

Lessons & Carols for
The Feast of the Nativity
of Jesus

25 December 2020

“A Silent Night”

Grace Episcopal Church
827 Church Street
Honesdale, PA

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INTRODUCTION

Hello, and welcome in this holy season to “Virtual Grace”
from Grace Episcopal Church in Honesdale, Pennsylvania.
I’m Fr. Ed, the rector of our parish,
and while we wish we could all be here in person
and shake the rafters with our singing,
we will sing God’s praises together,
though not right here,
or are you?
Christmas is full of mysteries!

It does feel like Christmas in some ways - more than a foot of snow this week,
college kids from previous years of Choir able to join us,
and the Church decorated.
And as you will see in the video, Choir members are here with me,
for we must sing carols at Christmas, how can we not?
Yet you will notice that with the exception of siblings,
we are all carefully distanced and wearing masks,
we apologize if some portions of the video are not the easy to hear.
We are grateful to Jordan, Kyle, Jared, Elise, Harry, Sue and Zach
for being with us and you in making this day special.

We hope that you have received the words of the carols in e-mail
(all of which are in the public domain, I have to mention)
and even if you don’t think you can sing,
sing anyway, or hum.

Our service is sadly not a midnight Mass
or a Christ-Mass on the day of the Nativity of Jesus - Christ-Mass.
But we offer you a variant of the traditional Lessons and Carols service,
with a special treat, thanks to a priest, an organist, and...
a mouse.

I’ve said that Christmas when Jesus was born
was not like anyone would have planned or expected.
But the Blessed Mary and Joseph made it through,
cradling a baby boy,
our Savior, Jesus.

Join with us now, and if you are able to make your thanksgivings
in the form of financial support, we appreciate your helping us
to continue our ministry to the community around us.

CHRISTMAS “VIRTUAL” SERVICE 2020

PROCESSION -

“Once in Royal David’s City”

Hymnal #102

*Harry sings first stanza from the hall outside Baptistry.
All begin to process as Jordan joins him on 2nd stanza
All then sing remaining stanzas as they take their place.*

*(The Procession goes through Baptistry “the short way,”
up Chancel steps to Quire and Sanctuary.)*

BIDDING PRAYER (adapted from the *Book of Occasional Services*)

Dear Friends: On this Christmas Day, let it be our delight to hear once more the message of the Angels, to go to Bethlehem with the shepherds and see the Son of God lying in a manger with the lowly animals.

Let us hear the story of God’s loving purpose brought to us in the Child Jesus, and let us make our homes glad with our carols of praise.

But first, let us pray for the needs of his whole world, for peace and justice on earth, for the unity and mission of the Church for which he died, and especially for his Church in our country and in our community.

And because he particularly loves them, let us remember in his name the poor and helpless, the cold, the hungry and the oppressed, the sick and those who mourn, the lonely and unloved, the aged and little children, and especially in this year those who suffer from the pandemic, those who have died, those who have lost loved ones and even those of us who are separated from loved ones in this holy time of family and fellowship.

Finally, let us remember before God his pure and lowly Mother, and that whole multitude which no one can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom, in Jesus, we are one for evermore.

And now, to sum up all these petitions, let us pray in the words which Christ himself has taught us, saying:

Our Father

The Almighty God bless us with his grace; Christ give us the joys of everlasting life; and to the fellowship of the citizens above, may the King of Angels bring us all. Amen.

Come, let us sing to the God of our salvation.

Carol: "O Come, all ye faithful" Hymnal #83
with organ introduction, setting by M. Dupré

I. Bethlehem Micah 5:2-5a
The one who is to rule Israel will be born in the village of Bethlehem.

O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, you who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

Carol: "O Little Town of Bethlehem" Hymnal #79
as my tradition, the Choir will sing the third stanza to #78

II. **St. Joseph** Luke 2:1-5
Joseph takes his wife Mary to Bethlehem to be registered.

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. 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. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

Carol: "The Snow Lay on the Ground" Hymnal #110

III. **The Manger** Luke 2:6-8
The Holy Child is born.

While they were there, the time came for Mary to deliver her child. 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.

Carol: "Away in a Manger" Hymnal #101

IV. The Angels

Luke 2:8-15

An angel host proclaims the birth of Jesus to shepherds.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see-- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

Carol:

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

Hymnal #96

V. The Shepherds

Luke 2:15-20

The shepherds go to Bethlehem to see the Baby in the manger.

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Carol:

"Go, Tell it on the Mountain"

Hymnal #99

Fr. Ed to play on the piano.

MEDITATION

"A Song in the Silent Night"

by Fr. Erb

Skit with five readers

characters

Mouse	Sue K.
Gruber (Franz)	Fr. Ed
Child (Christoph)	Harry
Fr. Joseph	Zach
Narrator	Jordan

SONG in a SILENT NIGHT
by The Rev'd Edward K. Erb
Christmas 2010, revised 2020
for the children of Grace Church, Honesdale PA

Narrator: A terrible thing to do.

