

# Christmas Carol Service



**DERRY DIOCESAN  
CATECHETICAL  
CENTRE**

## 1.1 **SETTING THE SCENE**

### **Suggested ways of Setting the Scene**

Covid restrictions regarding social distancing processions have been included in the liturgy. The readings can be read by one or two people who are stationed apart.

The congregational singing can be replaced by a soloist or taped carols.

The Liturgy begins with the sounding of a Christmas bell. Then a soloist sings the first verse of **Once in Royal David's City**. (Hymn 1) (could be taped music)

If possible, begin in darkness, then switch on the lights as the first carol ends. One person carries in the lit Advent Wreath.

A Nativity scene could be set up on the stage (manger, seat for Mary, notices to identify shepherd and Wise Men areas, some grass strewn around. A light could shine on each section of the tableau to replace the movement across the stages of the bible characters.

Instead of bringing individuals to the Nativity Scene a light could be shone on the Nativity scene at the place indicated in the gospel passage. Likewise the introduction to each carol could be read by the same person. The carols can be sung by one person depending on what is permitted. music can be used

## 1: 2 **WELCOME**

### **Congregation are seated**

Priest/Leader

Welcome to our Carol Service. This is one of my favourite events of the year and though times are different this year I know that you have united with us for the yearly celebration of the carol service Today is all about the spirit of Christmas- a time to listen, a time to sing, a time to reflect, a time to pray and a time to sit back and relax.

We gather, in person or online to hear with joy the message brought to the world through the birth of a child over 2000 years ago. We shall journey in heart and mind to Bethlehem, to reflect on the nativity story, to try and really hear the Christmas story as if for the first time, and consider how we can bring the Christmas message of love and peace to life in today's world. We will listen to some well-known carols and maybe even sing along! And we shall also pray that our family, friends, and neighbours are safe this Christmas and that the joy of Christmas message will help them cope with ongoing effects of Covid 19.

We pray for fellowship among all the peoples of the world, for care for the poor and needy, We will pray for God's earth and thank God for his great gift and promise to care for all of God's creation. As we begin this time of prayer, let us take a moment to pray and reflect.  
(Pause)

### **1:3 OPENING PRAYER AND CAROL**

Once in David's Royal City - entrance

**Priest/Leader:** We begin this time of prayer as we make the **Sign of the Cross.**

In the name of the Father, + and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

The Lord be with you.

**And with your spirit.**

Lord as we gather here this (time of day/night) enkindle the light of hope within us. Fill us with the Spirit of Joy as we prepare to celebrate the Birth of Jesus. Renew your gift of Peace to our world, to our country and to our communities.

May we welcome your Love into our hearts and into our homes. May Jesus, the light of the world, bring light, joy, peace, and love to all those who search in darkness. Today, as we gather for our annual carol service, we ask God's blessing on each one of us. Free us from any worry or distress that we may have and help us to welcome the light of Christ into our lives, a light that gives us the gift of hope. May hope, come into our hearts, our minds, and our homes.

We ask this through Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God forever and ever. **Amen**

### **1: 4 INVITATION**

Our second carol **O Come All Ye Faithful** calls us together in unity. Introducing this carol is \_\_\_ **(could be same person throughout)**

#### **Reader 1:**

The carol is an invitation to step into the nativity story, to make our journey of the imagination to be in the Bethlehem stable, and to join with others who have already travelled to this place. This carol goes straight to the heart of why Christmas is so special to Christians across the world and reflects the Creed we say each Sunday at Mass.

This carol is believed to have been written in 1743 in France by a Roman Catholic Layman called John Wade. Originally written in Latin and called *Adeste Fideles*, the carol was not translated into English for almost 100 years. It is based on the account of the birth of Jesus found in Luke's gospel.

### **1:5 O Come all you Faithful**

Together we stand to sing/sit to listen to : **O Come All Ye Faithful**

Congregational hymns provide opportunity for those present to stand but the words of the carol would need to be visible (leaflet/on a screen) **(could be soloist or taped music)**

**1:6 Birth of Jesus Luke 2:1-7**

As this reading is being read, Mary and Joseph walk slowly on stage and take up their positions at the Nativity. A light shines on them. **(Alternatively a light could shine on the seats set on the Nativity Scene for Mary and Joseph)**

**Reader 2: (quiet music in background) Luke 2:1-7**

**Leader:** Our third carol takes us to the manger and that hopeful scene. Introducing this carol is \_\_\_\_\_

**Reader 3:** Information below

The author of **Away in a Manger** is unknown. The tune was a well-known melody called the 'Cradle Song' which gives the carol the feel of a lullaby. The carol ends with a prayer of blessing "Bless all of the children"

This carol paints a simple picture of a baby trying to sleep and being lulled by the sounds that are around him. It is easy to forget the simplicity of the Christmas story, but let us pause and remind ourselves what we are celebrating- the miracle of birth, of life, the miracle that each of us are is celebrated in the Christmas story and in the birth of Jesus.

