



The Church of St. John the Evangelist, Kitchener

ON EAGLE'S WINGS

December 20, 2020

Available online at StJohn316.com/OEW

What is the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols anyways?

Rebecca McKay

Well, isn't Christmas going to feel just a bit different this year? But no matter where we are (or more specifically, *aren't*). There is still a point in the year where you really start to get into that Christmas Spirit. November 12th, advent 1, December 24th? Normally, for church choirs around the world and for ours here at St. John's, it can begin to feel like Christmas as early as October as we work to prepare for the Lessons and Carols Service. I, like many others, assumed this liturgy has a centuries-long liturgical position in the Anglican Church, but I was amazed to learn that is not quite the case.

The service finds its inception in 1880 at Truro Cathedral in England. The Bishop Edward White Benson, in his tiny wooden Cathedral compiled nine short lessons and nine short carols to be shared at 10pm on Christmas Eve. The format quickly became popular and spread throughout England. However, it was popularized by King's College Chapel Choir in Cambridge. Their first presentation of the service there was in December of 1918. It was revised the next year with a specific order of readings. It was at that point that the tradition of the first hymn began. The Hymn, *Once in Royal David's City*, is always sung with the first verse by a solo (usually boy) soprano, to commence the service. Hymns were changed, and introduced, but the readings and prayers basically stayed the same.

And thus, the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols spread not just throughout England, but with the advent of broadcast technology, was heard all around the world. First radio, then television, CD recordings, and now live-streamed online, you can usually catch the King's College Lessons and Carols every December 24th at 3pm (10am EST) and many years past available on CD or Youtube. The service has been taken by many churches and altered and changed, as far away as the West-Indies the services has been presented. Even here at our St. John's we have used the Nine Lessons and Carols Service for decades.

The structure of the service is as follows, simply 9 scripture readings, followed by 9 carols (sung either by congregation or choir).

God announces in the Garden of Eden that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. Genesis 3:8—15.

God promises to faithful Abraham that in his seed shall the nations of the earth be blessed. Genesis 22:15—18.

Christ's birth and kingdom are foretold by Isaiah. Isaiah 9:2,6—7.

The peace that Christ will bring is foreshown. Isaiah 11:1—9

The angel Gabriel salutes the Virgin Mary. Luke 1:26—38.

Matthew tells of the birth of Jesus. Matthew 1:18—23.

The shepherds go to the manger. Luke 2:8—16.

The wise men are led by the star to Jesus. Matthew 2:1—11

John unfolds the great mystery of the incarnation. John 1:1—14

These readings follow the prophecies of the coming of Christ, of the great things he will do, Mary's journey, the birth of the Jesus, the wise man and finally of John's Gospel explaining the great mystery of the incarnation of Jesus. It tells the whole Christmas story in one tidy and beautiful service. There are also organ preludes and postludes, prayers, biddings and collects that are spoken, but the majority of the service is scripture and song.

But things are going to be a bit different this year, as with everything else it seems. With restrictions and health concerns arising due to COVID, In-person or Livestream were not an option. So, in late November, Sarah and I quickly decided to pre-record

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January 31st

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the service in segments. We got to the drawing board, picking an assortment of stunning pieces that would work with small ensembles. Our motto was "Embrace the Simplicity". We wanted as much participation as possible as we chose the choristers best suited for each piece. Using my administrative prowess, I developed an intense rehearsal and recording schedule for 10 different ensembles, and 4 solo pieces. I contacted parishioners to see if they would be interested in submitting recordings of themselves reading Lessons from their homes.

We all came together over the course of about two weeks, singing and recording in our masks, and safely distanced 12' apart. Many of us had not sung for months, and most pieces only had 30 minutes of rehearsal, sometimes even less. The restrictions in place for COVID of one per part, masks, and distance, made the endeavour all the more challenging for everyone. Through the determination of the singers (and maybe a blessing from the God Almighty), we did it. As I sit writing this, there are only two solo pieces, and some readings yet to record. Jonathan Malton is slaving away in post-production editing audio and video together seamlessly. We're almost there.

When the world came to the realization that making music was suddenly dangerous, my heart broke. How could singing, a practice so stunning, so binding to many communities be deemed unsafe? The thought of not singing *Once in Royal* or *A Tender Shoot* broke my heart. I know many others in our choir and choirs around the world feel the same. While it was so much more effort to include all our singers (I can tell you it was a logistical nightmare), it was worth it to see the joy on the mask clad faces of all the choristers to be singing with other people again.

