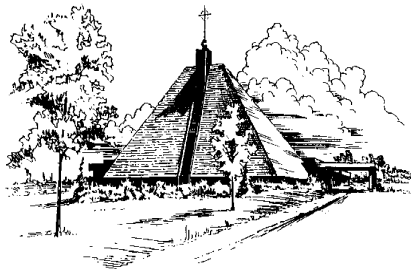


COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

CINNAMINSON, NEW JERSEY



2nd SUNDAY OF ADVENT

10:00 AM

DECEMBER 10, 2023

Covenant's Mission Statement

"To share God's love with all people, to nurture each other, to serve those in need, and to invite everyone into fellowship and worship as we strive to follow the example of Jesus Christ."

PRELUDE

"Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus"

arr. Hayes

GREETING AND PRAYER OF PREPARATION

Betty Herskovitz

Holy Spirit living within us, guide our hearts and minds as we welcome today all those who worship with us at Covenant Presbyterian Church. Give us discerning hearts so that everyone who crosses our threshold feels welcomed in the spirit of your love. Help us to recognize each person as an individual sent by you who will enrich our lives. And most of all, O God, let this be a place of love and acceptance of all your children; in the name of your child, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CHORAL INTROIT

"O Come, O Come Emmanuel"

Larson

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Listen to what the Lord our God says to us:

People: Peace is God's hope for us; salvation is God's gift to us.

Leader: See what the Lord our God reveals to us:

People: righteousness is the path to the kingdom; faithfulness is the highway we build.

Leader: Tell what the Lord our God asks us to speak:

People: prepare God's way; the Christ is coming to redeem us.

Leader: With prayer and praise, in scripture and in song, let us Worship the Living God!



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

2nd Candle (purple): Hope is assertive, but peace is subversive. The psalmist reminds us that we must seek peace and pursue it. We must search for it like a treasure hidden in a field, like it is the most precious, fragile thing we can imagine. But peace doesn't live only in dreams. Peace whispers into our ear that there is always another way, another path from rage and hate and fear. Peace calls us to have patience, but to not give up. Peace is not passive, but always lurking, just waiting for us to recognize we can grasp it. We light this candle as a reminder that peace is something we must pursue, for we follow the Prince of Peace.

Let us pray:

God of Peace, our world is full of angry voices calling for vengeance, calling for retribution masked as justice, calling for destruction as a lie for peace. But we know the true peace that comes from You is available for us all, if we seek it. If we follow You. May peace light our way in this world that desperately needs it. Amen.

OPENING HYMN

Arise Your Light Has Come

(See page 11)

CALL TO CONFESSION

God comes! Let us prepare the way. God comes to forgive us! Let us prepare our hearts as we confess our sins, saying,

PRAYER OF CONFESSION:

We confess that whatever our fine might have been that it has been paid, God of Comfort, yet we still insist on earning our way into your heart. We confess that you are beyond patient with us, but wish you would act quickly against those who hurt us. We confess that while your word will stand forever, it is our words of pain and anger that cause long term harm to others.

Your Messenger has come, Approaching God, crying out of your forgiveness and hope. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, you speak to us: not of punishment, but of peace; not of judgment, but of justice; not of a sentence, but salvation. And we offer our hearts in thanksgiving and hope.

SILENT MEDITATION



LORD HAVE MERCY (3x)

576 Lord, Have Mercy

Lord, have mer - cy.
Christ, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy on us.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Hear the good news and be a peace with yourself:

God is speaking to you: I love you; I forgive you; I restore you to new life.

We will not ignore the fact that God comes: not to condemn, but to comfort us; not to scold, but to speak tenderly to us of hope, of love, of joy. Thanks be to God. Amen.

WE ARE FORGIVEN (1x)

FORGIVENESS

447 We Are Forgiven

We are for - giv - en. We are for - giv - en. Thanks be to
God. Thanks be to God. We are for - giv - en.
We are for - giv - en. Thanks be to God. Thanks be to God.

