**Jesse Tree Christmas Program**
*Feel free to include additional songs and symbols. See end of script for a list of the Jesse Tree symbols used in this program.*

**Prelude and Welcome**

**Narrator A:** Welcome to our Advent worship based on the Jesse Tree. You may ask, “What is a Jesse Tree?” A Jesse Tree is a Christmas tree whose ornaments are all symbols that trace the family tree of Jesus. A Jesse Tree has three purposes. First, it traces the genealogy of Jesus Christ from Adam and Eve; to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; to King David; to Joseph (who the Bible says “belonged to the house and line of David”); and finally to the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Second, the Jesse Tree focuses our hearts and minds on Christ’s birth during the four weeks of Advent. Third, the Jesse Tree tells the story of God’s plan of salvation for humans, beginning with creation and continuing through the Old Testament stories to the coming of the Messiah. Each day of Advent, one symbol is added to the tree. Tonight we will travel through the entire Advent season with the help of our children. They will be presenting ornaments that will be placed on our Jesse tree. As each ornament is hung, we invite you to think about how the stories and prophecies revealed to us through these biblical symbols can help us understand the true meaning of Advent. The children are going to help us trace the family tree of Jesus through symbols. Come, let us wait for our Savior’s birth.

**Song**

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

*Adult singers enter and sing stanzas 1 and 2. The congregation joins on stanzas 3 and 4. Stanzas 3 and 4 should be printed in the program or shown on screen. Children enter as the congregation sings.*

**Narrator B:** Our first Jesse Tree symbol is a **stump with a shoot**.

**Child:** Isaiah 11, verse 1: “A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.”

**Narrator A:** It is from this symbol that we get the name of our tree: the Jesse Tree. Long before Jesus was born, a man named Jesse lived in Israel. Jesse was the father of David—a young boy who would eventually become king of Israel. The prophet Isaiah predicted that the Messiah would be a descendent of King David, the son of Jesse. In this symbol, the stump represents Jesse and the shoot represents Jesus.

**Narrator B:** Our second Jesse Tree symbol is the **world**.

**Child:** Genesis 1, verse 1: “In the beginning God created the heavens and earth.”

**Narrator A:** God is the creator of all things. God made the world and everything in it. When God finished creating the world, it was perfect.
Narrator B: That leads us to our third symbol, an apple.

Child: Genesis 3, verses 6 and 7: “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.”

Narrator A: Humans made a mess of God’s perfect world. Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil after being tempted by Satan. They disobeyed God and sin came into the world.

Narrator B: The world became so sinful that God could find only one person who still followed him. His name was Noah, and from his story comes our next Jesse Tree symbol, a rainbow.

Child: Genesis 9, verses 12 and 13: “God said, ‘This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations. I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.’”

Narrator A: God decided to destroy the world with a flood, but God saved Noah and his family. God made a promise to Noah, his family, the animals, and even you and me that he would never again destroy the world with a flood. The rainbow reminds us of that promise.

Narrator B: After the flood, God chose another man who loved and trusted the Lord—his name was Abraham.

Narrator A: God asked Abraham to move to another country. He crossed deserts and lived in tents, not knowing where he was going. Through it all, Abraham trusted God. Because Abraham trusted God, God promised him that he would make his family into a great nation. Our next symbol is a tent, a symbol of Abraham’s faith in God’s providence.

Child: Genesis 12, verse 2: “I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.”

Song “Will You Come and Follow Me?” #267, Sing! A New Creation

Narrator B: Abraham and his wife Sarah had a baby boy. They named him Isaac. Isaac gives rise to our next Jesse Tree symbol, a ram.

Child: Genesis 22, verses 11 and 12: “The angel of the Lord called out from heaven. ‘Abraham, Abraham…Do not lay your hand on the boy.’”
Narrator A: Isaac was Abraham and Sarah’s firstborn son, and they loved him very much. One day God told Abraham to take Isaac and sacrifice him on an altar to show just how much Abraham loved God. Abraham obeyed, but God provided Abraham with a ram to sacrifice in Isaac’s place. The ram is a symbol of what God’s son, Jesus, did for us many years later: he took our place by sacrificing his life on the cross to pay for our sins.

Narrator B: The next person in Jesus’ family tree is Isaac’s son, Jacob. Jacob had a dream about a ladder, our next Jesse Tree symbol.

Child: Genesis 28, verse 15: “Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go.”

