

Straight from the "Hart"

December 4, 2022

Christmas Carol Sing



Welcome to the Hartland UMC service script. We are glad you are reading in worship. Today is primarily a carol sing, the songs were pre-chosen by people attending two and three weeks ago. Two choices were not Advent-Christmas, but we made them work anyway... I've tried to align the songs and select the verses so that with some narration between we will be singing the Christmas story -- but since most songs were not written as part of a musical and often convey snippets of very different parts of the story, there may not be perfect chronological continuity -- but then again, I've noticed that when we tell each other stories about our life, we tend to jump back and forth and around and repeat the important stuff... sometimes even word for word ...



Opening Prayer God of mercy and grace, we pray that as we give our lives in love, our offerings will be used to offer hope, compassion, and healing in the chaos of our world. We have gathered to sing and pray and listen to your Word -- as a sign that we trust in Christ's consistent coming to us -- to prepare our hearts to receive your peace again in this Christmas season. Amen.

Call to Worship Come, all you who are waiting and hoping with expectant hearts, who are preparing for Christ's coming to us. Come, let's celebrate and rejoice and make our hearts glad with the peace that nothing can take away. Come, let's fill our hearts with wonderful joy at the glorious revelation of Jesus Christ in the manger.

adapted from © 1999 Epworth Press, ad. by SCM Press,
in UM Worship & Song, Leader's Edition.

Music I'm reminded of the story of the little drummer boy, who didn't have gold, frankincense or myrrh -- he didn't think he had anything to give -- but he came as he was -- and gave what he did have -- his ability to play on the drum. Advent, while it is a time of preparation, also calls us to come just as we are -- and offer ourselves just as we are to the Lamb of God -- a title for Jesus because he

sacrificed his life for us. Let's sing ourselves into the Christmas story by singing a couple verses of Just As I Am

Just As I Am

Words: Charlotte Elliott, 1835 Music: William B Bradbury, 1849

6. Just as I am, thy love unknown hath broken every barrier down;
now, to be thine, yea thine alone, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
5. Just as I am, thou wilt receive, wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
because thy promise I believe, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Special Music Seasonal Singers

Christmas is about Jesus coming about breaking down every barrier so that we can be received and welcomed back into relationship with God... As a way of introducing our singing of the story today, we are going to sing a song that invites us to do just that. After naming the happy songs of the angels and Mary and Joseph, we are invited to sing the Christmas tale as well. Listen to "One Holy Night in Bethlehem"

One Holy Night in Bethlehem

Words: Mary Nelson Keithahn Music: John D. Horman © 1998 Abingdon Press

1. One holy night in Bethlehem the air was filled with song.
Angelic voices sang on high and shepherds piped along:

Refrain

Sing glory, glory, gloria! God's love is given birth!
Be not afraid! Sing gloria, and peace to all the earth!

2. Their music echoed through the town into the stable stall,
where Mary sang a lullaby and rocked her baby small:

Refrain

3. As Joseph touched the lamb's soft wool and fed the donkey hay,
he whistled his own happy tune and thanked God for this day:

Refrain

4. Be still, and you will hear tonight these melodies of old.
Then join your voice in harmony until the tale is told:

Refrain



Special Music Seasonal Singers

The theme of Advent 2022 in Hartland is “Why Jesus Comes”. Last week, he came to bring peace, Today, he comes to bring hope. This next song also speaks about reasons Jesus comes to us... It’s called “Like a Child”

Like a Child

Words & Music: Daniel Charles Damon © 1993 Hope Publishing Co.

1. Like a child love would send to reveal and to mend,
like a child and a friend, Jesus comes.
Like a child we may find, claiming heart, soul, and mind,
like a child, strong and kind, Jesus comes.
3. Like a child born to pray and to show us the way,
like a child here to stay, Jesus comes.
Like a child we receive all that love can conceive,
like a child we believe, Jesus comes.

Advent Candles

Now join me in just the verse of “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” as we prepare for the Advent Candles.

