

Greenwood Forest



Baptist Church



Service of Lessons and Carols

leup

Cover Art

I Am with You

by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Isaiah 41:5-10

11"x14" Hand-carved block printed with oil-based ink on paper

Here we find the Israelites far from home, living in Babylonian exile. Fear and uncertainty hang heavy with the looming threat of Persian invasion.

"The coastlands have seen and are afraid, the ends of the earth tremble" (Isaiah 45:5). As some scramble to find courage in idols, God calls those exiled from Judah to be heartened by their rootedness in God's story.

The image that formed in my mind was a community nestled in God's hands amid the Mediterranean coastlands—the same lands conquered by the Babylonians, and to which the exiles longed to return.

While I was creating this image, the U.S. President shared an AI-generated video of his "vision" for Gaza, those same coastlands referenced in Isaiah. I was shaken by the contrast between his imagined future and the reality of U.S.-funded devastation. The video transformed rubble and the bone-chilling cries of mothers into panning vistas of high-rise beachfront resorts and casinos, rebranding Gaza as the "Riviera of the Middle East."¹

This bombastic vision mocks a people clinging to threads of existence. Watching the powerful revel in the demise of the vulnerable is horrifying—but fitting. In Isaiah, God's people are exiled under the thumb of a world power. Fearful artisans solder golden idols, hoping for security. But God is not found in the hands of the powerful or the shine of idols. God is present amid the rubble, comforting the forsaken and reminding them of their place in God's story. No matter which empire holds sway, God sides with the subjugated and disenfranchised. Despite the fear that causes the very earth to tremble, God accompanies the downtrodden, upholding them with a steady hand.

From my study of this passage and shock at the video, a counter-vision of hope emerged. Coastal Mediterranean plants—bougainvillea for peace, lantana for liveliness, and red valerian for strength—anchor the shifting sand. God's hands cradle the community like a fragile flame as their light resiliently radiates. The twelve figures in simplified Palestinian garb represent the exiled Judeans in Isaiah, the Palestinians in modern day Gaza, and all crushed by empire—each cherished by a faithful God. The hands in the image could also be ours.

—Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

¹ Some of the imagery included: a child holding a golden balloon in the shape of the U.S. President's head, crowds standing beneath a golden statue of said president, billionaire Elon Musk basking as money rained from the sky, and the U.S. president lounging poolside with the Israeli prime minister. While this imagery flashes, a song plays with the lyrics, "No need to fear, Trump's Gaza is finally here."

Welcome

We are so glad you've chosen to join us this week. Greenwood Forest Baptist Church is an inclusive community of faith, which means we welcome, affirm, and include all God's people in their diversity of genders, sexual orientations, races, ethnicities, citizenship statuses, ages, abilities, and backgrounds. We are each beloved by God and we are happy to welcome you to our church exactly as you are.

While you're here, we want to make sure you have everything you need! Here are some things to know:



Nursery care is available for infants and toddlers. There is also a glider in the back of the sanctuary if you need to rock your little ones.



Hearing assistance devices, transcripts of the sermon, and large print bulletins are available at the back of the sanctuary.



Services are livestreamed and you may end up on camera.



Gender-neutral, single-occupant bathrooms are located at the back of the sanctuary in the Narthex.



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Visitor Form



Greenwood Forest Baptist Church

Join Us for Christmas Eve

We invite you to join us for Christmas Eve as we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ!

There are two opportunities on December 24:

At 11am, we will hold a **Children's Christmas Eve** service in the sanctuary. This service can be attended by anyone of any age, but it is specifically geared toward children. We build a Nativity set throughout the service, stopping to dwell on each new addition as we go. We sing some easier Christmas carols and enjoy the morning together.

At 8pm, we hold the traditional **Candlelight Christmas Eve** service in the sanctuary. This service includes traditional carols, communion, and a Christmas homily. We sing "Silent Night" by the light of our own candles together as we welcome the Christ child to earth.

We hope to see you at one of these wonderful services on Christmas Eve!

Giving to Greenwood Forest

If you would like to give to Greenwood Forest Baptist Church, you can support our inclusive community of faith by placing money in the offering plate, mailing a check, setting up an automatic bank draft, or giving online at gfbccary.org/give.

