



St James's  
PICCADILLY

# Blue Christmas

**Sunday 8th December  
2024 at 3pm**

With a congregation in the church  
and live on YouTube



## ORDER OF SERVICE

### 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**

*The church lights are dimmed.*

#### **FIRST READING**

**Psalm 22** (excerpt)

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from helping me,  
from the words of my groaning?  
O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;  
and by night, but find no rest. ...  
Do not be far from me,  
for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

*Silence is kept.*

#### **LIGHTING OF ADVENT CANDLES**

We light our first candle:  
a single light that the deepest darkness cannot conquer;  
small, but a sign of hope.

**Let it speak to us of the 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,  
but witnessing to hope that another light brings.

**Let it speak to us of the sureness of morning,  
of the passing of suffering,  
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

*Lullaby (Goodnight My Angel) - Billy Joel*

*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 lonely at home or far from home  
this Christmas,  
for all who are 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**

*Song of Ruth (Wherever you go)*

*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**

*No One is Alone (from **Into the Woods**)- by Stephen Sondheim.*

*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

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

### **Music Scholars Christmas Concert**

TODAY - Sunday 8th December at 7pm

Featuring the SJP Singing and Instrumental Scholars directed by Michael Haslam.



Join us for a programme of Christmas music including works by Hildegard of Bingen, Avril Coleridge Taylor, Eleanor Daley, Francis Poulenc, Peter Warlock, Kerensa Briggs, Harrison Knights and Michael Haslam.

Wine and mince pies will be served after the concert.

Tickets at: [www.sjp.org.uk/whats-on/st-jamess-music-scholars-christmas-concert/](http://www.sjp.org.uk/whats-on/st-jamess-music-scholars-christmas-concert/)



## Let's make Christmas special for all

Since this church was built in 1684, generations of Londoners and visitors have gathered to celebrate Christmas here. We often use words like 'home' and 'family' when we talk about Christmas, as people gather to celebrate with love and joy.

For many, this season is not a joyful or an easy time. For many, homelessness or heartbreak make Christmas difficult to celebrate.

St James's supports thousands of people every year, providing warmth and offering comfort to those who need it most. Most importantly, we welcome all into the community at St James's. We invite everyone to support the work of St James's this Christmas alongside people of all faiths and none. Your donation, whatever you can afford, will help us bring joy and hope into every heart this winter, together.

### Ways to donate:

Using your phone, text the word ALL£10 to the number **70490**

Tap your card on a contactless giving device located in the church.

Visit our website at:

[www.sjp.org.uk/christmas](http://www.sjp.org.uk/christmas)

or scan this code QR code.



## Christmas 2024 at St James's Church

### Carols for All: Saturday 14th, Wednesday 18th, Friday 20th, and Saturday 21st Dec at 1.10pm

Sing along with the St James's Singers and brass ensemble to get into the festive spirit. Tickets at [www.sjp.org.uk/christmas/](http://www.sjp.org.uk/christmas/)

### Festival of Lessons and Carols: Sunday 15th Dec at 6pm

All are welcome to join the parish carol service with scripture, poetry, and music from our Lay Singers and Music Scholars.

### Christmas by Candlelight: Sunday 15th Dec at 8pm

Popular carols and festive music with St James's Singers and brass ensemble. Tickets at [www.sjp.org.uk/christmas/](http://www.sjp.org.uk/christmas/)

### Carols for Shoppers

#### Tuesday 17th 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.sjp.org.uk/christmas/](http://www.sjp.org.uk/christmas/)

### Christmas Eve Carols: Tuesday 24th Dec at 4pm

The Christmas story with choir, trumpets and congregational carols.

### Midnight Mass: Tuesday 24th Dec at 11.30pm

All are welcome to our midnight Eucharist with carols.

### Christmas Day Eucharist: Wednesday 25th Dec at 11am

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

