



A FESTIVAL OF LESSONS AND CAROLS

**Christmas Eve
Thursday 24th December, 2020
at 7.30pm**

ORGAN MUSIC BEFORE THE SERVICE:

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly *Traditional Polish Carol, arr. Keith Chapman (1945-89)*

CHOIR: ONCE IN ROYAL DAVID'S CITY

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 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 wait around.

Words: Mrs Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-95)

Tune: IRBY Melody by Henry J. Gauntlett (1805-76), harmonised by A. M. Mann (1850-1929);

last verse descant and organ part by Sir David Willcocks (1919-2015)

The **BIDDING**, *given by the Dean, followed by:*

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

CHOIR: IN THE BLEAK MIDWINTER

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 breastful of milk
And a mangerful of hay;

Enough for Him, whom Angels
Fall down before,
The ox and ass and camel
Which adore.

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.

Words: Christina Rossetti (1830-94)
Music: Harold Darke (1888-1976)

The **FIRST LESSON:** *The prophecy of the Messiah's kingdom of peace* (Isaiah 11:1-9), read by a member of the Congregation

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

CHOIR: O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

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.

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

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: Philip Brooks (1835-93)

Music: FOREST GREEN English traditional melody;

harmony by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958); descant by Thomas Armstrong (1898-1994)

The **SECOND LESSON:** *The prophet Micah foretells the glory of little Bethlehem* (Micah 5:2-4), read by a Cathedral Sexton

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.

Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labour has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.

And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

CHOIR: THE HOLLY AND THE IVY

The holly and the ivy,
When they are both full grown,
Of all the trees that are in the wood,
The holly bears the crown:

*O the rising of the sun
And the running of the deer,
The playing of the merry organ,
Sweet singing in the choir.*

The holly bears a blossom
As white as the lily flower,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
To be our sweet Saviour:

The holly bears a berry
As red as any blood,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
To do poor sinners good:

The holly bears a prickle
As sharp as any thorn,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
On Christmas day in the morn:

The holly bears a bark
As bitter as any gall,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
For to redeem us all:

*Words: Traditional English carol
Music: Matthew Owens (b. 1971)*

The **THIRD LESSON:** *The angel Gabriel salutes the Blessed Virgin Mary (Luke 1:26-38)*, read by a member of the Cathedral Choir

And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?
And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

CHOIR: I SING OF A MAIDEN

I sing of maiden
That is makeless
King of all kings
To her son she ches.

He came all so still
Where His mother was,
As dew in April
That falleth on the grass.

He came all so still
To His mother's bower,
As dew in April
That falleth on the flower.

He came all so still
Where His mother lay,
As dew in April
That falleth on the spray.

Mother and maiden
Was never none but she:
Well may such a lady
God's mother be.

*Words: Mediaeval English carol, 15th century
Music: Patrick Hadley (1899-1973)*

The **FOURTH LESSON:** *St. Luke tells of the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:1-7)*, read by Mrs Gillian McGaughey, Diocesan Lay Reader

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

CHOIR: SUSSEX CAROL

On Christmas night all Christians sing,
To hear the news the angels bring,
News of great joy, news of great mirth,
News of our merciful King's birth.

Then why should men on earth be so sad,
Since our redeemer made us glad.
When from our sin he set us free,
All for to gain our liberty.

When sin departs before his grace,
Then life and health come in its place.
Angels and men with joy may sing,
All for to see the new-born King.

All out of darkness we have light,
Which made the angels sing this night:
'Glory to God and peace to men,
Now and for evermore. Amen'.

*Words: English traditional carol
Music: English traditional carol, arranged by Sir Philip Ledger (1937-2012)*

The **FIFTH LESSON:** *The shepherds go to the manger* (Luke 2:8-20), read by The Dean's Vicar, The Reverend Canon Mark Niblock

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

CHOIR: MARY'S LULLABY

See the child that Mary bore
On her lap so softly sleeping,
In a stable cold and poor
Ox and ass their vigil keeping.

*Sing lullaby, sing lullaby
My own dear son, my child.
Lullaby, sing lullaby
Lullaby, my little baby.*

Flights of angels round his head
Sing him joyful hymns of greeting
Peace on earth, goodwill to men
Each to each the song repeating.

Shepherds kneeling by his bed
Offer homage without measure.
Wise men, by a bright star led
Bring him gifts of richest treasure.

Words: John Rutter CBE (b. 1945)

Music: John Rutter CBE (b. 1945)

The **SIXTH LESSON:** *St John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation* (John 1:1-14), read by The Dean, The Very Reverend Stephen Forde

The Christmas Gospel is written in the First Chapter of the Gospel according to St John, beginning at the first verse.

All say: **Glory be to thee, O Lord.**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

All say: **Thanks be to thee, O Lord.**

CHOIR: HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS 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 the angelic host proclaim,
Christ is born in Bethlehem:
*Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King.*

Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold him come
Offspring of a Virgin's womb!
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail the 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 heaven-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 (1707-88) and others
Music: From a chorus by Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (1809-47);
last verse descant and organ part by Sir David Willcocks (1919-2015)*

THE COLLECT OF CHRISTMAS EVE

Almighty God, you make us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of your Son Jesus Christ: Grant that, as we joyfully receive him as our redeemer, we may with sure confidence behold him when he shall come to be our judge; who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

THE BLESSING

May the obedience of Mary, the humility of the shepherds, the perseverance of the wise men, the joy of the angels, and the peace of the Christ Child be God's gift to you this Christmas time and always; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Organ music:

Chorale Prelude on 'In dulci jubilo' BWV 729 J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

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Thanks from the Dean

Our thanks at this most challenging Christmas time to:
our Readers,
the Cathedral Vergers,
those who worked so hard to decorate the cathedral for Christmas,
to the Members of Belfast Cathedral Choir,
Mr Jack Wilson, Assistant Director of Music
and to Mr Matthew Owens, Director of Music

Finally, thanks to everyone who has assisted in any way
with this year's Black Santa Appeal.

Tomorrow, Friday 25th December, at 11.00am

Festival Holy Communion for Christmas Morning

Preacher: The Bishop of Connor, the Right Reverend George Davison.
Setting: Joseph Haydn *Missa Brevis Joannis de Deo 'Kleine Orgel-messe'*
Anthem: Traditional Cornish, arranged John Rutter *The Sans Day Carol*

Please note: all seats must have been pre-booked for this service
It is also Livestreamed at www.facebook.com/BelfastCathedral/

Sunday 27th December, 2020

11.00am Service of the Word
For the First Sunday after Christmas
and the Feast Day of St John the Evangelist

There will be no afternoon service on 27th December