2025 has been an extraordinarily generous year at Greenwood Forest as we've had to overcome a number of critical financial obstacles, including the reconstruction of the HVAC systems in the church. Thank you so much for your generosity and investment in our community this year. We literally could not do what we do without you!



Scan to Give
Online Today!

Announcements for the New Year

Family Promise Week (January 5-11)

Family Promise of Wake County helps house families with children who are experiencing homelessness. Caring for these families throughout the year depends on the generosity and participation of faith communities across Wake County. We're up on the rotation for January 5-11, which means we'll be supplying nightly meals during the weekdays and groceries for families. If you would like to sign up for either (it involves dropping off food at the Family Promise office, which is about 15 minutes from GFBC), visit gfbccary.org/familypromise.

GFBC Welcomes Back Rev. Isaac Villegas (January 4)

Greenwood Forest will welcome back Isaac Villegas for Faith Formation and Worship on January 4, 2026! Villegas is the author of *Migrant God: A Christian Vision for Immigrant Justice* and is a Mennonite pastor in North Carolina. He will be kicking off a sermon series based on his book in worship (11am) as well as giving a book talk downstairs in the Fellowship Hall during the Faith Formation hour (9:45am). You can find his other writing in numerous publications, including *The Christian Century*, *Anabaptist World*, *Commonweal*, *Sojourners*, *Faith & Leadership*, and elsewhere.

Documentary Screening: No Other Land (January 11)



The Agora Initiative, an organization dedicated to peace in Palestine and Israel, will host a screening of the Academy Award-winning documentary *No Other Land* on Sunday, January 11 at 3pm in the Fellowship Hall. The film was recorded between 2019 and 2023 and covers the destruction of a Palestinian community in the occupied West Bank. Directed by a collective of Israeli and Palestinian peace activists, *No Other Land* is a moving diary of the experience of occupation. Following the screening, a panel conversation will follow featuring Khalil Sayegh (founder of The Agora Initiative) and Celeste Marcus (Executive Editor at *Liberties: A Journal of Culture & Politics*). The event is free and open to the public, but attendees need to register at gfbccary.org/nootherland.

About Our Advent Banners

Every year, we hang banners in the sanctuary each week of Advent. Each banner represents a different part of the Advent and Christmas stories. New banners were crafted in 2025 to adorn the sanctuary. Karen Upchurch, Vivian Denning, and Lynn Newsome joined together as a quilting team to make these amazing pieces of art. Rev. Wesley Spears-Newsome contributed the designs.

The quilt banners borrow from a number of traditions, including Appalachian quilting iconography from Western North Carolina, the quilt patterns used during the Underground Railroad, and numerous other historical and contemporary quilting patterns. The banners are wonderful examples of community art and we're excited to see them grace our sanctuary for years to come!



Advent I:

This banner represents the apocalyptic passages often read during the first week of Advent. The worshiper awaits the coming of God and looks for signs in the heavens.



Advent II:

This banner depicts the "Little Town of Bethlehem" where Jesus will be born. Notice how the scene of the mountains, the fertile valleys, and the cobblestone streets repeat across each banner.



Advent III:

Here the angels appear to the shepherds. The stars in the sky are abstract representations of the angelic beings as described as multi-winged creatures in the Bible.



Advent IV:

The Christ child is in a manger at the center of a pattern called "The Log Cabin." This pattern represented safe houses on the Underground Railroad and here symbolizes the liberating power of God.

About the Service of Lessons & Carols

We tell stories all year, but at Advent and Christmas we are particularly focused on recalling the story of God handed down to us over thousands of years. The Service of Lessons and Carols is a worship experience focused on storytelling. What began as the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols or the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols has found many expressions throughout the world but they all hold in common the retelling of Bible stories and the singing of Christmas carols. In some ways, Lessons and Carols is a return to the basics, reminded us of who God is and who we are – and what God wants for the world.

While originally an English tradition among Anglicans, the service has been adopted in Roman Catholic and other Protestant contexts across the globe. One notable incarnation of the service is done in Quebec, Canada, where there are not just nine readings and carols, but nine languages represented in the liturgy.

