



Kensington Presbyterian Church *Reflections to light the way*

December 27, 2020

WELCOME, during these times of physical isolation we are putting out these worship services that you can do at home.¹ This doesn't mean you have to do them alone. You can invite those who live with you, or connect with others through the phone or computer, or even in small groups outside.

Please continue to check out the website [kensingtonchurch.ca](https://www.kensingtonchurch.ca) or facebook <https://www.facebook.com/KensingtonChurchNDG/>

If you have any prayer requests, ideas, or just want to talk, please reach out to your elder or Rev. Peter (Peter@Kensingtonchurch.ca).

Announcements

Sunday Worship: n your Phone or computer. Please contact Rev. Peter for details on how to join in.

Visiting: The government considers ministers to be essential workers. If you need a visit, please contact Rev. Peter.

Prayer Group: will be meeting through Zoom on Wed. at 11:30 a.m.
[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/78266904325?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/78266904325?pwd=dkhMck1ZRXBKTmdvK2VsaHRlOFF1UT09)
[pwd=dkhMck1ZRXBKTmdvK2VsaHRlOFF1UT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/78266904325?pwd=dkhMck1ZRXBKTmdvK2VsaHRlOFF1UT09)
or phone: 438-809-7799

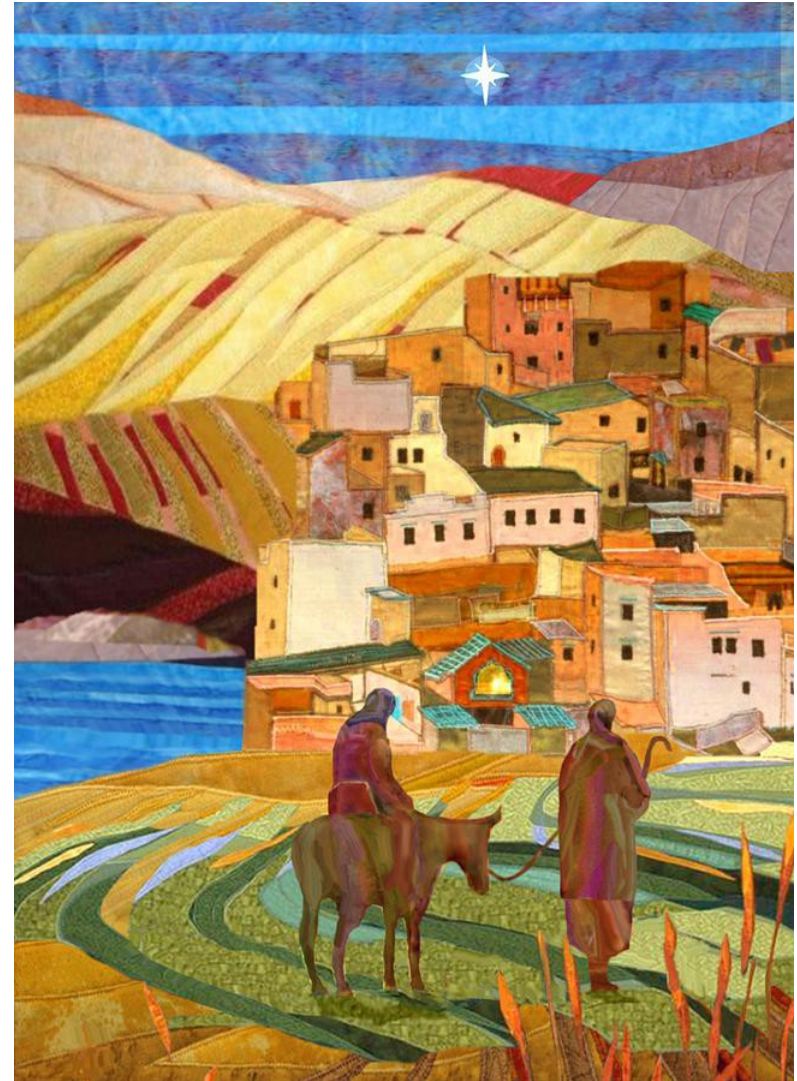
Meeting ID: 782 6690 4325

Passcode: 7864826

Book Club: Discussion of *The Fault in our stars* on Dec 30. Please contact Antoinette for details.

