

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF LANSING



*On the Eve of the Birth of Christ (1869) Michael Reiser*

**Festival of Lessons and Carols**

**Christmas Eve 7:00 p.m.**

**December 24, 2024**

[www.lansingfirstpres.com](http://www.lansingfirstpres.com)

## THE TRADITION OF LESSONS AND CAROLS

The service of Lessons and Carols is a relatively new tradition in the Western Christian churches. The known example of a Lessons and Carols service comes from England in 1880. Edward White Benson, then Anglican bishop of Turro, organized a 10pm service on Christmas Eve with readings and singing in an effort to keep the men of the area out of the pubs. The basic format of Benson's service is still used today. Readings from scripture alternate with hymns and anthems to tell the story of God's gift to the world in Jesus Christ.

Over time variations of the Lessons and Carols service have emerged. The most famous is the celebration of King's College, Cambridge on Christmas Eve. Broadcast worldwide on BBC radio and television, the King's College service of Nine Lessons and Carols tells the story of Christ's nativity in both word and song. Our service today is a version of the King's College celebration with some changes to the lessons more appropriate for the Advent season.

Whether on Christmas Eve or an Advent morning, the lessons read focus on the eternal promise of redemption through Jesus Christ. The story of Christ unfolds in the service, beginning with humanity's original sin. It is because we do sin that we are so in need of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. The lessons follow through the promise of God to Abraham and the visions of the prophet Isaiah proclaiming the coming of a savior of the people.

Since 1919 the service at King's College has begun with the processional hymn, "Once in Royal David's City." The first verse is sung by a solo boy chorister who is not told until just moments before the service begins that he is the soloist that year. When the service of lessons and carols is celebrated on Christmas Eve, the story of the birth of Christ is retold. On that night of nights, the community of faith awaits the coming of Christmas morning and the fulfillment of God's promise in the birth of the Christ child.

Because Advent is meant to be a season of expectation and anticipation of the miracle of Christmas, some texts surrounding the narrative of Jesus' birth are changed for an Advent service of Lessons and Carols. In their place, readings about John the Baptist and the angel's promise to Mary are read. During the season of Advent, the lessons and the carols help to focus our minds on the coming of Christ so that on Christmas Eve when we hear the story retold, our hearts and our minds are prepared for the wonderful event to unfold.

# WORSHIP ON THE EVE OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY

Tuesday, December 24, 2024 7:00 p.m.

+you are invited to stand if you are able  
Congregational responses and unison readings are in **bold**

*Kindly silence all electronic devices.*

**GATHERING MUSIC**

*Christmas Carols*

Brass Quartet

**LIGHTING THE CHRISTMAS CANDLE**

The Collins Family

The shepherds show us the way to Bethlehem.

“On the same night Jesus was born, shepherds in a field near Bethlehem saw an amazing sight. They were watching their sheep, as they did every night. Suddenly, an angel stood in front of them. A bright light surrounded them. The shepherds were frightened. The angel said, “Do not be afraid! I have good news for you! A baby was born in Bethlehem. This baby will be your Savior. He is Christ the Lord! Look for him wrapped in cloths and sleeping in a manger. Then many angels appeared and said, “Glory to God and peace to all people!”

**God, we are joyful this night as we remember your love through the birth of the baby Jesus. Amen.**

We light the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love. Today we also light the Christ candle.  
**And as a reminder that baby Jesus was born this night and modeled love and welcome for all.**

*LIGHT ALL FOUR CANDLES PLUS THE CHRIST CANDLE*

**HAND BELL MUSIC RESPONSE**

*O Come, All Ye Faithful arr. Jason W. Krug*

Bells of First



+OPENING CAROL Once in Royal David's City (vs1, solo, vs 2-4 congregation)

