

Christ Church, New Mill

Service of Readings and Carols

Sunday, December 17th 2006, 4.00pm.

Welcome to Christ Church, New Mill, and especially to this celebration of the Nativity of our Lord in words and music. You are invited to stand and join in the items marked "HYMN", and sit or kneel as appropriate for the other items. We hope you enjoy the service.

HYMN *(verse 1 sung as a 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.

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 meek and lowly
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.

For 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.

And 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.

Not 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: Cecil F. Alexander(1818-95) Music: H.J. Gauntlett (1805-76). Descant: Philip Ledger

CAROL: Wexford Carol (*arr. James W. Morgan*)

Good people all, this Christmas time, consider well and bear in mind,
What our good God for us has done in sending His beloved Son.

PRAYER

We meet to celebrate the coming of Christ into the world. The Word was made
flesh, and dwelt among us

And we beheld his glory.

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

(Silence is kept)

Lord of grace and truth, we confess our unworthiness to stand in your
presence as your children.

We have sinned:

Forgive and heal us.

The Virgin Mary accepted your call to be the mother of Jesus. Forgive
our disobedience to your will. We have sinned:

Forgive and heal us.

Your Son our Saviour was born in poverty in a manger.

Forgive our greed and rejection of your ways.

We have sinned:

Forgive and heal us.

The shepherds left their flocks to go to Bethlehem.

Forgive our self-interest and lack of vision.

We have sinned:

Forgive and heal us.

The wise men followed the star to find Jesus the king.

Forgive our reluctance to seek you.

We have sinned:

Forgive and heal us.

May the God of all healing and forgiveness draw us to himself that we may behold the glory of his Son, the Word made flesh, and be cleansed from all our sins, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

We say together:

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.

READING 1: Isaiah 11: 1-6, 9b Isaiah prophesies that Christ will bring peace.

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots: and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

HYMN:

O come, O come Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.

*Rejoice, rejoice! Immanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

O come, O come, Thou Lord of might
Who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times didst give the law
In cloud, and majesty, and awe.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save
And give them victory o'er the grave.

O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

O come, Thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.

READING 2: Luke 2: 1-7

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cxsar Augustus. that all the world should be taxed. 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 Judxa, 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.

CAROL: Joy lit her star

Joy lit her star that all might see under a soft blue canopy,
The fairest flower of purity, the little baby Jesus.

Though snow lay deep on field and wold, and winds blew bleak across the fold,
His glance drove out the bitter cold, this tender loving Jesus.

Harsh winter brought a summer flower, hate fled before his softening power,
A stable changed into a bower, when mankind welcomed Jesus.

(words Irene Gass; Music: George Rathbone)

HYMN:

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.

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 Immanuel!

(Words P. Brooks 1835-93; Music trad. Arr. R.V Williams, 1872-1958. Descant Thomas Armstrong 1898-)

READING 3: Jesus, born in poverty (by Douglas Kuiper)
(From *READING SERMON* by Rev. Douglas Kuiper Theme: “JESUS’ LOWLY BIRTH” <http://www.prca.org/sermons/luke2.6-7-kuiper.html>)

It is true that His being born in a cattle stall and laid in a manger indicates poverty; but it does not primarily indicate poverty. Joseph and Mary found shelter here not because they could not afford an inn, but because there was no room for them in the inn.

But the *clothes* in which He was wrapped! They were swaddling clothes. The English word “swaddling” indicates that these were clothes in which a baby was *wrapped*. But the Greek word translated “swaddling” indicates that these clothes were pieces of old castoff clothing which were cut up into strips, and wrapped around a baby. This surely was not the kind of clothing that a baby of rich parents would be wrapped in; he would be dressed with decent clothing. But Jesus was wrapped in rags. He was born poor; Joseph and Mary were poor.

This poverty of Jesus which was evident in His birth was an indication that He would be poor His whole life. Jesus never was rich in material goods. God saw to it that His earthly needs were always supplied; He was given food and drink, clothing and shelter. But God supplied Him with these gifts from day to day, not in abundance. Jesus Himself told His disciples, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Luke 9:58).

