

THE
WORSHIP
OF
Christmas
CELEBRATE
THE
MIRACLE

NARRATION

Written by Deborah Craig-Claar

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THE WORSHIP OF CHRISTMAS

Celebrate the Miracle

A Christmas Worship Service

by Deborah Craig-Claar

Construct

This script is offered for churches that wish to present *The Worship of Christmas* as a participatory evening of praise. Worship is led by two hosts. Two adult readers and two child readers provide inspirational testimony from scriptural and historical sources. Congregational participation is emphasized through the use of responsive readings that are created from Scripture, carols, and the lyrics of the songs. Although a specific text has been written for the hosts, you are welcome to make the script your own and have the hosts speak spontaneously. (You may also elect to have one person serve as the host.)

Participants

HOST 1

HOST 2

READER 1 (male adult)

READER 2 (female adult)

READER 3 (child)

READER 4 (child)

Song: "Noel"

HOST 1: Come join your voice with heaven's throng. Send out the message that goes on and on!

CHOIR and CONGREGATION: Noel! Born is the King of Israel!

HOST 2: A Savior has come—Emmanuel. Tidings of joy to the earth go and tell!

CHOIR and CONGREGATION: Noel! Born is the King of Israel!

HOST 1: Go, tell it on the mountain!

HOST 2: Sing we now of Christmas!

HOSTS 1 and 2: Joy to the world, the Lord is come!

HOSTS, CHOIR, and CONGREGATION: Noel! Born is the King of Israel!

HOST 1: O what a story we have to share with the world—what a message of hope and joy and redemption. And that message is Jesus. The hope of Jesus! The joy of Jesus! The redemption that is found in no other name ... but Jesus.

HOST 2: And Jesus is the reason we have gathered here tonight (or today). We have met in this place to lift our praise, raise our voices, and worship God's most precious gift—His Son, Jesus Christ, who was born to bring us everlasting life.

("Celtic Worship" begins; the instrumental introduction plays under the following lines.)

HOST 1: O come, let us adore Him!

HOST 2: O come, let us adore Him!

CHOIR and CONGREGATION: O come, let us adore Him!

HOSTS, CHOIR, and CONGREGATION: Christ the Lord!

Song: "Celtic Worship"

HOST 1: Christmas is a story of worship. It's a story of bowed heads and upraised hands, as God's people awaited the coming Messiah.

HOST 2: Christmas is a story of praise. It's a story of an angel, a young Nazarene girl, and a heavenly promise.

READER 1: "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God." You will be with child "and give birth to a son, and you are to call Him Jesus" (*Luke 1:30-31, NIV*).

HOST 2: And Mary responded in praise, worshiping God and saying,

READER 2: "'My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. For the Mighty One has done great things for me — holy is His name'" (*Luke 1:46-47,49, NIV*).

HOST 1: Does your soul glorify the Lord tonight? (or today)

CHOIR and CONGREGATION: Holy is His name!

HOST 2: Does your spirit rejoice in God our Savior?

CHOIR and CONGREGATION: Holy is His name!

HOST 1: The Mighty One has done great things!

HOST 2: He has given us His Son, and His name is Jesus!

HOSTS, CHOIR, and CONGREGATION: Holy! Holy! Holy is His name!

Song: “Call His Name Jesus”

HOST 1: *(a proclamation)* Jesus is born!

CHOIR and CONGREGATION: Hallelujah!

HOST 2: *(a proclamation)* Let me hear you proclaim it! Jesus is born!

CHOIR and CONGREGATION: Hallelujah!

HOST 1: Say it again! For the earth shall shout ...

CHOIR and CONGREGATION: Hallelujah! Jesus is born!

HOST 2: And the heavens reply,

CHOIR and CONGREGATION: Hallelujah! Jesus is born!

HOSTS, CHOIR, and CONGREGATION: Immanuel has come! God is with us! Hallelujah! Amen!

