

# umeri

DRAKE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI CHOIR

Aimee Beckmann-Collier, conductor

## The Lessons, Carols, and Reflections of Christmas



*The Birth of Christ*, Donald Jackson, © 2023 *The Saint John's Bible*, Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota, USA.

Sunday, December 17  
3:00 pm  
St. Ambrose Cathedral  
607 High Street

## About this concert



*The Lessons, Carols, and Reflections of Christmas*, presented today by Umeri, the Drake University alumni choir, is patterned on *The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols of Christmas* offered annually at King's College, Cambridge University, in the United Kingdom. That festival is a more than one-hundred-year-old tradition presented in the King's College Chapel on Christmas Eve and broadcast around the world; a festival that, at its inception, was a response to a world changed by the devastation of World War I.

Until the late nineteenth century, Christmas carols were performed by singers visiting homes; they were not heard in churches. But in 1878 John Stainer introduced carols into choral evensong at St. Paul's Cathedral in London and in 1880 Edward White Benson, Bishop of Truro, created a predecessor to the later King's College festival at Truro Cathedral in Cornwall. Benson was concerned about the excessive consumption of alcohol during the holiday season and wanted to attract revelers from pubs into the church.

Benson's experimental festival of carols, choral music, and readings was quite successful and became the model for the now legendary *Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols* that has been performed at King's College, Cambridge, since 1918. The King's College Festival was established by Eric Milner-White, Dean of the College, in response to the tragedies of World War I. The BBC has broadcast the festival since 1928 and it has been televised since 1954. The Festival is heard by millions of listeners across the globe each Christmas Eve, including in the United States, where it has been broadcast live on National Public Radio stations since 1979. (You can hear the live broadcast on Iowa Public Radio Classical at 9:00 am on December 24.)

Umeri began its musical life in 2019 by presenting *The Lessons, Carols, and Reflections of Christmas* in order to provide an

opportunity for listeners to enjoy the music of the season in a reflective atmosphere that allows for a more expansive contemplation of the meaning of Christmas. Our concert is based on the King's College model but offers a unique recasting of its structure in order to focus on specific aspects of the Christmas narratives. This year's program includes three sections consisting of readings, music, and reflections:

*A Long Walk Into the Unknown*, which focuses on our slow dance with God, beginning for Abraham and Sarah with a call to be partner and companion, a willingness to step out in faith, to step out into the unknown.

*O Great Mystery, O Great Silence*, which focuses on listening for the call to make love tangible in our families and communities.

*Until the Light Shines in Every Darkness*, which considers how the radiance of the divine presence illuminates every corner of this world through us.

In this fifth year of presenting *The Lessons, Carols, and Reflections of Christmas*, Umeri turned to Rev. Tim Fitzgerald, former pastor of Ss. John and Paul Parish in Altoona and a retired priest of the Diocese of Des Moines, Emily Wilmer, spiritual director, retreat leader, and poet from St. Joseph, Minnesota, and Dr. Michael Rubbelke, assistant professor at Saint John's University School of Theology and Seminary, Collegeville, Minnesota, to provide reflective pillars for this structure of spoken word and music. Father Tim and Kyle Lechtenberg, former Director of the Office for Worship for the Diocese of Des Moines and presently the choir director at West Des Moines United Methodist Church, have provided substantial direction in crafting this concert as a gift of light and promise, a time to reflect and then respond in hope and peace.

For the past four years, Umeri has presented *The Lessons, Carols, and Reflections of Christmas* as a feast for the ears. This year we are delighted to collaborate with *The Saint John's Bible* to provide a deeply immersive visual experience as well. Saint John's Abbey and University commissioned renowned calligrapher Donald Jackson to create a hand-written, hand-illuminated Bible. This work of art unites an ancient Benedictine tradition and an ecumenical approach to the Bible with the techniques and vision of today, illuminating the Word for a new millennium. *The Saint John's Bible* has been viewed in museums and historic sites around the world and has been hailed as "a monumental achievement."



