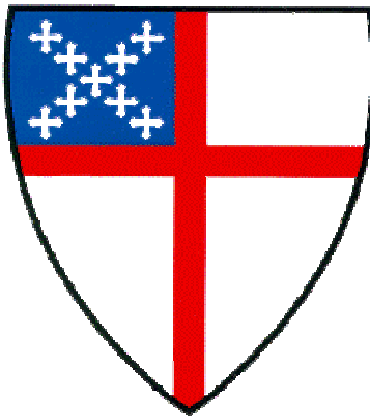


A Service for  
Christmas Eve or  
Christmas Day



*Episcopal service booklet for lay leaders*

## *Preparing for this Service*

*It is important to prepare for this service.*

This entire service is designed to be led by lay leaders. If the community has a Licensed Worship Leader, it is appropriate that the Worship Leader(s) serve as a presiding leader and coordinate preparing for the service. Leaders in the service may dress in a white robe (alb) or in cassock and surplice (long black robe with a short white cover); however, it is not required that leaders dress in church vestments. Where the directions (*printed in italics*) indicate parts that are to be said by *the Leader*, it should be understood that these parts may be led by any person assigned to lead that part of the service.

It is desirable to have five different readers; however, an individual may be assigned to read more than one lesson. Sometimes before the service, readers should be assigned. Any person may read at this service. There are five lessons.

This service includes the singing of 7 Christmas hymns or songs. All hymns/songs should be selected before the service begins. Any favorite Christmas hymns or songs may be used. For ease of planning, suggested hymns are included in this printed liturgy. These are only suggestions. Hymn numbers used are from the Hymnal 1982. Other songs or hymns may be substituted to suit the congregation's choices and available song books or materials.

If there are musicians who would like to offer a "special song" following one of the readings, it may take the place of any one of the hymns. Although Christmas songs are appropriate, other hymns or songs may be used.

Children may be invited to sing a song or to read. Acolytes may be used to light candles and to carry the cross in procession.

An Elder, Chief, or other community leader may say the blessing at the conclusion of the Bidding Prayer.

## A Service for Christmas Eve or Christmas Day

*If the church has an Advent Wreath, the four advent candles should be lit before the service begins. The Christmas candle should be left unlit. Acolytes, if available, may be vested as is the custom in your community. It is encouraged that there be at least one Acolyte to light the candles and carry the cross. Children may be invited to participate in the lighting of the Christmas Candle.*

### ***The Lighting of the Christmas Candle:***

*The service begins with the Leaders and Acolytes at the back of the church. After the ringing of the church bell, all stand, and the Leader greets the people with these words:*

*Leader:* Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

*People:* Thanks be to God.

*An assigned reader or the Leader reads the following lesson.  
The reading is done without introduction.*

*Reader:* In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

*Leader:* Let us pray. O God, you have caused this holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light: Grant that we, who have known the mystery of that Light on earth, may also enjoy him perfectly in heaven; where with you and the Holy Spirit he lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

*An Acolyte, children, or someone assigned now lights the Christmas Candle on the Advent Wreath. If there is no Advent Wreath, candles on the altar are lighted. If there are no candles to light, the service continues immediately with the Procession. (Optional: if your church has small candles that people can hold (sometimes called vigil candles), those candles should be lit at this time).*

***Hymn 83: "O Come, All Ye Faithful"*** (or another Christmas hymn or song)

*During the singing, the Leader(s) process to the front of the church following the Cross and Acolytes if there are any.*

## ***A Bidding Prayer***

*At the conclusion of the hymn, all remain standing. The assigned Leader says:*

Beloved in Christ: In this Christmas Season, let it be our duty and delight to hear once more the message of the angels, to go to Bethlehem and see the Son of God lying in a manger. Let us hear and heed in Holy Scripture the story of God's loving purpose from the time of our rebellion against him until the glorious redemption brought to us by his holy Child Jesus, and let us make this place glad with our songs of praise.

*The following petitions may be said by different individuals as assigned or all may be said by one Leader:*

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 this community.

*Silence is kept. The people may add petitions for the world, church, and community.*

And because Jesus 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, as well as all those who do not know and love the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Silence is kept. The people may add petitions for those in need.*

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.

*Silence is kept. The people may add petitions for those who have died.*

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

*All join in saying the Lord's Prayer:*

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.**

*At the conclusion of the prayer an Elder, Chief or Leader says:*

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*

## ***The Lessons***

*The people sit for the readings. If vigil candles were lit, it is suggested that they be extinguished at this time.*

**First Reading:** *The assigned person reads the lesson, first saying:*

A reading from Genesis 3:1-15: Adam and Eve rebel against God and are cast out of the Garden of Eden:

Now the serpent was more shrewd than any of the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Is it really true that God said, 'You must not eat from any tree of the orchard?'" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit from the trees of the orchard; but concerning the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the orchard God said, 'You must not eat from it, and you must not touch it, or else you will die'" The serpent said to the woman, "Surely you will not die, for God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will open and you will be like divine beings who know good and evil."