Re-opening the Church: Session will consider when to reopen the building after Montréal is no longer a 'red zone'. In the mean time, we are continuing to improve our facilities.

¹ note: that the footnotes are not as thorough as an academic paper.



Road to Bethlehem - M Torevell

Contacts

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Approaching God



Lighting of the Christ Candle
 Jésus Chris est la lumière du monde.
 Jesus Christ is the light of the world.



Call to worship
 Light looked down and saw darkness
"I will go there," said light.

Peace looked down and saw war.
"I will go there," said peace.

Love looked down and saw hatred.
"I will go there," said love.

So the Lord of Light,
 the Prince of Peace,
 the King of Love,
 came down and crept in beside us.

Let us look for the light.

♪ Hymn: Angels from the Realms of Glory.....pg 10
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUL8CDz2G1k>



Prayer of Adoration

Lord Jesus,
 we thank you
 that when the world was very dark
 you came to bring light into our darkness.
 You came in the night

to bring light into the lives of Mary and Joseph,
 innkeepers and shepherds,
 and so many more.

As we gather around your manger,
 we acknowledge there is darkness in ourselves.
 Sometimes there are times we intentionally don't follow your
 example - when we do things that hurt others, the
 environment, or ourselves. . .
 and sometimes we don't realize what a shadow we cause,
 and darkness we cast behind us. . .

Please come to us now,
 so that we may see your Spirit,
 and know your hope.
 We ask this as we gather again around your manger,
 and remember your light.
 Amen.



Assurance of Pardon

Read the good news from Matthew 1: 21
 She will give birth to a son,
 and you are to give him the name Jesus,
 because he will save his people from their sins.
 Amen.



Lord's Prayer (feel free to use another version/translation)

To help us along our journey, let us say the prayer that Jesus teaches to light our path.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.

♪ Hymn: O little town of Bethlehem.....pg 9

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKPYOf2aSF0>



Listening to God



Prayer

Mighty God,
the shepherds of old were full of your praises,
saying that all they had heard and seen
was like what they had been told.
May we hear your Holy Spirit
moving among us now
helping us to hear your message
as we look for you in our lives.

Amen.²

Intro to the readings

Today's readings are going to be split up, with some setting up the reflection, and others adding to it.

Matthew starts his narration of the good news of Jesus Christ with a reminder of those who have come before. This is a collection of heroes, people with dubious pasts, and people we've never heard of. Why start with this?

The Psalm includes some good reminders and requests.



Reading: Please look up the passages in your own

Bible, or click on the name to be taken to an online version.

[Matthew 1: 1-16](#)

[Psalm 27: 1-3, 11-14](#) (or the whole thing)

Sermon: Reflections to light the way

Dear Lord, please bless these words
and the meditations of our hearts.³ Amen.

Matthew starts by reminding us of those who have come before. Some english translations call it a genealogy, some say it's "An account of the birth of Jesus the Messiah." This is probably a better translation as the scholars almost universally agree that this couldn't be an accurate listing of Joseph's genetic ancestors.

It is however a good reminder of people who have travelled the journey of life before us leading to the revelation found in Jesus.

Looking back at the lives of those who have travelled similar journey's before is a source of insight and hope. One of those who journeyed with Kensington and helped share light and hope was Lesley MacLeod. This didn't come from nowhere. Somebody

² inspired by Worship Sourcebook E.3.1.1

³ Psalm 19:14

who gave her strength was her father Les. Before her body died, Lesley shared with me an article that he had written about a journey he took. This was written while he was serving in the Middle East during World War 2.



I am sure nearly all of us have fashioned a picture of Bethlehem in our minds at some time or other and, especial at Christmas time, have used our imagination to reconstruct the beautiful story of the Nativity. Even if we have perhaps failed to appreciate the full significance of that great event we still unconsciously surrender to a feeling of generosity and gladness when Christmas comes round.

To me this season of the year has always conjured up an image of a bright starlit night, with glittering frost and snow-covered fields, where a group of shepherds are attending their flocks. Over all the countryside around Bethlehem lies the

solemn hush of midnight, and somehow a feeling of expectancy mingles with the silent calm. The tempo of the scene changes suddenly, and with the proclamation of the Saviour's birth to the astonished shepherds comes an overflowing of joy and goodwill from heaven to earth I can see these shepherds hastening to the manger, finding the babe. and spreading abroad the great news to their incredulous neighbours; the three wise men are already following a new star which has risen in the eastern sky. The silent night has now become one of glad rejoicing as the scene expands and the joyous news spreads in widening ripples across the land. Perhaps it is this pictured scene, and one of these ripples, which impart to us that otherwise explainable feeling of goodwill at Christmas.