Narrator A: Jacob was traveling to another country. When he lay down to sleep at night, he used a stone for his pillow. That night, Jacob had a strange and wonderful dream. He saw a ladder that reached to the sky and God was standing at the top. God reminded Jacob that the promise made to his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac were promised to him, too. The Messiah, Jesus, would come from Jacob’s family.

Narrator B: Our next symbol is a coat of many colors.

Child: Romans 8, verse 28: “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”

Narrator A: Jacob had a son named Joseph, and he gave him a beautiful, many-colored coat. Joseph’s brothers were jealous, so they sold him into slavery in Egypt and told their father that a wild animal had killed him. God allowed this to happen to Joseph for a greater purpose. Joseph became a great ruler in Egypt and helped his brothers when they needed food many years later. Just as God had a plan for Joseph, God has a plan for everyone who loves him.

Narrator B: Hundreds of years later Joseph’s descendents became slaves in Egypt. The ruler of Egypt forgot how Joseph had saved Egypt from famine, and he forced the Israelites to work for him. God called Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and away from slavery. God wanted to show his people how to live their lives. He gave them the Ten Commandments, which Moses carved on stone tablets, our next Jesse Tree symbol.

Child: Psalm 119, verse 11: “I treasure your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against you.”

Song “Thy Word” #86, Sing! A New Creation

Narrator A: God gave his people the Ten Commandments, ten rules for living a godly life. We memorize them and keep them in our hearts so that we can live for God.
Narrator B: God led his people, the Israelites, to the promised land—the land that God had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob so many years ago. The land was beautiful and plentiful—filled with bunches of grapes so big that two people needed to carry one bunch. **Grapes** are our next symbol.

Child: Numbers 13, verse 27: “We came to the land to which you sent us; it flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.”

Narrator A: Joshua led the people into the promised land of Canaan. God provided the Israelites with a land of blessings. This is the way it is with our lives. God wants to give us blessings in our lives, if we just let him.

Narrator B: Our next symbol is a **sheaf of wheat**.

Child: Ruth 1, verse 16: “Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.”

Narrator A: Ruth was a woman who did not know God. She was not an Israelite. Her mother-in-law, Naomi, was an Israelite who loved God and taught Ruth to love God as well. After Ruth’s husband died, both women returned to Bethlehem, the town where Naomi’s family lived. There, Ruth met and married Boaz. They had a child named Obed, who was the grandfather of King David. God included Ruth in Jesus’ family tree.

Narrator B: Obed had a son named Jesse, and Jesse had a son named David who was a shepherd—he took care of his family’s sheep and protected them from wild animals. Our next symbol is a **shepherd’s staff** like the one David would have carried.

Child: Psalm 23, verse 1: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”

Song: Children sing “Only a Boy Named David” (by Arthur Arnott)

Narrator A: Little David was a shepherd boy. Sunday school children know him as the one who killed Goliath. Just like David cared for his sheep, the Lord is a shepherd for us, his sheep. The shepherd’s staff ornament is a symbol of Jesus as the good shepherd who will lay down his life for his sheep.

Narrator B: David, the shepherd boy, grew up to be king of Israel. Our next Jesse Tree symbol is a **crown**.

Child: First Samuel 16, verse 1: “Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.”

Narrator A: David grew wise and God’s favor was with him. David was a man after God’s own heart. He listened to the Lord and followed his commands, and God guided
him. God blessed David and told him that the promised Messiah would be one of his own descendants.

**Narrator B:** After David died, there were many kings who did not love God and worshiped idols instead. God’s Word, written on a scroll, became lost during those years.

**Child:** Psalm 119, verse 105: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

**Narrator A:** A boy named Josiah became king of Judah when he was eight years old. One day, when some men were cleaning the temple, they found a scroll. King Josiah realized it was God’s Word, which had been lost for many years. Josiah was faithful to God.

**Narrator B:** After King Josiah, the kings no longer obeyed God and went back to worshiping idols. But God did not forget his people. He sent prophets to tell the people to worship the one true God. The prophets also reminded the people that God had promised a savior. God was going to send a child who would grow up to be the world’s savior.

**Narrator A:** The prophets foretold that the Messiah would be born. Our next symbol, a fiery altar, comes from the prophet Elijah, who prayed for God to send a sign to prove to the people and the prophets of Baal that the God of Israel is the true God.

