

# Ceremony of Advent

## Festival of Lessons *Carols*



**Sunday, December 13, 2020**  
**10:30 AM**

## The Liturgy of the Word

### Lighting of the Advent Wreath

*Please stand as you are able.*

*Silently*

#### Introduction:

*Celebrant:* Welcome to the third Sunday in Advent. Today we light the rose candle indicating our joy over the nearness of the coming of the Lord. In some traditions, today is called "Gaudete" Sunday; Latin for "rejoice." It seemed appropriate to bring a joyful set of Advent lessons and carols to this date. Today we bring you music from a taped performance of Handel's Messiah done by the Muskogee Chorus and Orchestra, conducted by Tom Yadon. We are not going to play the entire three-hour performance. Instead, we have selected twelve pieces from Part 1 along with a bit of commentary on the scripture for each.

#### A Bidding Prayer

*Celebrant:* The Lord be with you

*People:* **And also with you**

*Celebrant:* Beloved in Christ, in this season of Advent, let it be our care and delight to prepare ourselves to hear again the message of the Angels, and in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem, to see the Babe lying in a manger.

Let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God from the first days of our disobedience unto the glorious Redemption brought us by his holy Child; and let us look forward to the yearly remembrance of his birth with hymns and songs of praise.

But first, let us pray for the needs of the whole world; for peace and goodwill over all the earth; for the mission and unity of the Church for which he died, and especially in this country and within this city.

And because this of all things would rejoice his heart, let us at this time remember in his name the poor and the helpless; the hungry and the oppressed; the sick and those who mourn; the lonely and the unloved; the aged and the little children; and all those who know not the Lord Jesus, or who love him not, or who by sin have grieved his heart of love.

Lastly, let us remember before God his pure and lowly Mother, and all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore and in a greater light, that multitude which no one can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and whom, in this Lord Jesus, we for evermore are one. **Amen.**

#### Reading I:

***Comfort ye, my people***

*Isaiah 40:1-3*

*Reader:* 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.

*Fr. Bob's comments:*

Christians have insisted that Isaiah predicts the coming of Christ since the Gospel of Mark was written. While I will not enter the debate about that here, perhaps we can better understand the circumstances under which Isaiah was written, and of those surrounding the birth of Jesus, and of our situation today. In every case, a people that is anxious about the future because of calamitous events beyond their control. The story begins with the prophet Isaiah asking God to comfort the people.

**Reading II:** ***Every valley shall be exalted*** *Isaiah 40:4*  
*Reader:* 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.

*Fr. Bob's comments:*  
We are all asked to become highway builders, raising up valleys, flattening hills, making rough places plain. The highway is not for people. It is for God's coming. The highway is in your heart.

**Reading III:** ***And the glory of the Lord.*** *Isaiah 40:5*  
*Reader:* Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

*Fr. Bob's comments:*  
The glory of the Lord to the Jews exiled in Babylon would be revealed as their return and rebuilding of Jerusalem. To the later Christian writers, it was the birth and later resurrection of the messiah. What glory of the Lord might be revealed to us today?

**Reading IV:** ***And He shall purify*** *Malachi 3:3*  
*Reader:* For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness

*Fr. Bob's comments:*  
One of the twelve Jewish tribes, the Levis were all priests in the Jerusalem temple. This verse about purifying the sons of Levi may be talking about removing the corruption from the temple priests before they return to rebuild the temple. Sometimes we have to clean the house before we can remodel it.

**Reading V:** ***Behold , a virgin shall conceive*** *Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23*  
*Reader:* Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."

*Fr. Bob's comments:*  
Let's get first things first. The Hebrew text of Isaiah says only that a young woman shall conceive. There are other Hebrew words for virgin, but they are not found in that verse which predates the birth of Jesus by over four hundred years. It was a translation of the Christian scriptures from Greek to Latin many centuries later where "young maiden" was converted into "virgin" and we have been hung up on that ever since. I invite you to ignore the details and enter into the full mystery of God becoming flesh and dwelling among us.

**Reading VI:** ***O thou, that tellest good tidings to Zion*** *Isaiah 40-9*  
*Reader:* Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"

*Fr. Bob's comments:*  
In movie terms, Isaiah chapter 40 is a "prequel." Here the future, rebuilt city of Jerusalem is to shout for joy to the neighboring cities of the region of Judah where Jerusalem is located. The city is to tell everyone in the region, "God is here again." We should all ask ourselves, "where is our God?" and will you tell your neighbors about it?

