

**Christmas Festival of Lessons and Music**  
**Sunday, December 27, 2020**

**Musical Prelude**

“Gaudete! Christus Natus Est” Anon. Renaissance Carol, pub. *Piae Cantiones* 1581  
Singers from Emmanuel, Harrisonburg  
Dr. Linell Moss Gray

**A Bidding Prayer**

Dear People of God: 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 Holy One of God lying in a manger.

Let us hear and heed in Holy Scripture the story of God’s loving purpose from the beginning of creation through the glorious birth of God’s blessed Child, Jesus, and may our hearts be made glad with songs of praise.

But first, let us pray for the needs of the whole world,  
for peace and justice on earth,  
for the unity and mission of the Church for which Jesus died and rose again,  
and especially for the Church in every ministry setting in our Diocese of Virginia.

And because God particularly loves them, let us remember 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 those whose faith is strained,  
and all who are growing in hope and love.

Finally, let us remember before God  
Mary and Joseph, shepherds and magi,  
our loved ones who have risen to larger life,  
and that whole communion of saints which no one can number, whose hope was in the  
Word made flesh, and with whom, in Jesus, we are one for evermore.

And now, to gather up all these petitions, let us pray in the words that Christ himself has taught us, saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

The Almighty God bless us with true grace; Christ give us the joys of everlasting life; and to the fellowship of the citizens above, may the Sovereign of Angels bring us all. Amen.

### **The Lessons**

#### I. "The Creation" by James Weldon Johnson

And God stepped out on space,  
And he looked around and said:  
I'm lonely –  
I'll make me a world.

And far as the eye of God could see  
Darkness covered everything,  
Blacker than a hundred midnights  
Down in a cypress swamp.

Then God smiled,  
And the light broke,  
And the darkness rolled up on one side,  
And the light stood shining on the other,  
And God said: That's good!

Then God reached out and took the light in his hands,  
And God rolled the light around in his hands  
Until he made the sun;  
And he set that sun a-blazing in the heavens.  
And the light that was left from making the sun  
God gathered it up in a shining ball  
And flung it against the darkness,  
Spangling the night with the moon and stars.  
Then down between  
The darkness and the light  
He hurled the world;  
And God said: That's good!

Then God himself stepped down –  
And the sun was on his right hand,  
And the moon was on his left;  
The stars were clustered about his head,  
And the earth was under his feet.

And God walked, and where he trod  
His footsteps hollowed the valleys out  
And bulged the mountains up.

Then he stopped and looked and saw  
That the earth was hot and barren.  
So God stepped over to the edge of the world  
And he spat out the seven seas –  
He batted his eyes, and the lightnings flashed –  
He clapped his hands, and the thunders rolled –  
And the waters above the earth came down,  
The cooling waters came down.

Then the green grass sprouted,  
And the little red flowers blossomed,  
The pine tree pointed his finger to the sky,  
And the oak spread out his arms,  
The lakes cuddled down in the hollows of the ground,  
And the rivers ran down to the sea;  
And God smiled again,  
And the rainbow appeared,  
And curled itself around his shoulder.

Then God raised his arm and he waved his hand  
Over the sea and over the land,  
And he said: Bring forth! Bring forth!  
And quicker than God could drop his hand,  
Fishes and fowls  
And beasts and birds  
Swam the rivers and the seas,  
Roamed the forests and the woods,  
And split the air with their wings.  
And God said: That's good!

Then God walked around,  
And God looked around  
On all that he had made.  
He looked at his sun,  
And he looked at his moon,  
And he looked at his little stars;  
He looked on his world  
With all its living things,  
And God said: I'm lonely still.

Then God sat down –  
On the side of a hill where he could think;  
By a deep, wide river he sat down;  
With his head in his hands,

God thought and thought,  
Till he thought: I'll make me a man!

Up from the bed of the river  
God scooped the clay;  
And by the bank of the river  
He kneeled him down;  
And there the great God Almighty  
Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky,  
Who flung the stars to the most far corner of the night,  
Who rounded the earth in the middle of his hand;  
This Great God,  
Like a mammy bending over her baby,  
Kneeled down in the dust  
Toiling over a lump of clay  
Till he shaped it in his own image;  
Then into it he blew the breath of life,  
And man became a living soul.  
Amen. Amen.

