



CHESTER  
CATHEDRAL

# **Service of Nine Lessons and Carols**

**23<sup>rd</sup> December 2023  
6.00pm**

**24<sup>th</sup> December 2023  
3.00pm**

**with Chester Cathedral Choir  
directed by Philip Rushforth,  
Organist and Master of the Choristers**

# WELCOME

We welcome you to Chester Cathedral!  
It is a place where the mission of the church to proclaim God's love is central, and your welcome presence here for worship helps to strengthen this vital act of witness.

We're a paperless Cathedral and are working environmentally to save paper. The service can be downloaded to your device using the QR code at the back of the nave, or by visiting [Services - Chester Cathedral](#). Carols, readings and responses will be presented on the screens.

Throughout the service, please stand (if you are able to do so) for the congregational carols and sit for the choir carols, readings, poems and prayers.

# COLLECTION

The Cathedral costs around £6,000 a day to keep open. We invite you to give generously to ensure our future.

A retiring collection will be taken after the service; donations can otherwise be left with cash or using the

**Contactless Donation Plates.**

A sidesperson can help you with this.

**Via the Cathedral Website**

[www.chestercathedral.com/donate](http://www.chestercathedral.com/donate)

We need your help to make sure that services like this one can continue and that we can keep the doors open for everyone. Thank you for your generous contributions.

# BEFORE THE SERVICE

*Daniel Mathieson, Head of Music Outreach  
and Assistant Organist, plays*

Fantasia in G major 'Pièce d'Orgue' BWV 572  
*J.S. Bach 1675-1750*

Pastorella BWV 590 *J.S. Bach*

La Nativité (from Poèmes évangéliques)  
*Jean Langlais 1907-91*

# Congregational Carol

*The service will begin when the Choir and Clergy enter the Quire. When you hear a bell sound, please stand in silence for the beginning of our first carol.*

## *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.

## *Choir*

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.

## *All*

And 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.

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 we see him: but in heaven,  
set at God's right hand on high,  
where like stars his children crowned,  
all in white shall wait around.

*C.F. Alexander 1818-95*

*IRBY*

*H.J. Gauntlett 1805-76*

## **Welcome and bidding prayer**

*Please be seated. The Very Revd Dr Tim  
Stratford, Dean of Chester, says*

I welcome you, on behalf of all of us here  
at Chester Cathedral.

We have come together as the family of God, in our Father's presence, to celebrate the great festival of Christmas. In this service we hear and receive the good news of the birth of Christ and we offer to God our thanksgiving in the joyful singing of carols.

As we gather together in the name of Christ, we pray for the world he came to save:

for the Church, that it may be enabled in our generation to surrender anew to God's holy Wisdom, and bear the good news of God's love to a needy world;

for the world, which is already Christ's, that all its peoples may recognize their responsibility for its future, and may be inspired by the message of Christmas to work together for the establishment of justice, freedom and peace everywhere;

for all in special need, the sick, the anxious, the lonely, the fearful and the bereaved, that the peace and light of the Christ-child may bring hope and healing to all who sit in darkness.

We commend all whom we love, or who have asked for our prayers, to the unfailing

mercy of our heavenly Father, and say together, as Christ himself 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.**

## **Choir Carol**

Masters in this hall, hear ye news today  
brought from oversea and ever I you pray:

*Nowell! Nowell! Nowell! Nowell, sing we clear!*

*Holpen are all folk on earth,*

*born is God's son so dear:*

*Nowell! Nowell! Nowell! Nowell, sing we loud!*

*God today hath poor folk raised*

*and cast a-down the proud.*

Going o'er the hills,

through the milk-white snow,

heard I ewes bleat while the wind did blow:



Shepherds many an one sat among the sheep,  
no man spake more word  
than they had been asleep:

Quoth I, 'Fellows mine, why this guise sit ye?  
Making but dull cheer,  
shepherds though ye be?