SHARING OF PEACE

Since God has forgiven us in Christ, let us forgive one another. The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

And also with you.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Together, let us pray.

**Guide us, O God, by your Word and Spirit, that in your light we may see light, in your truth find freedom, and in your will discover your peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

MARK 1:1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight,'"

So John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And the whole Judean region and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Glory to You, Lord Christ!

ANTHEM

"Come Emmanuel Come"

arr. Raney

PSALM 85:1-2, 8-13

Let us read responsively from Psalm 85.

Lord, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

You forgave the iniquity of your people; you pardoned all their sin.

Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.

Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.


Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.

The Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.

Righteousness will go before him and will make a path for his steps.

May God bless this, the reading and hearing of God's Holy Word.





ISAIAH 40:1-11

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass; their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers; the flower fades, [[when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers; the flower fades,]] but the word of our God will stand forever. Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms and carry them in his bosom and gently lead the mother sheep.

This is the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

SERMON

"Out of Our Wilderness"

Rev. Dr. Robert Higgs

PRAYER AND REFLECTION

We pause to reflect on the message

If you wish, you may want to use the following breath prayer (or any of your choice). The words may be said aloud or in silence

Breathe in: "I want to know you ...

Breathe out: "... and the power of your resurrection"

HYMN

"On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry"

(See page 12)

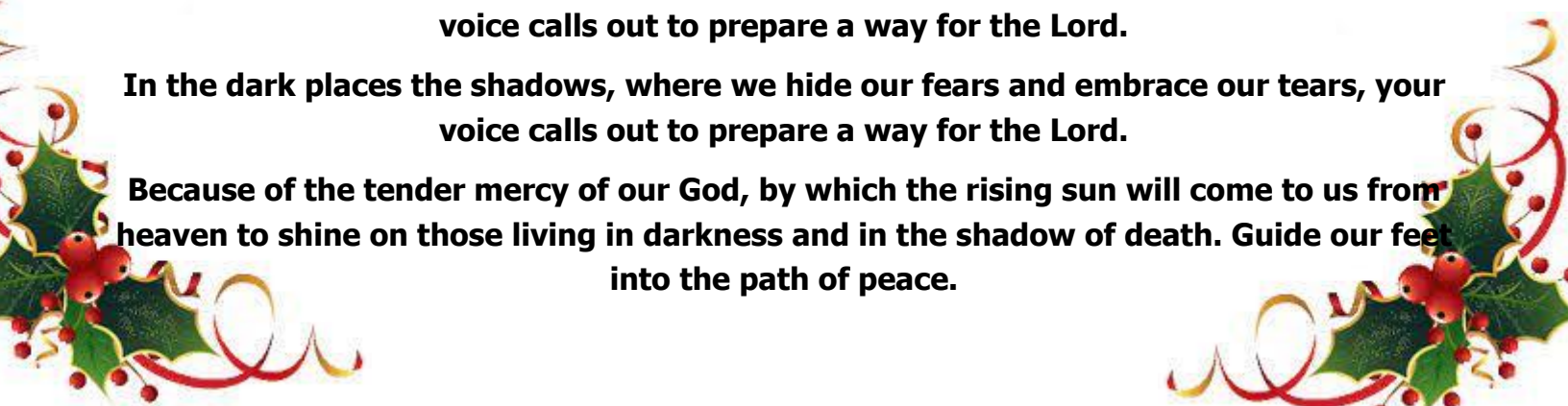
LITANY OF FAITH: JOHN THE BAPTIZER

Let us reflect on the ministry of John the Baptizer. Together, we say:

In the lonely places the wilderness where we stand forlorn, windswept, and alone your voice calls out to prepare a way for the Lord.

In the dark places the shadows, where we hide our fears and embrace our tears, your voice calls out to prepare a way for the Lord.

Because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death. Guide our feet into the path of peace.





As the rising sun comes to us each dawn, shine upon those who live in darkness. We pray all might know the joy of our salvation the forgiveness of sins and your great mercy.

