



THE CATHEDRAL AND METROPOLITICAL CHURCH OF CHRIST, CANTERBURY

A Festival of Carols



Sunday 17th December 2023

5.30pm

Nave

Welcome to Canterbury Cathedral for this Service

This is a new service for the Cathedral, designed to bring the story of the Nativity to people of all ages, and to gather together to sing carols as we prepare for the coming of Our Lord at Christmas.

The poems at this service are from *The Last Straw*, a narrative sequence of poems by Godfrey Rust http://www.wordsout.co.uk/christmas_readings.htm

Our readers represent the many different departments that make up the vibrant life of this cathedral community.

During the singing of carols, the Nativity Tableau will be built up in front of the Nave Altar, with the participants moving from the West End of the Cathedral.

Cover Image: The Nativity, from the North Quire Aisle, Canterbury Cathedral

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.



As part of our commitment to the care of the environment in our world, this Order of Service is printed on unbleached 100% recycled paper



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.

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The Book of Common Prayer (1662)

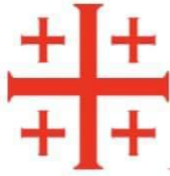
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PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF THE CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM

Statement on the Celebration of Advent and Christmas in the Midst of the War

November 10, 2023

Each year during the sacred seasons of Advent and Christmastide, our Christian communities throughout the Holy Land take great delight in their preparations for the commemoration of the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In addition to attendance in religious services, these celebrations have normally involved participation in numerous public festivities and the large-scale display of brightly lit and expensive decorations as a means of expressing our joy at the approach and arrival of the Feast of the Nativity.

But these are not normal times. Since the start of the War, there has been an atmosphere of sadness and pain. Thousands of innocent civilians, including women and children, have died or suffered serious injuries. Many more grieve over the loss of their homes, their loved ones, or the uncertain fate of those dear to them. Throughout the region, even more have lost their work and are suffering from serious economic challenges. Yet despite our repeated calls for a humanitarian ceasefire and a de-escalation of violence, the war continues.

Therefore, We, the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem, call upon our congregations to stand strong with those facing such afflictions by this year foregoing any unnecessarily festive activities. We likewise encourage our priests and the faithful to focus more on the spiritual meaning of Christmas in their pastoral activities and liturgical celebrations during this period, with all the focus directed at holding in our thoughts our brothers and sisters affected by this war and its consequences, and with fervent prayers for a just and lasting peace for our beloved Holy Land.

Moreover, during this season of giving, we also invite the faithful to advocate, pray, and contribute generously as they are able for the relief of the victims of this war and for those in dire need, as well as to encourage others to join them in this mission of mercy.

In these ways, we believe, we will be standing in support of those continuing to suffer—just as Christ did with us in his Incarnation, in order that all of God’s children might receive the hope of a New Jerusalem in the presence of the Almighty, where “death shall be no more, neither mourning, nor crying, nor pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

—The Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem

ORDER OF SERVICE

All stand as the choir and clergy enter the Nave

Processional Hymn



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 th'angelic host proclaim,
'Christ is born in Bethlehem'.
Hark! the herald-angels sing
Glory to the new-born King.

²Christ, 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 th'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 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 (1707-88) and others

Tune: MENDELSSOHN

Sit

The Dean welcomes the congregation

At Christmas time we delight again to hear the story of the journey to Bethlehem, the song of the angels, the surprise of the shepherds, and their joy as they found Jesus in the manger.

But lest we forget he was born to poverty, we remember at this season all who are hungry or cold.

And lest we forget he became a refugee, we remember now the stranger and the lonely among us.

And lest we forget he felt the pain of life and death, we remember now those who are ill, or anxious, or bereaved.

And because we know he came for our salvation, let us in heart and mind go once again to Bethlehem, to hear the message of the angels and worship afresh the Son of God.

First Reading

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.'

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.

Remain seated as the choir sings

The Angel Gabriel from heaven came,
his wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;
"All hail," said he to meek and lowly Mary,
"most highly favoured lady." Gloria!

"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!

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!

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 maiden." Gloria!

Words: Basque Carol

Music: arr. David Willcocks (1919-2015)

Paraphrased: Sabine Baring-Gould (1834-1924)

Second Reading

Angels move
like electricity
and do not wear watches.
They are in the communications business.

They attend training courses
in calming startled humans.
They visit often
but are usually well disguised.

They have their work to do.
But now and then
they let the mask slip
to show their true identities.

They do this when it matters
that there should be no misunderstanding.

Some have seen angels.
Be humble and expect them
and they will come
in their own good time
or rather in God's time.

