

**Bidding prayer**  
**Welcome to St Mary and St Margaret MU Carol service.**  
**Thank you for joining us.**

We have come together as the family of God, in our Father's presence, to celebrate the great festival of Christmas. Today we hear and receive the good news of the birth of Christ and we offer to God our thanksgiving in the joyful singing of carols.

As we gather together in the name of Christ, we pray for the world he came to save: for the Church, that it may be enabled in our generation to surrender anew to God's holy Wisdom, and bear the good news of God's love to a needy world; for the world, which is already Christ's, that all its peoples may recognize their responsibility for its future, and may be inspired by the message of Christmas to work together for the establishment of justice, freedom and peace everywhere; for all in special need, the sick, the anxious, the lonely, the fearful and the bereaved, that the peace and light of the Christ-child may bring hope and healing to all who sit in darkness.

We pray especially today in these strange times for the global effect the Covid virus has had, here at home and abroad. We ask Jesus to lead us forward in his light. We commend all whom we love, or who have asked for our prayers, to the unfailing mercy of our heavenly Father, and say together, as Christ himself taught us:

*The Lord's Prayer is said.*

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread,  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.

## Carol; Once In Royal David's City

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 needy, poor, and lowly,  
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.

For he is our childhood's pattern;  
Day by day, like us he grew;  
He was little, weak and helpless,  
Tears and smiles like us he knew;  
And he feeleth for our sadness,  
And he shareth in our gladness.

And our eyes at last shall see him,  
Through his own redeeming love;  
For that Child so dear and gentle  
Is our Lord in heaven 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;  
When like stars His children crowned  
All in white shall wait around.

Cecil Francis Alexander (1818-95)

## The prophets and the patriarchs (3 readings)

FIRST LESSON Genesis 22:15-18

*God promises to faithful Abraham that in his seed shall the nations of the earth be blessed*

The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, "By myself I have sworn, says the LORD: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore.

And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice."

Thanks be to God

**SECOND LESSON Micah 5:2-4**

*God promises a ruler from Bethlehem*

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labour gives birth and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites.

He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.

Thanks be to God

THIRD LESSON - Isaiah 9: 2; 6-7

*Christ's birth and kingdom are foretold by Isaiah*

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.

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named  
Wonderful Counselor, 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.  
Thanks be to God

### **Carol; It came upon the midnight clear**

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, good will to men,  
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 heavenly music floats  
O’er all the weary world;  
Above its sad and lowly plains,  
They bend on hovering wing,  
And ever o’er its Babel sounds  
The blessed angels sing.

For lo! the days are hastening on,  
By prophets long foretold  
When with the ever circling years  
Comes round the age of gold;  
When peace shall over all the earth  
Its ancient splendour fling,  
And all the world send back the song  
Which now the angels sing.

E H Sears (1810-76)

## The Annunciation (1 reading)

FOURTH LESSON Luke 1: 26–35; 38

*The angel Gabriel salutes the Blessed Virgin Mary*

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."

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. Thanks be to God

### Poem – The Angel Gabriel

The Angel Gabriel by Mary Wimser

The angel Gabriel  
Flew down from above,  
To teach me a lesson  
About the powers of love.

He whispered to me,  
Then took hold of my hand,  
There are so many things  
For you to understand.

About the powers of love,  
And all it can do,  
To someone who needs  
To share it with you.

A pat on the back,  
A kind smile on your face,  
Can make someone's life,  
A much brighter place.

It doesn't take much,  
To show someone you care,  
To give them the love,  
God gave you to share.

So please keep in mind,  
All the powers you possess,  
To grace someone's life,  
When they're in distress.

You've been put on this earth  
To bestow the powers of love,  
And with those final words,  
He disappeared up above.

## **Jesus's birth (2 readings)**

FIFTH LESSON Matthew 1:18-23

**St Matthew tells of the birth of Jesus**

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" -- which means, "God with us."

Thanks be to God

**SIXTH LESSON Luke 2: 1; 3**

*Christ born of Mary*

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.

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. Thanks be to God

**Carol; 'O Holy Night' sung by Sue Bates**

## **The Shepherds and the Wise Men (2 readings)**

**SEVENTH LESSON Luke 2: 8-16**

*The shepherds go to the manger*

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 Savior, 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 favors!"

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. Thanks be to God

EIGHTH LESSON Matthew 2: 1-12

*The Wise men 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.

Thanks be to God

## Carol; The First Nowell

The first Nowell the angel did say  
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;  
in fields where they lay, keeping their sheep,  
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.  
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,  
born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a star  
shining in the east beyond them far,  
and to the earth it gave great light,  
and so it continued both day and night.  
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,  
born is the King of Israel

And by the light of that same star  
three wise men came from country far;  
to seek for a king was their intent,  
and to follow the star wherever it went.  
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,  
born is the King of Israel

This star drew nigh to the northwest,  
o'er Bethlehem it took its rest,  
and there it did both stop and stay  
right over the place where Jesus lay.  
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,  
born is the King of Israel

Then entered in those wise men three  
full reverently upon their knee,  
and offered there in his presence  
their gold, and myrrh, and frankincense.  
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,  
born is the King of Israel

Words: traditional English carol, seventeenth century

# The Incarnation

## **NINTH LESSON John 1: 1-14**

*St 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. Thanks be to God

## **Carol Hark the Herald Angels Sing**

Hark the herald angels sing  
"Glory to the newborn King!  
Peace on earth and mercy mild  
God and sinners reconciled"  
Joyful, all ye nations rise  
Join the triumph of the skies  
With the angelic host proclaim:  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"  
Hark! The herald angels sing  
"Glory to the newborn 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 the incarnate Deity  
Pleased as man with man to dwell  
Jesus, our Emmanuel  
Hark! The herald angels sing  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail the heaven-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 man no more may die  
Born to raise the sons of earth  
Born to give us second birth  
Hark! The herald angels sing  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Charles Wesley (1743) George Whitfield (1753) Martin Madan (1760),

### **Hymn; O come, all ye faithful,**

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;

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.

O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels,  
Sing in exultation;  
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God, In the highest;

O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
Christ the Lord.

18th century tr. Frederick Oakeley (1802-80)

Thanks to all who took part this afternoon  
Thanks to Martin and Sue  
Special thanks go to Laurie who has worked her magic and sorted this  
online zoom service for us.  
Lastly thanks to those who managed to join us and special love to  
those who are reading this at home.