Lessons and Carols

What is Lessons and Carols?
Lessons and Carols is a prayer service of Scripture and song. Originating in England in the late 19th century, Lessons and Carols was originally conducted on Christmas Eve and consisted of exactly nine Lessons. However, it has since been adapted and can be found being celebrated throughout Advent with a variable number of Lessons. Regardless of the number of Lesson or when in the season leading up to Christmas it is observed, a Lessons and Carols service will focus on the mystery of the Incarnation and its role in salvation history.

What is a Lesson?
Typically, each Lesson in a Lesson and Carols service consists of 4 things: a reading from Scripture, a carol or hymn, a prayer, periods of silence.

- **Scripture Reading**: Each Lesson begins with a reading from Scripture. The readings selected for each Lesson will all touch on the coming of Christ as the Messiah. Readings regarding the Fall point towards the need for a Messiah. Readings from Old Testament prophets serve as reminders that a Messiah was long promised and foretold. Readings from the Gospels show how Christ fulfills the role of Messiah.
- **Carol or Hymn**: After the reading a carol or hymn is sung that reflects the readings message. Generally, a mix of Advent hymns and Christmas carols will make up the bulk of music selections for the evening.
- **Prayer**: Finally a brief prayer gathering the wisdom of that Lesson and often asking of God a related blessing is said.
- **Periods of Silence**: Periods of silence interspersed throughout each lesson, allow those present time and space to reflect on the meaning of the lesson, what God might be trying to communicate, and how the lesson might apply to daily life.

Why should we participate in Lessons and Carols?
For many people today, December is an incredibly busy, noisy, and stressful time of year. This is particularly true for families. It can be easy to let Advent rush by in a flurry of activity that has little or nothing to do with Christ. Lessons and Carols is a beautiful way to step out of all that hustle and bustle and take some time and space to prepare one’s heart for Christmas and the coming of Christ. The reflective nature of Lessons and Carols offers calm and quiet, two things in short supply in our world, and the chance to focus on God and remember the true meaning of this holy season.
Tenebrae Reflection

Family Last Name: ________________________________

First Names of Adult Participants: ____________________

First Names of Youth Participants: ____________________

Which Lesson held the most meaning for you? Why?

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What is one way your family can prepare for Christ this Advent?

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Did Lessons and Carols help you to connect with God and/or our parish community? If yes, how? If not, why not?

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What is one thing about Lessons and Carols that you would like to share with others?

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