

Good Shepherd Episcopal Church
Belmont, California

Celebration of the Nativity
with the Christmas Story and Carols

An All-Ages Christmas Celebration

Prelude

Welcome

Opening Hymn: *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

Hymnal 83

1 O come, all you faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
come, and behold him, born the king of angels
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

2 See how the shepherds, summoned to his cradle,
Leaving their flocks, draw nigh to gaze;
We too will thither bend our joyful footsteps;
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Opening Acclamation

Presider The people who walked in darkness
People **have seen a great light.**
Presider For to us a child is born;
People **to us a son is given.**
Presider His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor,
People **mighty God, the Prince of Peace.**
Presider Glory to God in the highest
People **and peace to all people on earth.**

The Collect for Christmas

Presider God be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Presider Let us pray.

O God, you have caused the holy night of your Son Jesus's birth to shine with the brightness of the true Light: Grant that we, who have known the mystery of the Light on earth, may also enjoy Christ perfectly in heaven; where with you and the Holy Spirit he lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. **Amen.**

Hymn of Praise: Angels We Have Heard on High

Hymnal 96

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

Glo - ria in excelsis Deo.

Glo - ria in excelsis Deo.

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

Glo - ria in excelsis Deo.

Glo - ria in excelsis Deo.

The First Reading

Reader A reading from the Book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

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. 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. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

The Christmas Gospel and Building of the Crèche

Reader 1

This night is like no other night. It is a time to dream and sing our way to Bethlehem. We will show each other the way. The little town we seek sits in the hill country some ten miles south of Jerusalem. For thousands of years the houses have gathered there on the hilltop like a family breaking bread. “Bethlehem” *means* “House of Bread.” In the center of the village is a small inn. On this night it is overflowing with people seeking sleep and a place to eat.

Behind the inn is a dark stable. A gray donkey chews his barley and broken straw while a weary cow leans and rests after the days plowing in the valley. A sheep nearby is nearly asleep. All is still and quiet in the little town.

The animals are placed in the crèche during the carol.

Carol: O Little Town of Bethlehem

Hymnal 79

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 all on earth.

Reader 2

As night gathers, the last two travelers come slowly up the road. Look, there is a young woman about to be a mother. She is walking with her husband. They are Joseph and Mary from Nazareth! They have walked for six days to come to this city where King David was born, so long ago. They have come, like so many others, because the Roman emperor wants to count each one, so he can take their money as a tax. But it is late, and Mary is so weary. Where will they sleep? There is no room in the inn. They decide to sleep with the animals.

Mary and Joseph are placed in the crèche during the carol.

Carol: Once in Royal David's City

Hymnal 102

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.

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.

Reader 3

Stars brighten slowly in the sky. All creation holds its breath. Suddenly, from the stable, comes the cry of a newborn child! Mary gently wraps the baby in a blanket and lays him in the feed box that his father has filled with straw.

The infant Jesus is placed in the crèche during the carol.

Carol: Away in a Manger

Hymnal 101

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 night.

Readers 4a/4b

Narrator

In the hills outside Bethlehem, shepherds watch their shadowy sheep. All at once, the dark is lost in light, and in the midst of the light is something even brighter: the faces of angels.

The fearful shepherds then hear music in the sky, and a voice says clearly,

Angel

“Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by all people. Today in the City of David a Savior is born! He is Christ, the Lord.”

Narrator

Then more angels appear, a whole heavenly host of them, praising God and singing:

Angel

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to all people, everywhere.”

Narrator

The shepherds run with joy across the fields to Bethlehem to the barn behind the inn. There they find the Holy Family and creep forward, overwhelmed with mystery, to find Nativity itself in the center of all that love.

The shepherd and angel are placed in the crèche during the carol.

Carol: Angels from the Realms of Glory

Hymnal 93

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:
 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 you is now residing;
yonder shines the infant Light:
 Come and worship, come and worship,
 worship Christ, the newborn King.

Reader 5

Three camels plod up the road to Bethlehem. They have come from the East, far beyond the Arabian Desert, perhaps from as far as the Caspian Sea. The camels carry three kings, the wise ones, the Magi. They are following the wild star, the destiny they had never seen before, and they are following it, wherever it goes, to find the King its shining shows them.

The kings' journey ends in a new kind of king. Their restlessness rests at last. They fall to their knees and give him bright gold, sweet-smelling frankincense, and bitter myrrh, brought so far with so much love.

The wise men are placed in the crèche during the carol.

Carol: We Three Kings of Orient Are

Hymnal 128

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

O _____ star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright;
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light!

2 Glorious now behold him arise,
King and God and Sacrifice;
heaven sings alleluia;
alleluia the earth replies.

O _____ star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright;
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light!

Reader 6

So now we all come, following the star, to find God with us. We come, as people have come all through the ages to bring our own gifts to this Child, God's gift to us.

Come forward now. Bring your gifts of stars and of yourselves to place around the manger. Show us the way into the Mystery of Christmas, as we sing, for this night is holy and filled with overflowing silence.

All are invited to bring stars to the crèche during the carol.



Carol: Silent Night

Hymnal 111

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.

Homily

The Prayers of the People

Presider

In peace and in faith, let us pray.

Presider and People

**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,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Intercessors

Radiant, glorious God, creator of all that is, we join our voices with the songs of angels this holy night, to praise your name for all of life: for pain and pleasure, for success and failure, for sorrow and joy.

Holy God, accept our praise.

God of the unexpected, who graced a humble stable with your most extraordinary child Jesus, we are awed by the generosity of your gift.

Holy God, accept our thanks.

God of limitless energy, inspire the leaders of this community, the nation, and the world with hope, that they may seek ways for all people to prosper in peace.

Holy God, strengthen our will.

Compassionate God, wrap the world in your love, that all who suffer from the effects of war, refugees, victims of violence, illness, trouble or despair may be released from all adversity. Hear our prayers on behalf of those we name now, either silently or aloud (*pause*). We pray:

Holy God, hear the cries of your people.

Loving God, move us beyond our fears and prejudices into the light of your love, where we may rest secure and risk great things in your name.

Holy God, bless us with your love.

Presider and People

Gracious and life-giving God, who illumined the night with the radiance of a child, help us so to receive your gift of love in Christ, that we may become beacons of light in this complex and wondrous world. Amen.

The Peace

Presider The Peace of Christ be always with you.

People **And also with you.**

All share the Peace and Christmas Greetings.

Offertory

Music: Announced

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contribute to the stewardship of the land where we gather;
and nurture our community relations.
Thank you for your generosity!*

Blessing

May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds,
the perseverance of the magi, the faithful trust of Mary,
and the peace of the Christ child be yours this Christmas.
And the blessing of God,
Creator, Redeemer, and Sustaining Spirit
be with you always. **Amen.**

Sending Hymn: Joy to the World

Hymnal 100

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.

2 Joy to the world! The Savior reigns;
Let us our songs employ,
While fields and floods,
rocks, hills and plains,
repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3 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.

The Dismissal

Presider Let us go forth, rejoicing that God has come to dwell among us.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

People **Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!**



Sources for the Christmas Eve Liturgy

The Book of Common Prayer (1979)

The 1982 Hymnal

Jerome Berryman, "A Children's Liturgy for Christmas Eve." *The Complete Guide to Godly Play*.
Vol. 3. 2006.

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Good Shepherd Episcopal Church
1300 Fifth Avenue
Belmont, CA 94002
Tel. (650) 593-4844
Email: contact@goodshepherdbelmont.org
Web: goodshepherdbelmont.org