The Lessons and Carols service at Greenwood Forest Baptist Church shares much with the other versions from around the globe. One notable change is a re-titling of the readings. The service was developed prior to the horrors of the Second World War and the Shoah or Holocaust. The sensitivity to anti-Semitism in Christian theology was simply not present and some of the original titles for the readings conveyed anti-Semitic tropes or theological positions (e.g., supercessionism, the idea that Christians have superseded God's relationship with the Jewish people). Our titles to the readings hope to reflect both the saving and liberating work of God and highlight that the Jewish tradition is a living part of that work.

The music you'll hear this morning is also from a variety of different sources. There will be a children's song (*His Name Will Be John*), a refrain from the Middle Ages in Latin (*Medieval Gloria*), alongside traditional Christmas music (*Once in Royal David's City; It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*). There's even a song arranged by our Choir Director, Cameron Aiken (*Rise Up, Shepherds*)!

We hope that the Service of Lessons and Carols will be a reminder of the hope, peace, joy, and love of God this Advent season. Even as there is much to fear in the wider world, our gatherings are meant to be a light in the darkness, a sanctuary for the fearful, and a place of hope for everyone.

Enjoy!

Order of Worship

Chiming of the Hour

Lighting of the Love Candle

Leanne and Wade Ritter

Processional Hymn

Once in Royal David's City (pg. 12)

v1: Catherine Glasgow, soloist

v2: Sanctuary Choir

vv3-4: Congregation

Welcome and Bidding Prayer

Rev. Lauren Hayes

Carol

His Name Will Be John (pg. 10)

Children's Choir & Sanctuary Choir

Lesson 1

Humanity Fails But God Promises Freedom

Rev. Wesley Spears-Newsome

Carol

Medieval Gloria (pg. 10)

Sanctuary Choir

Lesson 2

Abraham's Descendants Will Bless the World

Cameron Aiken

Carol

Up! Good Christen Folk and Listen | arr. G.R. Woodward (pg. 10)

Sanctuary Choir

Lesson 3

Isaiah Foretells God's Coming Liberation

Kevin Schaeffer

Carol

Lo, How a Rose (pg. 13)

Congregation

Lesson 4

Isaiah Foretells the Peaceful Reign of God

Sydney Spivey

Carol

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear (vv. 1, 3, 4; pg. 14)

Congregation

Lesson 5

Mary Receives Gabriel's Blessing

Nathan Bullock

Offertory Prayer

Nathan Bullock

Offertory

Mary Did You Know? | arr. Jack Schrader

Presentation of the Offering

Tune: CRANHAM

*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 him my heart.*

Lesson 6

The Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem

Rev. Lauren Hayes

Carol

The Infant King | arr. David Willcocks (pg. 11)
Ensemble

Lesson 7

The Shepherds Go to the Manger
PJ Harris

Carol

Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow | arr. Cameron Aiken (pg. 11)
Sanctuary Choir

Lesson 8

A Star Leads the Magi to Jesus
Rev. Dr. Stephen Stacks

Carol

On This Day, Earth Shall Ring (vv. 1, 3, 4; pg. 15)
Congregation

Lesson 9

The Mystery of the Incarnation
Rev. Wesley Spears-Newsome

Carol

Beautiful Savior | arr. F. Melius Christiansen (pg. 11)
Sanctuary Choir

Collect and Benediction

Rev. Lauren Hayes

Recessional

O Come, All Ye Faithful (pg. 16)
Congregation

Songbook

His Name Will Be John

Oh Zechariah, it's been a while,
since we heard your voice.

And your wife, Elizabeth,
Has been blessed with a little one

There's talk going around
that you've heard from God
and we're waiting to hear from you.

But one question that we need answered is
what will you name your son?

His name will be John, with the camel skin on.

He'll lead the way for the lamb of God.

His name will be John, with the camel skin on.

No it won't be Ron. It won't be Don.

His name will be John.

Oh, we've been waiting all this time
for the newborn king.

And your son will prepare the way
For the Holy One.

We know you've prayed all this time,
for this gift from God,

But one question that we need answered is
what will you name your son?

Will it be Mark? Hmm hmmm hmmmmm

Will it be Moses? Hmm hmmm hmmmmm

Will it be Joseph? Hmm hmmm hmmmmm

His name will be John!

Ooohhhhhh

Medieval Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo

et in terra pax

hominibus bonæ voluntatis.

Laudamus te,

benedicimus te,

adoramus te,

glorificamus te,

gratias agimus tibi

propter magnam gloriam tuam,

Domine Deus.

