

*The Benefice of St Mary the Virgin,
Higham Ferrers with St John the Baptist,
Chelveston-cum-Caldecott*

Festival Celebration



for Christmas Day

25th December 2021

Welcome to this Service of Celebration



Christmas is here! We may again find that our celebrations are muted by the continuing Covid threat. This year though, we need to know more than ever that God comes to be with us in the midst of our lives and our world – not a perfect world, but one that is as much in need of redemption and renewal as it was two thousand years ago. The birth of the Christ-Child at Bethlehem that we recall and celebrate in the joy of Mary and

Joseph, the angels and shepherds, renews our wonder in the mystery of the incarnation through which Christ is present with us now. In singing with the angels 'Glory to God in the highest heaven and peace to all the earth' we renew our hope and faith in the good news of salvation for all creation.

Many thanks to all who have helped with this Online Service: members of the Ministry Team and their families and special thanks to Lynda Needle for reading and Sandy Colman & Susie Betts for leading the prayers.

You may like to have a candle ready to light as we begin this service, welcoming the Light of the World born among us today.

The Gathering

At the beginning of the celebration of the First Eucharist of Christmas last night the image of the Christ-child was placed in the crib as we greeted him. Paul leads us in the first part of our service:

Welcome all wonders in one sight!
Eternity shut in a span.
Summer in winter, day in night,
heaven in earth and God in man.

Great little one whose all-embracing birth
brings earth to heaven, stoops heaven to earth.

Carol

**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 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;
where like stars his children crowned
all in white shall wait around.**

Words: Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895)

Music: Henry John Gauntlett (1805-1876)

The Greeting - Fr. Paul

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you
and also with you.

I bring you good news of great joy
A Saviour has been born to us. Alleluia!

Unto us a child is born
Unto us a Son is given. Alleluia!

He is Christ the Lord. Alleluia.
We worship and adore him. Alleluia!

Lighting of the Christ Candle – Brenda & John

*You may like to light a candle at home, as today, we light the Christ
candle on the Advent Wreath in church - the central white candle,
the Christ Candle, for Jesus the Light of the World:*

Jesus said: 'I am the light of the
world.

Whoever follows me will never
walk in darkness
but will have the light of life.'

Jesus Christ is the light of the
world:

**a light no darkness can
quench.**



People of God: sing for joy!
Tell the good news of peace on earth.
All creation bows to the Lord of all,
one with us, yet born to save:
**Lord, bring us today
into Christ's peace, light and love.
Alleluia! Amen!**

The Collect - Linda

Let us pray in the peace of this Christmas celebration that our joy in the birth of Christ will last for ever.

Lord Jesus Christ,
your birth at Bethlehem
draws us to kneel in wonder at heaven touching earth:
accept our heartfelt praise
as we worship you,
our Saviour and our eternal God. **Amen.**

The Liturgy of The Word

First Reading – Isaiah 9:2-7 - *read by Lynda Needle*

A reading from the prophecy of 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.

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
onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do
this.

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 on earth.
For Christ is born of Mary;
and gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wondering love.**

**How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heaven.
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 to us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell:
O come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Emmanuel.**

Words: Phillips Brooks (1835-1893)

Music: English traditional melody



Gospel –Luke 2:1-14 – *read by Lesley*

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

Glory to you, O Lord

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!’

Carol

**While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
all seated on the ground,
the angel of the Lord came down,
and glory shone around.**



**‘Fear not,’ said he, (for mighty dread
had seized their troubled mind);
‘glad tidings of great joy I bring
to you and all mankind.**

**‘To you in David's town this day
is born of David's line
a Saviour who is Christ the Lord;
and this shall be the sign:**

**‘The heavenly babe you there shall find
to human view displayed,
all meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
and in a manger laid.’**

**Thus spake the seraph, and forthwith
appeared a shining throng
of angels praising God, who thus
addressed their joyful song:**

**'All glory be to God on high,
and to the earth be peace;
goodwill henceforth from heaven to men
begin and never cease.'**

*Words: Nahum Tate (1652-1715) based on Luke 2:1-20
Music: Ascribed to George Kirbye (c.1565-1634)*

Reflection - Michelle

Carol

**Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
the stars in the heavens looked down
where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.**

**The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.**

**Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay
close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
and fit us for heaven, to live with thee there.**

Author Unknown Music: William James Kirkpatrick (1838-1921)



Prayers of Intercession led by Sandy Coleman & Susie Betts

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Jesus, whose mother was Mary:
we pray for our families this Christmas,
and remember especially
those who cannot be together this year.

Lord Jesus,
hear our prayer.

Jesus, cradled in a manger:
we pray for all those who are homeless this Christmas,
those who are refugees, and all whose homes
are places of fear or unhappiness.

Lord Jesus,
hear our prayer.

Jesus, sharing the stable with the animals:
we pray for the whole world and the wonder of creation.
Help us to care for all you have made.

Lord Jesus,
hear our prayer.

Jesus, worshipped by shepherds and kings:
we pray for all the people of the world,
for all nations and races, for all who lead that they may
have
integrity, wisdom and compassion.

Lord Jesus,
hear our prayer.

Jesus, our Emmanuel:
we pray for those known to us who need our prayers,
those who are unwell, anxious or lonely,
and all who care for them.

We pray for those who have died in recent days
and for all who mourn loved ones at Christmas.

Lord Jesus,
hear our prayer.

The Lord's Prayer

Rejoicing in the presence of God with us,
as our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name;
Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done;
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
The power, and the glory,
For ever and ever. Amen.**



The Peace - Paul

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given,
and his name shall be called the Prince of
Peace.



The peace of the Lord be always with you
and also with you.

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.



Carol

**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 the angelic host proclaim,
'Christ is born in Bethlehem.'
*Hark! the herald-angels sing
glory to the new-born King.***

**Christ, by highest heaven 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.**

**Hail, the heaven-born Prince of peace!
Hail, the sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
risen 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 them second birth.**

*Words: Charles Wesley (1707-1788) and others
Music: Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-1847)*



Final Prayer - Linda

God our Father,
whose Word has come among us
in the Holy Child of Bethlehem:
may the light of faith illumine our hearts
and shine in our words and deeds;
through him who is Christ the Lord. **Amen.**



Blessing - Michelle

May the joy of the angels,
the eagerness of the shepherds,
the perseverance of the wise men,
the obedience of Mary and Joseph,
and the peace of the Christ-child
be yours this Christmas;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you in this holy season
and remain with you always

Amen.

***Music at the end: We wish you a Merry Christmas,
John Rutter***



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