

St Stephen's Church, Canterbury

# Service of Lessons and Carols for Christmas



*Sunday 20 December 2020*  
*6.00 pm*



## Introduction

*We welcome you to our service of Lessons and Carols for Christmas. The Carol Service is a way in which we can celebrate the coming of Christ into the world. We make our celebration through our prayers, our singing, and listening to the words of the story, in the accounts of Scripture.*

*Because we believe that Christ is the Word made flesh, the culmination of our service is the Gospel Lesson from St. John, in which we hear of the Word of God, through whom all creation came into being, Himself coming into the world, as the infant Jesus, so that we may behold His glory.*

*This year our service takes place online as we cannot meet in large numbers in church; however, this also means that we can share our carol service with you, where ever you are. No one needs reminding how difficult this year has been, but as we celebrate Christmas, let us be gladdened by the Good News that Jesus Christ was born for to save us all.*

## CHOIR

## Hodie, Christus natus est

Plainsong – Liber Usualis 413

*Hodie Christus natus est:  
Hodie Salvator apparuit:  
Hodie in terra canunt Angeli,  
laetantur Archangeli  
Hodie exsultant justi, dicentes:  
Gloria in excelsis Deo.  
Alleluia.*

Today Christ is born:  
Today the Saviour appeared:  
Today on Earth the Angels sing,  
Archangels rejoice:  
Today the righteous rejoice, saying:  
Glory to God in the highest.  
Alleluia.

## CAROL

## Of the Father's heart begotten

- 1 Of the Father's heart begotten,  
Ere the world from chaos rose,  
He is Alpha: from that Fountain  
All that is and hath been flows;  
He is Omega, of all things  
Yet to come the mystic Close,  
*Evermore and evermore.*
- 2 O how blest that wondrous birthday,  
When the Maid the curse retrieved,  
Brought to birth mankind's salvation,  
By the Holy Ghost conceived;  
And the Babe, the world's Redeemer,  
In her loving arms received,
- 3 This is he, whom seer and sibyl  
Sang of ages long gone by;  
This is he of old revealéd  
In the page of prophecy;  
Lo! he comes, the promised Saviour;  
Let the world his praises cry!

4 Sing, ye heights of heaven, his praises;  
Angels and Archangels, sing!  
Wheresoe'er ye be, ye faithful,  
Let your joyous anthems ring,  
Every tongue his name confessing,  
Countless voices answering,  
*Evermore and evermore.*

Words : Latin, Prudentius (348–413),

Tr. R. F. DAVIS (1866–1937)

Music : '*Divinum Mysterium*', melody from  
*Piae Cantiones*, *Theoderici Petri Nylandensis* (1582)  
descant by DAVID WILLCOCKS (1919–2015)

### *The Bidding Prayer*

Beloved in Christ, it is our custom at this season of the year to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and to give thanks for the revealing of God's loving purposes for the world.

As we remember the gift of God's love in the birth of the Christ-child, let us pray for ourselves and for the needs of the world, calling to mind especially those who are less fortunate than ourselves. May the peace of Christ rest upon our troubled world; may the glory announced by the angels fill our world with the light of hope; may the joy that filled the shepherd's hearts fill our hearts with warmth and comfort; and may the love which enabled Mary to bear this great gift and inspired the wise men to make their offerings empower us to bear the Christ-child in our hearts and offer to God the gift of our lives in loving service.

As we join those who, throughout the centuries, have celebrated this story of wonder and grace let us join in praying together the prayer Jesus taught his family of faith to say:

*All*    **Our Father, which art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done,  
in earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive them that trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.**

## **CHOIR**

## **Ding! Dong! Merrily on High**

Music: 16th century French melody, arr. MACK WILBERG (*b.* 1955)

Words: G. R. WOODWARD (1848–1934)

Ding, dong! Merrily on high  
In heav'n the bells are ringing  
Ding, dong! Verily the sky  
Is riv'n with angel singing  
*Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis.*

E'en so here below, below  
Let steeple bells be swungen  
And i-o, i-o, i-o  
By priest and people sungen  
*Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis.*

Pray ye dutifully prime  
Your matin chime, ye ringers  
May ye beautifully rime  
Your evetime song, ye singers  
*Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis.*

## First Lesson ★ Isaiah 9: 2–7

### *The Darkness Turns to Light*

The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
on them light has shined.

