

# ST. JOHN'S CATHEDRAL

The Cathedral of the Episcopal Diocese of East Tennessee

A Christmas Festival of Lessons & Carols

10:30 AM Sunday, December 21st, 2025

Service items listed in red can be found in the red Book of Common Prayer. Hymns, listed in blue, can be found in the blue Hymnal.

## Prelude

Four Carols for Brass

Michel Rondeau (b. 1948)

*The holly and the ivy* | *O little town of Bethlehem*  
*Tomorrow shall be my dancing day* | *In dulci jubilo*

## The Opening Sentence (Stand at the bell)

Celebrant: Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
People: And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever.  
Amen.

**Hymn 102: Once in royal David's city**  
(v. 1 & 2 sung by the choir, 4 & 6 sung by all)

## The Christmas Prayer of Invitation and the Lord's Prayer

The People remain seated for the Lessons & Hymns.

## The First Lesson

*Isaiah 40: 1-11*

Reader: Callie Broyles

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass; their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers; the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers; the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms and carry them in his bosom and gently lead the mother sheep.

Reader The Word of the Lord.  
People Thanks be to God.

**Hymn 105: God rest ye merry, gentlemen** (v. 1 & 4)

## Anthem

arr. Alice Parker & Robert Shaw

*The holly and the ivy*

The holly and the ivy when they are both full grown  
Of all the trees that are in the wood  
the holly bears the crown

*Oh the rising of the sun and the running of the deer*  
*The playing of the merry organ,*  
*Sweet singing all in the choir*

The holly bears a blossom as white as the lily flower  
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ to be our sweet Savior

*Oh the rising of the sun...*

The holly bears a berry as red as any blood  
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ  
To do poor sinners good

*Oh the rising of the sun...*

The holly bears a prickle as sharp as any thorn  
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ  
On Christmas day in the morn

*Oh the rising of the sun...*

The holly bears a bark as bitter as any gall,  
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ for to redeem us all.

*Oh the rising of the sun...*

## The Second Lesson

*Luke 1: 26-38*

Reader: Kay Preston

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 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. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" 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. 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. For nothing will be impossible with God." 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.

**Reader** The Word of the Lord.  
**People** Thanks be to God.

**Anthem** *Ave Maria* Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.  
Benedicta tu in mulieribus,  
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus.  
Sancta Maria, Mater Dei,  
ora pro nobis peccatoribus,  
nunc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.  
Blessed art thou among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
pray for us sinners,  
now and in the hour of our death. Amen.*

**The Third Lesson** *Luke 2: 1–7*  
Reader: Bob Bowman

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. 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. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 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 in the guest room.

**Reader** The Word of the Lord.  
**People** Thanks be to God.

**Anthem** *Cradle song* Gerald Near (b. 1942)

Hush my dear, lie still and lumber,  
Holy angels guard thy bed.  
Heavenly blessings without number  
Gently falling on thy head.  
Sleep my babe; thy food and raiment,

House and home, thy friends provide;  
All without thy care and payment,  
All thy wants are well supplied.

Soft and easy is thy cradle;  
Coarse and hard thy Savior lay,  
When his birthplace was a stable  
And his softest bed was hay.  
See the kindly shepherds round him,  
Telling wonders from the sky!  
Where they sought him, there they found him,  
With his Virgin mother by.

Mayest thou live to know and fear him,  
Trust and love him all thy days;  
Then go dwell for ever near him,  
See his face, and sing his praise!  
Hush, my dear, lie still and slumber;  
Holy angels guard thy bed;  
Heavenly blessings without number  
Gently falling on thy head.

*Poem by Isaac Watts (1674–1748)*

**Hymn 78: O little town of Bethlehem (v. 1 & 2)**

**Anthem** *Myn lyking* R. R. Terry (1865–1938)

I saw a fair mayden sytten and sing.  
She lulled a lyttel childe, a sweete Lording.  
*Lullay myn lyking, my dere sonne, my sweeting.*  
*Lullay my dere herte, myn own dere derling.*

That same Lord is he that made alle thing;  
Of alle lordis he is Lord, of alle kynges Kyng.  
*Lullay myn lyking...*

There was mickle melody at that chylde's birth.  
All that were in heavenly bless, they made mickle mirth.  
*Lullay myn lyking...*

Angels bright sang their song to that chyld;  
Blyssid be thou, and so be she, so meek and so mild.  
*Lullay myn lyking...*

*Poem 15th century English*

**The Fourth Lesson** *Luke 2: 8–16*  
Reader: Tate Cantrell

Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 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: to

you is born this day in the city 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.

*Reader* The Word of the Lord.  
*People* Thanks be to God.

