Church Mission Society

CAROL SERVICE

The call in action
Inspired by the Stations of the Cross, this service outline will encourage your congregation or small group to reflect on the events that led up to the wonderful birth of our saviour. Christmas is a wonderful opportunity to welcome people into our church buildings and to go out into the communities we live in. We hope that this interactive resource will be an accessible way for people to encounter the familiar but radical story of Jesus coming to us.

**HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE:**

You will need to set up your stations around your church or room. You may want to print the words and have them available for people to read at the station. We recommend you also use a visual prop at each station: this could be an item in your church or room, like a stained glass window, a sculpture-figure or a printed image which reflects the passage. You may also want to light a candle at each station.

As a group visit each station, one person reads out the Bible passage and meditation and leads the singing. Leave time for silence so people can reflect on the words and the images.

Alternatively you can set up the stations around the church/room for people to move around individually. The words of the songs can be used for people to reflect on. You may want to have music playing quietly to add to the atmosphere.

This resource was created by Isaac Frisby and includes reflections written by staff members of Church Mission Society.
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 overcome it.

John 1:1–5
STATION 1: ANNUNCIATION

“Upon entering, Gabriel greeted her: ‘Good morning! You’re beautiful with God’s beauty, beautiful inside and out! God be with you.’”


MEDITATION

Just as Mary, with great humility, says “Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word”, so do we, like Mary, accept the work of the Holy Spirit who grows Jesus in us from a tiny bundle of cells to a fully-grown man, so that “it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.”

A short period of silence will be kept
“And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.”

Luke 2:4–5, KJV

MEDITATION

God is on the move; hidden in the womb of a teenage peasant on an arduous four day journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Might this be how God moves through the world – seemingly hidden yet amongst us; God in the unlikely? – Debbie James

O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight

For Christ is born of Mary
And gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love
O morning stars together
Proclaim the holy birth
And praises sing to God the King
And Peace to men on earth

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.

O holy Child of Bethlehem
Descend to us, we pray
Cast out our sin and enter in
Be born to us today
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell
O come to us, abide with us
Our Lord Emmanuel.

Philip Brooks
“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.”

Luke 2:7

MEDITATION
What were Mary’s thoughts as she wrapped her precious new born son in bands of cloth? Did she marvel at the tiny hands that would one day stretch out to save us? Did she catch her breath as she looked into the loving eyes of her saviour for the first time? Did she find it hard to lay him in that manger, wanting to hold on to him but knowing that some day she would need to let him go? Did she stay silent or did she find that she couldn’t help but sing praises? What are your thoughts as you look into your saviour’s eyes this Christmas? Come let us adore him! – Sharon Martin

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.
Silent night, holy night,
Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ the Saviour is born,
Christ the Saviour is born!

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.

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.

Joseph Mohr/Franz Gruber
“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 favours!’”

Luke 2:13–15

**MEDITATION**

The heavenly host, those who are in on the secret of God becoming a man, are the first to shout forth praise to the newborn Lord and preach the good news of his Incarnation. We in our current time, we who have been let in on the secret, take on this angelic messenger role today; celebrating, worshipping, and proclaiming the good news to all. – Isaac Frisby

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**Hark! the herald angels sing**
Glory to the new-born King
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled
Joyful, all ye nations, rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With angelic host proclaim
Christ is born in Bethlehem
Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King
Christ, by highest heaven adored
Christ, the everlasting Lord
Late in time behold him come
Offspring of the Virgin's womb
Hail the Flesh, the God Head see

Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with man to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel!
Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King
Hail the Heaven-born Prince of Peace
Hail the Son of Righteousness
Light and life to all He brings
Risen with healing in His wings
Mild He lays His Glory by
Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth
Born to give them second birth
Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King.

Charles Wesley
“Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.”

Luke 2:15

MEDITATION

The shepherds, a group on the edge of first-century Jewish society, were chosen to be the first to hear the universe-transforming news of Jesus’ birth. If Jesus were born today, would God choose to tell first refugees, prisoners or homeless people? Help us, Lord Jesus, to remember those on the margins of our society and to put them first, as you did – the preacher who told us that “the last shall be first”. – Hannah Caroe

Adestes Fideles

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant!
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him
Born the King of Angels:
O come, let us adore Him, (3×)
Christ the Lord.

God of God, light of light,
Lo, he abhors not the Virgin’s womb;
Very God, begotten, not created:
O come, let us adore Him, (3×)
Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of Heaven above!
Glory to God, glory in the highest:
O come, let us adore Him, (3×)
Christ the Lord.

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory given!
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing!
O come, let us adore Him, (3×)
Christ the Lord.

John Wade
“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.”

Matthew 2:11

MEDITATION

The magi left behind their comforts to seek out the One who gave up everything. The only right response for the magi was to offer their gifts and worship. So we too are invited to seek afresh, to offer our lives anew and to worship wholeheartedly. – Susann Haehnel

Joy to the world! The Lord is come:
let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare him room
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven, and heaven and nature sing!

Joy to the earth! the Saviour reigns:
let men their songs employ!
While fields and floods, rocks hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy!

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!

He rules the earth 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.

Isaac Watts
“Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt”

Matthew 2:14

MEDITATION
This child, the world’s most precious gift, the Prince of Peace, is carried into exile amid the threat of ruthless violence, fear and death. Yet this same child will return, a new Exodus, bearing hope for the world. He will not take flight in the face of cruelty and death and by his resurrection he will triumph over all the powers of darkness. – Colin Smith

INTERCESSIONS
(This is a time of open prayer; please do pray for the following, either out loud or silently)

🌟 For the refugee
🌟 For the oppressed
🌟 For the sick
🌟 For the hungry
🌟 For the lonely
🌟 For the disappointed
🌟 For the hopeless
🌟 For the lost

🌟 For the powerful
🌟 For the leaders of the world
🌟 For the Church
🌟 For the wicked
🌟 For the oppressor
🌟 For the terrorist
🌟 For the criminal
🌟 For our enemies
“And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.”
Luke 2:40, KJV

MEDITATION

Joseph, relieved by Herod’s death, reassured by the angelic dream, takes his family home again, a new Exodus from Egypt. But the chill finger of fear finds him afresh: the name of Archelaeus is enough in itself to send him north to Nazareth. But even fear serves the purposes of God. Jesus, raised in Nazareth, becomes the prophesied Nazarene: one step further on the road to all the promises of God being fulfilled in him. – Philip Mounstephen

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.

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.

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.

For he is our childhood’s pattern;
Day by day, like us He grew;
He was little, weak and helpless,
Tears and smiles like us He knew;
And He feeleth for our sadness,
And He shareth in our gladness.

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.

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;
Where like stars His children crowned
All in white shall wait around.

Cecil Frances Alexander