



SING, CHOIRS OF ANGELS!

24TH DECEMBER 2023, 4:30^{PM}

**ST BRIDE'S
CHURCH**

**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!***

**God of God,
light of light,
lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb;
very God,
begotten, not created;
*O come, let us adore him...***

**See 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...***

**Sing, 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...***

Words: Latin, 18th century. Trans. F Oakeley 1802–80 Tune:
Adeste Fideles by J F Wade 1711–86
Descant: D Willcocks 1919–2015

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Minister We have come together to hear again
the good news of Christ's birth
and to offer to God our thanksgiving
in the joyful singing of carols.
May God our Father
grant us the light of Christ this Christmas,
that we may shine with his love,
be diligent in his service,
and courageous in following in his steps,
who is the true light and source of all life.
In Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Choir Carol

***Lullaby* – William Byrd**

*Lulla, la-lulla, lulla, lullaby.
My sweet little baby,
what meanest thou to cry?*

Words: Traditional

Reading

Luke 1: 26-38

read by Anthony Mann

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Hail, O favoured one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be.

And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name 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 father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

And Mary said to the angel, “How shall this be, since I have no husband?” And the angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.” And Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

Thanks be to God.

Congregational Carol

**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.**

**O 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.**

Choir

*How 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.*

**O 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. English trad.

Melody harmonised by R Vaughan Williams 1872-1958

vs 3 and 4 J Cullen 1934-2022

Reading

***Joseph's Lullaby* – Ron Clug**

read by Pete Picton

Sleep now, little one,
I will watch while you and your mother sleep.
I wish I could do more.
This straw is not good enough for you.
Back in Nazareth I'll make a proper bed for you
of seasoned wood, smooth, strong, well-pegged.
A bed fit for a carpenter's son.
Just wait till we get back to Nazareth.
I'll teach you everything I know.
You'll learn to use the cedarwood, eucalyptus and fir.
You'll learn to use the drawshave, axe, and saw.
Your arms will grow strong, your hands rough – like
these. You will bear the pungent smell of new wood

and wear shavings and sawdust in your hair.
You'll be a man whose life centres
on hammer and nails and wood.
But for now,
sleep, little Jesus, sleep.

Choir Carol

***In dulci jubilo* – Robert Lucas de Pearsall**

*In dulci jubilo, (in sweet joy)
let us our homage show;
our heart's joy reclineth
in praeseptio (in a manger)
and like a bright star shineth,
matris in gremio. (in the mother's lap)
Alpha es et O! (Thou art Alpha and Omega)*

*O Jesu parvule! (O tiny Jesus)
I yearn for Thee alway!
Hear me, I beseech Thee,
O Puer optime! (O best of boys)
My prayer let it reach Thee,
O Princeps gloriae! (Prince of glory)
Trahe me post te! (draw me unto thee)*

*O Patris caritas, (O Father's caring)
O nati lenitas! (O newborn's mildness)
Deeply were we stained
per nostra crimina; (by our crimes)
but thou hast for us gained
coelorum gaudia. (heavenly joy)
O that we were there!*

*Ubi sunt gaudia, (where are joys)
if that they be not there?
There are Angels singing Nova cantica; (new songs)
and there the bells are ringing
in Regis curia. (in the King's court)
O that we were there!*

Words: 14th century German Carol

Reading

Luke 2: 8-20

read by Philip Tebb

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.

Thanks be to God.

Choir Carol

Alma redemptoris mater – Orlandus Lassus

*Alma redemptoris mater,
quae pervia caeli
porta manes,
et stella maris,
succurre cadenti surgere
qui curat populo.
Tu quae genuisti,
natura mirante,
tuum sanctum genitorem.
Virgo prius ac posterius,
Gabrielis ab ore peccatorum
illud Ave,
peccatorum miserere.*

Gracious mother of the redeemer,
you who remain the ever-open
gate of heaven,
and the star of the sea,
succour thy people
who fall but strive to rise again.
You who gave birth,
while nature marvelled,
to your holy creator.
A virgin before and after,
who heard that 'Ave' from the
mouth of Gabriel
have mercy on sinners.

Words: Compline Marian Anthem

Reading

Christmas 1653 – Anna Keay

from *The Restless Republic: Britain without a Crown* (London 2022)
read by Lesley-Ann Jones

Following the execution of King Charles I, the Puritans who came to power did their best to abolish Christmas, but with limited success. At Hunstanton Hall, home of the L'Estrange family, Christmas remained a hearty affair: roast beef, turkey, venison and goose were served, enriched with capers and olives, sugar and spices, and accompanied by the drinking of claret and sack. Beef was given out to the poor of the parish. Music was also an essential feature of the festivities: the men of the family were all accomplished musicians, and three generations of them played the viol.

The L'Estranges of Hunstanton Hall were not alone in celebrating the Christmas of 1653. Families up and down the country gathered to mark the ancient feast. The reality was that the Puritan government's attempt to stamp out the festivities of

the church year had been largely unsuccessful. Christmas, along with Easter and Whitsun, had been abolished as church festivals five years earlier, partly because the only holy day mentioned in the Bible was the Sabbath, and partly out of disapproval of the drinking and indulgence they involved. But removing the church services had done little to diminish the entertaining and eating, card playing and carol singing that characterized English Christmas celebrations. A pamphlet published in London in 1653 summed up the situation vividly: the bearded figure of Father Christmas arriving in England only to be turned away by the great men of London. But when he ventured out of the capital into the frosty villages of the countryside he was welcomed warmly. Country people, families of farmers and yeomen, beckoned him in to join them in eating meat and roast apples, singing carols, dancing, drinking and playing festive games.

