We Gather in Response to God’s Invitation

MUSIC TO GATHER US

WORDS OF WELCOME

The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols was first celebrated at King’s College, Cambridge on Christmas Eve, 1918. It was an adaptation of a similar service that had been written for the cathedral at Truro in 1880. The lessons were reordered in 1919, and what follows are six of the nine lessons that have been used since that time. At King’s College, the Festival is a Christmas Eve service, and the lessons, and music, move deliberately from the season of Advent into Christmastide. Many other churches have adopted the tradition, occasionally modifying it as needed. The complete service can be a bit lengthy, and it is not unusual to omit a few lessons.

*SINGING A CAROL TOGETHER

“Once in Royal David’s City”

BLACK #145 V. 1-3

You are welcome to sing quietly or hum along.

Once in royal David’s city stood a lowly cattle shed, Where a mother laid her Baby in a manger for a bed: Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ her little Child.

Jesus came to earth from heaven, who is God and Head of all, Sheltered in a rustic stable, cradled in a common stall; With the poor and meek and lowly lived on earth our Savior holy.

And through all this wondrous childhood Jesus honored and obeyed, Loved and watched the tender mother whose strong arms a cradle made, So, like Jesus we should be serving God obediently.

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*THE BIDDING PRAYER (ADAPTED)

Beloved in Christ, at this Christmastide let it be our care and delight to hear again the message of the angels, and in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, and the babe lying in a manger.

Therefore, let us read in our scriptures the tale of the loving purposes of God that we see in the birth of this holy Child.

But first, let us pray for the needs of the whole world; for peace on earth and goodwill among all Christ’s people; for unity and caring within Christ’s
church, and especially in this, our own community.

And because Jesus was born to a poor, brown-skinned peasant family, and came into this world as a vulnerable infant whose first bed was a manger, let us remember, in his name, the poor and helpless, the cold, the hungry, and the oppressed; the sick and them that mourn, the lonely and the unloved, the aged and the little children.

Lastly, let us remember before God all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore, and in a greater light, that multitude which no one can number, whose hope was and is in the Word made flesh, and with whom in Christ Jesus we are one forevermore.

Amen.

*SINGING A CAROL TOGETHER* 

“Good Christian Friends, Rejoice” 

You are welcome to sing quietly or hum along.

Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice; give ye heed to what we say: Jesus Christ was born today. Ox and ass before him bow, and he is in the manger now. Christ is born today! Christ is born today!

Six Selected Lessons (of Nine)

FIRST LESSON: GENESIS 3:8-15

God announces in the Garden of Eden the consequences of distrusting God.

1 They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 2 But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” 3 He said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.” 4 He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” 5 The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.” 6 Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent tricked me, and I ate.” 7 The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. 9 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.”

The word of God.

Thanks be to God.

*SINGING A CAROL TOGETHER* 

“Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus” 

Brown, #168 V. 1

You are welcome to sing quietly or hum along.

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.

SECOND LESSON: GENESIS 22:15–18
God promises to Abraham that by his descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.

15 The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, 16 and said, “By myself I have sworn, says the Lord: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, 18 and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.”

The word of God.

Thanks be to God.

SINGING A CAROL TOGETHER
“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

BROWN #169 V. 1

You are welcome to sing quietly or hum along.

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!

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FOURTH LESSON: ISAIAH 11:1–9
The king is coming and will usher in a reign of justice for the poor and peace for all God’s creation.

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall 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. 3 His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; 4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

6 The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder’s den. 9They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

The word of God.

Thanks be to God.
The angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she will give birth to God's promised Son whose kingdom shall never end.

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

28 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.

32 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 ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.

35 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

38 Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

The word of God. Thanks be to God.
The word of God.
Thanks be to God.

SINGING A CAROL TOGETHER
BROWN #179 V. 1
The first Noel the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay--
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter’s night that was so deep.
Noel, Noel! Noel, Noel!
Born is the King of Israel!

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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. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to what was his own, 12 and his own people did not accept him. 13 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 14 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

15 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.

The word of God.
Thanks be to God.

SINGING A CAROL TOGETHER
“O Come, All Ye Faithful”
BROWN #193 V. 1
You are welcome to sing quietly or hum along.
O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold Him, born the King of Angels;
O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord.

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MEDITATION:
“The Arc of History Bends Toward…”
We Respond to God's Word

A TIME FOR PRAYER

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

Let us remember to God the people who need our gratitude, love, and care.

PRAYERS ON BEHALF OF THE CHURCH THE PRAYER OF OUR SAVIOR

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 sins as we forgive those who sin 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. Amen.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO SHARING OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

You are invited to place your gifts in the offering basket as you arrive or depart from our worship together.

“We Three Kings of Orient Are”

BROWN #206

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

Refrain: O star of wonder, star of night, Star with royal beauty bright, Following yonder star, Guide us to thy perfect light.

Life-giving God, we praise you for the bounty of creation and all you provide every day. Receive these gifts we offer in thanksgiving, and use them to your glory and to the benefit of all in need. Open our eyes and hearts to the work of your Spirit, so that we may see where you would have us share and serve. Give us ears to hear your word so we may use our time, talent, and resources to minister to those who are wounded, oppressed, and suffering. As we go, help us to know that Christ goes with us. Amen.

We Go Out to Serve

ENGAGING THE GOSPEL LIFE

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

*GOOD WORDS FOR GOING FORTH

May the Christ who by his Incarnation gathered into One things earthly and heavenly, fill you with the sweetness of inward peace and goodwill; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always. Amen.

Go forth in peace and joy.

Thank be God, Alleluia!

*SINGING A CAROL TOGETHER

“Go, Tell It on the Mountain”

BROWN #205 V. 3

You are welcome to sing quietly or hum along.
Go, tell it on the mountains, Over the hills and everywhere;  
Go, tell it on the mountains That Jesus Christ is born!

Down in a lowly manger The humble Christ was born,  
And brought us God's salvation That blessed Christmas morn.

Go, tell it on the mountains, Over the hills and everywhere;  
Go, tell it on the mountains That Jesus Christ is born!