

The First Congregational Church in Worcester
United Church of Christ

Christmas Eve Festival of Lessons and Carols

December 24, 2020



Silent Night, Holy Night

IN SILENCE, YOUR LOVE SPEAKS TO OUR HEARTS.

Son of God, loves pure light

OUR SPIRITS SHINE WITH THE LIGHT OF YOUR LOVE.

Radiant beams from thy holy face

LET OUR LIVES REFLECT YOUR GOODNESS, LORD,

With the dawn of redeeming grace

AS WE GIVE PRAISE AND THANKS TO YOU.

Jesus, Lord at thy birth

JESUS, LORD AT THY BIRTH.



The Prelude

Pastoral Symphony from *Messiah* ~ Handel
In the Bleak Midwinter ~ Young
The Christmas Rose ~ Martin
Still, Still, Still ~ Manz

The Lighting of the Christ Candle

Leader We gather to celebrate the birth of the one who is the light of the world.
People We are here to worship God - and God's Son Jesus - born this night in Bethlehem of Judea.
Leader We light the candle of hope to remind us of the promises made by all the prophets that God would raise up a savior for the people of Israel.
People Christ is our hope and our salvation. He calls us to share our hope in him with each other.

Lighting the Candle of Hope

Leader We light the candle of peace to remind us that it is only with God that true peace can be found.

People **Christ brings the peace of God to us. Jesus calls us to share the peace he gives with each other.**

Lighting the Candle of Peace

Leader We light the candle of joy to remind us that God gives joy to every heart that abides in him.

People **As Mary rejoiced in the birth of Jesus - so his birth in us brings us joy. God calls us to share the joy he gives with each other.**

Lighting the Candle of Joy

Leader We light the candle of love to remind us that Jesus is God's gift of love to us - and that in him, the light of love triumphs over darkness.

People **Love never fails - it transforms all those who give it and receive it. God calls us to share his love with each other.**

Lighting the Candle of Love

Leader We light the Christ candle to remind us that the light of the world was born this night.

People **The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness - on them a light has shined.**

Leader You, O Lord, have multiplied the nation. You have increased its joy.

People **For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder.**

Leader His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

People **He is also called Emmanuel, for in him God is with us.**

Lighting of the Christ Candle

**The Processional Carol*

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King,
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"

Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King!"

Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord;
Late in time behold him come, offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail the' incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King!"

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
Born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King!"

The Bidding Prayer

The First Lesson *God announces in the Garden of Eden that the seed of a woman shall bruise the serpent's head.* Genesis III

*Carol ~ O Come, O Come Emmanuel

O come! O come! Emmanuel! And ransom captive Israel;
that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

O come! Thou Day-Spring! come and cheer our spirits by Thine Advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh;
to us the path of knowledge show, and cause us in her ways to go
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;
bid envy, strife and quarrels cease; fill all the world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

The Second Lesson *God promises to faithful Abraham that in his seed shall the nations of the earth be blessed.* Genesis XXII

Comfort, Comfort Ye My People ~ daSilva

The Third Lesson *Isaiah foretells Christ's birth and kingdom.* Isaiah IX

*Carol ~ Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates

Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates; behold, the King of glory waits;
the King of kings is drawing near; the Savior of the world is here!

Fling wide the portals of your heart; make it a temple, set apart
from earthly use for heaven's employ, adorned with prayer and love and joy.

Redeemer, come, with us abide; our hearts to thee we open wide;
let us thy inner presence feel; thy grace and love in us reveal.

Thy Holy Spirit lead us on until our glorious goal is won;
eternal praise, eternal fame be offered, Savior, to thy name!

The Fourth Lesson

The peace that Christ will bring is foreshown.

Isaiah XI

Tidings Carol ~ Liebergen

The Fifth Lesson

The angel Gabriel salutes the Blessed Virgin Mary.

St. Luke I

*Carol ~ What Child is This?

What Child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ, the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud, the Babe, the Son of Mary!

Why lies He in such mean estate, where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear: for sinners here the silent Word is pleading.
This, this is Christ, the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud, the Babe, the Son of Mary!

So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh, come, peasant, king to own Him.
The King of kings salvation brings; let loving hearts enthrone Him.
This, this is Christ, the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud, the Babe, the Son of Mary!

The Sixth Lesson

St. Matthew and St. Luke tell of the birth of Jesus.

St. Matthew I
& St. Luke I

Come and Hear the Joyful Singing ~ Hopson

The Seventh Lesson

The shepherds go to the manger.

St. Luke II

*Carol ~ O Come, All Ye Faithful

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.

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation;
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest;
O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to Thee be all glory given;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing.
O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

The Eighth Lesson

The star leads the wise men to Jesus.

St. Matthew II

**Carol ~ We Three Kings*

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 light, star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain, gold I bring to crown him again,
King forever, ceasing never, over us all to reign. [Refrain]

Frankincense to offer have I; incense owns a Deity nigh;
prayer and praising, voices raising, worshiping God on high. [Refrain]

Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume breathes a life of gathering gloom;
sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying, sealed in the stone-cold tomb. [Refrain]

Glorious now behold him arise; King and God and sacrifice:
Alleluia, Alleluia, sounds through the earth and skies. [Refrain]

The Ninth Lesson

St. John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation.

St. John I

O Holy Night ~ Adam

The Lighting of the Candles

(Please light candles with one another as we sing)

Carol ~ Silent Night

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.

Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!

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.

Silent night, holy night wondrous star, lend thy light;
with the angels let us sing, alleluia to our King;
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!

**The Collect and Blessing*

**The Organ Postlude*

Sing We Now of Christmas ~ Young



A Christmas Prayer

by Rev. F. Schaefer

Gracious LORD, be the God of our Christmas celebration. We rejoice with the shepherds over the good news of Jesus' birth. We join in the praises of the angelic choir, saying: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom God favors!"

Almighty God, you have favored us with the greatest gift ever given—your only begotten Son, light of true light, God of true God. May we never take this your gift for granted; may our songs of praise never fade, and may we treasure it in our hearts always and forever. Bless all of us here gathered in worship as well as our loved ones at home. May peace and joy ring in our hearts and reverberate through our communities tonight in the name of Jesus the new-born King. Amen.

The First Congregational Church in Worcester
1070 Pleasant Street, Worcester MA 01602
508-752-4635
www.fcc-worcester.org

Robert H Jackson, Pastor
Scott M. Yonker, Minister of Music
Doug Perkins, Sexton



Lessons and Carols had its origin at Truro Cathedral (England) on Christmas Eve 1880, when a service of scripture and supporting carols was developed by the Bishop of Truro, F. W. Benson. Some 38 years later in 1918, this format was adapted for Christmas Eve at King's College Chapel, Cambridge, England. The BBC broadcast from King's College helped to popularize the Service

of Lessons and Carols, and it was quickly duplicated by cathedrals and smaller churches throughout the world. The heart of the service continues to this day – that is, the retelling of the Christian story of faith from the fall of Adam to the coming of the Word Incarnate.