

CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE

Leader: Introduction:

Welcome to our Christmas Carol Service. We live in a world where we are surrounded by words: at the moment all we see are signs like "Happy Christmas", "Season's Greetings" or "Santa's Grotto". Words are our main means of communicating with others. It is small wonder then that Jesus is referred to in the gospels as the "Word of God". Jesus is the sign of God's great love for all humankind. God wanted people to know that they were so loved. So God decided to take human form and become Emmanuel - 'God With Us'. In these last few days before Christmas, we take time out to reflect upon the coming of Jesus. This Christmas Carol Service will help us to reflect on that very first Christmas when Jesus came into the world and encourage us to once again allow the light of Christ to shine through our lives this Christmas time. We listen now to the Word of God through his messengers, the prophets, the angels, the shepherds, the wise men, Mary and Joseph... and we praise in song God's goodness and God's great love for us.

Narrator: Our story begins hundreds of years after the death of Abraham, when the Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, foretold that God would send a child to establish the kingdom promised to Abraham.

Reader 1: The prophet Isaiah foretells Jesus' birth

God is going to give you a sign that he loves you; there is a girl who is going to have a baby, and she will call him 'Emmanuel' which means 'God With Us'. Then all the people

who have lived in the dark will walk out into the light, and they will be as happy as at the harvest festival. A baby is going to be born and he will become our King. People will find him as wise as Solomon and as strong as God. They will call him the 'Prince of Peace.' Take heart my people, says your God. You have suffered enough. Make a road through the desert for your God to come to you. Go tell it on the mountains; 'Look, your God is coming!'

Everyone: O Come O Come Emmanuel!

*O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, Thou Day-Spring bright
Pour on our souls thy healing light;
Dispel the long night's lingering gloom
And pierce the shadows of the tomb
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, thou Lord of David's key!
Thy royal door fling wide and free;
Safeguard for us the heavenward road,
And bar the way to death's abode.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

Reader 2: An Angel visits 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.'

Mary was a little troubled at these words and wondered what they could mean. The angel said to her,

'Do not be afraid, Mary, God has chosen you to be the mother of his Son. You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will call him Jesus.'

Mary said, 'How can this be since I am not yet married?'

The angel said; 'The power of God can do all things. Nothing is impossible for God.'

Mary answered,

'I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said.'

And the Angel left her.

Narrator: Reflection:

Mary was young and female - characteristics that to the people of her day would make her seem unsuitable to be chosen by God for any major task. But God selected Mary for one of the most important acts of obedience he has ever demanded of anyone. You may feel that your ability, experience, or age makes you an unlikely candidate for God's service. This Christmas trust God and let God work wonders through you.

Everyone: Magnificat

God fills me with joy, Alleluia.

His holy presence is my robe, Alleluia.

My soul now glorify the Lord who is my Saviour,

Rejoice for who am I that God has shown me favour?

The world shall call me blessed and ponder on my story,

In me is manifest God's greatness and his glory.

*For those who are his friends and keep his laws as holy,
His mercy never ends and he exalts the lowly.*

*But by this power the great, the proud, the self-conceited,
The kings who sit in state are humbled and defeated.*

*He feeds the starving poor, he guards his holy nation,
Fulfilling what he swore long since in revelation.*

*Then glorify with me the Lord who is my Saviour,
One Holy Trinity for ever and for ever.*

Reader 3: The Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem

So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee and travelled up to Judea, to the town of David called Bethlehem, in order to be registered together with Mary, his betrothed who was with child. While they were there the time came for her to have her baby. She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger for there was no room for them to stay in the inn.

Narrator: We listen as MARY ponders in her heart:

My own beautiful, precious Son . . . All these months I've wondered what it would be like to hold you in my arms and hug you tight . . . so many times I was afraid that I wouldn't be able to cope . . . people like

Elizabeth really helped me, and Joseph -
Where would we be without Joseph?
He was so worried about finding us a
comfortable inn here in Bethlehem.... But
we're fine here, it's warm and you're safe...

