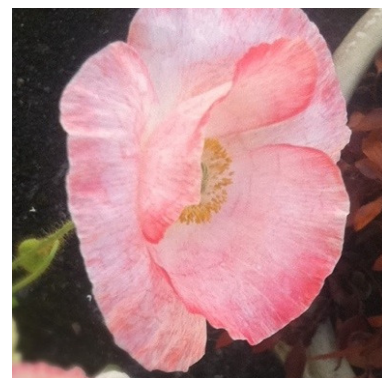


Advent 2011

*The grass withers and the flowers fall,
but the word of our God endures forever.”(Is 40:8)*

This workshop will look at the scripture of the 4 Sundays of Advent, at themes for your parish this Advent, and will offer resources for liturgy – including reconciliation and carol services.



These resources

- Advent themes: scripture & music this Advent
 - Resources for Reconciliation services – prayers, examinations of conscience, etc
 - Resources for Carol services – reflections, the history of our Carols, etc
 - Scripture: Advent scripture
-

Other resources available

Diocesan website: (services\liturgy resources\Advent)

- Is Advent Christmas? – a reflection & resources (how should a church look? Sound? How can we support families? – for each season)
- Creating a Jesse tree for church or home

Diocesan Carol Service: Christmas – a journey of hope.

- On Friday 16th Dec 2011, in St Johns Cathedral, Limerick, at 8pm we will gather to tell the story of the birth of Christ in word and song - from the visit of the angel Gabriel, the cry of John the Baptist in the wilderness, and the journey to Bethlehem, to the visit of the shepherds and the Magi.
- A number of priests of the diocese will be participating along with the Presentations secondary school choir and other vocalists. There will be ample opportunity for all present to join in with the singing of hymns and carols. A CD of the nights music will be available for sale on the night.
- Tickets 10 euros, available at Pastoral Centre, To raise funds for the Diocesan Lourdes pilgrimage, music ministry.

Free clipart for Advent

- Appropriate colourful clipart for every Sunday is available at <http://cruzblanca.org/hermanoleon/>

Scripture & music this Advent

27th November: The First Sunday of Advent

Scripture readings:

- Isaiah 63/64,
- 1 Cor 1:3-9.
- Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.
- Gospel Mk 13:33-37: Be watchful, *be alert*

Possible Music

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| - Entrance Song | Wait for the Lord (Taizé) |
| - Responsorial Psalm | Save us, O Lord (Bob Dufford) |
| - Preparation of Gifts | In the Lord, I'll be ever thankful (Taizé) |
| - Communion Song | To you, O Lord I lift up my soul (Marty Haugen) |
-

4th December: The second Sunday in Advent

Scripture readings:

- Isaiah 40: Comfort my people, fear not - Here is your God
- Mark 1: **John the Baptist** – prepare a way for the Lord
- 6th December: St Nicholas. Generous saint.
- 8th December: Immaculate Conception.

Possible Music

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| - Entrance Song | Save us, O Lord (Bob Dufford) |
| - Responsorial Psalm | Psalm 84 (Fintan O'Carroll) |
| - Preparation of Gifts | O Comfort my People (Traditional) |
| - Communion Song | Joy was in my heart (Robert Réboud) |
-

11th December: third Sunday in Advent

Scripture readings

- Isaiah 61: The Lord has anointed me.
- My soul rejoices in the Lord
- John 1: **John the Baptist** – Who are you? I baptise with water, there is one coming ...
- 13th December: St Lucy. Light

Possible Music

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| - Entrance Song | Advent Processional (arr. Marty Haugen) |
| - Responsorial Psalm | Magnificat (Paul Décha) |
| - Preparation of Gifts | Spirit of the Living God |
| - Communion Song | Wait for the Lord (Taizé) |
-

18th December: The Fourth Sunday of Advent

Scripture readings

- Sm 7: Your house will endure forever.
- For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.
- Luke 1: **Mary**. Annunciation. I am the handmaid of the Lord.

