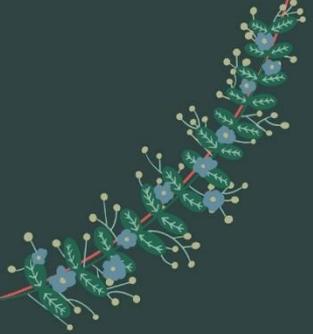




*Hanging of the  
Greens*



*Prelude*

*Carol of the Bells*

*Arnold Sherman*

*Saviour of the Nations Come*

*Cathy Mokebust*

***The Gathering of the Community***

*(Please stand)*

Minister: How can we prepare this house for the coming of Jesus, the King?  
How shall we prepare this house for the coming of Jesus, the eternal  
Christ?

**People: With garlands of wreaths of pine and fir, whose leaves are ever  
living, ever green.**

Minister: How shall we prepare this house for the coming of Jesus, our  
Saviour?

**People: With arrangements of holly and ivy, symbolizing His passion,  
death and resurrection.**

Minister: How shall we prepare this house for the coming of Jesus, the Son  
of God?

**People: By hearing again the words of the prophets who foretold the  
saving work of God.**

Minister: For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world,  
but that the world through Him might be saved.

**People: All Glory to God in the highest!**

*Hymn: O Come O Come Emanuel*

O Come O Come Emanuel, and ransom captive Israel,  
that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emanuel shall come to thee O Israel.

Minister: Good Lord, by your mercy guide our outward actions in such  
ways that our inward being is formed in faith, hope, and love. May  
the decorations we offer engage our senses during the days of Advent  
and enliven our praise and worship, in the name of the child of  
Bethlehem, our risen and coming savior, Jesus Christ.

**People: Amen.**

*Handbells: He Is Born*

*arr. John Behnke*

*Il est ne:*

*He is born, little child divine, join the song to announce the day...*

*O how pure is this perfect child of heaven.*

*O how lovely and gracious gift to human kind.*

*Personent Hodie:*

*On this day earth shall ring with the song children sing!*

*Christ our king (is) born on earth to save us. Him the Father gave us.*

## ADVENT WREATH

*Reading: Jeremiah 23:5-6*

The days are surely coming says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch, and He shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which He will be called: "The Lord is our Righteousness."

### *Narrative*

Advent is a time of expectation, and this is symbolized not only by the four-week period of preparation, but also by the lighting of an Advent candle on each Sunday of the season. The flame of each new candle reminds the worshiper that something is happening, but something more is still to come. The Advent season will not be complete until all four candles are lighted, with the central Christ candle also burning brightly on Christmas Eve.

The tradition of the Advent wreath is traced back to an old Scandinavian custom that celebrated the coming of light after a season of darkness. In that day candles were placed on the edge of a horizontal wheel. As the wheel was spun around, the lighted candles would blend into a continuous circle of light. Today we use a circle of evergreen to remind us of the continuous power of God, which knows no beginning nor ending.

There is also symbolism in the colors of the candles in the Advent wreath. The three purple, or white, candles symbolize the coming of Christ from the royal line of David. He is coming as the King of Kings as well as the Prince of Peace. The pink candle is lighted on the third Sunday of the Advent season. This candle symbolizes joy; its use goes back to the Latin church which asked the worshipers to fast during this period of time.

A progression is noted in the lighting of the candles of the Advent wreath. The first symbolizes expectation and hope. The second reminds us that we are involved in a season of preparation for peace in the coming of Christ. The third candle is proclamation, as we proclaim that Christ brought joy to the world when he appeared. The revelation of God's love for all humankind is portrayed by the lighting of the fourth candle. The culmination of the season comes on Christmas Eve, or Christmas Day, as the Christ candle is lighted.

*Handbells: Go Tell It On the Mountain with Prokofiev: Troika (with piano and bells)  
arr Linda McKechnie*

## GREENS

*Reading: Isaiah 9:2, 6-7*

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, among them a light has shined. For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given. And the government will be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

### *Narrative*

From ancient times, evergreens have been considered a symbol of eternity, a sign of God's everlasting nature. Isaiah tells us that there will be no end to the reign of the Messiah. Therefore, we hang wreaths shaped in circles, and place garlands of green, as a sign of everlasting life. These are symbols of Christ's gift of eternal life and of the celebration of Christmas itself.

Evergreen has long been considered a symbol of eternity, a sign of God's everlasting nature and faithfulness. Ancient peoples viewed evergreen with awe and wonder because of its changeless nature.

Isaiah 60:13 tells us: "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary."

Though evergreen has been viewed with reverence, it has only been in the last four centuries that Christians have used evergreen to decorate their homes and their churches. In our day, evergreen is surely a noted symbol of Christ's gift of eternal life and of the celebration of Christmas itself. The evergreen we use to decorate our church will remind us of God's abiding love in Jesus Christ.

*Hymn: Deck the Halls*

*arr. Martha Lynn Thompson*

Deck the halls with boughs of holly, Fa la...

