

Child: John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Child: John 1:14 “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

N: The apostle Peter wrote in his second letter that we have the word of the prophets, which is certain. The star that the Magi followed is for us too. It directs us to the Scriptures.

Child: 2 Peter 1:19 “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”

N: Until that day dawns, when the Morning Star rises for us and all believers, and our eyes at last shall see Him, may we, His children, who will be crowned like the stars, sound His praises, not only in this festive season but every day throughout our lives.

Cong. Song “O Holy Night”
Hymn: O holy night! The stars are brightly shining; It is the night of the dear Savior’s birth.
Long lay the world in sin and error pinning, Till 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 angel voices! O night divine, O night when Christ was born!
O night, divine, O night divine!

Led by the light of faith serenely beaming, With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand.
So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming, Here came the Wise Men from Orient land.
The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger, In all our trials born to be our Friend.
He knows our need to our weakness is no stranger. Behold your King, before Him lowly bend!
Behold your King, before Him lowly bend!

N: As we see many stars this Christmas season, let us remember that the star is the sign of the Word, Jesus Himself. He was the promised descendant of Abraham, the Morning Star rising from Jacob, and the Word itself leading us and giving us His grace and truth.

Offering/Prayer

Pastor: Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true light. Grant that as we have known on earth the wonder of that light, we may also behold Him in all his glory in the life to come; through your only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Congregation: Amen.

Pastor: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Congregation: Amen.

Recessional: “Joy to the World”
Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him room And heav’n and nature sing,
And heav’n and nature sing And heav’n and heav’n and nature sing.

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,
Far as the curse is found, Far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love, And wonders, wonders of His love.



Pastor: The Christ candle is the white candle at the center of an Advent wreath that symbolizes the arrival of the Light of the world, Jesus Christ. Tonight it is brought forward in the processional as a visual representation of Christ’s advent, or coming.

Processional: “Christmastime”
Child Song and Choir Song:

Children: Come see the Christ born tonight His salvation bringing
With humble thanks, see this wondrous sight.
Come see the Seed, Word foretold, Christ the Promised Offspring.
This Child of Old shines His love so bright.

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With humble thanks, see this wondrous sight.
Come see the Seed, Word foretold, Christ the Promised Offspring.
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Children: Sing gloria, gloria in excelsis Deo! Sing gloria in excelsis Deo!

N: Bells. Christmas trees. Ribbons and bows. Stars. Wreaths. Lights. Holly. Mistletoe. We see these things all around us, and they all tell us it is Christmastime. You may have many of these items in your homes. Perhaps you even have an Advent wreath or a nativity scene set up in your living room. There are so many images that remind us of Christmas, and without them Christmas seems almost empty. But what do they all mean? The church has a rich heritage of symbolism tracing back to the beginning of the world. Look around at our church building and consider the many images that surround us. They initially serve as reminders, but upon further inspection they teach us truths about God and His Word. Educational psychologists tell us that we learn best if all of our senses are engaged in the learning process. At Christmas we hear the familiar music and the Christmas story, taste the food, smell the lit candles, see the lavish adornments, and greet our family and friends. Our service tonight focuses on how God speaks to us through the many visual symbols that He has given us through the ages to remind us of the history of His people, to instruct us in His plan of salvation, to support our understanding of His truths, and to beautify our worship.

Cong. Hymn: “On Christmas Night All Christians Sing”
**On Christmas night all Christians sing To hear the news the angels bring;
On Christmas night all Christians sing To hear the news the angels bring,
News of great joy, news of great mirth, News of our merciful King’s birth.**

**When sin departs before Your grace, Then life and health come in its place.
When sin departs before Your grace, Then life and health come in its place.
Angels and saints with joy may sing All for to see the newborn King.**

**From out of darkness we have light Which made the angels sing this night.
From out of darkness we have light Which made the angels sing this night:
“Glory to God and peace to men Now and forevermore. Amen.”**

N: Tonight you already saw the Christ candle brought to the front of the nave and placed on the Advent wreath to symbolize the coming of Christ at Christmas. You have seen incense offered, just as the Old Testament believers did, to symbolize our prayers rising to the Father, and because of Jesus our prayers are pleasing to Him. You also see pictures throughout the bulletin which have special meaning at Christmas. As you worship tonight, take special note of these symbols and signs that we are given to focus on Christ’s birth at Bethlehem.

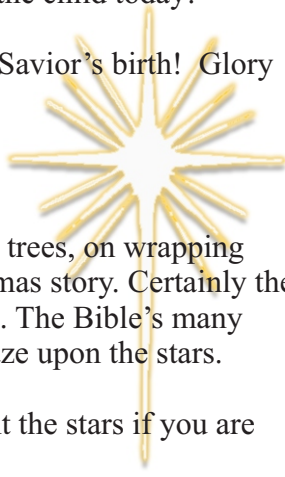
Child Song: “Christmas Songs of Joy”
Choir Song: Christmas comes with sounds of music, angels winging through the air.
Bringing joy to all the people, listen to the song they share. Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Glory to God in the highest, Glory to God the Most High! This day on earth is the Savior’s birth! Glory to God the Most High! Glory to God the Most High!