Shepherds should of right  
leap and dance and sing,  
thus to see ye sit is a right strange thing':

Quoth these fellows then,  
'To Bethlem town we go,  
to see a mighty lord lie in manger low':

'How name ye this lord,  
shepherds?' then said I,  
'Very God', they said,  
'come from heaven high'.

This is Christ the Lord, masters be ye glad!  
Christmas is come in,  
and no folk should be sad:

*Nowell! Nowell! Nowell! Nowell, sing we clear!  
Holpen are all folk on earth,  
born is God's son so dear:*

*Nowell! Nowell! Nowell! Nowell, sing we loud!  
God today hath poor folk raised  
and cast a-down the proud.*

*William Morris 1834-96    Marin Marais 1656-1728  
arr. Jerrick Cavagnaro b.1996*

# First Lesson

*On 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> Dec, read by a chorister*

They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?' He said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.' He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.' Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent tricked me, and I ate.' The Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.

*Genesis 3: 8-14*

Thanks be to God.

# Choir Carol

Adam lay ybounden, bounden in a bond;  
four thousand winter thought he not too long.  
And all was for an apple,  
an apple that he took.  
As clerkes finden written in their book.  
Ne had the apple taken been,  
the apple taken been,  
ne had never our Lady, a-been heaven's queen.  
Blessed be the time that apple taken was!  
Therefore we moun singen Deo gratias!

*Anon. 15<sup>th</sup> cent.*

*Howard Skempton b.1947*

## Second Lesson

*On 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec, read by The Venerable Dr Mike Gilbertson, Archdeacon of Chester*

*On 24<sup>th</sup> Dec, read by CWO Shannon Baldwin, Lord Lieutenant's Cadet*

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.

*Isaiah 9: 2, 6-7*

Thanks be to God.

## **Choir Carol**

Whence is that goodly fragrance flowing,  
stealing our senses all away?

Never the like did come a-blowing,  
shepherds, in flow'ery fields in May,  
whence is that goodly fragrance flowing,  
stealing our senses all away?

What is that light so brilliant, breaking  
here in the night across our eyes?

Never so bright, the daystar waking,  
started to climb the morning skies!

What is that light so brilliant, breaking  
here in the night across our eyes?

Bethlehem! There in manger lying,  
find your Redeemer, haste away,  
run ye with eager footsteps hieing!  
Worship the Saviour born today.  
Bethlehem! There in manger lying,  
find your Redeemer, haste away.

Praise to the Lord of all creation,  
glory to God the fount of grace;  
may peace abide in ev'ry nation,  
goodwill in men of every race.

Praise to the Lord of all creation,  
glory to God the fount of grace.

*French trad.  
arr. David Willcocks 1919-2015*

## **Third Lesson**

*On 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec, read by Cllr Sheila Little, Lord  
Mayor of Chester*

*On 24<sup>th</sup> Dec, read by Dennis Dunn MBE JP  
DL, High Sheriff of Cheshire*

A shoot shall come out from the stock of  
Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his  
roots.

The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might,  
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of  
the Lord.

His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,  
or decide by what his ears hear;  
but with righteousness he shall judge the  
poor,

and decide with equity for the meek of  
the earth;  
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his  
mouth, and with the breath of his lips he  
shall kill the wicked.

Righteousness shall be the belt around his  
waist,

and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

The wolf shall live with the lamb,  
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
the calf and the lion and the fatling  
together,

and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze,  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

The nursing child shall play over the hole  
of the asp,

and the weaned child shall put its hand  
on the adder's den.

They will not hurt or destroy

on all my holy mountain;

for the earth will be full of the knowledge  
of the Lord

as the waters cover the sea.

*Isaiah 11: 1-9*

Thanks be to God.

# Choir Carol

*A Rose e'er blooming, a lovely Rose.*

Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming,  
from tender root hath sprung!  
Of Jesse's lineage coming  
as men of old have sung.  
Brought forth a flower bright,  
amid the cold of winter,  
and in the dark midnight.

