Midnight Mass

Christmas Eve
Sunday 24th December 2023
11.00pm
Nave
Welcome to Canterbury Cathedral for this Service

The Ordinary is
Allan Wicks (1923-2010), Missa octavi toni

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.

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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
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
The Gathering

A welcome is offered

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.

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 '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.'

5 Thus 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.'

Words: Nahum Tate (1652-1715)  
Tune: WINCHESTER OLD  
AM 89i

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.

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

*And also with you.*

*The President 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.*

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

*Christ, have mercy.*

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

*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**

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.

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  Titus 2.11-14

The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

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:

Silent 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!'
Silent 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 Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.
Glory to you, O Lord.

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world
should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while
Quirinius was governor of Syria. 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.

In that region 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. When they saw this,
they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard
it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

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 Dean

Following the Sermon please stand

**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 choir sings

**The Motet**

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

*O great mystery and wonderful sacrament, that animals should see the newborn 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)*

**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.**

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. The collection will be shared between the cathedral and Porchlight, our charity for Christmas.*

*If you would prefer to 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.*

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 Eucharistic Prayer

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 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

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

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.

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, 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.

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 who are regular communicants in their own tradition are welcome to receive the sacrament. 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

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

Silence is kept

Stand as the President says

Let us pray.

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

Christ, who by his incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, fill you with peace and goodwill and make you partakers of 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.
Amen.
The Procession to the Crib

Let us proceed in peace.
In the name of Christ. Amen

During the singing of this hymn the choir and clergy process to the Crib, at the West end of the Cathedral, with the Dean carrying the Baby Jesus to place in the manger. The congregation is invited to turn towards the Crib as the procession passes.

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:

Refrain:
   O come, let us adore him,
   O come, let us adore him,
   O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

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

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

The Dean 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 Dean 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.

*The Dean censes the Crib*

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.*

*All sing*

"Yea, 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!"

*Organ Voluntary*

Olivier Messiaen (1908-92), *‘Dieu parmi nous’,* from *La Nativité du Seigneur*

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