(L – Lay Reader, P – Pastor P/C – Pastor with Congregation)

(v 4) O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Words: Laurence Hull Stookey, © 1984 UM Publishing House

Music: 15th c. French, arr & harm by Thomas Helmore

- ♩ 4. **O come, thou Root of Jesse’s tree, an ensign of thy people be;
before thee rulers silent fall; all peoples on thy mercy call.**

L: Last Sunday we lit the candle of hope to remind us that God will fulfill our longing for justice and peace. This Sunday we look for signs of that promised peace.

[P Lights candle one as above line is being read]

P: God of Love, you created the universe and all that is in it. You created all things and called them good.

L: You weave together this wide variety of life from your infinite palette of creativity.

P: All the creatures that walk or swim, crawl or fly sing praises to you.

L: People, affirm all God has created in love with the psalmist:

P/C: Surely his saving power is near for those who revere him... Unfailing love and truth have met together. Truth will spring up from the earth. Justice will smile down from heaven. Goodness and peace will be theirs.

From Psalm 85:9,11,10 (NLT, NLV, VOICE, ICB)

L: On this second Sunday of Advent, we light this candle of peace to remind us that our Creator still calls us to love and be at peace with all we meet.

[P lights candle two as the above line is being read]

♪ **Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**



Music We experience that kind of peace because the love of God binds us together as one. Let's prepare our hearts for prayer by singing *Blest Be the Tie*

Blest Be the Tie that Binds

Words: John Fawcett, 1782 Music: Johann G. Nögeli; arr Lowell Mason, 1845

1. Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love;
the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.
2. Before our Father's throne we pour our ardent prayers;
our fears, our hopes, our aims are one, our comforts and our cares.

Pastor's Prayer Gracious God, this season leads us to the manger. We are grateful that you always journey with us. Keep us on the path and focused on your purpose for our mission. We confess that it is easy to stray from the holiness of the day and concentrate on the abundance of to dos before us. So as we put up our Christmas lights, may we be reminded of your light. Grant us the patience to pause in our task and bask in the promise of the star we follow. As we shop for gifts, keep

us mindful of the birthday we celebrate and the gift we are given in the manger. As we decorate our homes, remind us to take time to share the treasured memories of love -- for it is your love that truly decorates our homes. **Praises and Petitions** And it is your love that leads us to pray for those in need around us: We continue to pray for * Jim Mallott, and * Mary Jo Mallott also requests prayer for sister-in-law Colleen Huffman who has stage 4 pancreatic cancer; * David Babcock requests prayer for his stepmother who had a mild stroke and is praying for the best medical care and recovery, *Jeff and Linda ask for the family of cousin John who passed away a few days ago, * Pat Schleh asks for Glenn Kingery who is hospitalized with a broken hip, *and Charles Kirkpatrick asks for sister Beverly and husband Chuck who are recovering from covid. * And there are others that are on our hearts and mind, Lord, that we have not named, but you know who they are and what they are facing, and we just ask that you would intercede in your timing and in your way. Bring healing, strength, comfort, guidance, whatever the need may be in this season. [Pause].

Lord, we are bound for Bethlehem. Teach us to make the journey well so that when we arrive, we will have room in our hearts for your Son, the one whom the wisest seek, the Messiah who taught us to pray **Lord's Prayer**

Music And so our story begins in sky – let's call on the angels to sing the news – to the shepherds.

Angels From the Realms

Words: James Montgomery, 1816 Music: Henry Smart, 1867

1. Angels from the realms of glory, wing your flight o'er all the earth;
ye who sang creation's story now proclaim Messiah's birth:

Refrain:

Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn king.

2. Shepherds, in the field abiding, watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing; yonder shines the infant light:
(Refrain)

Music And now we join the shepherds who hear their song of invitation to come to Bethlehem.

Angels We Have Heard on High

Words: Trad French Carol, tr. Crown of Jesus, 1862

Music: Trad French Carol, arr Edward Shippen Barnes, 1937
harm. Austin C Lovelace, 1964 harm © Abingdon Press, 1964

1. Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains.

