

St James Church, Piccadilly

Rooted in God's earth, we envision a just society and a creative, open-hearted church

Festival of Lessons and Carols Sunday 19th December 2021 at 6pm

WITH A CONGREGATION IN THE CHURCH AND LIVE ON YOUTUBE

*Welcome to St James's Church.
Whether you are in the building or online,
we are glad you are here.*

*In response to congregational feedback,
**we are returning to more singing during
the service.** Our Music Scholars and clergy,
socially distanced, will lead us in singing
without face coverings. If you are in the body
of the congregation, please keep your face
covering on while singing. All arrangements
are kept under review.*

*Please remember that social distancing is
being observed on the Jermyn Street side of
the church (on the right-hand side as you
come in) both on the ground floor and at
gallery level. If you arrive late, please
observe this social distance zone, and if you
are sitting in these pews, please keep at
least a metre away from the next person.*

*If you do not wish to sit distanced, then the
Piccadilly side (the left-hand side as you
come in) is free seating, both at ground floor
and gallery level.*

*As we continue to evolve our arrangements,
please be sensitive to those around you and
please also don't hesitate to move to a
distance if you are feeling uncomfortable.*

*We are fortunate to have a large airy
building and we hope that you will feel
comfortable as we pray our way through
these days.*

*At 6pm, after the clock has struck,
the church is darkened.*

Please remain seated.

FIRST READING

The Coming (RS Thomas)

And God held in his hand
A small globe. Look he said.
The son looked. Far off,
As through water, he saw
A scorched land of fierce
Colour. The light burned
There; crusted buildings
Cast their shadows: a bright
Serpent, A river
Uncoiled itself, radiant
With slime.

On a bare
Hill a bare tree saddened
The sky. many People
Held out their thin arms
To it, as though waiting
For a vanished April
To return to its crossed
Boughs. The son watched
Them. Let me go there, he said

CHOIR: Adam Lay Ybouden
(Boris Ord)

Please stand.

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

[Tune: Veni Emmanuel; Words: from
'Great O antiphons' (12th-13th C) trans.
J.M. Neale (1818-1866)]

**O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here,
until the Son of God appear.**

***Rejoice, rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.***

**O come, thou dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight.**

**O come, thou key of David, come
and open wide our heav'nly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery.**

**O come, thou Root of Jesse's tree,
an ensign of thy people be;
before thee rulers silent fall;
all peoples on thy mercy call.**

Please be seated.

WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER
The Revd Dr John Russell

SECOND READING
The angel Gabriel visits Mary
(Luke 1.26-38)

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 forever, 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.

CHOIR: *Gabriel's Message*
(arr. Edgar Pettman)

THIRD READING
Annunciation *(Kathleen Norris)*

Wondering at the many things that the story of the Annunciation might mean, I take refuge in the fact that for centuries so many poets and painters have found it worthy of consideration. The contemporary poet Laurie Sheck, in her poem 'The Annunciation,' respects the 'honest grace' that Mary shows by not attempting to hide her fear in the presence of the angel, her fear of the changes within her body. I suspect that Mary's 'yes' to her new identity, to the immense and wondrous possibilities of her new and holy name, may provide an excellent means of conveying to girls that there is something in them that no man can touch; that belongs only to them, and to God.

Thomas Merton, in *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, describes the true identity that

he seeks in contemplative prayer as a 'point vierge' at the centre of his being, 'a point untouched by illusion, a point of pure truth... which belongs entirely to God, which is inaccessible to the fantasies of our own mind or the brutalities of our own will. This little point of absolute poverty,' he writes, 'is the pure glory of God within us.' It is only when we stop idolizing the illusion of our control over the events of life and recognise our poverty that we become virgin in the sense that Merton means.

Please stand.

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL:

[Tune: Forest Green; Words: Philip Brooks (1835-1893)]

**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 all the 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 his heav'n.
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.**

FOURTH READING

Talking about God (Alice Codner)

What are the right words for talking about
God?

Words that are fervent or glib evaporate in
the morning sun;
Even 'he' or 'she' is already far away.

When I say the word 'love' too loudly I miss
The soles of my feet on solid ground
Plunging my fingers into fresh soil
And the life-oxygen that circulates my body
bringing
tenderness, the flexibility of limbs relaxing,
Eyes meeting eyes that really see, really
look.

Please do not tell me to pray every day
Or fill my head with lists of requirements
Because they have nothing to do with
The surprise of happenings closer than my
own mind
that are quiet, as deep as my belly
and as sporadic as snow.

What are the right words for talking about
God?

Stories that vanish beneath the force of
certainty

Images that cannot be held
softening,

an evening primrose unfurling at sunset,
a child vulnerable when the outburst is over,
the settling of sand in water,
an out-breath,

Earth,

Word,

Being,

Whisper,

Nearness,

Silence.

CHOIR: *Jesus Christ The Apple Tree*
(Elizabeth Poston 1905-1987)

ADDRESS

The Revd Dr Mariama Ifode-Blease

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

[Tune: Henry T. Smart (1867); Words:
James Montgomery (1816)]

**Angels from the realms of glory,
wing your flight o'er all the earth;
ye who sang creation's story
now proclaim the Messiah's birth:**

***Come and worship
Christ, the new-born King:
come and worship,
worship Christ, the new-born King.***

**Shepherds, in the field abiding,
watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing,
yonder shines the infant Light:**

**Sages, leave your contemplations;
brighter visions beam afar:
seek the great Desire of Nations;
ye have seen his natal star:**

**Saints before the altar bending,
watching long in hope and fear,
suddenly the Lord, descending,
in his temple shall appear:**

**Though an infant now we view him,
he shall fill his Father's throne,
gather all the nations to him;
ev'ry knee shall then bow down:**

FIFTH READING

***The Birth of Jesus* (Luke 2.1-15)**

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.'