Possible Music

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| - Entrance Song | Advent Processional (arr. Marty Haugen) |
| - Responsorial Psalm | Psalm 88 (Fintan O'Carroll) |
| - Preparation of Gifts | Behold a Virgin (Ronan McDonagh) |
| - Communion Song | Come to us, O Emmanuel (Marty Haugen) |
-

Christmas Eve is on a Saturday, & Christmas Day falls on a Sunday this year. Similarly, New years eve is a Saturday night and New Years Day is on a Sunday.

Reconciliation Service – some resources to create with.

*The grass withers and the flowers fall,
but the word of our God endures forever.”(Is 40:8)*

OPENING PRAYER

Eternal and merciful Father,
you have brought us together in the name of your Son
to receive your mercy and grace in our time of need.
Open our eyes to see the evil and hopelessness we have done.
Touch our hearts and convert us to yourself.

Where sin has divided and scattered, may your love make one again;
where sin has brought weakness, may your power heal and strengthen;
where sin has brought death, may your Spirit raise to new life.

Give us a new heart to love you, so that our lives may reflect the image of your Son.
May the world see the glory of Christ revealed in your Word, and your people,
and come to know and trust that he is the one whom you have sent,
Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.

R. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Isaiah 40:1-11 (NIV)

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken." A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?"

"All people are like grass, and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field.

The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them.

Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever."

You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!" See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.

He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God

Responsorial Psalm Ps 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19

R. Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

O shepherd of Israel, hearken, from your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth.
Rouse your power, and come to save us.

R. Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

Once again, O Lord of hosts, look down from heaven, and see;
take care of this vine, and protect what your right hand has planted,

the son of man whom you yourself made strong.

R. Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

May your help be with the one of your right hand, with the son of man whom you yourself made strong. Then we will no more withdraw from you; give us new life, and we will call upon your name.

R. Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

HOMILY

“Penitential services are gatherings of the people of God to hear God’s word as an invitation to conversion and renewal of life and as the message of our liberation from sin through Christ’s death and resurrection” (Rite of Penance, 36).

LITANY

Presider: Christ our Savior is our advocate with the Father:

with humble hearts let us ask him to forgive us our sins:

Your mercy is our hope: welcome us to the sacrament of reconciliation.

R. Lord, come and renew our spirit.

Make us a living sign of your love for all to see: people reconciled with you and with each other.

R. Lord, come and renew our spirit.

Make us grow in your peace and seek to spread it throughout the world.

R. Lord, come and renew our spirit.

In forgiving our sins: help us to love others and to forgive their sins against us.

R. Lord, come and renew our spirit.

Give light to our darkness and lead us by your truth.

R. Lord, come and renew our spirit.

In your mercy free us from the past and enable us to begin a new life of holiness.

R. Lord, come and renew our spirit.

Overcome the harm our sinfulness has brought us and guide us back into the ways of love and peace.

R. Lord, come and renew our spirit.

RITE OF RECONCILIATION

AN EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (an alternative Marian exam is also given)

Presider: God’s Word has enlightened us:

“That he may instruct us in his ways, and we may walk in his paths”

- Do I believe in God’s word and in its power to change my heart?
- Do I take seriously my relationship with God?
- Do I cherish my participation at the Eucharist every Sunday?

”They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks”

- Have I taken advantage of other peoples’ weaknesses?
- Have I led others stray by my bad example?
- Am I willing to forgive and ask for forgiveness? Am I grateful to others?

**“One nation shall not raise the sword against another,
nor shall they train for war again”**

- Am I violent toward others? Am I short of patience and respect toward others?
- Have I been sexually abusive?
- Do I respect the property of others?

**“He shall govern your people with justice... shall rescue the poor and the afflicted...
in him all the tribes of the earth be blessed”**

- Am I sensitive to other peoples’ pain and suffering?
- Do I work to overcome injustice or do I choose not to implicate myself against it?
- Do I speak out against lies and injustices? Do I embrace prejudice or work against it?

**“Go tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk,
lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good
news proclaimed to them”**

- Do I willingly minister to others?
- Are my God-given talents at the service of the common good?
- Have I tried to truly live out my vocation in life?

