

# A "Hanging of the Christmas Greens" Service Customizable for Any Congregation

Here is our 2010 "Hanging of the Greens" program. This service can be customized for any church by "adjusting" the text for items relating to church name and specific history related to Zion Lutheran Church. Most segments have a reading component and an action component. There are 15 segments. Details concerning permission to use our copyright material follows the text below. The congregational bulletin for our 2010 program follows the formal "Hanging of the Christmas Greens" script:

## Hanging of the Christmas Greens© A Service for the First Sunday of Advent at Zion Lutheran Church of Silverhill, AL 36576

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[The sections and divisions of this liturgy are designed to allow a variety of participants to lead the service as readers while others are involved in placement of Advent decorations. "Parts" may be assigned as appropriate. This service may comprise an "adult Christmas program" where there are few children in a congregation. Links to several websites relating to the ethnic background and flavor of our Silverhill community are embedded within this web rendition of our service as reference sources to some material within this service.]

### 1. Welcome, Offering, and Invocation.

-- Reader:  
-- Actions:

Welcome to worship at Zion Lutheran Church this First Sunday of Advent and to our "Hanging of the Christmas Greens" Sunday. We will receive our offering at this time to allow this service to flow without interruption.

**Action:** Offering received and NOT taken to the altar, but retired from the congregation. Then the service continues:

Let's pray: Father God, Son of God, Holy Spirit--Help us laud and magnify Your Holy Name and raise up the Name of Jesus as we begin the Advent Season of the Church Year. Bless our keeping of Christmas this season. Bless our desires to honor our Lord and Savior Whose birth we remember and Whose life we treasure. Bless our remembering of the happy events that brought the Savior of the world to the little town of Bethlehem and to our little town of Silverhill. Amen

### 2. Where Did Our Christmas Come From?

-- Reader:  
-- Actions:

The first people of our church came from the "Old Country." For some of us, that means Norway or Finland or Bohemia or Germany or elsewhere. For Oscar Johnson and the developers of Silverhill in 1896, it meant Sweden. Sixteen of those people who came to Silverhill wanted to remain Swedish Lutheran Christians in this new country. That meant "Augustana Synod." Augustana Pastor Hedberg from Thorsby, Alabama, began coming to Silverhill in 1897. His successor, Pastor Hartelius, made Zion's first Christmas in 1905 very special. He agreed to come every other month to bring regular Swedish Lutheran worship to Silverhill beginning in 1906.

How excited those Zion Swedes were that Christmas in 1905! You see, Pastor Hartelius made that decision and commitment in the Advent Season, December 18, 1905. Swedes, Norwegians, Finns, Czechs, and Germans immigrated to Baldwin County in the following decades, each bringing with them their Christmas traditions. Folks came to Baldwin County and Silverhill for a new life and a new home. They had expectation. Advent is a church season of expectation. We are thankful that they brought their traditions of worship with them. Traditions help us remember. Today as we enter the Advent Season, we look forward, but we remember the roots of our past. We remember our roots by laying remembrances at our altar.

## HYMN (AFLC Ambassador Hymnal, #490)

(congregation stands)

Son of God, eternal Savior,  
Source of life and truth and grace,  
Word made flesh, whose birth among us  
Hallows all our human race,  
You our head, who, throned in glory,  
For Your own will ever plead:  
Fill us with Your love and pity,  
Heal our wrongs, and help our need.

Son of God, eternal Savior,  
Source of life and truth and grace,  
Word made flesh, whose birth among us  
Hallows all our human race:  
By Your praying, by Your willing  
That Your people should be one,  
Grant, oh, grant our hopes fruition:  
Here on earth Your will be done.

**Action During Music:** Zion Lutheran Church Museum items of the past may be laid in tribute on the altar.

(congregation seated)

### 3. Tradition.

-- Reader:

-- Actions:

Every new Christian Year begins with Advent. Our traditions come from many lands. Today we prepare again for the coming of our Messiah. Through the centuries, Christians have observed a time of waiting and expectation before celebrating the birth of the Savior at Christmas. The Advent season is a time for reflection and preparation, but its mood is joyful. Advent tradition reflects the revelation of God's love expressed in Christ's birth. He was born in a humble stable, but He died on the cross. Death came to Him but He arose! Christ's resurrection and ascension point you and me to the hope of Christ's coming again as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Advent makes innkeepers out of all of us. Let us make room for the arrival of Christ the King. Let us, today, prepare Him room in our hearts, our lives, and our homes! We lay our traditions on God's altar--these early Swedish and German Bibles from our Museum symbolize God's continuing witness to Jesus Christ, the coming Messiah of Advent.