If you have never attended the Lessons and Carols Service, you are in for a treat. I recommend lighting a roaring fire, bundling up in some blankets with hot chocolate or a glass of wine. Watch on your device of choice, and enjoy on Sunday December 20th at 7:00pm, premiering on our YouTube Page. I encourage all of you to come and experience the magic, joy and teachings of the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols, I hope it rushes you into the Joy of Christmas and the miracle of Christ's birth like it does for me, year after year.



It's All in the Mix

Elaine Duncanson

Quite enough has been said already about the unwelcome visitor we have had this year. It is like the distant relative that decided to come for a visit, took over all activity, changed our plans, made everyone cranky while they still tried to be patient and kind, and then decided to stay and settle in. Now as Christmas approaches, we want to hang the holly, pull out the party trimmings and welcome friends we have not seen in a long time.

Then the Grinch speaks up. "We need more lockdowns". Has he not noticed how many businesses have shut their doors? Has he lost count of how many people no longer have work and a pay cheque? Did he not hear about the trouble this summer with the foreign workers and how the farmers could not get all their crops harvested and plant the full allotment for next summer? There are suggestions of higher food prices for us in the new year and perhaps food shortages.

Maria showed me an article today that said UNICEF is donating nearly \$2 million Cdn to the UK to feed hungry children in various parts of England. Their parents have lost most or all their income and have the choice of buying some food or keeping the heat on. She said that 40% of the pubs have closed their shutters and do not expect to return. More may follow.

Another aspect is the life of people in retirement homes. They are more active than those in long term care but they are almost as restricted. Residents in one may only go out of the building for a medical appointment and it can not be for more than three hours. All their mail, packages, and gifts are kept at reception for two days before being given to the resident.

Bales

For many years, each January, St. John's packs boxes of **new or clean, gently used, WASHABLE clothing** to be shipped to Kenora. Especially needed is warm clothing for winter. Boots are also accepted as long as they are in good condition.

Clothing collection for Bales to the north with get underway in January. Because of COVID restrictions, collection will be different this year. Donations may be dropped off on Saturday Jan 2, 9 and 16 between 10 and noon at the Duke St. door. A volunteer will be there to accept your donation. If you have items but are unable to drop them off, we will be providing pick up during the week of January 4th.

Please call Rosemary Cliff at 519-578-4405 to arrange pickup.

All their activities have been cancelled and they are segregated in the dining room. One person to a table and each table six feet apart. Many are hard of hearing so conversation, behind a mask, is difficult. What kind of life is that? Visitors are not welcome so the residents must use as much technology as they are able to keep up with family. If a family wants to take their person home for a friendly Christmas dinner, the resident must be in quarantine for fourteen days after returning. Those in an apartment style residence appear to have a little more liberty but any socializing would still be brief and at a distance.

What is distressing is the knowledge that Vitamin D is important for protecting the immune system. Yet, during the summer, when people should have been outside soaking up sunshine to strengthen their immune systems, parks were closed and fines were issued to some who sat on a park bench. Now that the days are shorter and we spend most of our time inside, we are still restricted and our immune systems have not been refreshed. Are you surprised that the

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numbers have not gone down?

This is the time for baking cookies. So many recipes come out only once a year. I remember making sugar cookies for my children to decorate for their grandparents. That was a great hit. One gingerbread man received an impossible number of buttons from an enthusiastic three-year-old and a tree was artistically decorated by the four-year-old. Now one needs to give away much of the baking in order to stay within a respectable calorie count. A limited number of trips to deliver the goodies is necessary to stay within the current guidelines.

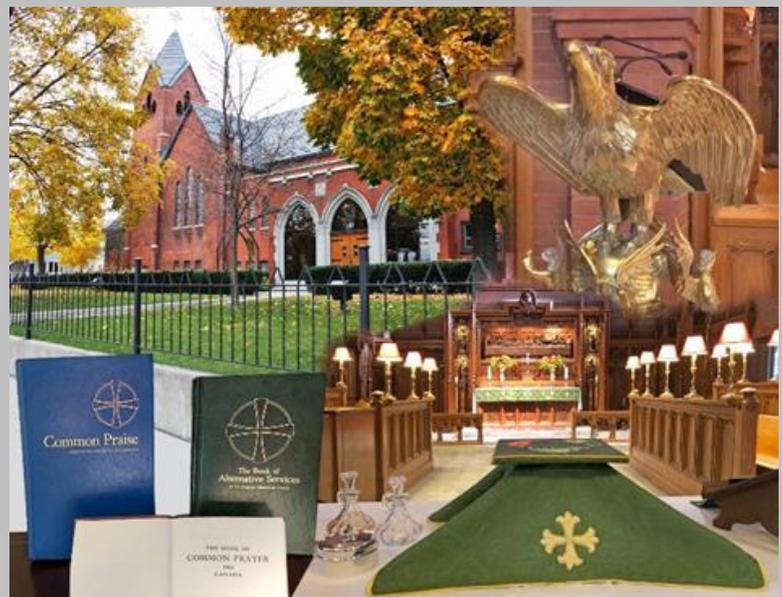
Did we really enjoy and appreciate last Christmas? It probably passed for most people in the usual chaotic scramble to do the shopping, the wrapping, the baking, finding addresses for friends who had moved during the year, and all the other things that seemed so important. The Lessons and Carols service provided an hour or so to sit still and listen. That may have been the only quiet time for some people. Then Christmas Eve arrived all dark and sparkly. The music, the readings, our friends, brought us another special moment to contemplate the reason for the season. Some of that can be repeated this year but we will be aware of many differences. Just remember to repeat the gardener’s mantra: “Next year ...”

