1. **Welcome**

Good morning everyone and welcome to our annual carol service.. So it is wonderful to be here this morning and wonderful to see our school community gathered in one place together.

Our service this morning helps us to take time out of our usual routine and to prepare ourselves for the season of Christmas. We will have readings, prayers and songs, all of which have been prepared by your fellow students so I know you will listen attentively to each of them. I would ask that we respect this service as a time of prayer and reflection and that we wait till the end to show our appreciation with a round of applause.

During our opening song there will be a procession of students bringing candles to the altar. Each candle has a flag on it showing a country that we have represented within our school community.

1. **Opening Music:**
2. **Procession of Candles to Altar with explanation**

Since our carol service is the one time of the year when we gather as a whole school I thought it would be great to get a sense of the many nationalities that make up our school community. What we have in these candles is a visual picture of the rich variety that exists in our school today.

At the end of todays service you will be offered a Christmas prayer card that includes the languages spoken in these countries. I think it is amazing to walk around our school corridors and here the sounds of voices speaking languages from so many places around the world, places I may never get to visit in person but that as part of our school family I get to experience in a small way everyday.

1. **Opening Prayer**

**So let us begin by acknowledging Gods presence within and amongst us, In the name of the father…..**

Today we come together as a community to celebrate the season of Advent and to look forward to our celebration of Christmas. We gather to hear with joy the message brought to the world through the birth of a child over 2000 years ago.

Today, as we gather for our annual carol service we ask Gods blessing on each of us. Free us from any worry or distress that we may have and help us to welcome the light of Christ into our lives, a light that gives us the gift of hope. As we pray for peace on earth, for fellowship among all the peoples of the world, for care for the poor and needy, for our families and our communities we ask God to fill our hearts and minds with the spirit of love and generosity that characterises Christmas.

We ask this through Christ Your Son, **Amen**

1. **Link:** We will now have a reading from Lukes gospel, a reading which will be very familiar to us, the story of a journey to the small town of Bethlehem and the birth of a baby boy.
2. **Gospel Reading**

A Reading From Luke’s Gospel

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that a census should take place throughout the empire. So all went to be counted, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, as there had been no room at the inn.

Now there were shepherd in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and they were struck with great fear. The angel said, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in Bethlehem a saviour has been born for you who is Christ and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there were many many angels, praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom the Lords favour rests”

This is the Word of the Lord.

1. **Choir:**
2. **Link**

Next we will here the words of scripture presented in a different way. Some students are sharing a short script with us that explores the reading we have just heard from different points of view.

1. **In the News**

**Announcer:** We all know that there were no televisions or newspapers around when Jesus was born, but just for a while suppose that there were…How do you think the amazing events of that 1st Christmas would have been reported?

**Vendor:** Mail, Mail, get your evening mail. Shock Tax Tactics! Emperor orders census

**Editor:** Ah, Marcus, is that you slinking in? What time do you call this?

**Marcus:** Sorry Sir got a bit of a hangover sir, that party I covered for you at the palace, sir.

**Editor:** Hangover! I think you need a bit of fresh air to clear your head. I want you to buzz off to Bethlehem for me.

**Marcus:** Bethlehem??

**Editor:** Bethlehem…don’t look so amazed. Its this census. I want you to cover it from the family interest angle…the son of an old friend of mine, called Joseph, and his fiancée Mary, have got to travel from Nazereth to Bethlehem.

**Marcus;** But sir..

**Editor:** But nothing! They’re an interesting couple, very religious..a good couple. Mary’s expecting a baby. Heard on the grapevie that there’s something different – special – about this pregnancy..some story about an angel appearing to Mary to tekk her that God will give her this baby.

**Marcus:** That’s ridiculous!

**Editor:** Well who can tell? Joseph would have droped out of the marriage but something happened to stop him doing that.

**Marcus:** Don’t tell me an – an angel appeared to Joseph too!

**Editor:** How did you know? This time it was in a dream.

**Marcus:** You expect me to believe that?

**Editor:** Well, I’m told that Isaiah prophesized something along these lines.

**Marcus:** But that was 700 years ago

**Editor:** So its about time the thing happened then, isn’t it? Anyway I want you to go down to Bethlehem. See if you can find Jospeh and Mary. Be on he lookout for…Well I don’t know what – just keep your eyes and ears open. And take Timotheus – you never know – I’ve got this hunch.

**Marcus:**  Timotheus – the cameraman? Wow, I’ve never been on TV before.

**Editor:** No, and you won’t get on it at all of you don’t get a move on.

**\*\*\*Choir: \*\*\***

**Newsreader:** Good evening. Tonight as the Roman Emperors deadline for the census draws near, thousands of people are on the move, returning to their forefathers homes. One place that has been badly affected by the crowds is Bethlehem. Our special census affairs correspondant reports from there… Good evening Marcus – how are things tonight in Bethlehem?

