

ST. ANDREW'S

Home for Christmas



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Grace to you and peace from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! Welcome to this very special evening of worship. In your worship kit, you'll find the essence of Christmas Eve: candlelight, bells, a taste of chocolate and mint, familiar Scripture readings, beloved hymns, and a cup of tea to share in fellowship. So I invite you to unpack your kit, find a box of matches, make yourself that cup of tea, and settle in somewhere comfortable, so we can celebrate the coming of Jesus together.

O Come, All Ye Faithful

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| 1. Oh come, all ye faithful,
joyful and triumphant;
oh come ye, oh come ye to Bethlehem.
Come and behold him, born the King of angels:
Oh come, let us adore him;
oh come, let us adore him;
oh come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord. | 2. Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation;
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above:
'Glory to God in the highest!'
Oh come, let us adore him;
oh come, let us adore him;
oh come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord. |
| 3. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this
happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory given;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing:
Oh come, let us adore him;
oh come, let us adore him;
oh come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord. | |

Opening Prayer

We have waited for a long time
for your hope, your peace, your joy, and your love
to shine in the darkness of this world, Holy and Eternal God.
Even now, we await you.
We long for the day when your light will blaze forth,
banishing the shadows of this world
and guiding all people back to you.

Yet, in your first Advent,
you did not come into this world in a show of power and majesty.
You did not shine forth for all of creation to behold.
A tiny spark –
a newborn baby,
visible to parents and curious animals.
A host of angels –
away from the populated areas,
singing to shepherds and their sheep.
A single bright star –
guiding foreigners to see what kings and scholars feared.

God with us, kindle your spark within us,
that together we may shine forth your light.
In this bleak midwinter,
we humbly offer our praise to you.
The coming of your Son is like the coming of the dawn,
warming our faith and re-igniting our hope
that one day your kingdom will fully come in grace and in truth.
We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

First Lesson: Genesis 3:8-15

⁸ They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." ¹¹ He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹² The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." ¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate." ¹⁴ The Lord God said to the serpent,

"Because you have done this,
cursed are you among all animals
and among all wild creatures;
upon your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat

all the days of your life.
¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.”

Every time God created something – day and night, birds and animals, men and women – God called them good. And they were! All creation flourished and grew like a lush garden, nurtured and fed by God’s presence as He walked in its goodness and beauty. And then the darkness crept in, trailing sin and separation, grief and doubt, in its wake. But that rather cryptic remark about enmity between the serpent and the woman’s offspring is a reference to the rescue that God was already planning. Like a shower of sparks, the coming light of Christ can be glimpsed, although it’s not yet ready to burst into flame.

Set out your candles and ready your matches! Soon, a distant light will begin to shine.

Second Lesson: Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

²The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.
⁶For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

For centuries, God and God’s people had walked together through shadows and light, out of captivity in Egypt and into the Promised Land, in times of peace and through long years of turmoil. And now, they stood facing the fear and cultural pain of exile into a distant country. But as the shadows drew closer, God spoke to them through the prophet Isaiah of a future hope. Isaiah proclaimed a child, a king who would be everything their hurting, longing hearts could desire: wise, strong, and caring, whose peace-filled kingdom would never end.

It’s time to light your red candle, because now we know: Christ is coming.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

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| 1. Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lowly exile here,
until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice, rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee,
O Israel. | 2. Oh come, thou Wisdom from on high,
and order all things far and nigh;
to us the path of knowledge show,
and cause us in her ways to go.
Rejoice, rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee,
O Israel. |
| 3. Oh come, thou Branch of Jesse, free
thine own from Satan's tyranny;
from depths of hell thy people save,
and give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice, rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee,
O Israel. | 4. Oh come, thou Key of David, come
and open wide our heavenly home;
make safe the way that leads on high
and close the path to misery.
Rejoice, rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee,
O Israel. |

Third Lesson: Isaiah 11:1-9

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
² The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
³ His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;
⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.
⁶ The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.
⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

⁹ They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.

In Isaiah's words, we see new life and a restored creation, all under the wise and peaceful care of the king. When this hopeful vision was first shared, King David's family tree was a mere stump of its former glory, and soon to be scorched by the great empire that would take God's people into exile. But stumps send up new growth even in nature; how much more will God do, as He acts to renew and restore all creation? This peaceable kingdom, where lions and lambs lay down together and children live in perfect safety, promises nothing less than a reversal of the darkness that fell in Genesis 3, an end to separation, sin, grief and doubt. Christ our Saviour, the king who will restore creation, once and for all, is coming...but not yet. God's people must wait a little longer for their Saviour.

