he who by his incarnation gathered things earthly and heavenly into one, fill us with such joy that comes with the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life. And the blessing of God Almighty—the Father, the Son †, and the Holy Spirit—be upon you and remain with you always.

C: **Amen**

There will be no formal dismissal. If you desire, you may stay and meditate.

*Join us for our Christmas Day festival service
tomorrow at 9:00 AM.*