*A Rose e'er blooming, a lovely Rose.*

The Rose, which I am singing,  
whereof Isaiah told,  
is Mary, purest maiden,  
who bears the holy child.  
At God's eternal will,  
she bore to us a Saviour,  
yet stays a virgin still.

O flower, whose fragrance tender  
with sweetness fills the air,  
dispel in glorious splendour  
the darkness everywhere.  
True man, yet very God,  
from sin and death now save us,  
and share our ev'ry load.

*A Rose e'er blooming.*

*Isa. 11:1, Isa. 35:1-2, Luke 1-2  
Matt 2, John 1*

*ES IST EIN ROS  
arr. David Blackwell b.1961*

# Congregational Carol

*Please 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 to-night.

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 only*

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.



*All*

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.

*Phillips Brooks 1835-93*

*FOREST GREEN*

*Ralph Vaughan Williams 1872-1958*

*Please be seated.*

## **Fourth Lesson**

*On 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec, read by Dr Anna Sung, Senior Lecturer in Accounting and Finance at the University of Chester and member of Chester Cathedral Chapter*

*On 24<sup>th</sup> Dec, read by The Revd Canon Rosie Woodall, Canon for Worship and Spirituality*

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; and he shall be the one of peace.

*Micah 5: 2-5a*

Thanks be to God.

## **Choir Carol**

Now the holly bears a berry  
as white as the milk,  
and Mary bore Jesus,  
who was wrapped up in silk:  
*and Mary bore Jesus Christ  
our Saviour for to be,  
and the first tree in the greenwood,  
it was the holly!*

Now the holly bears a berry  
as green as the grass,  
and Mary bore Jesus,  
who died on the cross:

Now the holly bears a berry  
as black as the coal,  
and Mary bore Jesus,  
who died for us all:

Now the holly bears a berry,  
as blood is it red,  
then trust we our Saviour,  
who rose from the dead:

*Cornish trad. arr. John Rutter b.1945*

## **Choir Carol**

Cradled in a manger, swaddled on the hay;  
Saviour of the world,  
you are new-born for us today.  
Shepherds on the hillsides, angels in the sky,  
all of God's creation  
throng to see you where you lie.  
Ox and ass adore you,  
wise men come from far;  
round this lowly stable shines  
the glory of your star.

Light is all around you, shining from above;  
you are born to bring our world  
new innocence and love.  
Born to share our sorrows,  
born to feel our pain,  
born to give you life for us,  
that we may live again.  
Cradled in a manger, swaddled on the hay;  
Lord of all the world,  
you are new-born for us today.  
Saviour of the world,  
you are new-born for us today.

*Giles Swayne b.1946*

## **Fifth Lesson**

*On 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec, read by Sam Dixon, MP for Chester*

*On 24<sup>th</sup> Dec, read by Lady Redmond MBE, HM Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire*

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him 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 ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' 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 holy;

he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

Luke 1: 26-38

Thanks be to God.

## Choir Carol

*Angelus ad virginem subintrans in conclave, virginis formidinem demulcens, inquit, 'Ave! Ave regina virginum; coeli terraeque Dominum concipies et paries intacta salutem hominum; tu porta coeli facta, medela criminum'.*

*'Quomodo conciperem quae virum non cognovi? Qualiter infringerem quod firma mente vovi? Spiritus Sancti gratia perficiet haec omnia; ne timeas, sed gaudeas, segura quod castimonia manebit in te pura Dei potentia'.*

*Ad haec virgo nobilis respondens inquit ei: 'Ancilla sum humilis omnipotentis Dei. Tibi coelesti nuntio, tanti secreti conscio, consentiens, et cupiens videre factum quod audio; parata sum parere, Dei consilio'.*

*Eia mater Domini, quae pacem redidisti  
angelis et homini, cum Christum genuisti; tuum  
exora filium ut se nobis propitium  
exhibeat, et deleat peccata: praestans auxilium  
vita frui beata post hoc exilium.*

Gabriel to Mary came, and entered at her dwelling, with his salutation glad her maiden fears dispelling, “All hail, thou queen of virgins bright! God, Lord of earth and heaven’s height, thy very Son, shall soon be born in pureness, the Saviour of mankind. Thou art the gate of heaven bright, the sinners’ healer kind.

