



SERVICE OF CELEBRATION AND COVENANT RENEWAL

Season of Advent

15 December 2019

Time after time mankind is driven against the rocks of the horrid reality of a fallen creation. —Hilaire Belloc

GOD CALLS HIS PEOPLE TO WORSHIP

It is God Himself who calls His people to worship. We do not call ourselves, but it is the King who opens His gates and beckons us into His courts.

Gospel Invitation—based on John 10:10

Good news. Glad tidings. Great joy. Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

Introit—The First Noel, Vs. 1

The first Noel the an - gel did say

Was to cer - tain poor shep - herds in fields as they lay;

In fields where they lay keep - ing their sheep,

On a cold win - ter's night that was so deep.

No - el, No - el, No - el, No - el, Born is the King of Is - ra - el.

Text: Traditional English Carol; Music: THE FIRST NOWELL, Traditional English Carol,
W. Sandy's *Christmas Carols*, 1833.

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Call to Worship—based on Micah 5:2-5

Pastor: Rejoice, O you people, and be glad.

All: For the Lord has spoken and His promises are sure.

Reader 1: O Bethlehem, you are too little even to be among the clans of Judah, but from out of you shall come forth one who is to be ruler in Israel.

Reader 2: His coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. He shall stand and shepherd His flock in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God.

All: We shall dwell secure, for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth.

Pastor: And He shall be our peace.

Hymn of Praise—On Christmas Night All Christians Sing



On Christ-mas night all Christ-ians sing, to hear the news the an-gels bring,
Then why should men on earth be sad, since our Re-deem-er made us glad,
When sin de-parts be-fore His grace, then life and health come in its place,
All out of dark-ness we have light, which made the an-gels sing this night,



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When sin de-parts be-fore His grace, then life and health come in its place;
All out of dark-ness we have light, which made the an-gels sing this night:



News of great joy, news of great mirth, news of our mer-ci-ful King's birth.
When from our sin He set us free, all for to gain our li-ber-ty?
An-gels and men with joy may sing, all for to see the new-born King.
"Glo-ry to God and peace to men, now and for ev-er-more. A-men."

Text: Traditional English Carol; Music: SUSSEX CAROL, Traditional English Carol, Arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1912.

GOD SPEAKS TO HIS PEOPLE THROUGH HIS WORD

The Bible is the means by which God graciously reveals Himself to His people—so we listen, read, and study with expectant hearts.

Hymn of Praise—All My Heart This Night Rejoices



All my heart this night re - joic - es
Forth to - day the Con - qu'ror go - eth,
He be - comes the Lamb that tak - eth
Come, then, ban - ish all your sad - ness



As I hear, far and near, sweet - est an - gel voic - es
Who the foe, sin and woe, death and hell, o'er - throw - eth
Sin a - way and for aye full a - tone - ment mak - eth.
One and all, great and small; come with songs of glad - ness.



"Christ is born," their choirs are sing - ing
Be - came man, man to de - liv - er;
For our life His own He ten - ders;
Love Him who with love is glow - ing;



Till the air ev - 'ry - where now with joy is ring - ing.
The dear Son now is one with our blood for - ev - er.
And our race, by His grace, meet for glo - ry ren - ders.
Hail the star, from a - far, light and joy be - stow - ing.

Text: Paul Gerhardt, 1653, Tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1858, Alt. 2018;
Music: WARUM SOLLT' ICH MICH DENN GRAMEN, Johann Ebeling, 1666.

Scripture Reading—Deuteronomy 30:11, 14-15, 19-20

This commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it. See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore, choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying His voice and holding fast to Him, for He is your life and length of days.

Elder: This is the Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Hymn of Praise—As With Gladness Men of Old

As with glad - ness, men of old did the guid - ing star be - hold
As with joy - ful steps they sped to that low - ly cra - dle bed
As they off - ered gifts most rare at that cra - dle rude and bare;
Ho - ly— Je - sus, ev - ery day keep us in the nar - row way;

As with joy they hailed its light lead - ing on - ward, beam-ing bright
There to— bend the knee be - fore Him whom Heaven and Earth a - dore;
So may we with hol - y joy, pure and free from sin's al - loy,
And, when earth - ly things are past, bring our ran - somed souls at last

So, most gra - cious Lord, may we ev - er - more be led to Thee.
So may we with will - ing feet ev - er seek Thy mer - cy seat.
All our cost - liest treas - ures bring, Christ, to Thee, our heav'n-ly King.
Where they need no star to guide, where no clouds Thy glo - ry hide.

Text: William C. Dix, 1860, Music: DIX, Konrad Kocher, 1838.

