DECEMBER 15, 2013 – THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE FESTIVAL OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS

The Anglican tradition of performing the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols during the season of Advent dates back to 1880, when Edward White Benson (later to become Archbishop of Canterbury) designed the service for use on Christmas Eve in Cornwall, England.

In 1918, King’s College in Cambridge, England, began performing the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols each year on Christmas Eve, and in the United States, the Groton School in Groton, Mass., has been performing the festival annually since 1928. Performances of the Nine Lessons and Carols have become an Advent tradition throughout much of the Anglican Communion.

The nine traditional readings begin with Genesis and end with the Gospel of Luke, following the story of the fall of man, the promise of a new covenant and the coming of a Messiah, and ending with the birth of Jesus Christ. Interspersed with the readings are traditional Christmas carols, hymns and choir music.

The Episcopal Church’s Office of Communication has produced several videos of Lessons and Carols, available for viewing online:

Lessons and Carols at Calvary - St. George’s Episcopal Church, New York City, December 17, 2012

Lessons and Carols at Grace Episcopal Church, New York City, December 7, 2011