‘How could I a mother be, that am to man a stranger? How should I my strong resolve, my solemn vows endanger?’ “Pow’r from the Holy Ghost on high shall bring to pass this mystery. Then have no fear: be of good cheer, believing that still thy chastity in God’s almighty keeping shall all unsullied be.

Then to him the maid replied, with noble mien supernal “Lo! The humble handmaid I, of God the Lord eternal! With thee, bright messenger of heav’n, by whom this wondrous news is giv’n, I well agree and long to see fulfilled thy gracious prophecy. As God my Lord doth will it, so be it unto me!”

*14th century Irish carol  
arr. David Willcocks 1919-2015*

## Sixth Lesson

*On 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec, read by HHJ Steven Everett, The Honorary Recorder of Chester*

*On 24<sup>th</sup> Dec, read by The Revd Canon Jane Brooke, Vice-Dean and Canon Missioner*

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

Lully, lullay, thou little tiny child,  
by by, lully, lullay,  
lullay thou little tiny child,  
by by lully, lullay.

O sisters too, how may we do,  
for to preserve this day  
this poor youngling, for whom we sing?  
By by, lully, lullay.

Herod, the king, in his raging,  
charged he hath this day  
his men of might in his own sight,  
all children young to slay.

Then woe is me, poor child for thee!  
And ever mourn and say,  
for thy parting nor say nor sing  
by by, lully, lullay.

*from the Pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors 16<sup>th</sup> C*  
*arr. Brittney Boykin b. 1989*



# Congregational Carol

*Please stand to sing.*

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:

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

*O tidings of comfort and joy!*

The shepherds at those tidings  
rejoiced much in mind,  
and left their flocks a-feeding  
in tempest, storm and wind,  
and went to Bethlehem straightway  
this blessed Babe to find:

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

*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:

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

*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 be seated.*

## Seventh Lesson

*On 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec, read by The Revd Jane Proudfoot, Interim Assistant Archdeacon of Macclesfield*

*On 24<sup>th</sup> Dec, read by Jo Sykes, Chair of the Nominations Committee, Chester Cathedral*

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**

Sleep, my Jesus, sleep,  
Jesus, fall asleep,  
I will rock you all night long,  
I will sing a little song,  
lully, rock-a-bye, lully.

Sleep, my baby, sleep,  
rest your head in sleep,  
in the arms of Mary mild,  
who enfolds her little child,  
lully, rock-a-bye lully.

Sleep, my poor one, sleep,  
fold your arms and sleep,  
here comes Joseph on his feet,  
bringing bread for you to eat,  
lully, rock-a-bye, lully.

Sleep, my darling, sleep,  
close your eyes and sleep,  
do not ask about tomorrow,  
future pain and future sorrow,  
lully, rock-a-bye, lully.

Sleep, my Jesus, sleep,  
take my heart and sleep,  
you bring peace to us on earth,  
and in heaven by your birth,  
lully, rock-a-bye, lully.

Sleep, my Jesus, sleep,  
lully, rock-a-bye, lully.

*Ukrainian trad. carol*  
*arr. Philip Rushforth b.1972*

## Choir Carol

Going through the hills on a night all starry,  
on the way to Bethlehem.

Far away I heard a shepherd boy piping,  
on the way to Bethlehem.

*Angels in the sky brought this message nigh; dance  
and sing for joy that Christ the new-born King is  
come to bring us peace on earth and he's lying  
cradled there at Bethlehem.*

'Tell me, shepherd boy piping tunes so  
merrily, on the way to Bethlehem.