Reading of the Word—Matthew 2:1-12

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,² 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.”³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him;⁴ and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.⁵ They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ⁶“‘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.’”⁷ Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared.⁸ 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.”⁹ 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.¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.¹¹ 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.¹² And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Sung Response—The First Noel, Vs. 3



And by the light of that same star the Wise Men came from coun - try far;



To seek for a King was their in - tent, and to fol - low the star wher - ev - er it went.



No - el, No - el, No - el, No - el, Born is the King of Is - ra - el.

Text: Traditional English Carol; Music: THE FIRST NOWELL, Traditional English Carol,
W. Sandy's *Christmas Carols*, 1833.

Sermon—Why He Comes

—Pastor, George Grant

GOD CALLS HIS PEOPLE TO CONFESSION, REPENTANCE, AND RECONCILIATION

The People of God respond to His Word by confessing their sins, repenting of their sinful ways, and seeking God's favor through the reconciling work of Jesus, the Son of God.

Confession of Sin—based on Romans 3:13-18; Jeremiah 8:3; Proverbs 8:36; Psalm 145:8

Pastor: Lord, we come confessing. We confess that our throats are open graves. Whether we realize it or not, we have chosen the way of death.

All: There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together we have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one.

Pastor: All those who hate God, love death.

All: Our feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and misery are in our paths, and the path of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before our eyes.

Pastor: But the Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

(Silent prayers of confession)

Sung Response—Lord, Have Mercy

MEN

Lord, have mer - cy, Lord, have mer - cy, Lord, have mer - cy, mer - cy.

WOMEN

Christ, have mer - cy, Christ, have mer - cy, Christ, have mer - cy.

MEN

Christ, have mer - cy, Christ, have mer - cy, Christ, have mer - cy, mer - cy.

Lord, have mer - cy, Lord, have mer - cy, Lord, have mer - cy.

Lord, have mer - cy, Lord, have mer - cy, Lord, have mer - cy, mer - cy.

Text: Traditional; Music: CLOVERCROFT KYRIE, Henry C. Haffner, 2019.

Assurance of Pardon—from Psalm 145:9-12; Revelation 15:3-4

The Lord is good to all, and His mercy is over all that He has made. All Your works shall give thanks to You, O Lord, and all Your saints shall bless You! We shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom and tell of Your power, to make known to our children and our children's children Your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of Your Kingdom. For Your Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom and Your dominion endures throughout all generations.

Pastor: This is the promise of God.

All: This is the Word of the Lord.

Pastor: Great and marvelous are Your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are Your ways, King of the Ages.

All: Who will not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name?

Pastor: For You alone are holy. Amen.

Sung Response—Amen

A - men, a - men

Text: Traditional; Music: DRESDEN, Johann Naumann, 18th Century.

HEAVENLY GIFT—*EUCHARISTO*

As God beckons His people to the bounty of His table, they make joyous profession of their fealty to Him.

Profession of Faith—The Apostles' Creed

We believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of Heaven and Earth,

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: who was conceived of the Holy Spirit,

Born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,

Was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into Hell.

On the third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into Heaven and now sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;

From whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

We believe in the Holy Spirit; the one holy church—both visible and invisible;

The communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins;

The resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. *Amen.*

Sursum Corda

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

People: **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: **It is right to give Him thanks and praise.**

Pastor: It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to You, Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth. Therefore, we praise You, Triune God, and we join our voices with the angels, the archangels, and the whole company of Heaven in this hymn of eternal praise:

UNISON



Glo-ry to God in the high - est, and peace to His peo-ple on earth. —

WOMEN

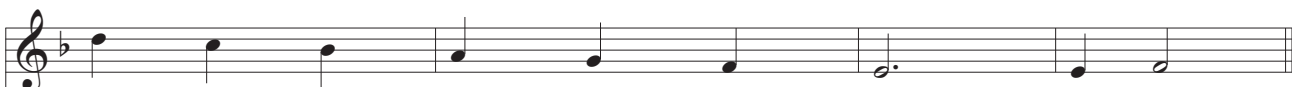


We praise You, we bless You, we wor-ship You, we glo-ri-fy You,

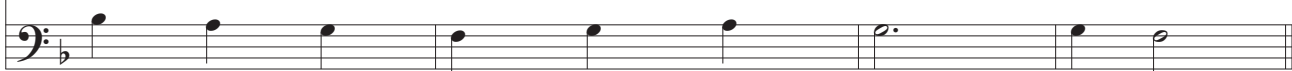
MEN



We praise You, we bless — You, we wor-ship You, we glo-ri-fy You,



We give You thanks for Your great glo - ry.



We give You thanks for Your great glo - ry.