**Action:** The Bibles are laid on the altar.

#### 4. What Advent Is All About.

-- Reader:

-- Actions:

The Advent Season anticipates Christ and Christmas. Advent is a time to get ready for Christ's coming. Decorations and presents are not the way that we get ready for Jesus' birth! The church has looked for clues in God's Word for that actual birth. People have searched the Bible to find the plan of Salvation. The Bible lays out the plan of our Redemption through God the Son. It begins with the birth of little Baby Jesus. John 3:16-17 proclaims, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."

This Advent Season we join the church of history. We remember our Bible. And, we recall God's love in Christ's birth in a barn! In Lent we will look past that stable to His sacrificial death on the cross, and on to His resurrection. We signify God's great kindness to us by taking our Altar Bible and opening it to Christmas story in the Second Chapter of Luke.

#### HYMN (AFLC Ambassador Hymnal, #5)

(congregation stands)

Come, Thou long expected Jesus,  
Born to set Thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us,  
Let us find our rest in Thee.  
Israel's Strength and Consolation,  
Hope of all the earth Thou art;  
Dear Desire of every nation,  
Joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver,  
Born a child and yet a King,  
Born to reign in us forever,  
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By Thine own eternal Spirit  
Rule in all our hearts alone;  
By Thine all sufficient merit,  
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

**Action During Music:** The Bible is placed on the altar and opened to the Christmas story.

(congregation seated)

#### 5. The Sanctuary Evergreens

-- Reader:

-- Actions:

Remember Noah and the ark? Would you believe that Noah's grandson Gomer is connected with Christmas? The children of Gomer are the Celts and this people group is ultimately responsible for many of our evergreen traditions. Early Christians placed evergreens in their homes to indicate Christ. Think about this--evergreens are eternally green and

alive, even in the middle of winter. Just like our Heavenly Father God Who is unchanging from eternity! Or just like our eternally living Lord Christ Jesus! Or just like our ever-present Counselor, the Holy Spirit! Might there be a Biblical reason for such remembrance? Look to Isaiah 60:13 which reads, “The glory of Lebanon shall come to you, the cypress, the pine, and the box tree together. To beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I will make the place of My feet glorious.” The cypress, the pine, and the box tree are evergreens.

Martin Luther is often credited for the Christmas tree and the tradition of lights. We know that the Norwegians were using Christmas trees pretty universally by 1900, about the time our church began. The Scandinavians carried the tradition to this country. Norway was part of Sweden in those days. We know that we have decorated our Advent Christmas tree at Zion for many years. We know that there were years when real holly decorated our windows and the red berries were real. We know that there were real wax candles nestled in that holly and that the candles were burning.

People from those days tell us tales of the smells of the Sanctuary, the aromas of worship, and the joys of Advent celebration. Today we think of fire hazards in this old church of ours, but there was a time when the celebration of Christmas was more important than our fears. Today we celebrate again with evergreens, with Christmas tree and holly.

Other decorations have been added to our evergreens over the years. Joyful red balls, strings of berries or lights, tinsel, garlands, and a sundry other items have graced our trees. The Chrismons used on our Zion tree have been with us since 1976 when the ladies of the church first created them. Let us continue our celebration as we decorate with the greens.

## HYMN (AFLC Ambassador Hymnal, #28)

(congregation stands)

I am so glad each Christmas Eve!  
The night of Jesus birth;  
Then like the sun The Star shone forth,  
And angels sang on earth.

The little child in Bethlehem,  
He was a king indeed;  
He came from His high state in heav'n,  
Down to a world in need.

Then mother trims the Christmas tree,  
And fills the room with light.  
She says that so the Star shone forth  
And made the dark world bright.

And so I love each Christmas Eve,  
And I love Jesus, too;  
And that He loves me in return,  
I know so well is true.

(congregation is seated)

**Action During Music:** While the song is being sung, the evergreens on the side walls and front are hung, and any other evergreens are put in place. The tree is decorated and Chrismons are “adjusted.” The Christmas window candles and other lights are lit. After the decorations have been placed on the tree, the lights are turned on.