Jesus required His would-be disciples to notice His earthly poverty. Jesus spoke these words in answer to the statement of a man, “Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest” (verse 57). We are the disciples to whom Jesus speaks. We claim to follow Jesus. In following Jesus, we have gathered today to pay Him homage and commemorate His birth. Do you think it is a great thing to be Jesus’ disciples? Do you think we will share in His riches? Then we must remember that His riches are not material riches. Just as He was poor in respect of material things, so must we be ready to give up earthly riches to be His disciples.

CHOIR: His Dwelling

The Christchild had for dwelling a stable rough and bare,
No servants there to wait on him, no trappings costly, rare.
Oh! Is it right thae King of kings should go without so many things?

Yet in that dwelling lowly was love on every side,
In Mary’s soft caressing hands, in Joseph’s tender pride;
And so indeed the King of Kings had all the care that childhood brings.

My heart, although a place so small can be a palace fair,
Or garden where my Lord can tend his flowers, fragrant, rare,
Then touch my heart, O King of kings, until to thee alone it clings.
(Words: Irene Gass; Music: George Rathbone 1874-?)

READING 4: Luke 2: 8-16

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.

CAROL: The Shepherd's pipe carol

Going through the hills on a night all starry,

On the way to Bethlehem,

(Words & Music: John Rutter)

READING 5: The wise men are led by a star to Jesus Matt 2: 1-11

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea 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 Judea. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired 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.

CAROL: I saw three ships.

I saw three ships come sailing in, *on Christmas day, in the morning.*
And what was in those ships all three? ...
Our Saviour Christ and his Lady,...
Pray whither sailed those ships all three? ...
O they sailed into Bethlehem, ...
And all the bells on earth shall ring, ...
And all the angels in heaven shall sing
And all the souls on earth shall sing ...
Then let us all rejoice amain! ...
(*Words traditional; Music arr. Philip Ledger*)

READING 6: The Christmas Guest

Helen Steiner Rice (*from <http://www.theholidayzone.com/christmas/index.html>*)

It happened one day at the year's white end,
Two neighbors called on an old-time friend.
And they found his shop so meager and mean,
Made gay with a thousand boughs of green.

And Conrad was sitting with face a-shine,
When he suddenly stopped as he stitched a twine,
And said, "Old friends, at dawn today,
When the cock was crowing the night away,
The Lord appeared in a dream to me
And said, 'I am coming your guest to be.'
So I've been busy with feet astir,
Strewing my shop with branches of fir,
The table is spread and the kettle is shined
And over the rafters the holly is twined,
And now I will wait for my Lord to appear
And listen closely so I will hear
His step as He nears my humble place,
And I open the door and look in His face...."

So his friends went home and left Conrad alone,
For this was the happiest day he had known.
For long since his family had passed away
And Conrad had spent a sad Christmas Day.

But he knew with the Lord as his Christmas guest,
This Christmas would be the dearest and best,
And he listened with only joy in his heart.
And with every sound he would rise with a start
And look for the Lord to be standing there
In answer to his earnest prayer.

So he ran to the window after hearing a sound,
But all that he saw on the snow-covered ground
Was a shabby beggar whose shoes were torn
And all of his clothes were ragged and worn.

So Conrad was touched and went to the door

And he said, "Your feet must be frozen and sore,
And I have some shoes in my shop for you
And a coat that will keep you warmer, too."
So with grateful heart the man went away,
But as Conrad noticed the time of day.

He wondered what made the dear Lord so late
And how much longer he'd have to wait,
When he heard a knock and ran to the door,
But it was only a stranger once more,
A bent, old crone with a shawl of black,
A bundle of faggots piled on her back.

She asked for only a place to rest,
But that was reserved for Conrad's great Guest.
But her voice seemed to plead, "Don't send me away
Let me rest awhile on Christmas day."
So Conrad brewed her a steaming cup
And told her to sit at the table and sup.
But after she left he was filled with dismay,
For he saw that the hours were passing away
And the Lord had not come as He said He would,
And Conrad felt sure he had misunderstood.