Donald Jackson, calligrapher, Artistic Director of *The St. Johns Bible*



*Word Made Flesh*, Donald Jackson, © 2023, *The Saint John's Bible*, Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota USA.

Our collaboration with *The Saint John's Bible* makes it possible for us to offer a vivid projected illumination from this imaginative effort for each of the readings you'll hear today. Volumes of the Heritage Edition of *The Saint John's Bible*, generously loaned to us by Chuck and Janet Haas of Des Moines, will be available for viewing immediately following today's concert. We're grateful to Dr. Michael Rubbelke, assistant professor of spirituality and monastic studies at Saint John's School of Theology, for his presentation on the art and spirituality of *The Saint John's Bible* earlier today.

*This service of lessons and carols  
follows a pattern that is time honored.  
We hear from the Jewish and Christian Scriptures and ponder their  
meaning,  
then we respond—in song, in silence, in measured words.*

*We listen and we respond: it is the rhythm, the cadence of human life.  
Every love, every relationship,  
the heartbeat of every household—  
all are built upon that blessed dialogue.*

*It is even the rhythm of our rapport with the divine.*

*We hear the Lord speak to us—the Scriptures of our service brief  
excerpts only.  
Even so, listen closely, for we will hear  
of promise, of visions, of hope greater than sorrow or suffering or  
despair.*

*The words will speak of dreams to delight us once again:  
that war will end, swords be turned into plowshares,  
exiles will be welcomed home,  
and peace will break out in our day.  
These are words intended for our hearts, food for our spirits.  
“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.”*

*So we seek to respond:  
setting our hearts on that new and better day,  
hungering and thirsting for what is right and just,  
sheltering the refugee and welcoming the stranger.*

*Let this be a sign for you, the heavenly messenger proclaims.  
The ancient Israelites looked for a sign to dispel the darkness,  
and so did the shepherds,  
and so do we.*

*So listen now with the heart,  
revel in this ancient story of light shining in the darkness,  
embrace again its visions and dreams,  
and be strong in hope.*

# The Lessons, Carols, and Reflections of Christmas

## Part I - A Long Walk into the Unknown

### Processional

Personent Hodie

German melody, 1630  
setting by Lara Hoggard  
transcription by William P. Dougherty

Umeri and brass quartet

Let youthful voices resound today,  
Joyfully praising Him who is born for us,  
Who is given unto us by the most high God,  
and brought forth from a virgin.

He is born in the world, is wrapped in swaddling cloths  
And placed in a manger in a stable of beasts.  
He is ruler over all things.  
The prince of darkness has lost his prey!

Three wise men come, bearing gifts.  
They have found the child by following a little star.  
Adoring the Lord, they offer Him gold, incense, and myrrh.

Let all young choristers now sing as did the angels,  
praising Him who has come into all the world:  
"Glory to God in the highest!"  
(medieval text, first printed in *Piae Cantiones*, 1582)

**Bidding Prayer**

Jude Fitzpatrick, CHM

**First Lesson – Isaiah 7:13-14, 9:6-7**

Steven Muang

Alleluia

Elaine Hagenberg  
(b. 1979)

Umeri

All shall be Amen and Alleluia.  
We shall rest and we shall see.  
We shall see and we shall know.  
We shall know and we shall love.  
Behold our end which is no end.  
(text – St. Augustine, 354-430)

**Second Lesson – Genesis 12: 1-9**

Kyle Roeder

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

arr. Julian Wachner

transcription by William P. Dougherty

Umeri and brass quartet

O come, O come, Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O come, Thou Lord of might,  
who to thy tribes on Sinai's height,  
In ancient times did'st give the law,  
in cloud and majesty and awe.  
Rejoice...

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free thine own from Satan's tyranny  
From depths of hell thy people save  
and give them vict'ry o'er the grave.  
Rejoice...

