



The Music of Christmas

Advent Readings for 2021

Part 1

Welcome to the first part of our readings for this year. There are still a slots to fill in the second half, if you would like to share favorite Christmas Carol and why it is special for you. If you are interested, please let Renda Brinson know.

The following are written by those who are part of your First Presbyterian Family. The Christian Education Committee hopes you enjoy reading about their favorite Christmas Carols and why they are special.

SOMETHING NEW – If you would like to receive this document in an email, again, please let Renda Brinson. You will note at the end of most of the devotions, there is a link to a YouTube video featuring the song being shared in the writing. They can be typed into the YouTube search, or cut and pasted from the emailed version, and it all works right, click on the link and you will be taken directly to the video.

May these readings speak to your heart and draw you closer to God as we again look to celebrate the birth of Christ into our world and our hearts.

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Sunday, November 28, 2021

The Music of Christmas

Luke 2:14 – Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.

Growing up in Waxhaw meant a standard schedule every Sunday: Sunday School and church at the Presbyterian Church; fried chicken for lunch, a visit to Granny Lizzie McCain's farm and time for me to play piano for my family.

As a child my favorite Christmas Carol was "Away in a Manger." Then as I grew older I so loved singing in the Glee Club. I was invited to be accompanist and later organist at church.

Christmas at our home was exciting with prayerful anticipation. Mama made cookies for the entire neighborhood, and Daddy cut a cedar tree from the farm. There was always music.

My favorite Christmas Song of all time is "Silent Night". My second-grade teacher conducted a special candlelight program for the Waxhaw Woman's Club and she concluded having all present sing "Silent Night." "Sweet Little Jesus Boy", and "What Child is This?" One year my church moved a piano onto the bed of a flatbed truck and away we drove to go Christmas Caroling!

Waiting for Christmas is a glorious time to play, sing, and enjoy music...even "That's What I Want for Christmas".

PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, waiting to celebrate the birth of Your Son, is more precious and rewarding every year. Thank you for the deep love you share with grace and forgiveness. In Jesus' Holy Name, Amen.

Gladys McCain Kerr



Monday, November 29, 2021

Manger Throne

What kind of King would we leave to HIS throne,
In Heaven to make his own earth home?
While men seek fame and great renown
In loneliness our King come down.

Jesus, Jesus, precious One
How we thank you that you've come

Jesus, Jesus precious one
A manger thrown for God's own Son
You left the sound of the angel's praise
To come for men and women with unkind ways
And by this Baby's helplessness
The power of nations is laid to rest.

What kind of King would come so small,
From Glory to a humble stall?
That dirty manger is my heart, too
I'll make it a royal throne for YOU>

Chad Nelms



Tuesday, November 30, 2021

"Joy to The World"

I remember every Christmas Eve growing up going to my father's parent's home, (Momma Helms) and celebrating with the entire Helms' family. We would gather in the main room and just sit/stand wherever we could and just talk, eat, open presents and just celebrate with each other. My grandmother was a very godly woman and she always wanted either gospel music or Christmas music in the background. My favorite song from those special occasions was, Joy to the World.

Chris Helms

Joy to the world! The Lord is come:
let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare him room
and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns:
let men their songs employ
while fields and floods rocks hills and plains
repeat the sounding joy.
No more let sins and sorrows grow
nor thorns infest the ground:
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found.

He rules the earth with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love.

Link: <https://youtu.be/7r3VVMUhAxU>



Wednesday, December 1, 2021

"What Christmas Means to Me"

Isaiah 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given and his name should be called Wonderful Counselor, mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

When I was a young child, I remember on Christmas Eve my parents, brother and I would go to my grandmother's house for dinner every year. Everyone in the family would go, my cousins, Aunts and Uncles. I would get so excited every year just to be together with everyone in our family, especially my grandmother. My parents would drive us home from my grandmother's house so late it was dark outside and it was way past my bedtime. But even though I was so tired on the way home I would look out the window of the car, hoping to catch Santa on his sleigh flying across the sky. Thinking each time, a glimpse of a star may have been Santa flying by as fast as he could to deliver the presents to each boy and girl. Then if we get home in time maybe we can stay up long enough to catch Santa or maybe we can get up real early and catch him while he delivers our presents to us. Either way the excitement I felt every Christmas Eve and every Christmas morning hoping I would actually see Santa at some point was such a wonderful feeling. Now as an adult it's not the same excitement and joy as I felt as a child. Not the same curiosity of an image of a man in a red suit with presents and reindeers waiting on top of our roof each year. But now as an adult I look at things so different now. I feel joy and peace knowing the true meaning of Christmas. Not that I wasn't taught the true meaning of Christmas as a child, but the thought of a man delivering presents seemed more magical and fun. I have such love and appreciation now with my family and the time I have with them and in knowing the real reason for Christmas "Jesus Christ". The baby that was born on this day so we can rejoice in his love and that he is our Savior. He is the real reason we should have that excitement and magic in our hearts.