When we walk the desert places guide our feet take us to where you would go. Give us words that you would use in this Advent season of promise and preparation. May we point the way with John the Baptizer to the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

~ written by John Birch

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

For the peace from above, for the loving kindness of God, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the world, for the unity of the church of God, and for the well-being of all peoples, let us pray to the Lord

Lord, have mercy.

For this gathering of the faithful, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For all the baptized, for all who serve in the church, for elders and pastors, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For the rulers of the nations as we pray for Joe our President, Cory and Robert our Senators, Philip our Governor, Andy our Representative, and the Justices of the Supreme Court. Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this town of Cinnaminson, for every city and community, and for those who live in them, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For seasonable weather, and for abundant harvests for all to share, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For the good earth which God has given us, and for the wisdom and will to conserve it, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

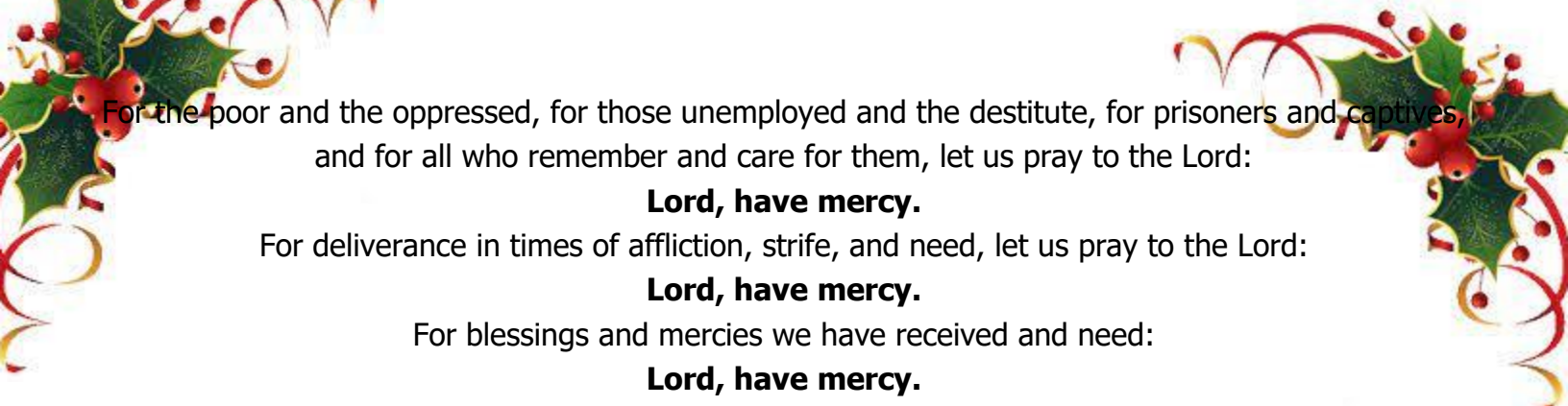
For those who travel by land, water, or air, or through outer space, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For the aged and infirm, for the widowed and orphaned, and for the sick and the suffering, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.





For the poor and the oppressed, for those unemployed and the destitute, for prisoners and captives,
and for all who remember and care for them, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For deliverance in times of affliction, strife, and need, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For blessings and mercies we have received and need:

Lord, have mercy.

For all your children to know the peace and joy of your supporting care, let us pray to the Lord

Lord, have mercy.

For all who have died in the hope of the resurrection and are at rest, let us give thanks to the Lord.

Eternal God, ruler of all things in heaven and earth, accept the prayers of your people, and
strengthen us to do your will; through Jesus Christ. Amen.

CALL TO STEWARDSHIP

May we not hide our gifts, Loving God, but offer them to you with trust and hope, so all may join us
on the journey to your kingdom of grace and hope, peace and healing. The offerings for the work of
the church will now be received.

