



THE CATHEDRAL AND METROPOLITICAL CHURCH OF CHRIST, CANTERBURY

# Choral Evensong



Christmas Day

Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> December 2025

3.00pm

# Welcome to Canterbury Cathedral for this Service

Canterbury Cathedral is the seat of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the cathedral church of the Diocese of Canterbury, the mother church of the Anglican Communion, and a place of pilgrimage welcoming visitors from across the world.

For over fourteen hundred years God has been worshipped here. With its roots in the Benedictine tradition, the ongoing daily pattern of morning and evening prayer and Eucharist (or Holy Communion) continues the prayers and praises of countless generations in this Cathedral. We welcome you today to share in this continuing rhythm of worship in this service of Choral Evensong.

## 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](http://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



*giftaid it*



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.

# ORDER OF SERVICE

*All stand as the choir enters the Quire and remain standing as the choir sings*

## Introit Puer nobis

Ante luciferum genitus  
et ante saecula Dominus,  
Salvator noster  
hodie mundo apparuit.  
Alleluia.

*Born before the day star  
and before the ages,  
the Lord our Saviour  
has appeared this day to the world.  
Alleluia.*

Words: from 1586 in *Opus musicum*, Volume 1, no. 56

Music: Jacob Handl (1550-91)

## Welcome The Dean

*Remain standing to sing*



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:

<sup>3</sup>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:

*O tidings of comfort and joy,  
Comfort and joy!  
O tidings of comfort and joy!*

<sup>2</sup>From God our heavenly 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:

<sup>4</sup>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:

Words: Traditional

Tune: GOD REST YOU MERRY

*The Cantor and choir sing the* **Preces**

O Lord, open thou our lips  
*and our mouth shall shew forth thy praise.*

O God, make speed to save us.  
*O Lord, make haste to help us.*

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;  
*as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,*  
*world without end. Amen.*

Praise ye the Lord.  
*The Lord's name be praised.*

*Music: William Harris (1883-1973)*

*Sit as the choir sings*

**Psalm**                  Psalm 8

O Lord our Governor, how excellent is thy Name in all the world :  
thou that hast set thy glory above the heavens!

Out of the mouth of very babes and sucklings  
hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies :  
that thou mightest still the enemy, and the avenger.

For I will consider thy heavens, even the works of thy fingers :  
the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained.

What is man, that thou art mindful of him :  
and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

Thou madest him lower than the angels :  
to crown him with glory and worship.

Thou makest him to have dominion of the works of thy hands :  
and thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet;

All sheep and oxen :  
yea, and the beasts of the field;

The fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea :  
and whatsoever walketh through the paths of the seas.

O Lord our Governor :  
how excellent is thy Name in all the world!

*Stand*

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son : and to the Holy Ghost;  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be :  
world without end. Amen.

*Sit*

# Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 65.17-25

Stand to sing the **Office Hymn**



Thou who wast rich beyond all splendour,  
all for love's sake becamest poor;  
thrones for a manger didst surrender,  
sapphire-paved courts for stable floor.  
Thou who wast rich beyond all splendour,  
all for love's sake becomest poor.

<sup>2</sup>Thou who art God beyond all praising,  
all for love's sake becamest man;  
stooping so low, but sinners raising  
heavenwards by thine eternal plan.  
Thou who art God beyond all praising,  
all for love's sake becamest man.

<sup>3</sup>Thou who art love beyond all telling,  
Saviour and King, we worship thee.  
Emmanuel, within us dwelling,  
make us what thou wouldst have us be.  
Thou who art love beyond all telling,  
Saviour and King, we worship thee.