When out of the stillness he heard a cry,
"Please help me and tell me where am I."
So again he opened his friendly door--
And stood disappointed as twice before,

It was only a child who had wandered away
And was lost from her family on Christmas Day. .
Again Conrad's heart was heavy and sad,
But he knew he should make this little child glad,
So he called her in and wiped her tears
And quieted her childish fears.
Then he led her back to her home once more
But as he entered his own darkened door,
He knew that the Lord was not coming today
For the hours of Christmas had passed away.

So he went to his room and knelt down to pray
And he said, "Dear Lord, why did you delay?
What kept You from coming to call on me?
For I wanted so much Your face to see...."

When soft in the silence a voice he heard,
"Lift up your head for I kept My word--

"Three times My shadow crossed your floor--
Three times I came to your lonely door--
For I was the beggar with bruised, cold feet,

I was the woman you gave to eat,
And I was the child on the homeless street."

CAROL: Here is the little door
Here is the little door, lift up the latch, oh lift!
We need not wander more but enter with our gift;
Our gift of finest gold, Gold that was never bought or sold;
Myrrh to be strewn about His bed;
incense in clouds about His head.
All for the child that stirs not in His sleep,
But holy slumber holds with ass and sheep.

Bend low about His bed, for each He has a gift;
See how His eyes awake, lift up your hands, O lift!
For gold, He gives a keen-edged sword
(Defend with it Thy little Lord!)
For incense smoke of battle red —
Myrrh for the honoured happy dead;
Gifts for His children, terrible and sweet,
Touched by such tiny hands and Oh such tiny feet.
(Words: Frances Chesterton; Music: Herbert Howells)

HYMN:

In the bleak midwinter 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 midwinter, 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 midwinter a stable-place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

Angels and archangels may have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air.
But His mother only, in her maiden bliss,

Worshipped the Belovèd with a kiss.

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.
(Words: Christina Rossetti 1830-91; Music: Gustav Holst

READING 7: Be joyful: Christ is born!

"Christ is born, glorify him!
Christ came from heaven,
welcome Him!
Christ is on earth, exalt!
Sing to the Lord all the earth,
Joyfully praise Him all you nations,
For He has become glorious!"

CAROL: Sir Christemas

Nowell, Nowell.

Who is there that singeth so, Nowell?

I am here, Sir Christemas.

Welcome, my Lord, Sir Christemas!

Welcome to all, both more and less, Come near. Nowell.

Dieu vous garde, beaux sieurs, tidings I you bring:

A maid hath borne a child full young, which causeth you to sing:

Nowell.

Christ is now born of a pure maid;

In an oxstall he is laid,

Wherefore sing we at a brayed: Nowell.

Buvez bien par toute la compagnie,

Make good cheer and be right merry,

And sing with us now joyfully, Nowell!

(Words anon. Music: William Mathias)

READING 8: The Christmas Gospel

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things

were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

HYMN:

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:

Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,

Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
Glory to God
In the highest:

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning,
Jesus, to Thee be glory given;
Word of the Father
Now in flesh appearing:

(Words & melody by J.F. Wade 1711-86)

COLLECT & BENEDICTION

Holy Jesus, to deliver us from the power of darkness you humbled yourself to be born among us and laid in a manger. Let the light of your love always shine in our hearts, and bring us at last to the joyful vision of your beauty, for you are now alive and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. **Amen**

May he who by his incarnation gathered into one
Things earthly and heavenly,
Bestow upon us the fullness of inward peace and goodwill;
And the blessing of God almighty,
The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
Be upon us and remain with us always. **Amen**

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 the angelic host proclaim,
'Christ is born in Bethlehem.'

Hark! the herald angels sing:
'Glory to the new-born King!'

Christ, 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 Immanuel.

Hark! the herald angels sing:
'Glory to the new-born King.'

Hail 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 men 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 by C. Wesley 1707-88; Music by Mendelssohn 1809-47)

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