

ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH
CANTERBURY



Carol Service
Sunday 21st December 2025



This service is being live-streamed on YouTube for those who are unable to attend in person. By attending this service, you may appear online.



An induction loop system for the hard of hearing is installed in our Church. Hearing aid users should adjust their aid to 'T'



Large print orders of service are available from the sidespersons. Please ask.



Toilet facilities are available in the Church Hall. Please ask a Sidesperson for directions.



Printed on recycled paper

ORDER OF SERVICE

When the vestry bell is rung, please STAND if you are able. The choir sings

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.

THE PROCESSIONAL CAROL

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 Nylandenis (1582)
descant by DAVID WILLCOCKS (1919–2015)

The Rev. Dr David Vannerley, Interim Priest-in-Charge, welcomes the congregation.

THE BIDDING PRAYER

We SIT or KNEEL for the bidding prayer, after which we say together The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name;
Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who 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 CAROL

Sussex Carol

English traditional carol arranged by Philip Ledger (1937–2012)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 On Christmas night all Christians sing
To hear the news the angels bring
News of great joy, news of great mirth,
News of our merciful King's birth. | 3 When sin departs before His grace,
Then life and health come in its place
Angels and men with joy may sing
All for to see the new-born King. |
| 2 Then why should men on earth be so sad,
Since our Redeemer made us glad,
When from our sin he set us free,
All for to gain our liberty? | 4 All out of darkness we have light,
Which made the angels sing this night:
“Glory to God and peace to men,
Now and for evermore, Amen!” |

THE FIRST LESSON

Genesis 1. 1–2, 26a, 27, 31a

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.

Thanks be to God.

CHOIR CAROL

In the Stillness

Words: Katrina Shepherd

Music: Sally Beamish (b. 1956)

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | In the stillness of a church
Where candles glow,
In the softness of a fall
Of fresh white snow, | |
| 2 | In the brightness of the stars
That shine this night,
In the calmness of a pool
Of healing light, | 4 |
| | | In the mildness of a night
By stable bare,
In the quietness of a lull
Near cradle fair, |
| 3 | In the clearness of a choir
That softly sings,
In the oneness of a hush
Of angels' wings, | 5 |
| | | There's patience as we wait
For a new morn,
And the presence of a child
Soon to be born. |

Please STAND if you are able, to sing together

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

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,
Jesus Christ her little child.

- 2 He came down to earth from heaven
Who is God and Lord of all,
And his shelter was a stable,
And his cradle was a stall;
With the poor and mean and lowly
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.
- 3 And through all his wondrous childhood
Day by day like us he grew,
He was little, weak, and helpless,
Tears and smiles like us he knew;
And he feeleth for our sadness,
And he shareth in our gladness.

- 4 And our eyes at last shall see him,
Through his own redeeming love,
For that Child so dear and gentle
Is our Lord in heaven above;
And he leads his children on
To the place where he is gone.
- 5 Not in that poor lowly stable,
With the oxen standing by,
We shall see him; but in heaven,
Set at God's right hand on high;
Where like stars his children crowned
All in white shall wait around.

Words: CECIL FRANCES ALEXANDER (1818–95)

Music: 'Irby', H J GAUNLETT (1805–76)

arranged by DAVID WILLCOCKS (1919–2015)

We SIT

THE SECOND LESSON

Isaiah 9. 2, 6–7

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Thanks be to God.

Please STAND if you are able, to sing together

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

SEE, amid the winter's snow,
Born for us on earth below,
See, the tender Lamb appears,
Promised from eternal years!
Hail, thou ever-blessed morn!
Hail, Redemption's happy dawn!
Sing through all Jerusalem:
'Christ is born in Bethlehem!'

- 2 Lo! within a manger lies
He who built the starry skies,
He who, throned in height sublime,
Sits amid the Cherubim.
- 3 Say, ye holy shepherds, say:
What your joyful news today?
Wherefore have ye left your sheep
On the lonely mountain steep?
- 4 'As we watched at dead of night,
Lo! we saw a wondrous light;
Angels, singing 'Peace on earth',
Told us of the Saviour's birth.'
- 5 Sacred Infant, all-divine,
What a tender love was thine
Thus to come from highest bliss
Down to such a world as this!
- 6 Teach, O teach us, holy Child,
By thy face so meek and mild,
Teach us to resemble thee
In thy sweet humility!
Hail, thou ever-blessed morn!
Hail, Redemption's happy dawn!
Sing through all Jerusalem:
'Christ is born in Bethlehem!'

Words: EDWARD CASWALL (1814–78)

Music: JOHN GOSS (1800–80)

We SIT

THE THIRD LESSON

Isaiah 11. 1–9

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord;

And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:

But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Thanks be to God.

CHOIR CAROL

The First Christmas Day

Words: Michael Butler (b. 1957)

Music: Stephen Barker (b. 1977)

- 1 The new birth of a baby boy,
 A star hanging high above;
 Just imagine his mother's joy —
 A triumph of eternal love!
- 2 The family in a stable bare:
 Their future seems to be set fair;
 Angels and shepherds come and go —
 Not the normal human flow!
- 3 In Bethlehem townstead night turned into day,
 The animals simply went on their way.
 "We must plan the journey," Joseph said;
 "When we are strong," came from Mary's bed.
- 4 The child bellowed and wanted his say;
 Tossed and turned in a box of hay.
 Christus natus ex Maria Virgine!
 The very first Christmas Day!

tr. Christ was born
of the Virgin Mary

This carol has been specially written by Michael and Steve for this year's Carol Service.