OFFERTORY

"Away in a Manger"

arr. Springer

DOXOLOGY

Praise God from Whom All Blessings

#809

OFFERTORY PRAYER

We pray, Holy God, that our gifts might smooth the path of those who walk in grief, might surround
the grieving with comfort, might feed the hungry, and bring others into places of peace and
safety. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**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 debts, as we forgive
our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen**

CLOSING HYMN

"Angels, from the Realms of Glory"

(See page 13)

CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

Go out into the world ... be with us all. Amen.

O Lord, may you this week open up doors for us to share your love!

CHORAL RESPONSE

"May the Lord Bless You and Keep You"

Larson

POSTLUDE

"Behold That Star"

arr. Hayes

MINISTERS: Barbara and Paul VanTassel (Ushers), Cynthia Joffe (Refreshments)



ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. CHRISTMAS CARDS

The December bulletin board welcomes Christmas greeting cards from our members. Please feel free to send them or drop them off to the church office and they will be posted on the bulletin board - a wonderful way to reconnect with our Covenant friends.

2. FLOWER CHART

The flower chart is posted on the bulletin board for 2024. Sign your name on a specific date in order to dedicate flowers to a loved one.

3. CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

Join us for our Christmas Eve Service at 4PM! We will have our bell choir, chancel choir and guest flutist Elisa Muzzillo and guest violinist, Nina Zubaidi providing music. The "ABC's of Christmas" will conclude with the traditional candle lighting ceremony.

4. ANGEL TREE

The Deacon's Angel Tree is ready for the 2023 season. We're sponsoring two local families in need who could use our help making this Christmas a little brighter. The items on the Angels are specific to these families, not generic items as in past years. All the gifts are things the families have requested. Beginning Sunday, December 3rd. You will be able to take an Angel from the Angel Tree and help make a very special Christmas for these needy families. All items should be returned unwrapped, with the Angel tag attached, by Sunday December 17th. You can direct any questions to Jeanne Martin. Thank you.

5. POINSETTIA FORM

If you are interested in dedicating a poinsettia to a loved one, please fill out the form and return it to the church office no later than December 10.

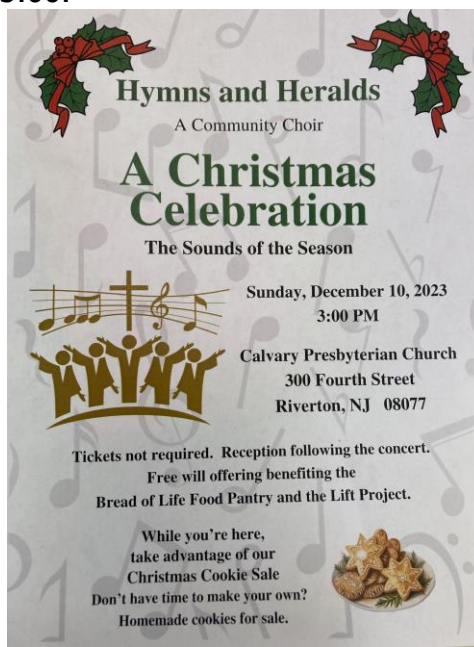
6. SUNDAY SCHOOL

Attention all children starting at age 4. Covenant will be hosting Sunday School during the 10am Church Service on the following dates: December 17th.

7. YOUR PARTICIPATION IS NEEDED! Members are invited to participate in our services. Please contact Bonnie Cain or Greg DiBona if you are interested in reading scripture or leading our worship services. We are also in need of more volunteers to operate the camera and soundboard. Please contact the church office if you are interested.

8. BIBLE STUDY The Bible Study will be located in the lounge on Mondays at 11AM. All are welcome!

9. STEWARDSHIP: Total Income for 12/3: Total Income: \$2329.00, Envelope Giving: \$2069.00. Deacons: \$274.00, Fellowship (Christmas Tea): \$1805.00.



Prayer List

We appreciated Pastor Bob's participation in the worship service and for his thoughtful sermon. Receiving holy communion once again in the true way was greatly appreciated. Thank you to Mary Lou Newborg for the reading of scripture and for making us aware of upcoming activities to look forward to at Covenant. Sandi Pascone provided tasty refreshments - thank you.

