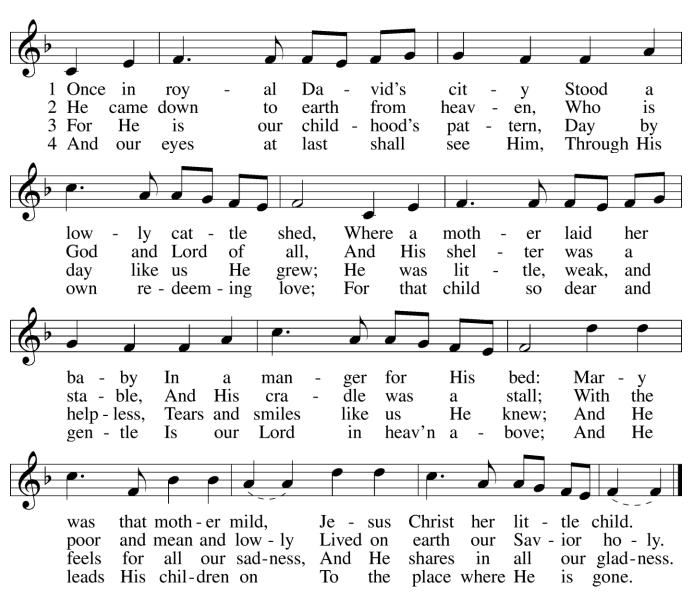
Home Worship Service for

Christmas Eve December 24, 2023

A FESTIVAL OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS

Note: In preparation for this service, you may choose to use an Advent wreath. The Advent wreath has four candles around its circumference. Three of them are blue or purple. One is rose-colored. A white candle is in the middle of the wreath. On Christmas Eve and continuing for the entire Christmas season we light all the candles on the Advent wreath.

Once in Royal David's City Lutheran Service Book 376, Lutheran Worship 58, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a



5 Not in that poor, lowly stable With the oxen standing by Shall we see Him, but in heaven, Set at God's right hand on high. Then like stars His children, crowned, All in white, His praise will sound!

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L In the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spir	rit.
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C Amen.

The Christmas Eve Bidding Prayer

L Beloved in Christ, may it be our care and delight this Christmas Eve to prepare ourselves to hear again the message of the angels; in heart and mind to go unto Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass, and the Babe lying in a manger.

Let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the story of the loving purposes of God from the first days of our disobedience to the glorious Redemption brought us by this Holy Child; and let us make this holy house of God glad with our carols of praise:

But first, let us pray for the needs of His whole world; for peace and goodwill over all the earth; for unity and brotherhood within the Church He came to build, and especially in our nation, our state and our community. And because this of all things would rejoice His heart, let us at this time remember in His name the poor and the helpless, the cold, the hungry and the oppressed; the sick in body and in mind and those that mourn; the lonely and the unloved; the aged and the little children; all who do not know the Lord Jesus, or who love Him not, or who by sin have grieved His heart of love.

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 man can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom, in this Lord Jesus, we forevermore are one.

- **L** Lord in Your mercy,
- C Hear our prayer.
- L These prayers and praises let us humbly offer up to the throne of heaven, in the words which Christ himself has taught us:
- 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 forever and ever. Amen.
- L May the Almighty God bless us with His grace. May Christ, the King of Angels, give us the joys of everlasting life and bring us all unto the fellowship with all the company of heaven.
- **C** Amen

Psalm for Christmas Eve: Psalm 110:1-4

- L ¹The Lord says to my Lord: Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."
- The Lord sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies!
- Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours.
- The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

Devotional Thoughts:

Many homes with children have an Elf on the Shelf. Our children grew up with the Cheese Ball Fairy.

Living in a home where dad is a pastor and mom sings in the choir means that the children attend all of the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services. Each year, we would return home from our second Christmas Eve service and find a cheese ball at our front door! It was the perfect addition to our tradition of snacking and opening gifts on Christmas Eve.

This happened year after year. Soon our children had a name for this mysterious Christmas Eve visitor and so the Cheese Ball Fairy was born.

