



THE CATHEDRAL AND METROPOLITICAL CHURCH OF CHRIST, CANTERBURY

Midnight Mass



Christmas Eve

Wednesday 24th December 2025

11.00pm

Nave

Welcome to Canterbury Cathedral for this Eucharist

The Choral Setting is
Tomás Luis de Victoria (c.1548-1611), Missa 'O magnum mysterium'

Please ask the priest if you require a gluten-free communion wafer

Livestreaming

This service will be livestreamed and you may be seen on camera, although we will not deliberately take any close-ups of the congregation. By attending you agree to be seen in this way.

If you have any concerns please speak to a member of the clergy.

Cover Image: The Nativity
North Quire Aisle, Canterbury Cathedral

Incense is used at this service as a symbol of the offering of prayer to God.

Health and Safety

Much of the present Cathedral was built hundreds of years ago. Whilst most of the parts of this ancient cathedral that are normally open to the public are easily accessible for all, the historic stone floor may be unpredictably uneven in places, entry to some parts is via stone steps or access ramps of varying gradients, and lighting levels may vary.

Please exercise due care and attention before, during and after the service and move around with regard for your safety. The Cathedral is unable to accept liability for any personal injury or damage to property unless this is due to our own negligence.

The Collection from this Service, including any tax recovered through Gift Aid, will - after deduction of costs - be shared equally between the Cathedral and this year's chosen partner charity, **Catching Lives** (www.catchinglives.org)

If you are a UK taxpayer we would encourage you to use the Cathedral's Gift Aid envelope for your donation. Please ensure that you complete all sections of the envelope including the box confirming that you are a UK taxpayer. The Cathedral will reclaim an extra 25p for every £1 placed in the envelope which will be passed on to the charities. Gift Aid envelopes can be obtained from the stewards. Cheques should be made payable to **Canterbury Cathedral**. You can also use the QR code



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Please ensure that mobile phones are switched off.
No form of visual or sound recording, or any form of photography, is permitted during Services. Thank you for your co-operation.



An induction loop system for the hard of hearing is installed in the Cathedral. Hearing aid users should adjust their aid to T.



Large print orders of service are available from the stewards and virgers. Please ask

The Gathering

The President says

Welcome all wonders in one sight!
Eternity shut in a span.
Summer in winter, day in night,
heaven in earth and God in man.
Great little one whose all-embracing birth
brings earth to heaven, stoops heaven to earth.

All stand and sing



While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
all seated on the ground,
the angel of the Lord came down,
and glory shone around.

21'Fear not,' said he (for mighty dread
had seized their troubled mind);
'glad tidings of great joy I bring
to you and all mankind.

3'To you in David's town this day
is born of David's line
a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;
and this shall be the sign:

4'the heavenly babe you there shall find
to human view displayed,
all meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
and in a manger laid.'

5Thus spake the seraph; and forthwith
appeared a shining throng
of angels praising God, who thus
addressed their joyful song:

6'All glory be to God on high,
and to the earth be peace;
good will henceforth from heaven to men
begin and never cease.'

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

And also with you.

The President welcomes the congregation and then the Deacon introduces

Prayers of Penitence

Christ the light of the world has come
to dispel the darkness of our hearts.
In his light let us examine ourselves and confess our sins.

Remain standing to say

God our Father, you sent your Son full of grace and truth:
forgive our failure to receive him.
Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Jesus our Saviour, you were born in poverty and laid in a manger:
Forgive our greed and rejection of your ways.
Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Spirit of Love, your servant Mary responded joyfully to your call:
forgive the hardness of our hearts.
Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

The President says

May the God of all healing and forgiveness draw you to himself,
that you may behold the glory of his Son,
the Word made flesh, and be cleansed from all your sins,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Remain standing as the choir sings

Gloria in Excelsis

Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis. Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te, gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam. Domine Deus, Rex coelestis, Deus pater omnipotens. Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe; Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis; qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram; qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis. Quoniam tu solus Sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu solus Altissimus, Jesu Christe, cum Sancto Spiritu: in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Collect

The President says

Let us pray in the peace of this Christmas celebration
that our joy in the birth of Christ will last for ever.

