



The Parish of St Mary, Portsea



Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

Friday 22nd December 2023
7pm



Welcome to St Mary's

Welcome to St Mary's for this service of Readings and Carols for Christmas. It is a special pleasure to welcome any visitors this evening.

Tonight's service follows the traditional pattern of prayers, lessons and music made popular by Kings College Cambridge. The service has its origins, however, far from Cambridge: in 1880 E. W. Benson, the then Bishop of Truro, drew up a Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, based on ancient sources, for use on Christmas Eve in the wooden shed which served as his cathedral. In 1918 this was adapted for use in the chapel of Kings College, Cambridge, by its Dean, Eric Milner-White, who also wrote the well-known Bidding Prayer. The service is an extended meditation on the prophecy of the coming of the Christ-child and a narration of the events of his birth. Once again, we enter into the familiar story of Christmas: and are invited hear again the song of the Angels, share in the wonder of the Shepherds, and resolve to be as persistent as the Magi. We hope that through prayer, reading and music you will share in something of the joy and peace that Jesus' birth brings to the world.

The building is equipped with a hearing loop system, to take advantage of this please switch your hearing device to the "T" position. Toilets are to be found in under the tower. Large print copies of this order of service are available.



At the start of the service, the Choir sings the carol:

Silent Night – Franz Gruber (1787-1863)
arr. Barry Rose (b. 1934)

Please stand to sing:

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.*

**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.**

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.*

**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.**

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.**

**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.**

Words: Cecil Alexander (1818-95)

Tune: Irby H. Gauntlett (1805-76) arr. A. H. Mann, Rick Erickson
& David Willcocks

Please remain standing for the **BIDDING PRAYER AND WELCOME**

Please Sit

The Choir sings

Up Good Christen Folk and Listen – melody from
Pie Cantiones (1582) Harmonised G. R. Woodward

READING ONE

God announces in the Garden of Eden that the seed of woman shall
bruise the serpent's head. Genesis 3.8-15

The Choir sings

Adam Lay Ybounden by Philip Ledger (1937-2012)

READING TWO

God promises to faithful Abraham that in his seed shall the
nations of the earth be blessed. Genesis 22.15-18

Stand to sing:

(Choir only)

**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.

(Choir only)

By his word was all created;
He commanded and 'twas done;
Earth and sky and boundless ocean,
Universe of three in one,
All that sees the moon's soft radiance,
All that breathes beneath the sun,
Evermore and evermore.

**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.**

**He assumed this mortal body,
Frail and feeble, doomed to die,
That the race from dust created
Might not perish utterly,
Which the dreadful Law had
sentenced
In the depths of hell to lie,
Evermore and evermore.**

**Sing, ye heights of heaven, his praises;
Angels and Archangels, sing!
Wheresoe'er ye be, ye faithful,
Let your joyous anthems ring,
Every tongue his name confessing,
Countless voices answering,
Evermore and evermore.**

Words: Prudentius (348-413) Melody from Pie Cantiones, arr David Willcocks

Please Sit

The Choir sings

Ding Dong, Merrily on High – 16th Century French Melody
arr. Charles Wood

READING THREE

*Christ's birth and kingdom are foretold by Isaiah.
Isaiah 9.2,6,7*

The Choir sings

In Dulci Jubilo – *Traditional* German carol,
arr. Bob Chilcott (b. 1955)

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 tonight.**

**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 wond'ring love.**

Choir only

*How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heav'n.
No ear may hear his coming;
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in*

**Where children pure and happy
pray to the blessed child.
where misery cries out to thee,
Son of the Mother mild.
where charity stands watching
and faith holds wide the door,
the dark night wakes, the glory breaks,
and Christmas comes once more.**

**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.**

Words: Phillips Brooks (1835-93) Tune: FOREST GREEN, arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams and Thomas Armstrong

Please Sit

READING FOUR

The Prophet Micah foretells the glory of little Bethlehem.