Mouse: What did I know? It was old leather. Sweet. I was hungry. Like an old shoe.

Narrator: A terrible thing to do.

Mouse: Oh, come on! I didn't mean to ruin their celebration. I was hungry!

Gruber; Are your pumping?

Christoph: Yes, but nothing is coming out. Something's wrong with the bellows.

Gruber: Don't tell me. No air for the organ? Let me see.

Here it is. Look here, Christoph, there's a hole in the leather. It's leaking.
Nothing is getting into the pipes. There'll be no organ music tomorrow!

No music for Christmas. I'll have to tell the Choir. I'll have to tell Fr. Joseph.

Fr. Joseph: Tell me what? What's wrong Franz? Christoph! What did you do?

Christoph: I didn't do anything!

and Gruber: He didn't do anything. It was a mouse.

Mouse: Here we go. I didn't know. It was just old leather. I was hungry and cold. The Church is warm and always a pleasant place to be - so peaceful. Nobody complained when I chewed through that old book I found. Food for thought!

Narrator: Now Christoph was a student at the local school where Franz was the schoolmaster. And Christoph was often given the penance for wrong-doings by pumping the organ bellows at the parish Church of St. Nicholas in Oberndorf, high in the Alpine mountain village.

Christoph together: They always blame me.

and Mouse together: They always blame me!

Narrator: But it was the mouse this time. And the organ would not play for the Christmas services of this little Church. What would they do?

You plan and plan, you practice and practice, and all of the sudden you find that the Holy Spirit will blow everything out of the water.

Fr. Joseph: Well, Franz. Simple truth. No organ. OK. So, what do we do? We can't have...

Gruber: We'll have to have a silent service, I guess. No music.

Fr. Joseph: No organ music, at least.
But the choir can sing the Mass *a cappella* can't they?

Gruber: Well, yes, I suppose so. They've sung it often enough. Maria and Georg can lead them, with me, of course. It will be a challenge, but I think that might actually be nice. I'll call them together early to practice.

Mouse: What about a guitar? I've heard Fr. Joseph playing.

Gruber: Father Joseph! What about your guitar? I've heard you playing.

Fr. Joseph: Well. I suppose. Maybe. I don't play much anymore since University. I'll have to clear it with Fr. Wilhelm first, of course. He doesn't like my guitar. And he is my superior. The bishop...

Gruber: Under these emergency circumstances, I think the Bishop and Fr, Wilhelm will understand. I can write some quick chords for you to accompany the Choir for the hymns.

Fr. Joseph: I suppose it could work.

Christoph: Better than nothing.

and *Mouse* together: Better than nothing.

Fr. Joseph: Wait. Franz. I wrote a poem a couple of years ago that might be perfect. I could read it at the service. It's called, "Silent Night, Holy Night." I wrote it when I was preparing for the priesthood and thought about that night in Bethlehem - what a mysterious holy time that was - angels, shepherds, shepherds, cows in the manger.

Mouse: And mice!

Gruber: Not like anyone expected to be sure.

Fr. Joseph: That's what the first Christmas was like, wasn't it?
A cold, quiet, winter night.

"Silent night, holy night. All is calm, all is bright."

Gruber: I like it. The perfect sentiment. Especially when a little baby is being born, and trying to sleep in a manger. You don't want the trumpets of angels and organs waking the child. Something simple and soft. A quiet night.

Child: Silent night, not quiet. Silent.

Mouse: I did it!

Narrator: So Fr. Joseph went home to find the poem stuffed in an old book on his shelf. And Franz stayed at the Church to get things re-arranged for the Choir. Christoph and Mouse? Well, they went about getting into more trouble.

As Franz pulled his scores off the organ, he saw Mouse sitting on the lampstand at the side of the keyboard.

Mouse: I didn't mean it.

Narrator: Of course, Franz couldn't hear. But he could see the sorrow in Mouse's eyes.

Gruber: It's OK. I know you didn't mean it. And you're sorry, aren't you? And look, a new carol will be born. I have a melody already running through my head. It'll work out. Just don't do it again! Do you hear me!

Narrator: And Franz smiled at Mouse, and Mouse smiled a sly smile back.

The volume and tone of Franz's voice. Not serious, but lovingly stern, as he chased Mouse away to the insides of the organ.

All of a sudden, a strum of a guitar could be heard from down in the front of the Church.

Child: And the rest is, well...

The sounds of a guitar strumming begins the music of "Silent Night."

Mouse: History.

Fr. Joseph Es war ein stille Nacht - ein heilige Nacht.