“I am sending my messenger ahead of you: he will prepare your way before you”

- Have I sought the truth, defended it, and communicated it to others?
- Am I a sign of hope and joy for others?
- Do I value the goodness of others? Do I believe in and value my own goodness?
- We have not ministered to others.
- We have exercised violence against others.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

THANKSGIVING

Presider: Together let us give thanks to the God.

A setting of the Magnificat is sung by the entire assembly.

CLOSING PRAYER

Gracious and loving God,
you show us mercy and make us a new creation in the image of your Son.
Make us living signs of your love to all those we meet.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

CLOSING BLESSING

Presider concludes the rite by signing himself with the sign of the cross and saying:

May God bless us and keep us. (+) Amen.

May God smile upon us and be gracious to us. Amen.

May God look upon us kindly, and give us peace. Amen.

Alternative Examination of Conscience – Marian theme

(this Marian theme is particularly appropriate for the final week of Advent)

Advent Penitential Prayer Service (based on Magnificat) © 2005, 2006, Diana Macalintal. All rights reserved.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Dear friends, with faith in God's mercy, let us lay bare our hearts to the Word, and let it pierce us that we may ever be changed by it.

“Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.”

- Have we greeted one another with curses instead of blessings?

- Have we borne bitter fruit in our thoughts, words, and deeds?

Response: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

“And how does this happen to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”

- Have we denied our own worth or the worth of others, disbelieving that God is present in ourselves or in others?

- Have we missed the presence of God because we are too busy, too hurried, or too anxious?

Response: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

“For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.”

- Have we closed our ears to the sound of God's voice coming from unexpected people, places, and encounters?

- Have we grown so serious that we cannot leap for joy?

Response: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

“Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.”

- Have we lost hope and faith in each other, in ourselves, in our church, in our world, in our communities?

- Do we prevent the Word from being fulfilled by our apathy, passive-aggressiveness, despair, or complacency?

Response: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior.”

- Does my very being, my very presence preach the goodness of God?

- Do I sing, dance, play, and rejoice with others as often as I can?

Response: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

“For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed.”

- Who have we looked down upon because of their particular spirituality, lifestyle, political party, educational background, or economic wealth or poverty?

- How has our need to help the lowly dominated their need to know the dignity of helping themselves?

Response: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

“The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.”

- When have we taken credit for what we have not done?

- When have we denied our own participation in the evil that our communities, church, families, countries, or other associations have done?

Response: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

“His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him”

- Have we lost our sense of mercy and compassion so that nothing ever angers or sickens us?

- Have we lost our sense of fear, awe, and reverence that nothing ever moves us at our core?

Response: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

“He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart”

- Have we been secretly arrogant?

- Have we used our own power, status, education, or religion to put others down, even in the silence of our hearts? [pause]

Response: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

“He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly.”

- Have we done all we can to participate in and influence the political life of our cities, states, and nations?

- Have we been afraid to be prophetic and revolutionary even at the cost of our own comfort?

Response: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

“The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty.”

- Have we become gluttonous for praise, solitude, piety, or the safety of those who are like us?

- Who have we sent away empty, without our acknowledgment, thanks, care, or gratitude?

Response: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

“He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

- Have we refused to give help and mercy?

- Have we broken our promises?

- Will we leave this world a more merciful, just, and beautiful place for our descendants?

Response: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

CONFESSION (all stand)

Let us stand and place a hand on the shoulder of those next to us, and let us bow our heads and pray.

ALL: I confess to almighty God...

Some resources for a Carol service

Advent 1955 by John Betjeman

The Advent wind begins to stir
With sea-like sounds in our Scotch fir,
It's dark at breakfast, dark at tea,
And in between we only see
Clouds hurrying across the sky
And rain-wet roads the wind blows dry
And branches bending to the gale
Against great skies all silver pale
The world seems travelling into space,
And travelling at a faster pace
Than in the leisured summer weather
When we and it sit out together,
For now we feel the world spin round
On some momentous journey bound -
Journey to what? to whom? to where?
The Advent bells call out 'Prepare,
Your world is journeying to the birth
Of God made Man for us on earth.'