**Reading VII:** ***For unto us a child is born*** *Isaiah 9: 6.*

*Reader:* For 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.

*Fr. Bob's comments:*

This verse was cited by Christians from the earliest days as predictive of Jesus. In its original context, the exiled Jews in Babylon expected a military savior. Also, I caution you that words like "government" are misleading. In the days of kings and princes, the government was the king. Sometimes it is best not to get too wrapped up in the details and just enjoy the wonderful music.

**Reading VIII:** ***Glory to God in the Highest*** *Luke 2: 13-14*

*Reader:* 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!"

*Fr. Bob's comments:*

Now, we jump to Luke's account of the birth of Jesus when the angels sang glory and praise. I have always wondered if there are times in our ordinary lives when the angels sang too. You have to be still and listen. But they are singing.

**Reading IX:** ***He shall feed his flock*** *Isaiah 40:11; Matthew 11:28-29*

*Reader:* 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.

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

*Fr. Bob's comments:*

Who cannot be moved by these two pieces? Did you know that the librettist who organized all this scripture, believed strongly that God does intervene in the affairs of humans? The verses of the Messiah are a counterargument to the then prevailing popular thought of Deism held by Isaac Newton, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin – that God set the universe in motion at the beginning, and no longer interferes with the affairs of humans. Which one do you believe ?

**Reading X:** ***His yoke is easy*** *Matthew 11:30*

*Reader:* For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

*Fr. Bob's comments:*

This verse from Matthew's gospel is also the largest stained glass in this church. It is our "Come unto me" window that you see on the west wall before you leave the church. Jesus seems to remind us that the burdens we place on ourselves are heavier than what he gives us. Give up your burdens and you will find rest and hope.

**Reading XI:** ***Hallelujah*** *Revelation 19:6;11:15;19:16*

*Reader:* And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King Of Kings, And Lord Of Lords.

*Fr. Bob's gives his final remarks.*

**Reading XII:**

**Questions**

*Nora & Nancy*

*What does Hallelujah mean?*

*Why do we say Hallelujah at Christmas?*

### **Blessing**

*Celebrant:* May Almighty God, by whose providence our Savior Christ came among us in great humility, sanctify you with the light of his blessing and set you free from all sin.

*People:* **Amen.**

*Celebrant:* May he whose second Coming in power and great glory we await, make you steadfast in faith, joyful in hope, and constant in love.

*People:* **Amen.**

*Celebrant:* May you, who rejoice in the first Advent of our Redeemer, at his second Advent be rewarded with unending life.

*People:* **Amen.**

*Celebrant:* And the blessing of God Almighty, † the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you for ever.

*People:* **Amen.**

# **CommunionToGo**

## **Missing communion?**

**Now you can partake  
without leaving your car!**

**Following our virtual  
worship service until  
12:30PM each Sunday, a  
bag of communion wafers  
and a church bulletin will  
be distributed to each car  
driving through the  
drop-off lane next to the  
church doors on 6th St.**







# CHRISTMAS VIRTUAL SERVICES:

December 13, 2020

Lessons & Carols - 10:30AM

December 16, 2020

Blue Christmas—6:00PM

December 24, 2020

Christmas Carols - 5:30PM & 10:30PM

Christmas Eve Mass - 6:00PM & 11:00PM

December 25, 2020

Christmas Broadcast - 10:30AM



# Poinsettias for the 2020 Christmas Altar

**Please make checks payable to: Grace Episcopal Church  
with altar guild on the memo line and place it, along with this  
form, into the offering plate or bring/mail it to the Parish Office.**