You have multiplied the nation,  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as with joy at the harvest,  
as people exult when dividing plunder.

For the yoke of their burden,  
and the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of Midian.  
For all the boots of the tramping warriors  
and all the garments rolled in blood  
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

To a child has been born for us,  
a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders;  
and he is named  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

His authority shall grow continually,  
and there shall be endless peace  
for the throne of David and his kingdom.  
He will establish and uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time onwards and for evermore.  
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

### *Prayer*

Almighty and ever living God, you revealed to your servant Isaiah the promise of a child who would bring light and peace to all the nations. Help us to know the fullness of that promise as we share the light and peace of Christ with one another. May your kingly rule of endless tranquillity and justice be our constant inspiration and hope as we pray for the fulfilment of your loving purposes for the whole of creation. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All*     **Amen.**

## CHOIR

## Adam lay Ybouden

Music: CARSON COOMAN (B. 1982)

Words: 15th century

Adam lay ybouden,  
Bounden in a bond;  
Four thousand winter  
Thought he not too long.

And all was for an apple,  
An apple that he took.  
As clerkës finden written  
In their book.

Ne had the apple taken been,  
The apple taken been,  
Ne had never Our Lady,  
A-been heaven's queen.

Blessed be the time  
That apple taken was!  
Therefore we may singen  
Deo gratias!

## Second Lesson ★ Luke 1: 26–38

*The Birth of Jesus is Foretold*

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

## Prayer

Almighty and ever living God, you revealed to Mary the good news of your gracious favour. Help us, as we reflect on this story of our human nature being overshadowed by your amazing Spirit, to be ever attentive to your call and invitation and, like Mary, be ever willing to open our hearts to the work of your glorious presence. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## CHOIR

## Gabriel's Message

Music: Basque traditional carol, arranged by EDGAR PETTMAN (1866–1943)

Words: English translation by SABINE BARING-GOULD (1834–1924)

1. The angel Gabriel from heaven came,  
His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame:  
'All hail,' said he, 'thou lowly maiden Mary,  
*Most highly favoured lady! Gloria!*
2. 'For known a blessed Mother thou shalt be;  
All generations laud and honour thee:  
Thy son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold.  
*Most highly favoured lady! Gloria!*
3. Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head;  
'To me be as it pleaseth God!' she said.  
'My soul shall laud and magnify his holy Name.'  
*Most highly favoured lady! Gloria!*
4. Of her Emmanuel, the Christ, was born,  
In Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn;  
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say:  
*Most highly favoured lady! Gloria!*

## Third Lesson ★ Luke 2: 1–7

### *The Birth of Jesus*

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

### *Prayer*

Almighty and ever living God, you led Mary and Joseph from Nazareth, their home-town, to welcome the Christ-child in a strange place. Help us, as we remember all those called to journey in faith and find you in strange places, to follow the path you set before us, and to bear in our hearts the gift of your love to the world throughout our earthly pilgrimage. This we ask, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**



1. O little town of Bethlehem,  
how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
the silent stars go by.  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
the everlasting light;  
the hopes and fears of all the years  
are met in thee tonight.
2. O morning stars, together  
proclaim the holy birth,  
and praises sing to God the King,  
and peace to men on earth;  
for Christ is born of Mary;  
and, gathered all above,  
while mortals sleep, the angels keep  
their watch of wondering love.
3. How silently, how silently,  
the wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
the blessings of his heaven.  
No ear may hear his coming;  
but in this world of sin,  
where meek souls will receive him, still  
the dear Christ enters in.
4. O holy child of Bethlehem,  
descend to us we pray;  
cast out our sin, and enter in,  
be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels  
the great glad tidings tell:  
O come to us, abide with us,  
our Lord Emmanuel.

