



St James's
PICCADILLY

Blue Christmas

**Sunday 10th December 2023
at 3pm**

With a congregation in the church
and live on YouTube



Welcome to St James's Church. Whether you are with us in person or joining us online, you are very welcome.

All ground floor pews are free seating, but social distancing is being observed on the side pews 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.

Music before the service played by Dominic Stokes.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

HYMN

[Tune: Trad. Irish Melody; Words: William Young Fullerton (1857-1932) alt.]

**I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship,
should set his love upon us, now or then,
or why, as Shepherd, he should seek the wanderers,
to bring them back, they know not how or when.
But this I know, that he was born of Mary,
when Bethlem's manger was his only home,
and that he lived at Nazareth and laboured,
and so the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is come.**

**I cannot tell how silently he suffered,
as with his peace he graced this place of tears,
or how his heart upon the cross was broken,
the crown of pain to three-and-thirty years.
But this I know, he heals the broken-hearted,
and stays our sin, and calms our lurking fear,
and lifts the burden from the heavy-laden,
for yet the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is here.**

I cannot tell how he will win the nations,
how he will claim his earthly heritage,
how satisfy the needs and aspirations
of east and west, of sinner and of sage.
But this I know, all flesh shall see his glory,
and he shall reap the harvest he has sown,
and some glad day his sun shall shine in splendour,
when he the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is known.

I cannot tell how all the lands shall worship,
when at his bidding every storm is stilled,
or who can say how great the jubilation
when every human heart with love is filled.
But this I know, the skies will thrill with rapture,
and myriad, myriad human voices sing,
and earth to heaven, and heaven to earth, will answer:
'the Saviour comes to us, God's grace and peace to bring.'

Acknowledging the darkness

FIRST READING

Psalm 42

As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.
When shall I come and behold
the face of God?
My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me continually,
"Where is your God?"

These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng,
and led them in procession to the house of God,
with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,
a multitude keeping festival.

Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.

My soul is cast down within me;
therefore I remember you
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,
from Mount Mizar.

Deep calls to deep
at the thunder of your cataracts;
all your waves and your billows
have gone over me.

By day the Lord commands his steadfast love,
and at night his song is with me,
a prayer to the God of my life.

I say to God, my rock,
"Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I walk about mournfully
because the enemy oppresses me?"

As with a deadly wound in my body,
my adversaries taunt me,
while they say to me continually,
"Where is your God?"

Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.

Silence is kept.

LIGHTING OF ADVENT CANDLES

We light our first candle:

a single light that the deepest darkness cannot conquer;
small, seemingly insignificant but a sign of hope.

**Let it speak to us of the tiny flame of hope within us -
the stubborn little light that refuses to be extinguished by all
that life has thrown at it.**

We light our second candle:

a companion to the first; equally small,
equally insignificant,
but witnessing to hope that another light brings.

**Let it speak to us of the sureness of morning, of the passing
of darkness and suffering, and the promise of an eternal
sunrise still to come, though we may yet be in that darkest
hour before the dawn.**

TAIZÉ CHANT

**Within our darkest night,
you kindle the fire that never dies away, that never dies away.
Within our darkest night,
you kindle the fire that never dies way, that never dies away.**

Silence is kept.

PRAYER

We pray for all those who experience the absence of God in their lives this night and for those fearful of believing that God may yet come.

Spirit of God, calm the turmoil in our souls so that we can hear your still small voice.

Naming the darkness

SECOND READING

Into the darkest hour *by Madeleine L'Engle*

It was a time like this,
War & tumult of war,
a horror in the air.
Hungry yawned the abyss-
and yet there came the star
and the child most wonderfully there.

It was time like this
of fear & lust for power,
license & greed and blight-
and yet the Prince of bliss,
came into the darkest hour
in quiet and silent light.

And in a time like this
how celebrate his birth
when all things fall apart?
Ah! Wonderful it is
with no room on the earth
the stable is our heart.

SONG

Tears In Heaven - music and lyrics by Eric Clapton

Silence is kept.

PRAYER

We pray for all those who grieve this night,
for those who lament all that used to be and cannot be
anymore after the loss of a loved one, a home, a job or a
cause.

**Spirit of God, comfort all who mourn and sustain them in their
loss.**

TAIZÉ CHANT

**Our darkness is never darkness in your sight.
The deepest night is clear as the daylight.**

THIRD READING

Isaiah 9.27

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 onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this

Silence is kept.

PRAYER

We pray for all those who are homeless,
lonely at home or far from home this Christmas,
for the cold and hungry,
and all who feel they are on the outside looking in.

