

Call to Worship:

P: The King has come.

C: WHO IS THIS KING? WHAT SHALL WE CALL HIM?

P: He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. (*Col. 1:15*)

C: BY HIM ALL THINGS WERE CREATED: THINGS IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH, VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE. (*Col. 1:16*)

P: He is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and ruler of all the kings of the earth. (*Rev. 1:5*)

C: BUT THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US. (*Jn. 1:18*)

P: He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. (*Jn. 1:29*)

C: HE HIMSELF BORE OUR SINS IN HIS BODY ON THE TREE, [...] BY HIS WOUNDS WE HAVE BEEN HEALED. (*1 Pet. 2:24*)

P: We were like sheep going astray, but now we can return to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. (*1 Pet. 2:25*)

C: LET US FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS, THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTER OF OUR FAITH, WHO FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM ENDURED THE CROSS. (*Heb. 12:2*)

P: Unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given.

C: AND HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED WONDERFUL COUNSELOR, THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING FATHER, THE PRINCE OF PEACE. (*Is. 9:6*)

P: The King has come.

C: WHO IS THIS KING? WHAT SHALL WE CALL HIM?

ALL: HE IS IMMANUEL, GOD WITH US.

Confession of Sins:

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: AMEN.

P: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

C: BUT IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, GOD, WHO IS FAITHFUL AND JUST, WILL FORGIVE OUR SINS AND CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.

P: We pause for a moment of silence to reflect upon our personal need for the mercy and forgiveness of our Heavenly Father. (*Pause.*)

Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

C: MOST MERCIFUL GOD, WE CONFESS THAT WE ARE BY NATURE SINFUL AND UNCLEAN. WE HAVE SINNED AGAINST YOU IN THOUGHT, WORD AND DEED, BY WHAT WE HAVE DONE AND BY WHAT WE HAVE LEFT UNDONE. WE HAVE NOT LOVED YOU WITH OUR WHOLE HEART; WE HAVE NOT LOVED OUR NEIGHBORS AS OURSELVES. WE JUSTLY DESERVE YOUR PRESENT AND ETERNAL PUNISHMENT. FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR SON, JESUS CHRIST, HAVE MERCY ON US. FORGIVE US, RENEW US, AND LEAD US, SO THAT WE MAY DELIGHT IN YOUR WILL AND WALK IN YOUR WAYS TO THE GLORY OF YOUR HOLY NAME. AMEN.

P: Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: AMEN.

MUSICALS

The Broadway Musical is a unique production. Somehow, due to the craftiness of the author, the playlist of songs enables the hearer to move through the story line and have it “spiced up” by the meaningful articulation of solos, duets, chorus pieces, and the like. Just last month, it was my privilege to go to the Skylight Theater in the Third Ward, and enjoy the story of the Wizard of Oz. Each song punctuated the dialog so that the story came to life.

Today, as we celebrate the Jesus who is about to undertake His mission as Savior, we are going to attempt to do the same thing with the story of the His coming. A narrator will share some conversation about God’s promises, a word from God will be shared, and our choir will punctuate the story with a song which connects to the story.

In a way, the Scriptures are like a Musical. Thousands of years of History – thousands of years of God’s activity in the world He created, and its all compressed into one little book. God decided to put the Greatest Hits in one place so that, whenever we want, we can connect with the major stories of His grace. We can listen to the songs.

Of course, the heart, core and center of this Musical, is the Savior who was promised from the day Adam and Eve fell into sin, and moved gradually toward His role as Messiah throughout the Old Testament. To Abraham, He was the descendent who would bless all peoples. To David, He was the coming King who would reign forever on the Royal Throne. To Isaiah, He was the light that would shine in the darkness and bring peace and joy to those who once were destined for destruction. Micah declares the place of His birth and His deep shepherding love.

And then, the promises take shape. The clock has ticked down and the time has come. The Christ is born. God becomes a man. And the music takes on a different sound. No longer are God’s people waiting for the One who would rescue them. He came, and He won forever, by His death on the cross, the victory over sin, death, and the devil.

And the songs continue to play as we celebrate. To old Simeon, just days after the birth of our Savior, to the Magi who rejoice with their gifts of Gold, incense, and myrrh. St. Paul and the Church of his day and ours, and, in the end, to all peoples gathered together before the throne of God in heaven. So sit back and enjoy the Musical, and hear God’s marvelous salvation move through the ages and into our hearts.

Angels, from the Realms of Glory
James Montgomery, 1816

**Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Once you sang creation's story,
Now proclaim Messiah's birth:
Come and worship,
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King!**

Choir: Shepherds, in the fields abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing,
Yonder shines the infant Light;
Come and worship,
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King!

