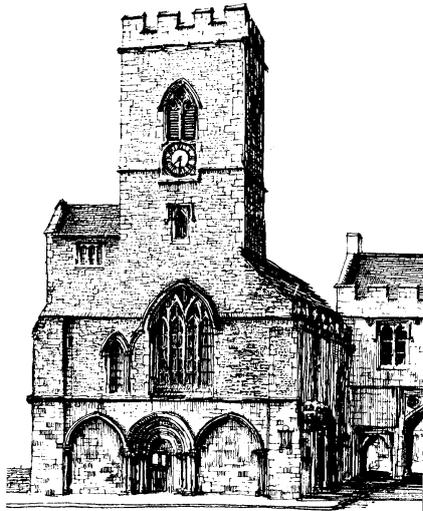




St NICOLAS' CHURCH
ABINGDON-ON-THAMES

**A SERVICE OF
CAROLS & READINGS
FOR CHRISTMAS**



**SUNDAY 20 DECEMBER 2020
11:15AM**

TEAM VICAR: THE REVD PAUL SMITH
ORGANIST: GRAHAM HOWELL

A very warm welcome to this service of Carols and Readings for Christmas. Much has been said in the media – and indeed no doubt will continue to be said! – about how this Christmas will be marked and celebrated, not least in the church. At one point I was alarmed to hear that Christmas may be cancelled!

Christmas can never be cancelled, of course! Its message is the central truth of our faith that God sent his Son into the world for our redemption. No circumstances, or pandemic, can change that wonderful mystery which we must celebrate even more at the end of this extraordinary year.

This service of Carols and Readings will be different this year. We cannot have ‘live’ singing and we grieve that. However, this service would not have been possible but for the work of Andrew Coker who has assembled the recordings of Carols for us to listen to; for Graham Howell who will provide an organ voluntary for us at the beginning and the end of the service as well as sing; for those of you who have kindly agreed to read; and for Eluned Hallas who has produced this Order of Service. My thanks go to you all.

Not having singing in church has been both a matter of debate and a source of sadness. With you, I have missed it enormously. However, perhaps as we listen to the words of the carols this morning we are given a different opportunity. May the words sink deeply into us and may they be a source of our offering of prayer and worship as we celebrate the great Festival of Christmas in word and song.

This comes with my prayers for you all as we meditate once again on the great mystery of Emmanuel: God-with-us. May you each be filled with comfort, joy and hope this Christmas.

The Revd Paul Smith

Team Vicar

Organ Introit

Wachet Auf

J S Bach

Welcome

Lighting the Advent Candle



**Lord Jesus, light of the world,
blessed is Gabriel, who brought good news;
blessed is Mary, your mother and ours.
Bless your Church this Christmas;
and bless us your children,
who long for your coming.
Amen.**

Bidding Prayer

Lord's Prayer

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

May the almighty God bless us with his grace;
Christ give us the joys of everlasting life,
And unto the fellowship of the citizens above
May the King of angels bring us all.
Amen

Once in Royal David's City

*Words: Cecil Frances Alexander 1818-1895;
melody by H J Gauntlett 1805-1876*

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 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 wait around!

Kings College, Cambridge, 2016

Genesis 3: 8 – 15, 17 - 19

The Fall in the Garden of Eden

They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?' He said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.' He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.' Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent tricked me, and I ate.' The LORD God said to the serpent,

'Because you have done this,
cursed are you among all animals
and among all wild creatures;
upon your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.

I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.'

And to the man he said,

'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,
and have eaten of the tree
about which I commanded you,
"You shall not eat of it",

cursed is the ground because of you;
in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.
By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread
until you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.'

Jesus Christ the Apple Tree

*From Divine Hymns or Spiritual Songs,
compiled by Joshua Smith, New Hampshire, 1784
Melody by Elizabeth Poston*

The tree of life my soul hath seen,
Laden with fruit, and always green:
The trees of nature fruitless be
Compared with Christ the apple tree.

His beauty doth all things excel:
By faith I know, but ne'er can tell
The glory which I now can see
In Jesus Christ the apple tree.

For happiness I long have sought,
And pleasure dearly I have bought:
I missed of all; but now I see
'Tis found in Christ the apple tree.

I'm weary with my former toil,
Here I will sit and rest awhile:
Under the shadow I will be
Of Jesus Christ the apple tree.

This fruit doth make my soul to thrive,
It keeps my dying faith alive;
Which makes my soul in haste to be
With Jesus Christ the apple tree.

Choir of St John's College, Cambridge

Isaiah 9.2b -7 The foretelling of Christ's birth and kingdom

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.

It came upon the midnight clear

Words: Edmund Hamilton Sears; melody: Arthur Sullivan

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 heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hovering wing
And ever o'er its Babel sounds
The blessed 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!

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 splendors fling,
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing.

*The Choir of Winchester Cathedral and the Waynflete Singers,
under the direction of David Hill, and accompanied by the Resounding Brass*

Micah 5: 2 - 4:

The foretelling of the glory of little Bethlehem

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;

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Words: Phillips Brooks 1835-1893; melody: H Walford Davies 1869 - 1941

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 wondering love.