1 Once in roy - al Da - vid's cit - y stood a low - ly  
 2 He came down to earth from heav - en who is God and  
 3 Je - sus is our child - hood's pat - tern; day by day like  
 4 And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own re -

cat - tle shed, where a moth - er laid her ba - by in a  
 Lord of all, and his shel - ter was a sta - ble, and his  
 us he grew; he was lit - tle, weak and help - less; tears and  
 deem - ing love; for that child so dear and gen - tle is our

man - ger for his bed: Mar - y was that moth - er  
 cra - dle was a stall; with the poor and meek and  
 smiles like us he knew; and he feels for all our  
 Lord in heaven a - bove; and he leads his chil - dren

mild; Je - sus Christ, her lit - tle child.  
 low - ly, lived on earth our Sav - ior ho - ly.  
 sad - ness, and he shares in all our glad - ness.  
 on to the place where he is gone.

+WELCOME & OPENING PRAYER

Rev. Stanley Jenkins

Let us pray:

In this season of Christmastide, we celebrate Christ's birth not just for one day but for twelve.

In the same way, let us remember that Christ's birth is not just a one-time event; Christ's love, life and salvation are constantly being born in our midst.

Let us continue to receive Christ's birth with joy and hope, that it may sustain our faith and worship.

Amen.

+CONFESSION & LAMENT SEQUENCE

Gwen Botting

God Incarnate, who dwells among us, your life and birth make new worlds possible,

**Yet so often we fail to follow you into them.**

Forgive us for the ways we fail to make room for you.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Forgive us for monetizing and sanitizing your birth,

**Lord, have mercy.**

Forgive us for silencing the prophets in our midst.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Forgive us for following the logics of Empire and the violence of Herod.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Forgive us for not receiving or believing your witness.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Teach us to live as your beloved children.

**So that we might recognize and receive your continual arrival in our lives and in our world.**

Amen.

The God who formed us and keeps us in love has chosen to come close, has pitched a tent among us.

May you rest in this promise: nothing in all of creation can separate you from the love of Christ. You are already forgiven.

Amen.

HAND BELL MUSIC RESPONSE *The First Noel* arr Jason W. Krug

Bells of First

INVITATION TO WORSHIP

Rose Rodrigue

A child has been born for us.

**A great light shines in the middle of our darkness.**

A child has been born for us,

**Establishing God's justice and breaking every yoke.**

A child has been born for us,

**Whose reign will have no end.**

A child has been born for us, and we worship him together;  
 Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
 Hallelujah!

CHRISTMAS CAROL

Angels From the Realms of Glory (verses 1 and 2)

1 An - gels, from the realms of glo - ry, wing your flight o'er  
 2 Shep - herds, in the fields a - bid - ing, watch - ing o'er your  
 3 Sag - es, leave your con - tem - pla - tions; bright - er vi - sions  
 4 All cre - a - tion, join in prais - ing God the Fa - ther,

all the earth; you, who sang cre - a - tion's sto - ry,  
 flocks by night, God with us is now re - sid - ing;  
 beam a - far; seek the great de - sire of na - tions;  
 Spir - it, Son, ev - er - more your voic - es rais - ing

now pro - claim Mes - si - ah's birth:  
 yon - der shines the in - fant light: come and wor - ship,  
 you have seen his na - tal star: come and wor - ship,  
 to the e - ter - nal Three in One:

come and wor - ship, wor - ship Christ, the new - born king!



*The story of creation and humanity's fall from paradise is told.*

In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, no shrub of the field was yet on the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground. But a mist arose from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.

The Lord God planted a garden in the east, in Eden, and there He placed the man whom He had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, along with the tree of knowledge of good and evil. A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four rivers. The name of the first is Pishon; it encompasses the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. The gold of that land is good; bdellium and the onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is Gihon; it encompasses the whole land of Cush. The name of the third river is Tigris; it goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

Then they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. The Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

He said, "I heard Your voice in the garden and was afraid because I was naked, so I hid myself."

The Lord God said, "The man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil. And now, he might reach out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"— therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken.