***Men:* Sages, leave your contemplations,
Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great desire of nations,
You have seen His natal star;
Come and worship,
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King!**

**▲ All creation, join in praising
God the Father, Spirit, Son,
Evermore your voices raising
To th'eternal Three in One.
Come and worship,
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King!**

INTRODUCTION

THE FIRST SONG: GENESIS 3:14-15

The first promise of a Messiah was made to an unlikely character. To the Serpent, who wrecked havoc on God's creation, God declares that He will raise up One who will crush the Serpent's head – that is the power of Satan. This child of the promise will be God, but will be fatally bruised by the striking from Satan's venom. But in the end, when He rises from the ashes of death, He will emerge as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Genesis 3:14-15

¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,
"Cursed are you above all livestock
and all wild animals!
You will crawl on your belly
and you will eat dust
all the days of your life.
¹⁵ And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel."

Hear now as our choir sings of the wondrous Creator, who from the beginning had a plan to save us. Please join them in singing verses 3-5.

Creator of the Stars of Night

9th century Latin hymn

Creator of the stars of night,
Your people's everlasting light,
O Christ, Redeemer of us all,
We pray you hear us when we call.

When this old world drew on toward night,
You came; but not in splendor bright,
Not as a monarch, but the child
Of Mary, blessed mother mild.

**At your great name, O Jesus, now
All knees must bend, all hearts must bow:
All things on earth with one accord,
Like those in heav'n, shall call you Lord.
Come in your holy might, we pray,
Redeem us for eternal day;
Defend us while we dwell below
From all assaults of our dread foe.**

**To God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit, Three in One,
Praise, honor, might, and glory be
From age to age eternally.**

(Choir) Amen.

THE SECOND SONG (To Abraham)

The world was a fallen place, but God raised up a special man to be the bearer of His promises. Abraham, who once appeared as if he would have no descendents, is called by God to have an heir. And through that heir, Isaac, he would have children as many as the stars in the sky and the sands of the seashore. And one of those stars would be THE star who would bless the whole earth. The Star of the Messiah would shine brightly with hope and joy so that God's people would know forgiveness of sins and life everlasting.

Genesis 15:5, 12:2-3

¹ The LORD said to Abram, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

² "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you;
I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Hear now our choir singing of the Bright Morning Star of Abraham that shone in the distance as God's people awaited a Messiah.

Morgenstern

Morning Star

Johann Scheffler, 17th century

Morgenstern auf finstre Nacht,
Morning Star in darkest night,
der die Welt voll Freude macht,
fills the world with joy and light,

Jesulein, komm herein,
Jesus, Child, come, be mine,
Jesulein, leucht in meines Herzens Schrein.
Jesus, Child, in my heart and life now shine.

Ei nun wahres Seelenlicht!
Come, oh, come, my soul's true light!
Komm herein und säume nicht;
Come, be mine, dispel my night;

Jesulein, komm herein,
Jesus, Child, come, be mine,
Jesulein, leucht in meines Herzens Schrein.
Jesus, Child, in my heart and life now shine.

THE THIRD SONG (To David)

THE SONG TO DAVID

The great King who once was just a shepherd boy is given the promise that His descendent will sit on the Throne of God forever. And, like David, He will be both Shepherd and King. As shepherd, He will save the sheep from destruction by His own sacrifice. As King, He will reign forever with strength, love, and peace.

2 Samuel 7:11b-14a; 16

“(David), The LORD himself will establish a house for you: ¹² When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be his father, and he will be my son. ¹⁶; your throne will be established forever.”

Hear now as our choir echoes the heart of David, hearing in the distance the Angels singing praise to the infant who will be King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Please join them in singing verse 3

All My Heart Again Rejoices

Paul Gerhardt, 1653

All my heart again rejoices
As I hear,
Far and near,
Sweetest angel voices;
"Christ is born," their choirs are singing,
Till the air
Ev'rywhere
Now with joy is ringing.

Hark! A voice from yonder manger,
Soft and sweet,
Does entreat:
"Flee from woe and danger;
Come and see; from all that grieves you
You are freed, All you need
I will surely give you."

**Come, then, let us hasten yonder;
Here let all,
Great and small,
Kneel in awe and wonder;
Love him who with love is yearning;
Hail the star
That from far
Bright with hope is burning.**

THE FOURTH SONG (To Isaiah)

The latter days of the Kingdom of Israel were dark days filled with warfare, idolatry, and, eventually, being deported into a foreign land as a defeated, broken people.

But God didn't give up on the ones He loved. No. He lifted up a promise, through the prophet Isaiah, that Hope could be found in a Child who would be born – a Child who would be the Son of God. He will save His people from the darkness.

