

Welcome

to your Parish Church in the
Diocese of Birmingham



Holy Communion Christmas 2023

We gather

For those worshipping at home, have ready in an honoured place a portion of food and something to drink. It may be bread and wine or something else. Set your Bible alongside. If possible and safe, have four tea lights and one larger candle, matches ready, light the four tea lights before you begin the service.

MUSIC *as we gather:*

Bright morning star (*Appalachian spiritual, arr Benjamin & Clare Noakes*)

While shepherds watched (***Cranbrook:** Thomas Clark, arr David Peacock*)

We are invited to stand and keep silence.

Priest: Behold, I bring you news of great joy. To you is born this day in the City of David a saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

CAROL
1. Joy to the world! The Lord is come;
let earth receive her King;
let ev'ry heart prepare him room,
and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

2. Joy to the earth! The Saviour reigns;
let us our songs employ;
while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3. He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness,
and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love,
and wonders, and wonders of his love.

(words: Isaac Watts, based on Psalm 98 alt; music: George Frideric Handel)

WELCOME

Priest: Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus
Christ be with you,

All: and also with you.

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

**All: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires
known, and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of
your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

We light the Christmas Candle

Emmanuel, God is with us.

Born as one of us.

*We light Christ's candle among the Advent Candle. At home, light the larger
candle now.*

Jesus Christ, born of Mary, we have remembered the glow of faith
in our ancestors, the light of truth in your prophets, the fire of
anger in John the Baptist and the brightness of expectation in
Mary. Today we know that all such light refracted through your
people comes from you. For you are the light of the world.

Illumine our lives, our culture, our politics and our faith today, and open our hearts to rejoice in the glimpses of your light in every human soul. **Amen.**

We sing: 1. Stay awake, be ready.
You do not know the hour when the Lord is coming.
Stay awake, be ready.
The Lord is coming soon!
Alleluia, alleluia!
The Lord is coming soon.

2. Prepare! he's coming!
The one who will give peace to the world is coming!
Prepare! he's coming!
The reign of God is near!
Alleluia, alleluia!
The reign of God is near.

3. Change your lives, he's coming.
The one who is the light of the world is coming.
Change your lives, he's coming.
The Lord is coming soon!
Alleluia, alleluia!
The Lord is coming soon.

4. You are blessed among women.
Mary, you are blessed, you believe God's promise.
You are blessed among women.
The Mother of my Lord.
Alleluia, alleluia!
The Mother of my Lord.

5. By the pow'r of the Spirit
Mary's given birth to a son named Jesus.
By the pow'r of the Spirit
Emmanuel is here.
Alleluia, alleluia!
Emmanuel is here.

(words & music: Christopher Walker)

We seek forgiveness

Deacon: Christ the light of the world has come to dispel the darkness of our hearts. In his light let us examine ourselves and confess our sins.

SILENCE

God our Father, you sent your Son full of grace and truth:
forgive our failure to receive him.

Lord, have mercy.

All Lord, have mercy.

Jesus our Saviour, you were born in poverty and laid in a manger:
forgive our greed and rejection of your ways.

Christ, have mercy.

All Christ, have mercy.

Spirit of love, your servant Mary responded joyfully to your call:
forgive the hardness of our hearts.

Lord, have mercy.

All Lord, have mercy.

Forgiveness is declared:

The God of all healing and forgiveness draw you to himself, that
you may behold the glory of his Son, the Word made flesh, and be
cleansed from all your sins, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

THE GLORIA

Glory! Glory! Glory to God!

Glory! Glory! Glory to God!

1. Glory to God in the heights of the heavens.
Peace to God's people, all people on earth.

2. Son of the Father, all glory and worship;
praise and thanksgiving to you, Lamb of God.

3. You take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us, receive our prayer.

4. Seated in pow'r at the right of the Father,
Jesus alone is the Lord, the Most High.

5. And with the Spirit of love everlasting,
reigning in glory for ever. Amen.

THE COLLECT FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

Almighty God, you have given us your only begotten Son to take our nature upon him and, as at this time to be born of a virgin: grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

We proclaim and respond
to God's Word

FIRST READING *Isaiah 9:2-7*

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.
You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.
For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;

and he is named
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onwards and for evermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

SECOND READING Titus 2:11-14

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

CAROL [Go, tell it on the mountain](#)

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and ev'rywhere.
Go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born.*

1. While shepherds kept their
watching
o'er wand'ring flocks by night,
behold, from out of heaven,
there shone a holy light.