Glory to God in the highest
and on earth peace,
goodwill to humankind.

We praise you,

we bless you,

we adore you,

we glorify you

We magnify you

for your great glory

Lord God

Up! Good Christen Folk & Listen

Ding-dong, ding:

Ding-a-dong-a-ding:

Ding-dong, ding-dong:

Ding-a-dong-ding.

Up! Good Christen folk, and listen

How the merry church bells ring,

And from steeple

Bid good people

Come adore the newborn king.

Tell the story how from glory

God came down at Christmastide,
Bringing gladness,
Chasing sadness,
Show'ring blessings far and wide.
Born of mother, blest o'er other,
Ex Maria virgine,
In a stable
('Tis no fable),
Christus natus hodie.

The Infant King

Sing lullaby!
Lullaby baby, now reclining,
Sing lullaby!
Hush, do not wake the infant king.
Angels are watching, stars are shining
Over the place where he is lying.
Sing lullaby!
Sing lullaby!
Lullaby baby, now a-sleeping,
Sing lullaby!
Hush, do not wake the infant king.
Soon will come sorrow with the morning,
Soon will come bitter grief and weeping:
Sing lullaby!
Sing lullaby!
Lullaby baby, now a-dozing,
Sing lullaby!
Hush, do not wake the infant king.
Soon comes the cross, the nails, the piercing,
Then in the grave at last reposing:
Sing lullaby!

Sing lullaby!
Lullaby! is the babe a-waking?
Sing lullaby!
Hush, do not stir the infant king.
Dreaming of Easter, gladsome morning,
Conquering death, its bondage breaking:
Sing lullaby!

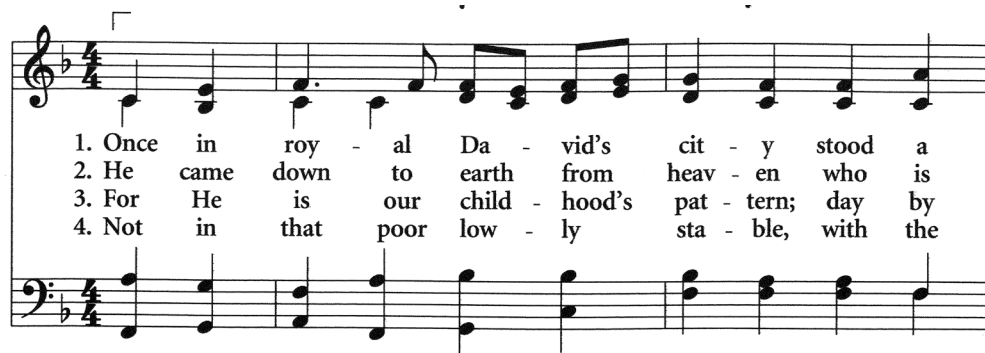
Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow

Follow, follow, rise up shepherd and follow!
There's a star in the east on Christmas morn,
It will lead to the place where the savior's born.
Follow, follow, rise up shepherd and follow!
Follow the star of Bethlehem
Leave your sheep and leave your lambs,
Leave your ewes and leave your rams.
If you take good heed to the angel's words,
You'll forget your flocks, you'll forget your
herds.

