

St Mary's Church, Walkley



The Church on the Road:
Inclusive, Eucharistic, a safe place to be with God

*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.*

Christmas Carol Service

17th December 2023

**Officiant: Joe, Reader at St Mary's
Churchwarden: Vicky**

The Preparation

We remain seated as the cantor sings and candles around the church are lit.

Minister On behalf of all here at St Mary's, welcome, both to those gathered in the building and on the livestream. We have come together to celebrate the great festival of Christmas. In this service 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 world in need;

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 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:

All **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.**

We stand and we sing:

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...

See how the shepherds,
summoned to his cradle,
leaving their flocks, draw nigh with lowly fear;
we too will thither
bend our joyful footsteps:
O come, let us adore him...

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...

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!*

Words: Latin, 18th century

We sit.

The prophecy of the Messiah's birth

Isaiah 9. 2, 6 - 7

Reader A reading from the Book of the Prophet 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 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.

Reader This is the word of the Lord.
All **Thanks be to God.**

We stand and we sing:

**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 through all his wondrous childhood
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.**

**Still among the poor and lowly
hope in Christ is brought to birth,
with the promise of salvation
for the nations of the earth;
still in him our life is found
and our hope of heav'n is crowned.**

**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.**

Words: Cecil Frances Alexander and Michael Forster

We sit.

Bethlehem, from you shall come forth a ruler
Micah 5. 2 - 4

Reader A reading from the Book of the Prophet Micah.

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.

Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labour has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.

And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.

And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth;

Reader This is the word of the Lord.
All **Thanks be to God.**

We stand and we sing:

**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.**

**For Christ is born of Mary;
and, gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King,
and peace to all the earth;**

**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.**

Words: Phillips Brooks, 1835-1893

We sit.

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse
Isaiah 11. 1 - 4a, 9

Reader A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.

A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.

Reader This is the word of the Lord.
All **Thanks be to God.**

We remain seated.

The singing group: Good news, good news to you we bring

The Annunciation of Jesus to Mary

Luke 1. 26 - 38

Reader A reading from the Gospel according to Luke.

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.

Reader This is the word of the Lord.
All **Thanks be to God.**

We remain seated.

The singing group: My bonny boy

The birth of Jesus

Luke 2. 1 - 7

Reader A reading from the Gospel according to Luke.

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.

Reader This is the word of the Lord.
All **Thanks be to God.**

We stand and we sing:

**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 all of humankind.’**

**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 all
begin, and never cease.’**

Nahum Tate, 1652-1715

We sit.

The shepherds journey to the manger

Luke 2. 8 - 20

Reader A reading from the Gospel according to Luke.

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. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

*Reader
All*

This is the word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

We stand and we sing:

**We three kings of Orient are;
bearing gifts we traverse afar;
field and fountain, moor and mountain,
following yonder star.**

***O star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.***

**Born a King on Bethlehem plain,
gold I bring, to crown him again,
King for ever, ceasing never,
over us all to reign.**

O star of wonder, star of night...

**Frankincense to offer have I,
incense owns a Deity nigh,
prayer and praising, gladly raising,
worship him, God most high.**

O star of wonder, star of night...

**Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume
breathes a life of gathering gloom;
sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
sealed in the stone-cold tomb.**

O star of wonder, star of night...

**Glorious now behold him arise,
King and God and sacrifice;
alleluia, alleluia,
earth to heaven replies.**

O star of wonder, star of night...

Words: John Henry Hopkins, 1820-1891

We sit.

The visit of the Magi

Matthew 2. 1 - 11

Reader A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew.

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.

Reader This is the word of the Lord.
All **Thanks be to God.**

We remain seated.

The singing group: Like a candle flame

The Word became flesh

John 1. 1 - 14

Reader A reading from the Gospel according to John.

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.

Reader This is the word of the Lord.
All **Thanks be to God.**

We stand and we sing:

**Of the Father's love begotten,
ere the worlds began to be,
he is Alpha and Omega;
he the source, the ending he,
of the things that are, that have been,
and that future years shall see,
evermore and evermore.**

**At his word they were created;
he commanded; it was done:
heav'en and earth and depths of ocean,
in their threefold order one;
all that grows beneath the shining
of the light of moon and sun,
evermore and evermore.**

**O that birth for ever blessèd
when the Virgin, full of grace,
by the Holy Ghost conceiving,
bore the Saviour of our race,
and the babe, the world's Redeemer,
first revealed his sacred face,
evermore and evermore.**

**O ye heights of heav'n, adore him;
angel hosts, his praises sing;
pow'rs, dominions, bow before him,
and extol our God and King:
let no tongue on earth be silent,
ev'ry voice in concert ring,
evermore and evermore.**

**This is he whom seers and sages
sang of old with one accord;
whom the writings of the prophets
promised in their faithful word;
now he shines, the long-expected;
let our songs declare his worth,
evermore and evermore.**

Words: Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, 348-413
Translated: John Mason Neale, 1818-1866

We sit or kneel.

The Prayers

Intercessor In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Christ, born in a stable,
give courage to all who are homeless.

All **Holy God,
hear our prayer.**

Intercessor Christ, for whom the angels sang,
give the song of the kingdom to all who weep.

All **Holy God,
hear our prayer.**

Intercessor Christ, worshipped by the shepherds,
give peace on earth to all who are oppressed.

All **Holy God,
hear our prayer.**

Intercessor Christ, before whom the Magi knelt,
give humility and wisdom to all who govern.

All **Holy God,
hear our prayer.**

Intercessor Christ, whose radiance filled a lowly manger,
give the glory of your resurrection to all who rest in you.

All **Holy God,
hear our prayer.**

Intercessor Father,
angels and shepherds worshipped at
the manger throne.
Receive the worship we offer in fellowship with Mary,
Joseph and the saints
through him who is your Word made flesh,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.

All **Amen.**

The prayers conclude with the following:

All **Lighten our darkness,
Lord, we pray,
and in your great mercy
defend us from all perils and dangers of this night,
for the love of your only Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

The Collect

Minister 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.
All **Amen.**

We stand and we sing:

**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 th'angelic host proclaim,
'Christ is born in Bethlehem.'
*Hark, the herald-angels sing
glory to the new-born 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 us to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.
*Hark, the herald-angels sing...***

**Hail, the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
ris'n with healing in his wings;
mild he lays his glory by,
born that we no more may die,
born to raise us from the earth,
born to give us second birth.
*Hark, the herald-angels sing...***

Words: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788 & others
Tune: Mendelssohn

The Blessing

Minister May the joy of the angels,
the eagerness of the shepherds,
the perseverance of the wise men,
the obedience of Joseph and Mary,
and the peace of the Christ-child
be ours this Christmas;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always.

All **Amen.**

All are welcome for mulled wine served at the back of church after the service.

Christmas services:

Christingle – 4pm on 24th December

Midnight Eucharist – 11:30pm on 24th December

Christmas Day Eucharist – 10:30am on 25th December

For more information: stmaryswalkley.co.uk