2. And lo, when they had seen it,
they all bowed down and prayed;
they travelled on together
to where the babe was laid.

3. When I was a seeker,
I sought both night and day:
I asked my Lord to help me
and he showed me the way.

4. He made me a watchman
upon the city wall,
and, if I am a Christian,
I am the least of all.

(words & music: Traditional, arr Richard Lloyd)

We stand for the GOSPEL READING Luke 2:1-20.

When the Gospel is announced:

All: Glory to you O Lord.

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and 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 heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favours!'

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

At the end:

Reader: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON from Tariro

One carol that I like very much is called Mary did you know and words of it goes like this:

*Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Would one day walk on water?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Would save our sons and daughters?
Did you know that your baby boy
Has come to make you new?
This child that you delivered, will soon deliver you*

*Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Is Lord of all creation?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Would one day rule the nations?
Did you know that your baby boy
Is heaven's perfect Lamb?
That sleeping child you're holding is the
great, I Am*

It is one that has me pondering every year around this time. This year especially - maybe because by the law of the land I'm single despite being traditionally married - I could easily be Mary. Last year it was the plight of the women in Iran, and I could go on but year in and year out there seems to be a thread that causes me to pause and think, Mary how did you do it?

I wonder if she knew. Did she understand of the greatness that her baby had? Did she know the power he wielded? That he was going to be the healer of many? That he would break the chains of those who were bound? That he would raise the dead?

Prophecies had been made foretelling the birth, like in Isaiah, 'For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6). It's one thing hearing a prophecy, it's another believing it. It takes a huge amount of faith and trust than we are used to. But Mary trusted. She believed. She hoped against hope.

You know those words of encouragement that you give yourself when you are about to do the most daring thing. Those 'God, I really hope you are there, and you are seeing this' kind of statement before you embark on a mission. Those 'just in case I'm wrong' moments and you choose to doubt your doubts and reach for something so out of this world even for your mind.

Mary as a Jewish girl had heard the history and sure knew about the prophecies like anyone else at that time who was waiting for a saviour to come. She had heard the angel's words but even that had scared her so much that the angel had to reassure her. I mean someone make it make sense. We have all seen babies. What do you mean a baby born of a mere poor woman will save the world. Come on! But she dared to believe.

My brothers and sisters, you and I are being asked to join the '**dare to believe**' team. These prophecies had come years before Mary was born and so she could not even get confirmation from the horse's mouth just like this story of Jesus comes more than two thousand years later and we cannot call Mary and say explain to us what was going on. I'm sure paparazzi would be going mad right about now and Mary and Joseph would be inundated by the number of interview request.

Despite not having met the prophets who foretold of Jesus's birth, Mary dared to believe. What more of us. Yes, we did not see the prophets and neither did we see Mary, or the baby Jesus being born but we get the full story. We get to hear of the fulfilment of the prophecies and the mighty works Jesus did, the light he brought, the woman's status that he raised, the people's lives he changed through healing and restoration of dignity. We get the full puzzle with no pieces missing.

Yes, we cannot have a one on one session with Mary to ask her questions but this gospel we have heard of her is asking us to join in, to hold on to what she had, to believe in what she believed because it changed our world. The saving might not have been instant but on that day 'she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn' (Lk 2:7) and her believing was fulfilled as she looked at the baby. There was no place for them, but she believed what she carried was a treasure and she made the best of what she had. She made sure that the baby was wrapped up warm and she made a bed for him in a manger and even the animals understood.

The power of believing!

Even though Mary is not here in front of us, she is asking us to believe and to trust as she did. Christ has been born to us. He brings peace into our chaos, light into our darkness, love into our brokenness, hope into our hopelessness. It started in the heart for Mary. She opened her heart to what God could do so this day may we open our hearts to Christ being born into our chaotic homes and maybe not so perfect lives where there are chores that still need doing and maybe some empty chairs, we wish there were people sitting on them.