## 6. Reminders of Christmas

-- Reader:

## -- Actions:

Pine boughs--the smells of Christmas! Foods--the tastes of breads and candies and cookies of Christmas! Our images of Christmas today are often disconnected from the events of 2000 years ago. Today we remember again the real events that surround the coming of the Messiah, God's Savior for the world. We remember the prophets, the Holy parents, the shepherds of Bethlehem, the wise men from the east. We remember all of God's people that looked forward to Baby Jesus. And we remember all of us who look back to that blessed event. Let us welcome the Baby who came at Christmas according to the Scriptures. Please join me in this responsive reading:

## Responsive Reading Drawing on Isaiah 9, Luke 1, and John 1 [NKJV]

(congregation stands)

Leader: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. That Word was the preincarnate Jesus Christ.

Congregation: All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and His life (the life of Jesus Christ) was the light of men.

L: The light of Christ shined in the darkness 2700 years ago when the Prophet Isaiah proclaimed that the darkness did not comprehend it. Yet the promise of his prophecy was that the people who walked in darkness would see a great light. Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them the light would shine.

C: Isaiah proclaimed, "You, O Father, have multiplied the nation and increased its joy; for unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.

L: "And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

C: "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

L: There was in the days of Herod, 700 years later, a certain priest named Zacharias serving according to the custom of the priesthood, to burn incense in the temple of the Lord. The whole multitude of the people was praying outside.

C: An angel of the Lord appeared to Zacharias, saying, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

L: "And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at John's birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and he will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

C: "And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." That preparation would be for our Lord Jesus Christ.

L: Just 6 months later the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

C: The angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women, for you have found favor with God. You will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS.

L: "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.

C: "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." This was the fulfilling of the Old Testament prophecy.

L: Please be seated. We remember our Christmas traditions with the placing of token Christmas cookies on our altar.

## HYMN (AFLC Ambassador Hymnal, #20)

Hark! The herald angels sing,  
“Glory to the newborn King,  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled!”  
Joyful, all ye nations rise,  
Join the triumph of the skies;  
With th’angelic host proclaim,  
“Christ is born in Bethlehem!”

Refrain

Hark! the herald angels sing,  
“Glory to the newborn King!”

Hail, the heav’n-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings,  
Ris’n with healing in His wings.  
Mild He lays His glory by,  
Born that man no more may die,  
Born to raise the sons of earth,  
Born to give them second birth.

Refrain

**Action During Music:** A plate of Christmas cookies is placed on the altar.

(congregation seated)

## 7. The Christmas Poinsettia and the Paraments and Advent Colors

-- Reader:

-- Actions:

Joel Robert Poinset brought the first “poinsettia” with its bright red flowers to the U.S. from Mexico in 1828. This “Flower of the Holy Night” has been part of our Christmas and Advent traditions at Zion Lutheran Church since the 1950s. Its bright red color and greenery reminds us of the Christmas Season. In the early days of Christian worship, Advent and Christmas were seen as a somber time, much like Lent is today. Advent was not celebration, but recognition. Royal purple altar trappings conveyed Christ’s Kingship and His coming reign. The flavor of Advent today is light and celebratory. We adjust our paraments in preparation for the coming of the King and place a poinsettia in honor of Christ’s coming.

## HYMN (AFLC Ambassador Hymnal, #2)

O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear.

Refrain

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by Thine advent here;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

Refrain

**Action During Music:** Since this service is on the first Sunday of Advent, the purple paraments will already be in place, so simply draw attention to the coverings as appropriate. A pulpit parament may be put aside for placement at this time. A poinsettia may be placed on the altar or organ.

## 8. The Advent Candle

-- Reader:

-- Actions:

Advent is a four-week time of preparation. We light a different Advent Candle on each Sunday of the season. Each new candle reminds us worshipers that something is happening as we wait.

The candles are arranged in a circle to remind us of the continuous power of God, which knows neither beginning nor ending. The three purple candles symbolize the coming of Christ from the royal line of David. He is coming as the King of Kings and Prince of Peace. The pink candle represents joy. The large white candle in the center is the Christ Candle. It points to Jesus as the Light of the world.