Heed what the signs have to say: Swaddled upon manger hay,
The Babe will be found in King David’s town; Go without further delay! Worship the child today!

Glory to God in the highest, Glory to God the Most High! This day on earth is the Savior’s birth! Glory to God, Glory to God, Glory to God the Most High!

The Star - The Sign of the Word



N: Stars seem to appear everywhere at Christmas. You can find them on the tops of Christmas trees, on wrapping paper, cut out as cookies, even in the eyes of children when they hear and recite the Christmas story. Certainly the Christmas lights on houses and the candles in the Advent wreath can remind us of stars too. The Bible’s many references to stars often point to Jesus. God led Abraham outside one night and had him gaze upon the stars.

Child: Genesis 15:5 “Then He brought him outside and said, ‘Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’”

N: Part of that covenant with Abraham was that the promised Savior would be one of those descendants that God promised him. In the book of Numbers, Moses wrote:

Child: Numbers 24:17 “A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel.”

N: We know from the book of Revelation that the star spoken of is Jesus, as Jesus himself says in the last chapter of Scripture:

Child: Revelation 22:16 “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”

N: God put a special star in the sky for Magi from the East to lead them to the newborn Savior. Matthew wrote in his gospel:

Child: Matthew 2:9-11 “They departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was.”

Child: “When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.”

Child: “And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”

Child Song: “Hark, Now, O Shepherds”
Choir Song: Hark, now, O shepherds, great news do we bring! Mighty the monarch whose praises we sing.
Lo, in the manger lies Jesus holy, Son of the gentle maid, Mary lowly, Shepherds rejoice!

See now in beauty, sweet Mother and Child! God’s tender light o’er them glowing yet mild.
O’er all the world the star, brightly beaming, Soft sheds its loving rays, gently streaming, Shepherds rejoice!

Angels bright shining, great tidings you bring, News of sweet Mary and Jesus, our King,
Straight will we journey forth, gladly bringing All our devotion fervently singing, Christ now is born!

N: The star - the sign of the Word - leads us to the Christ when we read and study that Word. The apostle John declares that the Word is Jesus Himself born of flesh living among us.

Child: Luke 2:8-14 “And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

Cong. Song: “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King; Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!” Joyful, all ye nations rise, Join the triumph of the skies;
With th’ angelic host proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”

Christ, by highest heav’n adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord, Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of a virgin’s womb. Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail th’ incarnate Deity!
Pleased as Man with man to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel!
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”

Child: Luke 2:15-20 “And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.”

Cong. Song: “Silent Night”
Hymn: 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.

Silent night! Holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heaven afar, Heav’nly hosts sing, Alleluia,
Christ the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!

Silent night! Holy night! Son of God, love’s pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face, With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.

N: The angels are the sign of proclamation. They were the first to proclaim the good news that the Messiah, Jesus, was born in Bethlehem. They proclaimed the messages to the lowly shepherds. They, in turn, proclaimed the message to the people of Bethlehem. The proclamation of the angels on that first Christmas has spread through time and across continents to our Gentile ears this Christmas. Now it is our turn, to proclaim. Proclaim the message that Christ is born. We too can be angels, messengers of God, proclaiming that Christ our Savior is born!

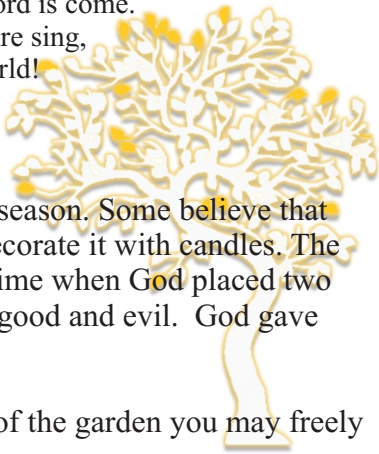
Child Song: “An Angel of the Lord”
An Angel of the Lord appeared to them. And the glory of the Lord shone round them.
And they were terrified! Terrified! But the angel said to them:

Do not be frozen with fright, Do not be fearful tonight. Quit shaking and see the Lord’s majesty,
Giving off glorious light, Giving good news tonight!

Christmas comes with praise and worship, shepherds sing with all their might.
As they run to see the Savior, hear their music in the night.
Noel, noel, Noel, noel. Born is the King of Israel.

Christmas comes to all the people, music ringing clear and strong.
Will you join the happy chorus lifting high a joyful song? Joy to the world! The Lord is come.
Let earth receive her King. Let ev’ry heart prepare Him room, and heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing, and heaven and heaven and nature sing. Joy to the world!

The Tree - The Sign of the Promise



N: The Christmas tree is easily one of the most recognizable symbols of the Christmas season. Some believe that Martin Luther may have been the first to set up an evergreen tree in his home and decorate it with candles. The tree as a symbol for Christmas, however, goes all the way back to the beginning of time when God placed two special trees in the Garden of Eden: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God gave special instructions to Adam and Eve regarding these trees.

Child: Genesis 2:16-17 “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat...”

Child: “For in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Child: Genesis 3:6 “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.”