Isaiah 9:2, 6

² The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.
⁶ For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Hear now our choir. As they sing of the moon of wintertime, think of the Light of Christ that shines in the darkness and brings rescue for God's people

'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime

Jean de Brebeuf, 1643

Written for the Huron Indians

'Twas in the moon of wintertime,
When all the birds had fled,
That God the Lord of all the earth
Sent angel choirs instead;
Before their light the stars grew dim,

And wandering hunters heard the hymn:
Jesus your King is born,
Jesus is born,
in excelsis gloria.

O children of the forest free,
The angels' song is true,
The holy Child of earth and heav'n
Is born today for you.
Come kneel before the radiant boy,
Who brings you beauty, peace and joy.
Jesus your King is born,
Jesus is born,
in excelsis gloria.

THE FIFTH SONG (To Micah)

Bethlehem is a small, “nothing” town whose only claim to fame was that it once was home to the great shepherd, King David. But it is the theme of the next Song, sung by Micah the prophet. Micah declares that just as a great King once came from humble origins, so also will the Great King of Kings will be born in the same place. And He, too, will be a shepherd who loves his flock.

Micah 5:2,4

² “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans of Judah,
out of you will come for me
one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of old,
from ancient times.”

⁴ He will stand and shepherd his flock
in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.”

Listen, now, to our choir, as they sing of the shepherds love for their sheep, of the message of a Savior born in Bethlehem, and of the joy that is meant for all people

While by My Sheep I Watched at Night

17th century carol from Lorraine

Arr. by Hugo Jeungst

While by my sheep I watched at night,
Glad tidings brought an angel bright:

Refrain:

How great my joy, great my joy,
Joy, joy, joy,
Joy, joy, joy,
Praise we the Lord in heav'n on high.
Praise we the Lord in heav'n on high.

There has been born, so he did say,
In Bethlehem a child today:
Refrain

There does he lie in manger mean,
Who shall redeem the world from sin:
Refrain

Lord, evermore to me be nigh,
Then shall my heart be filled with joy!
Refrain

THE SIXTH, SEVENTH, EIGHTH SONGS (To Mary, Joseph, Shepherds)

THE CHRISTMAS SONG

After years and years of waiting, the song of the angels rings out.
First to Mary.

Luke 1:26-32

²⁶ God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth ..., ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. ²⁸ The angel said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High."

Then to Joseph.

Matthew 1:18-21

¹⁸ Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ 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."

And finally, on a quiet night in Bethlehem all the songs of promise reach a grand climax as the prophecies reach their fulfillment in the Christ child. Born to humble parents in a lowly stable, He is here to accomplish a mission – to win our salvation. The Angels sing again:

Luke 2:8-14

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

Our choir echoes these beautiful songs as they share the Shepherds’ Carol and Angels we Have Heard on High

Shepherds’ Carol

Traditional Polish carol

Shepherds, run to Bethlehem this holy night,
Leave your sheep, be on your way, behold the sight!

Refrain:

Praise be to God in heaven, praise be to God in
heaven,

Peace on earth, peace on earth!

Shepherds, pay your homage to the Infant King,
Joyfully, with heart and voice, your praises sing!

Refrain

Shepherds heard the good news angel choirs did bring,
News, so wondrous, heav’n and earth together sing

Refrain

Angels We Have Heard on High

French carol

(Men) Angels we have heard on high

Sweetly singing o'er the plains,

And the mountains in reply

Echoing their joyous strains.

(All) Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

(Women) **Shepherds, why this jubilee?**

Why your joyous strains prolong?

What the gladsome tidings be

Which inspire your heavenly song?

(All) **Gloria, in excelsis Deo!**

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

(All) **Come to Bethlehem and see**

Him whose birth the angels sing;

Come, adore on bended knee

Christ the Lord, the newborn King.

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,

Maker of heaven and earth,

and in Jesus Christ,

His only Son, our Lord:

Who was conceived by 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 sits at the right hand of God the Father

Almighty,

from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the Holy Christian Church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,

and the life everlasting. Amen.

Offering / Offertory

The Prayers

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

For this congregation, its mission, and its people; for the ability to meet the needs that arise as we do the work God has given us to do; and for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, let us

pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who have wandered from the faith, that the Holy Spirit would use us to call them home to the Father, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who suffer from hunger, homelessness, poverty, or unemployment, that God's great mercy and love would preserve and relieve them, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who are sick, that God would grant healing to their bodies and strength to bear their infirmities with patience and grace, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who mourn, that in their time of sorrow they would not lose hope but rely on God's promise that He will never leave them or forsake them, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who rejoice in the rich blessings of God, that they may always remember the Giver of every gift and give Him heartfelt thanks, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

O Lord, heavenly Father, graciously receive our prayers, deliver and preserve us, for to You alone we give all glory, honor, and worship, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

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 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, for ever and ever.
Amen.**

THE NINTH SONG (To Simeon)

SONG TO SIMEON

We have entered a new era in history. The Christ HAS COME. And it isn't long before the message of the Savior begins to anchor itself among the faithful. In addition to the shepherds, who come and worship the baby, we also learn of an old man, Simeon, who had heard the song from God that he would not die before he saw the Messiah. He shares his own Song of Joy!