"Tis the season to be jolly, Fa la...

Don we now our gay apparel, Fa la...

Troll the ancient Yuletide carol, Fa la...

*Handbells: God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen*

*arr. Kevin McChesney*

*God rest ye merry gentlemen, let nothing you dismay;  
for Jesus Christ our Saviour was born on Christmas Day  
to save us all from Satan's power when we were gone astray.  
O tidings of comfort and joy!*

# HOLLY

*Reading: Isaiah 53:3a, 4a, 5-6*

He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; Surely He has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases. But He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; Upon Him was the punishment that made us whole. And by His bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

## *Narrative*

For Christians, this passage from Isaiah reflects the sufferings of Jesus, who saved us from our sins by His death on the cross, and by His resurrection from the dead. In ancient times, holly and ivy were considered signs of Christ's passion. Their prickly leaves suggest the crown of thorns, the red berries the blood of the Savior, and the bitter bark the drink offered to Jesus on the cross. As we place the holly and ivy, let us rejoice in the coming of Jesus our Saviour.

Holly grows in most nations of the world and since it bears fruit in the dead of winter, it is considered a Christian symbol of endless life and victory over winter's death. The sharpness of the bush and the redness of the berry associate it with the crown of thorns Christ wore and the blood He shed for us. Christians throughout the world have placed holly in their windows as a sign that Christ has entered their homes and was the Lord of their lives.

Since the Middle Ages, ivy has been used extensively for Christmas decorating. It is considered a symbol of love because of its clinging habit of growth. Holly and ivy are often associated together in legends because of the holly's sturdiness and the ivy's tenaciousness. Both have the incredible ability to survive and to grow.

Our church is decorated with holly and ivy because of their link through the ages with beauty, endurance, and permanence. Even though they are steeped in legend, their quality of life over death is fitting and proper for the birth of the One who offers each of us life beyond death.

*Handbells: What Child Is This*

*arr. Cathy Mokelebus*

*What Child is this, who laid to rest on Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping?  
This is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing:  
Haste to bring him laud, the Babe, the son on Mary.*

# POINSETTIA

*Reading: Numbers 24:17*

I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near ...a star shall come out of Jacob and a scepter shall rise out of Israel.

## *Narrative*

The poinsettia speaks to us symbolically in several ways. The star-shaped formation of ten leaves calls to mind the star which shone that first Christmas. In a less joyous sense, the color of the flower is blood red, reminding us of the male infants killed because King Herod wanted to eliminate any threat to his throne. We sometimes forget this part of the story, which made it necessary for Mary, Joseph, and the Christ Child to flee to Egypt.

The most popular flower of the Advent season is the bright red poinsettia. The blossoms are the small yellow clusters found at the center. The red and green leaves give to our Christmas celebration a special touch of beauty.

This attractive flower was discovered growing wild in Mexico by Dr. Joel Roberts Poinsett. In Mexico the plant was referred to as the Flower of the Holy Night. Dr. Poinsett brought several of the plants to America where a Philadelphia nurseryman developed it into the type of flower we see today.

This beautiful flower speaks to us symbolically in several ways. The star-shaped formation of red leaves reminds us of the star that shone at that first Christmas. In a less joyous sense, the color of the flower is blood red, symbolic of the male infants killed by Roman soldiers as King Herod sought to eliminate any threat to his throne. We sometimes forget this part of the story, which made it necessary for Mary, Joseph, and the Christ child to flee to Egypt.

*Handbells: Huron Carol*

*arr. Jason King*

*'Twas in the moon of wintertime when all the birds had fled  
That mighty Gitchi Manitou sent angel choirs instead  
Before their light the stars grew dim  
And wond'ring hunters heard the hymn:*

*Within a lodge of broken bark, the tender Babe was found  
A ragged robe of rabbit skin emwrapped His beauty round  
And as the hunter braves drew nigh,  
The angel song rang loud and high:*

*Jesus, your King, is born; Jesus is born!  
In excelsis gloria!*

## CANDLE

*Reading: Isaiah 60:2-3*

For darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

*Narrative*

Candles are lit tonight to remind us that Jesus is the light of the world and in Him there is no darkness. The light of Christ shines forth in our hearts and awakens our minds to God's love and goodness toward us and in the world. As we light these candles, may they be a symbol of hope and light in the darkness of this night.

The Christian use of candles was a blending of Hebrew and Roman customs. The symbol of light is a testament of Christ's role in the world to bring life and salvation to all who would receive Him. For over 1500 years Christians have been using candles at Christmas as a reminder that Christ came to bring light to the world.

According to legend, the Irish originated the custom of placing burning candles in their windows on Christmas Eve. This served as a guide to those who passed by in the darkness, and as an invitation to those looking for shelter, just as Joseph and Mary did on the first Christmas Eve.