CHOIR: *The Lamb*

(John Taverner 1944-2013)

SIXTH READING

The Soul's Deepest Desire

(Hugh St Victor)

What is that sweet thing that comes sometimes to touch me at the thought of God? It affects me with such vehemence and sweetness that I begin wholly to go out of myself and to be lifted up, whither I know not. Suddenly I am renewed and changed;

it is a state of inexpressible well-being.
My consciousness rejoices. I lose the
memory of my former trials, my soul
rejoices, my mind becomes clearer, my
heart is enflamed, my desires are satisfied.
I feel myself transported into a new place,
I know not where. I grasp something
interiorly as if with the embraces of love.
I do not know what it is, and yet I strive with
all my strength to hold it and not to lose it.
I struggle deliciously to prevent myself
leaving this thing which I desire to embrace
forever, and I exult with ineffable intensity,
as if I had at last found the goal of all my
desires. I seek for nothing more. I wish for
nothing more.

All my aspiration is to continue at the point
that I have reached. Is it my Beloved?
Tell me, I pray thee, if this be he, that,
when he return, I may conjure him not to
depart, and to establish in me his
permanent dwelling place? That indeed is
what I desire, what I choose; that is what I
long for from the depths of my heart.

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

[Tune: Humility; Words: Edward Caswell
(1814-1878) alt.]

**See, amid the winter's snow,
born for us on earth below,
see, the tender Lamb appears,
promised from eternal years.**

***Hail, thou ever-blessèd morn,
hail, redemption's happy dawn.
Sing through all Jerusalem,
Christ is born in Bethlehem.***

**Lo, within a manger lies
he who built the starry skies;
he, who, throned in heights sublime,
sits amid the cherubim.**

**Say, you holy shepherds, say,
what your joyful news today?
Wherefore have you left your sheep
on the lonely mountain steep?**

'As we watched at dead of night,

**there appeared a wondrous light:
angels, singing "Peace on earth,"
told us of the Saviour's birth.'**

**Sacred infant, all divine,
what a tender love was thine,
thus to come from highest bliss,
down to such a world as this!**

**Virgin mother, Mary, blest,
by the joys that fill thy breast,
pray for us, that we may prove
worthy of the Saviour's love.**

SEVENTH READING

***The Purity of Angels* (Brian O'Leary)**

In the understanding of the medieval
tradition the angelic life is composed of
contemplation and ministry. The purity of
the angels is a stance of openness towards
God (contemplation), and openness to
God's will (ministry). It combines a loving
readiness or availability to be constantly
before God's throne, in God's presence,
and also to go anywhere and do anything at
God's request. And yet, even in ministry,
even when sent abroad, the angels never
depart from God's presence. Angels are the
perfect 'contemplatives in action'.

CHOIR: *Coventry Carol* (Traditional)

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

[Music: English folk carol arr. Adrian Vernon
Fish; Words: traditional]

**The holly and the ivy,
when they are both full grown,
of all 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 all in the choir.***

**The holly bears a blossom,
as white as lily flow'r,
and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
to be our dear 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 the gall,
and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
for to redeem us all.**

**The holly and the ivy,
when they are both full grown,
of all trees that are in the wood,
the holly bears the crown.**

EIGHTH READING

Iona (Sarah Legrand)

If there is a God
I don't think she would mind
That though this morning,
I meant to go to Morning Prayer,
When it came to it, I cycled on north,
past the Abbey's pilgrims,
past the flock of starlings turning
in the breeze, down to the end of the road,
left my bike and walked on
through the dunes - barefoot now,
feeling the spring of grass, crunch of shells,
the soft slime of bladderwrack;
Saw Mull curtained by silver folds of rain,
the clouds breaking to the west and the sun
shining full on the Dutchman's Cap.
She might have followed as I walked
into the cool green water - turned my head
to see a dolphin break the surface,
Just as she'd pointed out
the stately glide of the snail on the gatepost,
And the way the light fell
At north-north-east, scattering into red
And green and blue.

CHOIR:

Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day
(John Gardner 1917-2011)

NINTH READING

The Word of God (John 1.1-14)

Please stand.

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 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 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 children of God, even to them that believe on his name: who 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.

This is the Gospel of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

Please remain standing.

A collection will be taken to help with the work of St James's. If you are a UK taxpayer, please consider using the Gift Aid envelope to increase the value of your gift. We are grateful for all who contribute to our common life with their time and in other ways. If you do not have cash with you, please visit www.sjp.org.uk/donate, or use one of the tap donation points in the church.

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

[Charles Wesley (1707-1788), George

Whitefield (1714-1770), Martin Madan
(1726-1790) and others, alt.]

**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 us 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 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 new born King.***

THE BLESSING

CHRISTMAS SERVICES AT ST JAMES'S CHURCH

Carols for Shoppers

Tuesday 21st December at 5.30pm

Come and hear the Christmas story in
scripture, poetry and carols, with music from
Vigala Singers and musicians from the
Royal College of Music Junior Department

Christmas Eve Carols

Friday 24th December at 4pm

Children and families are especially
welcome

Midnight Mass

Friday 24th December at 11.45pm

All are welcome to our midnight Eucharist
with carols

Christmas Day Eucharist

Saturday 25th December at 11am

Join us to celebrate Christ's birth at
Christmas