



Worship for the Lord's Day

Sunday, December 20, 2020, The Fourth Sunday in Advent
Westminster Presbyterian Church (USA), Greenville, SC

From the Pews, *Holly Vanderwal*

At eight months pregnant, this Christmas season I find myself reflecting quite a bit on Mary and her journey towards motherhood. I marvel at her faith and perseverance throughout what was probably one of the most challenging physical and emotional moments of her young life.

Knowing full-well the social and economic risks a baby out of wedlock could put her in, Mary tells Gabriel, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord: let it be with me according to your word.” (Luke 1:38) Her joyous Magnificat demonstrates the strength of her faith in God’s power and plan. Then she bravely set out on a physically grueling trip with her fiancé despite her advanced pregnant condition.

As I sip hot raspberry tea and honey from my armchair - a heating pad on my aching back, I think of Mary dealing with her own pregnancy aches and pains on that treacherous road to Bethlehem.

As I toss and turn at night trying to find a comfortable position among the heaps of soft pillows in my warm bed, I think of Mary riding a donkey wondering where (or if!) she might find rest for the evening.

As I pre-register at the hospital of my choice, I think of Mary who doesn’t know when or where the baby will come or who will be there to help when He arrives. Most of the familiar people in her life would have been back in Nazareth. Though we know Joseph was faithful and righteous, was he also the kind of man who would be there to hold her hand or massage her aching feet?

As I wash and fold newborn clothes, prepare the nursery and stock our hall closet with diapers, I think of Mary who had nothing but strips of cloth with which to wrap her newborn son. And once she becomes a parent, she raises Jesus in a faithful and righteous home.

We have all been on a journey of sorts in 2020. We aren’t exactly sure when or where the journey will end or who will be there with us when we arrive. There are so many unknowns. And yet, I pray that as individuals and as a church community, we remember Mary’s faith as she carried and raised Jesus. Like her, may we also confront the unknown, bolstered by an unwavering trust in God, rejoicing in Jesus’s birth and providing faith-filled homes for our families.

Cover Image: *Terrifying, Joyous News* by Lauren Wright Pittman

To learn more about the Service of Nine Lessons & Carols see page eight.

Worship for the Lord's Day

Sunday, December 20, 2020

9:00 a.m. and 11:15 a.m.

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

the 60th Annual Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

Prelude	Chorale Prelude on <i>Personent Hodie</i>	Brown
Welcome, Common Concerns of the Church		Ben Dorr
Lighting of the Advent Wreath		The Knauer Family

The stories of Advent are full of dreams.
The prophets dream of peaceable kingdoms.
The Magi dream of warnings against returning to Herod.
Joseph dreams of taking Mary as his wife.
Sometimes dreams lead to risks, and risks lead to love.

The Advent season depends on God's dreams.
Before the prophets shared their glorious visions, God dreamed of justice.
Before the Magi dreamed of their paths, God dreamed of life giving journeys.
Before Joseph dreamed of staying with Mary, God dreamed of covenantal love.
Sometimes dreams lead to risks, and risks lead to love.

God is behind all the dreams and dreamers in our faith story.
God took a risk, coming to us as a vulnerable baby.
God takes a risk by loving us unconditionally.
God risks inviting us to share in dreams of justice, mercy, and steadfast love.

Today, as we draw nearer to Christmas Day, we light the candle of love.

May this light burn bright as a reminder that despite the risk,
God is here, and God is love.

Hymn No. 133

"O Come All Ye Faithful"

ADESTE FIDELIS

THE SERVICE OF LESSONS & CAROLS

The Bidding Prayer & 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

Hymn No. 140

“Once in Royal David’s City”

IRBY

stanza 1 – solo, Cam Warren

stanza 3 – congregation

stanza 2 – choir

stanza 4 – congregation

The Lessons

at the conclusion of each reading the reader will say “The Word of the Lord.”
The congregation will respond by saying, “**Thanks be to God.**”

The First Lesson, Genesis 3: 8-15

Natalie Dixon

*God announces in the Garden of Eden that the seed of woman
shall bruise the serpent’s head.*

Carol

“Wexford Carol”

arr. Hamilton

*Good people all, this Christmas time, consider well and bear in mind
what our good God for us has done in sending his beloved son.
With Mary holy we should pray, to God with love this Christmas Day.
In Bethlehem upon that morn, there was a blessed messiah born.*

*Near Bethlehem did shepherds keep their flocks of lambs and feeding sheep;
to whom God's angel did appear which put the shepherds in great fear.
“Arise and go,” the angels said “to Bethlehem, be not afraid
for there you'll find, this happy morn a princely babe, sweet Jesus, born.”*

*With thankful heart and joyful mind the shepherds went the babe to find
and as God's angel had foretold they did our Saviour Christ behold.
Within a manger he was laid and by his side a virgin maid
attending on the Lord of Life who came on earth to end all strife.*

The Second Lesson, Genesis 22: 15-18

Ellie DuBose

*God promises to faithful Abraham that
in his seed shall the nations of the earth be blessed.*

Organ Solo

“Of the Father’s Love Begotten”

arr. Lasky

*Of the Father's love begotten, ere the worlds began to be, he is Alpha and Omega;
he the source, the ending he, of the things that are,
that have been, and that future years shall see, evermore and evermore!*

The Third Lesson, Isaiah 9: 2, 6-7

Gene Campbell

The prophet foretells the coming of the Savior.