A fun afternoon was had by all at the Christmas Tea. Thank you to our Fellowship Team for providing delicious goodies and for the beautiful room to enjoy it all. Thank you to all the gentlemen who served us. Thank you to the Boy Scouts who did a great job in cleaning up leaves and trimming bushes.

Please pray for the violence and wars to stop and for peace to prevail. It is greatly needed.

Please keep our Covenant families and friends in your prayers:

Treva - very good care in Rehab and return to good health very soon
Betty Graham - good to see her at the tea and continued healing and feeling good
B. Ann and Dave DuBois - good care and rest as they deal with health issues
Terri Bell - able to rest comfortably and strength for Ken as he takes very good care of her
Emily Busby - doing very well in independent living and proud to say that she is 95
Barbara Van Tassel's friend, Betty McCord - receiving very good care and healing
Mary Lou's friend, 2-year-old Logan - that he will become free of cancer as he receives radiation
Karen Schwartz's grandson, Lucas - healing of his leg and back to school
Betty Herskovitz's friend, Bill - improving health following treatment
Rita DiBona - Greg's grandmother - healing following a fall
Bruce and his family - able to secure an apartment and treatment for Bruce's health concerns
Carol's daughter, Susan, is requesting prayers for her friend's mother-in-law, Angie Ieradi, who is in the hospital due to very serious and persistent health concerns and prayers for her family





Poinsettia Order Form

I wish to purchase _____ POINSETTIA PLANT (s) at \$11.00 each.

The Christmas Eve Bulletin will include a listing of names of donors (if desired) and mention the names of those in whose memory or in whose behalf the poinsettia plants are presented.

Mr./Mrs./Family

In memory/gratitude

Enclosed please find my check for the sum of \$ _____

Signed _____ Phone _____

Please return form to the church office no later than Sunday, December 10, 2023.

POINSETTIAS MAY BE PICKED UP AFTER THE DECEMBER 24TH CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

PLEASE CHECK ONE!

_____ I will pick up my poinsettia

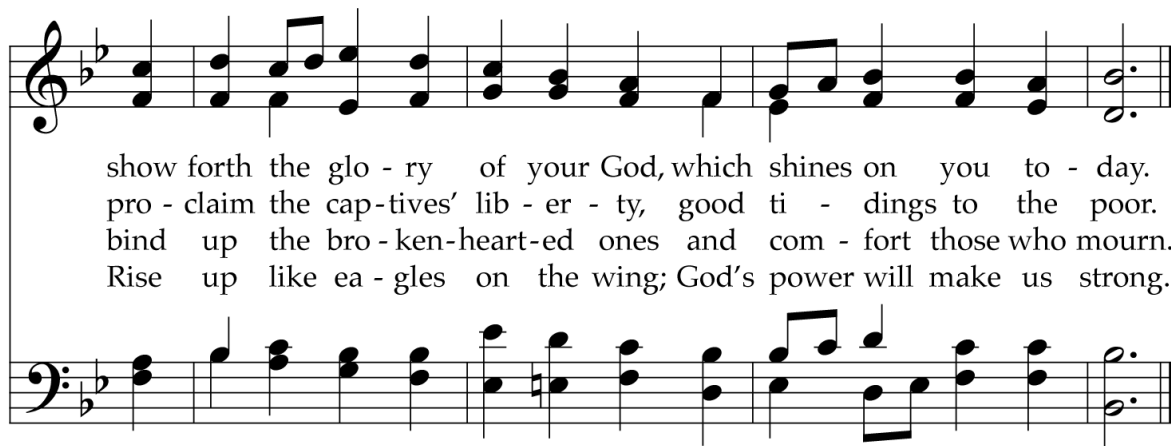
_____ I would like the Deacons to deliver my poinsettia to someone special



744 Arise, Your Light Is Come!



1 A - rise, your light is come! The Spir - it's call o - bey;
2 A - rise, your light is come! Fling wide the pris - on door;
3 A - rise, your light is come! All you in sor - row born,
4 A - rise, your light is come! The moun - tains burst in song!



show forth the glo - ry of your God, which shines on you to - day.
pro - claim the cap - tives' lib - er - ty, good ti - dings to the poor.
bind up the bro - ken - heart - ed ones and com - fort those who mourn.
Rise up like ea - gles on the wing; God's power will make us strong.

