

# IFFP Service of Lessons and Carols December 18, 2005

**Opening Song**—"This Little Light of Mine" (sung by Preschool class)

**Welcome and Sharing of Joys and Concerns**

**Interfaith Responsive Reading**

**Reader:** We gather here as an Interfaith Community to share and celebrate the gift of life together

**All:** Some of us gather as the Children of Israel  
Some of us gather in the name of Jesus of Nazareth  
Some of us gather influenced by each

**Reader:** Howsoever we come, and whomsoever we are  
May we be moved, In our time together  
To experience that sense of Divine presence in each of us evoked by our worship together

**All:** And to know in the wisdom of our hearts that deeper unity in which all are one.

**Reading: First Coming, by Madeleine L'Engle**

God did not wait till the world was ready,  
Till nations were at peace.  
God came when the Heavens were unsteady,  
And prisoners cried out for release.

God did not wait for the perfect time.  
God came when the need was deep and great.  
God dined with sinners in all their grim,  
Turned water into wine. God did not wait

Till hearts were pure. In joy God came  
To a tarnished world of sin and doubt.  
To a world like ours, of anguished shame  
God came, and God's Light would not go out.

God came to a world which did not mesh,  
To heal its tangles, shield its scorn.  
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh  
The Maker of the stars was born.

We cannot wait till the world is sane  
To raise our songs with joyful voice,  
For to share our grief, to touch our pain,  
God came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

## **First Lesson: The Prophecy, Isaiah 11:1-9**

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.  
The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might,  
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.  
His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord....  
...The wolf shall live with the lamb,  
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,  
and a little child shall lead them.  
The cow and the bear shall graze,  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.  
The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,  
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.  
They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain;  
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord  
as the waters cover the sea.

### ***Carol: Joy to the World***

*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 world, the Savior reigns!  
Let all their songs employ,  
While fields and floods,  
Rocks, hills, and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy  
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.*

## **Second Lesson: The Annunciation, Luke 1:26-35**

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be.

And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name 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 father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end."

## **Reading: Mother of God, by William Butler Yeats**

The threefold terror of love; a fallen flare  
Through the hollow of an ear;  
Wings beating about the room;  
The terror of all terrors that I bore  
The Heavens in my womb.

Had I not found content among the shows  
Every common woman knows,  
Chimney corner, garden walk,  
Or rocky cistern where we tread the clothes  
And gather all the talk?

What is this flesh I purchased with my pains,  
This fallen star my milk sustains,  
This love that makes my heart's blood stop  
Or strikes a Sudden chill into my bones  
And bids my hair stand up?

## **Carol: The Virgin Mary Had a Baby Boy**

*The Virgin Mary had a baby boy (3x)  
And they said that his name was (beat) Jesus*

*Chorus (2x):  
He come from the glory  
He come from the glorious kingdom*

*The angels told where the baby was born (3x)  
And they said that his name was (beat) Jesus*

*Chorus (2x)*

*The shepherds came where the baby was born (3x)  
And they said that his name was (beat) Jesus*

*Chorus (2x)*

*The wise men saw where the baby was born (3x)  
And they said that his name was (beat) Jesus*

*Chorus (sing 4 times)*

## **Third Lesson: Joseph's Dream, Matthew 1:18-25**

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the

Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

### **Reading: Tell Again the Christmas Story, by Langston Hughes**

Tell again the Christmas story;  
Christ is born in all His glory!

Baby laid in manger dark,  
Lighting ages with the spark  
Of innocence that is the Child  
Trusting all within his smile.

Tell again the Christmas story  
With the halo of His glory:  
Halo born of humbleness  
By the breath of cattle blest,  
By the poverty of stall  
Where a bed of hay is all,  
By a door closed at the inn  
Only men of means get in  
By a door closed to the poor,  
Christ born on earthen floor  
In a stable with no lock—  
Yet kingdoms tremble at the shock  
Of a king in swaddling clothes  
At an address no one knows  
Because there is no painted sign—  
Nothing but a star divine,  
Nothing but a halo bright  
About His young head in the night,  
Nothing but the wondrous light  
Of innocence that is the Child  
Trusting all within His smile.

Mary's Son of golden star:  
Wise men journey from afar.  
Mary's Son in manger born:  
Music of the Angel's horn.  
Mary's Son in straw and glory:  
Wonder of the Christmas story!

**Carol: O Little Town of Bethlehem**

*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 thy holy birth.  
Your voices raise to God in praise: and peace to all on earth.*

**Fourth Lesson: Journey to Bethlehem, Luke 2:1-7**

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

**Reading: The Oxen, by Thomas Hardy**

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.  
'Now they are all on their knees,'  
An elder said as we sat in a flock  
By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where  
They dwelt in their strawy pen,  
Nor did it occur to one of us there  
To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave  
In these years! Yet, I feel,  
If someone said on Christmas Eve,  
'Come; see the oxen kneel,

'In the lonely barton by yonder coomb  
Our childhood used to know,'  
I should go with him in the gloom,  
Hoping it might be so.