Prayer: Let us remember the true meaning of Christmas, the magic and excitement we feel for Jesus Christ. Heavenly Father thank you for giving us your only son Jesus and let us rejoice in his birth. Amen

Teresa Sand

When the Christmas time draws near
We think of joys and Christmas cheer
Of Santa with his reindeer and his sleigh

But long ago, we should recall,
The Bethlehem Babe was born for all
To show the world the life, the truth, the way
The spirit of Christmas
Is the spirit of Love
It's something that you cannot buy,
It's something from above

The presents that you give and get
Are nothing but a token
For if they don't come filled with love,
The Christmas spirit's broken

Just singing Christmas carols and
Just ringing Jingle Bells
Means nothing if you do not know
The story that it tells

So, 'midst the din and tinsel as you
Trim the Christmas tree
Let a newborn love enfold you
Embrace you, uphold you;
That's the true idea of Christmas
That's what Christmas means to me

Link: <https://youtu.be/34iEdXL0Z9g>



Thursday, December 2, 2021

"Go Tell It On the Mountain"

I chose "Go Tell it on the Mountain" because this Negro spiritual (circa 1907) brings back wonderful memories from my childhood singing at Christmas time with my youth group and Sunday school at Stony Point United Methodist church. I remember our children at the FPC Christmas pageant singing this song and other carols especially Joanne singing it in the play. My wife Tracey also remembers singing this with Jimmy Norwood at Christmas time as a teenager.

John Wesley Work Jr. takes credit for this song we sing each Christmas. This spiritual was passed down orally from plantation to plantation; very few spirituals were ever written down. Work was the first to publish this piece. The original singers of the song fulfilled the same important task the angels gave the shepherds that first Christmas night proclaiming "that Jesus Christ is born!"

The message of this song is important to me as its repeated line "Go Tell it on the Mountain that Jesus Christ is born" reminds us all to spread the gospel of Jesus to all and to SHOUT it out "Over the hills and *everywhere*" Its spiritual tune inspires us to clap, move, and energize us to action.

Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank you for the gift of the Christ child that "down in a lowly manger our humble Christ was born and brought us all salvation, that blessed Christmas morn" Remind us every day to spread the good news of Jesus Christ to all. May your Holy light shine on us all.

Amen

Greg McDanel

Go tell it on the mountain
Over the hills and far away
Go tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born
The shepherds all were watching
Over their sheep at night
When a guiding star shone from heaven
And the followed that holy light

Got tell it on the mountain
Over the hills and everywhere
Go tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born
They found a lovely manger
Where the humble Christ was born
And God sent out salvation
On that blessed Christmas morn

Go tell it on the mountain
Over the hills and everywhere
Go tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born

He brought with Him forgiveness
He live to show us the way
He came to redeem all creation
And to wash all our sins away

Go tell it on the mountain
Over the hills and everywhere
Go tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born

Link: <https://youtu.be/JOdGayslvF4>



Friday, December 3, 2021

"O Holy Night"

The heart of Christmas for me is family and being together. My memories go back many years to our Christmas traditions and gatherings with the Griffin's (mom's family) and the Sweezy's. I remember the laughter and the warm feeling of being together, as we celebrated the upcoming birth of our Savior.

Traditions continue to resonate in my mind, but as I grow older they are also a little bittersweet. Our last Christmas with the Griffin's was in the early 90's, but I still remember Granny Griffin letting us draw numbers to pick one of her beautiful ceramic pieces. We would laugh and tease, as to who got to draw 1st. Similarly, the last Christmas I remember with Granny & Paw Sweezy was 1992. We all gathered, ate tons of food and laughed at the same stories we told every year. It didn't matter that we knew the end of the story, what mattered was the warmth we felt just being together.

Many of our loved ones have long since passed away, and our traditions have changed. The gatherings are small now; just mom & dad, Terry's family and ours but what hasn't changed is the laughter and the love.

Traditions will evolve, but I know with certainty that our family will always come together at Christmas to celebrate the love and joy of Jesus's birth. As stated in "O Holy Night", Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we, let all within us praise His holy name.

Romans 12:10 "Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other"

Dear God, thank you for sending your son to this world to be a light when there is so much darkness. We are always comforted by your presence, and by those on earth that surround us with love and laughter. Amen

Angela Levan

O Holy Night

The stars are brightly shining
It is the night of our Savior's birth
Long lay the world in sin and error pining
'Til He appeared and the soul felt
its worth
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices
For yonder breaks a new and
glorious morn.