Refrain

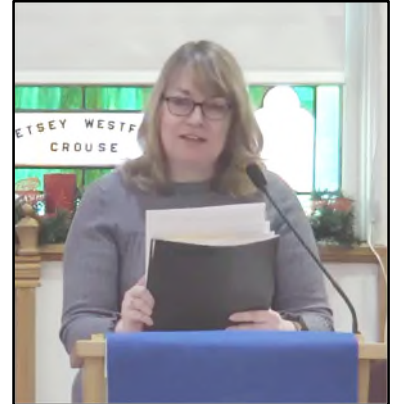
Gloria, gloria, gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Gloria, gloria, gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo!

3. Come to Bethlehem and see Christ whose birth the angels sing,
come, adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King.

(Refrain)

Intro to Bible Reading Jesus once told the people that they should be able to read the signs of the times because he was standing right there in front of them and who he was ought to have been obvious. In bleak times, an ancient king is offered any tangible sign of God's presence and protection that he could choose so that he could believe in his loving care in national crisis and stop worrying.



Bible Reading The Lord sent this message to Ahaz. "Ask the Lord your God for a sign to prove that these things are true. Ask anything. Make it as difficult as you want – from as high as heaven or as deep as the place of the dead." But Ahaz refused. "I will not ask for a sign. I will not test the Lord."

Then Isaiah said, "Listen well, descendant of David! Isn't it bad enough you exhaust human patience? Must you wear out patience of my God as well? All right then, the Lord himself will give you a sign anyway. A virgin will get pregnant. She will give birth to a son and will name him Immanuel (which means 'God with us'). By the time the child is old enough to choose what is right and reject what is wrong, the threat of war will be over. The two kings that have you so worried will be out of the picture.

Isaiah 7:10-16 (ICB, NLT, MSG)

Music Israel and Syria united together to capture King Ahaz and Judah. Loss seemed overwhelming and imminent. God told the king to choose *anything* to be a sign that he was with them and that they would not prevail against him. Can you imagine energy of that moment? If it were a movie, as king Ahaz pondered this miraculous opportunity to choose any sign at all, the camera would zoom in on his face and the background music would swell to a climax at this plot crisis moment of the movie. Those watching the scene would feel tension and you could hear a pin drop on carpeted floor...

This is the kind of atmosphere we feel as we return to the angels' song over Bethlehem that night and then zoom in on the mother and the baby. Let's try and capture the intensity of the atmosphere as we sing...

There's a Song in the Air

Words: Joseph G Holland, 1874 Music: Karl P Harrington, 1904

1. There's a song in the air! There's a star in the sky!
There's a mother's deep prayer and a baby's low cry!

And the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing,
for the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!

2. There's a tumult of joy o'er the wonderful birth,
for the virgin's sweet boy is the Lord of the earth.

Ay! the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing,
for the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!

Sermonette He Comes — To Bring Hope

For the ancient king, Ahaz, the air was filled, not with the anticipation of a birth, but the tension of impending war. King Ahaz was out trying to secure their water supply in anticipation of that war when Isaiah came to him and said God wanted to give him a sign to prove that he could trust and not have to be terrified like he was. Just as God gave Moses various signs when Moses needed encouragement that God would be with him, and the power to provide signs for the people as they faced what seemed an insurmountable task of moving out of slavery and to the promised land. (Exodus 3:12 ff) Sometimes, signs and proofs were okay.

But here, the king of Judah refused, piously quoting Moses, but from a different context of Moses' life when he had to tell the people that they should not be putting God to the test, the same words Jesus used when he was being tempted in the wilderness – sometimes signs and proofs are not okay, --- which should teach us that we must be very careful as we interpret Scripture, to see the context and understand why what is happening is happening.