Who will hear your tunes on these hills so  
lonely on the way to Bethlehem?'

*Angels in the sky brought this message nigh:  
'Dance and sing for joy that Christ the new-born  
King is come to bring us peace on earth and he's  
lying cradled there at Bethlehem.'*

‘None may hear my pipes on these hills so  
lonely on the way to Bethlehem.  
But a King will hear me play sweet lullabies  
when I get to Bethlehem’.

*Angels in the sky came down from on high,  
hovered o’er the manger where the babe was  
lying, cradled in the arms of his mother Mary,  
sleeping now at Bethlehem.*

‘Where is this new King, shepherd boy piping  
merrily, is he there at Bethlehem?’

‘I will find him soon by the star shining brightly  
in the sky o’er Bethlehem’.

*Angels in the sky brought this message nigh:  
‘Dance and sing for joy that Christ the new-born  
King is come to bring us peace on earth and he’s  
lying cradled there at Bethlehem’.*

‘May I come with you, shepherd boy piping  
merrily, come with you to Bethlehem?  
Pay my homage too at the new King’s cradle,  
is it far to Bethlehem?’

*Angels in the sky brought this message nigh:  
‘Dance and sing for joy that Christ the infant King  
is born this night in lowly stable yonder, born for  
you at Bethlehem’.*

*John Rutter b. 1945*

# **Eighth Lesson**

*On 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec, read by Dr Martin Smith,  
member of Chester Cathedral Chapter*

*On 24<sup>th</sup> Dec, read by Andy Glover, Minister of  
Hoole Baptist Church*

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.

*Matthew 2: 1-11*

Thanks be to God.

## **Choir Carol**

Three Kings from Persian lands afar,  
to Jordan follow the pointing star,  
and this the quest of the travellers three,  
where the new-born King of the Jews may  
be. Full royal gifts they bear for the King;  
gold, incense, myrrh are their offering.

*How brightly shines the morning star!  
With grace and truth from heav'n afar,  
our Jesse tree now bloweth.*



The star shines out with a steadfast ray;  
the kings to Bethlehem make their way,  
and there in worship they bend the knee,  
as Mary's child in her lap they see.

Their royal gifts they show to the King;  
gold, incense, myrrh are their offering.

*Of Jacob's stem and David's line,  
for thee my Bridegroom, King divine,  
my soul with love o'erfloweth.*

Thou child of man, lo, to Bethlehem  
the kings are trav'ling, travel with them!  
The star of mercy, the star of grace,  
shall lead thy heart to its resting place.  
Gold, incense, myrrh thou canst not bring;  
offer thy heart to the infant King, offer thy  
heart!

*Thy word, Jesu, inly feeds us, rightly leads us,  
life bestowing. Praise, O praise such love  
o'erflowing.*

*Peter Cornelius 1824-74*

*Please stand.*

## **Ninth reading**

*On 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> Dec, read by The Dean*

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.

*John 1: 1-14*

Thanks be to God.

*Please remain standing.*

## Congregational carol

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 heav’n adored,  
Christ the everlasting Lord,  
late in time behold him come  
offspring of a virgin’s womb:  
veiled in flesh the Godhead see,  
hail th’incarnate Deity!  
Pleased as man with man to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel.

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.

Charles Wesley 1707-88

MENDELSSOHN

Felix Mendelssohn 1809-47

*Please remain standing.*

## **Blessing**

*On 23<sup>rd</sup> December, The Bishop of Birkenhead says*

*On 24<sup>th</sup> December, The Bishop of Stockport 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.**

*Please remain standing while the choir and clergy leave, and then sit for the organ voluntary, played by Alexander Lanigan-Palotai, Sub-Organist.*

## **Voluntary**

Sortie on 'In dulci jubilo'

*David Briggs b.1962*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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