Stand to sing



Long ago, prophets knew
Christ would come, born a Jew.
Come to make all things new;
Bear his people's burden,
Freely love and pardon.

²God in time, God in man,
This is God's timeless plan:
He will come, as a man,
Born himself of woman,
God divinely human.

*Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!
Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!
When he comes, When he comes,
Who will make him welcome?*

Sit

Third Reading

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 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.

Remain seated as the choir sings

Still, still, still

Still, still, still, the child is sleeping still!
As Mary holds him to her breast, singing gently, bringing rest,
Still, still, still, the child is sleeping still!

Sleep, sleep, sleep, my little baby sleep!
The angels sing and tell the story of the child who comes in glory.
Sleep, sleep, sleep, my little baby sleep!

Joy, joy, joy, our hearts are filled with joy!
The Lord has come from heaven above us to this world to guide and love us.
Joy, joy, joy, our hearts are filled with joy!

Words: Traditional Austrian Carol

Music: Bob Chilcott (b. 1955)

Fourth Reading

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.

Stand to 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

Sit

Fifth Reading

It was done plainly enough.
The night sky was a perfect billboard,
the sound effects spectacular.
Only a few were awake
and in the right place
at the right time when heaven,
unable to contain its amazement any longer,
spilled out momentarily into earth
and explained itself.
The message was clear as day
but his timing was, as always, surprising,
and the show ran
for one performance only.

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.

²'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'All glory be to God on high,
and to the earth be peace;
good will henceforth from heaven to men
begin and never cease.'

Words: Nahum Tate (1652-1715)

Tune: WINCHESTER OLD

AM 89i

Sit

Sixth Reading

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.'

'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."'

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.

Stand to sing, during which there will be a collection which will be shared between the cathedral and Porchlight, our charity for Christmas.



We three kings of Orient are,
Bearing gifts we traverse afar
Field and fountain,
moor and mountain,
Following yonder star:

*O star of wonder, star of night,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light.*

³Frankincense to offer have I,
Incense owns a deity nigh;
Prayer and praising, all men raising,
Worship him, God most high:

⁴Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume
Breathes a life of gathering gloom;
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb:

²Born a king on Bethlehem plain,
Gold I bring to crown him again,
King for ever, ceasing never
Over us all to reign:

⁵Glorious now behold him arise,
King and God and sacrifice.
Heaven sings: 'Alleluia';
'Alleluia,' the earth replies:

Words: E J Hopkins (1818-1901)

Tune: THREE KINGS OF ORIENT

AM 105

Sit

Seventh Reading

Will you study these signs
as carefully
as you study the prices
in the Christmas catalogues?
Will you seek out the manger
as diligently
as you search for the right scarf
or this year's toy?
Will you examine
your heart's pilgrimage
and be sure towards what stable
it carries its precious gifts?
Will you be a wise fool
to find and follow
the strange star of truth
in a sky full of glittering lies?

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 wond'ring love.

³O 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 or kneel

Jesus, whose mother was Mary:
we pray for all families, especially those who are in need and who find
Christmas a difficult time.

Lord Jesus, **hear our prayer.**

Jesus, cradled in a manger:
we pray for all those who have no home, or who have had to flee from
their homes through violence or danger.

Lord Jesus, **hear our prayer.**

Jesus, sharing the stable with the animals:
we pray for all of your creation, that we may care for all you have made.

Lord Jesus, **hear our prayer.**

Jesus, worshipped by shepherds and kings:
we pray for all the nations of the world, especially where there is war,
natural disaster or living with challenging conditions.

Lord Jesus, **hear our prayer.**

Jesus, our Emmanuel:
we pray for all those in need: for all who will spend Christmas in danger
or on their own.

Lord Jesus, **hear our prayer.**

*Remain seated or kneeling as we sing this carol as a prayer for all
children who need to know that Jesus is near to them tonight. The first
verse will be sung by the choir and children only.*

*Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.*

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
And stay by my bedside till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay
Close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
And fit us for heaven, to live with thee there.

Words: Anon.

Tune: CRADLE SONG

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.**

Stand to sing



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.*

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

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?

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

Words: Latin 18th century
Tr F Oakeley (1802-80) and others

Tune: ADESTE FIDELES

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.

Remain standing as the choir and clergy depart

Organ Voluntary

If you were unable to give cash to the collection (to be shared between the cathedral and Porchlight, our charity for Christmas) you can give by text-message, or use the QR code

- To give £5 – text SERVICE to 70560
- To give £10 – text SERVICE to 70580

*In addition to any text donation, you will incur your standard network message charge.