Carol

“The Holly and the Ivy”

Gjeilo

*The holly and the ivy, when they are both full grown,
of all the trees that are in the wood, the holly bears the crown.
The rising of the sun and the running of the deer,
the playing of the merry organ, sweet singing in the choir.*

The Fourth Lesson, Isaiah 11:1-9

Laura Cox

The peace that Christ will bring is foreshown.

Carol

“In the Bleak Midwinter”

arr. Ellingboe

*In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow, in the bleak midwinter, long ago.*

*Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;
heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign.
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed the Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.*

*Angels and archangels may have gathered there,
cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;
But his mother only, in her maiden bliss, worshipped the beloved with a kiss.*

*What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man, I would do my part; yet what I can I give Him: give my heart.*

The Fifth Lesson, Luke 1: 26-33, 38

Katie Reid

The angel Gabriel appears to Mary and announces that she will bear a holy child.

Carol

“Ding Dong Merrily on High”

C. Jennings

*Ding Dong! Merrily on high in heav'n the bells are ringing:
ding dong! verily the sky is riv'n with angel-singing.
“Gloria! Hosanna in excelsis!”*

*E'en so here below, below, let steeple bells be swungen,
and io, io, io, by priest and people sungen:
“Gloria! Hosanna in excelsis!”*

*Pray you, dutifully prime your matin chime, ye ringers;
may you beautifully rhyme your e'entime song, ye singers.
“Gloria! Hosanna in excelsis!”*

The Sixth Lesson, Luke 2:1-7

Jeff Dumpert

Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem, where Mary gives birth to her child.

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!*

The Seventh Lesson, Luke 2: 8-16

Charlie Moseley

Angels appear to the shepherds in the field and announce the birth of the Messiah

Hymn No. 113

“Angels We Have Heard on High”

GLORIA

The Eighth Lesson, Matthew 2: 1-11

Susan Robbins

Magi from the East are led by the star to Jesus

Carol	The Three Kings	Young
The Ninth Lesson, John 1: 1-5, 14	<i>John unfolds the great mystery of the incarnation</i>	Ben Dorr
Hymn No. 134	“Joy to the World”	ANTIOCH
The Benediction		
Postlude	“Angels from the Realms of Glory”	arr. Innes

Musicians Leading in Worship

Mark Kemp, Music Director

Nancy Smith, organist

Cam Warren, **soloist**

Diana Dailey, Derek Pitman, Katie Knauer,
Hunter Ditsch, Judy McKenney, **vocalists**

Joanna Mulfinger, Xiaoli Saliny, **violins**

Caleb Cox, **viola** David Saliny, **cello**

Craig King, Jim Kilgus, **trumpets**

Anneka Zuehlke-King, **French horn**

Mark Britt, Richard deBondt, **trombones**

About the Service of Lessons & Carols

The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols was first held on Christmas Eve 1918 at King's College, Cambridge. It was planned by Eric Milner-White, who, at the age of thirty-four, had just been appointed Dean of King's after experience as an army chaplain which had convinced him that the Church of England needed more imaginative worship.

A revision of the Order of Service was made in 1919 involving rearrangement of the lessons. From that date the service has always begun with the hymn 'Once in Royal David's City.' In almost every year the choice of carols has varied, and some new ones have been introduced. The backbone of the service, the lessons and the prayers, has remained virtually unchanged. The original service was, in fact, adapted from an Order drawn up by E. W. Benson, later Archbishop of Canterbury, for use in the wooden shed, which then served as his cathedral in Truro, at 10 p.m. on Christmas Eve 1880.

The service is held during the Advent and Christmas season throughout the world, from the East Indies to the British Isles and Greenville, South Carolina. In 2020 we celebrate its 60th year as a centerpiece of the life and worship of Westminster.

Wherever the service is heard and however it is adapted, whether the music is provided by choir or congregation, the pattern and strength of the service, as Dean Milner-White pointed out, derive from the lessons and not the music. 'The main theme is the development of the loving purposes of God [seen] through the windows and the words of the Bible.' Many of those who took part in the first service must have recalled those killed in the Great War when it came to the famous passage 'all those who rejoice with us, but on another shore and in a greater light.' The center of the service is still found by those who 'go in heart and mind' and who consent to follow where the story leads.

Adapted from Kings College Chapel Bulletin, 2014