

Joy Has Dawned: A Children's Christmas Service

Opening Hymn: 353, "Joy to the World"

Preschoolers' Song: "In A Little Stable"

Stand

Minister: In the name of the Father and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit.

Congregation: Amen.

Opening Dialogue (selected verses from Psalm
65):

M: Praise awaits you, our God, in Zion;

C: to you our vows will be fulfilled.

M: You who answer prayer,

C: to you all people will come.

M: When we were overwhelmed by sins,

C: you forgave our transgressions.

M: Blessed are those you choose and bring near
to live in your courts!

C: We are filled with the good things of your
house, of your holy temple.

M: The whole earth is filled with awe at your
wonders;

C: where morning dawns, where evening fades,
you call forth songs of joy.

M: O Jesus Christ, your manger is our paradise at which we now recline. There, O Lord, we find the Word made flesh for us; there, O Lord, your grace brightly shines. Move us by your Spirit to depend on you alone; enable us to be of good cheer; keep us steadfast in the midst of sorrow; fix our hearts on you, our greatest treasure. For in you and through faith in you we possess a lasting crown and look forward to honor beyond measure in the eternal glories of heaven. We ask these things in your name, our Savior and Lord (based on “O Jesus Christ, Your Manger Is” [CW 342]).

C: Amen.

Be seated

1. THE DAWN OF TIME

Narration: Brayden Walker “In the beginning...”
These familiar words from Genesis launch the account of God creating the universe. The eternal God, who knows no beginning and no end, created time.

Recitation: 6&8 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day (Genesis 1:1,3-5).

Narration: Brayden Walker From there we hear about the creation of water and sky, land and vegetation, stars and planets, and all animals in the sky and in the waters and on the land. And then God created humans.

Recitation: 6&8 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:26-27).

Narration: Brayden Walker After creating the first man and woman, God established marriage

and gave humans their purpose. He blessed these people, named Adam and Eve, and said to them:

Recitation: 6&8 “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so (Genesis 1:28-30).

Narration: Brayden Walker God also made a way for humans to show their love for him—he gave them a command that they could follow.

Recitation: 6&8 The Lord God commanded...“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die” (Genesis 2:16-17).

Narration: Brayden Walker The record of the dawning of time concludes with these joy-filled observations:

Recitation: 6&8 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good (Genesis 1:31).

Congregation: Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame (Genesis 2:25).

Hymn: 360, “Branch is Growing”

2. THE DAWN OF HOPE

Narration: Jackie LaPratt It was not long before the perfection and joy in all of God’s creation were shattered, and God’s perfect relationship with humans was severed. It began in heaven. In the last book of the Bible, we are told that shortly after God created all that there is, a rebellion took place, led by an angel of light who became an agent of darkness.

Recitation: 4th War broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place

in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—
that ancient serpent called the devil, or
Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was
hurled to the earth, and his angels with him
(Revelation 12:7-9).

Narration: Jackie LaPratt Back in the first book of
the Bible, we hear what this devil, Satan, did
next. He seeded doubts and spread lies. He did
only what his fallen nature could do: deceive,
harm, and relentlessly pursue the spiritual death
of God’s beloved children.

Recitation: 5th Now the serpent was more crafty
than any of the wild animals the Lord God had
made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say,
‘You must not eat from any tree in the
garden’?” The woman said to the serpent, “We
may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but
God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree
that is in the middle of the garden, and you
must not touch it, or you will die.’” “You will not
certainly die,” the serpent said to the
woman. “For God knows that when you eat from
it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like
God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:1-5).

Narration: Jackie LaPratt And then it happened.

Love for following God's command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was replaced by rebellion against his command. Eve ate. Adam accepted her offer of the fruit and also ate. Sin and all its evil effects had entered the world. Adam and Eve realized they were naked and they felt shame. They heard God walking in the garden and hid in fear. They avoided any blame for their wrongdoing at all cost.

Choir: 574 vs 1-2, "The Tree of Life"

Narration: Jared Frank Adam and Eve's rebellion had immediate and severe consequences:

All Women and Girls: To [Eve, God] said "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (Genesis 3:16).

All Men and Boys: To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from

the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return" (Genesis 3:17-19).

Narration: Jared Frank A great darkness had come over and into creation—not in physical light but in life now and forever. Pain, curses, adversities, tiring and aggravated daily effort, broken relationships, and worst of all—physical death and eternal separation from God for eternity. The prophet Isaiah sums up this darkness that by nature is at the center of every human soul and into which all are born:

All Women and Girls: Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and

their God. Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness (Isaiah 8:21-22).

Narration: Jared Frank Can there be any hope after this great and eternal fall? After meriting nothing but distress, death, and eternal darkness? Yes! Returning to Genesis, we immediately

read this promise from God, graciously given to Adam and Eve after their fateful choice:

All Men and Boys: The Lord God said to the serpent...“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Genesis 3:14-15).

Narration: Jared Frank There it is...the dawn of hope! The first promise of a Savior who would crush the devil and redeem humanity from his evil grasp. The prophet Isaiah repeats this promise with greater detail:

Congregation: The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in

the land of deep darkness a light has dawned
(Isaiah 9:2).

Narration: Jared Frank For to us a child is born, to
us a son is given, and the government will
be on his shoulders. And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the
greatness of his government and peace there will
be

no end. He will reign on David's throne and over
his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with
justice and righteousness from that time on and
forever (Isaiah 9:6-7).