O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by thine advent here.  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.  
Rejoice...  
(text – from the O antiphons, eighth century)

### **Third Lesson – Isaiah 49: 8-13**

Kyle Lechtenberg

Now may we singen

Cecilia McDowall  
(b. 1951)

Umeri

This Babe to us that now is born,  
Wonderful works He hath ywrought (made),  
He would not loss what was forlorn (lost),  
But boldly again it brought;

And thus it is Forsooth ywis (in truth indeed),  
He asketh nought but that is His.

Now may we singen,  
Now may we singen as it is.  
Quod puer natus est nobis (Because a boy is born to us).



This bargain loved He right well,  
The price was high and bought full dear.  
Who would suffer and for us feel  
As did that Prince withouten peer?  
And thus it is...

His ransom for us hath y-paid;  
Good reason have we to be His.  
Be mercy asked and He be prayed,  
who may deserve the heavenly bliss.  
And thus it is...

To some purpose God made man;  
I trust well to salvation.  
What was his blood that from him ran  
but fence against damnation?  
And thus it is...

Almighty God in Trinity,  
Thy mercy we pray with whole heart,  
Thy mercy may all woe make fell  
And dangerous dread from us to start.  
And thus it is...  
(text – anonymous fifteenth century English)

## **Reflection I – A Long Walk into the Unknown**

Rev. Timothy Fitzgerald

## Part II – O Great Mystery, O Great Silence



Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

Michael Praetorius

(1571-1621)

arr. William P. Dougherty

Umeri, Brass Quartet, and Susan Ihnen, piano

Lo, how a rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung!  
Of Jesse's lineage coming as men of old have sung.  
It came, a flow'ret bright, amid the cold of winter  
When half spent was the night.

Isaiah 'twas foretold it the rose I have in mind.  
With Mary we behold it, the Virgin Mother kind.  
To show God's love aright, she bore to us a Savior  
When half spent was the night.

This flower whose fragrance tender with sweetness fills the air,  
Dispels with glorious splendor the darkness ev'rywhere.  
Enfleshed, yet very God, from sin and death He saves us  
And lightens ev'ry load.  
(text – German carol, fifteenth century)

### Fourth Lesson – Luke 1:26-38

Dr. Gesine Gerhard

There is no rose

Rene Clausen

(b. 1953)

Umeri  
Emily Airhart, cello  
Susan Ihnen, piano

There is no rose of such vertu as is the rose that bare (bore) Jesu,  
alleluia.

For in this rose contained was heav'n and earth in little space,  
Res miranda (a wonderful thing)  
By that rose we may well see there be one God in persons three.  
Alleluia, res miranda, pares forma (an unequalled form).

The angels sangen the shepherds to,  
Gloria in excelsis Deo (Glory to God in the highest),  
Gaudemus (Let us rejoice).  
(text – anonymous, fifteenth century)

### **Fifth Lesson – Matthew 1:18-28**

Napoleon Douglas

O magnum mysterium

Tomas Luis de Victoria  
(c. 1548-1611)

Umeri

O great mystery, and wondrous sign,  
That animals should see the newborn Lord lying in their manger!

Blessed is the Virgin whose womb was worthy  
to bear the Lord Jesus Christ. Alleluia!  
(text – responsory for Matins of the Nativity)

### **Reflection II – O Great Mystery, O Great Silence**

Emily Wilmer

## Part III – Until the Light Shines in Every Darkness



### Carol – God Rest You Merry, One and All

English carol  
sixteenth century

arr. William P. Dougherty

Umeri, brass quartet, and audience

**Audience/Umeri** - God rest you merry, one and all,  
let nothing you dismay,  
For Jesus Christ our Savior was born upon this day,  
To save us all from Satan's power when we were gone astray  
O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy;  
O tidings of comfort and joy.

**Audience/Umeri** - From God our heav'nly Father  
a blessed angel came;  
And unto certain shepherds brought tidings of the same;  
How that in Bethlehem was born the Son of God by name.  
O tidings...

**Umeri** – "Fear not, then," said the angel, "Let nothing you affright  
This day is born a Savior of a pure Virgin bright,  
"To free all those who trust in Him from Satan's pow'r and might."  
O tidings...

