

First hymn:

Christians, awake! salute the happy morn
whereon the Saviour of the world was born;
rise to adore the mystery of love
which hosts of angels chanted from above;
with them the joyful tidings first begun
of God incarnate and the Virgin's Son.

Then to the watchful shepherds it was told,
who heard the angelic herald's voice, 'Behold,
I bring you tidings of a Saviour's birth
to you and all the nations on the earth:
this day hath God fulfilled his promised word,
this day is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord.'

He spake; and straightway that celestial choir
in hymns of joy, unknown before, conspire:
the praises of redeeming love they sang,
and heaven's whole orb with alleluias rang:
God's highest glory was their anthem still,
peace on the earth, and unto men goodwill!

To Bethl'em straight the enlightened shepherds ran,
to see the wonder God had wrought for man,
and found, with Joseph and the blessed Maid,
her Son, the Saviour, in a manger laid;
joyful, the wondrous story they proclaim –
the first apostles of his infant fame.

Like Mary let us ponder in our mind
God's wondrous love in saving lost mankind;
trace we the babe, who hath retrieved our loss,
from his poor manger to his bitter cross;
Then may we hope, angelic hosts among,
to sing, redeemed, a glad triumphal song.

John Byrom 1691-1763

Tune Yorkshire

Carol *(after first reading)*

The Choir will sing 'Away in a Manger'

Offertory hymn:

While shepherds watched their flocks
by night,
all seated on the ground,
the angel of the Lord came down,
and glory shone around.

'Fear not', said he (for mighty dread
had seized their troubled mind);
'Glad tidings of great joy I bring
to you and all mankind.

'To you in David's town this day
is born of David's line
a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;
and this shall be the sign:

The heavenly babe you there shall find
to human view displayed,
all meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
and in a manger laid.'

Thus spake the seraph; and forthwith
appeared a shining throng
of angels praising God, who thus
addressed their joyful song:

'All glory be to God on high,
and to the earth be peace;
good will henceforth from heaven
to men

begin and never cease.'

Nahum Tate 1652-1715

Tune: Winchester Old

Final Hymn

Ding dong! merrily
in heav'n the bell
Ding dong! verily
is riv'n with ange

Gloria! Hosanna in excelsis

E'en so here bells
let steeple bells tinkle
and i-o, i-o, i-o,
by priest and people

Pray you, dutifully prime
your matin chime, ye ringers;
may you beautifully rhyme
your evetime song, ye singers.

G R Woodward 1848-1934

Tune 16th century French carol