Everyone: Away In A Manger

*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 bed side, 'til; morning in
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.*

Reader 4: The Angels and the Shepherds

There were shepherds living out in the
fields nearby, keeping watch over their
flocks at night. An angel of the Lord
appeared to them, and they were terrified.
But the angel said to them, "Do not be
afraid. I bring you Good News. Today in
the town of David a Saviour has been born
to you; he is Christ the Lord." Suddenly a
great host appeared with the angel,
praising God .When the angels had left
them, the shepherds said to one another,
"Let's go to Bethlehem and see what the
Lord has told us."
So they hurried off and found Mary and
Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the

Jesus, I know you are a special child. I
don't know what plans God has in mind for
you, but I'll be the best mother I can be.
Joseph and I will do our best for you. I
promise you that.

manger. After they had seen Him, they
spread the word about the child, and all
who heard it were amazed. Meanwhile Mary
treasured up all these things and pondered
them in her heart.

Narrator: Reflection

What a birth announcement! The
shepherds were terrified, but their fear
turned to joy as the angels announced the
Messiah's birth. First the shepherds ran to
see the baby; then they spread the Word.
Jesus is your Messiah, your Saviour. This
Christmas look forward to meeting Jesus in
prayer and in his Word each day. Discover
a Lord so wonderful that you can't help
sharing your joy with others.

Everyone: While Shepherds Watched...

*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 minds;
"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 Savior, 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 swaddling-clothes
And in a manger laid."*

*Thus spake the seraph,--and forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of angels, praising God, and thus
Addressed their joyful song:
"All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace;
Good will henceforth from Heaven to men
Begin and never cease."*

Reader 5: You Shouldn't Have

And is this all Christmas is really about:
Useless presents we could well do without?
Grumbles when we get what we don't really
want
If that's all it's for and that's how it is,
We might as well give up, admit it's a swizz.
You shouldn't have. Really, you shouldn't
have.

But for all of the handkerchiefs, bath salts
and soap,
There's something about Christmas,
something about hope,
And a birth in a manger, a child in a stable
Far from the shops and the over-full table,
Where God came among us from heaven
above
And showed in that giving astonishing love.
He shouldn't have.

He shouldn't have gone through all that for
us -
The birth, the humility, the death on a
cross -
Yet he did, and everything's changed by
that life,
Bringing light out of darkness, peace out of
strife.
He emptied himself in love beyond
measure,
So that life in its fullness and all heaven's
treasure

we should have...

Everyone: 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 heav'n-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 them second birth
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"*

Reader 6: Visitors Arrive From Eastern Lands

After Jesus was born, during the time of
King Herod, wise men from the east came
to Jerusalem and asked. "Where is the one
who has been born King of the Jews? We
saw his star in the East and have come to
worship him."

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed. He called together all his advisors and asked them where the Christ was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied.

Then Herod called the Magi. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child, As soon as you find Him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship Him."

They went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. There they saw the child with His mother Mary and they bowed down and worshipped Him. They opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Narrator: Reflection

Far to the East of Israel, three kings see a star, which leads them to worship Jesus in Bethlehem. When they saw the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary, his mother, and knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. The three kings travelled thousands of miles to greet the King of the Jews. When they finally found Him they responded with joy, worship and gifts. Today... we expect God to find us. We expect God to give us gifts. Ask yourself: when was the last time that I took time out of my day to acknowledge God's presence with me. Let us take the time this Christmas to look for Jesus and to worship Him for who He is.

Everyone: We Three Kings

*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 forever, ceasing never,
Over us all to reign.*

*Frankincense to offer have I,
Incense owns a Deity nigh.
Prayer and praising, all men raising,
Worship him, God most high.*

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

Reader 7: The First Christmas

It never snows at Christmas in that dry and dusty land.
Instead of freezing blizzards, there are palms and drifting sands,
And years ago a stable and a most unusual star
And three wise men who followed it, by camel, not by car,
while, sleepy on the quiet hills, a shepherd gave a cry.
He'd seen a crowd of angels in the silent starlit sky.
In the stable, ox and ass stood very still and calm
And gazed upon the baby, safe and snug, in Mary's arms.

And Joseph, lost in shadows, face lit by an oil lamp's glow
stood wondering, that first Christmas Day,
two thousand years ago.