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, we ask God's blessing on everyone gathered here today. Open our hearts to the good news that this birth represents and help us to welcome the light of Christ into our lives, a light that gives us the gift of joy. May this joy fill our hearts, our minds, and our homes. We ask this through Christ Our Lord. **Amen**

**Congregational/Choir: Away in a Manger**

Please stand and join in/sit and listen to the singing of **Away in a Manger**.

(Pause as they stand) **(could be soloist or taped music)**

**Priest/Leader:** Prayer after First Reading and Carol

Father,

Through all the ages you have called your people from darkness into light,  
making their gladness greater and their joy increase.

As we celebrate a child born for us, a son given to us,

make the light of Christ bright in our own hearts

that we may once more bring peace and reconciliation to our families,  
our communities, and to our world.

Through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## **1:7: The Shepherds Hear the Good News: Luke 2: 8-20**

### **Reader 4: Luke 2:8-20**

As this reading is being read, the shepherds appear on stage. The angel also appears. A light shines on them. They walk slowly off stage heading for Bethlehem. They arrive at the stable and take up their positions around the Holy Family (they could carry toy lambs!) **(Alternatively, a light could shine on the area set aside in the Nativity Scene for shepherds (quiet music in background))**

### **Reader 5: Information below**

The announcement of his birth was not to royalty, nor to the famous, but to the simple, common people of the day. After they had seen him lying in the manger, the shepherds told everyone they met about this child, the bearer of peace. Hear the word of the Lord: 'Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace, for there is a future for the people of peace.'

### **Priest/Leader:**

Our fourth carol **While Shepherds Watched their Flocks by Night** takes us to the shepherds on the hillside. Introducing this carol is \_\_\_\_\_

### **Reader 6:**

This carol is another traditional favourite in the Christmas story and captures the spirit of welcome that plays a part in the Christmas story. The Good News of the birth of the Saviour was not given to just the Jewish people but to all peoples. Let us never forget that Jesus came to save all mankind. I now invite you to stand/join in the singing.

**Congregational/Choir** While Shepherds Watched their Flocks by Night

**Priest/Leader:** Prayer to conclude section

Father,

you sent angels to the shepherds

as they watched their flocks by night,

bringing them news of great joy:

a Saviour born to us, who is Christ the Lord.

May we not be afraid to share with all whom we meet

the good news of your salvation,

peace and God's favour for everyone who hears it

and ponders it in their heart.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

## **1.8 The Magi go to Bethlehem Matthew 2: 1-2:10-11**

### **Reader 7: Matthew 2:1-2: 10-11**

As this reading is being read, the Three Wise Men appear on stage- they come from a distance. They carry gifts. They approach the stable and bow to the child. They take up their positions. (Alternatively, a light could shine on the area set aside in the Nativity Scene for Wise Men)

### **Reader 8:**

For the magi of yesterday who crossed the expanse of nations and for those today who bridge the chasms of the heart, earnestly seeking the source of everlasting joy, we give thanks.

**We thank you O God.**

**Priest/Leader:** Our fifth carol **We Three Kings of Orient Are** takes us once again to the manger scene, complete now with shepherds and wise men. (a light now shines on the whole Nativity Scene) (for a short time). Introducing this carol is \_\_\_\_\_

**Reader 9** introduces '**We Three Kings of Orient Are**'.

This carol was written by John Henry Hopkins Jr in 1857. Hopkins wrote the carol for a Christmas pageant in New York City. The carol centres around the Magi, the Wise men who visited Jesus and brought him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, while paying homage to him. This event is told in Matthew's gospel. Their names are unknown, but legend has it that they were called Melchior, Caspar, and Balthazar. The number three stems from the fact that three separate gifts were given.

**Congregational/Choir: We Three Kings of Orient Are**

**Priest/Leader:** Prayer to conclude section

Father,

the Wise Men saw the star as it rose

and it filled them with delight.

and they came to do the Christ-child homage

offering him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh

from their treasures.

May we follow your signs and wonders

in our everyday world,

as they reveal the presence of Christ to us

in those around us.