Silence is kept

Eternal God,
who made this most holy night
to shine with the brightness of your one true light:
bring us, who have known the revelation of that light on earth,
to see the radiance of your heavenly glory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Sit

The Liturgy of the Word

Epistle *Hebrews 1.1-4*

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

All stand and sing



Silent night! Holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
round the virgin and her child:
holy infant so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace;
sleep in heavenly peace!

²Silent night! Holy night!
Shepherds quail at the sight,
glory streams from heaven afar,
heavenly hosts sing 'Alleluia,
Christ the Saviour is born,
Christ the Saviour is born!'

³Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light:
radiant beams your holy face
with the dawn of saving grace,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth.

Words: Joseph Mohr (1792-1848)
Tr. John Freeman Young (1820-85)

Tune: STILLE NACHT

AM 84

Remain standing

Today Christ is born: **alleluia.**

Today the Saviour has come: **alleluia.**

Today the angels sing on earth: **alleluia. Glory to God in the highest.**

The Gospel

John 1:1-14

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

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

Glory to you, O Lord.

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.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

The organ plays a fanfare

Once the Sermon has been introduced please sit

Sermon

The Reverend Dr E L Pennington, Canon Missioner

After the Sermon, a few moments of silence are kept as we reflect on what we have heard and then the choir sings

The Motet

O magnum mysterium
et admirabile sacramentum,
ut animalia viderent Dominum
natum jacentem in praesepe.
O beata Virgo, cujus viscera
meruerunt portare Dominum
Jesum Christum.
Alleluia!

*O great mystery
and wonderful sacrament,
that animals should see the new-
born Lord lying in a manger!
O blessed is the Virgin, whose
womb was worthy to bear Christ
the Lord.
Alleluia!*

Words: Responsory for Matins of Christmas Day Music: Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548-1611)

Stand to say

The Affirmation of Faith

We proclaim the Church's faith in Jesus Christ.

**We believe and declare that our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Son of God, is both divine and human.**

God, of the being of the Father,
the only Son from before time began;
human from the being of his mother, born in the world;
**fully God and fully human;
human in both mind and body.**

As God he is equal to the Father,
as human he is less than the Father.

**Although he is both divine and human
he is not two beings but one Christ.**

One, not by turning God into flesh,
but by taking humanity into God;
**truly one, not by mixing humanity with Godhead,
but by being one person.**

For as mind and body form one human being
so the one Christ is both divine and human.

**The Word became flesh and lived among us;
we have seen his glory,
the glory of the only Son from the Father,
full of grace and truth.**

Kneel or sit for

Prayers of Intercession

The reply to the petitions is

Holy God, **hear our prayer.**

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

The Peace

Stand

The President says

This holy night the angels sang,
'Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to all in whom he delights.'

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

The Deacon says

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

Members of the congregation greet one another.

Remain standing to sing

The Offertory Hymn *during which the table is prepared and the gifts of the people are gathered and presented.*

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When the thurifer turns to bow to the congregation, all turn to the altar



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.

²Still 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.

³Yet 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!

⁴For 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 (1810-76)

Tune: NOEL

NEH 29

Remain standing

The President says

Word made flesh, life of the world, in your incarnation you embraced poverty: by your Spirit may we share in your riches.

Amen

The Eucharistic Prayer

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.

All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere,
mighty creator, ever-living God.

We give you thanks and praise for your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who for love of our fallen race humbled himself, and was born of the
Virgin Mary by the power of your Spirit, and lived as one of us.

In this mystery of the Word made flesh
you have caused his light to shine in our hearts,
to give knowledge of your glory in the face of Jesus Christ.
In him we see our God made visible
and so are caught up in the love of the God we cannot see.

Therefore with all the angels of heaven
we lift our voices to proclaim the glory of your name
and sing our joyful hymn of praise:

The choir sings

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.

*Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.*

Benedictus qui venit
In nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

*Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.*

Accept our praises, heavenly Father,
through your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ,
and as we follow his example and obey his command,
grant that by the power of your Holy Spirit
these gifts of bread and wine
may be to us his body and his blood;

who, in the same night that he was betrayed,
took bread and gave you thanks;
he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, after supper
he took the cup and gave you thanks;
he gave it to them, saying:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it,
in remembrance of me.

