**Dear Reader, please read all of the following:**

Who is Jesus Christ?

It is through him that all creation came into being.

It is he through whom all life was created.

**FIRST LESSON:**

A reading from the Gospel of John.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

1:1-5

**Dear Reader, please read all of the following after**

**Carol #89 *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel***

After the world was created by God through Christ - it longed to be reunited with Christ, the source of all life and goodness. Christ would return to the people of the earth in human form as one of Abraham’s descendants. Through this descendant, all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

**SECOND LESSON:**

A reading from the Book of Genesis.

Now the Lord said to Abram, *Go from your country and your kindred and your father*’*s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth, shall be blessed.*

*I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.*

3:8-15

**Dear Reader, please read all of the following after**

**Carol #109 *When the King Shall Come Again***

The prophet Isaiah lived in times of oppression and hardship, when many people longed for peace. He foretold of the coming of a child who would be the people’s Saviour.

**THIRD LESSON:**

A reading from the Book of Isaiah.

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. 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. 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. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. 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 Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 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.

9:2; 6-9

**Dear Reader, please read all of the following after**

**Carol #140 *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear***

The prophet Isaiah not only foretold that a Saviour would be born, he also prophesied what his rule would be like. Christ would be no ordinary ruler, his peace would be one based on true justice for all people.

**FOURTH LESSON:**

A reading from the Book of Isaiah.

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adders den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

11:1-9

**Dear Reader, please read all of the following after**

**Carol #137 *What Child is This***

Our next lesson takes place centuries after Isaiah at a time when his prophecies were about to be fulfilled. Christ would be born of human parents, yet be divinely conceived. Creator and creation would be brought together through the coming miracle of the birth of the tiny child, Jesus.

**FIFTH LESSON:**

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he resolved to do 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 as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. All his took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means, God is with us. When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

1:18-25

**Dear Reader, please read all of the following after**

**Carol #153 *Good Christians All, Rejoice***

As was foretold by the prophet Isaiah, Christ was to be no ordinary ruler. It is fitting the ruler of all people and Saviour of the poor, the sick, the lonely, and the oppressed, would not be born in a palace, but in the humble surroundings of a stable.

**SIXTH LESSON:**

A reading from the Gospel of Luke.

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

2:1-7

**Dear Reader, please read all of the following:**

**Carol #120 *O Little Town of Bethlehem***

And who should be the first to be told of the Saviour’s birth? Not kings or princes, but humble shepherds working in the fields.

**SEVENTH LESSON:**

A reading from the Gospel of Luke.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them,  *Do not be afraid; for see I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.* And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, *Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!*

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, *Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place which the Lord has made known to us. So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.*

2:8-16

**Dear Reader, please read all of the following after**

**Carol #136 *While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks***

Christ’s birth was not seen as Good News by everyone. Those who are powerful and who oppress innocent people for their own gain are threatened by a ruler who comes in love to bring justice for all people.

**EIGHTH LESSON:**

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking,  *Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.* When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, *In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.*

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying,  *Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.*

When they had heard the king, they set out; and there ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chest, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

2:1-11

**Dear Reader, please read all of the following after**

**Carol #160 As With Gladness Men of Old**

And so, tonight, we end where we began with the Gospel of John. God’s *Word*, Jesus Christ, is here among us. And to all whose hearts are open to him, he is a shining light which casts away the shadows of despair, allowing us to see the loving presence of God with us, *Emmanuel.*

**NINTH LESSON:**

A reading from the Gospel of John.

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

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born not of blood or of the will of the flesh or the will of man, but of God.

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. (John testified to him and cried out, *This is he of whom I said, He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.*). From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.

 1:6-18