Each candle explains our waiting experience. In Advent we focus on Prophecy, Preparation, Rejoicing, and Proclamation. Advent ends when we light the Christ Candle on Christmas Eve. Let us rejoice in the fulfillment of that promise of long ago as we light our Advent wreath.

## HYMN (AFLC Ambassador Hymnal, #31)

(congregation stands)

Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown  
When Thou camest to earth for me;  
But in Bethlehem's home there was found no room  
For Thy holy nativity.  
O come to my heart, Lord Jesus:  
There is room in my heart for Thee.

Heavens arches rang when the angels sang,  
Proclaiming Thy royal degree;  
But in lowly birth didst Thou come to earth,  
And in great humility.  
O come to my heart, Lord Jesus:  
There is room in my heart for Thee.

(congregation is seated)

**Action During Music:** As the song is sung, the wreath is lit.

## 9. The Nativity

-- Reader:

-- Actions:

At Zion Lutheran Church we display our crèche scene from the beginning of Advent. In the past the “Baby Jesus” was not part of the crèche until Christmas Eve. Our white china crèche dates from 1979 when Martha and Charles Jolliff donated the crèche and ceramic figures. The Nativity scene speaks of the mystery of God's wisdom. We do not know why God chose to send His Son into our world as a baby of humble birth in common surroundings. What we do know is that God reached out to all people including the poor and the rich, the simple and the wise, the powerless and the powerful.

Whenever we see a crèche we find ourselves with Mary and Joseph, with the Shepherds, and with the Wise Men, bowing before the manger, overwhelmed by God's expression of love in coming to us. We remember the stable as Luke records in 2:16-20, “So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.” Today we place the Baby Jesus in our crèche.

## HYMN (AFLC Ambassador Hymnal, #36)

Infant holy, infant lowly,  
For His bed a cattle stall;  
Oxen lowing, little knowing  
Christ the child is Lord of all.  
Swiftly winging, angels singing,  
Bells are ringing, tidings bringing:  
Christ the child is Lord of all!  
Christ the child is Lord of all!

Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping  
Vigil till the morning new.  
Saw the glory, heard the story,  
Tidings of a Gospel true.  
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow,  
Praises voicing, greet the morrow:  
Christ the child was born for you!  
Christ the child was born for you!

**Action During Music:** As the song is sung the Baby Jesus is placed in the crèche and the other figures of the Nativity are arranged.

## 10. The Music Of Christmas

-- Reader:

-- Actions:



The church praises God for His lovingkindness. The roots of praise can be found in Genesis, but we often think of King David and the psalmists as the song-smiths of Israel. Let us stand and praise God with His Holy Word recorded in the Scriptures:

**Responsive Reading Drawing on the Psalms and Revelation. (Psalms 33:2-3; 40:3; 98:1; 149:1; 81:1-3; 108:3 and Revelation 5:9-10; 14:3) [NKJV]**

(congregation stands)

Leader: Praise the LORD with the harp.

Congregation: Make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings.

L: Sing to Him a new song. Play skillfully with a shout of joy.

C: He has put a new song in my mouth-- Praise to our God. Many will see it and fear, and will trust in the LORD.

L: Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! For He has done marvelous things.

C: His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory. Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song ... in the assembly of saints.

L: Sing aloud to God our strength. Make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob.

C: Raise a song and strike the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the lute. Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, at the full moon, and on our solemn feast days.

L: I will praise You, O LORD, among the peoples. I will sing praises to You among the nations.

C: And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals. For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood, O Christ.

L: You have drawn us out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made us kings and priests to our God and we shall reign on the earth.

C: They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders.

L: And no one could learn that song--

C: Except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth."

(Please be seated.)

It is hard to understand how church music became so institutionalized in the Middle Ages that the lay people did not sing in worship. God's people are supposed to sing. Martin Luther and the Reformation is credited with bringing songs of praise and worship back. The Reformation brought new melodies and instrumental music into the Advent and Christmas seasons. Michael Praetorius, a German composer just a generation after Luther, developed musical forms based on many early Protestant hymns. Here's his 1609 work, "Lo, How A Rose E'er Blooming."