And how, in fact, do we prepare
The great day that waits us there -
For the twenty-fifth day of December,
The birth of Christ? For some it means
An interchange of hunting scenes
On coloured cards, And I remember
Last year I sent out twenty yards,
Laid end to end, of Christmas cards
To people that I scarcely know -

They'd sent a card to me, and so
I had to send one back. Oh dear!
Is this a form of Christmas cheer?
Or is it, which is less surprising,
My pride gone in for advertising?
The only cards that really count
Are that extremely small amount
From real friends who keep in touch
And are not rich but love us much
Some ways indeed are very odd
By which we hail the birth of God.

We raise the price of things in shops,
We give plain boxes fancy tops
And lines which traders cannot sell
Thus parcell'd go extremely well
We dole out bribes we call a present
To those to whom we must be pleasant
For business reasons. Our defence is
These bribes are charged against expenses
And bring relief in Income Tax
Enough of these unworthy cracks!
'The time draws near the birth of Christ'.
A present that cannot be priced
Given two thousand years ago
Yet if God had not given so
He still would be a distant stranger
And not the Baby in the manger.

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Advent Calendar

He will come like last leaf's fall.
One night when the November wind
has flayed the trees to the bone, and earth
wakes choking on the mould,
the soft shroud's folding.

He will come like frost.
One morning when the shrinking earth
opens to mist, to find itself
arrested in the net
of alien, sword-set beauty.

He will come like dark.
One evening when the bursting red
December sun draws up the sheet
and penny-masks its eye to yield
the star-snowed fields of sky.

He will come, will come,
will come like crying in the night,
like blood, like breaking,
as the earth writhes to toss him free.
He will come like a child.

– Rowan Williams

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

(L = leader, P=people)

- L It was cold and Mary and Joseph were fearful.
P But that did not stop the birth.
- L They were poor and had no place fitting for their child.
P But that did not stop the birth.
- L They were uncertain about what God wanted from them.
P But that did not stop the birth.
- L Today we are still sometimes cold and fearful, certainly poor in many ways.
P We often feel we have no place and are unclear about what God wants of us.
- L But these things did not stop the birth of Jesus then, nor will they now.
P Lord Jesus be born in us today.
- L Like Mary and Joseph, who trusted in your grace, may we trust all that we have and are to you. Bless the gifts we bring, bless our thoughts and our actions, that Christ may be glorified through them, that we might bring light to a world that is yet in darkness.
We ask these things in his name, saying together the prayer he taught us...
- P Our Father...

<http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/b-ch01-carolservice.php>

"The Marvelous Story of Many of Our Christmas Hymns" To Be Used In A Setting of Worship

The following is published by permission of the Rev. Denzel Nonhof (dnonhof@mo-net.com). The rubrics, suggested order of service, and narratives concerning the various hymns or carols are his with the exception of that for "Silent Night". The information on "Silent Night" was taken Charlene Fairchild's [A Tribute To Silent Night](#). The Specific Prayers and Order that follow the eight narrative texts are that of the Rev. Richard Fairchild.

The Rev. Denzel Nonhof writes: This celebration of the marvelous story of many our Christmas Hymns was first written for Christmas 1994. It was prepared while my daughter Charissa was in the St. Francis Hospital in Aurora, Nebraska. Many of the materials used in gathering these stories are from books no longer in print. As with so much which we have as Christians, we must be thankful to the many who have given us so much. May this service be used to the glory of God as we ponder the majesty and mystery of God who gave us the best gift of all His Son Jesus!

THE MARVELOUS STORY OF MANY OF OUR CHRISTMAS HYMNS 1994, 1999

The Rev. Denzel Nonhof, HC 3, Box 3580, Shell Knob, Missouri 65747-9114

and adapted for use for

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS, 1999

The Rev. Richard J. Fairchild, 045 King Crescent, Golden, BC, V0A 1H2

RUBRICS:

To use this work, please list the hymns in the bulletin in the order given. One may desire to intersperse the hymns with Scripture reading, also, but personally, I think the following order is sufficient. Prior to the singing of each hymn, a reader shall read the history of the hymn. It is wise to omit reading any material given in parentheses, especially dates. This information is only provided in case one wishes to do further research. It is not necessary to read the title information and who the hymn is by prior to reading the text. In fact, to omit this material can make this more like a mystery to the listeners, and so more interesting. Please feel free to adapt and change this material.