Words: Frank Houghton (1894-1972)

Tune: FRAGRANCE

AM 87

*Remain standing as the choir sings*

## **Magnificat**

My soul doth magnify the Lord :  
and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.  
For he hath regarded :  
the lowliness of his handmaiden.  
For behold, from henceforth :  
all generations shall call me blessed.  
For he that is mighty hath magnified me :  
and holy is his Name.  
And his mercy is on them that fear him :  
throughout all generations.  
He hath shewed strength with his arm :  
he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.  
He hath put down the mighty from their seat :  
and hath exalted the humble and meek.  
He hath filled the hungry with good things :  
and the rich he hath sent empty away.  
He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel :  
as he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever.  
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son : and to the Holy Ghost;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be :  
world without end. Amen.

*Music: John Sheppard (c.1515-58) First Service*

*Sit*

## **New Testament Reading**      *Philippians 2.5-11*

*Stand as the choir sings*

## **Nunc Dimittis**

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace :  
according to thy word.  
For mine eyes have seen : thy salvation;  
Which thou hast prepared : before the face of all people;  
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles :  
and to be the glory of thy people Israel.  
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son : and to the Holy Ghost;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be :  
world without end. Amen.

*Music: John Sheppard (c.1515-58) First Service*

*Turn East and say together the*

## **Apostles' Creed**

**I believe in God the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth:  
and in Jesus Christ  
his only Son our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried.  
He descended into hell;  
the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and sitteth on the right hand of  
God the Father almighty;  
from thence he shall come  
to judge the quick and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Ghost;  
the holy catholic Church;  
the communion of saints;  
the forgiveness of sins;  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

*Remain standing to sing*



The first Nowell the angel did say  
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;  
In fields as 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.*

<sup>2</sup>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:

<sup>3</sup>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:

<sup>4</sup>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:

<sup>5</sup>Then entered in those Wise Men three,  
Full reverently upon their knee,  
And offered there in his presènce  
Both gold and myrrh and frankincense:

<sup>6</sup>Then let us all with one accord  
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord,  
That hath made heaven and earth of nought,  
And with his blood mankind hath bought:

*Words:* Traditional

*Tune:* THE FIRST NOWELL



## *The Cantor and choir sing the* **Versicles and Responses**

The Lord be with you.

*And with thy spirit.*

Let us pray.

*Sit or kneel*

Lord, have mercy upon us.

*Christ, have mercy upon us.*

Lord, have mercy upon us.

*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. Amen.*

O Lord, shew thy mercy upon us.

*And grant us thy salvation.*

O Lord, save the King.

*And mercifully hear us when we call upon thee.*

Endue thy ministers with righteousness.

*And make thy chosen people joyful.*

O Lord, save thy people.

*And bless thine inheritance.*

Give peace in our time, O Lord.

*Because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou, O God.*

O God, make clean our hearts within us.

*And take not thy Holy Spirit from us.*

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. *Amen.*

O God, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed; give unto thy servants that peace which the world cannot give; that both, our hearts may be set to obey thy commandments, and also that, by thee, we being defended from the fear of our enemies may pass our time in rest and quietness; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour. *Amen.*

Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord; and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of thy only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. *Amen*

*Music: William Harris (1883-1973)*

## Anthem

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 Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

*Words:* Collect for Christmas Day

*Music:* Thomas Tomkins (1572-1656)

## Prayers *concluding with*

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore.  
Amen.**

*Stand to sing*



Joy to the world, the Lord is come!  
let earth receive her King;  
let every heart prepare him room,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

<sup>2</sup>Joy to the world, the Saviour reigns!  
let all their songs employ;  
while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

<sup>3</sup>He rules the world with truth and grace,  
and makes the nations prove  
the glories of his righteousness,  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders, wonders, of his love.

*Words:* Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

*Tune:* Antioch

AM 72

*Remain standing for* **The Blessing**

May the joy of the angels,  
the eagerness of the shepherds,  
the perseverance of the wise men,  
the obedience of Joseph and Mary,  
and the peace of the Christ-child  
be yours this Christmas;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always;  
**Amen.**

*All remain standing as the choir and clergy depart*

**Organ Voluntary**

*A retiring collection will be taken for Canterbury Cathedral and Catching Lives. You can also use the QR Code below*



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