Words: PHILLIPS BROOKS (1835–1893)

Music: *'Forest Green'*, English traditional melody,

## CHOIR

## In dulci jublio

German Mediaeval Carol, harmony from R. L. DE PEARSALL (1795–1856)

1. In dulci jubilo *With sweet jubilation*  
Let us our homage shew;  
Our heart's joy reclineth  
In praesepio *In a manger*  
And like a bright star shineth  
Matris in gremio *In [your] mother's lap*  
Alpha es et O! *You are Alpha and Omega*
2. O Jesu parvule, *O infant Jesus*  
I yearn for thee alway;  
Listen to my ditty  
O Puer optime, *O best of boys*  
Have pity on me, pity  
O princeps gloriae! *O Prince of Glory*  
Trahe me post te! *draw me after you [to heaven]*
3. O Patris caritas, *O love of the Father,*  
O Nati lenitas! *O mercy of the Son!*  
Deeply were we stain'ed  
Per nostra crimina; *through our sins*  
But thou hast for us gain'ed  
Coelorum gaudia. *the joys of heaven*  
O that we were there!
4. Ubi sunt gaudia, *Where are joys[?]*  
If that they be not there?  
There are angels singing  
Nova cantica, *new songs*  
There the bells are ringing  
In Regis curia: *in the court of the King*  
O that we were there!

## Fourth Lesson ★ Luke 2: 8–20

### *The Shepherds and the Angels*

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 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 Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

'Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favours!'

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

## *Prayer*

Almighty and ever living God, you gave the shepherds a vision of your glory and invited them to know the joy of the Christ-child. Help us, as we hasten in our imaginations to see what has taken place in this story, to rejoice at this sign of good news and, like the shepherds, to share our amazement and wonder at the glorious things you have done. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All*     **Amen.**

## **CHOIR**

## **Today our God of his Great Mercie**

15th century Kent carol, arranged by STEPHEN BARKER (B. 1977)

1. Today our God of his great mercie  
Hath sent his Son with us to be,  
To dwell with us in verity,  
God, who is our Saviour.
2. Today in Bethlehem did befall,  
A child was born in ox's stall,  
Who needs must die to save us all,  
God, who is our Saviour.
3. Today there spake an angel bright,  
To shepherds there who watched by night,  
And bade them take their way forthright  
To God, who is our Saviour.
4. Therefore 'tis meet we kneel today,  
And Christ, who died on cross, we pray  
To show his grace to us alway,  
God, who is our Saviour.

## CAROL

### It came upon the midnight clear

1. It came upon the midnight clear,  
that glorious song of old,  
from angels bending near the earth  
to touch their harps of gold:  
'Peace on the earth, good-will to men,  
from heaven's all-gracious king!'  
The world in solemn stillness lay  
to hear the angels sing.
2. Still through the cloven skies they come,  
with peaceful wings unfurled;  
and still their heavenly music floats  
o'er all the weary world:  
above its sad and lowly plains  
they bend on hovering wing;  
and ever o'er its Babel-sounds  
the blessed angels sing.
3. Yet with the woes of sin and strife  
the world has suffered long;  
beneath the angel-strain have rolled  
two thousand years of wrong;  
and man, at war with man, hears not  
the love-song which they bring:  
O hush the noise, ye men of strife,  
and hear the angels sing!
4. For lo, the days are hastening on,  
by prophet-bards foretold,  
when, with the ever-circling years,  
comes round the age of gold;  
when peace shall over all the earth  
its ancient splendours fling,  
and the whole world give back the song  
which now the angels sing.

Words: EDMUND SEARS (1810–1876)

Music: 'Noel' Traditional, *arr.* ARTHUR SULLIVAN (1842–1900)

## Fifth Lesson ★ Matthew 2: 1–12

### *The Visit of the Wise Men*

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, ‘Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.’ When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

“And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who is to shepherd my people Israel.”

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, ‘Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.’ When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

### *Prayer*

Almighty and ever living God, you led the wise men by the light of a star to the place where the Christ-child was born. Help us, as we are led by the light of the Gospel to bring our gifts and, like those wise men, to kneel in worship as we adore your gracious presence in the Word made flesh. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All*     **Amen.**