Please STAND if you are able, to sing together

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

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
descant by THOMAS ARMSTRONG (1898–1994)

We SIT

THE FOURTH LESSON

Luke 1. 26–35, 38

And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary.

And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her

mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

Thanks be to God.

CHOIR CAROL

Gabriel's Message

Words: English translation by Sabine Baring-Gould (1834–1924)

Music: Basque traditional carol, arranged by Edgar Pettman (1866–1943)

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!

THE FIFTH LESSON

Luke 2. 1–7

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.

And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; because he was of the house and lineage of David: To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

Thanks be to God

CHOIR CAROL

Where Riches is Everlastingly

Words: 16th century

Music: Bob Chilcott (b. 1955)

1. Into this world this day did come
Jesus Christ both God and Man,
Lord and servant in one person,
Born of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
*I pray you be merry and sing with me
In worship of Christ's nativity.*
2. He that was rich without a need
Appeared in this world in right poor weed
To make us that were poor indeed,
Rich without any need truly.
3. A stable was his Chamber, a crib was his bed,
He had not a pillow under his head;
With maiden's milk that babe was fed,
In poor clothes was wrapped the Lord Almighty.
4. A noble lesson here is taught,
To set all worldly riches at naught,
But pray that we may be thither brought
Where riches is everlastingly.

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

GOD rest you merry, gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
Remember Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas 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!

- 2 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:
- 3 And when they came to Bethlehem,
Where our dear Saviour lay,
They found him in a manger,
Where oxen feed on hay;
His mother Mary kneeling down
Unto the Lord did pray:
- 4 Now to the Lord sing praises,
All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas
All other doth efface.
O tidings of comfort and joy,
comfort and joy!
O tidings of comfort and joy!

Words: 18th century London Carol

Music: "God Rest You Merry", from Bramley & Stainer's

Christmas Carols New and Old, 1871

THE SIXTH LESSON

Luke 2. 8–16

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, 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, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

Thanks be to God.

CHOIR CAROL

Torches

Words: Translated from the Galician by J. B. Trend (1887–1958)

Music: John Joubert (1927–2019)

- 1 Torches, torches, run with torches
All the way to Bethlehem!
Christ is born and now lies sleeping;
Come and sing your song to Him!
- 2 Ah, Roro, Roro, my baby
Ah, Roro, my love, Roro;
Sleep you well, my heart's own darling
While we sing you our Rorro
- 3 Sing, my friends, and make you merry
Joy and mirth and joy again;
Lo, He lives, the King of heaven
Now and evermore. Amen

Please STAND if you are able, to sing together

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

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 Child, for us sinners
Poor and in the manger,
Fain we embrace thee with awe and love;
Who would not love thee,
Loving us so dearly?

6 Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing all ye citizens of heaven above:
"Glory to God
In the highest:"

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

*If you are able, remain **STANDING***

THE CHRISTMAS GOSPEL

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

All **Glory to you, O Lord.**

John 1. 1–14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All **Praise to you, O Christ.**

CHOIR CAROL

I Wonder as I Wander

Words and original music by John Jacob Niles (1892–1980)

arranged by John Rutter (b. 1945)

- I I wonder as I wander out under the sky,
How Jesus the Saviour did come for to die.
For poor on'ry people like you and like I...
I wonder as I wander out under the sky.

- 2 When Mary birthed Jesus 'twas in a cow's stall,
 With wise men and farmers and shepherds and all.
 But high from God's heaven a star's light did fall,
 And the promise of ages it then did recall.
- 3 If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing,
 A star in the sky, or a bird on the wing,
 Or all of God's angels in heav'n for to sing,
 He surely could have it, 'cause he was the King.

THE COLLECT OF CHRISTMAS DAY

The Lord be with you.

All

And also with you.

Almighty God,
who hast given us thy only-begotten Son
to take our nature upon him,
and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin;
Grant that we, being regenerate
and made thy children by adoption and grace,
may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit;
through the same our Lord Jesus Christ,
who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit,
ever one God, world without end.

All

Amen.

THE BLESSING

Christ, who by his incarnation
gathered into one all things earthly and heavenly,
fill you with his joy and peace
and make you partakers in the divine nature;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All

Amen.

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

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)

Please remain STANDING until the procession of Choir and Clergy has departed.

ORGAN VOLUNTARY

In dulci jubilo BWV 729

J. S. Bach (1685–1750)

Seasonal refreshments will be available following the service — do stay and join us for fellowship.

If you would like to make a donation towards the work of St Stephen's, there is a plate at the back of church for cash and a card reader for contactless contributions. You can also make a donation by scanning this QR code on your smart phone.



*A very Happy and Peaceful Christmas
from all at St Stephen's*

Do join at any of our other services as we celebrate the birth of Jesus

Wednesday 24th December

CHRISTMAS EVE

*10.30am Crib Service
10.00pm Midnight Mass*

Thursday 25th December

CHRISTMAS DAY

10.30am Festal Sung Eucharist

Sunday 28th December

HOLY INNOCENTS

10.30am Sung Eucharist

Sunday 4th January 2026

THE EPIPHANY

*10.30am Sung Eucharist
6.00pm Choral Evensong*

Regular weekly worship at St Stephen's

Sundays

*10.30am Sung Eucharist
6.00pm Choral Evensong*

Wednesdays

10.00am Holy Communion

Find details of all our services on our website
www.ststephenscantebury.net