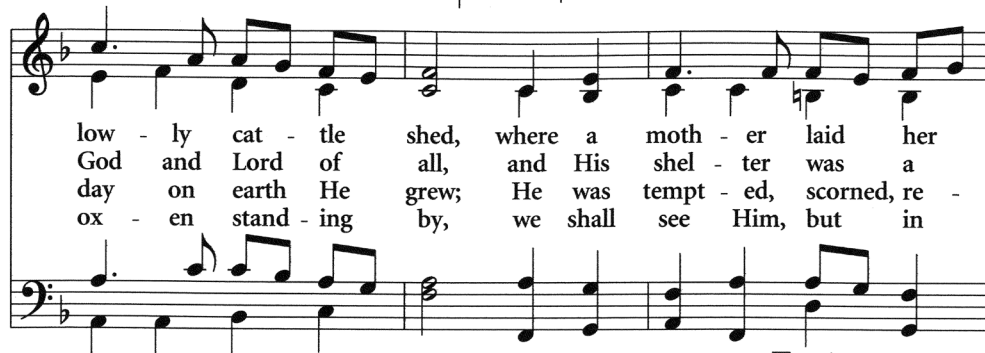
Beautiful Savior

Beautiful savior, king of creation,
Son of God and Son of Man!
Truly I'd love thee, truly I'd serve thee,
Light of my soul, my joy, my crown.
Fair are the meadows, fair are the woodlands,
Robed in flow'rs of blooming spring;
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer;
He makes our sorr'wing spirit sing.
Fair is the sunshine, fair is the moonlight,
Bright the sparkling stars on high;
Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer
Than all the angels in the sky.
Beautiful savior, lord of the nations,
Son of God and Son of Man!
Glory and honor, praise, adoration,
Now and forevermore be thine!

Once in Royal David's City



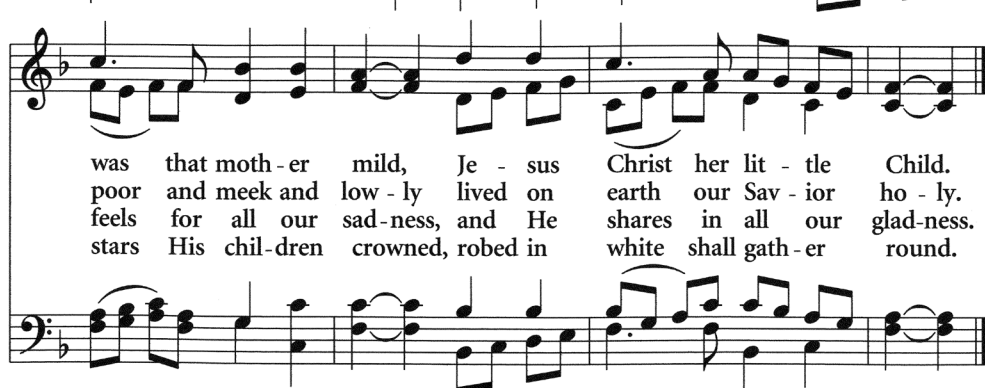
1. Once in roy - al Da - vid's cit - y stood a
 2. He came down to earth from heav - en who is
 3. For He is our child - hood's pat - tern; day by
 4. Not in that poor low - ly sta - ble, with the



low - ly cat - tle shed, where a moth - er laid her
 God and Lord of all, and His shel - ter was a
 day on earth He grew; He was tempt - ed, scorned, re -
 ox - en stand - ing by, we shall see Him, but in

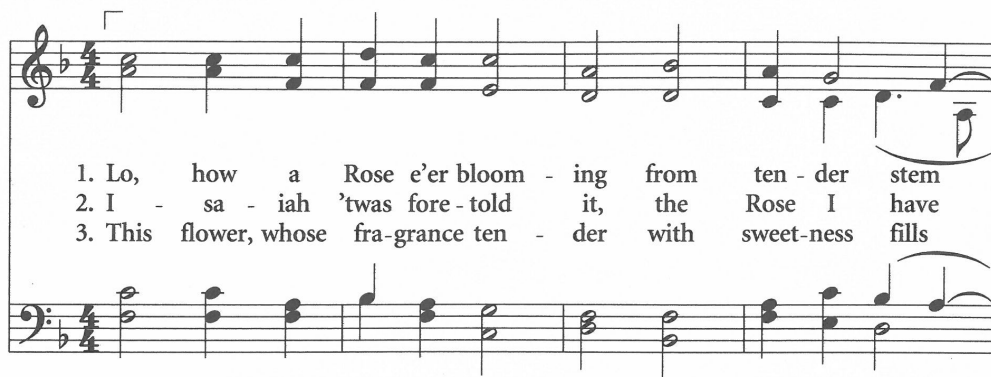


ba - by in a man - ger for His bed. Ma - ry
 sta - ble, and His cra - dle was a stall. With the
 ject - ed, tears and smiles like us He knew. Thus He
 heav - en set at God's right hand on high; when like