**Spirit of God,
surround us with your presence and your peace,
and comfort all who feel abandoned, forsaken or forgotten.**

Looking for the light

HYMN

[Tune: Christ, be our light; Words: Bernadette Farrell (b. 1957)]

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.

Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts,
shine in the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has power to save us.
Make us your living voice.

Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.

Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.

Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.

FOURTH READING

Revelation 21.1-17

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

'See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples,

and God himself will be with them;

he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;

mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away.'

And the one who was seated on the throne said,

'See, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this,

for these words are trustworthy and true.' Then he said to me,

'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and

the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring

of the water of life. Those who conquer will inherit these

things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

SONG

***Somewhere** - music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim
and Leonard Bernstein*

Silence is kept.

PRAYER and TAIZÉ CHANT

O, Lord hear my prayer
O, Lord hear my prayer
When I call answer me
O, Lord hear my prayer
Oh, Lord hear my prayer
Come and listen to me

Silence is kept.

We pray for those who cannot give voice or words to the trauma they have suffered and the pain they still feel.

Spirit of God, accept the silence of our worship and heal our hurting hearts.

The Light of the World

FIFTH READING

Come, God-with-us

Come, God-with-us:
who braves our rejection and hurt, who holds us in acceptance and love.

Come, God-for-us:
who whispers in our ears
that we - each of us -
are beloved children.

Come, God-under-us:
who cradles us in arms that never grow weary;
whose heart has room enough for all.

Come, God-over-us:
who watches in the long silence of the night, that we might
rest in peace.

Come, God-beside-us:
who steadies us when we falter,
who lifts up us when we fall.

Come, God-behind-us:
who picks up all the faded dreams we drop along the way
and patchworks them into hope.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,
God-with-us
today and every day.

SONG

***When You Believe** - music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz*

We light and hold our candles.

THE GOSPEL

John 1.1-14

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.

CAROL

[Tune: Noel; Words: Edmund Hamilton Sears]

**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, goodwill to all,
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 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.**

**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 warring humankind hears not
the love-song which they bring:
O hush the noise of mortal strife,
and hear the angels sing!**

**For lo, the days are hastening on,
by prophets seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years
comes round the age of gold;
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendours fling,
and all the world send back the song
which now the angels sing.**

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy God of Advent,
you became weak so we would find strength in moments of
heartbreak;
you left the safety of heaven to wander the wilderness of the
world, holding our hands when we feel hopeless;
you set aside your glory to hold our pain so we might be
healed, even when there seems to be no hope;
you became one of us,
so we would never be alone in any moment,
in any circumstance.

**So come now,
Child of Bethlehem,
to strengthen us in these days.**

**May we feel your presence in a way we have never known,
not just as one born in a stable long ago and far away
but as the One born in our hearts.**

You have promised to go before us:
into our brokenness, into hospital rooms, into empty houses,
into refugee camps, into warzones, into graveyards,
into our future held by God,

**and you are here, even now, waiting for each of us:
to serve us, to hold us, to comfort us, to heal us,
to live in us,
now and forever.
Amen.**

THE BLESSING

Music after the service is played by Dominic Stokes.



There will be a retiring collection after the service - all proceeds to aid the ministry of St James's Church. If you do not have cash with you, please scan this QR code with your smartphone to make a one-off or regular donation.

Alternatively, please visit sjp.org.uk/donate, or use one of the tap donation points in the church.



Please join us for refreshments after the service and, if needed, a listening ear.



Together, this Christmas, we can make a real difference in the lives of people who are struggling. St James's Piccadilly and The Passage, a leading homelessness charity in Westminster, have joined forces to bring warmth, hope, and comfort to those experiencing homelessness in our community. Your support will provide shelter, hot meals and vital services during this cold season.

Please, today as you read this, open your hearts and donate to our Christmas appeal. Every single gift, large or small, makes a real difference to the lives of those experiencing homelessness across the festive season.

Your gift of £5 could directly provide a hot meal to someone experiencing homelessness, served in the church itself to anyone who needs it. Your gift of £50 will help provide free counselling, warm clothes, advice and support.

Ways to donate:

Text ALL followed by your donation amount to 70490 to give that amount (e.g. ALL 10 to donate £10). Texts will cost the donation amount plus one standard network rate message.

Use one of the contactless giving devices located in the church. You may also see these in local shops and offices: please don't feel as if you can give only once...!

Visit the **Christmas for All** page on our website using this QR code:

