

**A BIBLE WORD PRAISE CELEBRATION
FORETELL BETHLEHEM CHRISTMAS SERVICE**

This is used for a Carols by Candlelight or morning service at Christmas time. The minister/pastor/priest/worship leader does the narration of each reading as set out, the readings are best done by representatives of the congregation. Carols should be chosen appropriately so as not to clash with other Christmas services, and also to fit with the reading they follow after. The service can be used with traditional choir-based or contemporary music/band group format, with Traditional and Contemporary Service Orders provided at the end. God's people need to hear our relationship with the Bible in Christmas worship, or lose faith balance. Items for soloists, music/band group/choirs should number 2 to 4 of the carol/song items for good quality gifted ministry input. Any non-expanded good Bible version can be used for the readings. It is recommended that readers from childrens' church be included for all ages ministry.

Entry of the Bible/Welcome/Notices

Introduction: The minister/service leader states the purpose of the service in words such as these:

God speaks by his Word and Spirit to show how his plan for our salvation unfolded. In this service we receive God's spoken Word with praise and prayer, and celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ his Son who came to save us. Though only some take part in the readings, as we hear and celebrate, we all worship in joyful thanks.

Let us worship God. The first carol is:

Opening Christmas Carol:

God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us with all the spiritual blessing of heaven in Jesus. He chose us in Christ before the world was made, to be holy and unstained, to live through love before Him. His purpose is that we should be his adopted children through Jesus Christ, as the Spirit of Jesus Christ leads us to praise the glory of his grace, God's free gift of salvation for us in his one and only Son.

Opening Prayer : *(Prayer below provided. Use own prayers as desired)*

Let us pray: Almighty and Future-opening God,
 give us grace to be part of your blessing to the nations
 through the one who is the light to the nations.
 Sin and death abound in our mortal life, so how good it is
 that your Son Jesus Christ came to save us in great humility.
 Heavenly Father, we are in your holy presence.
 We know our sin and the world's sin
 from which your Son came to redeem us.
 In his name we seek your gracious forgiveness,
 so that You fulfil the promise of grace in our faithful lives.

The nations waited for the coming of your divine light,
and so we take up our salvation,
and pass on your blessing to the nations.
On the last day, when Jesus comes again
in his glory to judge the living and the dead,
You give us share in His resurrection to the life immortal -
for He is alive and reigns with you and the holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Please let your face shine upon us in this world,
and in eternal life in the world to come;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading 1: Genesis 3.8-15 proclaims that from the earliest time of humankind's fall from grace, God promised his ultimate victory over evil through an offspring of grace.
GENESIS 3.8-15 is read.

Christmas Carol/Song.....

Reading 2: Later in Genesis God also promised Abraham that in his offspring all nations of the earth would be blessed: the offspring of grace would bear his promise.
GENESIS 22.15-18 is read

Christmas Carol/Song

Reading 3: Let us hear God's Word through the Christmas prophet Isaiah that the Christ was coming to his people.
ISAIAH 9.2,6-7 is read.

Christmas Carol/Song

Reading 4: God's Word to the prophet Micah even foretold the venue for the coming of his offspring of grace.
MICAH 5.2-4,7 is read.

Christmas Carol/Song

People are amazed when they find out that Old Testament Bible prophets foretold events of the coming Christmas long before they happened. God organises history his way, not ours. The New Testament tells of the fulfilment of these prophecies, which we share together now.

Reading 5: Listen to Luke's gospel telling how God announced the coming of the Christ child to the virgin Mary in Nazareth:
Luke 1.26-38 is read (optional addition of verses 1.44-65)

Christmas Carol/Song

Reading 6: God's gospel message is clear - in the fullness of time Christ was born as foretold in the Scriptures; Luke's gospel gives us the account:
LUKE 2.1-7 is read.

Christmas Carol/Song

Reading 7: The coming of God's chosen one for the poor and humble was fulfilled through Jesus Christ, again given to us in Luke's gospel.
LUKE 2.8-20 is read.

Christmas Carol/Song

Reading 8: The coming of God's chosen one for the rich and wise was also fulfilled through Jesus Christ, this time presented in Matthew's gospel.
MATTHEW 2.1-12 is read.

Christmas Carol/Song

Offering: The wise men made their gifts and offerings to Jesus Christ. Let us also worship God with our gifts and offerings: your offerings will now be received.

The offerings are collected and then brought forward at the offering song by the office-bearers/duty stewards, who remain standing for the offering prayer:

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, that first Christmas you entrusted your Son to us,
Your greatest gift. Accept our gifts, we pray,
and use them in Your service to Jesus' kingdom and grow His Church.
The congregation then sits.

Prayer of Intercession: *(Prayer below provided. Use own prayers as desired)*

Let us pray: Holy Father, Almighty and Everlasting God,
it's right, it's our discipleship and our joy to praise you
at all times and in all places.

You created the spiritual, the universe and earth, and all that is in them.

You made humans in your own image
and by the mystery of Jesus the Word made flesh,
the coming of the offspring of grace is fulfilled.

The light of your glory has dawned in love
upon us and we are the blessing of the nations.

Thank you for the day of our deliverance.

By the power of the Holy Spirit Jesus took our nature upon himself,
and was born of Mary the virgin, so that,

being himself without sin, He might make us clean from all sin.

So through Jesus' death and resurrection

You make all things new, for He gives us to be born again at repentance,
and He comes in power to judge the world for resurrection.

[Optional inclusion of traditional responses:

*Therefore with angels, archangels and all the company of heaven
we praise the greatness of your glory, now and for ever saying:*

***Glory to God in the highest,
peace on earth and good will toward humankind.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory;
Hosannah in the highest.]***

Almighty God, we're glad for Christmas.
We remember the birth of your Son Jesus,
and we joyfully believe He is our redeemer.
Give us deep assurance to receive his love
when He comes to be our judge.
He is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

[Optional Traditional inclusion: the Lord's Prayer may be said.]

Final Reading 9: In the New Testament, John's gospel also tells us the eternal meaning of these these things foretold for all humankind:
JOHN 1.1-14 is read.

The Lord always blesses the readings of his holy Word. How powerful is the story of Christmas when He gave us his Son Jesus.

Closing Christmas Carol/Song

Benediction and Benediction Song

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(TRADITIONAL FORM – Hymns are suggestions only.)
Recommendations: Choir sings anthems in place of two or more carols)**

Entry of the Word
Welcome and Notices

Service Introduction
Opening Carol:
Opening Prayer

Joy to the world

Reading 1: Genesis 3.8-15

Christmas Carol:

It came upon the midnight clear

Reading 2: Genesis 22.15-18

Christmas Carol:

What child is this?

Reading 3: Isaiah 9.2,6-7

Christmas Carol:

O come, o come, Immanuel

Reading 4: Micah 5.2-4,7

Christmas Carol:

Once in royal David's city/ O little town

Reading 5: Luke 1.26-38 (*optional verses 46-55*)

Christmas Carol:

Child in the manger

Reading 6: Luke 2.1-7

Christmas Carol:

See in yonder manger low

Reading 7: Luke 2.8-20

Christmas Carol:

Hark the herald angels sing/ Silent Night

Reading 8: Matthew 2.1-12

Christmas Carol:

The first nowell

Offering with Offering Song:
Prayer of Intercession and Lord's Prayer

Reading 9: John 1.1-14

Closing Christmas Carol:

O Come all ye faithful

Benediction and Benediction Song