Light the green candle now to celebrate new life in Christ and the coming of His peaceable kingdom.

Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming

1. Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming
from tender stem hath sprung,
of Jesse's lineage coming,
as prophets long have sung.
It came, a floweret bright,
amid the cold of winter,
when half-spent was the night.

2. Isaiah 'twas foretold it,
the Rose I have in mind;
with Mary we behold it,
the virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright,
she bore to us a Saviour,
when half-spent was the night.

3. O Saviour, child of Mary,
who felt our human woe,
O Saviour, King of glory,
who dost our weakness know,
bring us at length, we pray,
to the bright courts of heaven
and to the endless day.

Fourth Lesson: Luke 1:26-38

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. ³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be great, and will be

called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” ³⁴ Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” ³⁵ The angel said to her, “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 holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶ And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸ Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

After centuries of silence, God is on the move! Mary’s cousin Elizabeth is miraculously pregnant and her son will be John the Baptist, who will prepare the way for the advent of Jesus. In many ways, John comes as the last of the Old Testament prophets: his mother, who was too old to conceive; his father, a priest in the Temple who struggled with despair; and John himself, who echoes Isaiah’s words of hope, preparation, and the coming of a Saviour-King. Mary and her soon-to-be-husband Joseph likewise prepared the way for Jesus’ birth. Mary’s faith in God’s promises and her willingness to believe, Joseph’s trust in God’s call and his willingness to act...these two young people clear the way for the long-promised Saviour to be born.

Light the blue candle to honour these courageous men and women of faith.

What child is this?

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| <p>1. 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, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
the babe, the son of Mary.</p> | <p>2. Why lies he in such mean estate
where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christians, fear, for sinners here
the silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce him through,
the cross be borne for me, for you.
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,
the babe, the son of Mary.</p> |
| <p>3. So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;
come, peasant, king, to own him.
The King of kings salvation brings;
let loving hearts enthrone him.
Raise, raise the song on high;
the virgin sings her lullaby.
Joy, joy for Christ is born,
the babe, the son of Mary.</p> | |

Fifth Lesson: Luke 2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴ Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

At long last, these simple, familiar words share the news we've been waiting for all through this long Advent time: Jesus is born! The Saviour-King whom God's people have longed for these many centuries has been born, into the humblest of circumstances: a stable in a small village in an insignificant province of the great Roman empire. But babies know nothing of politics or poverty. So we can imagine that Jesus only knew himself to be warmly swaddled, nestled in a soft and fragrant bed, with a full belly, curious animals nosing at him, and loving parents to comfort and cuddle him. This warmly glowing peace will not last forever, not for this young family; but let's allow them their time together on this special night.

Light your gold candle for Jesus, and join his parents in singing the newborn Saviour to sleep.

Away in a manger

1. 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.

2. The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.

I love you, Lord Jesus!
Look down from the sky,
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.

Sixth Lesson: Luke 2:8-20

⁸ In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

¹⁵ 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.” ¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

It's no coincidence that the good news of the birth of Jesus was first announced to shepherds and their flocks. This is the same Jesus, after all, who would later call himself the Good Shepherd, and lay down his life for his sheep. To their credit, these shepherds did not dismiss what they had seen and heard as a strange dream or lack of sleep; instead, they decided to investigate. And what they found was everything the angels had promised: a Saviour, all wrapped up and lying in a manger. The shepherds and Jesus' parents exchange information, and the amazement and joy only builds, higher and higher!

Ring your bells and join in the joyful celebration of the good news of Jesus' birth!

It came upon a midnight clear

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| 1. It came upon the midnight clear,
that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth
to touch their harps of gold:
'To all the earth goodwill and peace,
from heaven's all gracious King!"
The world in solemn stillness lay
to hear the angels sing. | 2. Still through the cloven skies they come
with peaceful wings unfurled,
and still their heavenly music floats
o'er all the weary world;
above its sad and lowly plains
they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o'er its babel sounds
the blessed angels sing. |
| 3. And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way
with painful steps and slow,
look now! for glad and golden hours
come swiftly on the wing.
Oh rest beside the weary road
and hear the angels sing. | 4. For lo! the days are hastening on,
by prophets seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years
shall come the time foretold,
when peace shall over all the earth
God's promised splendours fling,
and all the world take up the song,
which now the angels sing. |

Seventh Lesson: Matthew 2:1-11

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ² 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.” ³ When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

⁶ ‘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.’”

⁷ Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸ 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.” ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹ 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.

