

# Christmas Carol Service 2012

*Hobart, December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2012*

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## INTRODUCTION:

### **A. TODAY WE ARE GOING TO LISTEN TO NINE READINGS THAT TAKE US THROUGH THE STORY OF JESUS' INCARNATION**

1. The service of Nine Lessons with Carols was first drawn up for use in Truro Cathedral in England. In 1918 it was modified for use in King's College, Cambridge and has been conducted on Christmas eve every year since, and broadcast since 1928.
2. Versions of this service are sung by Cathedral and parish choirs around the world.
3. We are going to sing some well known carols that fit the readings, and also listen to some others, old and new, some familiar some not.

### **I. FIRST READING FROM GENESIS 3: 8-15; 17-19**

<sup>8</sup> When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man\* and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees.

<sup>9</sup> Then the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

<sup>10</sup> He replied, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."

<sup>11</sup> "Who told you that you were naked?" the LORD God asked. "Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?"

<sup>12</sup> The man replied, "It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it."

<sup>13</sup> Then the LORD God asked the woman, "What have you done?"

"The serpent deceived me," she replied. "That's why I ate it."

\* Or *Adam*, and so throughout the chapter.

<sup>14</sup> Then the LORD God said to the serpent,  
“Because you have done this, you are cursed  
more than all animals, domestic and wild.  
You will crawl on your belly,  
groveling in the dust as long as you live.  
<sup>15</sup> And I will cause hostility between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring.  
He will strike\* your head,  
and you will strike his heel.”

**v17** And to the man he said,  
“Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree  
whose fruit I commanded you not to eat,  
the ground is cursed because of you.  
All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it.  
<sup>18</sup> It will grow thorns and thistles for you,  
though you will eat of its grains.  
<sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your brow  
will you have food to eat  
until you return to the ground  
from which you were made.  
For you were made from dust,  
and to dust you will return.”

**A. LISTEN: REMEMBER OH THOU MAN**

1. words, 16th century; music by [Thomas Ravenscroft](#)
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\* Or *bruise*; also in 3:15b.

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## II. SECOND READING FROM GENESIS 22: 15-18

### **Genesis 22: 15-18**

<sup>15</sup> Then the angel of the LORD called again to Abraham from heaven. <sup>16</sup> "This is what the LORD says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that <sup>17</sup> I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants<sup>\*</sup> beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies. <sup>18</sup> And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me."<sup>1</sup>

#### **A. CAROL: ANGELS FROM THE REALMS OF GLORY**

"[Angels from the Realms of Glory](#)" – words by [James Montgomery](#); music, old French tune arranged by [Philip S. Ledger](#)

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\* Hebrew *seed*; also in 22:17b, 18.

<sup>1</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (Ge 22:15-18). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

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**III. THIRD READING FROM ISAIAH 9:2; 6-7**

**A. ISAIAH 9:2; 6-7**

<sup>2\*</sup> The people who walk in darkness  
will see a great light.  
For those who live in a land of deep darkness,\*  
a light will shine.

**6-7**

<sup>6</sup> For a child is born to us,  
a son is given to us.  
The government will rest on his shoulders.  
And he will be called:  
Wonderful Counselor,\* Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
<sup>7</sup> His government and its peace  
will never end.  
He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David  
for all eternity.  
The passionate commitment of the LORD of Heaven's Armies  
will make this happen!

**B. LISTEN: MICHAEL CARD: UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN**

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\* Verses 9:2-21 are numbered 9:1-20 in Hebrew text.

\* Greek version reads *a land where death casts its shadow*. Compare Matt 4:16.

\* Or *Wonderful, Counselor*.

## IV. FOURTH READING FROM ISAIAH 11:1-9

### Isaiah 11: 1-9

**11** <sup>1</sup> Out of the stump of David's family\* will grow a shoot—  
yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root.

<sup>2</sup> And 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.

<sup>3</sup> He will delight in obeying the LORD. He will not judge by appearance  
nor make a decision based on hearsay.

<sup>4</sup> He will give justice to the poor  
and make fair decisions for the exploited.  
The earth will shake at the force of his word,  
and one breath from his mouth will destroy the wicked.

<sup>5</sup> He will wear righteousness like a belt  
and truth like an undergarment.

<sup>6</sup> In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together;  
the leopard will lie down with the baby goat.  
The calf and the yearling will be safe with the lion,  
and a little child will lead them all.

<sup>7</sup> The cow will graze near the bear.  
The cub and the calf will lie down together.  
The lion will eat hay like a cow.

<sup>8</sup> The baby will play safely near the hole of a cobra.  
Yes, a little child will put its hand in a nest of deadly snakes without harm.

<sup>9</sup> Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain,

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\* Hebrew *the stump of the line of Jesse*. Jesse was King David's father.

for as the waters fill the sea,  
so the earth will be filled with people who know the LORD.

<sup>10</sup> In that day the heir to David's throne\*  
will be a banner of salvation to all the world.