**Marcus:** Good evening from a very full betlehem, as you can see behind me. The innkeepers are very busy but, ah, heres one now.

Can you tell me how full your inn is?

**Innkeeper:** Full? FULL? It’s full to bursting – I’ve never known anything like it. Brilliant for trade – just think of the profits.

**Marcus:** Have you any rooms left? What about any people who haven’t got here yet?

**Innkeeper:** There are no rooms left – I told you, we’re full. The only place left – if you cal call it that – is my stable. I suppose a few latecomers could go there but its small and smelly.

**Marcus:** Hmmm. Glad I got here in time to get a room. Well, thank you for your help. (says goodbye to innkeeper) That’s the way things are in Bethlehem – very full, very noisy and nowhere to stay, unless you fancy a small, smelly stable. My next report will be from the hills above Bethlehem to see how all these people coming here has affected those who live out of town.

**Newsreader:** Thank you very much Marcus. We’ll be having more reports from around the region in our late bulletin.

**\*\*\*Choir \*\*\***

**Newsreader:** This is the 9 0’clock news with reports from around Palestine. First we hear from our man in Bethlehem, Marcus.

**Marcus:** Hello, I’m actually up on the hills above Bethlehem, with some shepherds. How are you coping with all the travellers?

**Shepherd1:** Its made the sheep a bit jumpy.

**Marcus:** That sounds almost like a joke! Jumper – jumpy!

**Shepherd2:** We’re all feeling jumpy – like somethings going to happen. (Enter Angel)

**Shepherd3:** WHATS THAT?

**Marcus:** This is amazing – a man in shining white clothes has appeared, suddenly, beside the shepherds. It ant be…it must be..an ANGEL!!

**Shepherds:** SHHHHHH

**Angel:** Don’t worry, I’ve got great news for you – the Saviour has been born in Bethlehem. You’ll find him wrapped up in baby clothes in a stable.

**Marcus:** The Saviour – born in a stable? (angel leaves) What was that all about?

**Shepherd1:** I don’t know.

**Shepherd2:** But we’re going to find out.

**Shepherd3:** Let’s go down to Bethlehem.

**Marcus:** This is sensational. Nothing like this has been seen before.

**Newsreader:** So what happens now?

**Marcus:** It seems there is a special baby in Bethlehem. Id better follow the shepherds and find him. This is Marcus, from the hills above the little, very full and special town of Bethlehem, handing you back to the studio.

**Newsreader:** We’ll keep you updated with this exciting news throughout the rest of the evening.

**\*\*\*Choir \*\*\***

**Newsreader:** Marcus? Whats the latest from Bethlehem?

**Marcus:** I am standing outside a small, dark and smelly stable. Its full of shepherds looking at a newborn baby. His parents are calling him Jesus. I’ll just talk to the shepherds. Now you’re here, how do you feel?

**Shepherd1**: Excited and Happy

**Shepherd2:** God wanted US to see this baby

**Shepherd3:** His name is Jesus

Shepherds: Jesus means Saviour

**Marcus:** Mary, Jesus’ mother, and Joseph plan to stay around for a while. That’s all I cab report to you from Bethlehem on this night when the savior was born, so back to the studio.

**\*\*\*Choir \*\*\***

**Newsreader:** Tonight we have a special report from the palace. And the royal astronomer Patricus, tells us more about that bright star that appeared in the sky. Marcus…

**Marcus:** Good evening from Herods palace in Jerusalem. There was a lot of coming and going today when 3 very special men arrived. I have the palace doorman here.

**Doorman:** Evening

**Marcus:** Can you tell me who these men were?

**Doorman:** They were professors of astronomy, studying the stars.

**Marcus:** What did they want?

**Doorman:** They asked where the king of the Jews was.

**Marcus:** What did you do then?

**Doorman:** Well, sir. I only knows of one king, so I took them to see Herod.

**Marcus:** Herod must have been pleased to have such distinguished visitors.

**Doorman:** I don’t know as he was. He looked very odd.

**Marcus:** Here come the 3 professors. Good evening sirs how did your business go?

**Wiseman1:** We are truly grateful. We have had so much help.

**Wiseman2:** King Herod was most kind. He asked lots of questions about this star.

**Wiseman3:** But there doesn’t seem to have been a new king born around here recently.

**Marcus:** So what are you going to do, you’ve come all this way for nothing?

**Wiseman1:** Oh no! King Herod asked his advisors and they looked in the old Jewish books. It says in Micah that there would be a king born in Bethlehem.

