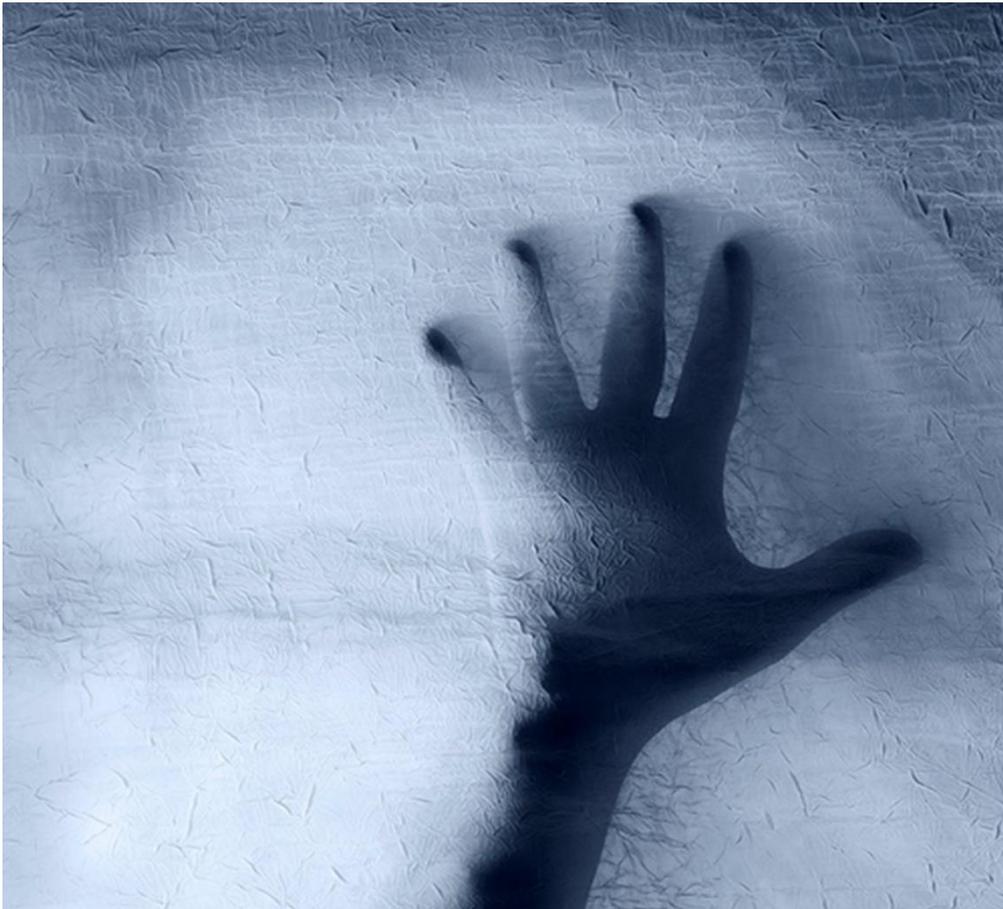


**St James's Church Piccadilly**

**Carol Service for Christmas Eve**

**Thursday 24th December 2020 at 4pm**

**In St James's Church, on YouTube and in the courtyard**



**Choir Introit**

In Dulce Jubilo!

**Welcome and Opening Prayer**

Eternal God,  
in the stillness of this night  
you sent your almighty Word

to pierce the world's darkness with the  
light of salvation:

give to the earth the peace that we long  
for

and fill our hearts with the joy of heaven  
through our Saviour, Jesus Christ  
**Amen.**

## Choir anthem

Ding Dong Merrily On High

## Reading

### Luke 2. 1-20

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.

## Choir anthem

The Sussex Carol

## Reading

### John 1.1-14 from the King James Version (adapted)

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 all people.

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 everyone 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.