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!

Massed schools, BBC

Luke 1: 26 - 38

The Annunciation to Mary

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

Ding dong merrily on high

words: G R Woodward; melody: Arbeau, 1589, arr. Mack Wilberg

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 sungen.
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

Pray you, dutifully prime your matin chime, ye ringers;
May you beautifully rime your evetime song, ye singers.
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

Mormon Tabernacle Choir

Luke 2: 1 - 7

The Birth of Jesus

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.

Away in a manger

*Words: anon;
tune, W J Kirkpatrick (1838 – 1921); arranged by David Willcocks*

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.

Kings College, Cambridge

Luke 2: 8 - 16

The Shepherds go to the Manger

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.

The Shepherds Pipe Carol

Words & melody: John Rutter

Going through the hills on a night all starry
On the way to Bethlehem
Far away I heard a shepherd boy piping
On the way to Bethlehem

Angels in the sky brought this message nigh:
"Dance and sing for joy that Christ the king of Kings
Is come to bring us peace on earth
And he's lying cradled there at Bethlehem."

"Tell me, shepherd boy piping tunes so merrily
On the way to Bethlehem
Who will hear your tunes on these hills so lonely
On the way to Bethlehem?"

Angels in the sky brought this message nigh:
"Dance and sing for joy that Christ the king of Kings
Is come to bring peace on earth
And he's lying cradled there at Bethlehem."

"None may hear my pipes on these hills so lonely
On the way to Bethlehem;
But a King will hear me play sweet lullabies
When I get to Bethlehem."

Angels in the sky came down from on high
Hovered over the manger where the babe was lying
Cradled in the arms of his mother Mary
Sleeping now at Bethlehem

"Where is the new King, shepherd boy piping merrily
Is he there at Bethlehem?"

"I will find him soon by the star shining brightly
In the sky o'vr Bethlehem."

Angels in the sky brought this message nigh:
"Dance and sing for joy that Christ the king of Kings
Is come to bring us peace on earth
And he's lying cradled there at Bethlehem."

"May I come with you, shepherd boy piping merrily
Come with you to Bethlehem?
Pay my homage too at the new King's cradle
Is it far to Bethlehem?"

Angels in the sky brought this message nigh:
"Dance and sing for joy that Christ the king of Kings
Is born in lowly stable yonder, born for you at Bethlehem

The Cambridge Singers

Matthew 2: 1 - 12:

The Wise Men visit the Christ Child

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, ‘Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.’ When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: “And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.” ’

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, ‘Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.’ When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

The Three Kings

*Words: after P Cornelius (1824-1874);
music: P Cornelius, arr. I A Atkins (1869-1953)*

Three kings from Persian lands afar
To Jordan follow the pointing star;
And this the quest of the travellers three,
Where the new-born King of the Jews
may be;

*How brightly shines
The morning star
With grace and truth
From heaven afar!*

Full royal gifts they bear for the King;
Gold, incense, myrrh are their offering.

The star shines out with a steadfast ray;
The kings to Bethlehem make their way,
And there in worship they bend

the knee

As Mary's child in her lap they see;

Their royal gifts they show

to the King;

Gold, incense, myrrh

are their offering.

Thou child of Man, lo, to Bethlehem

The kings are trav'ling,

Travel with them!

The star of mercy, the star of grace,

Shall lead thy heart to its resting place.

Gold, incense, myrrh

Thou canst not bring:

Offer thy heart to the infant King,

Offer thy heart!

*Our Jesse tree now
bloweth*

*Of Jacob's stem and
David's line:*

*For thee my Bridegroom,
King divine,*

My soul with love

o'er floweth.

Thy word, Jesu,

Inly feeds us,

Rightly leads us,

Life bestowing.

Praise,

O praise

Such love o'erflowing.

Christmas Eve

Christmas has a darkness

Brighter than the blazing noon,

Christmas has a chillness

Warmer than the heat of June,

Christmas has a beauty

Lovelier than the world can show:

For Christmas bringeth Jesus,

Brought for us so low.

Christina Rossetti

Earth, strike up your music,
Birds that sing and bells that ring;
Heaven has answering music
For all angels soon to sing:
Earth, put on your whitest
Bridal robe of spotless snow:
For Christmas bringeth Jesus,
Brought for us so low.

Hark, the herald angels sing

*Words: Charles Wesley 1707-1788 and others;
melody F Mendelssohn-Bartholdy 1809-1847*

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!
Veiled in 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.*

St Pauls Cathedral

If you are able please stand for

John 1: 1 - 14

The Great Mystery of the Incarnation

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

O Come, all ye faithful

*Words: Latin, 18th century, tr. Frederick Oakeley 1802-1880, and others;
melody probably by J F Wade 1711-1786*

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:

*O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord!*

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

*O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord!*

Kings College Cambridge

The Collect

The Blessing

Organ Voluntary

Radetzky March

J. Strauss, arr. Graham Howell

*No collection will be taken at this Service,
but a plate for your donation to
The Children's Society
is available at the back of the Church
Thank you*



*We wish you a joyful and
peaceful Christmas time*

CCL 57519

