

Christmas Eve is Coming October 19

The Grace Children's Christmas Eve Service, while always unique, will be special in many ways this year. The traditional Lessons and Carols service will be recorded in October and a virtual service will be ready to view on Christmas Eve. As with every year, students in the cross with candles, reading the lessons, speaking Luke 2, ringing, and singing carols makes the Grace Christmas Eve service a uniquely meaningful celebration of the birth of Jesus. Bringing these elements to life this year will require some adaptations. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we will not have packed pews, the acoustics of the sanctuary, or the excitement of sharing the final product after hours and hours of rehearsal. But we do have the children of Grace Lutheran Church and School, the most important and essential part of the Christmas Eve service. With everyone's participation we can still share the story of the birth of Christ, share Grace traditions, and spend Christmas Eve with more families than ever before! Here's how students can be involved:

Grades 5-8

- ***Participate in the cross***

Because of the pandemic we cannot form the cross indoors. To make it possible to see the candles as we form the cross outside, the processional and cross will be videotaped at 6 p.m. (5:30 arrival) on Monday, October 19 on the church steps and Bonnie Brae. Following the guidance of health care professionals, students will not be shoulder to shoulder but will have some distance between them, will be masked, and will be together for less than 15 minutes. There will be no singing when the children are together.

- ***Sing the Cross Songs***

Audio and visual recordings of the cross songs will be made in order to create a virtual choir. Students will record the cross songs individually during the school day later in October. All voices will then be combined into a choir. Lyrics need not be memorized. Students will sing along to a recording so that all voices will be in sync with one another. (Recording and printed music forthcoming.) There will be Zoom rehearsals to help singers prepare.

- ***Sing a Solo***

As always, the service will begin with "Once in Royal David's City," sung by a soloist. Auditions will be held via Zoom next Wednesday, October 7 at noon, or another scheduled time that day. The selected singer will be recorded Monday, October 19 at 4:30. To help singers prepare, a video with the solo is available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6iyXOxA_gGU

- ***Sing One or More Carols***

To encourage listeners at home to participate in the service, the music following each reading will be familiar and led by Grace students. These audio recordings can be recorded by students at home. Examples are "Away in a Manger," "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," "O, Come All Ye Faithful," and "Silent Night." (Recording to sing with and printed music forthcoming.)

- ***Read a Lesson***

Participating 8th grade students will be recorded Monday, October 19 in the sanctuary either during or after school. Practices will take place during the school day.

- ***Ring a Song***

The possibility of ringing for the service is being explored and a decision will be made soon.

Grades 1-4

- ***Speak Luke 2 (does not involve Grade 1)***

Students in Grade 2 will speak verses 1 and 2 (paragraph 1 on the word sheet). Students in Grades 3 and 4 will speak all of Luke 2. Students will need to be very familiar with the words, but it is not necessary to memorize them. The recording of Luke 2 will be Monday, October 19 at 1:00. Children are asked to wear dress clothes for this videotaping on October 19.

- ***Bring Gifts to the Manger***

A procession of gifts will be brought to the manger and videotaped on Monday, October 19 at 2:00. Children are asked to wear dress clothes for this videotaping on October 19.

- ***Sing "Away in a Manger" and "Silent Night"***

Audio recordings can be made by students at home and sent to Pastor Costello by November 1. You will be provided a recording to sing along with and the lyrics, which need not be memorized. (Recording to sing with and printed music forthcoming.)

Notes about participating

Participation in the 2020 Christmas Eve service is strongly encouraged. We need everyone to pitch in to make the service a success during these unprecedented times. We can't stress enough how important it is that you be involved. The success of this virtual service depends on the combined spirit, voices, and energy of as many students as possible. Please plan to take part in as much of the service as you are able.

To get a full sound for the cross songs we need the voices of MANY, MANY students in grades 5 through 8. Yes, you will need to be recorded singing alone, but only Pastor Costello and Ms. Dennen will be present and there is nothing to be afraid of. You will not be heard individually. Trust that your voice will be blended with all the others to form a virtual choir. An audio recording will be provided for you to sing to and we will have Zoom rehearsals. Lyrics need not be memorized.

Much of the video recording for the service will take place Monday, October 19 with a rain date of October 20. The cross will be recorded at 6 p.m. so we can take advantage of the dark and make it possible to see the candles.

In closing

A Google poll will be coming soon in which families can let us know specifically if and how their child/children will be involved. This is a year in which we are experiencing loss and many missed opportunities. With this virtual service we can add beauty and add meaning to Christmas Eve in different ways than in previous years, creating a virtual service that will live on for years to come. We hope you will take part in this exciting project.

Pastor Michael D. Costello, Cantor
Janel Dennen, Music Teacher