### Choir anthem

For Unto Us a Child is born *from 'Messiah'*  
*by GF Handel*

### Reading

The Epiphany *by Godfrey Rust*

A stable is a good place for revelations.  
The best discoveries are made in back rooms,  
half by accident, by people half-exhausted and looking for something else.  
Just as we felt like giving up,  
when the whole thing had become ridiculous  
and had gone on much too long, and we were blaming  
everybody else for our mistakes,  
we came upon an unexpected answer in the least likely place:  
a speechless, thoughtless, helpless child who just lay there, needing to be loved.  
In this defiance of all natural things was born  
the enabling power of sacrifice—  
a being whose ambition was to seek his own destruction and then call upon his followers to do nothing else.  
What kind of way was this to rule a world?  
He just lay there, needing to be loved.  
It would be stopped. Each Herod would conspire

for its destruction, when they cannot tempt it  
with possessions nor subdue it with pain  
nor lull it to sleep with alcohol or television.

Here was something we could not buy or cure,  
digitise, transplant, promote, update, invest in,  
analyse or write a business plan for.  
He had no army, text-book, voters' mandate

or computer markup language  
with which to implement this great design:

he just lay there, needing to be loved.

It was the most implausible demand.

Anything else we could negotiate  
but not this secret life secured through death:

grace, born out of deprivation,  
grace born of the endurance of the oppressed,  
grace born of the hardships of the poor,  
grace born of the forgiveness of the intolerable,  
grace borne in the dignity of silence, grace born

from incomprehensible submission  
to the absolute abuse of power.

In the strength of his weakness  
he just lay there, needing to be loved.

Eons after life exploded into matter  
here in this stable was let loose  
a far more potent power,  
shedding the fabric of his former life  
like an old coat, reckless that the truth  
would prove for all he knew fatal  
to everything to which he had thus far clung.

Our gifts were powerless to help.

There was nothing more to do  
but leave the child to his own terrible story,

and return by different routes  
to our own countries, strangers to us now,  
yet seeing them as if for the first time,

how they just lie there, needing to be loved...

**Sermon** The Revd Lucy Winkett

**Choir anthem**

Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day *by John Gardner*

**Prayers, ending with The 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.**

**Congregational carol**

*Please hum along if you would like to join in*

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 all  
From heav'n'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 heav'nly music floats  
O'er all the weary world.  
Above its sad and lowly plains  
They bend on hov'ring wing,  
And ever o'er its babel sounds  
The blessed angels sing.

For lo! the days are hast'ning on,  
By prophets seen of old,  
When with the ever-circling years  
Shall come the time foretold,  
When peace shall over all the earth

Its ancient splendours fling  
And the whole world send back the song  
Which now the angels sing.

### **Choir anthem**

The Coventry Carol

*At the end of the anthem, please move safely and in single file, using all available doors, into the courtyard for the final part of the service. Please remain socially distanced in the courtyard and keep your face covering on at all times.*

### **Congregational Carol**

*Please feel free to sing with the choir and brass, keeping your face covering on at all times.*

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,  
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,  
Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,  
Sing, all ye citizens of Heaven above!  
Glory to God, glory in the highest:  
O come, let us adore Him, (3×)  
Christ the Lord.

### **A Christmas Blessing**

May Christ the Word made flesh give you grace to proclaim God's presence on the earth.

**Amen.**

May the inspiration of Mary who bore God into the world encourage you to carry the light of Christ wherever you go.

**Amen.**

May the almighty God, with us in the vulnerability of a child, be born anew in this city, in which so many have suffered this year.

**Amen.**

And the blessing of God; Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit be with you and remain with you this Christmas and for ever. **Amen.**

### **Congregational Carol**

Hark! The herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn 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 newborn 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 the incarnate Deity,  
Pleased as man with us to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel.  
Hark! The herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Son 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.  
Hark! The herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

### **The Dismissal**

Let us go in peace

**Thanks be to God!**

**PLEASE HELP US BY MAKING A DONATION!**

*In place of a physical collection, please make a text donation by texting **WREN20, WREN10 or WREN5 to 70085** to donate £20, £10 or £5 respectively.*

Please use the tap donation boxes in the courtyard and in the church.

Please go to the website [www.sjp.org.uk](http://www.sjp.org.uk) and make a donation by card.

**WE WISH YOU A BLESSED CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!**