I have visited Bethlehem three times. and although Monty's push upset our plans to spend Christmas Eve there. we did manage on those ether occasion to gather in at least a little of the Christmas feeling which pervades the "City of David".

It was In an attempt to capture as much as possible of this atmosphere that my friend and I set cut to walk from Jerusalem to Bethlehem one morning in September, 1942. 7.30 am. saw us striding out of the Old C1ty through the Jaffa Gate and down on to the Hebron road. I found it quiet and pleasant walking along, with olive trees bordering the roadway, and 1 thought for a time of all the famous Biblical people to whom this journey must have been familiar. We pulled figs from a tree within reach. but found them to be unripe and very bitter. Almost half-way to Bethlehem we stopped at 'Mary's Well' or "The Well of the Magi". Mary is believed to have rested here on her journey to Bethlehem, and here, too, came the Three Wise Men, who, having lost their Guiding star, stopped to drink at the well. On looking down into the clear water, they saw the reflection of the star and followed it once more until it stopped over Bethlehem.

At the top of the hill where the well is stands the Monastery of Mar Elias, which is built over the traditional place where Elijah rested during this flight from Jezebel. From here we got our first glorious sight of Bethlehem. It is built on a hillside, as are so many towns in Palestine; sloping down from the city into the valley beneath are terraces, like big steps. These are so formed as to make use of all the available rain, and the valley and terraces are dotted with fig trees, vines and olives. Some of the finest olives in Palestine are grown in this district.

Further along the road is the gracefully domed Tomb of Rachel. Here died Jacob's wife after the birth of Benjamin, and the present tomb is built around the pillar which Jacob erected upon her grave. We come at last to the end of our six mile walk and trudge up the hill into Bethlehem itself. Close by can be seen the "Field of the Shepherds" which speaks for itself.

Bethlehem means "The House of Bread" because of the cornfields which have always surrounded it. It was in one of these cornfields that Ruth met Boaz after she had refused to let Naomi return to Bethlehem without her in those memorable words: "Entreat me not to leave thee. Whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and they God my God; where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried: The Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."

From Ruth's marriage with Boaz was born a line which descended to David and, "born of David's line" to the Saviour of the world.

Bethlehem's immortal fame, however, comes from it being the birthplace of Jesus, and the Church of the Nativity is the magnet which draws so many pilgrims. A magnificent basilica was built in 330 A.D. by Constantine, the first Christian Roman emperor, over the stable where Christ was born. This

was restored during the Byzantine period, and at one time the basilica was glittering with gold, marble and wonderful mosaics, some of the latter still remaining today. The nave of the church, with its four rows of high Corinthian pillars, is all that remains of the original building, and it belongs in common to the Greek, Latin and Armenian Churches, who have separate churches inside the main building. The places seemed cold and bare when we first stepped inside, but the great ancient pillars and high roof of English oak gave it a sort of lofty grandeur which grew on me as the minutes ticked by. Somehow this building has escaped the fate of the other famous churches in Palestine, most of which have been destroyed and rebuilt several times, and it is now the oldest Christian Church in use today.

Below the church, down a flight of stone steps, lies the grotto, where the birth took place. We each obtained a candle from one of the priests to light the way. The cave is difficult to describe, there is so much atmosphere about it. It is quite small and lit by numerous silver lamps. The roof and walls are smoke-blackened rock, and set in the floor is a silver star, about 9" across, indicating the spot where our Lord was born. Above the star hangs a row of small oil lamps, and the smell of incense, which priests scatter periodically, is heavy on the air. A few yards from the Star of Bethlehem is another small grotto, also with a row of lamps. This is the manger where the new-born child was laid. "And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger".

It is difficult to realize the full significance of the moments spent in this cave at the time one is there. The pungent smell of incense combined with the semi-darkness and the smoked rocky walls and roof dulls one's senses. It is only later in the fresh air of the courtyard that I realize I have just seen the Centre of the World. There have been doubts cast on the authenticity of many

religious sites, especially in Jerusalem, because of its oft-repeated destruction. but of all the holy places in Palestine this grotto of the Nativity is the most authentic - so early is the tradition which fixed it.