**Audience/Umeri** - Now to the Lord sing praises,  
all you within this place,  
And with true love and charity each other now embrace;  
This holy tide of Christmas all others shall replace.  
O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy;  
O tidings of comfort and joy.  
(text – responsory for Christmas Day)

### Sixth Lesson – Luke 2:8-20

Craig Ihnen

Umeri

We stood on the hills, Lady,  
Our day's work done,  
Watching the frosted meadows  
That winter had won.

The evening was calm, Lady,  
The air so still,  
Silence more lovely than music  
Folded the hill.

There was a star, Lady,  
Shone in the night,  
Larger than Venus it was  
And bright, so bright,

Oh, a voice from the sky, Lady,  
It seemed to us then  
Telling of God being born  
In the world of men.

And so we have come, Lady,  
Our day's work done,  
Our love, our hopes, ourselves  
We give to your son.

(text – Clive Sansom, 1910-1981)

**Seventh Lesson – Matthew 2:1-12**

Collin Comito

The Three Kings

Healey Willan  
(1880-1968)

Umeri

“Who knocks tonight so late?” the weary porter said.  
Three Kings stood at the gate, each with a crown on head.

The serving man bowed down; the inn was full he knew.  
Said he, “In all this town is no fit place for you!”

A light the manger lit:  
There lay the Mother meek.

Said they, “This place is fit:  
Here is the rest we seek!”

They loosed their latchet strings;  
So stood they all unshod.

Come in, ye Kings!  
And kiss the feet of God.  
(text – Laurence Housman, 1865-1959)

### **Reflection III – Until the Light Shines in Every Darkness**

Dr. Michael Rubbelke

### **Eighth Lesson – John 1:1-14**

Bridget Sheaff

Verbum caro factum est

Ivo Antognini  
(b. 1963)

Umeri

And the Word became flesh and lived among us;  
and we have seen his glory,  
the glory as of a father's only son,  
full of grace and truth.  
(text – John 1:14)

## **Closing Prayer**

Rev. John Ludwig

## **Carol – Joy to the World**

George Frideric Handel  
(1685-1759)  
arr. William P. Dougherty

Umeri, brass quartet, and audience

**Audience/Umeri** - Joy to the world! The Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let ev'ry heart prepare him room,  
And heav'n and nature sing...

**Umeri** - Joy to the world! The Savior reigns;  
Let earth her songs employ;  
While fields and floods, rock, hills, and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy...

**Umeri** - He rules the world with truth and grace,  
and makes the nation prove  
The glories of His righteousness  
And wonders of His love...

**Audience/Umeri** - "Glory to God," the sounding skies,  
with joy their anthems ring;  
"Peace to the earth, goodwill to all,"  
From heav'n's eternal King...  
(text – Isaac Watts, 1674-1748)

## Support

We hope you'll consider donating to Umeri, which is entirely supported by audience gifts. You may donate online at <https://alumni.drake.edu/umeri> or give your contribution to singers stationed at the doors following the concert.



### **This concert is made possible by major gifts from:**

Barbara and John Cortesio  
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Rev. Steve Orr  
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Rev. Nipin Scaria  
Carol Stewart  
David Watson  
Dana and Peter Wenstrand  
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### **Contributors to Umeri during 2023 include:**

Larry Bailey	Suzanne and Tom Fross
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Eric Ferring	Joyce Smith
David French	Susan Wickham

**Bill Baum, grandfather of soprano Gabbi Sarcone, was a dedicated Umeri supporter. Following his death in June 2023 the following donors gave memorial gifts in his honor:**

Aimee Beckmann-Collier and David C. Collier	Lauren McCarthy
Shelly and Marte Cook	Tracey and Jerome Rayhons
Hopkins and Huebner, PC	Diane and Phillip Self
Susie and Erik Hunter	



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DRAKE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI CHOIR



## **Soprano**

Kelly Friesleben  
Katelyn Mardis  
Gabbi Sarcone  
Kelly Schnackenberg  
Elizabeth Watson