It was not perfect for Mary as a young 'single' girl but that which seemed so bad in the eyes of society became the light of the world and the saviour of us all. So, this Christmas, let us forget the report the world gives and look with believing hearts around us as we embrace the love, light, peace and hope that Christ brought through Mary and is being given to us. Mary believed in God's words. Mary believed in Jesus as the saviour even if born of a human mother. She believed in the light that he would bring.

In the words of Isaiah, 'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder' (Isa 9:2-3). Over two thousand years ago, this came to pass and today let us realise that we the thousands of thousands of thousand people that have gone ahead of us that we too believing in our hearts get to join in becoming witnesses.

We are the people who 'wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ' (Titus 2:13) and this is being fulfilled in us today if only we believe.

It's a heart thing so let us spread the joy, the love and the peace and invite others in our sharing of such freely given priceless gifts this Christmas.

We affirm our faith

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Deacon: Let us declare our Faith in God:

Do you believe in God the Father
from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named?

We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love?

We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us with power from on high?

We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the church.

This is our faith.

**We believe in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

We pray for others

INTERCESSIONS *led by Margaret Healey Pollett*

For those at home:

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Father, this holy day *your* Son our Saviour
was born in human flesh.

Renew your Church as the Body of Christ.

Holy God

hear our prayer.

this holy day there was no room for your Son in the inn.

Protect with your love those who have no home
and all who live in poverty.

Holy God

hear our prayer.

this holy day Mary, in the pain of labour,
brought your Son to birth.

Hold in your hand [...and] all who are in pain or distress.

Holy God

hear our prayer.

this holy day your Christ came as a light shining in the darkness.
Bring comfort to [...and] all who suffer in the sadness of our world.

Holy God

hear our prayer.

this holy day the angels sang, 'Peace to God's people on earth.'
Strengthen those who work for peace and justice
in [...and in] all the world.

Holy God

hear our prayer.

this holy day shepherds in the field heard good tidings of joy.
Give us grace to preach the gospel of Christ's redemption.

Holy God

hear our prayer.

this holy day strangers found the Holy Family,
and saw the baby lying in the manger.
Bless our homes and all whom we love.

Holy God

hear our prayer.

this holy day heaven is come down to earth,
and earth is raised to heaven.

Hold in your hand [...and] all those who have passed through death
in the hope of your coming kingdom.

Holy God

hear our prayer.

this holy day Christians the world over celebrate Christ's birth.

Open our hearts that he may be born in us today.

Holy God

hear our prayer.

Father, this holy day angels and shepherds worshipped at
the manger throne.

Receive the worship we offer in fellowship with Mary,

Joseph and the saints

through him who is your Word made flesh,

our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

We prepare for Communion

Deacon: Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall
be called the Prince of Peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

All: And also with you.

We offer one another a sign of peace.

CAROL [O come, all ye faithful](#)

1. 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, (x3)
Christ the Lord.*

2. God of God,
Light of Light,
Lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb;
very God, begotten not created:

3. Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above;
glory to God in the highest:

4. Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
born this happy morning,
Jesu, to thee be glory giv'n;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing:

*(words: Original Latin attrib John Francis Wade, trans Frederick Oakeley;
music: attrib John Francis Wade, arr David Willcocks)*

Priest: Word made flesh, life of the world, in your incarnation you
embraced our poverty: by your Spirit may we share in your
riches. **Amen.**

*The Table is prepared in Church. At home, now is the time to say the Lord's
Prayer (below) and consume the food and drink you have prepared.*

We tell the story of God's faithfulness

Priest: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: It is right to give thanks and praise.

Holy are you, embracing God, for through your Word all things
came into being and without you not one thing was made. As
your Word spoke through your covenant, you created a people

bound to you. Through promise and pardon, slavery and exile, you showed that what had come into being through you was life.