Micah 5.2-4

The Choir sings

Here is the Little Door by Herbert Howells (1892-1983)

READING FIVE

The Angel Gabriel salutes the Blessed Virgin Mary

Luke 1.26-38

The Choir sings

Myn Lyking by Richard Runciman Terry (1864-1938)

Stand to sing:

**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, good-will to men,
From heaven'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 heav'nly music floats
O'er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hovering wing;
And ever o'er it Babel sounds
The blessèd angels sing.**

**Yet with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love-song which they bring:
O hush the noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing!**

**And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow,
Look now! for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing:
O rest beside the weary road
And hear the 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.**

Words: Edmund Sears (1810-76) Tune: NOEL Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900) arr. David Willcocks

Please Sit

READING SIX

*St Matthew tells of the birth of Jesus
Matthew 1.18-23*

The Choir sings

In the Bleak Mid-Winter by Harold Darke (1888-1976)

READING SEVEN

*The Shepherds go to the Manger
Luke 2.8-16*

The Choir sings

Scots Nativity by Alan Bullard (b. 1947)



Stand to sing:

**Angels from the realms of glory,
wing your flight o'er all the earth;
ye who sang creation's story
now proclaim Messiah's birth:**

*Come and worship
Christ the new-born King,
come and worship,
worship Christ the new-born King.*

**Shepherds in the field abiding,
watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing;
yonder shines the infant light:**

Come... (etc)

**Sages, leave your contemplations;
brighter visions beam afar;
seek the great Desire of Nations;
ye have seen his natal star:**

Come... (etc)

**Saints before the altar bending,
watching long in hope and fear,
suddenly the Lord, descending,
In his temple shall appear.**

Come... (etc)

**Though an infant now we view him,
he shall fill his Father's throne,
gather all the nations to him;
every knee shall then bow down:**

Come... (etc)

Words: James Montgomery (1771-1854) Tune: Trad French Melody, arr. David Willcocks, Reginald Jaques
and Brian Moles

Please Sit

READING EIGHT

*The Wise Men are led by the star to Jesus.
Matthew 2.1-11*

The Choir sings

No Small Wonder by Paul Edwards (b. 1955)

Stand to sing:

**Unto us is born a son,
King of choirs supernal:
See on earth his life begun,
of lords the Lord eternal,
of lords the Lord eternal.**

**Christ, from heav'n descending low,
comes on earth a stranger;
Ox and ass their owner know,
becradled in a manger,
becradled in a manger.**

Gentlemen

**This did Herod sore affray,
and grievously bewilder,
So he gave the word to slay,
and slew the little childer,
and slew the little childer.**

Ladies

**Of his love and mercy mild
this the Christmas story;
and O that Mary's gentle Child
might lead us up to glory,
might lead us up to glory!**

Full

**O and A, and A and O,
cum cantibus in choro,
Let our merry organ go,
benedicamus Domino,
*benedicamus Domino.***

Words and Melody from Pies Cantiones (1582) arr. David Willcocks

Please remain standing for

READING NINE

*St John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation.
John 1 1-14*

Please sit.

The Choir sings

The Infant King – Basque Carol arr. David Willcocks (1919-2015)

All stand to sing:

**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:**

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

O come, let us adore Him...

O come, let us adore Him...

THE COLLECT FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

The Collect is said or sung and all respond: **Amen.**

**Yea, Lord we greet thee,
born for our salvation,
Jesu to thee be glory given.
Word of the Father,
now in flesh appearing**

O come, let us adore Him ...

Words and Melody: J.F. Wade (1711-86) Adeste Fideles – arr. D. Willcocks

THE BLESSING

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

God's blessing is given and all respond: **Amen.**

We 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 heav'n adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come
offspring of a Virgin's womb!
Word made flesh the Godhead see,
hail th'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 heav'n-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 them second birth:**

***Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King.***

Words: Charles Wesley (1707-1788) et al. Tune: Mendelssohn arr. D. Willcocks

Organ Voluntary:

*Chorale Prelude: In Dulci Jubilo (BWV 729)
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)*

Organist – Peter Gould

We wish you a Peaceful and Happy
Christmas and a Joyful New Year!

*Please do join us at other services
over Christmas:*

St Mary's

*Christmas Eve 5 pm Crib Service for Children
 11.30 pm Midnight Mass with Carols*

Christmas Day 10 am Parish Mass with Carols

*Sunday 31st
December 10am Parish Mass*

St Faith's

*Christmas Eve 7pm Vigil and Mass of the Night
 with Carols*

