



St James's
PICCADILLY



Festival of Lessons and Carols

**Sunday 15th December 2024
at 6pm**

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 online, you are very welcome.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Please stand.

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

Solo:

Once in royal David's city
stood a lowly cattle shed,
where a mother laid her baby
in a manger for his bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little child.

**He came down to earth from heaven,
who is God and Lord of all,
and his shelter was a stable,
and his cradle was a stall;
with the poor and mean and lowly,
lived on earth our Saviour holy.**

**And our eyes at last shall see him
through his own redeeming love,
for that child so dear and gentle
is our Lord in heav'n above;
and he leads his children on
to the place where he is gone.**

**Not in that poor lowly stable,
with the oxen standing by,
we shall see him; but in heaven,**

**set at God's right hand on high;
there his children gather round
bright like stars, in glory crowned.**

Please sit.

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

Advent "O" Carol

Words and Music by Joanna Forbes L'Estrange

SECOND 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.

Please stand.

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

**The Angel Gabriel from heaven came,
his wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;
'All hail,' said he, 'thou lowly maiden, Mary,
most highly favoured lady.'
Gloria!**

**'For known a blessed Mother thou shalt be,
all generations laud and honour thee,
thy son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold;
most highly favoured lady.'
Gloria!**

**Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,
'To me be as it pleaseth God,' she said,
'My soul shall laud and magnify his holy name:'
most highly favoured lady!
Gloria!**

Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ, was born
in Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,
and Christian folk throughout the world will ever say,
'Most highly favoured lady.'
Gloria!

Please sit.

CHOIR

In The Bleak Midwinter

Words: Christina Rosetti; Music: Harold Darke

THIRD READING

I Saw a Stable, Low and Very Bare

by Mary Elizabeth Coleridge

I saw a stable, low and very bare,
A little child in a manger.
The oxen knew Him, had Him in their care,
To men He was a stranger,
The safety of the world was lying there,
And the world's danger.

Please stand.

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

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.

Please sit.

FOURTH READING

Luke 2.1-7

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.

Please stand.

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

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

Refrain:

***The rising of the sun
and the running of the deer,
the playing of the merry organ,
sweet singing in the choir.***

**The holly bears a blossom,
white as the lily flow'r,**

and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
to be our sweet 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 any 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 the trees that are in the wood
the holly bears the crown.

Please sit.

FIFTH READING

Luke 2.8-20

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

Carol of the Bells

Words and Music Peter J. Wilhousky and Mykola Leontovich

SIXTH READING

Don't Hesitate

by Mary Oliver

If you suddenly and unexpectedly feel joy,
don't hesitate. Give in to it. There are plenty
of lives and whole towns destroyed or about
to be. We are not wise, and not very often
kind. And much can never be redeemed.
Still, life has some possibility left. Perhaps this
is its way of fighting back, that sometimes
something happens better than all the riches
or power in the world. It could be anything,
but very likely you notice it in the instant

when love begins. Anyway, that's often the case.
Anyway, whatever it is, don't be afraid
of its plenty. Joy is not made to be a crumb.

CHOIR

A Tender Shoot

Words and Music by Kerensa Briggs

SEVENTH 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.

ADDRESS

The Revd Dr Mariama Ifode-Blease

CHOIR

Ding! Dong! Merrily on High

Words: G.R. Woodward; Music: 16th-century French Carol arranged by Mack Wilberg.

EIGHTH READING

Black Liturgies (excerpt)

by Cole Arthur Riley

It can feel foolish to pause to marvel
at the stars when the world is burning.
Or to find the world beautiful when
you've known it to betray you.

But wonder is a liberation practice.
A reminder that we contain more than
tragedy. Beauty is our origin and our
anchor.

Please stand 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.

*During the final two carols, a collection will be taken for St James's **Christmas for All** appeal.*

Opportunity for cash or tap donations will be passed around the congregation. £10, £20 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 16.

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

**Joy to the world! The Lord is come;
let earth receive her King;
let ev'ry heart prepare him room
and heav'n and nature sing
and heav'n and nature sing
and heav'n, and heav'n, and nature sing!**

**Joy to the earth! The Saviour reigns;
let us our songs employ;
while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
repeat the sounding joy
repeat the sounding joy
repeat, repeat the sounding joy!**

**Christ rules the earth with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love
and wonders of his love
and wonders, and wonders of his love.**

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

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



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

or scan this code QR code.