Please have all readers and participants in the service close to the place from where they will be reading. You can have several points from where they will read. It is not necessary to have all from the pulpit. You may alternate from the pulpit to another microphone or two. Use choir people, Elders, youth, any who can read well. It is recommended that the church have printed in the bulletin something like the following order of service. The names of the readers may be published next to the hymn/narration they are responsible for. Please note that numbers to the right of each hymn are those which correspond to the page numbers in "Voices United", the United Church of Canada Hymnal, 1996. Alternate numbers in brackets are those from "Hymns for the Family of God", Paragon Associates, 1976, the hymnal used at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Shell Knob, Missouri.

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SUGGESTED ORDER OF SERVICE

Greeting, Welcome, Announcements:

Combined Prayer of Adoration and Confession:

Assurance of Forgiveness

Passing the Peace

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:1-20 (or Lectionary Text: John 1:1-14)

Prayers of the People:

Offering with Doxology and Dedication

Reader 1: Introduction

Reader 2: O Little Town of Bethlehem - VU 64 (178)

Reader 3: O Come All Ye Faithful - VU 60 (193)

Reader 4: Angels from the Realms of Glory - VU 36 (190)

Reader 5: It came upon the Midnight Clear - VU 44 (197)

Reader 6: Silent Night - VU 67 (195)

Reader 7: We Three Kings - bulletin (206)

Reader 8: Joy to the World - VU 59 (171)

Closing Prayer

Reader 1:

When we worship God, our ideas of God are formed by the Scriptures we hear read and by the songs and hymns we sing. Many of us can sing parts or all of our favorite Christmas Carols from memory. Because we remember the words, these carols and songs have greatly helped to form our faith.

This morning we are going to learn about many of our favorite Christmas songs. We learn about them, because they help us to express our joy and hope which comes to us in Jesus Christ.

These songs teach us about the mystery and wonder of a child born to be King of kings and Lord of lords.

We will lift our voices in joyous celebration, remembering the one who was born in a manger to die on a cross to be resurrected on the third day, who ascended into heaven and even this day prays for us. He will come again, to take all the faithful to live with him forever.

Let us pray: O Lord, who sent Jesus to be born in a stable in Bethlehem; we praise you for coming into this world as a child. Many have pondered the mystery of the God who became flesh and dwelt among us. We ponder that marvelous mystery today. We thank you for song writers, and hymn writers who gave us a rich heritage of songs and carols to sing as we celebrate the birth of Jesus. Bless us in our singing, and be honored as we rejoice in this event we call Christmas! Amen.

Let us listen and hear the story of how one of our favorite Christmas songs came to be.

Reader 2:

Phillips Brooks was born in 1835. He began serving Holy Trinity Church in the City of Brotherly Love, at the age of 24. He was an Episcopalian Priest. In 1865, he went on a trip

to the Holy Lands - visiting Bethlehem on Christmas Eve, riding there on horseback. As he prepared his Christmas service for 1868, Phillips recalled his trip three years earlier and penned a 5 stanza poem which we know as O Little Town of Bethlehem. The poem was written especially with the children of the parish in mind.

The day after he wrote this poem, Phillips handed it to Mr. Lewis Redner, the Church Organist and Sunday School Superintendent and requested him to write the music for it. Rev. Brooks said, "If it is a good tune, I will name it "St. Lewis' after you." Thirty six children first sang this song on December 27, 1868.

Let us sing: O Little Town of Bethlehem

by Phillips Brooks (1835-1893)

Reader 3:

Despite the wide fame of our next hymn, nothing certain is known of the Latin original from which it was translated. Much guesswork has focused on John Francis Wade (1711-1786), "who made a living by copying and selling plain chant and other music." He lived at Douai, in France, where there was a large colony of English Catholics centered around the famous college. Wade made all the known manuscript copies dated 1746-1760. Whether the lines were his own invention or whether he was copying a lost archetype is not known; nor was he certainly the composer of the tune. What we can safely conclude is that "hymn and tune came to us together, in the services of the Roman Catholic Church, during the first part of the 18th century.

