



THE CATHEDRAL AND METROPOLITICAL CHURCH OF CHRIST, CANTERBURY



Carol Service
23rd and 24th December 2025
5.30pm

Welcome to Canterbury Cathedral for this 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.

Voluntaries before the service played by Stephanie Gaunt, Organ Scholar

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), Nun Komm, der Heiden Heiland, BWV 599

Louis-Claude Daquin (1694-1772), Noel Suisse

Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713), Pastorale from the "Christmas" Concerto

J S Bach, Aria "Schlafe, mein Liebster" from the Christmas Oratorio, arr Harvey Grace

J S Bach - Nun Komm, der Heiden Heiland, BWV 659

Attrib. J S Bach, Nun Singet und Seid Froh

Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707), Nun Komm, der Heiden Heiland, BuxWV 211

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-47), Sonata in D Major op 65 movement 3

Wilber Held (1914-2015), God Rest You Merry Gentlemen

Timothy Ravalde (b. 1988), Introduction and Fugue on "Veni, Veni, Emmanuel"

John Ireland (1879-1962), The Holy Boy

Gordon Phillips (1908-91), Prelude on "O little town of Bethlehem"

Herbert Sumsion (1899-1995), Prelude on "the holly and the ivy"

Johannes Brahms (1833-97), Chorale Prelude on 'Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen'

Jeanne Demessieux (1921-68), Rorate Caeli

Flor Peeters (1903-86), Of the Father's Love Begotten

J S Bach, Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme

Cover Image: Detail from The Nativity (Christopher Whall), South-West Transept



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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ORDER OF SERVICE

Stand as the lights are dimmed – silence is kept

The choir on the Pulpitum Steps sings

Puer Nobis

Given, not lent,
And not withdrawn--once sent--
This Infant of mankind, this One,
Is still the little welcome Son.
New every year,
New-born and newly dear,
He comes with tidings and a song,
The ages long, the ages long.
Even as the cold
Keen winter grows not old,
As childhood is so fresh, foreseen,
And spring in the familiar green.
Sudden as sweet
Come the expected feet;
All joy is young, and new all art,
And He, too, whom we have by heart.

Words: Alice Maynell (1847-1922)

Music: Richard Rodney Bennett (1936-2012)

Poem The Work of Christmas *by Howard Thurman (1899-1981)*
Read by a member of staff from the Quire Lectern

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among others,
To make music in the heart.

The procession moves through the Nave

Remain standing to sing



Solo

*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.*

⁴For he is our childhood's pattern,
Day by day like us he grew,
He was little, weak, and helpless,
Tears and smiles like us he knew;
And he feeleth for our sadness,
And he shareth in our gladness.

Choir only

²*He 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.*

⁵And 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.

All

³And through all his wondrous childhood
He would honour and obey,
Love and watch the lowly maiden,
In whose gentle arms he lay:
Christian children all must be
Mild, obedient, good as he.

⁶Not 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: Mrs C F Alexander (1818-95)

Tune: IRBY

AM 81

Sit

A Christmas Homily

The Dean

Choir Up! Good Christen folk

*Ding-dong, ding:
Ding-a-dong-a-ding:
Ding-dong, ding-dong:
Ding-a-dong-ding.*

Up! good Christen folk, and listen
How the merry church bells ring,
And from steeple
Bid good people
Come adore the new-born King:

Tell the story how from glory
God came down at Christmastide,
Bringing gladness,
Chasing sadness,
Show'ring blessings far and wide.
Born of mother, blest o'er other,
Ex Maria Virgine,
In a stable ('Tis no fable),
Christus natus hodie.

Words: George Ratcliffe Woodward (1848-1934)

Music: Trad., arr, G. R Woodward

Stand 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:

³And 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!*

²From 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:

⁴Now 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

NEH 25

Sit

The First Lesson

Isaiah 9. 2, 6,7

Read by a virger from the Nave Pulpit

Christ's birth and kingdom are foretold

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Thanks be to God.

Choir **There is a flower**

There is a flower sprung of a tree,
The root thereof is called Jesse,
A flower of price;
There is no other such in paradise.

This flower is fair and fresh of hue;
It fadeth never, but ever is new;
The blessed branch this flower on
grew
Was Mary mild who bore Jesu —
A flower of grace,
Against all sorrow it is solace.

The seed thereof was Goddes sand,
That God himself sowed with his
hand;
In Nazareth that holy land,
Amidst her arbour a maiden found.
This blessed flower
Sprang never but in Mary's bower.

When Gabriel this maid did meet,
With "Ave, Maria," he did her greet;
Between them two this flow'r was set,
And safe was kept, no man should wit,
Till on a day
In Bethlehem, it could spread and
spray.