There is a big difference between demanding God prove himself, or testing his patience by constantly grumbling and complaining, which is what prompted the original saying to not test God – they were testing his patience. (See Matthew 4:7, Exodus 17:2, Deuteronomy 6:16 et al) There is a big difference between that kind of testing God – kind of like putting him on trial and forcing him to prove himself -- and refusing to receive a sign of encouragement that he is offering to give to you. When God wants to do something for you, no matter how politely or piously you state your refusal, it is going against his will. "I want to give you this." "Nooooo."

Have you ever had those people who refuse your Christmas present, or you can tell they didn't like it? And it just crushes your heart?

So, through Isaiah God says, "Okay – I'm going to give you one anyway! The virgin (or it could be translated young woman) will give birth to a son and call him Immanuel (which means God is with us). There is some debate about what exactly that sentence means, and I don't want to get into it that deeply today, but this was probably the name of Isaiah's second son, following his pattern that Isaiah had of naming all his children as a tangible message to somebody about what God was doing. Because God was with Judah and the Israelites, the threatening kings were of so little threat that instead of building armies and securing the water supply, a helpless child will be the sign of hope for Judah, and the Davidic line of kings would continue as God had promised from the beginning, though it would face some tough times down the road. And sure enough, the Assyrian Empire gobbled up Israel and Syria before they could conquer Judah.

The sign of Immanuel, in Isaiah's context seems to be at least in part a short-term sign of hope for Judah. Back then, the sign was bound up more in the child's name than it was in the child himself. The Spirit-inspired prophets often spoke more than even they themselves knew.

When the gospel writers reviewed this sign of promise, they saw it as a foreshadowing of an even greater fulfillment than the immediate one of Isaiah's day. Oppressed by Assyria or oppressed by Babylon or oppressed by Rome -- probably not a lot of difference. God accomplishes the discipline of his people in order to free them from the tyranny of the Empires. But in this case, even more than political empires, the inspired Bible writers saw in this new child, this Christmas child, the one born in a manger -- a discipline that will conquer the tyranny of sin, and free us and restore us to become one with God and allow us to aspire to the humanity we are designed and destined to become.

So here is the question. Isaiah saw the baby as a sign concerning God's presence against the rebel alliance and the Assyrians. The gospel writers saw the baby born as a sign for God's presence to deliver us from sin. What sign do we see as we relive the story of Christ born in the manger? Is it just a great nostalgic story good only for trivia games or sentimental memories? Or do we see the light of Christ coming to us in the Christmas season each year as a renewed promise that God is always with us, always saving us, always delivering, always our King. Think about the sign put it – that Christ is for us today as we continue to sing through the story.

Music So our story resumes, -- I told you about how sometimes people will go back and circle around in their stories – well we are going to do that again. As we resume the story we are flashing back to repeat some of the important plot line – this sign of hope laying in the manger is first announced to the shepherds by the songs of the angels. Let's sing the first verse of The First Noel

The First Noel

Words: Trad. English Carol Music: Trad. English Carol; harm 1871

1. The first Noel the angel did say
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
in fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Refrain:

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, born is the King of Israel.

Music And again we join the shepherds as they hear the news, but this time we are invited to get into their sandals and hear the invitation of the angels join in praise for God has come to be with us and save us.

Hark the Herald Angels Sing

Words: Charles Wesley, 1734 alt. George Whitefield, 1753

Music: Felix Mendelssohn, 1840 arr William H Cummings, 1856.

1. Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King,
peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies;
with th' angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King!"

2. Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord;
late in time behold him come, offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail th' incarnate Deity,
pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King!"

3. Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King!"

Music And now the plot thickens as the angels now invite us to come (along with the shepherds) to see our hope, the hope of the world.

O Come All Ye Faithful

Words: John F Wade, ca 1743 tr by Frederick Oakeley, 1841
Music: John F Wade, ca 1743, harm from Collections... 1792

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.