**Carol: What Child Is This?**

*What child is this who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping?*

*Chorus: This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard, and angels sing:  
Haste, haste to bring him laud, the Babe, the Son of Mary.*

*So bring him incense, gold and myrrh, come, rich and poor, to own him,  
The King of Kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone him.*

*Chorus.*

### **Fifth Lesson: Visitation of the Shepherds, Luke 2:8-14**

And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths 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, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!"

### **Reading: Angels Gather, by Maya Angelou**

Angels gather.  
the rush of mad air  
cyclones through.  
Wing tips brush the  
hair, a million strands  
stand: waving black anemones.  
Hosannahs crush the  
shell's ear tender, and  
tremble  
down clattering  
to the floor.  
Harps sound,  
undulate their sensuous meanings.  
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!  
You  
beyond the door.

### **Carol: Angels We Have Heard on High**

*Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'r the plains,  
And the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains.*

*Chorus: Glo-o-o-r-ia, in exelsis deo, Glo-o-o-r-ia, in exelsis deo.*

*Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?  
What your gladsome tidings be, which inspire this heavn'ly song?*

*Chorus.*

## Sixth Lesson: Visitation of the Wise Men, Matthew 2:1-6

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet: `And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will govern my people Israel.'"

### Reading: Journey of the Magi, by T. S. Eliot

"A cold coming we had of it,  
Just the worst time of the year  
For a journey, and such a long journey:  
The ways deep and the weather sharp,  
The very dead of winter."  
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,  
Lying down in the melting snow.  
There were times we regretted  
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,  
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.  
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling  
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,  
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,  
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly  
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:  
A hard time we had of it.  
At the end we preferred to travel all night,  
Sleeping in snatches,  
With the voices singing in our ears, saying  
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,  
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;  
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,  
And three trees on the low sky,  
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.  
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,  
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,  
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.  
But there was no information, and so we continued  
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon  
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,  
And I would do it again, but set down  
This set down  
This: were we led all that way for  
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,  
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,  
But had thought they were different; this Birth was  
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.

We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,  
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,  
With an alien people clutching their gods.  
I should be glad for another death.

**Carol: We Three Kings of Orient Are**

*We three kings of Orient are; bearing gifts we traverse afar,  
Field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.*

*Chorus:*

*O..... star of wonder, star of night  
Star with royal beauty bright  
Westward leading, still proceeding  
Guide us to thy perfect light.*

*Glorious now, behold him arise; Christ and God and sacrifice:  
Alleluia, alleluia, sounds through the earth and skies*

*Chorus.*

**Seventh Lesson: John 1:1-5**

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 were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

**Reading: Each Night a Child is Born, by Sophia Lyon Fahs**

For so the children come  
And so they have been coming.  
Always in the same way they come  
Born of the seed of man and woman.  
No angels herald their beginnings.  
No prophets predict their future courses.  
No wiseman see a star to show  
Where to find the babe that will save humankind.  
Yet each night a child is born is a holy night.  
Fathers and mothers  
Sitting beside their children's cribs  
Feel glory in the sight of a new life beginning.  
They ask, "Where and how will this new life end?  
Or will it ever end?"  
Each night a child is born is a holy night—  
A time for singing,  
A time for wondering,  
A time for worshipping.



### **Carol: Silent Night**

*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!  
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.*

### **Benediction and Charge**

**All:** May we go out into the world carrying with each of us the love & blessing of this Interfaith Community

**Reader:** May we continue to hold on to what is good and to stand as beacons of light and understanding for all people.

**All:** May God's spirit and peace be with us each now and forever.

**Reader:** May the Lord bless you and keep you and bring you peace. Amen.

### **Blessing over Snack**

Baruch atah adonai elohaynu melech ha-olam hamotzi le-chem min ha-aretz.  
(*Blessed art thou o Lord, ruler of the universe, who has brought forth the fruit of the earth*)

We thank thee, God, for happy hearts, for rain and sunny weather.  
We thank thee, God, for this our food, and that we are together.  
-- Emilie Fendall Johnson

### **Carol: Go Tell it On the Mountain**

*When shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,  
Behold throughout the heavens, there shone a holy light.*

*Chorus: Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere  
Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ was born*

*The shepherds feared and trembled, when lo! above the earth  
Rang out the angel chorus, that hailed our Saviour's birth*

*Chorus*

*Down in a lowly manger, the humble Christ was born  
And God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn.*

*Chorus*