Congregational Carol

**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!*

**Lo, within a manger lies
he who built the starry skies,
he who, throned in height sublime,
sits amid the cherubim!**

Hail thou ever-blessèd morn...

**Say, ye holy shepherds, say,
what your joyful news today;
wherefore have ye left your sheep
on the lonely mountain steep?**

Hail thou ever-blessèd morn...

**'As we watched at dead of night,
lo, we saw a wondrous light;
angels, singing "Peace on earth",
told us of a Saviour's birth.'**
Hail thou ever-blessèd morn...

**Sacred Infant, all divine,
what a tender love was thine,
thus to come from highest bliss
down to such a world as this!**
Hail thou ever-blessèd morn...

**Teach, O teach us, Holy Child,
by thy face so meek and mild,
teach us to resemble thee
in thy sweet humility:**
Hail thou ever-blessèd morn...

Words: Edward Caswall 1814-78
Tune: Humility (Oxford) by John Goss 1800-80
Descant: D Willcocks 1919-2015

Reading

***Behold, I Stand* – Gerard Kelly**
read by Angela Cova

When the night is deep
with the sense of Christmas
and expectancy hangs heavy
on every breath,
behold, I stand at the door and knock.
When the floor is knee deep
in discarded wrapping paper
and the new books are open at page one
and the new toys are already broken,
behold, I stand at the door and knock.
When the family is squashed
elbow to elbow
around the table

and the furious rush for food is over
and the only word that can describe the feeling
is full,
behold, I stand at the door and knock.
And when Christmas is over
and the television is silent
for the first time in two days
and who sent which card to whom
is forgotten until next year,
behold, I stand at the door.
And when the nation has finished celebrating
Christmas without Christ
a birthday
without a birth
the coming of a kingdom
without a King.
And when I am
Forgotten
Despised
Rejected
Crucified –
Behold, I stand.

Choir Carol

***Carol of the bells* – Mykola Leontovych**

*Hark how the bells,
sweet silver bells,
all seem to say,
throw cares away
Christmas is here,
bringing good cheer,
to young and old,
meek and the bold.*

*Ding dong ding dong
that is their song
with joyful ring
all caroling.
One seems to hear
words of good cheer
from everywhere
filling the air.*

*Oh how they pound,
raising the sound,
o'er hill and dale,
telling their tale.
Gaily they ring
while people sing
songs of good cheer,
Christmas is here.*

*Merry, Merry, Merry, Merry Christmas,
Merry, Merry, Merry, Merry Christmas.*

*On on they send,
on without end,
their joyful tone
to every home.
Ding dong ding... dong!*

Words: Adapted from Shchedrk, traditional Ukrainian
English translation by William Wilhousky

Reading Epilogue

from *The Meaning is in the waiting* – Paula Gooda
read by The Revd Canon Dr Alison Joyce

Many Advent wreaths have a fifth and final white candle, which is lit on Christmas Day and which symbolizes Jesus Christ, the one for whom Abraham and Sarah, the prophets, John the Baptist, Mary and indeed we, ourselves, have been waiting for so long.

It is in Jesus Christ that we discover a perfect fulfilment of

everything for which we have waited – as well as for those things for which we have not waited. Jesus brings both completion and surprise in our waiting, and points us forward to a life-long waiting that can only find fulfilment in the end of all things. Perhaps most surprising of all, however, is the discovery that the one for whom we wait has been present all along; silently waiting with us in joy as well as in sorrow, in delight as well as in agony, drawing us further into the glorious paradox of God, who summons us to wait for that which has already happened and to remember that which is still to come.

Choir Carol

***O magnum mysterium* – Francis Poulenc**

*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 new-born Lord
lying in a manger.
O blessed Virgin
whose womb was worthy
to carry our Lord
Jesus Christ.
Alleluia.

Words: Matin Responsory for Christmas Day

Prayers

The Revd Canon Dr Alison Joyce

Choir Carol

***Christmas Day 1666* – Bob Chilcott**

*Lay pretty long in bed, and then rise,
leaving my wife desirous to sleep,
having sat up till four this morning
seeing her maids make mince pies.*

*I go to church, where our parson Mills
made a good sermon.
Then home, and dined well on some good ribs of beef roasted
and mince pies;
only my wife, brother and Barker,
and plenty of good wine of my own;
and my heart full of true joy
and thanks to God Almighty
for the goodness of my condition at this day.*

Words: Samuel Pepys

Congregational Carol

**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, goodwill to men,
from heaven’s all-gracious King!’
the world in solemn stillness lay
to hear the angels sing.**

**Still 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.**

**Yet 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.**

**For 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: E H Sears 1810-1876
Tune: Noel, English traditional melody adapted by A Sullivan 1842-1900
Descant: D Willcocks 1919-2015

Organ Voluntary

Choral prelude 'In dulci jubilo' BWV 608 – Johann Sebastian Bach