Carol:

“Silent Night”

Hymnal #111

beginning with one stanza in German

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

CONCLUDING PRAYERS

The Collect for Christmas

Almighty God, you have given your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and to be born this day of a pure virgin: Grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with you and the same Spirit be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

BCP p.213

Seasonal Blessing for Christmas

May Almighty God, who sent his Son to take our nature upon him, bless you in this holy season, scatter the darkness of sin, and brighten your heart with the light of his holiness. *Amen.*

May God, who sent his angels to proclaim the glad news of the Savior’s birth, fill you with joy, and make you heralds of the Gospel. *Amen.*

May God, who in the Word made flesh joined heaven to earth and earth to heaven, give you his peace and favor. *Amen.*

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, ✠ the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon us and remain with us all for ever. *Amen.*

Carol:

“Joy to the World”

Hymnal #100

introduced with the handchimes playing “The King’s Peal”

POSTLUDE

“God rest ye merry”

Lloyd Webber

The Carols shared today are in the public domain, with no copyright restrictions. The texts are from our Hymnal 1982, The Church Hymnal Corporation, NY, 1985.

ONCE IN ROYAL DAVID'S CITY

The 1st stanza is sung by a solo treble

1. Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed,
where a mother laid her baby in a manger for his bed:
Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ her little child.

The 2nd stanza joined by Choir

2. He came down to earth from heaven, who is God and Lord of all,
and his shelter was a stable, and his cradle was a stall;
with the poor, the scorned, the lowly lived on earth our Savior holy.
3. [*Protected by copyright*]
4. For he is our lifelong pattern; daily, when on earth he grew;
he was tempted, scorned, rejected, tears and smiles like us he knew.
Thus he feels for all our sadness, and he shares in all our gladness.
5. And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own redeeming love;
for that child who seemed so helpless is our Lord in heaven above;
and he leads his children on to the place where he is gone.
6. Not in that poor lowly stable, with the oxen standing round,
we shall see him; but in heaven, where his saints his throne surround:
Christ, revealed to faithful eye, set a God's right hand on high.

O COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL

- 1 O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem;
come, and behold him, born the King of angels;

Refrain:

- O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.
- 2 God from God, Light from Light eternal,
lo! he abhors not the Virgin's womb;
only-begotten Son of the Father; [*Refrain*]
- 3 Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation;
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
glory to God, glory in the highest; [*Refrain*]
- 4 See how the shepherds, summoned to his cradle,
leaving their flocks, draw nigh to gaze;
we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps; [*Refrain*]

5 Child, for us sinners poor and in the manger,
we would embrace thee, with love and awe;
who would not love thee, loving us so dearly? [Refrain]

6 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory given;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing; [Refrain]

O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

1. O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;
yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.
2. For Christ is born of Mary; and gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth!
and praises sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth.

The Choir sings stanza 3

3. How silently, how silently, the wondrous Gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.
4. Where children pure and happy pray to the blessed Child,
where misery cries out to thee, Son of the mother mild;
where charity stand watching and faith holds wide the door,
the dark night wakes, the glory breaks, and Christmas comes once more.
5. O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!

THE SNOW LAY ON THE GROUND

1. The snow lay on the ground, the stars shone bright,
when Christ our Lord was born on Christmas night.
Venite adoremus Dominum. (*repeat*)

Refrain:

Venite adoremus Dominum. (*repeat*)

2. 'Twas Mary, daughter pure of holy Anne,
that brought into this world the God made man.
She laid him in a stall at Bethlehem;
the ass and oxen shared the roof with them. [Refrain]

3. Saint Joseph, too, was by to tend the child;
to guard him, and protect his mother mild;
the angels hovered round, and sang this song,
Venite adoremus Dominum. [*Refrain*]
4. And thus that manger poor became a throne;
for he whom Mary bore was God the Son.
O come, then, let us join the heavenly host;
to praise the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. [*Refrain*]

AWAY IN A MANGER

1. Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay;
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.
2. The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.
3. Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay
close by me forever and love me I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care;
and fit us for heaven to live with thee there.

ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD

- 1 Angels we have heard on high, singing sweetly through the night,
and the mountains in reply echoing their brave delight.

Refrain:

Gloria in excelsis Deo, gloria in excelsis Deo.

- 2 Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why these songs of happy cheer?
What great brightness did you see? What glad tidings did you hear? [*Refrain*]
- 3 Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing.
Come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn King. [*Refrain*]
- 4 See him in a manger laid whom the angels praise above.
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid, while we raise our hearts in love. [*Refrain*]

SILENT NIGHT

Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht. Alles schläft, einsam wacht.
Nur das traute hoch heilige Paar. Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar.
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh! (*repeat*)

1. Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy Infant, so tender and mild, sleep in heavenly peace.
sleep in heavenly peace.
2. Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight,
glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing alleluia;
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!
3. Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord at thy birth. Jesus, Lord at thy birth.

GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN

Refrain:

Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere;
go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!

1. While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. [*Refrain*]
2. The shepherds feared and trembled when lo! above the earth
rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth. [*Refrain*]
3. Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born,
and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. [*Refrain*]