The nations will rally to him,  
and the land where he lives will be a glorious place.\*

<sup>11</sup> In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time  
to bring back the remnant of his people—  
those who remain in Assyria and northern Egypt;  
in southern Egypt, Ethiopia,\* and Elam;  
in Babylonia,\* Hamath, and all the distant coastlands.

<sup>12</sup> He will raise a flag among the nations  
and assemble the exiles of Israel.  
He will gather the scattered people of Judah  
from the ends of the earth.

**A. LISTEN: MICHAEL CARD, THE PROMISE**

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\* Hebrew *the root of Jesse*.

\* Greek version reads *In that day the heir to David's throne [literally the root of Jesse] will come, / and he will rule over the Gentiles. / They will place their hopes on him.* Compare Rom 15:12.

\* Hebrew *in Pathros, Cush*.

\* Hebrew *in Shinar*.

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**V. FIFTH READING LUKE 1: 26-38**

**Luke 1: 26-38**

<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. <sup>28</sup> Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"

<sup>29</sup> Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. <sup>30</sup> "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! <sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup> And he will reign over Israel\* forever; his Kingdom will never end!"

<sup>34</sup> Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin."

<sup>35</sup> The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. <sup>36</sup> What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she's now in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup> For nothing is impossible with God.\*"

<sup>38</sup> Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.

**A. ONCE IN ROYAL DAVID'S CITY**

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\* Some manuscripts add *Blessed are you among women.*

\* Greek *over the house of Jacob.*

\* Some manuscripts read *For the word of God will never fail.*



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## VI. SIXTH READING FROM LUKE 2:1; 3-7

### A. LUKE 2: 1; 3-7

**2** At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire.

<sup>v</sup>**3** All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. **4** And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. **5** He took with him Mary, his fiancée, who was now obviously pregnant.

**6** And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. **7** She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

### B. O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

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## VII. SEVENTH READING FROM LUKE 2: 8-16

### Luke 2: 8-16

**8** That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. **9** Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, **10** but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. **11** The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! **12** And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

**13** Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,

**14** "Glory to God in highest heaven,  
and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."

**15** When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

**16** They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger.

**A. GOD REST YOU MERRY GENTLEMEN**

1.

**B. POEM BY RICHARD CRASHAW**

1. 17th century by Richard Crashaw

"That the Great Angel-blinding light should shrink  
His blaze, to shine in a poor Shepherd's eye;  
That the unmeasur'd God so low should sink  
As Pris'ner in a few poor rags to lie;  
That from His Mother's Breast He milk should drink,  
Who feeds with Nectar Heaven's fair family;  
That a vile Manger His low Bed should prove,  
Who in a Throne of stars Thunders above;  
That He whom the sun serves, should faintly peep  
Through clouds of Infant Flesh! That He, the old  
Eternal Word should be a Child, and weep;  
That He who made the fire, should fear the cold;  
That Heaven's high Majesty His Court should keep  
In a clay cottage, by each blast control'd;  
That Glory's self should serve our Griefs and fears,  
And free Eternity submit to years,  
Let our overwhelming wonder be."

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## VIII. EIGHTH READING MATTHEW 2: 1-12

### Matthew 2: 1-12

<sup>2</sup> Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men\* from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, <sup>2</sup>“Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose,\* and we have come to worship him.”

<sup>3</sup> King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?”

<sup>5</sup> “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they said, “for this is what the prophet wrote:

<sup>6</sup> ‘And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities\* of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.’\* ”

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. <sup>8</sup> Then he told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!”

<sup>9</sup> After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! <sup>11</sup> They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

<sup>12</sup> When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

### A. WE THREE KINGS

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\* Or *royal astrologers*; Greek reads *magi*; also in 2:7, 16.

\* Or *star in the east*.

\* Greek *the rulers*.

\* Mic 5:2; 2 Sam 5:2.

## IX. NINTH READING: JOHN 1: 1 - 14

### John 1: 1-14

**1** <sup>1</sup> In the beginning the Word already existed.

The Word was with God, and the Word was God.

<sup>2</sup> He existed in the beginning with God.

<sup>3</sup> God created everything through him,  
and nothing was created except through him.

<sup>4</sup> The Word gave life to everything that was created,\*  
and his life brought light to everyone.

<sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness can never extinguish it.\*

<sup>6</sup> God sent a man, John the Baptist,\* <sup>7</sup> to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. <sup>8</sup> John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. <sup>9</sup> The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

<sup>10</sup> He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. <sup>11</sup> He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. <sup>13</sup> They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

<sup>14</sup> So the Word became human\* and made his home among us. He was full of unending love and faithfulness.\* And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

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\* Or *and nothing that was created was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything.*

\* Or *and the darkness has not understood it.*

\* Greek *a man named John.*

\* Greek *became flesh.*

\* Or *grace and truth*; also in 1:17.