When the woman saw that the tree produced fruit that was good for food, was attractive to the eye, and was desirable for making one wise, she took some of its fruit and ate it. She also gave some of it to her husband who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God moving about in the orchard at the breezy time of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the orchard. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" The man replied, "I heard you moving about in the orchard, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid." And the LORD God said, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave me, she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it." So the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman replied, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate."

The LORD God said to the serpent,  
"Because you have done this,  
cursed are you above all the wild beasts  
and all the living creatures of the field!  
On your belly you will crawl  
and dust you will eat all the days of your life.  
And I will put hostility between you and the woman  
and between your offspring and her offspring;  
her offspring will attack your head,  
and you will attack her offspring's heel."

*After the reading all stand to sing*

**Hymn 89: "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"** (or another Christmas song)

*All sit for the reading.*

**Second Reading:** *The assigned person reads the lesson, first saying:*

A reading from Isaiah 40:1-11. God comforts his people and calls on them to prepare for redemption:

“Comfort, comfort my people,” says your God. “Speak kindly to Jerusalem, and tell her that her time of warfare is over, that her punishment is completed. For the LORD has made her pay double for all her sins.” A voice cries out, “In the wilderness clear a way for the LORD; construct in the desert a road for our God. Every valley must be elevated, and every mountain and hill leveled. The rough terrain will become a level plain, the rugged landscape a wide valley. The splendor of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it at the same time. For the LORD has decreed it.” A voice says, “Cry out!” Another asks, “What should I cry out?” The first voice responds: “All people are like grass, and all their promises are like the flowers in the field. The grass dries up, the flowers wither, when the wind sent by the LORD blows on them. Surely humanity is like grass. The grass dries up, the flowers wither, but the decree of our God is forever reliable.” Go up on a high mountain, O herald Zion! Shout out loudly, O herald Jerusalem! Shout, don’t be afraid! Say to the towns of Judah, “here is your God!” Look, the sovereign LORD comes as a victorious warrior; his military power establishes his rule. Look, his reward is with him; his prize goes before him. Like a shepherd he tends his flock; he gathers up the lambs with his arm; he carries them close to his heart; he leads the ewes along.

*After the reading all stand to sing*

**Hymn 96: “Angels We Have Heard on High”** (or another Christmas song)

*All sit for the reading.*

**Third Reading:** *The assigned person reads the lesson, first saying:*

A reading from Isaiah 9:2-7. Isaiah speaks of the coming of the Christ Child, the Prince of Peace, to establish a kingdom of justice and peace:

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, *and* not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, *and* as *men* rejoice when they divide the spoil. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall* be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

*After the reading all stand to sing*

**Hymn 100: “Joy to the World”** (or another Christmas song)

*All sit for the reading.*

**Fourth Reading:** *The assigned person reads the lesson, first saying:*

A reading from Luke 1:26-35: The Angel Gabriel announces to the Virgin Mary that she will bear the Son of the Most High:

In the sixth 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, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern 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 to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

And the angel answered 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 called holy—the Son of God.

*After the reading all stand to sing*

**Hymn 78 or 79: "O Little Town of Bethlehem"** (or another Christmas song)

*All sit for the reading.*

**Fifth Reading:** *The assigned person reads the lesson, first saying:*

A reading from Luke 2:1-20: Jesus is born at Bethlehem and is worshiped by angels and shepherds:

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in the same 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 around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto 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 baby wrapped in swaddling cloths 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 those 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 baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up 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.

*After the reading all kneel or sit to sing*

**Hymn 111: “Silent Night”** (or another Christmas song)

*After the hymn all remain kneeling. The Leader says:*

*Leader:* The Lord be with you

*People:* And also with you

*Leader:* Let us Pray

O God, you make us glad by the yearly festival of the birth of your only Son Jesus Christ: Grant that we, who joyfully receive him as our Redeemer, may with sure confidence behold him when he comes to be our Judge; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, on God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

*An Elder, Chief, or Leader says the blessings while remaining kneeling:*

May Almighty God, who sent his Son to take our nature upon him, bless us in this holy season, scatter the darkness of sin, and brighten our hearts with the light of his holiness. May God, who sent his angels to proclaim the glad news of the Savior’s birth, fill us with joy, and make us heralds of the Gospel. And may God, who in the Word made flesh joined heaven to earth and earth to heaven, give us his peace and favor always. *Amen.*

*All Stand.*

**Hymn 87: “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”** (or another Christmas song)

*The Leaders and Acolytes may process to the back of the church during the singing of the hymn.*

*Leader:* Merry Christmas! Let us bless the Lord!

*People:* Thanks be to God! Merry Christmas!