

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

Reading

A reading from the First letter of Paul to the Colossians (3:12 – 17)

Carol

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

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.

that he all men surpasses.

Herod then with fear was filled:
'A prince', he said, 'in Jewry!'
and all the little boys he killed
at Bethlem in his fury.

Gospel

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke (12. 41 - 52)

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.

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

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

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

Tune: Greensleeves

Final Hymn

Of the Father's heart be
ere the world from chaos
he is Alpha: from that Father
all that is and hath been
he is Omega of all things
yet to come the mystic
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.

O how blest that wondrous
when the Maid the curse
brought to birth mankind
by the Holy Ghost conceived
and the Babe, the world
in her loving arms received
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