Your prophets promised that life as a light for all people and spoke of a day of comfort and redemption when ruins and waste places would break forth into song. When that day came, and the Word became flesh, your angels sang for joy and put a new song into our hearts. And even when your own people rejected your Son, you brought forth from his death a resurrection of everlasting glory. You welcome us as your forgiven people, uniting heaven and earth and joining our voices with angels and archangels in the unending hymn:

**All: Holy, holy, holy Lord.
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Life-giving God, as your Word became flesh and lived among us, come among us now in the fullness of your grace and truth. Make us holy as you are holy, that your Word may become flesh anew today. Send your Holy Spirit upon this bread and wine and make them be for us the body and blood of Jesus. Who, at supper with his disciples, took bread, gave you thanks, broke the bread and gave it to them saying: "Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

A bell is rung

After supper he took the cup. Again he gave you thanks, and gave it to his disciples, saying: "Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

A bell is rung

Deacon: Great is the mystery of faith:
**All: Christ has died,
Christ is risen
Christ will come again.**

God of glory, make your church a sign of new-born hope in your kingdom. Be born in us today. Where your children are faced with ruin, show them redemption. Where sorrow endures, bring your holy comfort. Where division excludes, give your grace. Where bondage confines, sing your new song. Restore our hope in you, until the day when all that you have brought into being finds its everlasting destiny in the glory of your only Son, when nothing in heaven or on earth falls outside your redeeming purpose, and when all things shall be full of grace and truth in you, one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

We pray the Lord's Prayer

Priest: Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:
**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in
heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

We break and share the Bread

Priest: God's holy gifts for God's holy people.
**All: Jesus Christ is holy, Jesus Christ is Lord,
To the glory of God the Father.**

We sing: **Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.
Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.
Jesus, Redeemer of the world, give us your peace. (x2)**

All are welcome to receive bread and wine, now for us the body and blood of Christ. If you prefer not to receive, you are welcome to come forward for a prayer of blessing if you wish.

SONG *during Communion*: O little one sweet, O little one mild (*Samuel Scheidt, harm J S Bach*)

After Communion we pray:

Priest: God our Father, whose Word has come among us in the Holy
Child of Bethlehem: may the light of faith illumine our hearts
and shine in our words and deeds; through him who is
Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

**All: Father of all, we give you thanks and praise
that when we were still far off,
you met us in your Son and brought us home.
Dying and living he declared your love,
gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory.
May we who share Christ's body live his risen life;
we who drink this cup bring life to others;
we whom the spirit lights give light to the world.
Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us,
so we and all your children shall be free
and the whole earth live to praise your name. Amen.**

We are sent out

CAROL [Hark, the herald-angels sing](#)

1. 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.*

2. Christ, by highest heav'n adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come,
offspring of a virgin's womb!
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
hail th'incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with us to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.

3. Hail, the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
ris'n with healing in his wings;
mild he lays his glory by,
born that we no more may die,
born to raise us from the earth,
born to give us second birth.

*(words: Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, Martin Madan & others alt;
music: Adapt from Felix Mendelssohn by William Hayman Cummings, v3 arr David Willcocks)*

THE BLESSING

God the Father, who has loved the eternal Son from before the foundation of the world, shed such love upon you, his children.

Amen.

Christ, whose incarnation gathered into one all things earthly and heavenly, fill you with joy and peace.

Amen.

Holy Spirit, by whose overshadowing Mary became the God-bearer, give you grace to carry the good news of Christ.

Amen.

and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Go in peace. Proclaim the Word made flesh.

Glory, thanks and praise to God.

VOLUNTARY

* * *

We wish you a very good Christmas.

Thank you to all our musicians, hospitable sidespeople, especially Churchwarden Chris, those who have done many practical tasks decorating and preparing Church for Christmas, those ensuring services are available online. Thank you to those preparing readings and prayers.

* * *



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Eucharistic Prayer from Joining the Angels' Song, © Sam Wells and Abi Kocher 2016

*This Christmas we are delighted to welcome to Church the remainder of our new **crib figures**, carved by local craftsman **Graham Jones**. We are very grateful to the All Saints Crafters are funding their making in memory of Gill Cole.*

Graham says: In 1982, after achieving a Degree in Sculpture, I became a professional sculptor. I became fascinated by the possibilities of carving wood to make my work. I've made sculptures all around the Midlands and further afield.

I've lived in Kings Heath and Moseley for 25 years and was very pleased to be asked to make the nativity figures for the church. They are in a style that reflect my approach to sculpture and I was pleased also to consult with church members along the way, in their design.

Graham Jones