

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

READINGS & MUSIC
IN PREPARATION FOR CHRISTMAS

ST. FAITH'S CHURCH, MAIDSTONE

WEDNESDAY 23rd DECEMBER 2020
7:30pm

*Led by the Priest-in-Charge
Revd Canon Arthur Houston*

*Music by
The Gundulf Consort*

*Directed by
Douglas Henn-Macrae*

*Assisted by Guest Organist
Philip White-Jones*

*Recorded & edited by
Christopher Toulmin
and
Kenneth Kirk*

“Carols by Candlelight” on the night before Christmas Eve has been a regular feature at St. Faith’s for over 40 years. This year, for the first time ever, we have had to do it without a congregation being physically present. But we hope this “virtual” service will be helpful in your preparations for the Christmas festival.

In 21st-century Britain, Christmas is celebrated principally as a secular and commercial occasion, and this easily overwhelms the distinctive and holy season of Advent, which Christians keep as a time of preparation. Even the spiritual images of light and darkness, day and night, are diminished by our control over physical darkness with artificial light. Most of us who live in cities, towns and villages hardly know what darkness is, and we are largely immune to the spiritual drama of the gift of God’s light shining in that deep darkness which renders our physical sight useless.

For many of us, this year 2020 has been a period of “darkness” in all sorts of ways; but with vaccines on the horizon, there is a glimmer of light at the end of the long tunnel, and the hope that, in the coming months, we may eventually see a return to some sort of what our transatlantic friends call “normalcy”.

Advent is a season of expectation and preparation, as the Church prepares to celebrate the coming (adventus) of Christ in his incarnation, and also looks ahead to his final advent as judge at the end of time. The Four Last Things – Death, Judgement, Heaven and Hell – have been traditional themes for Advent meditation. Yet the journey of our human days, when lit by Christ, leads us not only to death and judgement but also to salvation. The light overcomes the darkness; love conquers fear and death through the love of the crucified and risen Saviour. The characteristic notes of Advent are therefore expectation and hope.

The anticipation of Christmas under commercial pressure has also made it harder to sustain the appropriate sense of alert watchfulness, but the fundamental Advent prayer remains ‘Maranatha’ – ‘Our Lord, come’ (1 Corinthians 16.22).

Traditionally, the Church has enacted our mortal pilgrimage using processions, and in this service we “move” from (geographical) west to east in our journey to Bethlehem. Tonight in prayer we travel through the scriptures towards the coming Christ, the Light of the world - the light that gathers all people into one.

In the northern hemisphere, the Advent season falls at the darkest time of the year, and the natural symbols of darkness and light are powerfully at work throughout Advent and Christmas.

Tonight we include many of the traditional elements of a Christmas carol service – familiar readings, carols and hymns - but we also include some modern and less familiar items (including four monologues written by Mick Gibson of Dartford Community Church, based on the Gospel readings from St Matthew and St Luke) to ensure that we don't get stuck in comfortable ruts and see it all as if through rose-tinted spectacles. The Christmas story – like a puppy – is not just for Christmas; it is for life.

TO BEGIN THE SERVICE, THE CHOIR SINGS:

In the stillness of a church where candles glow,
In the softness of a fall of fresh white snow,
In the brightness of the stars that shine this night,
In the calmness of a pool of healing light,
In the clearness of a choir that softly sings,
In the oneness of a hush of angels' wings,
In the mildness of a night by stable bare,
In the quietness of a lull near cradle fair,
There's a patience as we wait for a new morn,
And the presence of a child soon to be born.

Words: Katrina Shepherd
Music: Sally Beamish (b. 1956)

**WELCOME BY THE PRIEST-IN-CHARGE,
REVD CANON ARTHUR HOUSTON**

BIDDING PRAYER

ALL SAY THE LORD'S PRAYER:

**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.

HYMN:

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, 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, Christ the Lord!

See how the shepherds, summoned to his cradle,
Leaving their flocks, draw nigh with holy fear;
We too will thither bend our joyful footsteps:
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

Lo! Star-led chieftains, Magi, Christ adoring,
Offer him incense, gold and myrrh;
We to the Christ-Child bring our hearts' oblations:
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

Child, for us sinners poor and in the manger,
Fain we embrace thee with awe and love;
Who would not love thee, loving us so dearly?
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above;
Glory to God in the highest:
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

Words: *18th Century, translated from the Latin by
F Oakley, WT Brooke et al.*

Music: *18th Century melody, probably by JF Wade.
Harmony mainly by WH Monk (1823-1889).
Last verse arrangement by Sir David Willcocks (1919-2015).*

READING: Isaiah 9: 2, 6-7

Christ's birth and kingdom are foretold by Isaiah.

HYMN:

**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.**

**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 man, at war with man, hears not the love-song which they bring:
O hush the noise, ye men of strife, and hear the angels sing.**

**And ye, beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow,
Look, now! for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing;
O rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing.**

**For lo, the days are hastening on, by prophet-bards foretold,
When, with the ever-circling years, comes round the age of gold;
When peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendours fling,
And the whole world send back the song which now the angels sing.**

Words: Edmund Sears.

Music: Traditional English Melody adapted by Sir Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900).

Last verse arrangement by Sir David Willcocks (1919-2015).

READING: Isaiah 11: 1-2, 4a, 6-9

The peace that Christ will bring is foreshown.

THE CHOIR SINGS:

**Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen aus einer Wurzel zart;
Wie uns die Alten sungen von Jesse kam die Art**

Und hat ein Blümlein bracht
Mitten im kalten Winter wohl zu der halben Nacht.

