



St James's
PICCADILLY



Festival of Lessons and Carols

**Sunday 17th December 2023
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.

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.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Please stand.

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

[Words: Aurelius Clemens Prudentius (348-413) tr. John Mason Neale (1818-1866); Tune: Corde Natus, Plainsong melody adpt. by Theodoricus Petrus in *Piae Cantiones* (1582)]

**Of the Father's heart begotten,
ere the world began to be,
he is Alpha and Omega,
he the source, the ending he,
of the things that are, that have been,
and that future years shall see
evermore and evermore.**

**O that birth for ever blessed
when the virgin, full of grace,
by the Holy Ghost conceiving
bore the saviour of our race,
and the babe, the world's redeemer,
first revealed his sacred face,
evermore and evermore.**

**This is he whom seers and sages
sang of old with one accord,
whom the voices of the prophets,
promised in their faithful word;
now he shines, the long-expected:
let creation praise its Lord
evermore and evermore.**

**In the heights of heaven adore him,
angel hosts his praises sing,
all dominions bow before him
and extol our God and King;
let no tongue on earth be silent,
every voice in concert sing
evermore and evermore.**

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Revd Dr Ayla Lepine

FIRST READING

Luke 1.26-38

God invites Mary to become the Mother of Jesus.

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.

CHOIR

Ukrainian Carol Of The Bells

Peter J. Wilhousky and Mykola Leontovich

Please stand.

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

Tune: Noel; Words: Edmund Hamilton Sears (1810-1876)]

**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.

SECOND READING

The Annunciation by Rainer Maria Rilke

The angel's entrance (you must realize)
was not what made her frightened. The surprise
he gave her by his coming was no more
than sun or moon-beam stirring on the floor
would give another, – she had long since grown
used to the form that angels wear, descending;

never imaging this coming-down
was hard for them. (O it's past comprehending,
how pure she was. Did not one day, a hind
that rested in a wood, watchfully staring,
feel her deep influence, and did it not
conceive the unicorn, then, without pairing,
the pure beast, beast which light begot, –)
No, not to see him enter, but to find
the youthful angel's countenance inclined
so near to her; that when he looked, and she
looked up at him, their looks so merged in one
the world outside grew vacant, suddenly,
and all things being seen, endured and done
were crowded into them: just she and he
eye and its pasture, visions and its view,
here at the point and at this point alone:-
see, this arouses fear. Such fear both knew.

CHOIR

Jesus Christ The Apple Tree

Words: Divine Hymns or Spiritual Songs, New Hampshire
1784; music by Elizabeth Poston (1905-1987)

THIRD READING

Luke 1.39-56

Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth.

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of

your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.'

And Mary said,
'My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.'

And Mary remained with her for about three months and then returned to her home.

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

[Tune: TROEGAR by Mark A. Miller (b.1967); Words: Thomas H. Troegar (1945-2022)]

[Choir only]

Will the angels sing this year
and the shepherds wake to hear?
Will the star send out its light
and the magi brave the night?
Will the star send out its light
and the magi brave the night?

[All]

**Will the angels sing this year
and the shepherds wake to hear?
Will the star send out its light
and the magi brave the night?
Will the star send out its light
and the magi brave the night?**

**Will the oxen and the sheep
give the child a bed to sleep?
Will the family flee in time
from King Herod's vicious crime?
Will the family flee in time
from King Herod's vicious crime?**

**Will we dare to hope and trust
that in darkness and in dust,
in a world this bruised and torn,
God's great love for us is born?
In a world this bruised and torn,
God's great love for us is born?**

FOURTH READING

Luke 2.1-16

Jesus is born in Bethlehem.

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

In Bethlehem Above

Words and music by Yshani Perinpanayagam (b.1983)

FIFTH READING

What the Donkey Saw by U. A. Fanthorpe

No room in the inn, of course,
And not that much in the stable
What with the shepherds, Magi, Mary,
Joseph, the heavenly host -
Not to mention the baby
Using our manger as a cot.
You couldn't have squeezed another cherub in
For love or money.

Still, in spite of the overcrowding,
I did my best to make them feel wanted.
I could see the baby and I
Would be going places together.

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.'

Refrain

*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.

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.

SIXTH READING

Matthew 2.1-12

The magi are led by the star to Jesus.

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.

CHOIR

Sussex Carol

Trad. arranged David Willcocks (1919-2015)

SEVENTH READING

**Gospel Christmas Homily, Washington National Cathedral,
23 December 2022 (excerpt) – Kelly Brown Douglas**

We have hearts that hold our deepest feelings of hurt and sorrow. We have hearts that hold our deepest feelings of happiness and joy. Hearts that hold our deepest desires to be loved and to love. And so as long as we each have a beating, beating heart, then this I know to be true. We have the capacity to empathize with the feelings of another. We have the capacity to sympathize with the wants and wounds of another. We have the utter capacity to have compassion for the struggles and strivings of another. And thus we have the God-given capacity to love one another.