**Action:** Special Instrumental Music, “Lo, How A Rose E'er Blooming.” A single rose may be placed on the altar.

## 11. The Gifts of Christmas

-- Reader:

-- Actions:

Gift giving is part of the Christmas season. St. Matthew records in 2:11, “On coming to the house, ... [the Wise Men] 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 and of incense and of myrrh.” Those Wise Men gave out of their treasures, and the Shepherds gave of themselves. Both express the Gift of God in giving Christ as the Savior of the World. The biggest gift is Jesus Christ Himself, God’s gift to the world. In the case of Zion Lutheran Church, we know that its first recorded Christmas gift was \$5.07 to Pastor Swanlund in 1913. Oranges and apples were gifted to children in Christmas plays in Silverhill from the early days. We know that children got boxes of hard candies when they “said their pieces” in the Christmas programs. Those boxes were colorful and had little string handles of yarn that dressed them up. By the 1950s hard candy and a Delicious apple was the expectation in our church.

Now, think about Santa. Did you know he was an early Christian? Saint Nicholas was Bishop of Myra in the fourth century A.D. He was apparently wealthy, but the good Bishop gave his money away secretly to those in need. He was deeply interested in young people. He gave his wealth especially to young people, like young girls whose lack of a dowry limited their marriage future and to needy boys. Gifts coming from unknown sources were commonly attributed to him and parents customarily gave “Saint Nick” credit for their gifts to their children from that time. Today, St. Nicholas’ name survives as the human embodiment of unselfish giving, “Santa Claus.” We remember the gift-giving of Christmas with our own Christmas present.

## HYMN (AFLC Ambassador Hymnal, #26)

(congregation stands)

What child is this, who, laid to rest,  
On Mary’s lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet  
While shepherds watch are keeping?  
This, this is Christ the king,  
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:  
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,  
The babe, the son of Mary!

So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh;  
Come, peasant, king, to own Him.  
The King of kings salvation brings;  
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.  
Raise, raise the song on high;  
The virgin sings her lullaby;  
Joy, joy, for Christ is born,  
The babe, the son of Mary!

(congregation is seated)

**Action During Music:** While the song is sung, boxes wrapped in colorful paper are placed under the tree.

## 12. The Bells of Christmas

-- Reader:

-- Actions:

Angels had no bells, but they had words that ring true through history in the testimony of St. Luke 2:10-14: "And the angel said to them, 'Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths 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, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.'" Beginning in the fourth century, bells have announced the birth of the Baby Jesus. In Silverhill our first church bell welcomed Christmas until 1928. It then served Silverhill School and was eventually retired. Zion's present "new" bell first rang at Christmas beginning in 1929. And it continues to ring today. Let us listen again to some peals of Christmas.

**Action:** The church bell is rung.

## 13. The Christ Of Christmas

-- Reader:

The greatest Gift of Christmas is the Gift of God in Christ Jesus. All that we do in this Holy Season points to that expression of Holy Love. Christ came as a Babe in Bethlehem, God's gift at Christmas. As Christians we seek to pass on our heritage to our children and to those who, by faith in Christ, become part of the Family of God.

Let us stand and join together in the prayer that the Baby Jesus would share with His disciples thirty some years after that first Advent and first Christmas:

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.  
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory,  
For ever and ever. Amen.

## HYMN (AFLC Ambassador Hymnal, #41)

(congregation stands)

The happy Christmas comes once more,  
The heavenly guest is at the door,  
The blessed words the shepherds thrill,  
The joyous tidings, Peace, good will.

Come, Jesus, glorious heavenly guest,  
Keep Thine own Christmas in our breast,  
Then David's harp-strings, hushed so long,  
Shall swell our jubilee of song.

## 14. The Benediction.

-- Reader:

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely this day and this Advent Season. May your spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless till the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. May you bless all who cross your path this Advent season with an appropriate "Merry Christmas" and a willingness to share the Good News that God cared enough for humankind to send His only Son Jesus Christ to die for our sins. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(congregation seated)

## 15. Announcements.

### HYMN (AFLC Ambassador Hymnal, #332)

(congregation stands)

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.  
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,  
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the Baby awakes,  
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes;  
I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky  
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay  
Close by me forever, and love me, I pray;  
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,  
And fit us for Heaven to live with Thee there.