When that fair flower began to spread,
And his sweet blossom began to bed,
Then rich and poor of every land,
Marvelled how this flower might spread,
Till kinges three
That blessed flower came to see.

Angels there came from heaven's tower
To look upon this freshele flow'r —
How fair he was in his colour,
And how sweet in his savour,
And to behold
How such a flow'r might spring in gold.

Words: John Audelay (d. c.1426)

Music: John Rutter (b. 1945)

The Second Lesson Micah 5.2-5

Read by a member of the congregation from the Nave Pulpit

The glory of Bethlehem is foretold

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labour has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.

Thanks be to God.

Stand to sing



Of the Father's heart begotten,
Ere the world from chaos rose,
He is Alpha: from that Fountain
All that is and hath been flows;
He is Omega, of all things
Yet to come the mystic Close,
Evermore and evermore.

²By his word was all created;
He commanded and 'twas done;
Earth and sky and boundless ocean,
Universe of three in one,
All that sees the moon's soft radiance,
All that breathes beneath the sun,
Evermore and evermore.

³This is he, whom seer and sibyl
Sang in ages long gone by;
This is he of old revealèd
In the page of prophecy;
Lo! he comes, the promised Saviour;
Let the world his praises cry!
Evermore and evermore.

⁴Sing, ye heights of heaven, his praises;
Angels and Archangels, sing!
Wheresoe'er ye be, ye faithful,
Let your joyous anthems ring,
Every tongue his name confessing,
Countless voices answering,
Evermore and evermore.

Words: Latin, Prudentius (348-413)
Tr R.F. Davis (1866-1937)

Tune: DIVINUM MYSTERIUM
Melody from Piae Cantiones

AM 80

Sit

The Third Lesson

Luke 2.1-7

Read by a server from the Nave Pulpit

St Luke tells of the birth of Jesus

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.

Thanks be to God.

Choir **The Shepherd's Carol**

We stood on the hills, Lady,
Our day's work done,
Watching the frosted meadows
That winter had won.

The evening was calm, Lady,
The air so still,
Silence more lovely than music
Folded the hill.

There was a star, Lady,
Shone in the nights,
Larger than Venus it was
And bright, so bright.

Oh, a voice from the sky, Lady,
It seemed to us then
Telling of God being born
In the world of men.

And so we have come, Lady,
Our day's work done,
Our love, our hopes, ourselves
We give to your son.

Words: Anonymous

Music: Bob Chilcott (b. 1954)

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 all the earth;
For Christ is born of Mary;
And, gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wond'ring love.

³How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of his heav'n.
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

NEH 32

Sit

The Fourth Lesson

Luke 2. 8-16

Read by a representative of the City Council, from the Nave Pulpit

The shepherds go to the manger

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.

Thanks be to God.

Choir **A humble light**

Not crowns of gold but simple grace
first shone within a humble place;
so may our lives, in quiet ways,
be songs of love through winter
days.

The kindly word, the steady hand,
the neighbour's need we understand,
the pledge to serve without a claim—
let these be gifts we gladly name.

And when we sing this Christmas/stilly night,
let deeds of mercy be our light;
in memory of the hands we knew,
we'll carry on the good he drew.

Words: Adapted by John Frederick Hudson (b. 1987)
and Brock Andreatta

Music: Paul Mealor (b.1975)

Poem

Kenosis by Luci Shaw (1928-2025)

Read by a representative of the Canterbury business community, from the Nave Pulpit

In sleep his infant mouth works in and out.
He is so new, his silk skin has not yet
been roughed by plane and wooden beam
nor, so far, has he had to deal with human doubt.
He is in a dream of nipple found,
of blue-white milk, of curving skin
and, pulsing in his ear, the inner throb
of a warm heart's repeated sound.
His only memories float from fluid space.
So new he has not pounded nails, hung a door
broken bread, felt rebuff, bent to the lash,
wept for the sad heart of the human race.

Choir **In the bleak mid-winter**

In the bleak mid-winter
Frosty wind made moan;
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
Snow on snow,
In the bleak mid-winter
Long ago.

Our God, heaven cannot hold Him
Nor earth sustain,
Heaven and earth shall flee away
When He comes to reign:
In the bleak mid-winter
A stable-place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty —
Jesus Christ.

Words: Christina Rossetti (1830-94)

Enough for Him, whom Cherubim
Worship night and day,
A breastful of milk
And a mangerful of hay;
Enough for Him, whom Angels
Fall down before,
The ox and ass and camel
Which adore.

What can I give Him,
Poor as I am? —
If I were a Shepherd
I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise Man
I would do my part, —
Yet what I can I give Him, —
Give my heart.