HOST 1: *(softer)* Hallelujah. *(pause)* Amen. And so Jesus entered our world, not with earthly power or position, but in the simplicity of a manger; not with thunder and fanfares, but with the soft lullaby of a mother’s and father’s quiet smile.

HOST 2: But on a hill over Bethlehem, it would not stay quiet for long. Shepherds and their families were awakened by a brilliant light and a joyous declaration:

READER 1: “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news [of] great joy [that will be] for all the people” *(Luke 2:10, NIV)*.

READER 3: Look, Mother! Up in the sky—above the stars.

READER 4: Do you see it?

READER 2: Yes, children. It’s an angel! Listen! He’s saying, “Today in the town of David” ...

READER 1: ... “a Savior has been born to you: He is Christ the Lord.”

HOST 2: And suddenly, a great company of angelic worshipers appeared, filling the skies with their praise, saying ...

READERS 1, 2, 3, and 4: “Glory to God in the highest” *(Luke 2:11, 13, 14, NIV)*.

(“When Love Came Down” begins; the introduction plays under the following lines.)

HOST 1: And the shepherds ran to find the Savior that had been born for them in a manger. And there ... they knelt ... and offered the praise of their lips and the worship of their hearts.

Song: “When Love Came Down”

HOST 2: The shepherds would not be the only worshipers to kneel before the Christ child.

HOST 1: Far beyond Bethlehem, in a distant land to the east, a brilliant star called three wise men on a journey to find the newborn King. The road was rough and dark, but they had an unwavering light to guide them.

HOST 2: And when at last they found the One whose coming had been foretold, they bowed down and offered Him gifts of riches ... and of praise.

(“Song in the Air” begins; the introduction plays under the following lines, which are said worshipfully.)

HOST 1: O come, let us adore Him.

HOST 2: O come, let us adore Him.

CHOIR and CONGREGATION: O come, let us adore Him.

HOSTS, CHOIR, and CONGREGATION: Christ the Lord.

Song: “Song in the Air”

HOST 1: There’s a thunderous joy, O the wondrous birth!

CHOIR and CONGREGATION: Welcome our King!

HOST 2: Now the waiting is over, here’s the Lord of the earth!

CHOIR and CONGREGATION: Welcome our King!

HOST 1: The star rains its fire!

HOST 2: The beautiful sing ...

HOSTS: Praises from heaven, to ...

HOSTS, CHOIR, and CONGREGATION: Welcome our King!

HOST 1: Praise can be explosive—like thunder—and fill the skies with the voices of a thousand angels! Or they can be hushed and reverent—like a prayer—and sing their song within a listening heart.

HOST 2: There was a righteous man in Jerusalem named Simeon. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ.

("Lord of Heaven" begins; the introduction plays under the following lines.)

HOST 1: At the appropriate time after His birth, when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple to present Him to the Lord, Simeon took the baby in his arms and praised God, saying,

READER 1: "'Sovereign Lord, as You have promised, You may now dismiss Your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the sight of all [people]: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel'" *(Luke 2:29-32, NIV)*.

Song: "Lord of Heaven"

HOST 1: Holy! Holy! Holy is the Lord! We come before You to offer our praises for the gift of Your only Son!

HOST 2: For Mary said,

READER 2: "'My soul glorifies the Lord'" *(Luke 1:46, NIV)*.

HOST 1: And the angel said,

READER 3: "'I bring you good news [of] great joy'" *(Luke 2:10, NIV)*.

READER 4: "'A Savior has been born to you'" *(Luke 2:11, NIV)*.

HOST 2: And Simeon said,

READER 1: "'For my eyes have seen your salvation'" *(Luke 2:30, NIV)*.

HOST 1: And all God's people said,

ALL: Gloria in excelsis Deo! Glory to God in the highest!

Song: "Gloria"

HOST 1: Sing it with the angels,

CHOIR and CONGREGATION: Gloria in excelsis Deo!