**Anthem** Sarah MacDonald (b. 1968)  
*The angels sing this day*

*The angels sing this day, and so will I.*

Now in a manger lies the eternal Word:  
the Word he is, yet can no speech afford;  
he is the Bread of Life, yet hungry lies;  
the Living Fountain, yet for drink he cries;

*The angels sing this day, and so will I.*

He cannot help or clothe himself at need  
who did the lilies clothe and ravens feed;  
he is the Light of Lights, yet now doth shroud  
his glory with our nature as a cloud.

*The angels sing this day, and so will I.*

Christ had four beds and those not soft nor brave:  
the Virgin's womb, the manger, cross, and grave.

The angels sing this day, and so will I  
that have more reason to be glad than they.

*Poem by Rowland Waykyns (ca. 1614–1664)*

#### Hymn 94: *While shepherds watched their flocks by night*

#### The Fifth Lesson

*Matthew 2: 1–11*  
Reader: Logan Craft

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east 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 magi 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 in the east, 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.

*Reader* The Word of the Lord.  
*People* Thanks be to God.

**Anthem** James Whitbourn (1963–2024)  
*The Magi's Dream*

Night has come to Bethlehem,  
The family is asleep  
Exhausted by the wonders seen,  
The news outrageous, deep  
'That I may come and worship him.'

Ox, and ass have closed their eyes,  
Their ears now hear no sound  
Shepherds have gone back to their flocks,  
The mouse still noses around.  
'That I may come and worship him.'

Kings have left for their distant lands,  
Fractious camels moan.  
At a desert spring they make their farewells.  
'It's a mighty way to home!'  
'That I may come and worship him.'

Later that night their heads are filled with a dream-drenched holy ray.  
'Do not return to Herod the king,  
Go back another way.'  
'That I may come and worship him.'

And so our Christ is saved from death  
His mission to complete  
To change the world by selfless love  
Satan's legions to beat.

*Poem by Robert Tear (1939–2011)*

An offering will be taken during the singing of the following hymn.

**Hymn 115: What child is this, who, laid to rest**

**The Sixth Lesson**

*John 1: 1-18*

Reader: Stella Sudderth

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

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

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. (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Reader      The Word of the Lord.  
People      Thanks be to God.

**Collects and Blessings**

*All stand for the Hymn.*

**Hymn 87: Hark! the herald angels sing**

**Dismissal**

**Postlude:**      Michel Rondeau (b. 1948)  
                    *The Twelve Days of Christmas*

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**Altar Flowers**

The flowers in the Church are given to the glory of God and in loving memory of Sue Elizabeth Redden by Carl Reitz and Ronda Redden Reitz

And in loving memory of John David Fox by Georgianna Vines

And in honor of those who dedicate time and service to the Backpack for Kids program at Green Magnet Academy

**Lay Ministries**

Ushers	David Jones - Lead, Zollie Cantrell, Mark Love
	Tommy Siler, Robert Straight
Greeters	Missy Minking, Anne Wilson
Crucifer	Becca Burress
Thurifer	Lloyd Terry
Verger	Braxton Hunter
Safety	Ryan Anderson, Larry Hutsell
Altar Guild	Anne Wilson & Team
Flower Guild	Kathy Lasater & Team

**Announcements**

*more information available at [www.stjohnscathedral.org](http://www.stjohnscathedral.org)*

**Today at the Cathedral**

9:20 am	Donuts & Discussions - Jr./High School - 2nd Floor
9:20 am	Nursery & Childcare Opens - 2nd Floor
10:30 am	S.K.i.P. Children's Church - ages 5 & up - 2nd Floor
11:30 am	Coffee & Cookies - Ross Hall

**Cathedral Holiday Office Hours**

The Cathedral Office will be closed December 24th, 25th and at 2:00 pm on Wednesday, December 31st. The office will also be closed Thursday, January 1st.

**A Visit with St. Nicholas**

Sunday, December 21st | 11:30 AM | Ross Hall

**Christmas Eve Services**

Wednesday, December 24th, 2025

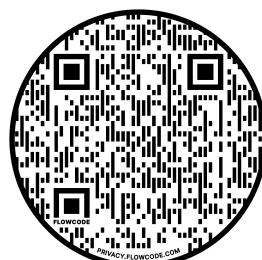
2:00 PM	Choir & Organ
4:30 PM	Choir & Orchestra <i>with Messiah prelude</i>
7:00 PM*	Choir & Orchestra <i>with Messiah prelude</i>
10:45 PM*	Choir & String Quartet

Nursery & S.K.i.P. offered at 2:00 PM, 4:30 PM, and 7:00 PM.

\* Streamed LIVE on YouTube & Knoxville Community Media

**Christmas Day**

10:00 AM Thursday, December 25th, 2025



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