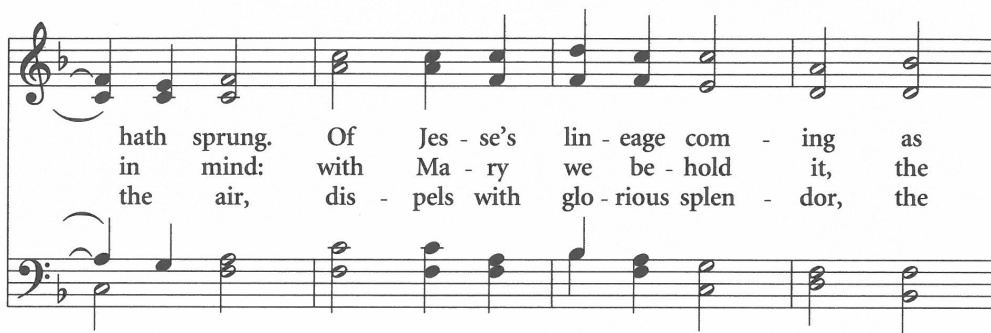


was that moth - er mild, Je - sus Christ her lit - tle Child.
 poor and meek and low - ly lived on earth our Sav - ior ho - ly.
 feels for all our sad - ness, and He shares in all our glad - ness.
 stars His chil - dren crowned, robed in white shall gath - er round.

Lo, How a Rose



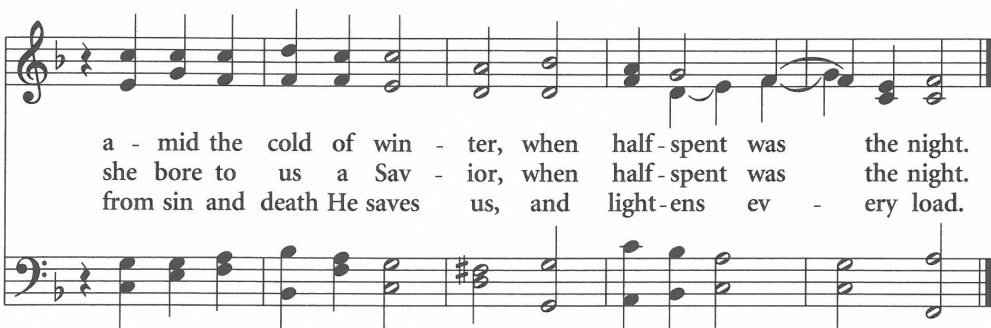
1. Lo, how a Rose e'er bloom - ing from ten - der stem
 2. I - sa - iah 'twas fore - told it, the Rose I have
 3. This flower, whose fra-grance ten - der with sweet-ness fills



hath sprung. Of Jes - se's lin - eage com - ing as
 in mind: with Ma - ry we be - hold it, the
 the air, dis - pels with glo - rious splen - dor, the



saints of old have sung. It came a flow-eret bright,
 vir - gin moth - er kind. To show God's love a - right
 dark-ness ev - ery - where. True Man, yet ver - y God,



a - mid the cold of win - ter, when half-spent was the night.
 she bore to us a Sav - ior, when half-spent was the night.
 from sin and death He saves us, and light-ens ev - ery load.

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear (w. 1, 3, 4)

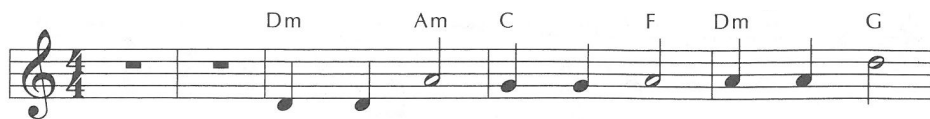
1. It came up-on the mid-night clear, that glo-rious song of old,
 2. Still through the clo-ven skies they come with peace-ful wings un-furled,
 3. All ye, be-neath life's crush-ing load, whose forms are bend-ing low,
 4. For lo! the days are has-tening on, by proph-et bards fore-told,

from an-gels bend-ing near the earth, to touch their harps of gold:
 and still their heaven-ly mu-sic floats o'er all the wea-ry world.
 who toil a-long the climb-ing way with pain-ful steps and slow,
 when with the ev-er-cir-cling years comes round the age of gold;

"Peace on the earth, good will to men, from heaven's all-gra-cious King."
 A-bove its sad and lone-ly plains they bend on hov-ering wing,
 look now! for glad and gold-en hours come swift-ly on the wing;
 when peace shall o-ver all the earth its an-cient splen-dors fling,

The world in sol-emn still-ness lay, to hear the an-gels sing.
 and ev-er o'er its Ba-bel sounds the heaven-ly an-gels sing.
 O rest be-side the wea-ry road, and hear the an-gels sing.
 and the whole world give back the song which now the an-gels sing.

