

(soft music) (soft music) (soft music)

- Mary had a baby, my Lord. Mary had a baby, my Lord. Mary had a baby. Where was he born, my Lord? Where was he born, my Lord? Born in a manger. Born in a manger. What did they call him, my Lord? What did they call him, my Lord? What did they call him? They called him King Jesus, my Lord. They called him King Jesus, my Lord. They called him King Jesus. They called him King Jesus, my Lord. (woman singing brightly) (woman singing brightly) ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ (woman singing brightly) (woman singing brightly) (woman singing brightly) ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ (gentle piano music) (gentle piano music) (gentle piano music) (gentle piano music) (choir singing faintly) (gentle piano music) (choir singing faintly) (gentle piano music) (choir singing faintly) (gentle piano music) (choir singing faintly) (gentle piano music)

- In the name and in the spirit of Christ, I welcome you to this Christmas Eve service of worship, of prayers, hymns, carols, lessons, and lighting of candles. We come tonight as one in the love of Christ who's glorious coming to earth we joyously and triumphantly commemorate and celebrate this night and on tomorrow. A word of special thanks is due to many, many persons who have worked and planned that we might rejoice together. And so, to all those named in the bulletin and to all those who are not mentioned, but without whose help we would not have the beauty of this service, may I say a word of thanks and appreciation, especially to Mrs. Eva Wiseman, and to the Burlington Boys Choir who will lead us and share with us in music. To Meredith Marcellus who has stepped in at the last moment to fill in for Ben Smith who is recuperating at home after several days stay in the hospital, and to Dr. Barney Jones who will read the second lesson which was to be read by Mr. Smith. Also to Mr. Michael Best, tenor soloist from New York and from Durham who sang the solo parts of "Messiah" recently and will sing "O Holy Night" for us at an inappropriate time in the service, we are glad you are present. And may this hour be a time of reflection for you upon the goodness of God's love, a time of renewal for your own spirit in the presence of God and in the presence of fellow Christians and friends and family, and especially a time of rebirth as the unfathomable richness of God's amazing love is revealed to us again this glorious Christmas Eve. May love, joy and peace be yours this night and tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow.

- Beloved in Christ, during this holy service, let us hear again the Christmas message. And our hearts and minds go even unto Bethlehem to see this thing which has come to pass and the babe lying in a manger. Therefore, let us read and mark in the holy scriptures the loving purposes of God. Let us begin our pilgrimage in prayer. Let us pray. O Lord, you humbled yourself that we might be exalted. You came to us that we might come to you. You became human that we might share in the fullness of life and your kingdom of love. O Holy God, we are gathered in the presence of this mystery and this miracle to adore you, to praise you, to proclaim you and to receive your word. We beseech you to be in the midst of us. And hear our prayers O God, for the needs of the whole world, for peace on earth, and goodwill among all your people, for

unity within your church. And O God, we lift to your care and our responsibility this holy night the poor, the helpless, the cold, the hungry, and the oppressed. The sick, and they that mourn, the lonely and the unloved, the aged and the little children. And now, O God, hear our personal prayers for those we have special concern for during this Christmas season. And now, O Lord, show us, and through the Holy Spirit prepare for us the way that leads to you. That with our own eyes, we may see your light which has come into this world and may become your witnesses with all of our being from this moment and forevermore. And (speaks faintly) to the one whose birth we celebrate, who told us to pray saying, "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." (bright piano music) (choir singing brightly) (choir singing brightly) (choir singing brightly) (choir singing brightly) The first lesson is from the 11th chapter of Isaiah. Christ's birth and kingdom are foretold by Isaiah. "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of it's roots. 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 the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide 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 he shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. Thou has multiplied the nation. Thou has increased its joy. They rejoice before Thee as with joy at the harvest as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden and for the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor thou has broken as on the day of Midian. For unto us, a child is born; to us, a son is given and the government will be upon his shoulder and his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end upon the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this." Thanks be to God. (soft piano music) (soft piano music) (soft piano music)

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- The second lesson, St. Luke chapter one verses 26 through 33 and 38. "The angel Gabriel visited the blessed Virgin Mary. In the six month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth to a Virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David. And the Virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you.' But she was greatly troubled at the saying and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb

and bear a Son and you shall call his name Jesus. 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 father, David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. And of his kingdom, there will be no end.' And Mary said, 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word.' And the angel departed from her." Thanks be to God. (soft piano music) (soft piano music)

(choir singing brightly) ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ (soft piano music)

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(choir singing brightly) ♪ The angels sang and the shepherds too ♪ (soft piano music)

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- The third lesson. St. Luke 1st chapter, 46th to the 55th verses. "And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for he has regarded the lowest state of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed for he who is mighty has done great things for me. And Holy is his name. And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the might from their thrones and exalted those of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent empty away. He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever.'" Thanks be to God. (soft piano music) (soft piano music) (soft piano music) (soft piano music)

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- The fourth lesson, St. Matthew 1:18-23. St. Matthew tales of Christ's nativity. "Now the birth of Jesus was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband being a just man and not willing to make her a public example was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream saying, 'Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins.' Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 'Behold, a virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us.'" Thanks be to God. (soft piano music) (soft piano music) (soft piano music) (soft piano music) (soft piano music)

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- The fifth lesson, St. Luke 2:8-20, "The Shepherds Go onto the Manger. "And in that region, there were shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone round them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, 'Be not afraid for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy, which will come to all the people. For to you is born this day in the city of David a savior who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you. You will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes 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, and on earth, peace among men with whom he is pleased.' When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.' And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child, and all

who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as it had been told them." Thanks be to God. (gentle piano music) (gentle piano music) (gentle piano music) (gentle piano music)

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(choir singing faintly) (soft piano music) (choir singing brightly) ♪ Jesus has (singing faintly) ♪ ♪ Mary is beside him ♪ (choir singing brightly) ♪ Christ is born ♪ ♪ Christ is born ♪ (soft piano music) (soft piano music)

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- The sixth lesson is from the 2nd chapter of St. Matthew. "The Wise Men are Led by the Star of Jesus. And now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem saying, 'Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen a star in the east and have come to worship him. When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him. And assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him in Bethlehem of Judea for so it is written by the prophet and you O Bethlehem and the land of Judah are by no means least among the rulers of Judah. For from you shall come a ruler who will govern my people, Israel. Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child. And when you have found him, bring me word that I too may come and worship him.' When they had heard the king, they went their way. And lo, the star which they had seen in the east went before them till it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then opening their treasures, they offered him gifts: gold and frankincense and

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- Light has always been a symbol of hope and life. Tonight we share symbolically and personally in receiving again and anew the light from Christ. I want you to note particularly how quickly, how meaningfully, and again, how personally light can shed and can lighten not only the life of one person, but the lives of many persons. As I light my light from the Christ candle in the center of the Advent wreath this Christmas morn, and the ushers then will light the candles of those sitting nearest the aisle. And then you share your light with your neighbor. (soft piano music)