All: The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish
this (Isaiah 9:7).

Hymn: 345, "Where Shepherds Lately Kneled"

3. THE DAWN OF JOY

Narration: Chelsea Walker A promise made is
only good if it is kept. God repeated the promise
of a Savior for hundreds of years, offering more
details about the circumstances of the Savior's

appearing and keeping it central in the minds and hearts of his people as they endured the many ups and downs of their sin-filled existence.

But would it ever happen? Would the Savior ever appear? Generation after generation died still waiting. Would God ever fulfill that promise?

Would he keep it? The gospel writers report the details. When the time was right, God sent his messenger to a young virgin named Mary.

Recitation: 5th God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:26-28,31-33).

Recitation: K-3 “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” (Luke 1:34).

Recitation: K-3 The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

Narration: Chelsea Walker A pregnant virgin? Yes, just as Isaiah foretold. But that would cause quite a stir in the community—an unmarried woman found to be pregnant! Matthew records the commotion and God’s faithfulness to his salvation promise and plan.

All Women and Girls: Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly (Matthew 1:18-19).

All Men and Boys: But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him

in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him (Matthew 1:20-21,24).

Narration: Chelsea Walker Trusting in God’s promises, Mary and Joseph moved forward to the blessed day of the Savior’s birth. Luke records the final details of that first Christmas.

All Men and Boys: In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register (Luke 2:1-3).

Recitation: K-3 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went

there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child (Luke 2:4-5).

All Women and Girls: While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them (Luke 2:6-7).

Children's Hymn: 341, "Away in a Manger"

Narration: Braylin Zieroff When Jesus—the world's long-promised and only Savior—was born,

God ensured that the news began spreading immediately. Luke continues his report:

Recitation: K-3 There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been

born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:8-12).
Narration: Braylin Zieroff “To you.” Those words know no bounds of time or culture, of status or reputation, of sin or shame or guilt. This event wasn’t just for the shepherds—it’s for all of us too! Jesus was born to be your Savior and mine...the dawn of joy for all the world! Such joyous

news calls for glorious praise. And the shepherds saw and heard just that.

Recitation: 4th Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

All: “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests” (Luke 2:13-14).

Children’s Hymn: 337, “Silent Night”

4. THE DAWN OF “CHRISTIANS”

Narration: Kenley Woolworth The good news of the long-awaited birth of the Savior had a

remarkable effect on these shepherds. Luke tells
us:

Recitation: 5th When the angels had left them
and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one
another,

All: “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that
has happened, which the Lord has told
us about” (Luke 2:15).

Recitation: 5th So they hurried off and found Mary
and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in
the manger (Luke 2:16).

Stand

Hymn: 354 vs 1 & 3, “O Come, All Ye Faithful”

Be seated

Narration: Piper Schultz And what did the
shepherds do after finding Jesus in the manger?

Luke tells us that “they spread the word
concerning what had been told them about this
child”

and that they returned to their fields and flocks
“glorifying and praising God for all the things they
had heard and seen, which were just as they had
been told” (Luke 2:17-18). The birth of Jesus

was a turning point in history, from waiting on the fulfillment of a promise to sharing the news of a promise fulfilled. They wouldn't be called Christians until some decades later, but the birth of

Jesus was the dawning of a new name for the people of God, followers of the God-man, Jesus. Luke tells us in his other book in the Bible, Acts: Recitation: K-3 For a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch (Acts 11:26).

Narration: Piper Schultz Like the shepherds that first Christmas night, God's believers share throughout the world the good news of sins forgiven in Jesus. And the Lord blesses that effort. Luke shares this report about those first-called Christians:

Recitation: 4-8 Those who had been scattered by persecution...traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. Some of them, however, men from

Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord (Acts 11:19-21).

Narration: Piper Schultz The good news that began at Christmas culminated in Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Jesus' death in our place redeemed us from all our sin. His resurrection defeated death forever. This salvation is ours. This free gift is ours to share with everyone.

All: Joy has dawned for you, for me, for all!

Hymn: 352, "Joy Has Dawned"

Offering

Stand

M: On this holy day, dear Father, we rejoice to hear the good news of great joy that a Savior has been born for us. For fulfilling your prophecies and in the fullness of time sending your Son to be our Savior, we give you our heartfelt thanks and praise.

C: Unto us a child is born! Unto us a Son is given!

M: What a great mystery of our faith this is: that God has become fully human for our salvation!

Even though he is the all-powerful Lord of all, he is wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.

C: Help us always believe that this precious child was born as our substitute to be our Savior.

M: In the midst of our joy, we grieve for the many people in our world who do not know that Jesus has come to bring them forgiveness and healing. As the shepherds spread abroad the good news of the birth of the Savior born for all the world, may we also make use of the unique opportunities this holiday presents to tell others of what we have seen and heard concerning the child.

C: Grant that the true peace between God and fallen mankind may comfort all people.

M: As the angels sang out their praise, move us also to sing out our praise to you, today and every day, as the joy of Christmas remains in our hearts.

C: Glory to God in the highest! Amen.

All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be

done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day
our daily bread; and forgive us our
trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass
against us; and lead us not into
temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is
the kingdom and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.

M: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord
make his face shine on you and be gracious to
you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you
peace.

C: Amen.

Be seated

Closing Hymn: 338, Children vs 1, Congregation
vs 2-3, "On Christmas Night All Christians
Sing"