When our children were old enough, they would attend the first Christmas Eve service and then return home while mom and dad participated in the second service. They developed the tradition of regularly checking the front step to see if the Cheese Ball Fairy had made her annual visit. Without fail, on one of those expeditions, a cheese ball would magically appear! This continued every Christmas Eve until just a few years ago when our now adult children encountered the Cheese Ball Fairy face to face!

Children love mysteries at Christmas. The wonder of a visit from Old St. Nick, his little spy on a shelf, and a red-nosed reindeer are all part of this mysterious season. And let us not forget the most amazingly marvelous visitor of all, the Cheese Ball Fairy!

While children and adults love mysteries, in a sense, Christmas is not about mystery. It is about pulling back the curtain to reveal the truth of God's love for all.

The first Christmas did not have a Cheese Ball Fairy. It was filled with angels! Gabriel visited Zachariah and Mary. The Angel of the Lord visited Joseph and the shepherds. Angels are messengers from God. God sent them so that everyone would know that Jesus was coming to save us from sin, death, and the devil. He did not want it to be a secret. Let's review a few of their messages:

The angel said to Joseph:

"Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:20-21).

The angel said to Mary:

"Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 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 father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:18-33).

The angel said to the shepherds:

"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the 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 for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." (Luke 2:10-12).

Shepherds heard the multitude of the heavenly host say,

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:14 KJV).

Collect for Christmas Eve

- L O God, because you once caused this holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light, grant that we who have known the mystery of that Light here on earth may come to the full measure of its joys in heaven; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C Amen.

Lesson One: Genesis 3:8-15; 17-19

God tells sinful Adam that he has lost the life of Paradise and announces in the Garden of Eden that the **Seed of the woman** (Christ) would destroy Satan and his power.

⁸ And 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. ⁹ But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." ¹¹ He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹² The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." ¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴ The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,

cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field;

on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat

all the days of your life.

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring;

he shall bruise your head,

and you shall bruise his heel."

¹⁷ And to Adam he said,

"Because you have listened to the voice of your

L This is the Word of the Lord

C Thanks be to God.

wife

and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you.

'You shall not eat of it,'

cursed is the ground because of you;

in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

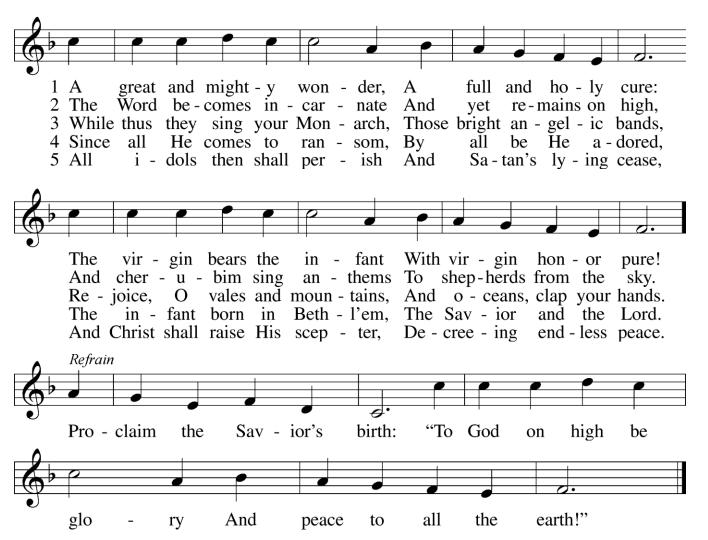
¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.

19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread,

till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken;

for you are dust,

and to dust you shall return."

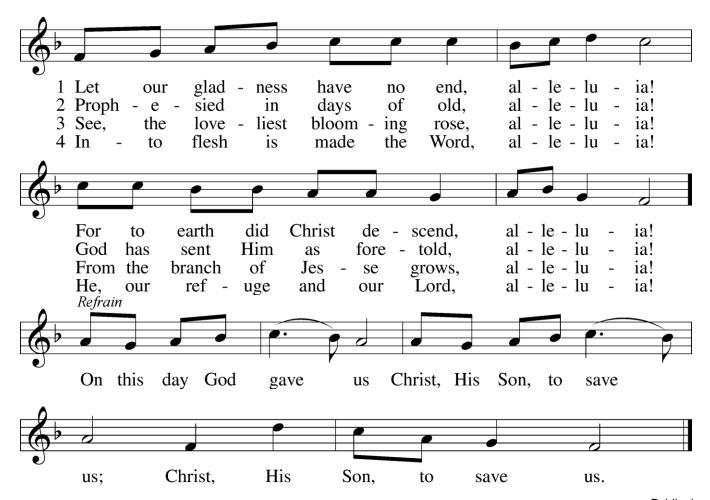


Lesson Two: Genesis 22:15-18

God promises to faithful Abraham that through his descendants - and eventually the Messiah - all the nations of the earth will be blessed with salvation.