Through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## **1:9 Silent Night**

For this carol Mary with baby Jesus walks slowly to the front of the stage. Mary sits down and cradles the baby. Mary looks at her baby. A light shines on her. Meanwhile the manger and its occupants Joseph, shepherds, Wise Men stay in place and do not move. They appear as statues. Their area is darkened.

The following passage is read and then **Silent Night** is sung. Choir/soloist sing. The congregation is silent. **( A very bright light shines the Nativity scene and remained there) Church lights are dimmed**

**Priest/Leader:** Our sixth carol **Silent Night** focusses on Mary and Jesus. This carol is introduced by \_\_\_\_\_

### **Reader 10**

A legend that has grown up alongside our next carol 'Silent Night'. It tells of an Austrian parish priest who on Christmas Eve discovered to his horror that the bellows of the church organ had been nibbled by mice. No church organ meant no music, disaster. The story goes that he then remembered a poem he had written some time before that, a simple poem perhaps too simple for a big event such as Christmas Eve Mass. Hours later, with the help of a guitar-playing friend a simple melody was written in time for the Christmas mass. The day was saved and arguably the most famous of all carols was born. The legend continues that the carol was lost and all but forgotten until a workman repairing the church organ discovered its manuscript in 1825.

The carol paints a picture of a moment of stillness and silence at the manger of the newborn baby. It is as if nothing else exists, even Joseph isn't included. There are no animals, nothing in the first verse except Mary and Jesus, a mother and her baby in a pool of light, which seems to be a circle of peace and protection letting them sleep within it.

### **Choir/Soloist Silent Night**

**Priest/Leader:** Prayer to conclude section

Father

Mary listened to your voice and placed her trust in you.

In humility and faithfulness, she gave birth to her Son,  
the Word-made-flesh.

May we like Mary respond to God's call in our lives,

May we listen to what God is asking of us during this holy season

**Amen**

## **2:1 Intercessions, Actions Final Prayers and Blessing**

**All stand**

**Priest/Leader**                      **Intercessions**

As we look at the Crib, we are reminded of the first Christmas moment, the moment when God sent His Son Jesus into the world. We thank God our Father for the gift of His Son Jesus.

Together we pray.

The response is: **God be with us and bless us**

**Priest/Leader**                      When we give presents to our family and friends.    **Response**

**Priest/Leader**                      When we open our presents.    **Response**

**Priest/Leader**                      When we visit the crib.    **Response**

**Priest/Leader**                      When we pray for all those expecting babies at this time.    **Response**

**Priest/Leader**                      When we pray for all those who need kindness and generosity this  
Christmas.                      **Response**

**Priest/Leader**                      When we pray for peace in our hearts, in our families, in our country, in  
the world.                      **Response**

**Priest/Leader**                      When we pray that Christmas is a time of peace and happiness for each  
member of our school community. **Response**

**Priest/Leader**                      When we pray for all those who are mourning the loss of a family member  
or friend. May they experience your healing grace during this Christmas season **Response**

**Priest/Leader**                      When we pray for all those separated from their loved ones this Christmas  
due to Covid.                      May your love sustain them in these difficult times. **Response**

**Priest/Leader**                      Let us pray silently in our hearts for our own special intention. **Response**

**Priest/Leader:** Before we pray the **Our Father** together, consider for a moment a change your family could make in their celebration of Christmas this year.

Parents/carers could put into action the **Four Gift Rule- Want, Need, Wear and Read.**  
They could give their children:

Something they Want

Something they Need

Something to Wear

Something to Read

and you in return could be gracious and accepting in your response.

As we pray the **Our Father** let us think about this challenge or another way of preparing for Christmas.

### **Our Father**

United as one family we say together the prayer that Jesus himself taught us Our Father.

**Final Prayer & Blessing** (Priest gives final blessing - **if a priest is not present just finish with In the Name of the Father.... said together**

Loving God as our time of prayer comes to a close, we ask you to be with us throughout this Advent and Christmas season and to help us to be people who bring more light than darkness into this world. Help us to ask for less this Christmas and to be generous towards those who have little. Bless those gathered here today and may the hope, peace, joy, and love of Christ be with us and all of our loved ones this Christmas.

We ask all these things in the name of Jesus who is our light and lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

And may the blessing of almighty God,

Father, + Son and Holy Spirit,

come down upon you

and remain with you always.

**Amen.**

Thank you for your attention and prayerful attitude during our Carol Service. Please sit as we listen to the closing carol **O Holy Night** . . . A carol which reflects on the birth of Jesus and humanity's redemption

**Closing Hymn** O Holy Night