

The FRIENDS of
Canterbury
Cathedral

Christmas Carol Service



Monday, 15th December 2025

7.00pm

The Nave

Canterbury Cathedral

Welcome to Canterbury Cathedral
for *The Friends of Canterbury Cathedral* Christmas Carol Service.

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 Annunciation, photograph by Stephen Brown



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.

Hymns and songs reproduced under CCLI number 1031280

Typeset and printed by the Music & Liturgy Department
precentor@canterbury-cathedral.org
01227 762862

Please remain seated as the Choir enters

Introit

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day;
I would my true love did so chance
To see the legend of my play,
To call my true love to my dance;

*Sing, oh! my love, oh! my love,
my love, my love,
This have I done for my true love.*

In a manger laid, and wrapped I was
So very poor, this was my chance
Betwixt an ox and a silly poor ass
To call my true love to my dance.

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day;
I would my true love did so chance
To see the legend of my play,
To call my true love to my dance;

Then was I born of a virgin pure,
Of her I took fleshly substance
Thus was I knit to man's nature
To call my true love to my dance.

Words: Traditional English Carol

Music: John Rutter (b. 1945)

Please stand to sing

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.

³And 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.

²He 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.

⁴Not 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;
When like stars his children crowned
All in white shall wait around.

Words: C. F. Alexander (1818-95)

Tune: IRBY

Remain standing

The Dean gives the Welcome

*The **Bidding Prayer** which concludes with 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.**

Sit

First Reading Isaiah 40.1-5

read by The Right Worshipful Councillor Keji Moses, Lord Mayor of Canterbury

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Thanks be to God.

All stand to sing

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 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 and cease your 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 all the world give back the song
Which now the angels sing.

Words: Edmund Sears (1810-76)

Tune: NOEL

Sit

Second Reading Isaiah 11.1-9

read by Rachel Bennett, Manager, Canterbury Cathedral Lodge

A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Thanks be to God.

Choristers *The time of snow*

They journey onward to find their rest,
Mary and Joseph, for ever blessed.
They travel wearily as they go,
the time of winter, the time of snow.

The place of shelter they have in mind,
a simple stable is all they find.
The promise of an angel is all they know,
the time of winter, the time of snow.

It may not have been winter then,
that certain night in Bethlehem,
but with the beauty of this birth
came the renewal of the earth,
as a flower that grows
through the melting snows.

There in the silence lies Mary's son,
a source of wonder for everyone.
Within a stable so long ago,
the time of winter, the time of snow.

Words and Music: Bob Chilcott

Third Reading Luke 1.26-38

read by Jenny Pate-Wright, Friends' Volunteer

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, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible.

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.

All stand to sing

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.

²O 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.

³How 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.

⁴O 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 (1835-93)

Tune: FOREST GREEN

Sit

Fourth Reading Luke 2.1-7

read by David Innes, Appointed Trustee of The Friends

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.

Choristers *Angels' Carol*

Have you heard the sound
of the angel voices
Ringing out so sweetly,
ringing out so clear?
Have you seen the star
shining out so brightly
As a sign from God
that Christ the Lord is here?
Have you heard the news
that they bring from heaven
to the humble shepherds
who have waited long?

*Gloria in excelsis Deo!
Hear the angels
sing their joyful song.*

He is come in peace,
In the winter's stillness
Like a gentle snowfall
in the gentle night;
He is come in joy
Like the sun at morning

Filling all the world
With radiance and light.
He is come in love
As the child of Mary
In a simple stable
We have seen his birth:
Gloria...

He will bring new light
to a world of darkness
Like a bright star shining
in the skies above;
He will bring new hope
To the waiting nations
When he comes to reign
In purity and love.
Let the earth rejoice
At the Saviour's coming;
Let the heavens answer
With the joyful morn:
Gloria..

Words and Music: John Rutter (b. 1945)

Fifth Reading Luke 2.8-16

read by Wheezie Cottrell, Appointed Trustee of The Friends

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.

All stand to sing

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

"Fear not," said he (for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind);
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.

"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:

The heavenly Babe you there shall find
To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
And in a manger laid."

Thus spake the seraph; and forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of angels praising God, who thus
Addressed their joyful song:

"All glory be to God on high,
And on earth be peace;
Good-will henceforth from heaven to men
Begin and never cease."

Words: Nahum Tate (1652-1715)

Tune: WINCHESTER OLD

Sit

Sixth Reading Matthew 2.1-12

read by the Dean

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, 'And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.' Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and

search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.
When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.
When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.
And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh.
And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

Thanks be to God.

All stand to sing

See, amid the winter's snow,
Born for us on earth below,
See, the Lamb of God appears,
Promised from eternal years!

*Hail, thou ever-blessèd morn!
Hail, redemption's happy dawn!
Sing through all Jerusalem:
Christ is born in Bethlehem!*

²Lo, within a manger lies
He who built the starry skies,
He who, throned in height sublime,
Sits amid the cherubim!

³Say, 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."

⁵Sacred Infant, all divine,
What a tender love was thine,
Thus to come from highest bliss
Down to such a world as this!

Words: Edward Caswall (1814-78)

Tune: HUMILITY (OXFORD)

Kneel or sit for the

Prayers *concluding with*

The Friends' Prayer

**O Lord Jesus Christ,
in whose name our Cathedral Church is dedicated,
Grant that its life and worship
May ever abound to your greater glory;
And that as Friends we may do our part,
By prayer and offering,
To strengthen its witness to all the world;
Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit
Live and reign ever One God.
Amen.**

All stand to sing (during which a collection for The Friends of Canterbury Cathedral will be taken)

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.*

²Christ, by highest heaven 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:
*Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King.*

³Hail the heaven-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)
and others

Tune: MENDELSSOHN

The Blessing

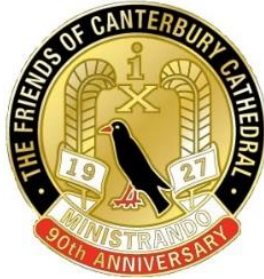
Voluntary

Let's Be Friends!

The Friends is the Cathedral's fan club – the first organisation of its kind in England. Founded in 1927, The Friends has raised the equivalent of £20 million to support our Cathedral over the years.

Friends enjoy events, outings and exclusive mailings throughout the year. They also receive 10% discount in the Cathedral Lodge and Shop, and enjoy an exclusive Friends' Day every summer. For more information about our Friendly community visit www.canterbury-cathedral.org/friends

If you are attending the Friends' Dinner, please make your way to the Clagett Auditorium after the Service.



Thank you for supporting

The FRIENDS of

Canterbury Cathedral

11, The Precincts, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2EH
Tel: 01227 865292

Email: friends@canterbury-cathedral.org

www.canterbury-cathedral.org/support-us/friends

Registered Charity No. 256575