*[A rose there is a-springing from tender roots on earth;
as ancient men were singing, from Jesse came its birth
and now this little flower
appears in coldest winter at this, the midnight hour.]*

Das Röslein, das ich meine, davon Jesaias sagt;
Hat uns gebracht alleine Marie, die reine Magd:
Aus Gottes ew'gem Rat Hat sie ein Kind geboren
wohl zu der halben Nacht.

*[This Rose, the stem of Jesse, by prophets once foretold;
Mary alone has brought us the Child promised of old.
By God's eternal power The Maid has borne the Infant
at this, the midnight hour.]*

Das Blümelein so kleine, das duftet uns so süß;
Mit seinem hellen Scheine vertreibts die Finsternis.
Wahr'r Mensch und wahrer Gott,
Hilft uns aus allem Leide rettet von Sünd' und Tod.

*[The flower so small and slender shines through with radiance bright;
To us so sweet and tender dispels the darkest night.
True Man with God's true power,
Helps us from all our suffering, saves us from death's dark hour.]*

Words: German, 15th century
[English paraphrase by Donald Cashmore]
Music: Michael Praetorius (1571-1621)
Vs 2-3 arranged by Donald Cashmore (1926-2013)

READING: Micah 5: 2-4
The prophet Micah foretells the glory of little Bethlehem

HYMN:

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 men on 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.

Where children pure and happy pray to the blessèd Child,
Where misery cries out to thee, Son of the mother mild;
Where charity stands watching, and faith holds wide the door,
The dark night wakes, the glory breaks, and Christmas comes once more.

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.

*Words: Bishop Phillips Brooks (1835-1893).
Music: English traditional tune
arranged by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958).
Vs.3 harmonised by Malcolm Archer (b.1952).
Descant by Thomas Armstrong (1898-1994).*

READING: (based on Luke 1:26-38)
The Angel appears to Mary

THE CHOIR SINGS:

There is no rose of such virtue As is the rose that bare Jesu:
Alleluia.
For in this rose contained was Heaven and Earth in little space:
Resmiranda. [Wondrous thing]

By that rose we may well see There be one God in Persons three:
Pares forma. [One in form]
The angels sungen the shepherds to: Gloria in excelsis deo.
Gaudeamus. [Let us rejoice]
Then leave we all this worldly mirth, And follow we this joyous birth:
Transeamus. [Let us cross over]

Words: *Anonymous, 15th century).*
Music: *Philip Stopford (b.1977).*

READING: (based on Matthew 1:18-25)
The Angel appears to Joseph

HYMN:

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
the stars in the bright sky 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.

Words: *Anonymous.*
Music: *Traditional Normandy tune*
Arranged by Reginald Jacques

Reading: (based on Luke 2:8-20)
The Shepherd

HYMN:

**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 heav’nly 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;
Good will henceforth from heav’n to men begin and never cease.’**

Words: Nahum Tate (1652-1715)

**Music: Ascribed to George Kirbye in Thomas Este’s Psalter (1592)
Descant by Alan Gray (1855-1935)**

**Reading: (based on Matthew 2:1-12)
A Wise Man**

THE CHOIR SINGS:

**In the bleak mid-winter, frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone.
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
In the bleak mid-winter long ago.**

**Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign.
In the bleak mid-winter a stable-place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.**

Enough for him, whom cherubim worship night and day,
A breast full of milk, and a manger full of hay.
Enough for him, whom angels fall down before,
The ox and ass and camel, which adore.

What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.
If I were a wise man, I would do my part.
Yet what I can, I give him: give my heart.

Words: *Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)*

Music: *Harold Darke (1888-1976)*

READING: John 1: 1-14

St John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation.

ADDRESS by The Revd Canon Arthur Houston, Priest-in-Charge
CLOSING PRAYERS and the Collect for Christmas Eve

THE CHOIR SINGS:

What sweeter music can we bring than a carol,
for to sing the birth of this our heavenly King?
Awake the voice! Awake the string!
Dark and dull night, fly hence away, and give the honour to this day
That sees December turned to May.
Why does the chilling winter's morn smile, like a field beset with corn?
Or smell like a meadow newly shorn thus on a sudden?
Come and see the cause, why things thus fragrant be:
'Tis he is born, whose quickening birth
gives life and lustre, public mirth, to heaven and the under-earth.
We see him come, and know him ours,
Who, with his sunshine and his showers,
Turns all the patient ground to flowers.

The darling of the world is come,
And fit it is, we find a room to welcome him.
The nobler part of all the house here, is the heart,
Which we will give him; and bequeath this holly, and this ivy wreath,
To do him honour; who's our King, And Lord of all this revelling.

What sweeter music can we bring than a carol,
for to sing the birth of this our heavenly King?

WORDS: *Robert Herrick.*

MUSIC: *John Rutter (b.1945).*

HYMN:

**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.
*Hark, the herald angels sing Glory to the new-born King.***

**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.
*Hark, the herald angels sing Glory to the new-born King.***

Words: *C Wesley, T Whitefield, M Madan and others.*

Music: *Adapted by WH Cummings from a chorus in
Mendelssohn's Festgesang (1840).*

Introduction & last verse arrangement by William Llewellyn.

The Minister gives the BLESSING

ORGAN VOLUNTARY

Toccata on "Vom Himmel hoch" by Garth Edmundson (1892-1971)

THE GUNDULF CONSORT:

Soprano:

**Abbey Sanders, Amanda Grout, Katie Barnes, Rosemary Clemence,
Rosemary Henn-Macrae, Stella Shee, Elizabeth Green.**

Alto:

Jessica Green, Hannah Barker, Joanna Clark, Rachael Curtis.

Tenor:

Christopher Clemence, James Green.

Bass:

Jeremy Cross, John Stanton, Nigel Montagu.