St. John’s Note Card

Jennifer Uttley

St. John’s ACW has a new hasty note as shown in the image. The collage shows the exterior of the church, the chancel, service books and the eagle. Use them as thank you notes or to send a note of encouragement to you haven’t seen in a while.

A package of 5 for \$10 can be purchased from St. John’s ACW by email acw@stjohn316.com or by calling Jennifer Uttley (519-578-6052).



The Christmas Story goes online and COVID-safe for its 83rd season

Syd Reginato

Many parishioners of SJE are familiar with, or have seen, the fabulous annual Christmas Story pageant at The Church of the Holy Trinity in downtown Toronto. Susan Watson, daughter of long-time parishioners Dr. Alan and Cherry Watson, has been the Director since 1990. I watched this year's pageant predawn one morning during Advent, and found it to be breathtaking! Tickets are available until January 6, the Twelfth Day of Christmas.



The Christmas Story at the Church of the Holy Trinity has been **reinvented into a film** presenting the classic Nativity story against the backdrop of life in an urban centre in the middle of a pandemic. This year, we are especially pleased to present **The Christmas Story 2020: A Pandemic Pageant**. The film will have its **streaming premiere** on **December 11 at 7 p.m.**, a second streaming event on **December 19th at 1 p.m.**, and **on-demand availability** from December 11 onward. Tickets to the screenings and for on-demand access are **by donation** (\$10 suggested). Tickets will be available via www.thechristmasstory.ca.

“Back in September, we wondered how we could possibly safely stage the pageant,” said longtime **Director Susan Watson**. “We knew COVID-19 required a different approach to presenting our pageant for its 83rd season. **A series of small miracles aligned** to allow us to create a film for the first time.”

“**Angel**” investors who committed seed funds up-front allowed the project to hire a **professional film crew**. Enough performers from the usual two volunteer casts were willing to stage the pageant outside with **physically-distanced blocking and within household bubbles**. Even the weather cooperated with sunshine and 18-degree November temperatures on the two shooting days.

“But our biggest coup was landing a real baby to play Jesus,” said Susan. “This year The Christmas Story really is a pandemic pageant. A quirk of the film is that the performers playing Mary and Joseph change between various scenes. The only way we were able to safely have a real baby was to persuade the parents to dress up in a separate set of Mary and Joseph costumes and play the key scenes that involve the infant Jesus.”

Susan worked with **Eric Miller** of **THALWEG Media** to produce the film. Miller came with a track record working on another challenging church project – a documentary about a 40-day Jesuit Truth and Reconciliation canoe trip.

She recruited her spouse, physician Ian Digby, to be the COVID compliance officer on set. Safety measures included pre-shoot and on-set screening, temperature checks, hand sanitation, physical distancing and mandatory mask wearing when the camera was not rolling.

True to its roots, the film incorporates the **professional sound recording of the narration, carols and organ music**, and the **gorgeous costumes** the stage production is known for.

The result is a **beautiful film** which situates the classic story in a modern urban environment. You will see **The Christmas Story** you love with fresh eyes.



Non-Pudding Pudding Factory

Each year, the St. John's Pudding Factory provides most of the revenue for ACW outreach projects. Because the pandemic prevented us from holding this vital fundraiser this year, we are looking for help to fund important Church activities.

Please consider donating the money you would normally spend on Christmas puddings to the ACW. Tax receipts will be provided for donations over \$20.

Cheques can be made out to St. John's ACW,
23 Water St. N., Kitchener, ON, N2H 5A4.

Thank you for your continued support!