

## Lessons and Carols, 2014

14 December 2014

### WELCOME AND GREETING

PRELUDE "The Angel Gabriel" Raney  
*Jubilate Bells and Strings*

CONGREGATIONAL CALL TO WORSHIP No. 211  
"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (v. 3)

**O come, O come great Lord of might,  
Who to thy tribes on Sinai's height  
In ancient times once gave the law  
In cloud and majesty and awe.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

### +LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLES

LEADER: "The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing "

**PEOPLE: "Joy to the World" is a beloved carol written in the early 1700s by Isaac Watts. It captures the enthusiasm we feel when announcing to the world the joy of our Messiah.**

LEADER: The first verse speaks to this joy, "Joy to the world! The Lord is come; let earth receive her King. Let every heart prepare Him room, and heaven and nature sing." As we light the third candle of Advent, let us carry the joy of our redemption into the world that the people may catch the Spirit.

*(Light two blue candles and one pink candle)*

LEADER: Let us pray.

**ALL: Lord of Joy we await your coming with great expectation. Our lives are marked by joy even when our circumstance might prove to the contrary. May we bring joy to every heart this Advent season. Amen.**

### +PROCESSIONAL HYMN

"Joyful, All Ye Nations Rise" No. 240  
*Chancel Choir, Jubilate Bells, Brass Choir & Congregation*

## *We Bow Together in Prayer*

### BIDDING PRAYER:

Ever present God, you taught us that the night is far spent and the day is at hand.

Grant that we may ever be found watching for the coming of your Son.

Save us from undue love of the world, that we may wait with patient hope for the day of the Lord, and so abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may not be ashamed; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**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 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. Amen.**

## *We Respond in Giving and Listening*

### OFFERING OUR GIFTS OF THANKS

Invitation to Give Our Treasure, Our Talent and Our Time

Offertory "The Angel Gabriel" Jubilate Bells No. 95

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
praise God, all creatures here below;  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise God,  
the source of all our gifts!  
Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!  
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit, Alleluia!  
Alleluia! Alleluia!**

### +Prayer of Dedication

**In this season of joy, we join you in wanting to give gifts of ourselves. Receive what we offer, that your joy may abound in this world. Amen.**

## + Festival of Lessons and Carols +

Isaiah 9:2-7

A reading from the prophet Isaiah, chapter 9, verses 2-7

<sup>2</sup> The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
on them light has shined.

<sup>3</sup> You have multiplied the nation,  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as with joy at the harvest,  
as people exult when dividing plunder.

<sup>4</sup> For the yoke of their burden,  
and the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

<sup>5</sup> For all the boots of the tramping warriors  
and all the garments rolled in blood  
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

<sup>6</sup> For a child has been born for us,  
a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders;  
and he is named

Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

<sup>7</sup> His authority shall grow continually,  
and there shall be endless peace  
for the throne of David and his kingdom.

He will establish and uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time onwards and for evermore.  
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

### The Magus

#### *Meditation 1: "A God Beyond the Stars"*

*Magus:* I do not know about the gods. The people around me, all through the land of Persia, they seem to know all about them. The Medes know about the Medean gods. The Greeks know about the Greek gods. The Romans know about the Roman gods. Me, I don't know about any of them.

I know the stars. I am what the people call a magus: a wise man, a star-gazer. And what I know is that the same stars that dance over the Greeks dance also over the Romans and the Persians and the Medes. While the peoples close themselves behind their artificial borders and build private temples and walls of doctrines to hide their gods from others, the stars move majestically above them all. When you know the stars, the gods seem very small.

Except for one. A foreign wise man once told me about a different sort of god, a god that was not just for one people. The man was an exile from a faraway western land called Judea. He said his people worshipped one God – the God who made the land and the sea and who cast the stars into the heavens, a God whose wish was to be honored by all peoples. He said that one day this god would send an anointed one, the son of a great king, to heal all nations, to break down all walls, and to heal the earth. I heard this tale with wonder and longing, but as I say, I do not know about gods. I know the stars.

And then the star appeared, a new star. It was not a planet, dancing in patterns among the constellations; not a comet, soaring briefly in the skies, then disappearing; it did not even rise and fall with the night do as the other fixed stars. It was always on the sunset horizon, always in the west. It was a star like no other. It was as different from the other stars as the One God is from the other gods.

Other magi gathered with me, and together we gazed in awe at this star. At last one said what I too was feeling: "It is calling. I must go to it." We loaded our camels and headed west.

Carol: "When the Christmas Baby Cries"

Wolover      *Chancel Choir*

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A reading from the Gospel According to Matthew, chapter 1, verses 18-25

18 Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup>Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. <sup>20</sup>But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup>She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’<sup>22</sup>All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:  
<sup>23</sup> ‘Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel’, which means, ‘God is with us.’ <sup>24</sup>When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, <sup>25</sup>but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

## The Carpenter

### *Meditation 2: “The Promised King”*

*Carpenter:* The prophet Isaiah said that in that day, the mountain of the Lord’s house – Jerusalem – would become a place of pilgrimage for all nations. All people would seek the God of Israel. The prophet said that the anointed one, the Messiah, would be born of David’s line, and that he would be the one to bring this healing to the earth.

Our people have thought so many times that Messiah had come. But all flashed briefly, like a comet in the sky, then disappeared. And now, under the Romans, messiahs are a bad joke. We have a new one nearly every year – but they don’t bring healing, only futile rebellion and slaughter.