(congregation dismissed)

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## **Hangings of the Christmas Greens©**

A Service for the First Sunday of Advent at Zion Lutheran Church of Silverhill, AL 36576

**1. WELCOME, OFFERING, AND INVOCATION. -- Pastor Dave**

**2. WHERE DID OUR CHRISTMAS COME FROM? -- Milt Luoma**

**HYMN (AFLC Ambassador Hymnal, #490)**

**(congregation stands)**

Son of God, eternal Savior,  
Source of life and truth and grace,  
Word made flesh, whose birth among us  
Hallows all our human race,  
You our head, who, throned in glory,  
For Your own will ever plead:  
Fill us with Your love and pity,  
Heal our wrongs, and help our need.

Son of God, eternal Savior,  
Source of life and truth and grace,  
Word made flesh, whose birth among us  
Hallows all our human race:  
By Your praying, by Your willing  
That Your people should be one,  
Grant, oh, grant our hopes fruition:  
Here on earth Your will be done.

**(congregation seated)**

**3. TRADITION. -- Shirley Stephens**

**4. WHAT ADVENT IS ALL ABOUT. -- Phil Owen**

**HYMN (AFLC Ambassador Hymnal, #5)**

**(congregation stands)**

Come, Thou long expected Jesus,  
Born to set Thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us,  
Let us find our rest in Thee.  
Israel's Strength and Consolation,  
Hope of all the earth Thou art;  
Dear Desire of every nation,  
Joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver,  
Born a child and yet a King,  
Born to reign in us forever,  
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By Thine own eternal Spirit  
Rule in all our hearts alone;  
By Thine all sufficient merit,  
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

**(congregation seated)**

**5. THE SANCTUARY EVERGREENS. -- Reader: Steve Vasko; Actions: Becky Vasko**

**HYMN (AFLC Ambassador Hymnal, #28)**

**(congregation stands)**

I am so glad each Christmas Eve!  
The night of Jesus birth;  
Then like the sun The Star shone forth,  
And angels sang on earth.

The little child in Bethlehem,  
He was a king indeed;  
He came from His high state in heav'n,  
Down to a world in need.

Then mother trims the Christmas tree,  
And fills the room with light.  
She says that so the Star shone forth  
And made the dark world bright.

And so I love each Christmas Eve,  
And I love Jesus, too;  
And that He loves me in return,  
I know so well is true.

**(congregation is seated)**

**6. REMINDERS OF CHRISTMAS. -- Reader/Actions: Pete Midgarden**

## RESPONSIVE READING

Drawing on Isaiah 9, Luke 1, and John 1 [NKJV]

### (congregation stands)

Leader: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. That Word was the preincarnate Jesus Christ.

**Congregation: All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and His life (the life of Jesus Christ) was the light of men.**

L: The light of Christ shined in the darkness 2700 years ago when the Prophet Isaiah proclaimed that the darkness did not comprehend it. Yet the promise of his prophecy was that the people who walked in darkness would see a great light. Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them the light would shine.

**C: Isaiah proclaimed, “You, O Father, have multiplied the nation and increased its joy; for unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.**

L: “And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

**C: “Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”**

L: There was in the days of Herod, 700 years later, a certain priest named Zacharias serving according to the custom of the priesthood, to burn incense in the temple of the Lord. The whole multitude of the people was praying outside.

**C: An angel of the Lord appeared to Zacharias, saying, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.**

L: “And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at John’s birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and he will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb.

**C: “And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” That preparation would be for our Lord Jesus Christ.**

L: Just 6 months later the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary.

**C: The angel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women, for you have found favor with God. You will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS.**

L: “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.

**C: “And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” This was the fulfilling of the Old Testament prophecy.**

L: Please be seated. We remember our Christmas traditions with the placing of token Christmas cookies on our altar.

### HYMN (AFLC Ambassador Hymnal, #20)

Hark! The herald angels sing,  
“Glory to the newborn King;  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled!”

Joyful, all ye nations rise,  
Join the triumph of the skies;  
With th'angelic host proclaim,  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Refrain

Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail, the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings,  
Ris'n with healing in His wings.  
Mild He lays His glory by,  
Born that man no more may die,  
Born to raise the sons of earth,  
Born to give them second birth.

Refrain

**(congregation seated)**

**7. THE CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA AND THE PARAMENTS AND ADVENT COLORS. -- Reader/Actions: Cindi Johnson**

**HYMN (AFLC Ambassador Hymnal, #2)**

O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear.