**A. WORDS FROM AN OLD WELSH HYMN;**

1. Express beautifully the mystery, paradox and wonder of the Incarnation, God the Word, the Son becoming one of us, born a human baby in a manger.

“Little babe who art so great, Child so young who art so old, In the manger small his room, Whom not heaven itself could hold.

Father—not more old than thou? Mother—younger, can it be? Older, younger is the Son, Younger, older, she than he.”<sup>2</sup>

**B. O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL**

**C. HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING**

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<sup>2</sup> D. Hyde, “Religious Songs of Connacht” (London, 1906), ii. 225 f. (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/time/crt/crt22.htm>)

## X. JOSEPH TKACH

1. Before we conclude, I'd like to read from Joe Tkach's Christmas message and a final poem;

### **Celebrating and proclaiming the Messiah's coming**

As the etymology of the word *Christmas* indicates, the Christian celebration of this day has its roots in the idea that Jesus has been sent to us. The church gathers on Christmas to worship and take communion in recognition of his coming through his birth to Mary in Bethlehem. From this gathering, the church is sent out (dismissed) to proclaim this good news in all the world.

When Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist regained his voice, he proclaimed a rich prophecy concerning the coming *Messiah*. In Luke 1:78, Zechariah refers to the long-promised Messiah as “the dayspring” (KJV) or “the rising sun” (NIV), sent “to us from heaven.” The Greek word translated “dayspring” or “rising sun” is *anatole*—a word used by Greek speakers in two ways. First it is used to refer to the light of the sun and the stars rising—also meaning, “from the east,” since the sun rises in the east and sunrise is another way of saying daybreak or dawn. Second, *anatole* is used to refer to a “shoot” or “branch.” It was used this way in the Septuagint (the Old Testament in Greek) to convey the meaning “branch” found in Jeremiah 23:5 and Zechariah 3:8 and 6:12.

Thus, in Luke 1:78, *anatole* could be translated “the branch from on high,” a reference similar to Isaiah 4:2, “the Branch of the Lord.” However, the translators chose “dayspring” (KJV) and “rising sun” (NIV) because verse 79 contains the imagery of light coming into darkness, just as the dawn chases away the darkness of night. The translators were likely correct in this choice, though the idea of “the branch” is lurking in there too. It appears that Luke uses *anatole* as a play on both meanings of the word—celebrating the Messiah as both humankind's new branch and new day.

Christmas proclaims that God is the light of his people from all eternity. And when, in the fullness of time, Jesus came, it was to fulfill all the ordinances and messianic prophecies concerning him. These were shadows, cast by the real light, for Jesus alone is “the dayspring” (Malachi 4:2; Luke 1:78) and “the morning star” (2 Peter 1:19; Revelation 2:28 and 22:16) of the promised

everlasting day in which the sun never sets. With Jesus' first coming, the eternal morning dawned. In this we find great hope for it carries with it the promise that all wrongs will ultimately be righted and all tears wiped away. Thus Jesus' first coming carries with it the promise of his second coming in glory, when the fullness of this hope will be realized in the new heavens and new earth, proclaimed in the book of Revelation.

Our celebration at Christmas of Jesus' first Advent (coming) is a joyous celebration of his love, his faithfulness and the promise of the fullness of his kingdom at his second Advent. Because of his birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension, the love of God dwells not just among us but also, by his Spirit, in us so that we will love one another with his love in the same Spirit.

Christmas is about the light and the love of God being sent to us in a most personal way—in the incarnate person of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. I pray that as you and yours celebrate Christmas with this fullness of meaning, you will find the joy, hope and comfort that come through our Lord's presence.

Sincerely in Christ's service,

Joseph Tkach

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## CONCLUSION:

### XI. POEM:

#### A. “CHRIST'S VICTORY IN HEAVEN”: WRITTEN BY GILES FLETCHER IN THE EARLY 1600'S.

“Who can forget—never to be forgot—The time, that all the world in slumber lies,When, like the stars, the singing angels shotTo earth, and heaven awakèd all his eyesTo see another sun at midnight riseOn earth? Was never sight of pareil fame,For God before man like Himself did frame,But God Himself now like a mortal man became.

A Child He was, and had not learnt to speak,That with His word the world before did make;His mother's arms Him bore, He was so weak,That with one hand the vaults of heaven could shake,See how small room my infant Lord doth take,Whom all the world is not enough to hold!Who of His years, or of His age hath told?Never such age so young, never a child so old.” [3-43](#)<sup>3</sup>

#### B. WITH ALL THIS IN MIND; LET US CONCLUDE BY SINGING;

#### C. JOY TO THE WORLD

#### D. PRAYER AND BENEDICTION

##### 1. Benediction:

Christ, who by his incarnation, gathered into one things earthly and things heavenly, grant you the fullness of inward peace and good will, and make you partakers of the divine nature, and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit be upon you, and remain with you always. Amen

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.sacred-texts.com/time/crt/crt22.htm>