The only material link which connects Bethlehem with the majority of people in this country is the Christmas bells, and it gave us a great thrill to climb up into the tower and stand beside them. Year after year they ring out their message of peace and goodwill. They may seem a little anachronistic in this war-stricken world. No doubt this same feeling has occurred to many people down the ages who, like ourselves, found the Christmas message conflicting with the stark reality of war. Perhaps it is because, like the Three Wise Men, we too have temporarily lost sight of the star, and that the world is still too dark to catch its reflection again. If so, it would be foolish of us to say that neither the star nor the message now exists.

I wonder if Les knew of the hymn we're going to sing later, *As with gladness men of old?* I can imagine him praying the forth verse,
Holy Jesus, ev'ry day
keep us in the narrow way,
and, when earthly things are past,
bring our ransomed souls at last
where they need no star to guide,
where no clouds thy glory hide.

Les was nourished by the stories he was reminded of, such as: Ruth's struggles, strength and joy, and the Wise Men losing their direction and then finding it again. Just as he found strength in them, so I find strength in his story. 1942 was the middle of the war. It was a dark time, but he reminds us there is hope. God is with us.

The times we are in now are very different that Ruth, the Wise

Men, and Les MacLeod... but they are also dark. It's not the first time, but there is hope.



Let us hear the final two scripture passages.

[Isaiah 9: 2-7](#)

[John 12: 44-46](#)

To God be the glory

Amen.



Responding to God

FaithTalk: Please explore these questions with somebody, or many somebodies. Do what you feel safe (& practice stretching a little).

Memories: Can you share about a time when you visited someplace that has historical significance. What was it like? How did it feel?

Etching: What is a story that has given you hope for your life journey?

Actions: How do you look for guiding stars for your journey?

Values: What is one of your guiding stars?

Offering

Financially, we have set up donation options on **our website**.

Just click the '[Donate Now](#)' button, and then the pretty button. It gives you various options that are easy to follow.

You can also donate through **interac e-transfer**. Our name is [Kensington Presbyterian Church](#) and the e-mail address is info@kensingtonchurch.ca.

Mailing a cheque or signing up for Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR) are also good options.

Prayers of the people

Lord Jesus,
you are the light of the world.
Shine in the dark places
where there are wars
and where people hurt each other...

Lord, in your mercy,
here our prayer.

Lord Jesus,
you are the light of the world.
Help our leaders to know how to run this nation and city so that
everybody's needs are met, especially those who are suffering...

Lord, in your mercy,
here our prayer.

Lord Jesus,
you are the light of the world.
Shine in those dark places where people are ill or sad.
Please bring help and healing...
(Peter M. has finished his 5th round of treatment and is doing
well, all things considered.)...

Lord, in your mercy,
here our prayer.

Lord Jesus,
we are your lights in the world.
Help us to be prepared to show people your light by loving
them...
and to put the needs of others before our own needs...

Lord, in your mercy,
here our prayer.

Lord Jesus,
we are your lights in the world.
Help us to look and listen for your light along our journey
so that we can know hope and love...
Help us to be prepared to share your light by loving others...
and to put the needs of others before our own needs...

Lord, in your mercy,
here our prayer.
Amen.⁴

♪ Hymn: As with gladness men of old.....pg 10
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sp52sx2_GYs

Benediction

May the light of the glorious gospel of Christ
Shine in our hearts, transform our lives,
and brighten the world.
And the blessing of God almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
*rest upon you always.*⁵
Amen.



⁴ adapted from a prayer by John Davies found in *Hay and Stardust* from Wild Goose Publ

⁵ Worship Sourcebook F.9.2.1

Prayer We give thanks for language teachers and translators who connect cultures and people around the world through education.

Sharing the Gift of Language

The PCC's partnership with the Protestant Theological Institute (PTI) in Cluj-Napoca, an ancient city in Romania, began with the overseas appointment of Brian Johnston in 1997. Supported by Presbyterians Sharing, Brian taught English at the Seminary of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Romania until 2016. After retirement, Brian continued to organize musical concerts with students and others at the Institute. The PCC's partnership with this Reformed seminary in Eastern Europe continues with an annual grant for the English teacher. Theological students must pass an English exam as a requirement for ordination. In thanking the PCC, Dr. Vilmos József Kolumbán, Rector of PTI, added, "Your financial contribution to the limited resources that we have is an extremely valuable input towards fulfilling our goals."