¹⁵And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven ¹⁶and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, ¹⁸and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

- **L** This is the Word of the Lord
- **C** Thanks be to God.



Lesson Three: Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

The birth and kingdom of Christ are foretold by the prophet.

⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

L This is the Word of the Lord

C Thanks be to God.

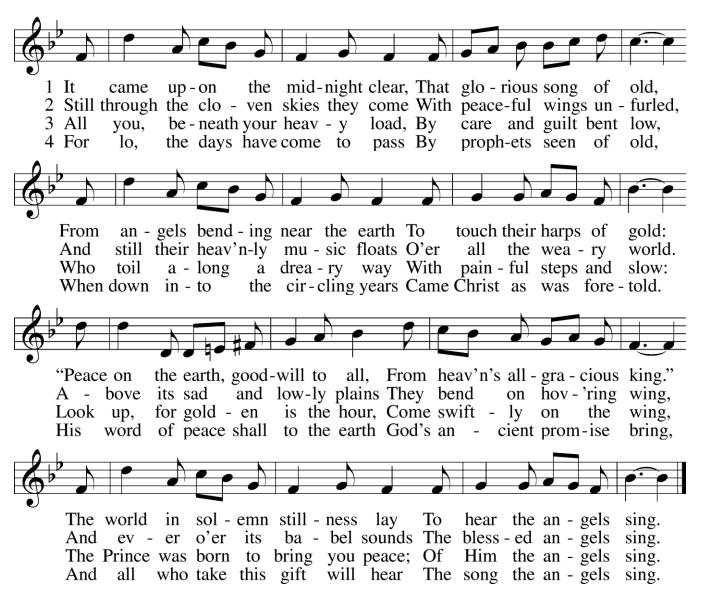
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.

It Came upon the Midnight Clear Lutheran Service Book 366, Lutheran Worship 37, The Lutheran Hymnal 85



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Lesson Four: Micah 5:2-4

The prophet foretells the glory of little Bethlehem, birthplace of Jesus.

² But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.

³Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth;

L This is the Word of the Lord

C Thanks be to God.

then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel.

⁴And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD,

in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great

to the ends of the earth.



Lesson Five: Luke 1:26-35, 38

The angel Gabriel salutes the Blessed Virgin Mary.

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name 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 father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

- **L** This is the Word of the Lord
- C Thanks be to God.

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing Lutheran Service Book 380, Lutheran Worship 49, The Lutheran Hymnal 94



³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

³⁵ And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.

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

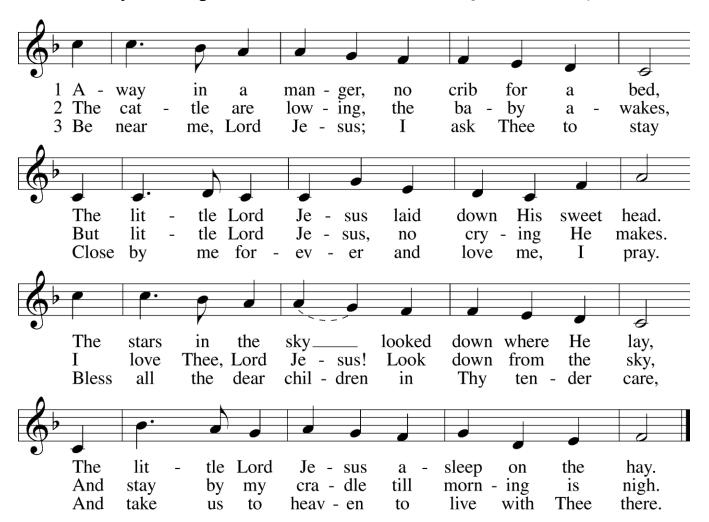
Lesson Six: Luke 2:1-7 (King James Version)

St. Luke tells of the birth of Jesus. We read in unison.

