



# HEXHAM ABBEY

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**Carols by Candlelight**

**December 2021**

**Hello, and a very warm welcome to this Carol Service** in which we celebrate through powerful words and wonderful music the joy of Christmas, and draw near to God who comes to us in Jesus and who knows by experience what human life is like.

I know that we are gathering at the end of another challenging year and that our Christmas celebrations are still a little different to how they were before COVID. But it is wonderful to see you and that we are joining together to worship God, delight in the joy of Christmas and enjoy each other's fellowship.

I do hope that you find this service a blessing – as a moment to reflect on the year that has passed, as an opportunity to let the Christmas spirit enter your heart, and a chance to remember that in Jesus God entered a broken world to share his love and to offer his healing. I wish you all a very happy Christmas and, God willing, a hopeful, blessed and joyful 2022.

Every blessing,  
David (Rector)

**Choir** 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.

*Please stand*

**All** 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,  
where like stars his children crowned,  
all in white shall wait around.** Cecil Frances Alexander (1818–1895)

*Please sit*

## **Welcome from the Rector**

We meet this night to celebrate the coming of  
Christ into the world.

“Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all  
people: for unto you is born in the city of David, a Saviour, which  
is Christ the Lord.” (*Luke 2.10-11*)

In this service we come before God, who comes to us in Jesus  
and who knows from experience what human life is like. As we  
hear the ancient words and listen to the sacred melodies, let us  
invite the child of Bethlehem to be in our midst and in our hearts,  
as our comforter, our healer and our giver of hope.

May the light of Christ fill our hearts with love and blessing and  
hold before us the hope of heaven.

## **Proverbs 8.22 – 30**

Wisdom proclaims her presence with God in creation from the beginning.

**Choir Carol** This is the truth sent from above *Vaughan Williams*

## **Isaiah 10.33–11.6**

The prophet foretells the coming of a king on whom rests the spirit of wisdom and understanding.

**Congregational Carol** *Please stand*

**Long ago, prophets knew Christ would come, born a Jew,  
come to make all things new; bear his people's burden,  
freely love and pardon.**

**Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!**

**Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!**

**When he comes, when he comes,  
who will make him welcome?**

**Mary hail! Though afraid, she believed, she obeyed.**

**In her womb, God is laid: till the time expected,  
nurtured and protected,**

**Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!**

**Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!**

**When he comes, when he comes,  
who will make him welcome?**

**Journey ends! Where afar Bethl'em shines, like a star,  
stable door stands ajar, unborn Son of Mary,  
Saviour, do not tarry!  
Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!  
Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!  
Jesus comes! Jesus comes!  
We will make him welcome!**

Fred Pratt Green (1903–2000)

*Please sit*

**Choir Carol** There is no rose of such virtue

*Bryan*

**Luke 1.26-33, 38**

"The angel Gabriel greets Mary with the promise of a son who shall be king."

**Congregational Carol** *Please stand*

**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 us 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 in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels  
the great glad tidings tell:  
O come to us, abide with us,  
our Lord Emmanuel.**

Phillips Brooks (1835–1893)

*Please sit*

## A Prayer to the Holy Child of Bethlehem

In the hope given by the holy child of Bethlehem,  
our God come amongst us,

let us ask God for a good Christmas:

that no powerful nation  
should fail to share vaccines with the poorest;  
that no one should be a victim of prejudice  
because of their race, colour, or sexual orientation;  
that no door will be shut  
on those who need to find it open;  
that the raw cry of the Earth will be heard  
and creation allowed to flourish;  
that barbed wired walls and angry division  
may not be found in Bethlehem;  
that wise men and wise women might appear  
in all the war-torn places of the earth;  
that the vulnerable would be preserved  
from those who would abuse them;  
that this Christmas the world would be healed  
and a whispered promise would be lived out with joy  
that Christ has come among us,  
the holy child of Bethlehem. Amen.

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## Luke 2. 1–7

St Luke tells of the birth of Jesus.

