



CHESTER
CATHEDRAL

Nave Choir Carol Service

10th December 2023
3.00pm

Throughout the service, please stand (if able) for the congregational carols and sit for the choir anthems, readings, poems and prayers.

Before the service, Daniel Mathieson, Head of Music Outreach and Assistant Organist, plays

Vom Himmel Hoch BWV 700

J S Bach 1685-1750

Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen

Johannes Brahms 1833-1897

Congregational Carol

Please stand, if able, to sing together.

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:

Child, 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?

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

*Latin 18th century,
tr Frederick Oakeley 1802-80*

*ADESTE FIDELES
J. F. Wade 1711-86*

Welcome and opening prayer

The Dean welcomes the congregation and concludes by praying

Lord Jesus Christ,
your birth at Bethlehem
draws us to kneel in wonder
at heaven touching earth:
accept our heartfelt praise
as we worship you,
our Saviour and our eternal God.
Amen.

Choir Carol

Drop down ye heavens from above,
and let the skies pour down righteousness.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people;
my salvation shall not tarry.

I have blotted out as a thick cloud,
thy transgressions:

fear not, I will save thee;

for I am the Lord thy God,

the holy one of Israel, thy redeemer.

Drop down ye heavens from above,
and let the skies pour down righteousness.

Text from the Advent Prose

Judith Weir b.1954

Bible reading

Read by The Revd Canon Rosie Woodall

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.'

All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.' When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took her as his wife.

Matthew 1:18-24

Thanks be to God.

Choir Carol

This Babe to us that now is born,
wonderful works he hath y-wrought,
he would not loss what was forlorn,
but boldly again it brought;

*And thus it is forsooth y-wis,
he asketh nought but that is his.*

Now may we singen as it is.

Quod puer natus est nobis.

This bargain loved he right well,
the price was high and bought full dear.
Who would suffer and for us feel
as did that Prince withouten peer?

His ransom for us hath y-paid;
good reason have we to be his.
Be mercy asked and he be prayed,
who may deserve the heavenly bliss.

To some purpose God made man;
I trust well to salvation.
What was his blood that from him ran
but fence against damnation?

Almighty God in Trinity,
thy mercy we pray with whole heart,
thy mercy may all woe make fell
and dangerous dread from us to start.

Poem **Christmas Carol**

Read by The Revd Canon Jane Brooke

The kings they came from out the south,
All dressed in ermine fine;
They bore him gold and chrysoprase,
And gifts of precious wine.

The shepherds came from out the north,
Their coats were brown and old;
They brought him little new-born lambs—
They had not any gold.

The wise men came from out the east,
And they were wrapped in white;
The star that led them all the way
Did glorify the night.

The angels came from heaven high,
And they were clad with wings;
And lo, they brought a joyful song
The host of heaven sings.

The kings they knocked upon the door,
The wise men entered in,
The shepherds followed after them
To hear the song begin.

The angels sang through all the night
Until the rising sun,
But little Jesus fell asleep
Before the song was done.

Sara Teasdale

Please stand to sing.

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 heav’n’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 hov’ring wing,
and ever o’er its Babel sounds
the blessed 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.

Edmund Sears 1810-76

NOEL

Trad; ad. Arthur Sullivan 1842-1900

Please sit.

Bible reading

Read by The Revd Jonathon Green

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 Joseph and Mary 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.

Luke 2: 1 – 7

Thanks be to God.

Choir Carol

Ding dong! merrily on high
in heav'n the bells are ringing.

Ding dong! verily the sky
is riv'n with angel singing:

Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

E'en so here below, below
let steeple bells be swungen,
and i-o, i-o, i-o

by priest and people sungen:

Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

Pray ye dutifully prime
your matin chime, ye ringers.
May ye beautifully rime
your evetime song, ye singers:

Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

G.R. Woodward 1848–1934

Jehan Tabourot 1519–1593
arr. David Willcocks 1919–2015

Poem

Christmas

Read by The Revd Canon Jane Brooke

The bells of waiting Advent ring,
The Tortoise stove is lit again
And lamp-oil light across the night
Has caught the streaks of winter rain

In many a stained-glass window sheen
From Crimson Lake to Hookers Green.