– from James Weldon Johnson's "God's Trombones"

Musical response: "Huachi torito"

Trad. Carol, arr. J. Cuellar

Julio Cuellar

Coro de Niños, la Iglesia Santa Maria

## II. Genesis 3:1-15. (CEB)

The snake was the most intelligent of all the wild animals that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say that you shouldn't eat from any tree in the garden? The woman said to the snake, "We may eat the fruit of the garden's trees but not the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden. God said 'Don't eat from it, and don't touch it, or you will die.'" The snake said to the woman, "You won't die! God knows that on the day you eat from it, you will see clearly and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." The woman saw that the tree was beautiful with delicious food and that the tree would provide wisdom, so she took some of its fruit and ate it, and also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then they both saw clearly and knew that they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made garments for themselves.

During that day's cool evening breeze, they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden; and the man and his wife hid themselves from the Lord God in the middle of the garden's trees. The Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" The man replied "I heard your sound in the garden; I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself." He said "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree, which I commanded you not to eat?"



of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth 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 heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Musical Response: “Dost Thou in a Manger Lie” arr. M. Burford  
Musicians of the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia and the Diocese of Virginia  
Martha Burford, Music Director

#### VI. *The Visit of the Magi* Matthew 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: ‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.’” Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.”

When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Musical response: “Los Reyes Magos” Trad. Carol, arr. J. Cuellar  
Julio Cuellar  
Coro de Niños, la Iglesia Santa Maria

VII. *Jesus is the Word of God*      Genesis 1 and *John 1*

1.

In the beginning

*In the beginning*

God created the heavens and the earth

*was the Word*

the earth was a formless void

*and the Word was with God*

and darkness covered the face of the deep

*and the Word was God*

and a wind from God swept over the face of the waters

*He was in the beginning with God.*

Then God said, "let there be light"

*in him was life*

and there was light

*and the life was the light of all people*

God saw that the light was good

*the light shines in the darkness*

God separated the light from the darkness

*and the darkness did not overcome it*

2.

*The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into  
the world.*

And God said, "let there be light."

*He was in the world*

And there was light

*yet the world did not know him*

And God saw that the light was good.

*But to all who received him, he gave power to become  
children of God,*

And God separated the light from the darkness.

3.

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image."

*And the Word became flesh*

"And let them have dominion over all the earth."

*and dwelt among us.*

So God created humankind in his own image  
*full of grace and truth*

and God saw everything he had made  
*We have beheld his glory*

And indeed it was very good  
*and from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace*

4.

And God said, "Let there be light."  
*And Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."*

And there was light.  
*"whoever follows me will not walk in darkness,"*

And God saw that the light was good.  
*"but will have the light of life."*

Musical response: "Brightest and Best" arr. M. Burford  
Musicians of the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia and the Diocese of Virginia  
Martha Burford, Music Director

### **The Concluding Collect**

Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### **The Blessing for Christmas**

#### **Closing Music**

"Silent Night" Traditional  
Curt Sydnor, Music Director, Emmanuel, Brook Hill  
Laura Ann Singh, Soloist

"Sleep, Holy Babe" John Bacchus Dykes  
Choristers of the Church of the Holy Comforter, Vienna  
David Kelley, Music Director

~ Worship Leaders ~

Presiding: The Rt. Rev. Susan E. Goff, Bishop Suffragan and Ecclesiastical Authority

Readers:

- I. Julian Bivins, Trinity, Charlottesville
- II. Elizabeth Kim, Holy Cross Korean, Fairfax
- III. Mark Eastham, Diocesan Staff
- IV. Gwendolyn Malone, St. Mary's, Berryville
- V. David André Meija-Medina, Iglesia San Gabriel, Leesburg
- VI. Isaiah King, VCU senior student and a member of the Episcopal Campus Ministry at Grace and Holy Trinity, Richmond
- VII. Bishops Jennifer Brooke-Davidson and Porter Taylor

Musicians:

Singers from Emmanuel, Harrisonburg  
Dr. Linell Moss Gray, Music Director

Soloists from Trinity, Upperville  
Christian Myers, Music Director

Julio Cuellar  
Coro de Niños, la Iglesia Santa Maria

Musicians of the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia and the Diocese of Virginia  
Martha Burford, Music Director

The Rev. Dr. Mary Thorpe, Canon to the Ordinary

Musicians of St. George's Fredericksburg  
John Vreeland, Music Director

Curt Sydnor, Music Director, Emmanuel, Brook Hill  
Laura Ann Singh, Soloist

Choristers of the Church of the Holy Comforter, Vienna  
David Kelley, Music Director

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