**Wiseman2:** Indeed, the star appears in that part of the sky, so we’re going to Bethlehem.

**Marcus:** What will you do when you get to Bethlehem?

**Wiseman3:** We shall see where the star stops and there we will find the baby.

**Wiseman1:** We have some presents for him. (wisemen exit)

**Marcus:** This is all very exciting. What can you tell us about the star?

**Patricus:** The star appeared in the east where the professors saw it. I have never seen anything like it before.

**Marcus:** Why did it appear?

**Patricus:** The professors are sure that it shows the birth of a very special baby.

**Marcus:** They are going to Bethlehem. I was there a while back – during the census. I saw a baby in a stable. An angel told some shepherds to go and see him. They were told that he is to be the Saviour. What does it all mean?

**Patricus:** Its simple really, God is fulfilling his promises in this baby. Babies grow up. I wonder what this baby will do when he’s grown up.

**Announcer:** Jesus grew up to be God’s perfect person – a pattern for us. He spoke about God’s kingdom, healed people and went about doing good things.

1. **Choir:**
2. **Link**

Our next reading is a Christmas Version of a reading we usually hear at weddings. Its all about love which when we pause to think about it is at the heart of the Christmas story.

1. **Corinthiams Christmas Version**

This reading from St. Pauls letter to the Corinthians is one we often hear at wedding because it is all about love. Today we would like to share with you a Christmas Version of this well known reading.

If I decorate my house perfectly with pretty bows, strands of twinkling lights and shiny stars, but do not show love to my family, then I am just another decorator.

If I slave away in the kitchen, baking dozens of Christmas cookies and preparing gourmet meals, but do not show love to my family, I am just another cook.

If I work in a soup kitchen, volunteer my time at the local nursing home and give all that I have to charity but do not show love for my family, it profits me nothing.

If I fill my tree with shimmering angels and knitted snowflakes, go to all the christmas parties and sing in christams carol service but do not focus on Christ, I have missed the point.

Love stops the cooking to hug the child. Love sets aside the decorations to say a kind word. Love is generous even when busy and tired. Love doesn’t envy another’s home that has co-ordinated Chritsmas china and table linens.

Love doesn’t yell at the kids to get out of the way. Love doesn’t give only to those who are able to give in return, love rejoicesd in giving to those who cannot.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails. Video games will break, pearl necklaces will be lost, golf clubs will rust, but giving the gift of love will endure.

1. **Choir: O Holy Night**
2. **Link**

Many of you have generously donated to our food hamper and toy appeal over the past few weeks. I would now like to invite \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to speak to us about this great cause.

1. **Our Christmas Wishes and Prayers**
2. Lord, sometimes our Christmas preparations can be so overwhelming that we forget it is really our hearts which need to be prepared. Mary and Joseph couldn’t find any room at the inn. This Christmas we pray that when Jesus comes knocking on the door of our hearts we find room for Him.

Lord Hear Our Prayer

1. We pray for those who struggle at Christmastime, those who find it difficult to provide for their families, those who get depressed, those for whom Christmas is more of a burden than a joy. May God comfort them and keep them safe.

Lord Hear Our Prayer

1. As we wait to celebrate the birth of Jesus this Christmas, let us pray for all the families within our own school community who have welcomed new babies into their lives this year.

Lord Hear Our Prayer

1. We take a few moments to think of those people who make our lives happy. Today let us for them and ask God that they will be happy and content this Christmas.

Lord Hear Our Prayer

1. We pray for all of us here in this school. May we have a good holiday and return refreshed and ready to do our best in the New Year.

Lord Hear Our Prayer

1. Let us pray for all members of our school community, especially those who have emigrated and won’t be home for Christmas this year. May they enjoy Christmas where ever they are, and know that we are thinking of them and praying for them.

Lord Hear Our Prayer

1. Let us pray for Peace. God, comfort those whose hearts are troubled at this time. May we all experience your peace in our hearts, minds and homes this Christmas.

Lord Hear Our Prayer

1. Today we also remember all those people associated with this school community who have died during the year. May they be granted peace in Gods eternal home.

Lord Hear Our Prayer

**Pray for 1st Years and 6th Years**

I’d like to particularly pray for our 1st years, the newest members of our school, may their time with us be happy and productive. And for our 6th years who this time next year will have left us and moved into the world of further education, work, may be some of you will be travelling the world. Whereever you are , wherever you go you will always be remembered in the prayers of this school community.

1. **Link**
2. **Fr. Ben: Our Father and Final Blessing**

On this Advent Day we turn to you in prayer. As we prepare to celebrate the birth of your Son, we ask your blessing on each of us. Help us to welcome your light into our lives, a light that gives us the gift of love. You showed us the greatness of your love in Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us. May love fill our hearts, our minds and our homes this Christmas. We ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen

1. **Choir Sing: Medley**
2. **Principal**