On This Day, Earth Shall Ring (vv. 1, 3, 4)



1 On this day earth shall ring with the song
 2 His the doom, ours the mirth; when he came
 3 God's bright star, o'er his head, wise men three
 4 On this day an - gels sing; with their song



chil - dren sing to the Lord, Christ our King, born on earth to
 down to earth Beth - le - hem saw his birth; ox and ass be -
 to him led; kneel they low by his bed, lay their gifts be -
 earth shall ring, prais - ing Christ, heav - en's King, born on earth to



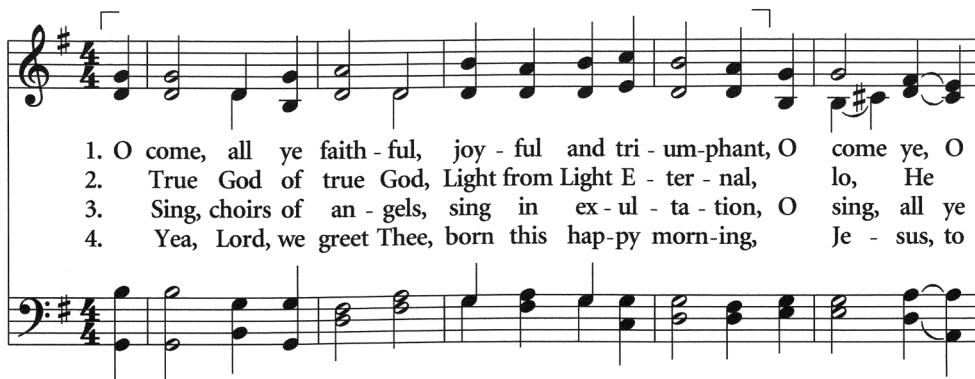
save us; him the Fa - ther gave us.
 side him from the cold would hide him. *Id - e - o - o - o,
 fore him, praise him and a - dore him.
 save us; peace and love he gave us.



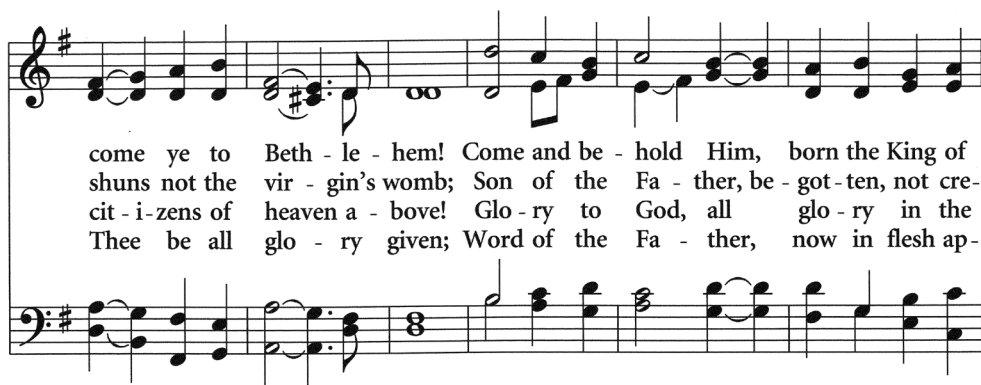
id - e - o - o - o, id - e - o glo - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o!

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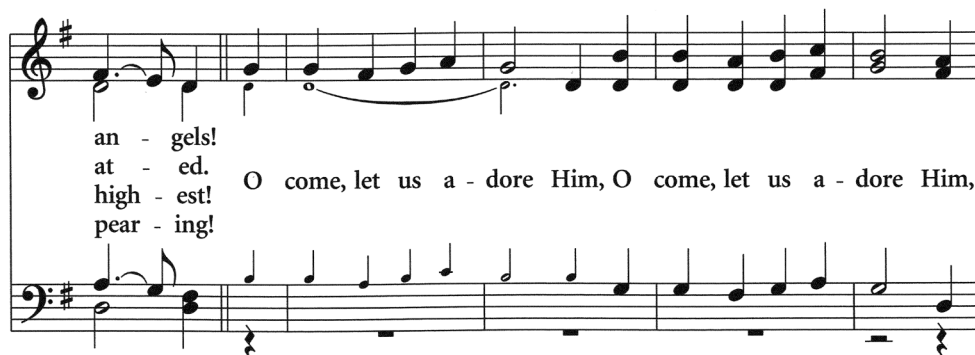
O Come, All Ye Faithful