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)

Music We are making our way to Bethlehem, so in our movie, our story, we cut forward to get a glimpse of where we are heading. The stable. The animals express the way they can serve the Lord of all. The donkey had carried the mother, the cow offered his feeding trough (manger), the sheep gave his wool for the blanket, and the doves coo the baby to sleep... Let's sing this scene now

The Friendly Beasts 1,6

Words: 12th c. French Carol, tr. anon.
Music: Medieval French Melody, harm Carlton R Young, 1987
harm © 1989 The United Methodist Publishing House

1. Jesus, our brother, strong and good was humbly born in a stable rude,
and the friendly beasts around him stood, Jesus, our brother, strong and good.

6. Thus all the beasts, by some good spell, in the stable dark was glad to tell
of the gifts they gave Emmanuel, the gifts they gave Emmanuel.

Music And now we have arrived and see the child king. It is easy to be in awe of any newborn, but with all we have heard to get to this point of the story, we must be wondering in just overwhelming awe -- just who and how special this child is.

What Child is This?

Words: William C Dix, 1863 Music: 16th c. English melody

1. 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?

Refrain:

This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary.

Music And as we continue to watch the baby and it begins to sink in to us just how special he is, we pray that this child king would stay with us and bless us on our journey to eternal life.

Away in a Manger

Words: Anon. Music: James R Murray, 1887

1. Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

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.

Music And now the camera zooms back and we reflect on the whole story and what has happened and it all begins to sink in with a *holy hush*.

Silent Night

Words: Joseph Mohr, 1818 sts 1,2,3 tr by John F Young st 4 anon Music: Franz Gruber 1818

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.

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.

Music And having reflected, it is our turn to react and respond to all the events we have heard, and hope that Jesus is not only born in the world but born in us as well.

Little Town of Bethlehem

Words: Phillips Brooks, ca 1868 Music: Lewis H Redner, 1868

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.

4. 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!

Music And you might think the story would end there, but you kept requesting songs so we can't stop 😊! There is another plot line that has begun out east. Wise ones see the sign of a rising king in the sky and come to see God's sign of salvation in the manger. They present gifts representing his kingship, his divinity, and his sacrifice for all.

We Three Kings

Words & Music: John H Hopkins, Jr., 1857

1. We three kings of Orient are; bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.

Refrain:

O star of wonder, star of light, star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.

5. Glorious now behold him arise; King and God and sacrifice:
Alleluia, Alleluia, sounds through the earth and skies.
(Refrain)

Music And now that this has sunk in, each in their turn, the shepherds, the wise ones, ourselves; we are called to go and proclaim the story of salvation that came in the birth of Jesus. So let's go tell it on the mountain and everywhere.

Go Tell it on the Mountain

Words: John W Work, Jr., 1907

Music: Afro-American Spiritual ad., arr. by Willilam Farley Smith, 1986
ad, arr © 1989 The UM Publishing House

Refrain

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

3. Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born,
and brought us all salvation that blessed Christmas morn.

Refrain

Prayer And so we have heard the story of Jesus' birth through the songs you have requested this year. Let's pray. Lord, we latch on to the sign of the baby in the manger and we know that God is with us – you are with us always. You will never abandon us. You will always have a people who form your kingdom. A people who receive -- and offer -- hope, peace, joy and love because you, God, became physically present with us, in the baby Jesus, beginning in a town called Bethlehem. Amen.

Music Let's sing the joy of our hope – the ultimate victory that will be won by this humble, newly born Son of God.

Joy to the World

Words: Isaac Watts, 1719

Music: arr from GF Handel, 1741 by Lowell Mason, 1848

1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King;
let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and heaven and nature sing.
4. He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness, and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.

Conclusion and Blessing When Matthew's looked back through history, and chose this passage in Isaiah as the crucial description of Jesus' birth, being Immanuel, God with us -- and without using the name refers to it again in Jesus' final words to his disciples – “I will be with you always to the end of the age” -- the meaning of his message is this:

The same God that has always been with his people throughout their history, and who has revealed himself as present in the world in Jesus the Christ, will continue to be present with his people as they carry out his commission of incorporating all people into the present and coming Kingdom of God! Amen.

Music: CCLI # 2561297