

Prelude: Rejoice and Be Merry arr. Robert J. Powell

Call to Worship and Lighting of Advent wreath:

My soul magnifies the Lord

My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.

The Mighty One has done great things.

Holy is God's name!

We light the first candle of Advent
with a plea for God to come down;
we light the second candle of Advent
as we hear words of comfort,
and the command to prepare
for God's coming.

Our third candle announces that
the anointing of the one who comes
with the Spirit of God.
Our fourth candle declares that
the people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light.

**Those who lived in a land of deep darkness –
on them light has shined.**

Minister: Friends, welcome all, who gather here,
This Advent season of the year!
Prepare to listen as we trace
The wondrous story of God's grace;
Of how He came to earth to dwell,
To live, and die, and plunder hell,
And save us all from Satan's hold:
Let now this sacred tale unfold!

So come with me and let us go
Far back in time, long, long ago.
When all was dark and lacking form,
The Spirit breathed above the storm.
And then God gave the world its birth,
Making the seas, the sky, the earth;
To life God gave the gift of light,
The sun by day, the moon by night.
All living things God did create,
Creatures small and creatures great.
Worms and creepy crawly things,
Fish with gills and birds with wings,
Dragons and monsters of the deep,
Cows and lions, bears and sheep.
So marvellous in all its ways,
This nature gives its Maker praise!
Wondrous world, so free from flaw,
And God was pleased with what God saw!

3. He comes the broken hearts to bind,
the bleeding souls to cure;
and with the treasures of his grace
to enrich the humble poor.
4. The sacred year has now revolved,
accepted of the Lord,
when heaven's high promise is fulfilled,
and Israel is restored.
5. Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,
thy welcome shall proclaim;
and heaven's exalted arches ring
with thy most honoured name.

Minister: Now, with God's world gone all astray
His special plan comes into play;
For soon we hear the Bible tell
Of Jacob's children, Israel!

All: Israel!

Minister: Once you were proud Egypt's slaves!

All: Israel!

Minister: Captives, whom the Lord did save!

All: Israel!

Minister: Through you the Lord will bring release!

All: Israel!

Minister: Through you will come the Prince of Peace!

Reading: Isaiah 9.2 – 7 *The Promise of a King* (Thijs Glasz)

Minister: Who then will this great King be
Who comes to set creation free?

**All: We learn that it is God's design
That he will come through David's line.**

Minister: And where then will this birth take place,
Ordained to save the human race?

All: Bethlehem!

Minister: Little town in Judah's land,
Something great for you is planned!

All: Bethlehem!

Minister: As David's birth-place you are known;
From you shall come a greater throne!

Reading: Micah 5.2 – 5 *The birthplace of the coming king* (Laura Elliott)

Hymn 304: O little town of Bethlehem

1. O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see you lie!
Above your deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by;
yet in your streets is shining
the everlasting Light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in you tonight.
2. O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King,
and peace to all on earth,
For Christ is born of Mary;
and, gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wondering love.
3. How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming;
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.
4. O holy Child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and enter in;
be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Emmanuel.

Minister: And so the mystery sublime
Is woven on the loom of time;
As flies the shuttle of the years
The Great Weaver's grand design appears,
And we shall see how one small thread
Will lead us to a cattle-shed.
But first we go, surprisingly,
To Nazareth in Galilee.

All: Nazareth!

Minister: Scorned by Roman and by Jew!

All: Nazareth!

Minister: Can any good come out of you?

Reading: Luke 1.26 – 35, 38

(Sophie, Elisa, Danielle)

Minister: Now Joseph was Mary's betrothed,
And fearing that he might be loath
To marry his young fiancée
Now she was in the family way,
An angel came to reassure
Young Joseph that his bride was pure.

Reading: Matthew 1:18-25 *The angel appears to Joseph*, (Aeden, Alexander, Victoria)

Minister: And this is how it came to be
 That they set off from Galilee,
 And made the long, slow journey down
 To Bethlehem, King David's town!

Reading: Luke 2- 1 – 5 *The birth of Jesus* (Martin, Clare, Tiwi, Ferry)

Hymn 315: Once in royal David's city

1. Once in royal David's city
 Stood a lowly cattle shed,
 Where a mother laid her baby
 In a manger for his bed:
 Mary was that mother mild,
 Jesus Christ her little child.
2. He came down to earth from heaven
 Who is God and Lord of all,
 And his shelter was a stable,
 And his cradle was a stall;
 With the poor and mean and lowly
 Lived on earth our Saviour holy.
3. And through all his wondrous childhood
 He would honour and obey,
 Love and watch the lowly maiden,
 In whose gentle arms he lay:
 Christian children all must be
 Mild, obedient, good as he.
4. And our eyes at last shall see him,
 Through his own redeeming love,
 For that child so dear and gentle
 Is our Lord in heaven above;
 And he leads his children on
 To the place where he is gone.
5. Not in that poor lowly stable,
 With the oxen standing by,
 We shall see him; but in heaven,
 Set at God's right hand on high;
 When like stars his children crowned
 All in white shall wait around.

Minister: Now certain witnesses were sent
 By angels to this strange event;
 And shepherds, lowest of degree,
 Were first to hail God's family.

All: Shepherds? Ridiculed! Despised!

Minister: See God in baby flesh disguised!

All: Shepherds? Outcasts! Shunned! Unclean!

Minister: Find God in filth of stable mean!

Reading: Luke 2: 8 – 15 (The Stouts)

Hymn 296: While humble shepherds watched their flocks

1. While shepherds watched their flocks by night
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.
2. "Fear not" said he, for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind.
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.
3. "To you, in David's town, this day
Is born, of David's line
A Saviour, who is Christ the Lord
And this shall be the sign:
4. "The heavenly Babe you there shall find
To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swaddling-bands,
And in a manger laid."
5. Thus spake the seraph and forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of angels praising God on high,
Who thus addressed their song:
6. "All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace;
Good will henceforth from Heav'n to men
Begin and never cease!

Minister: But other witnesses there were
To that strange birth that did occur,
For while this babe in manger lies
His birth was told in foreign skies:
Astrologers came from afar,
Guided by a shining star!

Reading: Matthew 2: 1-12 *The wise men* (Christopher and Richard)

Offering dedication, prayer and Lord's Prayer

Minister: Dear friends, my story told in rhyme,
Will echo on and on in time,
But it can never be complete
'til every knee bows at His feet!
For this child, born in stable cruel,
Will come again in power, to rule!
Today, before you leave this place,
Renew again this child's embrace.

CHILDREN'S CHORUS *Away in a Manger*

1. Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
the star 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 thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.
3. Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay
close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
and fit us for heaven, to live with thee there.

The Blessing (*Sung Amen*)

Postlude I: *The Snow Lay on the Ground*

(Havila, Lita and Frederick)

Postlude II: *To Us Has Come the Saviour*

J.S. Bach