The good news of Jesus’ birth was better and more far-reaching than anyone had ever imagined. God is God of all people and all creation, and the promises He’d been making all these centuries were not just for a few people – they were for the whole world! These foreign scholars had travelled from far away, driven by curiosity, chasing a rumour of hope. Herod and his scribes were full of fear, but not the wisemen; they were ready to embrace the mystery and wonder of Jesus, Son of God and child of humanity. It’s still good news that salvation through Jesus is for everyone, no matter who we are, where we’re from, or what our lives have been like. We are the reason Jesus came; saving us from darkness and sin is the reason for Christmas.

Unwrap your chocolates or your candy cane, and enjoy – the gift of salvation is for all!

Eighth Lesson: John 1:1-5, 9-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of

the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ 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 and truth.

Since the very beginning, the coming of Christ has been God's plan for us and for all creation. And in John's new telling of the Genesis story, we see that Jesus – the Word – has been there all along. The good news of Christmas is that, in Christ, God broke into history and came to dwell among us, to walk beside us, to eat and drink, to weep and laugh, in fellowship with us. The gift of salvation is for all; the gift of faith, the promise of that peaceable kingdom, the blessing of new abundant life in Christ, are offered to everyone. And even though not everyone will want these gifts, the light still shines in the darkness, undimmed. Like all of us tonight, with our own small candles burning in homes scattered far and wide, that light shines forth, illuminating our lives and the world around us. Through everyone who welcomes the advent of Christ into their hearts, that light continues to proclaim that our Saviour-King is coming still.

Light the purple candle and remember: these are the last hours of darkness before Christmas Day, and the coming of Christ.

Silent Night

1. 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.

2. Silent night! holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight:
glories stream from heaven afar,
heavenly hosts sing 'Hallelujah,
Christ, the Saviour is born!
Christ, the Saviour is born!"

3. 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.

Prayers of the People

O Emmanuel,
child of promise and sign of hope,
you come from a distance far beyond our reach,
yet you are closer to us than we are to ourselves:
remain with us in our own days of preparation,
that we may come to full and abundant, grace-filled life,
living in ways that are just, true, beautiful, and good,

through Jesus Christ, our Lord,
who with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
abides with us, always.

O Wisdom,
your words uttered in the beginning
created a world of beauty and goodness,
giving purpose and value to each creature;
instruct us in the ways of care and consideration,
that we may nurture the world with justice and joy.
Help us to resist evil and to obey you
so that we may walk in your ways,
following the one whom we know as the Wisdom of the ages:
Christ, our Saviour and Lord.

O Root of Jesse,
you reach deep down into the darkness of the earth
and stir the world's longings for deliverance and hope:
raise up within our own lives
a spirit of courage and strength, of wisdom and insight,
that we may do your work for the coming of your kingdom,
through Christ, our Lord.

O Key of David,
you open the way to the future and no one may close it;
you close the way to the past and no one may open it.
Release us and all your people from the burdens of the past,
that we may face the future with boldness and purpose—
healed and made whole, led and inspired by Jesus, the Messiah.

O Rising Dawn,
you shine with warm brightness and clean freshness,
chasing the fearsome shadows of the night away:
enlighten the lives of your people with visions of peace
until you bring all things into the harmony of your kingdom,
illuminated and enfolded in the light of the world, Christ, our Lord.
These prayers and praises we humbly offer to you,
Emmanuel, God-with-us;
confident in your love, certain of your care.
In the name of Jesus – Saviour, Messiah, and King – we pray,
Amen.

Joy to the World

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| 1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come:
let earth receive its King;
let every heart prepare him room
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven, and nature sing. | 2. Joy to the earth! the Saviour reigns:
let us our songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy. |
| 3. 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. | 4. 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. |

Closing Prayer

Eternal and loving God, you have sent your Son to be our Saviour:
our light in the midst of an ever-darkening world;
our hope in days of uncertainty and fear;
our peace amid turmoil and sadness;
our joy on good days and hard days;
our deep well of love when our hearts feel empty.

We see that Jesus Christ is the most perfect revelation of your love for us.

In him, you broke into our darkness, scattering the fears that bind us
and setting us free to walk in the light as your children.

May your light, ablaze in our hearts, shine forth in our lives,
illuminating the shadows around us through Jesus Christ, our Lord,
in whose name we pray,
Amen.

Sending and Benediction

Now, O Lord, let your servants go in peace as promised in your Word.
For our eyes have seen the salvation prepared by you for all the world to see:
A light to shine on nations trapped in darkest night,
And to be the glory of your people.

And may the Lord bless you and keep you;
May the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;
May the Lord turn his face toward you, and give you peace.
Amen.