Refrain

Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by Thine advent here;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

Refrain

**8. THE ADVENT CANDLE. -- Reader: Mary Kinsey; Actions: Ed Kinsey**

**HYMN (AFLC Ambassador Hymnal, #31)**

**(congregation stands)**

Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown  
When Thou camest to earth for me;  
But in Bethlehem's home there was found no room  
For Thy holy nativity.  
O come to my heart, Lord Jesus:  
There is room in my heart for Thee.

Heaven's arches rang when the angels sang,



Proclaiming Thy royal degree;  
But in lowly birth didst Thou come to earth,  
And in great humility.  
O come to my heart, Lord Jesus:  
There is room in my heart for Thee.

**(congregation is seated)**

**9. THE NATIVITY. -- Reader: Charley Canning; Actions: Martha Canning**

**HYMN (AFLC Ambassador Hymnal, #36)**

Infant holy, infant lowly,  
For His bed a cattle stall;  
Oxen lowing, little knowing  
Christ the child is Lord of all.  
Swiftly winging, angels singing,  
Bells are ringing, tidings bringing:  
Christ the child is Lord of all!  
Christ the child is Lord of all!

Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping  
Vigil till the morning new.  
Saw the glory, heard the story,  
Tidings of a Gospel true.  
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow,  
Praises voicing, greet the morrow:  
Christ the child was born for you!  
Christ the child was born for you!

**10. THE MUSIC OF CHRISTMAS. -- Reader: Ernie Burnett; Actions: Cindi Johnson/Shirley Stephens**

**RESPONSIVE READING**

Drawing on the Psalms and Revelation. (Psalms 33:2-3; 40:3; 98:1; 149:1; 81:1-3; 108:3 and Revelation 5:9-10; 14:3) [NKJV]

**(congregation stands)**

Leader: Praise the LORD with the harp.

**Congregation: Make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings.**

L: Sing to Him a new song. Play skillfully with a shout of joy.

**C: He has put a new song in my mouth-- Praise to our God. Many will see it and fear, and will trust in the LORD.**

L: Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! For He has done marvelous things.

**C: His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory. Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song ... in the assembly of saints.**

L: Sing aloud to God our strength. Make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob.

**C: Raise a song and strike the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the lute. Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, at the full moon, and on our solemn feast days.**

L: I will praise You, O LORD, among the peoples. I will sing praises to You among the nations.

**C: And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals. For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood, O Christ.**

L: You have drawn us out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made us kings and priests to our God and we shall reign on the earth.

**C: They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders.**

L: And no one could learn that song--

**C: Except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.”**

**(Please be seated.)**

**11. THE GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS. -- Reader/Actions: Henrie Burnett**

**HYMN (AFLC Ambassador Hymnal, #26)**

**(congregation stands)**

What child is this, who, laid to rest,  
On Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet  
While shepherds watch are keeping?  
This, this is Christ the king,  
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:  
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,  
The babe, the son of Mary!

So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh;  
Come, peasant, king, to own Him.  
The King of kings salvation brings;  
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.  
Raise, raise the song on high;  
The virgin sings her lullaby;  
Joy, joy, for Christ is born,  
The babe, the son of Mary!

**(congregation is seated)**

**12. THE BELLS OF CHRISTMAS. -- Reader: Vera Avera; Actions: Ernie Burnett**

**13. THE CHRIST OF CHRISTMAS. -- Reader: Margaret Stephens**

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.  
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory,  
For ever and ever. Amen.

**HYMN (AFLC Ambassador Hymnal, #41)**

**(congregation stands)**

The happy Christmas comes once more,  
The heavenly guest is at the door,  
The blessed words the shepherds thrill,  
The joyous tidings, Peace, good will.

Come, Jesus, glorious heavenly guest,  
Keep Thine own Christmas in our breast,  
Then David's harp-strings, hushed so long,  
Shall swell our jubilee of song.

**14. THE BENEDICTION. -- Reader: Pastor Dave**

**(congregation seated)**

**15. ANNOUNCEMENTS. -- Reader: Pastor Dave**

**HYMN (AFLC Ambassador Hymnal, #332)**

**(congregation stands)**

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.  
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,  
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the Baby awakes,  
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes;  
I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky  
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay  
Close by me forever, and love me, I pray;  
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,  
And fit us for Heaven to live with Thee there.

**(congregation dismissed)**