

A Creation Service of Nine Lessons and Carols – The small stories in the biggest Story

The Bidding Prayer

We gather in the image of the Creator

who is a community of love.

We gather with the Word, Emmanuel,

who reconciles all of creation.

We gather in the presence of the Life Giver

who inspires new life and renews it.

We gather at a time of environmental crisis

Lord have mercy.

We gather as people polarised from one another

Christ have mercy.

We gather as people confused within

Lord have mercy. Amen

Our problems are BIG STORIES but they are not THE BIGGEST STORY. This HUGE STORY is made up of many smaller stories.

The mystery of the beginning of THE BIGGEST STORY

First Story John 1:1-4 (NRSV) God brings the universe into being

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJJK9x1Ffhw>, Animation of the Big Bang with a silence before (In the Beginning) –downside – narration, but that can be silenced and other music played at the same time. Suggestion <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5lIVfkY5q54> or a Christmas Carol
We are playing this between verses 2 and 3 of the First Story

Second Story Genesis 3:1-7 (NRSV) The Trinity's gift of choice
Consequences of choice can be great good and great evil

⁵ *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.*

Third Story Isaiah 9: 2-9 (NRSV) The prophet Isaiah speaks God's promise to people in Exile

Fourth Story Luke 1:5-17 (NIV) The coming of John, the prophet who would announce that God had arrived on Earth

⁶ *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.*

Fifth Story Luke 2:1-7 (NIV) The birth of Jesus, Emmanuel, the Light of the World, God born on Earth

¹⁰ *He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.*

Sixth Story Luke 2: 8-15 (NIV) Ordinary Jewish people have access to God

¹¹ *He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him*

Seventh Story Matt 2:1-12 (NIV) Gentiles have access to God

*These stories lead us to new stories, some yet to be written
In the first and second stories God spoke directly.
In the third and fourth God speaks through prophets.
In the fifth, the Word becomes flesh.
In the sixth, God speaks through angels.
In the seventh, God speaks through dreams.*

*God still speaks in many varied ways
We have prophets, like Archbishop Desmond, who have called us back to living justly
Could Greta Thunberg be a person who speaks God's truth into our time?*

*Few listened to the prophets of old – a remnant.
At Christmas we are so tempted to be worse consumers than ever.
But like for the Israelites there are natural consequences.
This time we need more than a remnant.
The Trinity has given the power of Choice.*

Video Greta Thunberg and The 1975 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4CtkPr0kgPA>

Eighth Story Eph 2:4-10 (MSG) We are included and invited to join in God's plan for saving the world.
But we can't do this unless we have a spiritual transformation
Only God can help us fight the greed in us.

Penitence

Holy and merciful God, we confess that we have failed to honour you by rightly claiming our kinship with all your creatures. We have walked heavily on your earth, overused and wasted its resources, taken for granted its beauty and abundance, and treated its inhabitants unjustly, holding future generations hostage to our greed. Have mercy on us and forgive us our sin. Renew in us the resolve to keep and conserve your earth as you desire and intend, with grateful and compassionate hearts, through your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Ninth Story Col 1:15-23(MSG) All things come together.
Rejoining: God and people; People and people; People and the Earth

Blessing

May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers,
half truths, and superficial relationships, so that you may live deep within your heart.
May God bless you with anger at injustice,
oppression and exploitation of people, so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.
May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain,
rejection, starvation, and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and turn their pain to joy.
May God bless you with enough foolishness
to believe that you can make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done.
And may our creator God bless you with a deep knowledge of the Word made Flesh,
and the guidance and energy of the Spirit,
to transform the way we live in this world. **Amen.**

Read:

The First Story: God brings the universe into being

(Pause)

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

²He was in the beginning with God.

Video of big bang

³All things came into being through him,
and without him not one thing came into being.

What has come into being ⁴in him was life,^[a]

and the life was the light of all people.

(pause)

Go back to your seat.

Read:

The Second Story: The Trinity's gift of choice

(Pause)

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman,

"Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

²The woman said to the serpent,

"We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden;

³but God said,

'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it,

or you shall die.'"

⁴But the serpent said to the woman,

"You will not die;

⁵for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened,

and you will be like God, ^[a] knowing good and evil."

⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food,

and that it was a delight to the eyes,

and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise,

she took of its fruit and ate;

and she also gave some to her husband,

who was with her, and he ate.

⁷Then the eyes of both were opened,

and they knew that they were naked;

and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

(pause)

Go back to your seat.

Read:

The Third Story: The prophet Isaiah speaks God's promise to people in Exile

(Pause)

² [b] The people who walked in darkness
 have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
 on them light has shined.

³ You have multiplied the nation,
 you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
 as with joy at the harvest,
 as people exult when dividing plunder.