**Choir Carol**    In the bleak mid-winter

*Darke*

### A Litany of the Incarnation

Leader            When the time was right, God sent his Son;

**Women            sent him and suckled him,**

**Men                reared him and risked him,**

**Women            filled him with laughter and tears  
                          and compassion,**

**Men                filled him with justice and love and devotion.**

Leader            Unwelcomed child, a refugee, a runaway,

**All                 Jesus Christ is God's own Son.**

Leader            Feeder and teacher, healer and disturber,

**All                 Jesus Christ is God's own Son.**

Leader            Lover of the unlovable,  
                          toucher of the untouchable,  
                          forgiver of the unforgivable,

**All                 Jesus Christ is God's own Son.**

Leader Loved by the poor, feared by the powerful,  
befriended by the weak,  
despised by the strong,  
deserted by his listeners,  
betrayed by his friends,  
bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh,  
writing heaven's pardon  
over earth's mistakes.

**All Jesus Christ is God's own Son.**

Leader The Word became flesh;

**All Jesus Christ is God's own Son;**

Leader and dwelt among us.

**All Jesus Christ, God's gift, our Saviour,  
the beloved one. Amen.**

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**Congregational Carol** *Please stand*

**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;  
good-will henceforth from heaven to men  
begin and never cease.'**

Nahum Tate (1652–1715)

*Please sit*

### **Colossians 1. 15 – 20**

St Paul sets forth the significance of Christ in creation and redemption.

## **In hope the universe waits**

Leader In hope the universe waits;

**All God's purpose shall be revealed.**

Leader Limited by mortality,  
yet destined for liberation,  
in hope the universe waits;

**All God's forgiveness shall be revealed.**

Leader Groaning as if in childbirth,  
sampling the fruits of God's harvest;  
in hope the universe waits;

**All God's healing shall be revealed.**

Leader Trusting in what is unseen,  
believing the best is to come,  
in hope the universe waits;

**All God's redemption shall be revealed.**

**Leader** In the hiddenness of the manger;  
in the torture of the cross;  
in the joy of resurrection:

**All God's Son shall be revealed.**

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**Choir Carol**    Sussex carol

*Ledger*

**John 1.1-14** *Please stand*

St John unfolds the mystery of the Incarnation.

**Closing Prayers** *Please remain standing*

Leader            Let us pray  
                         Almighty God, we have heard with joy once  
                         more the good news of your Son's coming.  
                         Fill the world with your glory and be for us a  
                         living hope in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All                Amen.**

Leader            But lest we forget that Jesus was born to  
                         poverty, we remember tonight all who are hungry  
                         and cold.  
                         And lest we forget he became a refugee,  
                         we remember the stranger and  
                         the lonely among us.

                         And lest we forget he felt the pain of life and  
                         death, we remember now those who are ill,  
                         or anxious, or bereaved.

                         And because we know he came for our  
                         salvation, let us in joy and hope hold his life  
                         in our hearts this Christmas.

                         These prayers we ask through Christ our Lord.

**All                Amen.**

## Congregational Carol

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...*

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...*

## **The Blessing**

May the Father, who has loved the eternal Son  
before the foundation of the world,  
shed that love on you, his beloved children.

**All    Amen.**

May Jesus Christ,  
who by his incarnation gathered in one  
things earthly and heavenly,  
fill you with joy and peace.

**All    Amen.**

May the Holy Spirit,  
by whose overshadowing Mary  
became the God-bearer,  
give you grace to carry the good news of Jesus.

**All    Amen.**

And the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.

**All    Amen.**

## **Organ Voluntary**

We very much hope that you enjoyed the service and enjoy the rest of your evening. There is a retiring collection following this service to support the work of the Abbey. Alternatively, you can make a donation on-line by scanning the code below. Thank you for your generosity.



### **Christmas Services**

Christmas Eve at 11pm: Midnight Mass

Christmas Day at 10am: Christmas Parish Eucharist

(no ticket required at either of these services)

**All Welcome**

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