

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 Beth'lem 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.

Reading

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews (1.1 – 4)

Carol

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
the stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay
close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
and fit us for heaven, to live with thee there.

Anonymous 1883

Tune: Cradle Song

Gospel

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke (2.15 – 20)

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

Offertory

hymn:

Communion Hymn

Ding dong! merrily on high
in heav'n the bells are ringing
Ding dong! verily the sky
is riv'n with angel-singing.

Gloria! Hosanna in excelsis!

E'en so here below, below,
let steeple bells be swungen,
and i-o, i-o, i-o,
by priest and people sung.

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

Final Hymn

God rest you merry, gentlemen,
let nothing you dismay,
remember 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 heavenly 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:

And when they came to Bethlehem,
where our dear Saviour lay,
they found him in a manger,
where oxen feed on hay;
his mother Mary kneeling down,
unto the Lord did pray:

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 other doth efface:

Traditional
merry

Tune: God rest you