The holly in the windy hedge
And round the Manor House the yew
Will soon be stripped to deck the ledge,
The altar, font and arch and pew,
So that the villagers can say
'The church looks nice' on Christmas Day.

Provincial Public Houses blaze,
Corporation tramcars clang,
On lighted tenements I gaze,
Where paper decorations hang,
And bunting in the red Town Hall
Says 'Merry Christmas to you all'.

And London shops on Christmas Eve
Are strung with silver bells and flowers
As hurrying clerks the City leave
To pigeon-haunted classic towers,
And marbled clouds go scudding by
The many-steepled London sky.

And girls in slacks remember Dad,
And oafish louts remember Mum,
And sleepless children's hearts are glad.
And Christmas-morning bells say 'Come!'
Even to shining ones who dwell
Safe in the Dorchester Hotel.

And is it true? And is it true,
This most tremendous tale of all,

Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,
A Baby in an ox's stall ?
The Maker of the stars and sea
Become a Child on earth for me ?

And is it true? For if it is,
No loving fingers tying strings
Around those tissueed fripperies,
The sweet and silly Christmas things,
Bath salts and inexpensive scent
And hideous tie so kindly meant,

No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare -
That God was man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.

John Betjeman 1906-84

Congregational Carol

Please stand.

God rest you merry, gentlemen,
let nothing you dismay,
for Jesus Christ our Saviour
was born on Christmas Day,
to save us all from Satan's power
when we were gone astray:

*O tidings of comfort and joy,
comfort and joy!*

O tidings of comfort and joy!

From God our heav'nly 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:

Choir only

But when to Bethlehem they came,
whereat this infant lay,
they found him in a manger,
where oxen feed on hay;
his mother Mary kneeling,
unto the Lord did pray:

All

Now 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 others doth deface:

*O tidings of comfort and joy,
comfort and joy!*

O tidings of comfort and joy!

English trad.

Please sit.

Choir carol

What sweeter music can we bring
than a carol, for to sing
the birth of this our heavenly King?
Awake the voice! Awake the string!
Dark and dull night, fly hence away,
and give the honour to this day,
that sees December turned to May.

Why does the chilling winter's morn
smile, like a field beset with corn?
Or smell like a meadow newly-shorn,
thus, on the sudden? Come and see
the cause, why things thus fragrant be:
'tis he is born, whose quickening birth
gives life and lustre, public mirth,
to heaven, and the under-earth.

We see him come, and know him ours,
who, with his sunshine and his showers,
turns all the patient ground to flowers.

The darling of the world is come, and fit it is,
we find a room to welcome him.
The nobler part of all the house here,
is the heart, which we will give him; and
bequeath this holly, and this ivy wreath,
to do him honour, who's our King,
and Lord of all this revelling.

What sweeter music can we bring,
than a carol for to sing
the birth of this our heavenly King?

Robert Herrick 1591-1674

John Rutter b.1945

Bible reading

Read by The Revd Canon Rosie Woodall

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.

Luke 2: 8-16

Thanks be to God.

Choir Carol

A babe is born all of a may,
to bring salvation unto us.
To him we sing both night and day.
Veni Creator Spiritus.

At Bethlehem, that blessed place,
the child of bliss now born he was;
and him to serve God give us grace,
O lux beata Trinitas.

There came three kings out of the East,
to worship the King that is so free,
with gold and myrrh and frankincense,
A solis ortus cardine.

The angels came down with one cry,
a fair song that night sung they
in worship of that child:
Gloria tibi Domine.

A babe is born all of a may,
to bring salvation unto us.
To him we sing both night and day.
Veni Creator Spiritus. Noel!

William Mathias 1934-92

Prayers

Led by The Dean; ends with The 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.**

Congregational Carol

Please stand to sing.

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!”*

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 Emmanuel:

*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 man no more may die,
born to raise the sons of earth,
born to give us second birth.

*Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new born King!”*

Charles Wesley 1707-88

MENDELSSOHN

Felix Mendelssohn 1809-47

Please remain standing.

Blessing

The Dean says

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.

Voluntary

Lobt Gott, ihr Christen allzugleich (Op.
78/12)

Sigfrid Karg-Elert 1877-1933

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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