Echoing imagery from Isaiah 61:1-2 and other passages, this text was created as an inclusive-language alternative to an older hymn using this late 19th-century tune. Because it is a song of encouragement rather than a song of praise, it is not directed to God but to people.

96 On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry

1 On Jor - dan's bank the Bap - tist's cry an -
2 Then cleansed be ev - ery life from sin; make
3 We hail you as our Sav - ior, Lord, our
4 Stretch forth your hand; our health re - store, and

nounc - es that the Lord is nigh; a - wake and heark - en,
straight the way for God with - in, and let us all our
ref - uge and our great re - ward; with - out your grace we
make us rise to fall no more. O let your face up -

for he brings glad ti - dings of the King of kings!
hearts pre - pare for Christ to come and en - ter there.
waste a - way like flowers that with - er and de - cay.
on us shine and fill the world with love di - vine.

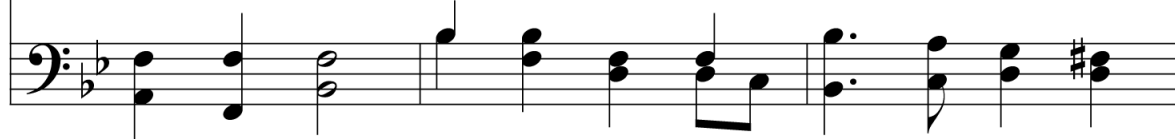
143 Angels, from the Realms of Glory



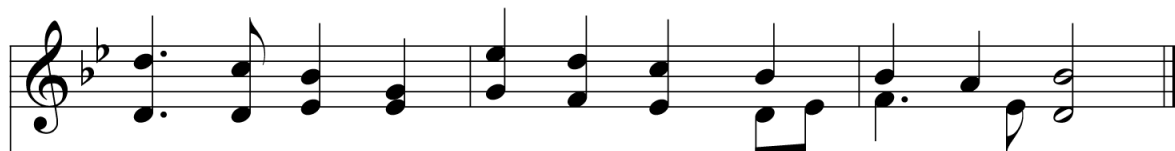
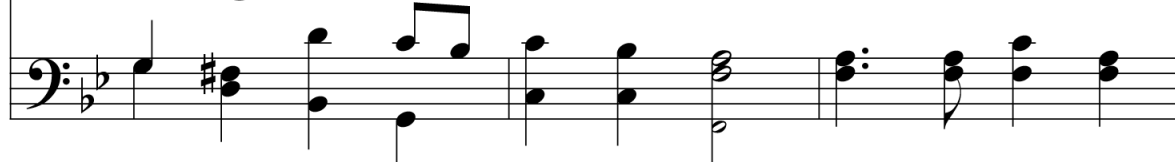
1 An - gels, from the realms of glo - ry, wing your flight o'er
 2 Shep - herds, in the fields a - bid - ing, watch - ing o'er your
 3 Sag - es, leave your con - tem - pla - tions; bright - er vi - sions
 4 All cre - a - tion, join in prais - ing God the Fa - ther,



all the earth; you, who sang cre - a - tion's sto - ry,
 flocks by night, God with us is now re - sid - ing;
 beam a - far; seek the great de - sire of na - tions;
 Spir - it, Son, ev - er - more your voic - es rais - ing



now pro - claim Mes - si - ah's birth:
 yon - der shines the in - fant light: come and wor - ship,
 you have seen his na - tal star:
 to the e - ter - nal Three in One:



come and wor - ship, wor - ship Christ, the new - born king!