Text: Traditional, based on Luke 2:14; Music: CLOVERCROFT GLORIA, Henry C. Haffner, 2019.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION AND THE LORD'S TABLE

This table is open to all baptized Christians who have made a profession of faith. You may come forward to receive the bread and wine or grape juice.

Hymn of Contemplation—Lovely Child, Holy Child



Love - ly child, ho - ly child, gen - tle, mild, un - de - filed;
Child of light, born to - night, our de - light, prom - ise bright;
Rest Your head, sweet - est head; gifts we'll spread at Your bed.
To this boy, our great joy, we em - ploy hymns of joy;

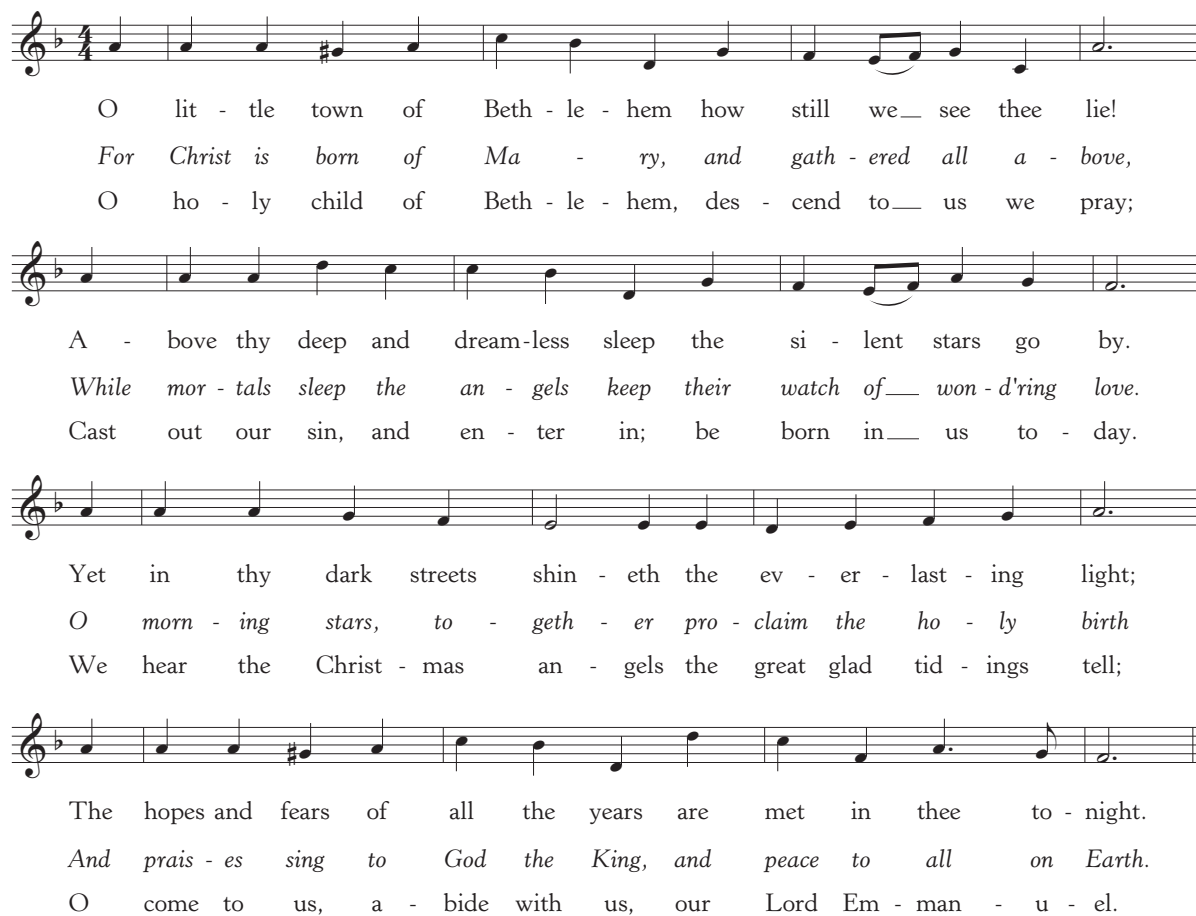
In - fant King, fair - est King, gifts we'll bring and an - thems sing;
Child so fair, see Him there; now de - clare Him ev - 'ry where;
Je - sus Lord, be a - dored, may this word now be out - poured:
Child so fair: see Him there; now de - clare Him ev - 'ry where:

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Text: Folk Carol, adapted by David N. Johnson, 1968; Music: BETHLEHEM, Folk Carol, Arr. Henry C. Haffner, 2018.