⁴ For the yoke of their burden,
 and the bar across their shoulders,
 the rod of their oppressor,
 you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵ For all the boots of the tramping warriors
 and all the garments rolled in blood
 shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶ For a child has been born for us,
 a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
 and he is named

Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
 Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ His authority shall grow continually,
 and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
 He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
 from this time onward and forevermore.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

(Pause)

Go back to your seat.

Read:

The Fourth Story:

The coming of John, the prophet who would announce that God had arrived on Earth

(Pause)

⁵In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron.

⁶Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly.

⁷But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

⁸Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God,

⁹he was chosen to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

¹⁰And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

¹¹Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense.

¹²When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear.

¹³But the angel said to him:

"Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard.

Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John.

¹⁴He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth,

¹⁵for he will be great in the sight of the Lord.

He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God.

¹⁷And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children

and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous

—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

(pause)

Go back to your seat.

Read:

The Fifth Story: The birth of Jesus, Emmanuel, the Light of the World, God born on Earth

(Pause)

In those days

Caesar Augustus issued a decree

that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.

²(This was the first census that took place while^[a] Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴So 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.

⁵He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

⁶While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷and 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.

(pause)

Go back to your seat.

Read:

The Sixth Story: Ordinary Jewish people have access to God

(Pause)

⁸And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby,
keeping watch over their flocks at night.

⁹An angel of the Lord appeared to them,
and the glory of the Lord shone around them,
and they were terrified.

¹⁰But the angel said to them,

“Do not be afraid.

I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

¹¹Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you;
he is the Messiah,
the Lord.

¹²This will be a sign to you:

You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven,
the shepherds said to one another

“Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened,
which the Lord has told us about.”

(pause)

Go back to your seat.

Read:

The Seventh Story: Gentiles have access to God

(Pause)

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod,
Magi^[a] from the east came to Jerusalem

²and asked,

“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?

We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

³When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

⁴When he had called together all the people’s chief priests
and teachers of the law,

he asked them where the Messiah was to be born.

⁵“In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied,

“for this is what the prophet has written:

⁶“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.’^[b]”

⁷Then Herod called the Magi secretly

and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.

⁸He sent them to Bethlehem and said,

“Go and search carefully for the child.

As soon as you find him, report to me,
so that I too may go and worship him.”

⁹After they had heard the king, they went on their way,

and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them
until it stopped over the place where the child was.

¹⁰When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

¹¹On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary,
and they bowed down and worshiped him.

Then they opened their treasures

and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

¹²And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod,
they returned to their country by another route.

(pause)

Go back to your seat.

Read:

The Eighth Story: We are included and invited to join in God's plan for saving the world

(Pause)

⁶It wasn't so long ago

that you were mired in that old stagnant life of sin.

You let the world,

which doesn't know the first thing about living,

tell you how to live.

You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief,

and then exhaled disobedience.

We all did it,

all of us doing what we felt like doing,

when we felt like doing it, all of us in the same boat.

It's a wonder God didn't lose his temper and do away with the whole lot of us.

Instead, immense in mercy and with an incredible love,

he embraced us.

He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ.

He did all this on his own, with no help from us!

Then he picked us up and set us down in highest heaven

in company with Jesus, our Messiah.

⁷⁻¹⁰Now God has us where he wants us,

with all the time in this world and the next

to shower grace and kindness upon us in Christ Jesus.

Saving is all his idea, and all his work.

All we do is trust him enough to let him do it.

It's God's gift from start to finish!

We don't play the major role.

If we did, we'd probably go around bragging that we'd done the whole thing!

No, we neither make nor save ourselves.

God does both the making and saving.

He creates each of us by Christ Jesus

to join him in the work he does,

the good work he has gotten ready for us to do,

work we had better be doing.

Go back to your seat.

Read:

The Ninth Story: All things come together.

Rejoining:
God and people;
People and people;
People and the Earth

(Pause)

¹⁵⁻¹⁸ We look at this Son

and see the God who cannot be seen.

We look at this Son

and see God's original purpose in everything created.

For everything, absolutely everything,

above and below,

visible and invisible,

rank after rank after rank of angels

—*everything* got started in him and finds its purpose in him.

He was there before any of it came into existence

and holds it all together right up to this moment.

And when it comes to the church,

he organizes and holds it together, like a head does a body.

¹⁸⁻²⁰ He was supreme in the beginning and

—leading the resurrection parade—

he is supreme in the end.

From beginning to end he's there,

towering far above everything, everyone.

So spacious is he,

so roomy,

that everything of God finds its proper place in him

without crowding.

Not only that,

but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe

—people and things, animals and atoms

—get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies,

all because of his death,

his blood that poured down from the cross.

(pause)

Go back to your seat.