

First hymn:

Once in royal David's city,
stood 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 mean and lowly
lived on earth our saviour holy.

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

C.F. Alexander (1818-95)

Tune: Irby

Carol *(after first reading)*

The Choir will sing 'What child is this'

Offertory hymn:

In the bleak mid-winter
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 mid-winter, 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 mid-winter
a stable-place sufficed
the Lord God almighty, Jesus Christ.

Enough for him, whom cherubim
worship night and day,
a breast full of milk,
and a manger full of hay:
enough for him, whom angels
fall down before,
the ox and ass and camel which
adore

Final Hymn

Of the Father's heart begotten,
ere the world from chaos rose,
he is Alpha: from that Fountain
all that is and hath been flows;
he is Omega of all things
yet to come the mystic Close,
evermore and evermore.

O how blest that wondrous birthday,
when the Maid the curse retrieved,
brought to birth mankind's salvation,
by the Holy Ghost conceived;
and the Babe, the world's Redeemer,
in her loving arms received,
evermore and evermore.

Angels and archangels
may have gathered there,
cherubim and seraphim
thronged the air -
but only his mother
in her maiden bliss
worshipped the beloved 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.

Christina Rossetti 1830-94

Tune: Cranham

This is he, whom seer and sybil
sang in ages long gone by;
this is he of old revealed
in the page of prophecy.
Lo! he comes, the promised Saviour;
let the world his praises cry!
evermore and evermore.

Sing, ye heights of heav'n, his praises;
angels and Archangels sing!
wheresoe'er ye be, ye faithful,
let your joyous anthems ring,
ev'ry tongue his name confessing,
countless voices answering,
evermore and evermore.

Prudentius (b.348) Tune: Piae Cantiones