Hymn of Praise—O Little Town Of Bethlehem



O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem how still we see thee lie!
For Christ is born of Ma - ry, and gath - ered all a - bove,
O ho - ly child of Beth - le - hem, des - cend 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 - d'ring love.
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
We hear the Christ - mas an - gels the great glad tid - ings tell;

The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.
And prais - es sing to God the King, and peace to all on Earth.
O come to us, a - bide with us, our Lord Em - man - u - el.

Text: Phillips Brooks, 1868; Music: ST. LOUIS, Lewis H. Redner, 1868.

GOD'S PEOPLE RESPOND IN GRATEFUL PRAISE, PETITIONS, TITHES & OFFERINGS

Our praying, serving, and giving are essential aspects of worship. It is here that our faith moves from our heads and hearts into our lives and callings.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession—The Lord's Prayer

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. *Amen.*

Hymn of Praise—What Child Is This



What Child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mar-y's lap is sleep - ing?
Why lies He in such mean es - tate, where ox and ass are feed - ing?
So bring Him in - cense, gold, and myrrh; come, peas-ant, king, to own Him;



Whom an - gels greet with an - thems sweet, while shep - herds watch are keep - ing?
Good Chris-tian, fear; for sin - ners here the si - lent Word is plead - ing.
The King of kings sal - va - tion brings, let lov - ing hearts en - throne Him.



This, this is Christ the King, whom shep-herds guard and an - gels sing:
Nails, spear, shall pierce Him through; the cross be borne for me, for you:
Raise, raise the song on high, the vir - gin sings her lul - la - by:



Haste, haste to bring Him laud, the Babe, the Son of Mar - y.
Hail, hail the Word made flesh, the Babe, the Son of Mar - y.
Joy, joy for Christ is born, the Babe, the Son of Mar - y.

Text: William Chatterton Dix, 1865;
Music: GREENSLEEVES, 16th Century English Carol.

GOD SENDS HIS PEOPLE OUT

After calling His people into His presence, forgiving their sins, instructing them in His Word, and providing a foretaste of the marriage supper of the Lamb, God sends His people into the world to show His light in the darkness.

Benediction—based on 2 Timothy 1:9-10

He has saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of His own purpose and grace, which He gave us in Christ Jesus. And He abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. May the Lord grant you grace and mercy to know this Gospel of Life. *Amen.*

Sung Response—The First Noel, Vs. 6

The musical score is written for a two-part setting (Soprano and Bass) in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It consists of six systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The lyrics are: 'Then let us all in one accord Sing praises to our heav'n - ly Lord; That hath made Heav'n and Earth of naught, And with His blood man - kind hath bought. No - el, No - el, No - el, No - el, Born is the King of Is - ra - el.' The melody is simple and traditional, with the piano accompaniment providing harmonic support.

Then let us all in one ac - cord

Sing prai - ses to our heav'n - ly Lord;

That hath made Heav'n and Earth of naught,

And with His blood man - kind hath bought.

No - el, No - el, No - el, No - el, Born is the King of Is - ra - el.

Text: Traditional English Carol; Music: THE FIRST NOWELL, Traditional English Carol,
W. Sandy's *Christmas Carols*, 1833.

Announcements

Worship Notes:

*Come, then, banish all your sadness, one and all, great and small; come with songs of gladness
Love Him who with love is glowing, hail the star, from afar, light with joy bestowing.*
—Paul Gerhardt

In this morning's sermon text from Matthew 2, we find the story of the "wise men from the east" and the star they observed which hailed the birth of a king. These picturesque images have found their way into many of the hymns we sing during this season (and many a slightly historically inaccurate nativity scene), such as the beloved *The First Noel*. Written in six stanzas (three of which we'll sing at different points in this morning's service), this English carol invites us to relate in song the night of Jesus' birth, the arrival of the wise men from the east, and our own corporate response to the incarnation. As *With Gladness Men Of Old* directly compares our own position to that of the wise men: "As they offered gifts most rare ... so may we with holy joy, pure and free from sin's alloy, all our costliest treasures bring, Christ, to Thee, our heavenly King." Likewise, the Appalachian folk carol *Lovely Child, Holy Child* has us taking the Wise Men as an example: "Infant King, fairest King, gifts we'll bring and anthems sing." The final hymn of the morning, *What Child Is This*, makes a further application: though receiving gold and incense, Christ was guarded by shepherds and born in a stable. The babe in Mary's lap would bear the cross for both peasants and kings—indeed, He would die, "for me, for you." —Henry C. Haffner

Key Words: Wise Men, King, Worship, Prophet, Search, Star, Gifts, Dream
Keystone Verse: 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. (Matthew 2:6)



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All Biblical quotes taken from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.