DAILY PRAYERS

Monday, December 28 We pray for all those who have been victims of violence and who experience the effects of trauma.

Tuesday, December 29 We pray for those who struggle with illness, grief or depression. May they know God's peace and strength.

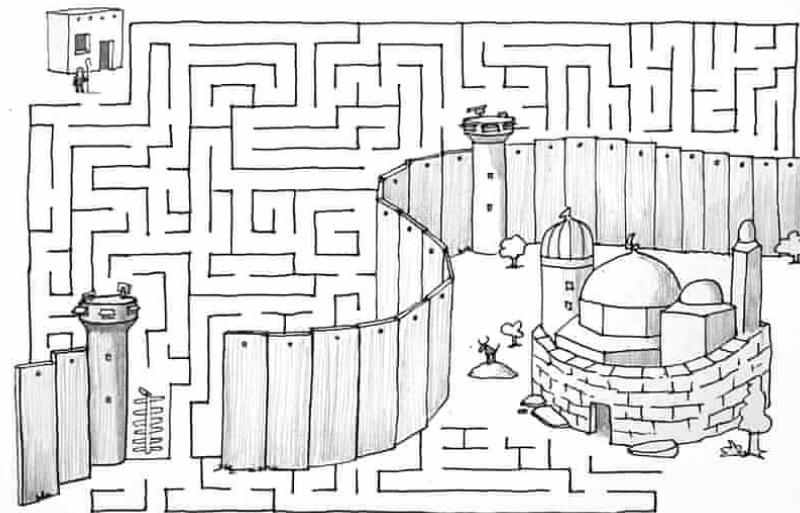
Wednesday, December 30 We pray for a spirit of co-operation and understanding among leaders in our communities, nations and the world as they seek ways to recover in the face of the global pandemic.

Thursday, December 31 (New Year's Eve) Though 2020 was a difficult year for every country in the world, we pray for the ability to see the blessings of the past year, mourn the sorrows we experienced, and look to 2021 with hope and open hearts.

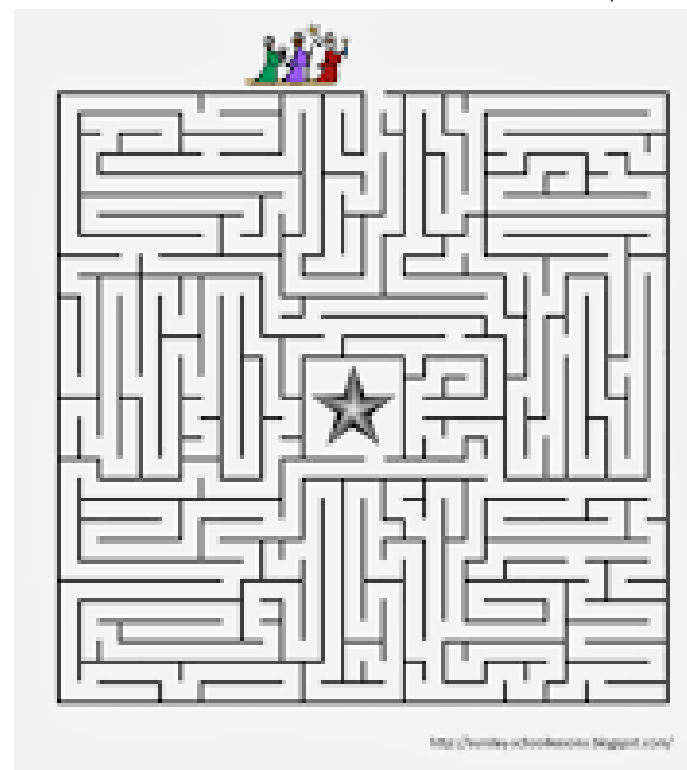
JANUARY 2021

Friday, January 1 (New Year's Day) We end the past year in gratitude to God for the moments and the milestones in which we experienced God's presence. We begin the new year in prayer for a more just and loving world where we depend on the abundance of God's grace, the generosity of God's mercy and the unwavering promise of God's compassion.