And she gave birth to her firstborn son and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn. The Marys and Josephs come to us on this night with children in tow fleeing war, fleeing oppression, fleeing famine. Looking for refuge, looking for welcome, looking for open hearts. Yet there is no room for them in the inns of our land ... We are people with heart. We can be more loving than this.

CHOIR

The Lamb

Words by William Blake (1757-1827)

Music by John Tavener (1944-2013)

EIGHTH READING

Amazing Peace: A Christmas Poem (excerpt) by Maya Angelou

It is Christmas time, a halting of hate time.
On this platform of peace, we can create a language
To translate ourselves to ourselves and to each other.

At this Holy Instant, we celebrate the Birth of Jesus Christ
Into the great religions of the world.
We jubilate the precious advent of trust.
We shout with glorious tongues at the coming of hope.
All the earth's tribes loosen their voices
To celebrate the promise of Peace.
We, Angels and Mortal's, Believers and Non-Believers,
Look heavenward and speak the word aloud.
Peace. We look at our world and speak the word aloud.
Peace. We look at each other, then into ourselves
And we say without shyness or apology or hesitation.
Peace, My Brother.
Peace, My Sister.
Peace, My Soul.

*During the final two carols, a collection will be taken for St James's **Christmas for All** appeal. An opportunity for cash or tap donations will be passed around the congregation. £5, £10, £15 or more will make a huge difference to the work St James's does with people who need a listening ear, hot food or clothing at this time of year and will support music and arts education programmes too. Please also use the QR code on page 18.*

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

[Words: St Germanus, tr. John Mason Neale]

**A great and mighty wonder,
a full and holy cure!
The Virgin bears the infant
with virgin-honour pure:**

Refrain:

Repeat the hymn again!

***"To God on high be glory,
and peace on earth shall reign".***

**The Word becomes incarnate,
and yet remains on high;
and cherubim sing anthems
to shepherds from the sky:**

**While thus they sing your monarch,
those bright angelic bands,
rejoice, ye vales and mountains,
ye oceans, clap your hands:**

**Since all he comes to ransom
by all be he adored,
the infant born in Bethl'em,
the Saviour and the Lord:**

Please remain standing for the Gospel.

NINTH READING

John 1.1-14

John unfolds 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.

This is the Gospel of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

Please remain standing.

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

[Tune: Adeste fideles; Words: John Francis Wade (1710-1786)]

**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:**

Refrain:

***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:

See how the shepherds,
summoned to his cradle,
leaving their flocks, draw nigh with lowly fear;
we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps:

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

THE BLESSING

Please join us for mince pies and refreshments after the service.



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:



Christmas Day Lunch and Request for Volunteers

Monday 25th December at 1pm

On Christmas Day after the Eucharist, we welcome everyone to a community lunch in the church. There will be turkey and vegetarian options, served with all the trimmings. No need to book, just turn up!



If you would like to help prepare the lunch, please email Debbie at springlering@hotmail.com

A vegetable 'Chopathon' will be held on Sunday 24th December c.1-4pm.

Helpers will also be needed on Christmas Day, for setting up, serving, and clearing up.

Christmas lunch costs £8-£10 per head (for 100-120 guests). If you would like to make a donation towards the cost of the lunch, that would be wonderful and deeply appreciated. You can do this online at www.sjp.org.uk/giving or with cash or contactless payment in church, and if you would like to ask any questions or let us know about your donation, please email associaterector@sjp.org.uk

Christmas 2023 at St James's Church

Carols for Shoppers

Tuesday 19th Dec at 2.30pm and 5.30pm

Join young musicians and singers from the Royal College of Music as the Christmas story is told in scripture, poetry, and carols. Tickets at www.eventbrite.com

Search 'Carols for Shoppers'.

Carols for All: Saturday 23rd Dec at 1pm

Sing along with the St James's Singers and trumpet to get into the festive spirit. Tickets at www.eventbrite.com

Search 'Carols for All'

Christmas Eve Carols: Sunday 24th Dec at 4pm

The Christmas story with choir, trumpet and congregational carols.

Midnight Mass: Sunday 24th Dec at 11.30pm

All are welcome to our midnight Eucharist with carols.

Christmas Day Eucharist: Monday 25th Dec at 11am

Join us for our Christmas Day Eucharist with carols, followed by lunch in the church.