MUSIC RESPONSE

*Christmas Gift by Sergei Kvitko*

Sergei Kvitko

**THE SECOND LESSON** Isaiah 9: 2, 6-7

Lexi Green

*The prophet foretells the coming of a savior.*

The people who walked in darkness  
    have seen a great light;  
those who dwell in the land of the shadow of death,  
    upon them the light has shined.  
For unto us a child is born,  
    unto us a son is given,  
    and the government shall be upon his shoulder.  
And his name shall be called  
    Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
    Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.  
Of the increase of his government and peace  
    there shall be no end,  
upon the throne of David  
    and over his kingdom,  
to order it and to establish it  
    with justice and with righteousness,  
    from now until forever.  
The zeal of the Lord of Hosts  
    will perform this.





CHRISTMAS CAROL *remain seated.*

O Little Town Of Bethlehem (verses 1, 2 and 3)

1 O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie!  
 2 For Christ is born of Mar - y and, gath - ered all a - bove,  
 3 How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly, the won - drous gift is given!  
 4 O ho - ly child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend 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 - dering love.  
 So God im - parts to hu - man hearts the bless - ings of his heaven.  
 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,  
 No ear may hear his com - ing, but in this world of sin,  
 We hear the Christ - mas an - gels the great glad ti - dings 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.  
 where meek souls will re - ceive him, still the dear Christ en - ters in.  
 O come to us; a - bide with us, our Lord Em - man - u - el!

**THE THIRD LESSON** Isaiah 11:1-2, 6-9

Rev. Stanley Jenkins

*The prophet foretells the promised Kingdom of God.*

And there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,  
and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.  
The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,  
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and might,  
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.  
The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,  
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,  
and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together;  
and a little child shall lead them.  
The cow and the bear shall graze;  
their young ones shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.  
The nursing child shall play by the hole of the asp,  
and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den.  
They shall not hurt or destroy  
in all My holy mountain,  
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord,  
as the waters cover the sea.

**OFFERING**                      *Please place your offering in the plate as the ushers come by.*

**CHORAL RESPONSE**      *The Snow Lay on the Ground arr John Leavitt*              Chancel Choir w/Bells of First

**THE FOURTH LESSON** Luke 1:26-38

Rose Rodrigue

*The angel Gabriel visits the young Mary.*

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. The angel came to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored. The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women."

When she saw him, she was troubled by his words, and considered in her mind what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Listen, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest. And the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. And of His kingdom there will be no end."

Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

The angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you. Therefore the Holy One who will be born will be called the Son of God. Listen, your cousin Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age. And this is the sixth month with her who was declared barren. For with God nothing will be impossible."

Mary said, "I am the servant of the Lord. May it be unto me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

+CHRISTMAS CAROL

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing (all verses)

1 Hark! The her - ald an-gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new-born king.  
2 Christ, by high - est heaven a-dored, Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord,  
3 Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the sun of righ-teous-ness!

Peace on earth and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners rec - on - ciled!"  
late in time be-hold him come, off-spring of the vir-gin's womb.  
Light and life to all he brings, risen with heal - ing in his wings.

Joy - ful, all ye na - tions, rise; join the tri-umph of the skies;  
Veiled in flesh the God-head see; hail the in-car - nate de - i - ty,  
Mild he lays his glo - ry by, born that we no more may die,

with the an-gel - ic host pro-claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"  
pleased in flesh with us to dwell, Je - sus, our Em-man - u - el.  
born to raise us from the earth, born to give us sec - ond birth.

Hark! The her - ald an-gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new-born king!"

**THE FIFTH LESSON** Mark 1:4-8

Gwen Botting

*John proclaims that the one foretold by the prophets is at hand.*

John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. The whole region of Judea and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist. And he ate locusts and wild honey. He preached saying, "After me is coming One mightier than I, the straps of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I indeed have baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

**CHORAL RESPONSE**

*Lullaby by John Ness Beck*

Chancel Choir

**THE SIXTH LESSON** Luke 2:1-20

Pr. Bob Hagle

*The birth of Christ.*

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the entire inhabited earth should be taxed. This taxation was first made when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone went to his own city to be taxed.