Luke 2:29-30

²⁹ “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace.
³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation, ³² a light to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”

Simeon finishes his words with a prophecy of suffering when he tells Mary, that Jesus will cause the rising and falling of many in Israel -- “and a sword will pierce your own soul too.” In other words, the Christ has come to pay the price for sin.

Consider the words of our choir anthem, now, which demonstrate that the humble circumstances of Christ’s birth forshadow His mission of rescue.

Jesus, Jesus, Rest Your Head

Appalachian Carol, by John Jacob Niles, 1892-1980

Jesus, Jesus, rest your head.
You have got a manger bed;
All the evil folk on earth
Sleep in feathers at their birth.
Jesus, Jesus, rest your head.
You have got a manger bed

Have you heard about our Jesus?
Have you heard about his fate?
How his mother went to that stable,
On that Christmas Eve so late?
Winds were blowing, cows were lowing.
Stars were glowing, glowing, glowing.

Jesus, Jesus, rest your head.
You have got a manger bed;
All the evil folk on earth
Sleep in feathers at their birth.
Jesus, Jesus, rest your head.
You have got a manger bed.

THE TENTH SONG (To the Magi)

SONG TO THE MAGI

Some time, perhaps even up to a year or more after Jesus was presented at the Temple, Magi from the East are guided by a star. Familiar with the message of Messiah from the time when the prophet Daniel lived in Babylon, they come to worship Him who was prophesied as King of Kings and Lord of Lords..

Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11

¹After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ²and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." ...⁹After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

Join with our choir in celebrating the song of The Magi. As Gentle Mary rests her child in her arms, she knows, even now, that one day through suffering, He will bring redemption for God's people.

Gentle Mary Laid Her Child

Joseph Simpson Cook, 1919

Quartet: Rob Crossley, Jesse Jastram, Scott Meyer and Vicar Daniel Vang

Gentle Mary laid her child

Lowly in a manger;

There he lay, the undefiled,

To the world a stranger.

Such a Babe in such a place,

Can he be the Savior?

Ask the saved of all the race

Who have found his favor.

Angels sang about his birth,

Wise men sought and found him;

Heaven's star shone brightly forth

Glory all around Him.

Shepherds saw the wondrous sight,

Heard the angels singing;

All the plains were lit that night,

All the hills were ringing.

Gentle Mary laid her child

Lowly in a manger;

He is still the undefiled,

But no more a stranger.

Son of God of humble birth,

Beautiful the story;

Praise his name in all the earth;

Hail the king of glory!

THE ELEVENTH SONG (To All of God's People)

THE SONG TO US ALL AND THE FOREVER SONG

St. Paul declares to us that the Song of Christ's Birth is Our Song -- For Jesus came as a Servant to die for US – to pay the price for OUR sins – to win OUR salvation. His is OUR King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is OUR Savior from death and hell.

And His Song will ring out forever and ever, for He is the Lamb of God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

Philippians 2:5-11

⁵ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

⁷ but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

So let us all prepare our hearts to receive Him. Let us join the Songs of the Centuries and celebrate our Christ, our Savior, our KING!

The Benediction

Prepare the Royal Highway
Frans Mikael Franzén, 1772-1847

**Prepare the royal highway;
The King of kings is near!**

**Let ev'ry hill and valley
A level road appear!
Then greet the King of glory,
Foretold in sacred story:
Hosanna to the Lord,
For he fulfills God's word!**

Choir:

God's people, see him coming:
Your own eternal king!
Palm branches strew before him!
Spread garments! Shout and sing!
God's promise will not fail you!
No more shall doubt assail you!
Hosanna to the Lord,
For he fulfills God's word!

**Then fling the gates wide open
To greet your promised king!
Your king, yet ev'ry nation
Its tribute too may bring.
All lands will bow before him;
Their voices join your singing:
Hosanna to the Lord,
For he fulfills God's word!**

**His is no earthly kingdom;
It comes from heav'n above.
His rule is peace and freedom
And justice, truth, and love.
So let your praise be sounding
For kindness so abounding:
Hosanna to the Lord,
For he fulfills God's word!**