At about 1786, a duke of Leeds happened to hear ADESTE FIDELES in the Portuguese Chapel and introduced the tune as "The Portuguese Hymn," at the concert of Ancient Music, of which he was director.

The misnomer is still retained in some hymnals. ADESTE FIDELES was a favorite Christmas summons for the Roman Catholic Church, just as "O Come, all ye faithful" is favored by the Protestants.

We will now sing O Come All Ye Faithful

Reader 4:

James Montgomery was the son of Missionaries who went to the West Indies and left their son in a boarding school when he was only 6 years old. While his devout parents shared the gospel, their son was shuttled from home to home. He failed at school. He failed as a baker's apprentice. But, he could write poetry. In time, he worked for The Sheffield Register, a radical newspaper which he later bought out and renamed, The Iris. Because of addressing sensitive political issues in his paper, twice Mr. Montgomery was fined and imprisoned.

On Christmas Eve, 1816, at the age of 45, James published his poem, "Angels from the realms of glory," in his paper.

The stirring tune, Regent Square came from the pen of the blind musician composer, Henry Smart who was born in 1813 and lived until 1879. The name Regent Square was taken from the most prominent Presbyterian Church in London. Montgomery produced more than 400 hymns, surpassed only by Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts in the number of hymns now in general use throughout Christendom.

Together let us sing Angels From the Realms of Glory by James Montgomery (1771-1854)

Reader 5:

The only Unitarian clergyman who produced a Christmas hymn that outlived his own day and generation was a New Englander, the Rev. Edmund Hamilton Sears.

Unitarians reject the deity of Christ, which means they do not believe that Jesus Christ was equal with God. They teach Jesus is inferior to God, but superior to humans. They claim Jesus was divine just as all of God's children are divine. They reject the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Rev. Sears was one of the first to spread the social message of Christianity, chiefly through this famous hymn. The message he wished to share with all is, "Peace on earth, good will towards men."

The tune Carol, is one of the better efforts of an American composer, Richard S. Willis. Mr. Willis was born in 1819 and died in 1900. He could boast that Mendelssohn had revised some of his compositions.

Let us sing of the Prince of Peace as we join our voices in singing It Came Upon the Midnight Clear by Rev. Edmund Hamilton Sears (1810-1876)

Reader 6:

Many interesting fables abound for the origins of "Silent Night." Most of them are fanciful and untrue. Many of these anecdotal stories claim that Pastor Joseph Mohr of St. Nicholas Church in Oberndorf, Germany, wrote the words on Dec. 24, 1818 in order to provide a guitar-accompanied carol for Midnight Mass. They claim the church organ did not work because mice ate the bellows.

In fact the church organ worked just fine. And the words - well Pastor Mohr had written them in the form of a poem two years earlier while serving at the pilgrim church in Mariapfarr.

The truth is that on Christmas Eve of 1818 Pastor Mohr decided that it might be nice to have a new carol for the coming service. And he thought that his poem could be set to music. He hurried off to see his friend, Franz Gruber, who was a school teacher and also served as the church's organist and choir master. Maybe he could help. And he did. In a few short hours Franz came up with the hauntingly beautiful melody that is so loved and revered to this day. At the request of Joseph, who had a special love for his guitar, Franz composed the music for guitar accompaniment. Just short hours later, Franz stood with his friend the pastor, Joseph, in front of the altar in St. Nicholas church and introduced "Stille Nacht" to the congregation.

"That night, a song was born which has become an anchor for Christmas celebrations everywhere. Silent Night" has been translated into nearly 300 languages and dialects. Its lullaby-like melody and simple message of heavenly peace can be heard from small town street corners in mid-America to magnificent cathedrals in Europe and from outdoor candlelight concerts in Australia to palm-thatched huts in northern Peru.

The English version we sing comes from the 1863 translation by the Rev. John Freeman Young. Rev. Young was elected Bishop of the Episcopalian Church in Florida in 1867.