Fall on your knees O hear the
angels voices.
O night divine O night when Christ as born
O night divine O night divine
O night divine.

Link: <https://youtu.be/17killxSdCO>



Saturday, December 4, 2021

Away In a Manger

Luke 2: 6-7 New International Version

“While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in clothes and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.”

Away In a Manger

Away in a manger, no crib for His bed;
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head

The King of Kings and Lords of Lords is born in a manger with not so much as a bed to lie on. The humble beginnings of our Lord’s life remind us that we are to be humble and thankful for what we have been blessed with. The true meaning of Christmas is reflected so poetically in the story of Jesus’ birth that we cannot help but find ourselves grateful for all that was given to us on that day.

The song describes how even when Jesus wakes, he does not cry out or make a sound. This day was a day of rejoicing and the baby lying awake on the hay was no ordinary child, He was the Savoir of men. The last verse of the song asks the Lord to stay beside us, to lead us, and to eventually take us to Heaven to live with Him. How often is that our prayer? Stay beside me Lord as I make my way through this earthly life.

How glorious and beautiful is the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. We celebrate His birth and the life that was given to us by Him through His life, death, and resurrection.

Questions:

How does this carol reflect the love of Christ?

Why do you think God chose for his son to be born in a manger instead of a birth fitting of royalty?

Devotional from Carols: A Christmas Devotional

Janice Morrison

Away in a manger no crib for a 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.
The cattle are lowing the baby awakes
but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.
I love you Lord Jesus; look down from the sky
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.

Be near me Lord Jesus I ask you to stay
close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care,
and fit us for heaven, to live with you there.

Link: <https://youtu.be/pbQpEdwGEXo>



Sunday, December 5, 2021

The Little Drummer Boy

Growing up this was not a song that was played in my house often. My Dad did not enjoy this Christmas song because it wasn't "real." There was not a little drummer boy who played for baby Jesus in the manger, the ox and lamb did not keep time. However, the song always moved me when I heard it as a child but I didn't understand why for many years.

While everyone brings their finest gifts, the little drummer boy has nothing but his drum. He does not have grand gifts of gold, frankincense or myrrh. He was not serenaded by angels singing "hallelujah" as were the shepherds. He has a drum. And takes what little he has to give and gives it to Jesus. And Jesus amplifies the gift.

I do not have great gifts or talents to give my Savior. But what I have I want to give freely to Him. He will amplify whatever I give and make it greater for His glory. I want to say "I played my best for Him" and know "then He smiled at me...me and my drum."

Lord, Thank you for the gifts and talents You have given to us and the wonders You accomplish with them when we freely gift those gifts back to You. Amen.

Stephanie Ruggiero

Come they told me
Pa rum pum pum
A new born King to see
Pa rum pum pum pum
Our finest gifts we bring
Pa rum pum pum pum
To lay before the king
Pa rum pum pum pum
rum pum pum pum
rum pum pum pum
So to honor Him
Pa rum pum pum pum
When we come
Little baby
Pa rum pum pum pum
I am a poor boy too
Pa rum pum pum pum
I have no gift to bring
Pa rum pum pum pum
That's fit to give our King
Pa rum pum pum pum,
rum pum pum pum,
rum pum pum pum
Shall I play for you
Pa rum pum pum pum
On my drum

Mary nodded
Pa rum pum pum pum
The ox and lamb kept time
Pa rum pum pum pum
I played my drum for Him
Pa rum pum pum pum
I played my best for Him
Pa rum pum pum pum,
rum pum pum pum,
rum pum pum pum
The He smiled at me
Pa rum pum pum pum
Me and my drum

Link: <https://youtu.be/Zfk5nOnDQuI>



Monday, December 6, 2021

Oh What a Glorious Night - by Sidewalk Prophets

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly host praising God and saying "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased" Luke 2:13

I really enjoy Christmas music. I am one of those people who will start listening to Christmas music before Thanksgiving if my family allows it. (Currently - the rule in my house is not until the Saturday after Thanksgiving). I love all of the hymns we sing during Advent - Silent Night, O Holy Night - all of them. I have so many favorite Christmas songs it is hard to choose just one. I am moved by how they inspire quiet reflection, the solemnity of the season, and the awe that Jesus left Heaven to become the least of us and show us how to be in relationship with our Heavenly Father and then to die for our sins.

My favorite song at Christmas is *O What a Glorious Night* by the Sidewalk Prophets. Please give it a listen! The beginning of the song gives me goosebumps as I listen to Linus explain the true meaning of Christmas to Charlie Brown. A simple child, explaining a truly simple and life changing truth.