Everyone: O Holy Night

*O holy night! The stars are brightly
shining,
It is the night of the dear Saviour's birth;
Long lay the world in sin and error pining
'Til he appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!*

Chorus

*Fall on your knees! Oh, hear the
angel voices' O night divine!
O night, when Christ was born.
O night divine, O night, O night divine!*

*Led by the light of faith serenely beaming
with glowing hearts by His cradle we stand;
So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming;
Here came the wise men from the Orient
land;
The King of Kings lay thus in lowly manger,
In all our trials born to be our friend.*

Chorus

*Fall on your knees! Oh, hear the
angel voices' O night divine!
O night, when Christ was born.
O night divine, O night, O night divine!*

**Leader: We will now have the Prayer of
the Faithful (Pause)**

**We have no other light but Christ. He
came down from heaven to show us the
way to our heavenly Father. Let us pray
to him with unlimited confidence as we
look forward to celebrating his birth.**

Reader 8: (Read 2 prayers each)

We pray for God's family, the Church, that
we might open our minds and hearts to the
love of God this Christmas.

Lord hear us

We pray this Christmas that, like Mary,
people will be open- hearted and give to
the many charities at home and abroad
which help the poor, so that others can
have a happy Christmas.

Lord hear us

Reader 9: Mary followed God's will in
making a difficult decision. We pray that
God will help us to when we are faced with
difficult choices in our lives.

Lord hear us

The shepherds experienced the joy of
Christmas. We pray that, through Jesus,
all families may experience the joy of
Christmas this year.

Lord hear us

Reader 10: The three kings travelled
thousands of miles. We pray for all who are
away from their home this Christmas. We
pray especially for refugees and people
who have been forced to flee their own
country. May they enjoy the peace of
Christmas wherever they are.

Lord hear us

Christmas can be a difficult time for those
who have lost a loved one. We pray for the
bereaved, and for the souls of those that
we know and love who have died.

Lord hear us

**Leader: Father, your Son scattered the
darkness of this world and filled it with
your glory. Grant that through His
grace we may live as children of the
light and come at last to the kingdom**

where he lives and reigns with you and
the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and
ever, Amen.

Reader 11: Love

Probably the reason
we all go so haywire at Christmas time
with the endless, unrestrained
and often silly buying of gifts
is that we don't quite know
how to put our love into words.

Deep down inside we know
that the best gifts
don't come from catalogues
or shopping centres.
They don't come in brightly-coloured
packages
or fancy envelopes
and they're not sitting under a tree
somewhere...

The best gifts come from the heart.
They come when we look at each other and
say
'You mean a lot to me'
or 'I'm so glad you're a part of my life'
A gift like that
will never go out of style
or be forgotten
or be returned for a different size.
A gift like that can change the world.

Everyone: Silent Night

*Silent night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child
Holy Infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace*

Silent night, holy night!

*Shepherds quake at the sight
Glories stream from heaven afar
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ, the Saviour is born
Christ, the Saviour is born*

*Silent night, holy night
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth "*

Reader 12: A Christmas Prayer

Lord, Jesus Christ,
You are the Son of God and Son of Mary.
You are our brother, our friend,
And Saviour of all peoples.

Fill our hearts with joy
As once again we celebrate your birth at
Bethlehem.
Open our eyes
So that we may see you in the people
around us.
Open our lips
So that we may speak words that are kind.
Open our hands
So that we may be generous to others.

Let us see you
In the beauty of flowers and stars.
Let us hear you
In the whisper of the breeze.
Let us feel you
In the company of family and friends.
Let us know you
In our times of prayer.
Prince of peace,
Bless us this Christmas.
Amen.

Leader: Final Prayer

We thank you for all the joy and happiness of Christmas. Amid all the laughter and fun may we remember the baby who was born in a stable 2000 years ago, and who became poor so that we might become rich. Help us to follow his example and to bring the real meaning of Christmas into the lives of others who have nothing to celebrate.

Everyone: 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:*

Chorus:

*O come let us adore him (x3),
Christ the Lord!*

*Sing, choir of Angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of Heaven above:
'Glory to God
In the highest':*

Chorus

*Yea, Lord we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning;
Jesus, to Thee be glory given,
Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing:*

Chorus

Everyone: We Wish You A Merry Christmas!

*We wish you a merry Christmas.
We wish you a merry Christmas
and a happy new year.
Good tiding we bring to you and your kin,*

*We wish you a merry Christmas
and a happy new year!*

Jingle Bells!

*Jingle bells, jingle bells
Jingle all the way,
Oh what fun it is to ride
In a one-horse open sleigh, O
Jingle bells, jingle bells
Jingle all the way,
Oh what fun it is to ride
In a one-horse open sleigh.*

*Dashing through the snow
In a one-horse open sleigh
Through the fields we go
Laughing all the way.
Bells on bob-tail ring
Making spirits bright
What fun it is to ride and sing
A sleighing song tonight.*