Let us sing one of the most favorite of all Christmas Songs -Silent Night by Father Joseph Mohr (1792-1848)

Reader 7:

Both the text and tune of this next Epiphany carol were written by John Henry Hopkins, Jr. in 1857. It was first published in 1863. The poem is a tiny masterpiece of its sort, and the tune achieves the character of a folksong. John was the distinguished son of an honored Bishop of the Episcopalian Church in Vermont.

He wrote many other poems which became hymns, but none as famous as this one.

Hopkins was not content with just telling the story of the visit of the wisemen. Unlike many poets, this native American hymn-writer looked beyond Christmas to Good Friday and to Easter day with the words, "Glorious now behold Him arise, King and God and Sacrifice; Alleluia, Alleluia, Sounds through the earth and skies."

As we sing this song, looking beyond Christmas Day, let us remember the wonders of the magi who visited the Christ Child.

Our song is We Three Kings of Orient Are *by John Henry Hopkins, Jr. (1820-1891)*

Reader 8:

When Isaac Watts was 18 years of age, he criticized the hymns of the church. His father said, "If you don't like the hymns we sing, then write a better one!" To that Isaac replied, "I have." One of his hymns was shared with the church they attended and they asked the young man to write more. For 222 Sundays, Isaac Watts prepared a new hymn for each Sunday, and single-handedly revolutionized the congregational singing habits of the English Churches. In 1705, Watts published his first volume of original hymns and sacred poems. More followed. In 1719, he published his monumental work, "The Psalms of David, Imitated." In preparing this work, he focused on Psalm 98, especially verses 4, 6, 8 & 9, when he wrote his hymn which we know as Joy to the World.

For many years, only Psalms were sung throughout the Presbyterian Churches. The first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States convened at the Second Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia in May of 1789. The Rev. Adam Rankin rode horseback from his Kentucky parish to the seat of the Assembly to plead with his fellow Presbyterians, to reject the use of Watts hymns. He cautioned the Assembly Commissioners "to refuse to allow the great and pernicious error of adoption the use of Watt's hymns in public worship in preference to Rouse's versifications of the Psalms of David."

Set to a musical theme adapted by Dr. Lowell Mason (1792-1872), from "The Messiah" by George Frederick Handel (1685-1759), "Joy to the Lord" is, as its first word suggests, one of the most joyous hymns of the Christmas Season.

Our closing hymn is: Joy to the World *by Isaac Watts (1674-1748)*

First Sunday of Advent**Lectionary: 2****Reading 1 Is 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7**

You, LORD, are our father, our redeemer you are named forever. Why do you let us wander, O LORD, from your ways, and harden our hearts so that we fear you not? Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your heritage.

Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, with the mountains quaking before you, while you wrought awesome deeds we could not hope for, such as they had not heard of from of old. No ear has ever heard, no eye ever seen, any God but you doing such deeds for those who wait for him. Would that you might meet us doing right, that we were mindful of you in our ways!

Behold, you are angry, and we are sinful; all of us have become like unclean people, all our good deeds are like polluted rags; we have all withered like leaves, and our guilt carries us away like the wind. There is none who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to cling to you; for you have hidden your face from us and have delivered us up to our guilt.

Yet, O LORD, you are our father; we are the clay and you the potter: we are all the work of your hands.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19

R. (4) Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

O shepherd of Israel, hearken, from your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth.

Rouse your power, and come to save us.

R. Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

Once again, O LORD of hosts, look down from heaven, and see;

take care of this vine, and protect what your right hand has planted the son of man whom you yourself made strong.

R. Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

May your help be with the man of your right hand, with the son of man whom you yourself made strong. Then we will no more withdraw from you; give us new life, and we will call upon your name.

R. Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

Reading 2 1 Cor 1:3-9

Brothers and sisters: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to my God always on your account for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus, that in him you were enriched in every way, with all discourse and all knowledge, as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you, so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He will keep you firm to the end, irreproachable on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is faithful, and by him you were called to fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Mk 13:33-37

Jesus said to his disciples: "Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his own work, and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch.

Watch, therefore; you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning.

May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!'"

Second Sunday of Advent *Lectionary: 5* *Reading 1 Is 40:1-5, 9-11*

Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God.

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her service is at an end, her guilt is expiated; indeed, she has received from the hand of the LORD double for all her sins.