1. THE first Nowell the angel did say  
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;  
In fields where they lay, keeping their sheep,  
On a cold winter's night that was so deep:  
*Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,  
Born is the King of Israel.*
2. They lookèd up and saw a star,  
Shining in the east, beyond them far:  
And to the earth it gave great light,  
And so it continued both day and night:
3. And by the light of that same star,  
Three Wise Men came from country far;  
To seek for a king was their intent,  
And to follow the star wheresoever it went:
4. This star drew nigh to the north-west;  
O'er Bethlehem it took its rest,  
And there it did both stop and stay  
Right over the place where Jesus lay:
5. Then entered in those Wise Men three,  
Fell reverently upon their knee,  
And offered there in his presence  
Both gold and myrrh and frankincense:
6. Then let us all with one accord  
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord,  
That hath made heaven and earth of naught,  
And with his blood mankind hath bought:  
*Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,  
Born is the King of Israel.*

Words: Traditional

Music: 'The First Nowell' Traditional, arr. JOHN STAINER (1840–1901)

## Sixth Lesson ★ John 1: 1–14

### *The Word Became Flesh*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

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.

### *Prayer*

Almighty and ever living God, you revealed to your servant John the good news of the Word made flesh, and the coming of light into the darkness of the world. Help us, as we receive that Word into our hearts to know, with John, the light of Christ in the darkness of our lives. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## CHOIR

## Shout the glad tidings

Words: WILLIAM AUGUSTUS MUHLENBERG (1796–1877)

Music: PAUL LINDSLEY THOMAS (b. 1929)

*Shout the glad tidings, exultingly sing,  
Jerusalem triumphs, Messiah is king!*

1. Sion the marvelous story be telling,  
The Son of the Highest, how lowly his birth;  
The brightest archangel in glory excelling,  
He stoops to redeem thee, He reigns upon earth.
2. Tell how He cometh from nation to nation,  
The heart-cheering news let the earth echo 'round:  
How free to the faithful He offers salvation,  
His people with joy everlasting are crowned.
3. Mortals your homage be gratefully bringing,  
And sweet let the gladsome hosanna arise,  
Ye angels the full alleluia be singing,  
One chorus resound through the earth and the skies.

## CAROL

## O come all ye faithful

1. O come, all ye faithful,  
joyful and triumphant,  
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;  
come and behold him,  
born the King of angels;  
*O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!*
2. God of God,  
Light of Light,  
lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb;  
very God,  
begotten, not created:
3. See how the Shepherds  
summoned to his cradle,  
leaving their flocks, draw nigh with lowly fear;  
we too will thither  
bend our joyful footsteps:



4. Lo, star-led chieftains,  
magi, Christ adoring,  
offer him incense, gold, and myrrh;  
we to the Christ-child  
bring our hearts' oblations:

5. Sing, choirs of angels,  
sing in exultation,  
sing all ye citizens of heaven above:  
"Glory to God  
in the highest:"

*O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!*

Words: Latin 18<sup>th</sup> century, Tr. FREDERICK OAKLEY (1802–80)  
Music: 'Adeste Fideles', J. F. WADE (1711–86)  
arranged by DAVID WILLCOCKS (1919–2015)

## *The Collect and Blessing*

## CAROL

## Hark! the herald angels sing

1. Hark! the herald-angels sing  
glory to the new-born King,  
peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled.  
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,  
join the triumph of the skies;  
with the angelic host proclaim,  
'Christ is born in Bethlehem.'  
*Hark! the herald-angels sing  
glory to the new-born King.*
2. Christ, by highest heav'n adored,  
Christ, the everlasting Lord,  
late in time behold him come,  
offspring of a Virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see!  
Hail, the incarnate Deity!  
Pleased as Man with man to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel.
3. Hail, the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail, the Sun of righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings,  
risen with healing in his wings.  
Mild he lays his glory by,  
born that man no more may die,  
born to raise the sons of earth,  
born to give them second birth.  
*Hark! the herald-angels sing  
glory to the new-born King.*

Words: CHARLES WESLEY (1707–1788)

Music: "Mendelssohn", FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY (1809–1847)

arranged by DAVID WILLCOCKS (1919–2015)

### *Organ voluntary*

In dulci jubilo, BWV 729

J. S. BACH (1685–1750)

Thank you for joining us for our Carol Service.

You are very welcome to join us at any of our services which are available online so that you can participate where ever you are.

For more details, see our website:

**[www.ststephenscanterbury.net](http://www.ststephenscanterbury.net)**

or search for St Stephen's Church Canterbury on YouTube.

