

⁵ To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. ⁶ And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. ⁷ And 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.

Carol "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly" (213)
 The Seventh Lesson Luke 2:8-16 Vikki Reynolds
 "In which the shepherds go to the manger"

⁸ And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. ¹⁰ And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. ¹² And 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, ¹⁴ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. ¹⁵ And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them unto 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.

*Silence follows the reading

Carol "While Shepherds Watched their Flocks by Night" (203)
 The Eighth Lesson Matthew 2:1-12 J.D. Sexton
 "In which the wise men are led by the star to Jesus"

¹ Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the King, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, ² Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. ³ When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. ⁵ And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by prophet. ⁶ And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. ⁷ Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. ⁹ When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, til it came and stood over where the young child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. ¹¹ And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

*Silence follows the reading

Carol "I Saw Three Ships" (203)
 The Ninth Lesson John 1:1-14 David Jones
 "In which John unfolds the great mystery of the incarnation"

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² The same was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life; and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. ⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. ⁸ He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. ⁹ That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. ¹¹ He came unto his own, and his own received him not. ¹² But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: ¹³ Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

*Silence follows the reading

Carol "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" (192)




CHECK THESE AND OTHER TITLES OUT IN THE LIBRARY



The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols was first held on Christmas Eve 1918. It was planned by Eric Milner-White, who, at the age of thirty-four, had just been appointed Dean of Kings after experience as an army chaplain which had convinced him that the Church of England needed more imaginative worship. (He devised the college's Advent Carol Services in 1934, and was a liturgical pioneer and authority during his 22 years as Dean of York.) The music was then directed by Arthur Henry Mann, organist 1876-1929. The choir included 16 trebles as laid down in King Henry VI's statutes, but until 1927 the men's voices were provided partly by Choral Scholars and partly by older Lay Clerks.

A revision of the Order of Service was made in 1919, involving rearrangement of the lessons, and from that date the service has always begun with the hymn 'Once in 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 Arch Bishop of Canterbury, for use in the wooden shed, which then served as his cathedral in Truro, at 10:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve 1880.

A. C. Benson recalled: 'My father arranged from ancient sources a little service for Christmas Eve—nine carols and nine tiny lessons, which were read by various officers of the Church, beginning with a chorister, and ending, through the different grades, with the Bishop'. The idea had come from G. H. S. Walpole, later Bishop of Edinburgh. Almost immediately other churches adapted the service for their own use. A wider frame began to grow when the service was first broadcast in 1928 and, with the exception of 1930, it has been broadcast annually, even during the Second World War, when the ancient glass (and also all heat) had been removed from the Chapel.

Sometime in the early 1930s the BBC began broadcasting this service on overseas programmes. It is estimated that there are millions of listeners world wide, including those to Radio, Four in the United Kingdom. Recordings of carols by DECCA and EMI have also served to spread it's fame. In these and others ways the service has become public property.

From time to time King's College receives copies of services held, for example, in the West, Indies or for the Far East and these show how widely the tradition has spread. The broadcast, too, have become part of Christmas for many far from Cambridge. One correspondent writes that he heard the service in a tent on the foothills of Everest; another, in the desert. Many listen at home, busy about their own preparations for Christmas. Visitors from all over the world are heard to identify the Chapel as the place where the carols are sung.

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. Personal circumstances give point to different parts of the service. 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.



The carol "Jesus Christ the Apple Tree" is old. It may have been written in the eighteenth century, but it is more likely to be medieval. It seems such a strange metaphor for Jesus. It conjures up pictures of this lovely tree, so pretty in its springtime blossom, so beautiful hung with ripe fruit in autumn, and so endearing in winter, especially when it is old and gnarled, its lower branches leaning down towards the grass, inviting young children to climb and play. We wonder why the writer saw Jesus as an apple tree. For all the imaginings of painters through the centuries, we can't know what Jesus looked like, but we do know that in mind and spirit, He was beautiful. We also know that He was indeed fruitful and that His words have inspired millions of people worldwide, often to change their lives. So, the carol celebrates the beauty and fruitfulness of Jesus.

It makes you want to look at the gospel stories afresh and seek out the powerful qualities of the Person Who is the Son of God. May it inspire you to love and worship Him in a new way. Tonight, as we observe Lessons and Carols, may you discover your own "apple tree," your relationship with this complex man who was both human and divine. It is a personal quest. Each person must come to Jesus on their own. In Scripture and Song, may we see the One who was born to be King, to suffer grievously, and to change the world.