*Handbells: Song of the Manger*

*arr. Arnold Sherman*

*W Zlobie Lezy:*

*Infant Holy, infant lowly for his bed a cattle stall.  
Oxen lowing little knowing Christ the babe is Lord of all.  
Swift are winging angels singing, nowells ringing, tidings bringing:  
Christ the babe is Lord of all.*

*Cradle Song:*

*Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.  
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,  
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.  
Be near me Lord Jesus I ask you to stay  
close by me forever and love me, I pray.  
Bless all the dear children in your tender care  
and fit us for heaven to live with you there.*

# CHRISTMAS TREE

*Reading: Micah 5:2, 4*

But you, O Bethlehem, from you shall come forth one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from ancient days. And He shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. And they shall live secure, for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth; and He shall be the one of peace.

*Narrative*

In ancient times the cedar was revered as the tree of royalty. It also signified immortality, and was used for purification. We have placed this tree in the sanctuary as a symbol of Christ, who reigns as King forever, and whose coming will purify our hearts.

In the earliest of days people revered trees and decorated them in their homes to bring the world of nature indoors. The Egyptians brought green date palms indoors to signify life's triumph over death. Romans trimmed trees with trinkets and toys during their Festival of Saturn. A fir tree hung with apples used in medieval "miracle plays" is thought to be a forerunner of the Christmas tree.

Legend has it that Protestant Reformer, Martin Luther was the first to decorate his home with a Christmas tree over four centuries ago. He was walking home on Christmas Eve when he saw the stars shining upon the snow-covered branches of fir trees. He was so taken by the sight that he took a tree home and placed candles on the branches to demonstrate to his family what a glorious sight he had seen. From this first Christmas tree in the Luther's home the German people began using a Christmas tree in their homes.

*Hymns: O Christmas Tree*

*arr. Martha Lynn Thompson*

O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, your branches are uplifted.

You seem to say, that on this day our world's supremely gifted.

The shining of your candles bright, reminds us Light has come tonight.

O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, you lift our eyes to heaven.

# CHRISMONS

*Reading: John 1: 1-4, 9-14*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the Beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and without Him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in Him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through Him, yet the world did not know Him. He came to what was His own, and His own people did not accept Him. But to all who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave power to become children of God, who were born not of the blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace

## *Narrative*

As our final preparation for the coming of Jesus, the Light of the World, we will light the Chrismon tree. And in this time of Advent, whenever you see a lighted tree, let it call to mind the One who brings light into our darkness, healing in our brokenness, and peace to all who will receive Him. May this tree, arrayed in beauty and splendor, remind us of the life-giving cross of Christ, that we may always rejoice in the new life that shines in hearts.

Chrismons or Christ's Monograms are handmade designs forming the familiar symbols of the Christian faith. These symbols speak to Christians of the deep meanings of the gospel.

The Bell is symbolic of the need to place a priority for the things of God over the secular world. The Bell is to sound forth the Word of God.

The Fish is the most ancient symbol for our Lord, and was used as a secret sign by early Christians. The first letters of the Greek words for "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior" form the Greek word for "fish".

The Epiphany Star that the wise men followed has five points and refers to the appearance and the revelation of Jesus as the Son of God. The Gospel story in Matthew makes no reference to the names, number or even royalty of these kings. They simply set out to pay homage to the newborn king, guided by this star of Bethlehem.

*From a distant home the Saviour we come seeking,  
using as our guide the star so brightly beaming,  
Glowing gold I bring the newborn babe so holy,  
token of His power to reign above in glory.  
Lovely eastern star that tells us of God's morning,  
heavens wondrous light, oh never cease thy shining!  
Glory in the highest to the Son of Heaven,  
and upon the earth be peace and love to all.*

## CLOSING PRAYER

Minister: Jesus said, "I am the Light of the World. He that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

**People: He was prophesied as light, star, and scepter. He was named, centuries before his birth.**

Minister: There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel.

**People: He was heralded by light, on the Bethlehem pasture ground, where the shepherds watched their sheep as the Glory of the Lord shone round.**

Minister: He was greeted by the light of the new and glorious star, guiding wise men from the East.

**People: He is everlasting light and His presence shines afar in the hearts and in the lives of the followers of the Star.**

*Good Christians all rejoice with heart and soul voice!  
Listen now to what we say: Jesus Christ is born today;  
ox and ass before him bow and he is in the manger now!  
Christ is born today!*

*Hymn: Silent Night*

*arr. Martha Lynn Thompson*

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.

The Dismissal

*Postlude: Light of Peace*

*arr. Bigham & Hakes*

Thank you for joining us for the Hanging of the Greens Service as we embark on our Advent journey in preparation for the Birth of our Lord.

Thank you to Debbie Rice who organized this evening's service and to Joy Berg for her assistance in planning this event. A very special thank to all the Ringers for providing the joyous sounds of the bells! And lastly, thank you to our readers for lending the gift of their voices.

Just a reminder: there is an open call for members of Christ Church to join us each Sunday in Advent at 9:00 am in the church lounge for a bellringer practice. No experience necessary! After the rehearsal, this drop-in group will accompany one hymn at the 10:00 am worship service.



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