Name of Donor: \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

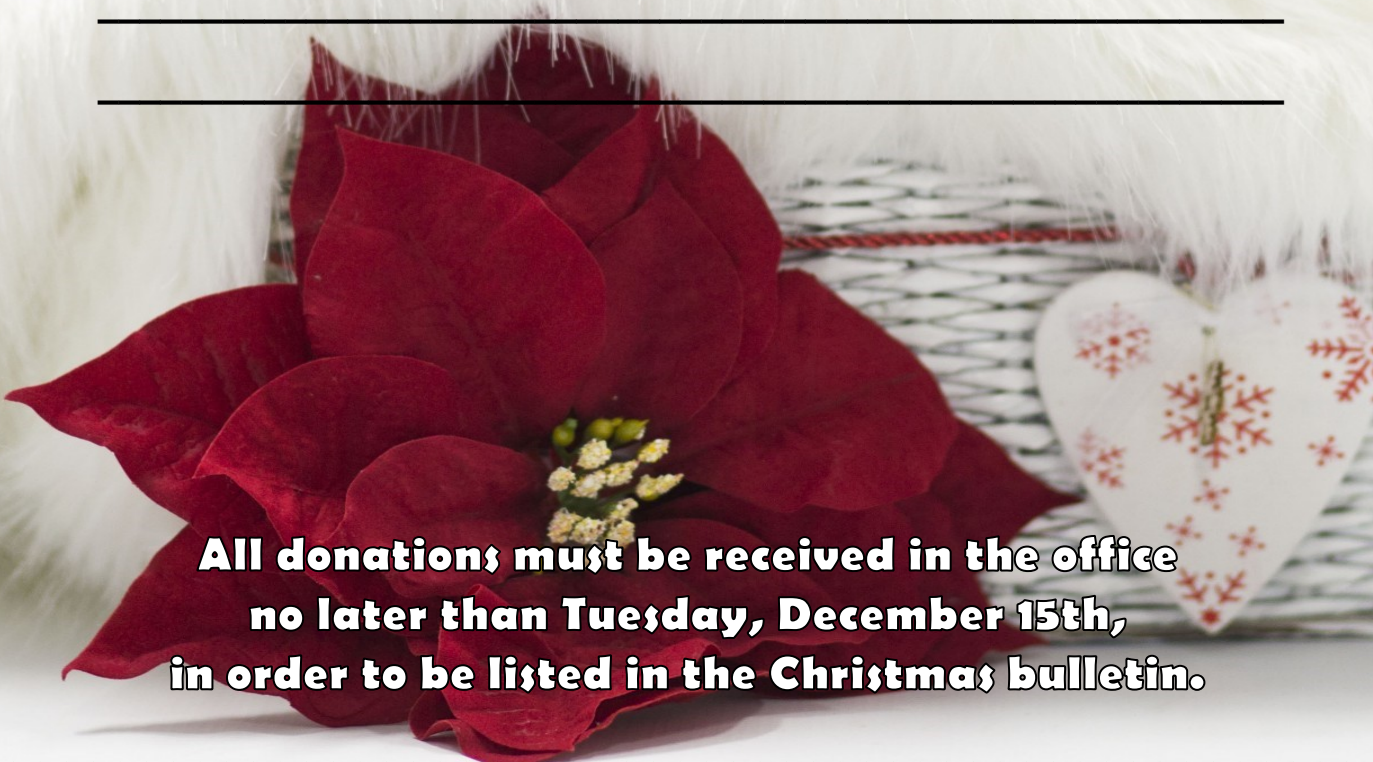
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In Honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

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**All donations must be received in the office  
no later than Tuesday, December 15th,  
in order to be listed in the Christmas bulletin.**



# Blue CHRISTMAS

JOIN US FOR COMFORT & INSPIRATION THIS SEASON

We will hold a VIRTUAL "Blue Christmas" service of healing and quiet reflection at

**6pm Wednesday, December 16th, 2020.**

We know that the holidays can be stressful, busy, and sometimes lonely. This special service is for those in need of respite—whether due to divorce, tough economic times, the loss of a loved one, or whatever has them feeling down at the holidays.



## END OF 2020 CONTRIBUTION YEAR

In order for giving to be credited to the 2020 tax year, contributions must be received in the office no later than:

**Sunday, December 27th.**

Any contributions received after this will be posted to 2021 as this is the last deposit date for 2020.



**218 N. 6th Street Muskogee, OK 74401**

**Phone/Fax:** (918) 687-5416

**Email:** [Office@GraceMuskogee.org](mailto:Office@GraceMuskogee.org);

**Website:** [www.GraceMuskogee.org](http://www.GraceMuskogee.org)

**Ministers:** All the People of God (BCP p. 855)

**Rector:** The Rev. Bob Wickizer

**Deacon:** The Rev. Thomas A. Harrington

**Music Director:** Kenneth Yadon

**Rector's Cell:** 918-913-2605; **Email:** [bob@gracemuskogee.org](mailto:bob@gracemuskogee.org)