HOST 1: Shout it from the temple,

CHOIR and CONGREGATION: Gloria in excelsis Deo!

HOST 1: Tell the nations of the world, today ... tomorrow ... and forever,

ALL: Gloria in excelsis Deo! Glory to God in the highest!

HOST 2: (*conversationally*) Gloria. Glory to God. For Jesus is born. The voices of praise have echoed across the centuries. The song of the angels is also the carol on a local street corner. The words of the prophets are embossed on a family greeting card. The testimonies of Christmas are strong and enduring.

READER 3: “We are better throughout the year for having, in spirit, become a child again at Christmastime.” (Laura Ingalls Wilder)

READER 2: “The only real blind person at Christmastime is he who has not Christmas in his heart.” (Helen Keller)

READER 4: “God bless us, every one!” (Tiny Tim/Charles Dickens)

HOST 2: The testimonies of Christmas are as true today as the day when they were first uttered. They have a special power to speak to us today, if we will only listen.

HOST 1: More than one hundred fifty years ago in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a man woke up on Christmas Day in deep despair. It was 1864, the darkest days of the Civil War. He was a writer by trade, and not only had he recently lost his wife in a tragic accident, but now his oldest son, a lieutenant in the Army, lay gravely wounded, fighting for his life.

(“I Heard the Bells” begins; the introduction plays under the following lines.)

But then, as the first light began to dawn, the hope that Christmas promises each of us washed over him, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow took his pen and began to write ...

READER 1: “I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, goodwill to men.”

Song: “I Heard the Bells”

HOST 2: (*gently*) Peace on earth, goodwill to men.

HOST 1: Jesus was born to bring us peace—a peace that surpasses understanding; not a peace absent of worldly conflict, but a peace within each heart.

HOST 2: He would one day say, “Peace I give you,” (*John 14:27, NIV*) reminding us that though we will have trouble during our lives, He has overcome the world.

HOST 1: Jesus Christ: King of kings and Prince of peace. Our Immanuel.

HOST 2: And all of this—all of this—took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:”

READER 1: “The virgin will [be with child] and give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel’ (which means ‘God with us’)” (*Matthew 1:22-23, NIV*).

HOST 2: How we worship You, Immanuel!

HOST 1: Immanuel, You alone are worthy of our praise!

HOSTS and **CHOIR:** God ... is ... with ... us!

Song: “God Is with Us”

Song: “God Is with Us” (Reprise)

(Coming out of the applause for the previous song, a worshipful prayer is offered; a scripted prayer is provided below, but you may also elect to let your Host[s] speak spontaneously.)

HOST 1: O heavenly Father, Creator and holy God! Thank You. Thank You for Christmas. Thank You for the manger. Thank You for the cross and the empty tomb and heaven’s throne. Thank You for sending Your Son into our dark and lost world so that, through His death and resurrection, we can know Your light, we can know Your grace, and we can know Your joy and peace and life everlasting! And for this we give You all our praise, all our worship, and all our hearts ... tonight (or today) and forevermore. In the righteous, in the exalted, in the saving name of Jesus ...

ALL: Amen.

Song: “Gift of Love”

PASTOR’S MESSAGE

Song: “Amen”

HOST 1: O come, let us adore Him.

HOST 2: O come, let us adore Him.

CHOIR and **CONGREGATION:** O come, let us adore Him.

HOSTS, CHOIR, and **CONGREGATION:** Christ the Lord.

(building)

HOST 1: We’ll give Him all the glory!

HOST 2: We’ll give Him all the glory!

CHOIR and **CONGREGATION:** We’ll give Him all the glory!

HOSTS, CHOIR, and **CONGREGATION:** Christ the Lord!

(peaking)

HOST 1: We'll praise His name forever!

HOST 2: We'll praise His name forever!

CHOIR and CONGREGATION: We'll praise His name forever!

HOSTS, CHOIR, and CONGREGATION: Christ ... the ... Lord!

Song: "Down from His Glory"