I was raised with this hope, because I am son of David, a direct descendant of the king. My family bears that burden – that any child born to us could be the Chosen One. We were taught to watch for signs of God’s blessing. But when you reach my age, it’s hard to believe in such stories. I want no more messiahs. I left my home in Bethlehem of Judea and moved to Galilee to start a new life – to quietly marry and raise children. Perhaps I could create one small circle of healing around me. I opened a workshop, made a name for myself as a craftsman, and got engaged to a young woman named Mary.

And then there came the dream – an angel told me that Mary was with child, by the Holy Spirit, that I should name the child Jesus, and that he would be the one to save the people. Then the angel quoted from Isaiah.

God, I told you, I want no more messiahs. But I am a son of David. I will do as you command.

Carol “Celtic Noel” *Jubilate Bells*  
+Carol “Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates” No. 213

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A reading from the Gospel According to Luke,  
chapter 1, verses 26-38

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth,<sup>27</sup> to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.<sup>28</sup> And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.'<sup>29</sup> But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.<sup>30</sup> The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God.'<sup>31</sup> And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.<sup>32</sup> 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 ancestor David.<sup>33</sup> He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.'<sup>34</sup> Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?'<sup>35</sup> The angel said to 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 holy; he will be called Son of God.'<sup>36</sup> And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren.<sup>37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God.'<sup>38</sup> Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

## The Girl

### *Meditation 3: "Here Am I"*

*Girl:* Up until the angel came I thought my worst problem was finding something to talk about with my new husband. He's quite old, you know. I'm not complaining, mind you. I don't do that. Besides, I knew when my parents arranged it that it was a great match. Joseph is a good man, honorable, respected man. But what do you talk about with a man who's almost 40? Arthritis?

But then the angel came to me, and I realized I had bigger problems than that. I was pregnant, and it was God's doing. I was going to be whispered about for the rest of my life, and probably shunned by the older ladies at the synagogue. The child that I bore would probably be looked down on by the good families, who might not let their children play with him. I was looking at a lifetime of trouble. But I didn't complain.

I did protest. I pointed out that I'm a virgin. I assume the angel understood how these things usually work. But he didn't seem interested. I suppose when you speak for God you don't care how things *usually* work. All that matters is how God plans to make things work this time. So I decided I should have that same attitude.

"All right," I said. "Here I am, your servant. Let it be as you say."

One good thing: Joseph and I should have plenty to talk about now.

Carol "Angels from the Realms of Glory"  
Forrest *Chancel Choir*

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Luke 2:1-7

A reading from the Gospel According to Luke, chapter 2, verses 1-7

<sup>2</sup>In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup>Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

## The Carpenter

### *Meditation 4: "Room for a King"*

*Carpenter:* This was not how the Messiah was supposed to come. He was supposed to be born in a palace, raised to rule, crowned in the Temple, greeted by adoring crowds of Israelites.

Instead, he will be born to a girl – a very unusual girl, I must say, but still a mere girl – to be raised by her and me, a common craftsman, in a backwater town in Galilee. There, he will be greeted not with adoration but with, at best, indifference. Indifference would be good. Mary and I are hoping for indifference, rather than scorn.

And then, forced by the Roman census to return to Bethlehem to be counted, I take this yet-unborn Messiah to the town of David, the birthplace of kings, and there isn't even a room for him. He's born in a common stable, with no midwife, no attendants, no courtiers. Just us and the donkeys.

The coming of the Messiah is not supposed to be like this.

Unless it is. Unless this king is supposed to be different.

Carol: "The Hands That First Held Mary's Child"  
Forrest                      *Chancel Choir*

+Carol                      "The First Noel"                      No. 245

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*Matthew 2:1-12*

A reading from the Gospel According to Matthew, chapter 2, verses 1-12

2 In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>asking, ‘Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.’ <sup>3</sup>When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup>and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup>They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

<sup>6</sup>“And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.”’

7 Then Herod secretly called for the wise men\* and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup>Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, ‘Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.’ <sup>9</sup>When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising,\* until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw that the star had stopped,\* they were overwhelmed with joy. <sup>11</sup>On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup>And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

**The Magus**

***Meditation 5: “Children”***

*Magus:* The star led us almost to the western sea, to the very land that foreign wise man had told me about: Judea. The land where they worship only one God, who is over all the earth and heavens. I felt a stir of excitement. Was this star perhaps the sign for that people, that their promised king had been born, the king who would bring healing to all nations?

If so, it was certainly not the king we met in the city of Jerusalem – Herod. That king would bring peace and healing to no one. We moved on, following signs, praying for help, watching the star, and came to the town of Bethlehem – and there he was. The signs were clear: this was the one. But what a let down! He was nothing out of the ordinary. Just a baby, like every other baby. We could have stayed in the east and seen a thousand other babies that looked just like him.

The others started to turn away, disappointed, but then I understood.

“Wait. Don’t you see?” I said. “This *is* the king who will save all people. Of course he looks like every child. He *is* every child. How else could he be the savior of all?”

Kneeling, we offered our gifts.

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Carol: “Carol of the Magi” Rutter *Chancel Choir*

Closing Blessing

RECESSIONAL HYMN

“O Come, All Ye Faithful” Dobrinski  
*Chancel Choir, Jubilate Bells, Brass Choir, and  
Congregation*