So Joseph also departed from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to the City of David which is called Bethlehem, in Judea, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be taxed with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So while they were there, the day came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in strips of cloth, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And in the same area there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And then an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were very afraid. But the angel said to them, "Listen! Do not fear. For I bring you good news of great joy, which will be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign to you: You will find the Baby wrapped in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." Suddenly there was with the angel a company of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest,

and on earth peace, and good will toward men."

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

So they came hurrying and found Mary and Joseph, and the Baby lying in a manger. When they had seen Him, they made widely known the word which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at what the shepherds told them. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

+CHRISTMAS CAROL

Still, Still, Still (both verses)

1 Still, still, still, he sleeps this night so chill! The vir - gin's  
 2 Sleep, sleep, sleep, he lies in slum - ber deep while an - gel

ten - der arms en - fold - ing, warm and safe the child are hold - ing.  
 hosts from heaven come wing - ing, sweet - est songs of joy are sing - ing.

Still, still, still, he sleeps this night so chill.  
 Sleep, sleep, sleep, he lies in slum - ber deep.

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Rev. Stanley Jenkins

CHORAL RESPONSE

*Jesus ahatonnia' arr Sarah Quartel*

Chancel Choir

THE SEVENTH LESSON John 1:1-14

Rev. Stanley Jenkins

*John testifies to the light of Christ.*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were created through Him, and without Him nothing was created that was created. In Him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. The light shines in darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. This man came as a witness in order to testify concerning the Light, that all men through Him might believe. He was not this Light, but was sent in order to testify concerning the Light.

The true Light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was created through Him, yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. Yet to all who received Him, He gave the power to become sons of God, to those who believed in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, the glory as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

**+CLOSING CAROL**

**Silent Night, Holy Night (all verses)**

*As the hymn begins, the candles of those standing on the aisles will be lit.*

*Please light your candle and say to your neighbor, "Let us welcome the Light of Christ."*

1 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! All is calm, all is bright  
 2 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Shep - herds quake at the sight;  
 3 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Son of God, love's pure light  
 4 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Won - drous star, lend thy light;

'round yon vir - gin moth - er and child! Ho - ly In - fant, so ten - der and  
 glo - ries stream from heav - en a - far, heav - en - ly hosts sing "Al - le - lu -  
 ra - diant beams from thy ho - ly face, with the dawn of re - deem - ing  
 with the an - gels let us sing Al - le - lu - ia to our

mild, sleep in heav - en - ly peace, sleep in heav - en - ly peace.  
 ia: Christ the Sav - ior is born; Christ the Sav - ior is born!"  
 grace, Je - sus, Lord, at thy birth, Je - sus, Lord, at thy birth.  
 King: Christ the Sav - ior is born; Christ the Sav - ior is born.

**+BENEDICTION**

Rev. Stanley Jenkins



+POSTLUDE

Joy to the World (verses 1 and 4)

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re - ceive  
2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their songs  
3 No more let sins and sor - rows grow, nor thorns in - fest  
4 He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the na -

her king; let ev - ery heart pre - pare him room,  
em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains  
the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings flow  
tions prove the glo - ries of his righ - teous - ness

and heaven and na - ture sing, and heaven and na - ture  
re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing  
far as the curse is found, far as the curse is  
and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his  
and heaven and na - ture sing,

and

sing, and heaven, and heaven and na - ture sing.  
joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.  
found, far as, far as the curse is found.  
love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

heaven and na - ture sing,

Participants in this evening's service:

Presiding/Preaching Minister	Rev. Stanley Jenkins
Lay Readers	Pr. Bob Higl, Gwen Botting, Rose Rodrigue, Lexi Green
Director of Music	Megan Higl
Organist/Pianist	Sergei Kvitko
Hand Bell Director	Darin Showalter
Audio/Visual	Bill Collins, Andrew Mackoul, Prince Solace
Brass Quartet	Chris Pike, Annie Walton, Gwen Botting, Mike Emerson

The staff of Lansing First Presbyterian Church wishes you and your loved ones a very Merry Christmas!