## **Alto**

Mary Craven Bartemes  
Greta Hammond  
Megan Houge  
Maggie Parker  
Chelsea Rink  
Betsy White

## **Tenor**

Jon Barrett  
Seth Hammond  
Hunter Johnson  
Justin Scheel  
Derek Self  
Tanner Smith

## **Bass**

Patrick Carroll  
Jacob Fross  
Sean Galligan  
Daniel Minnie  
Thomas Riordan  
Bryn Start

## **Brass Quartet**

James Bovinette, trumpet  
Paul Stodolka, trumpet  
Martin Gelwasser, trombone  
Paul Bridson, trombone

## **Bible Bearers**

Nate Mohrhauser  
Ben Schultz

## About the Choir



Founded in November 2019, Umeri is an ensemble of alumni of the Drake Choir, Drake University. Seventy-five alumni of the choir live in the Des Moines metro area and, since its inception, fifty-five of them have participated in Umeri. Alumni who have sung in the choir graduated from Drake in the years 1992 through 2022 and represent all Colleges of the University and a plethora of academic disciplines. As alumni, the singers are contributing to the Greater Des Moines community in many professional areas, including education, health care, public relations, finance, marketing, accounting, sports administration, and the arts.

Among their employers are a number of school districts, as well as the Meredith Corporation, Wells Fargo, Nationwide Insurance, US Cellular, Des Moines Performing Arts, the Iowa Arts Council, Iowa Public Radio, ACLU of Iowa, Principal Financial Group, Drake University, Target, the Iowa Events Center, Make-a-Wish Iowa, the Iowa Center for Economic Success, the Iowa High School Girls Athletic Union, the West Des Moines Chamber of Commerce, and Veterans Hospital of Central Iowa.

Umeri, which takes its name from the Latin word for "shoulders," because Drake Choir members were frequently reminded that they stood on the shoulders of those who came before them, is a project-based ensemble. The choir rehearses 7-9 times preceding a concert, thus requiring a high level of musical independence and advance preparation on the part of each member. Umeri presents three concerts per year. For further information, contact Dr. Aimee Beckmann-Collier ([aimee.beckmann-coller@drake.edu](mailto:aimee.beckmann-coller@drake.edu)).

## About the Reflection Writers



**Rev. Timothy Fitzgerald** is a priest of the Diocese of Des Moines. He has served as pastor, most recently at Ss. John and Paul Parish, Altoona; as teacher and resource leader for the St. Joseph Education Center, West Des Moines, the Center for Pastoral Liturgy at the University of Notre Dame, and the diocese; and as author of materials and articles on worship, prayer, and sacramental practices. In retirement he has become a beekeeper.

**Ms. Emily Wilmer**, a Benedictine oblate of Saint John's Abbey, Colledgeville, MN, is a spiritual director, retreat leader, and poet. Her formation in spiritual direction was at the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation in Washington, DC. She also trained with the Rev. Lauren Artress in the facilitation of labyrinth experiences. She has been in the ministry of spiritual direction and retreat facilitation for thirty years both in the US and UK. Her chapbook, *Shaft of Light*, was published in May 2020. She has been a Thomas Merton *Poetry of the Sacred* finalist and has received two Pushcart Prize nominations.

**Dr. Michael Rubbelke** is Assistant Professor of Spirituality and Monastic Studies at Saint John's University School of Theology and Seminary. A graduate of Saint John's University, he earned master's and doctoral degrees at the University of Notre Dame. His teaching and scholarship focus on the relation between God's divine self-gift and human response and the interrelationship between spirituality and theology. He has particular interest in how certain monastic practices alter and inform Christian memory and identity, both individually and communally. Michael and his wife, Rebecca, have two children, Hannah and Caleb, who are "the best gifts they have received from the Lord who became a child for us."

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Diocese of Des Moines Pastoral Center

Chuck and Janet Haas, owners of The Heritage Edition of  
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Tim Ternes, director, *The Saint John's Bible*