² The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. ³ Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. ⁴ For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. ⁵ For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. ⁶ 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, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this

*Silence follows the reading

Advent Song

"Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus" (176)

The Fourth Lesson

Isaiah 11:1-9

Patti Johnston

"In which the peace that Christ will bring is foreshown"

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: ² And 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; ³ And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: ⁴ But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. ⁵ And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. ⁶ The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. ⁷ And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸ And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. ⁹ They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

*Silence follows the reading

Christmas Hymn

"Good Christian Men, Rejoice" (183)

The Fifth Lesson

Luke 1: 26-48

"In which the birth of Jesus is foretold"

²⁶ And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, ²⁷ To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. ²⁹ And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. ³⁰ And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. ³¹ And, behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. ³² He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: ³³ And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. ³⁴ Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? ³⁵ And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. ³⁶ And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. ³⁷ For with God nothing shall be impossible. ³⁸ And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her. ³⁹ And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; ⁴⁰ And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. ⁴¹ And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: ⁴² And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. ⁴³ And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. ⁴⁶ And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, ⁴⁷ And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. ⁴⁸ For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

*Silence follows the reading

Christmas Hymn

"What Child is This?" (198)

The Sixth Lesson

Luke 2: 1-7

Pat Jones

"In which Luke tells of the birth of Jesus"

¹ And 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). ³ And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. ⁴ And 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:)



Christmas Lessons & Carols

In order not to spoil the service for other members of the congregation, please turn off chiming digital watches and mobile phones.

"I am sending the messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple."
Malachi 3:1

Carol

Advent Declaration

Pastor: Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Pastor: Comfort my people, comfort them; my salvation shall not be delayed. I have swept away your offenses like a cloud; fear not, for I will save you. I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Redeemer. Thus says the Lord. Come and save us, O Lord of hosts.

People: Come, O Lord, and save us.

Advent Bidding

Pastor Tiner

Dear People of God: in the season of Advent, it is our responsibility and joy to prepare ourselves to hear once more the message of the Angels, to go to Bethlehem and see the Son of God lying in a manger. Let us hear and heed in Holy Scripture the story of God's loving purpose from the time of our rebellion against Him until the glorious redemption brought to us by His holy Child Jesus, and let us look forward to the yearly remembrance of His birth with hymns and songs of praise.

The Lord's Prayer

Congregation

Carol

"O Come, All Ye Faithful" (199)

The First Lesson

Genesis 3:1-15

Steve Baxter

"In Which Paradise is Lost"

¹ Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? ² And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: ³ But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. ⁴ And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: ⁵ For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. ⁶ And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. ⁷ And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. ⁸ And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. ⁹ And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? ¹⁰ And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. ¹¹ And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? ¹² And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. ¹³ And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. ¹⁴ And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: ¹⁵ And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

*Silence follows the reading

"Jesus Christ the Apple Tree"

The Second Lesson

Genesis 22:15-18

Melanie Inmon

"In which God promises to Abraham that in his seed shall the nations of the earth be blessed"

And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, ¹⁶ And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: ¹⁷ That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; ¹⁸ And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

*Silence follows the reading

Carol

"Love Came Down at Christmas"

Carol

"Joy to the World! The Lord is Come" (181)

The Third Lesson

Isaiah 9: 2-7

Rita Sexton

"In which Christ's birth and kingdom are foretold by Isaiah"



A word from our Pastor ...

When you think about it, *I Saw Three Ships Come Sailing In* is a rather unusual Christmas carol. There are no boats in the accounts of Jesus' birth. The Jews of Bible times were generally terrified of open water. Only fishermen routinely set sail, and that was on the comparatively placid lake called the Sea of Galilee. One of the carol's verses declares that the ships come sailing into Bethlehem. That's an interesting picture, since the City of David sits high and dry in the Judean Mountains, 2,543 feet above sea level. The number "three," however, provides some clues to the song's message.

It echoes the traditional number of Magi (or "wise men" in the King James Version). Sometime during the 1100's, three sailing vessels were said to have transported the purported bones of the Magi to the cathedral in Cologne, Germany, where they became holy relics. By the mid-1600's, wandering English minstrels had crafted the familiar folk song and lyrics we have today to commemorate that voyage.

There's another possibility, however.

Camels, which exhibit an extraordinary capacity to travel great distances between drinks of water, are known as "ships of the desert." Some historians believe the "three ships sailing in" represent the Magi's visit to the young Jesus, which is reported in Matthew 2:1-12.

It's worth noting how many questions still swirl around this event.

For instance, how many actual visitors from the east were searching for Jesus? Matthew doesn't say. But because they brought three gifts, the number stuck. Later tradition even assigned them names: Melchior, Caspar, and Balthazar. There's no evidence such individuals ever existed.

Were they kings? The Bible uses the term *magioi*, from which we get Magi (as well as the word "magic"). They were almost certainly not royalty, but rather dedicated students of the night skies.

We can only be grateful that John Henry Hopkins, Jr., who wrote *We Three Kings* in 1857, chose not to call his carol *We Undetermined Number of Astronomers from Present-Day Iraq*.

What we know for sure is that those who came from the east to visit Jesus were searchers. And they brought special gifts.

Gold, incense (or frankincense, as the older English versions have it), and myrrh are not the kinds of gifts one would generally order online from Babies R Us.

