



ASSOCIATION  
of CHRISTIAN  
LIBRARIANS®

# Reference Point

## December 2016

### God and Sinners Reconciled

*For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. (Romans 5:10 ESV)*

Family traditions are an important part of my Christmas, and every year my wife and I take our children back to her hometown in the Northeast for several days of food, fun, and family. Various protestant denominations and communities are represented in the family, and part of the tradition involves attending a series of Christmas Eve services. The process begins in the afternoon and concludes with midnight mass at an Episcopal cathedral. The mass is modeled on the Christmas Eve service at King's College, Cambridge, and is a splendid celebration with choirs, scripture readings, and Holy Communion. Each year, the service begins in perfect silence, broken by the clear voice of a lone chorister singing...

*Once in royal David's city,  
Stood a lowly cattle shed  
Where a Mother laid her baby  
In a manger for his bed;  
Mary was that Mother mild,*

Eventually the entire congregation joins the soloist and choir in rejoicing in the promise that animates the life of all Christians,

*And our eyes at last shall see him  
Through his own redeeming love ...  
Not in that poor, lowly stable ... but in heaven  
Set at God's right hand on high,  
When, like stars, his children, crowned,  
All in white shall wait around."*

As the liturgy progresses, the audience is invited to ponder the words of Psalm 96:4-6 (NKJV), an invitation to sing a new song because *"the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods... strength and beauty are in his sanctuary."*

The service concludes with the congregation and choir thundering out the glad news that *"God and sinners reconciled; Joyful all ye nations rise, Join the triumph of the skies"* because *"Christ is born in Bethlehem ... Come desire of nations come, fix in us thy humble home."*

Once the celebration ends, it's the 25th of December and our group spills out of the cathedral and into the night, exhilarated by the frigid air and the reminder of what a sacred gift is the birth of the Savior.

Many of us have just come through months of exposure to political campaigning, and the election of a new president of the United States. The constant, even relentless, focus on the political has served to divide friends, family, and even believers. These experiences may distract us from the only source of real joy for all people, an everlasting hope that was born in a stable, in the city of David. As we move through Advent, in anticipation of the Christmas season, it is my prayer that Christ, who through his incarnation brought all things of earth and heaven into unity, fill us with joy and peace.



—Joshua Avery  
*Joshua is the Director of Library Services at God's Bible School and College in Cincinnati, OH and he has been a member of ACL since 2010.*