Music: Harold Darke (1888-1976)

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:
'Through all the earth, goodwill and peace
from heaven's all-gracious king!'
The world in solemn stillness lay
to hear the angels sing.

²With sorrow brought by sin and strife
the world has suffered long
and, since the angels sang, have passed
two thousand years of wrong:
the nations, still at war, hear not
the love-song which they bring:
O hush the noise and cease the strife,
to hear the angels sing!

³And still the days are hastening on —
by prophets seen of old —
towards the fulness of the time
when comes the age foretold:
then earth and heaven renewed shall see
the prince of peace, their king;
and all the world repeat the song
which now the angels sing.

Words: Edmund Sears (1810-76)
adapted by Jubilate Hymns

Tune: NOEL

AM 70

Sit

The Fifth Lesson

Matthew 2.1-11

Read by a Member of Chapter from the Nave Pulpit

The wise men are led by a star to Jesus

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.' When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

They told him, '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."'

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.'

When they had heard the king, 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.

Thanks be to God.

Stand to sing



Unto us is born a Son,
King of quires supernal:
See on earth his life begun,
Of lords the Lord eternal.

³This did Herod sore affray,
And grievously bewilder,
So he gave the word to slay,
And slew the little childer.

²Christ from heav'n descending low,
Comes on earth a stranger;
Ox and ass their owner know,
Be-cradled in the manger.

⁴Of his love and mercy mild
This the Christmas story;
And O that Mary's gentle child
Might lead us up to glory.

⁵O and A, and A and O,
Cum cantibus in choro,
Let our merry organ go,
Benedicamus Domino.

Words: Latin, 15th century

Tune: PUER NOBIS

Sit or kneel

The Prayers

The Canon in Residence

As we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we bring before him the needs of the whole world, praying

for peace and goodwill over all the earth,
for unity and fellowship within the Church,
for those who suffer through the inhumanity of their neighbours,
for the sick, the bereaved and the lonely,
the poor, the hungry and the oppressed.

We pray also for those who have loved and served God here
and are now at rest, that he may grant them,
with Thomas and all the saints of Canterbury,
refreshment, light and peace.

These prayers we offer in the words which Christ himself has 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, forever and ever. Amen.**

Notre Père...

Vater Unser...

Onze Vader...

Padre Nuestro...

Ojcze Nasz...

Baba Yetu...

E to matou Matua...

Ein Tad...

Choir **O magnum mysterium**

O magnum mysterium
Et admirabile sacramentum
Ut animalia viderent Dominum natum
Iacentem in praeseptio!
Beata Virgo, cuius viscera
Meruerunt portare
Dominum Christum. Alleluia!

*O great mystery,
and wonderful sacrament,
that animals should see the newborn
Lord, lying in a manger!
Blessed is the virgin whose womb
was worthy to bear
the Lord Christ. Alleluia!*

Words: Latin Responsory for Christmas

Music: Morten Lauridsen (b 1943)

Stand

The Sixth Lesson

John 1.1-14

St John unfolds the mystery of the Incarnation

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.

Thanks be to God

Choir

On Christmas Night (Sussex Carol)

On Christmas night all Christians sing
To hear the news the angels bring;
News of great joy, news of great mirth,
News of our merciful King's birth.

When sin departs before Thy grace,
Then life and health come in its place;
Angels and men with joy may sing,
All for to see the newborn King.

All out of darkness we have light,
Which made the angels sing this night:
"Glory to God and peace to men
Now and for evermore. Amen."

Words: English traditional carol

Music: arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

Remain standing

The Blessing

Christ, who by his incarnation gathered into one
all things in heaven and on earth,
fill you with his joy and peace;
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 to sing

During the following hymn the processions move through the Quire and the Nave to the Great West Door



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.*

⁴Lo! star-led chieftains,
Magi, Christ adoring,
Offer him incense,
gold, and myrrh;
We to the Christ-child
Bring our hearts' oblations:
*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:
*O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.*

⁵Child, 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?
*O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.*

³See how the shepherds,
Summoned to his cradle,
Leaving their flocks, draw nigh
with lowly fear;
We too will thither
Bend our joyful footsteps:
*O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.*

⁶Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens
of heaven above:
'Glory to God
In the highest':
*O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.*

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

Tune: ADESTE FIDELES

AM 78

Organ Voluntary

Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937), Final from Symphony no.6

*Members of the congregation are asked to remain
in their places until directed to leave by the stewards*

A retiring collection will be taken by the Stewards as you leave.

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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Christmas Day Services at the Cathedral

(Cathedral open for services only)

- 8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – High Altar
- 9.15am Morning Prayer (said) – Western Crypt
- 11.00am Sung Eucharist – Nave
- 3.00pm Evensong with Carols – Quire