Jesus, of course, was no ordinary child. So what's the significance of the gifts?

Gold is a gift worthy of a king. In truth it's prized by most everyone – from ancient times to today's Wall Street speculators.

Incense is a gift associated with worship. It was extravagantly expensive. Worshippers would put a pinch of incense into a flame, and its sweet smell would connote the beauty of a relationship with God.

Myrrh is the most counterintuitive of the gifts. It was a burial spice. Why in the world would one give something like that to a child? From day one, the *death* of Jesus – and his subsequent resurrection – was part of his story. The fuller meaning of Jesus' life is already embedded in the Bethlehem accounts.

The ultimate meaning of Jesus' life was well known to those who crafted these lyrics almost 400 years ago:

*I saw three ships coming sailing in on Christmas Day, on Christmas Day
I saw three ships coming sailing in on Christmas Day in the morning.*

*And what was in those ships all three on Christmas Day, on Christmas Day?
And what was in those ships all three on Christmas Day in the morning?*

*Our Savior Christ and His lady on Christmas Day, on Christmas Day
Our Savior Christ and His lady on Christmas Day in the morning*

*Pray, wither sailed those ships all three on Christmas Day, on Christmas Day
Pray, wither sailed those ships all three on Christmas Day in the morning*

*O, they sailed into Bethlehem on Christmas Day, on Christmas Day
O, they sailed into Bethlehem on Christmas Day in the morning*

*And all the bells on Earth shall ring on Christmas Day, on Christmas Day
And all the bells on Earth shall ring on Christmas Day in the morning*

People sometimes sigh, "One day, when my ship comes in, everything will be OK." On that day, they assume, they will finally experience love, joy, and peace.

Here's the good news:

Love, joy, and peace can be ours right now as we abandon ourselves to the One whose arrival at Bethlehem is the centerpiece of every carol.



The apple cider is flowing once again in Waymack Hall. Join us tonight immediately following the service for warm apple cider and gingerbread men.



Annual Nog-off

It's the most delicious time of the year! The Nog-off is back! This year we'll enjoy the world's tastiest drink on the 12th Day of Christmas, January 5, 2025, following evening worship! Bring cookies. We'll provide the eggnog. For those few who do not prefer eggnog, we'll have hot chocolate, coffee, and warm chocolate swizzle nog (which isn't a nog, proper).



An Apple Cider Reception follows tonight's service, paired with Gingerbread Men cookies and Ginger Jingle Cake, featuring four layers of spiced gingerbread cake filled with rich eggnog cream cheese frosting, finished with festive sprinkles. A holiday classic with a decadent twist!

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, December 31st

Library Hours 5:15—5:45 p.m.

Call to Dinner at 5:30 p.m.

Menu—Brisket, Sautéed Vegetables, Cornbread Dressing, Rolls & Chocolate Cake. Must R.S.V.P. for meal

New Year's Eve Service at 6:15 p.m.

Mission Class at 6:15 p.m. in Children's Library

Sunday, January 5th—The 12th Day of Christmas

Library Hours 8:30 AM—9:00 AM

Youth & Adult Sunday School at 9:00 AM

Preschool Storytime at 9:00 AM

1st-6th Grade Activity Time at 9:00 AM

Children's Sunday School at 9:15 AM

Morning Worship at 10:15 AM

Bible Drills at 6:00 p.m.

Levy at Nite at 6:00 PM

Nog Off Fellowship to Follow



2024 Contributions

As the year draws to a close, you may wish to review your current 2024 contributions. If so, please contact the church office and request a summary of your 2024 giving. Current giving statements will be mailed or emailed to you upon your request. Of course everyone will receive their year-end statements for tax purposes in January by mail.

2024 Year End Giving

In order to qualify for a 2024 contribution under IRS tax laws, your gift must be received in the church office or postmarked by December 31. Thank you for giving!

2024 IRA Charitable Rollover

If you are 70 ½ or older and have an IRA, you have the opportunity to make a contribution from your IRA to Levy Baptist Church. This contribution is considered a Qualified Charitable Deduction, and is a tax-free way to help satisfy your annual Required Minimum Distributions. The process is simple: Tell your financial advisor or your IRA custodian that you would like to donate to Levy Baptist Church. They will then liquidate the appropriate investments within your account and mail a check directly to Levy Baptist Church. (The contribution must go directly from your IRA to Levy Baptist Church to qualify as a tax-free Qualified Charitable Deduction; you cannot take the money from your IRA then write a check.) The information you will need: Donation amount; organizational name and address – Levy Baptist Church, 3501 Pike Avenue, North Little Rock, AR, 72118. Most importantly, your generous support will help sustain Levy Baptist Church and its work.

NOTE: Tax advisors can also help with charitable clustering and others ways to give.

LEVY BAPTIST CHURCH



A FESTIVAL OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS

~ music & readings for Christmastide ~

DECEMBER 29, 2024