

First Hymn

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 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.

Unto us a boy is born!
King of all creation,
came he to a world forlorn,
the Lord of every nation.

Cradled in a stall was he
with sleepy cows and asses;
but the very beasts could see
that he all men surpasses.

Herod then with fear was filled:

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

After the Reading

Now may Mary's son, who came
so long ago to love us,
lead us all with hearts aflame
unto the joys above us.

Omega and Alpha he!
Let the organ thunder,
while the choir with peals of glee
doth rend the air asunder.

*Latin 15th Century trans Percy Dearmer 1867-1936
Tune: Puer Nobis*

'A prince', he said, 'in Jewry!'
and all the little boys he killed
at Bethlem in his fury.

Second 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.

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

Communion Hymn

What child is this, who laid to rest

on Mary's lap is sleeping?
whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
while shepherds watch are keeping?
this, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds worship and angels sing:
haste, haste to bring him praise
the babe, the son of Mary.

Why lies he in such mean estate,
where ox and ass are feeding?
come, have no fear, God's son is here,
his love all loves exceeding:
nails, spear, shall pierce him through,
the cross be borne for me, for you:
hail, hail, the Saviour comes,
the babe, the son of Mary.

So bring him incense, gold and myrrh,
all tongues and peoples own him,
the King of kings salvation brings,
let every heart enthrone him:
raise, raise your song on high
while Mary sings a lullaby,
joy, joy, for Christ is born,
the babe, the son of Mary.

W. Chatterton Dix 1837-98
Greensleeves

Tune:

Of the Father's heart begotten,
ere the world from chaos rose,

Final Hymn
This is he, whom seer and sybil
sang in ages long gone by;
this is he of old revealed
in the page of prophecy.

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.

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