A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God! Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low; the rugged land shall be made a plain, the rough country, a broad valley.

Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

Go up on to a high mountain, Zion, herald of glad tidings; cry out at the top of your voice, Jerusalem, herald of good news! Fear not to cry out and say to the cities of Judah: Here is your God! Here comes with power the Lord GOD, who rules by his strong arm; here is his reward with him, his recompense before him. Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs, carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 85:9-10-11-12, 13-14

R. (8) Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

I will hear what God proclaims; the LORD?for he proclaims peace to his people.

Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear him, glory dwelling in our land.

Kindness and truth shall meet; justice and peace shall kiss.

Truth shall spring out of the earth, and justice shall look down from heaven.

The LORD himself will give his benefits; our land shall yield its increase.

Justice shall walk before him, and prepare the way of his steps.

Reading 2 2 Pt 3:8-14

Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day. The Lord does not delay his promise, as some regard "delay," but he is patient with you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a mighty roar and the elements will be dissolved by fire, and the earth and everything done on it will be found out. Since everything is to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be, conducting yourselves in holiness and devotion, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved in flames and the elements melted by fire. But according to his promise we await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you await these things, be eager to be found without spot or blemish before him, at peace.

Gospel Mk 1:1-8

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. A voice of one crying out in the desert: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. John was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. And this is what he proclaimed:

"One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Third Sunday of Advent**Lectionary: 8****Reading 1 Is 61:1-2a, 10-11**

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God.

I rejoice heartily in the LORD, in my God is the joy of my soul; for he has clothed me with a robe of salvation and wrapped me in a mantle of justice, like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem, like a bride bedecked with her jewels. As the earth brings forth its plants, and a garden makes its growth spring up, so will the Lord GOD make justice and praise spring up before all the nations.

Responsorial Psalm Lk 1:46-48, 49-50, 53-54

R. (Is 61:10b) My soul rejoices in my God.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked upon his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed:

R. My soul rejoices in my God.

the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name. He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation.

R. My soul rejoices in my God.

He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he has remembered his promise of mercy,

R. My soul rejoices in my God.

Reading 2 1 Thes 5:16-24

Brothers and sisters: Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophetic utterances. Test everything; retain what is good. Refrain from every kind of evil. May the God of peace make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will also accomplish it.

Gospel Jn 1:6-8, 19-28

A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light. And this is the testimony of John.

When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to him to ask him, "Who are you?" He admitted and did not deny it, but admitted, "I am not the Christ." So they asked him, "What are you then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us? What do you have to say for yourself?" He said: "I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, 'make straight the way of the Lord,'" as Isaiah the prophet said." Some Pharisees were also sent. They asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie." This happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Fourth Sunday of Advent *Lectionary: 11* *Reading 1 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16*

When King David was settled in his palace, and the LORD had given him rest from his enemies on every side, he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God dwells in a tent!" Nathan answered the king, "Go, do whatever you have in mind, for the LORD is with you." But that night the LORD spoke to Nathan and said: "Go, tell my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: Should you build me a house to dwell in?' "It was I who took you from the pasture and from the care of the flock to be commander of my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you went, and I have destroyed all your enemies before you. And I will make you famous like the great ones of the earth. I will fix a place for my people Israel; I will plant them so that they may dwell in their place without further disturbance. Neither shall the wicked continue to afflict them as they did of old, since the time I first appointed judges over my people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also reveals to you that he will establish a house for you. And when your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins, and I will make his kingdom firm. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever."

Responsorial Psalm Ps 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29

R. (2a) For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

The promises of the LORD I will sing forever; through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness. For you have said, "My kindness is established forever"; in heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness.

"I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant:

Forever will I confirm your posterity and establish your throne for all generations."

"He shall say of me, 'You are my father, my God, the Rock, my savior.'

Forever I will maintain my kindness toward him, and my covenant with him stands firm."

Reading 2 Rom 16:25-27

Brothers and sisters: To him who can strengthen you, according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret for long ages but now manifested through the prophetic writings and, according to the command of the eternal God, made known to all nations to bring about the obedience of faith, to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ be glory forever and ever. Amen

Gospel Lk 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "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. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.