N: Adam and Eve both ate fruit from the tree and had to answer to God for their sin. But before God told them of the consequences, He first gave them a promise. This was the first promise of the Savior, who would be born to pay for that sin in the garden as well as the sins of the entire world. This promise was found in God’s curse on Satan, who would be defeated by the Savior’s death on another tree.

Child: Genesis 3:15 “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

N: God’s plan for the Savior is like a red thread woven through the fabric of the Old Testament, reminding believers of the Messiah and his work for them. God used animal sacrifices as special symbols to show that their Savior’s life had to be offered in death for their own in order to rescue them from eternal punishment. He also had them burn incense during their prayers to show them that those prayers did rise to God, like the smoke of the incense, and that he heard their cries for help. The Holy Spirit spoke through the prophet Isaiah about another tree. He was speaking of the promised Messiah. But the picture doesn’t stop with a tree. He also speaks of the work the Messiah would do on earth. This Prince of peace would return his people to the state of perfection that they had in the Garden of Eden.

Responsive Reading from Isaiah 11:1-4,10 (“Behold a Branch Is Growing” played in the background)

Pastor: A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
Congregation: **From his roots a Branch will bear fruit.**
Pastor: The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
Congregation: **The Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,**
Pastor: The Spirit of counsel and of power,
Congregation: **The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD—and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.**
Pastor: He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
Congregation: **Or decide by what he hears with his ears;**
Pastor: But with righteousness he will judge the needy,
Congregation: **With justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.**
Pastor: He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
Congregation: **With the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.**

Pastor: In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples;
Congregation: The nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.

Cong. Song: “Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel”
Oh, come, Oh, 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.

Oh, come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free Thine own from Satan’s tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save And give them vict’ry o’er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.

N: The first chapter of Matthew shows how Jesus’ family tree grew from the seed of Adam and Eve to its sturdy trunk in Abraham, Jacob, and David, all the way to the branches of Joseph and Mary. In the first chapter of Luke, we hear how the virgin Mary, an ordinary young woman from the family of David, received a visit from an extraordinary messenger.

Child: Luke 1:30-38 Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”

Child: Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?”

Child: And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.”

Child: Then Mary said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

Child Song: “Mary Did You Know?”
Mary did you know that your baby boy would some day walk on water?
Mary did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?
Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?
This child that you delivered, will soon deliver you?
Mary did you know that your baby boy will give sight to a blind man?
Mary did you know that your baby boy, will calm a storm with his hand?
Did you know that your baby boy, has walked where angels trod?
When you kissed your little baby, then you kissed the face of God.
Mary did you know, the blind will see, the deaf will hear, the dead will live again;
The lame will leap, the dumb will speak the praises of the Lamb!
Mary did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all Creation?
Mary did you know that your baby boy will one day rule the nations?
Did you know that your baby boy was Heaven’s perfect Lamb?
This sleeping child you’re holding is the Great I AM!

The Manger - The Sign of the Servant

N: A nativity scene makes a lovely Christmas decoration and reminds us of the true meaning of Christmas. At the center of any nativity scene is a manger, a feedbox. That bed for the Creator of the universe was not the ideal place for a newborn. But it was the perfect start in life for our Savior. It was a picture of the humility that He took on himself all through His life—a picture of His submission to God’s law and the laws of men. The account of Jesus’ birth begins in Luke chapter 2, with Mary and Joseph obeying the law of the Roman emperor that the population of the entire empire should be counted.

Child: Luke 2:1-7 “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with Child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

PreK: And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”

Child Song: “Away in a Manger”
Choir Song: 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 poor baby wakes. But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay close by me forever, and love me, I pray;
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care And fit us for heaven to live with Thee there.

N: The King of kings and Lord of lords humbled himself by taking on the form of a human. God be praised that this “riches to rags” story turns into a “rags to riches” story for us sinners. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, wrote:

Child: Galatians 4:4-7 “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

Child: “And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’ Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”

N: The manger is the sign of Christmas that points to Christ’s humility. God in His infinite love sent His Son as the Savior of the world. Christ in His perfect obedience humbled Himself to be clothed in human form not to be served by mankind but to serve mankind as the Savior from sin.

Child: Matthew 20:28 “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Cong. Song: “Now Sing, We Now Rejoice”
Now sing we, now rejoice, Now raise to heav’n our voice;
He from whom joy streameth Poor in a manger lies;
Not so brightly beameth The sun in yonder skies Thou my Savior art! Thou my Savior art!

Oh, where shall joy be found? Where but on heav’nly ground?
Where the angels singing With all His saints unite,
Sweetest praises bringing In heav’nly joy and light Oh, that we were there! Oh, that we were there!

The Angel - The Sign of Proclamation

N: Scripture speaks of angels throughout its pages. They are God’s messengers. God sent angels to people to announce important news. Angels visited Abraham to tell him that he and his wife, Sarah, would have a baby boy in their old age. The angel Gabriel announced the birth of John to Zechariah and Elizabeth. Later he proclaimed to Mary that she was to be the mother of the Savior. After the birth in the manger, angels made an announcement to shepherds at work in the fields.