This song is my favorite because of the joy - it is the kind of song you can crank up in your car while driving or play too loud at home and still you are not as loud as the "multitude of heavenly host" singing over 2000 years ago. It's the song of a proud Father announcing the birth of His Son to the world: "Jesus Christ is born!" The joy of this birth infects the shepherds so much "they couldn't hide it, told everyone in sight."

This is the joy I need to be reminded of in the middle of the holiday-busy. The joy that I shouldn't be able to hide and that has nothing to do with decorations or presents or parties or 2 weeks off from school. A joy that should amaze me every day of the year.

God, thank you for your Son. Let the joy we feel because of Your love for us overflow so that others are also "amazed when they (hear) how God came down on this Glorious Night!" Amen.

Stephanie Ruggiero

The shepherds came to
see the baby
Stood by his mother's side
Here laid the Savior
inside a manger
Oh what a glorious night
Oh what a glorious night

I hear the angels singing halleluiah
Let the earth receive her king
I know that love has come
Singing it out
Jesus Christ is born
Jesus Christ is born
Yeah

The shepherds wondered
They couldn't hide it
Told everyone in sight
All were amazed
When they heard how
God came down on the glorious night
God came down on this glorious night

I hear the angels singing halleluiah
Let the earth receive her king
I know that love has come
Singing it out
Jesus Christ is born
Jesus Christ is born
Yeah

Glorious
Glorious
What a Glorious night

Glorious
Glorious
What a Glorious night

I hear the angels singing halleluiah
Let the earth receive her king
I know that love has come
Singing it out
Jesus Christ is born

I hear the angels singing halleluiah
Let the earth receive her king
I know that love has come

Singing it out
Jesus Christ is born
I heard that Jesus Christ is born
Yeah Yeah Yeah

All is calm now
All is quiet
A Star shining in the sky
Below in Bethlehem
The king is sleeping
Oh What a Glorious Night
Oh What a Glorious Night

Link: <https://youtu.be/Zn417v68lpw>



Tuesday, December 7, 2021

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

There are so many Christmas Carols that bring me such memories. But the beginning of the Season of Advent being welcomed with the tune of 'O Come, O Come, Emmanuel'. The hope the world has at Christmas is captured in the refrain of this song. "Until the Son of God appear * Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel." In the simplicity of a Babe in a manger, we can see God's appearance into the world. Emmanuel - "God with us". As we again count the days till the celebration of that special birth, we remember that God is with us. He has come in majesty and awe. Let us prepare our hearts for the coming of Emmanuel.

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O come, Thou Lord of Might,
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law,
In cloud, and majesty, and awe. Refrain

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save
And give them victory o'er the grave. Refrain

O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight. Refrain

O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery. Refrain

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,
And order all things, far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And cause us in her ways to go. Refrain

O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,
And be Thyself our King of peace. Refrain

Link: <https://youtu.be/UAOJzffkP8>



Wednesday, December 8, 2021

O Come All Ye Faithful

My name is Jordan Locke, I am the Interim Music Minister at First Presbyterian Church of Monroe. My favorite time of the year is Christmas. I enjoy all the colorful lights, Christmas trees, Christmas parades, joyful singing, and the promise of Hope. Christmas time is a new beginning, the birth of Jesus Christ, and the promise that He would save us all from our sins.

My favorite traditional carol is O Come, All Ye Faithful. This hymn encapsulates the journey to Bethlehem, taking us on the journey then to the arrival at Bethlehem. The first verse is telling everyone come to Bethlehem to see the King of angels. The refrain is this "O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!" this refrain reflects excitement, joy, and hope. This hymn is full of celebration, the Christ Child long awaited for is finally here. In the second verse you have finally arrived at the manger and you see Jesus, then immediately begin singing, celebrating, and praising God. Jesus was not only born into the earth to save people from their sins but also to teach and guide. The second verse reflects that by saying "Word of the Father, Now in flesh appearing!". Also stated in John 1:1-3; "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning." The third verse is a celebration in heaven while the second verse was an earthly celebration. This verse has choirs of angels singing, citizens of heaven singing, and all singing Glory to God. In only three verses this hymn takes us from the journey to Bethlehem to the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. One of my favorite things about traditional music is that we sing hymns, and those hymns are mostly scripture collaborated with song. So the next time you sing a hymn focus on the text and see how you can apply/relate that to your life. This advent season let us come, sing, and worship the Christ, but also reach out to those who do not know Jesus so that they may also experience the love and peace of Jesus Christ.

I wish you all a celebratory Advent season,

Jordan Locke

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;
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

O Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing all that hear in heaven God's holy word.
Give to our Father glory in the Highest;
O come, let us adore Him,

O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

All Hail! Lord, we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning,
O Jesus! for evermore be Thy name adored.
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

Link: <https://youtu.be/5NetJIHwhbw>