L This is the Word of the Lord

C Thanks be to God.

Away in a Manger Lutheran Service Book 364, Lutheran Worship 64, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a



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¹And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.

²(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

³And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

⁵To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

⁶And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

⁷And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

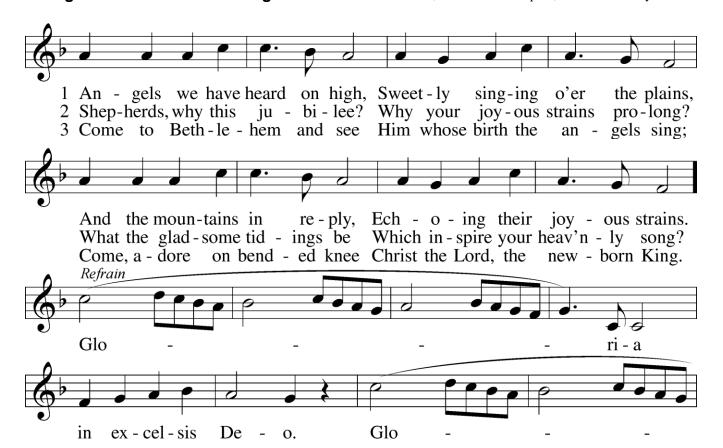
Lesson Seven: Luke 2:8-16 (King James Version)

The shepherds go to the manger. We read in unison.

8And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

- ⁹And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.
- ¹⁰And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.
- ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.
- ¹²And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.
- 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,
- ¹⁴Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.
- ¹⁵And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.
- 16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.
- **L** This is the Word of the Lord
- **C** Thanks be to God.

Angels We Have Heard on High Lutheran Service Book 368, Lutheran Worship 55, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a





Lesson Eight: Matthew 2:1-12

The Wise Men are led by the star of Jesus.

¹Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ²saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." ³When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

6...And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

⁷Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." ⁹After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them

until it came to rest over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And

being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

L This is the Word of the Lord

C Thanks be to God.



Lesson Nine: John 1:1-14

St. John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation.

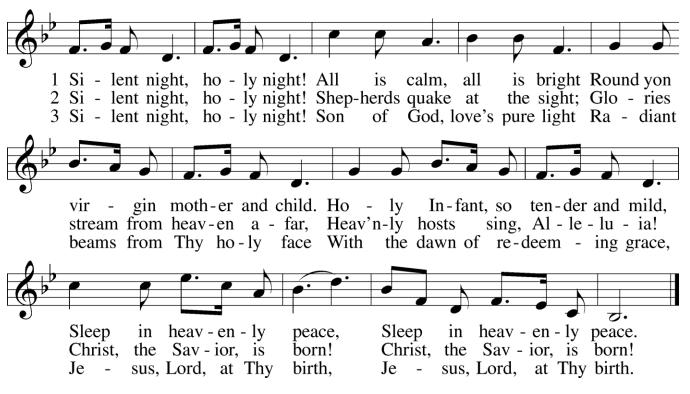
¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹²But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

- **L** This is the Word of the Lord
- C Thanks be to God.



Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht!
Alles schläft, einsam wacht
Nur das traute, hochheilige Paar.
Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh.

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- **L** The Lord be with you.
- **C** and with your spirit.
- L O God, You make us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Grant that as we joyfully receive Him as our Redeemer, we may with sure confidence behold Him when He comes to be our Judge; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C Amen.

The Benedicamus and Blessing

- Let us bless the Lord.
- **C** Thanks be to God.
- L Christ, who by his incarnation gathered into one all things earthly and heavenly, fill you with peace and goodwill, and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.
- **C** Amen
- L Rejoice and be glad! For Christ is born!
- C Our joy and gladness have no end!



Service Notes:

One person may serve as Leader or this may be shared with a number of individuals.

Read one or more of the lessons. Hymns may be sung or read. Use as much or little of this service as you would like.

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