**Child:** First Kings 18, verse 36: “O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God.”

**Narrator A:** The prophet Habakkuk compares himself to a watchman waiting in a watchtower as he waits for the Anointed One. The next symbol on our Jesse Tree is a watchtower.

**Child:** Habakkuk 2, verse 1: “I will stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me.”

**Narrator A:** The prophet Micah foretold that Bethlehem would be the place where the Savior would be born.

**Child:** Micah 5, verse 2: “But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel.”

**Song** Congregational song: “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” stanzas 1 and 2

**Narrator A:** Even though the prophets told the people to abandon their idols and pray to the Lord, they did not listen. God allowed the Israelites to be captured and sent into exile in the land of Babylon. While in Babylon, the Lord raised up another prophet—Daniel. God displayed his power in Babylon by keeping Daniel safe in
the midst of hungry lions.

Child:  Daniel 6, verse 22: “My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths so that they would not hurt me, because I was found blameless before him.”

Narrator B:  The Lord brought his people back to Jerusalem from Babylon. They began to rebuild the city wall...our next symbol.

Child:  Revelation 22, verse 20: “‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!”

Narrator A:  The prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah. The Bible said when Jerusalem’s wall was rebuilt, the Savior would come. The waiting for the Messiah began—and lasted another 400 years.

Narrator B:  As the people of Israel waited for the birth of the Messiah, a couple, Zachariah and Elizabeth, waited for a son to be born to them.

Child:  Luke 1, verses 11 and 13: “Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense...But the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John.’”

Narrator B:  Their son would one day be a very important prophet, proclaiming the message of the upcoming Savior.

Narrator A:  Their son was John the Baptist, who baptized people and told them to be prepared for the coming of the Messiah. John’s symbol is a shell with three water droplets, a symbol for baptism.

Child:  Luke 3, verse 16: “John answered all of them by saying, ‘I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming...He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.’”

Narrator B:  Our next symbol is the angel Gabriel, who announces to Mary that she will be the mother of our Savior.

Child:  Luke 1, verse 30: “But the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.’”

Narrator B:  An angel also came to Joseph to tell him to take Mary as his wife even though she was pregnant. Joseph was a carpenter.

Child:  Matthew 1, verses 20 and 21: “An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are
to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”"

**Narrator A:** Joseph and Mary had to take a long journey to Bethlehem. They walked on hard, dusty, rough roads in **sandals**. Our next symbol, a pair of sandals, reminds us of Joseph and Mary’s journey to Bethlehem.

**Child:** Luke 2, verses 1, 4, and 5: “In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered…Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.”

**Song** Solo: “Breath of Heaven (Mary’s Song),” by Amy Grant

**Narrator B:** Even though it was a long journey for Mary and Joseph, it was all part of God’s plan.

**Narrator A:** And finally, it happened—what we have been waiting for all night, what God’s people waited for for hundreds of years, and what Mary and Joseph waited for for months. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, was born on a still, holy night in Bethlehem. God sent an angel to proclaim Jesus’ birth to the shepherds, who were surprised and terrified, but went to the **manger**, where they found Jesus. The star is shining, the angels are singing, the shepherds are worshiping. Our Savior is here.

**Child:** Luke 2, verses 10 to 12: “But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”

**Song** Children sing “Away in a Manger”

**Narrator A:** We hope you enjoyed our Jesse Tree this evening. Together we’ve traced the lineage of Jesus Christ through 24 symbols. Through the Jesse Tree, we’ve told the story of God’s redemptive plan for the world beginning with creation, through ancient Israel, and up the New Testament stories of Jesus’ birth. The plan of salvation did not start in a manger; it started “in the beginning.”

We wish you a blessed Advent.

**Closing Prayer**

**Song** Congregation sings “Joy to the World”
Ornaments/Symbols Needed:
1. Stump and shoot
2. World
3. Apple
4. Rainbow
5. Tent
6. Ram
7. Ladder
8. Coat of many colors
9. Stone tablets
10. Grapes
11. Sheaf of wheat
12. Shepherd’s staff
13. Crown
14. Scroll
15. Fiery altar
16. Watchtower
17. Lion
18. City wall
19. Zechariah and Elizabeth (people)
20. Shell with water droplets
21. Angel
22. Hammer
23. Sandals
24. Manger

This Jesse Tree Christmas program was written by Amy DeKruyter. It was originally performed at North Holland Reformed Church in 2011.