Saturday, January 2 We give thanks for congregations celebrating special anniversaries this year and pray for their ongoing witness into the future.



top maze by Banksy



O little town of Bethlehem

FOREST GREEN 8 6 8 6 D CMD

D/F# G C G/B Am 6 G Em D Em Am G/B C6 D 7 G

1. O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie!
 2. For Christ is born of Ma - ry, and, gath - ered all a - bove,
 3. How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly, the won - drous gift is given!
 4. O ho - ly child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray;

D/F# G C G/B Am 6 G Em D Em Am G/B C6 D 7 G

A - bove thy deep and dream - less sleep the si - lent stars go by:
 while mor - tals sleep, the an - gels keep their watch of won - dering love.
 So God im - parts to hu - man hearts the bless - ings born of heaven.
 cast out our sin and en - ter in; be born in us to - day.

Em Bm (C) D G Em D /C G/B G C6 Em D

yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the ev - er - last - ing light;
 O morn - ing stars, to - geth - er pro - claim the ho - ly birth,
 No ear may hear his com - ing, but in this world of sin,
 We hear the Christ - mas an - gels the great glad tid - ings tell;

G C G/B Am 6 G Em D Em Am G/B Dsus4 D 7 G


the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.
 and prais - es sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth.
 where meek souls will re - ceive him, still the dear Christ en - ters in.
 oh come to us, a - bide with us, our Lord, Em - man - u - el.

Words: Phillips Brooks (1835–1893), alt Music: English traditional; harmony, Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)



Words: public domain Music: harmony, copyright © Oxford University Press from *The English Hymnal*





Angels from the realms of glory




1. An - gels from the realms of glo - ry, wing your flight o'er all the earth;
 2. Shep-herds in the field a - bid - ing, watch-ing o'er your flocks by night,
 3. Sa - ges, leave your con-tem-pla-tions; bright-er vis-ions beam a - far;
 4. Saints, be-fore the al - tar bend-ing, watch-ing long in hope and fear,
 5. Though an in - fant now we view him, he shall fill his Fa-ther's throne,

ye who sang cre - a - tion's sto - ry, now pro-claim Mes - si - ah's birth.
 God with us is now re - sid - ing; yon-der shines the in - fant Light.
 seek the great de - sire of na-tions; ye have seen his na - tal star.
 sud - den - ly the Lord, de-scend-ing, in his tem - ple shall ap - pear.
 ga - ther all the na - tions to him; eve - ry knee shall then bow down.


Come and wor-ship, come and wor-ship; wor-ship Christ, the new-born King.



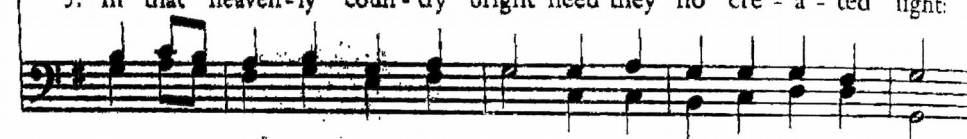

Words: James Montgomery (1771-1854) Music: Henry T. Smart (1813-1879)

Worship with joy, O ye who dwell in glory



As with gladness men of old




1. As with glad-ness men of old did the guid-ing star be - hold;
 2. As with joy - ful steps they sped, Sav-iour, to thy low - ly bed,
 3. As they of - fered gifts most rare at thy cra - dle rude and bare,
 4. Ho - ly Je - sus, eve - ry day keep us in the nar-row way,
 5. In that heaven-ly coun - try bright need they no cre - a - ted light:

as with joy they hailed its light, lead-ing on - ward, beam-ing bright:
 there to bend the knee be - fore thee, whom heaven and earth a - dore,
 so may we with ho - ly joy, pure and free from sin's al - loy,
 and when earth - ly things are past, bring our ran-somed souls at last
 thou its light, its joy, its crown, thou its sun which goes not down;

so, most gra-cious Lord, may we ev - er-more be led to thee.
 so may we with will - ing feet ev - er seek thy mer - cy seat.
 all our cost-liest treas - ures bring, Christ, to thee, our heaven-ly King.
 where they need no star to guide, where no clouds of glo - ry hide.
 there for - ev - er may we sing hal - le - lu - jahs to our King.



Words: William Chatterton Dix (1837-1898) Music: Conrad Kocher (1786-1872);
 harmony, William H. Monk (1823-1889); descant, Sydney H. Nicholson (1875-1947)

Reflections to light the way