Therefore, heavenly Father,
we remember his offering of himself
made once for all upon the cross;
we proclaim his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension;
we look for the coming of your kingdom,
and with this bread and this cup
we make the memorial of Christ your Son our Lord.

The Deacon says

Great is the mystery of faith:

Christ has died:

Christ is risen:

Christ will come again.

Accept through him, our great high priest,
this our sacrifice of thanks and praise,
and as we eat and drink these holy gifts
in the presence of your divine majesty,
renew us by your Spirit,
inspire us with your love
and unite us in the body of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through him, and with him, and in him,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
with all who stand before you in earth and heaven,
we worship you, Father almighty,
in songs of everlasting praise:

**Blessing and honour and glory and power
be yours for ever and ever. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

The President says

Rejoicing in the presence of God here among us, so we say,
each in our own language, the prayer that Jesus taught us.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Notre Père...

Vater Unser...

Onze Vader...

Padre Nuestro...

Ojcze Nasz...

Baba Yetu...

E to matou Matua...

Ein Tad...

Remain standing for

Breaking of the Bread

The President breaks the consecrated bread, saying

We break the bread of life,
and that life is the light of the world.
**God here among us,
light in the midst of us,
bring us to light and life.**

The President says

Christ is the true bread which has come down from heaven.

Lord, give us this bread always.

Sit as the President and other ministers begin

The Distribution of Communion

Please come up for Communion as directed by the stewards. All baptised Christians who receive communion in their own church are encouraged to receive today. If you are accompanied by children who do not yet receive, please bring them with you to receive a blessing. They should not be left on their own.

*If you are not a communicant, you are welcome to come forward at this point in the service to receive a blessing, keeping your hands to your sides. Please ask the priest if you **need a gluten-free host**.*

*We request that **you do not intinct (dip) your host in the wine** but either take a sip from the cup or remain with your head bowed. This is for the reasons of good hygiene.*

*We keep a **prayerful silence** during Communion to allow others to prepare to receive the sacrament or pray afterwards.*

During Communion, the choir sings the Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

Prayer after Communion

Stand as the President says

Let us pray.

Silence is kept

God our Father,
in this night you have made known to us again
the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:

confirm our faith

and fix our eyes on him

until the day dawns

and Christ the Morning Star rises in our hearts.

To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

All then say

**Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work to your praise and glory.
Amen.**

The Blessing

Remain standing

The President says

May the Father,
who has loved the eternal Son
from before the foundation of the world,
shed that love upon you his children.
Amen.

May Christ,
who by his incarnation gathered into one
things earthly and heavenly,
fill you with joy and peace.
Amen.

May the Holy Spirit,
by whose overshadowing Mary became the God-bearer,
give you grace to carry the good news of Christ.
Amen.

And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

Placing Jesus in the Crib

During the singing of this hymn the President will bring the Baby Jesus to place in the manger.



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:

³Child, 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?

Refrain:

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

²God of God,
Light of Light,
Lo! he abhors
not the Virgin's womb;
Very God,
Begotten, not created:

⁴Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens
of heaven above;
Glory to God
In the Highest:

The President says

'Do I not fill heaven and earth?' says the Lord.

Now the Word is made flesh and laid in a narrow manger.

From eternity to eternity you are God,

and now we see you as a newborn child.

The President places the Baby Jesus in the Crib

Let us pray that God our Father will bless this crib,
and that all who worship his Son, born of the Virgin Mary,
may come to share his life in glory.

God our Father,
on this night
your Son Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary
for us and for our salvation:
bless this crib,
which we have prepared to celebrate that holy birth;
may all who see it be strengthened in faith
and receive the fullness of life he came to bring,
who is alive and reigns for ever.

Amen.

5Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
Born this happy morning,
Jesu, to thee be glory given;
Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing:
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

The Deacon says

Go in peace. Proclaim the Word made flesh.
Glory, thanks and praise to God. Amen.

Organ Voluntary



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