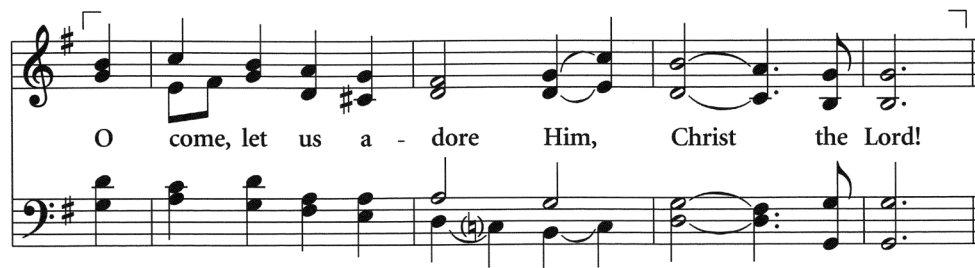
1. O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - um - phant, O come ye, O
 2. True God of true God, Light from Light E - ter - nal, lo, He
 3. Sing, choirs of an - gels, sing in ex - ul - ta - tion, O sing, all ye
 4. Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this hap - py morn - ing, Je - sus, to



come ye to Beth - le - hem! Come and be - hold Him, born the King of
 shuns not the vir - gin's womb; Son of the Fa - ther, be - got - ten, not cre -
 cit - i - zens of heaven a - bove! Glo - ry to God, all glo - ry in the
 Thee be all glo - ry given; Word of the Fa - ther, now in flesh ap -



an - gels!
 at - ed.
 high - est! O come, let us a - dore Him, O come, let us a - dore Him,
 pear - ing!



O come, let us a - dore Him, Christ the Lord!

Poinsettia Dedications

The Beal Family

in memory of Don Beal

Chuck and Susan Beck

in honor of Beckett Brooks Jordan

Pat and Tom Brooks

in memory of our parents

in honor of our children and grandchildren

Carolyn Camp

in memory of her husband Ray Camp

Greg and Carol Carter

in honor of Jon and Jennifer, Brooks and Jennifer, Justin and Mary,
and Grands: Grace, Carter and Clark

Jennifer, Tom, and Sarah Coltrane

in honor of Jean Harris

in memory of Jerry Harris

Steve and Vivian Denning

in memory of Jennifer Denning

David Floyd

in memory of his parents Ed and Marjorie Floyd

in honor of his sister, Nancy Long and her family,
including his new great nephew Luke William Long

The Glasgow Family

in honor of Lee and Patti Webb

in memory of William Webb Glasgow

Jane Griffin

in memory Ann Griffin Clawson

Poinsettia Dedications

Jean Harris

in memory of her husband Jerry Harris
in honor of her family

Janice and Randy Medford

in memory of Doris Martin and in honor of Jay Martin
in honor of Mary George Brewer

Diana Morde

in honor of the JOY Class and their leader Bucky Sydnor
in memory of those gone before us, who taught us so much

Gerry Ritter

in honor of Scott, Denise, Ava, and Erica Dean Ritter
in memory of Dean Ritter

Marlen Ruegg

in memory of friend and mentor Susan Miller
in memory of beloved friend Marietta Potok

The Spears-Newsome Family

in honor of Rev. Lauren Hayes
in honor of the Wonder Room, Rainbow Room, and Youth Volunteers

Sydney Spivey

in memory of Rev. Harold McDonald
in memory of Betty McDonald
in memory of Lori Baysden

Lee and Patti Webb

in memory of Hurst and Virginia Webb, Morris and Lorene Phillips, and William Webb Glasgow
in honor of Scot, Leanne, Sean, and Catherine Glasgow; Henry, Susan, and Hannah Meador

Marie Seeger

In memory of her husband Frederick Seeger



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Helen Bishop, Organist

Cameron Aiken, Choir Director

Alex Filby, Director of Administration and Facilities

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