



A
Celebration
of
Christmas

Thursday 12th December 2024
7.00 pm

Welcome to the Church of
St. Michael and All Angels

We are a Christian church within the Anglican tradition and we welcome people of all Christian traditions as well as people of other faiths and people of little or no faith. Christian worship has been offered to God here for over 135 years. By worshipping with us today, you become part of that living tradition. Our regular worshippers comprising of three congregations (English, Sinhala, Tamil) supported by members of staff and a large number of volunteers, make up the church community.

We are committed to the diversity, equal opportunities and personal and spiritual development of all who work and worship here because we are followers of Jesus Christ. Thank you for being with us today.

If you need any help, please speak with the Vicar.

Holy Communion is celebrated daily at 7.00 am
and every Wednesday at 12.00 noon
and on Sundays Holy Communion is celebrated at
7.30 am in English
9.00 am in Sinhala
10.30 am in Tamil
12.00 noon in English

For information regarding our services during the season of
Advent and Christmas please visit our website:
www.stmichaelspolwatte.lk/christmas



Please do not use any photographic,
video or recording equipment at any time.

A Celebration of Christmas

Ven. Christopher Balraj
Vicar

Jill Macdonald
Mokshini Jayamanne
Nathan Koblintz
Readers

Voice of Praise
Chamber Choir

Denham Pereira
Organist

The organist plays

Vom himmel hoch	Johann Pachelbel (1653–1706)
Vom himmel hoch	Georg Kauffmann (1679–1735)
In dulci jublio	Dietrich Buxtehude (1637–1707)
Wachet Auf, BWV 645	J. S. Bach (1685–1750)
Veni Emmanuel	Philip Moore (b. 1943)
Prelude on ‘Quem pastores’	Helmut Walcha (1907–91)

The Programme

*Please join in all text printed in **bold**.*

If you are unable to stand at any point during the service, please feel free to remain seated.

Remain seated as the choir enters and takes their place at the west end of the Church.

The vicar welcomes the congregation

Remain seated

Reading

St. John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation.

IN the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.

John 1. 1–14

All stand as the organ sounds

Hymn

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.

Choir:

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
He would honour and obey,
Love, and watch the lowly maiden,
In whose gentle arms he lay;
Christian children all must be
Mild, obedient, good as he.**

**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;
When like stars his children crowned
All in white shall wait around.**

Words: C. F. Alexander (1818–95)

Tune: Irby
Melody H. J. Gauntlett (1805–76)
Descant by James O'Donnell (b.1961)

All sit

Reading

Advent 1955

John Betjeman

THE Advent wind begins to stir
With sea-like sounds in our Scotch fir,
It's dark at breakfast, dark at tea,
And in between we only see
Clouds hurrying across the sky
And rain-wet roads the wind blows dry
And branches bending to the gale
Against great skies all silver pale
The world seems travelling into space,
And travelling at a faster pace
Than in the leisured summer weather
When we and it sit out together,
For now we feel the world spin round
On some momentous journey bound -
Journey to what? to whom? to where?
The Advent bells call out 'Prepare,
Your world is journeying to the birth
Of God made Man for us on earth.'

And how, in fact, do we prepare
The great day that waits us there -
For the twenty-fifth day of December,
The birth of Christ? For some it means
An interchange of hunting scenes
On coloured cards. And I remember
Last year I sent out twenty yards,
Laid end to end, of Christmas cards
To people that I scarcely know -
They'd sent a card to me, and so
I had to send one back. Oh dear!
Is this a form of Christmas cheer?
Or is it, which is less surprising,
My pride gone in for advertising?
The only cards that really count
Are that extremely small amount
From real friends who keep in touch
And are not rich but love us much
Some ways indeed are very odd
By which we hail the birth of God.

We raise the price of things in shops,
We give plain boxes fancy tops
And lines which traders cannot sell
Thus parcell'd go extremely well
We dole out bribes we call a present
To those to whom we must be pleasant
For business reasons. Our defence is
These bribes are charged against expenses
And bring relief in Income Tax
Enough of these unworthy cracks!
'The time draws near the birth of Christ'.
A present that cannot be priced
Given two thousand years ago
Yet if God had not given so
He still would be a distant stranger
And not the Baby in the manger.

The choir sings

Carol

ON Christmas night all Christians sing,
To hear the news the angels bring,
News of great joy, news of great mirth,
News of our merciful King's birth.

Then why should men on earth be so sad?
Since our Redeemer made us glad,
When from our sin he set us free,
All for to gain our liberty?

When sin departs before his grace,
Then life and health come in its place,
Angels and men with joy may sing,
All for to see the newborn King.

All out of darkness we have light,
Which made the angels sing this night,
'Glory to God and peace to men,
Now and for evermore. Amen!'

Words: English, Traditional

Music: English, Traditional

Arranged by: Sir David Willcocks (1919–2015)

All stand

Hymn

LO! he comes with clouds descending,
Once for favoured sinners slain;
Thousand thousand saints attending
Swell the triumph of his train:
Alleluia!
God appears, on earth to reign.

Every eye shall now behold him
Robed in dreadful majesty;
Those who set at nought and sold him,
Pierced and nailed him to the tree,
Deeply wailing
Shall the true Messiah see.

Those dear tokens of his passion
Still his dazzling body bears,
Cause of endless exultation
To his ransomed worshippers:
With what rapture
Gaze we on those glorious scars!

Yea, Amen! Let all adore thee,
High on thine eternal throne;
Saviour, take the power and glory:
Claim the kingdom for thine own:
O come quickly!
Alleluia! Come, Lord, come!

Words: Charles Wesley (1707–88)

Tune: Helmsley
Attributed to Thomas Olivers (1725–1799)

All sit

Reading

The Prophet Micah foretells the glory of little Bethlehem

BUT you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to me the one to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting. Therefore he shall give them up, until the time that she who is in labour has given birth; then the remnant of his brethren shall return to the children 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 abide, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth;

Micah 5. 2-5

The choir sings

Carol

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)

Reading

What the donkey saw

U. A. Fanthorpe

NO room in the inn, of course,
And not that much in the stable,
What with the shepherds, Magi, Mary,
Joseph, the heavenly host —
Not to mention the baby
Using our manger as a cot.

You couldn't have squeezed another cherub in
For love nor money.

Still, in spite of the overcrowding,
I did my best to make them feel wanted.
I could see the baby and I
Would be going places together.

All stand

Carol

OLITTLE 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 wondering love.

Choir:

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.**

Words: Phillips Brooks (1835–93)

Tune: Forest Green

English Traditional Melody

Harmony by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

Descant by Thomas Armstrong (1898–1994)

All sit

Reading

The angel Gabriel visits the Blessed Virgin 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.' 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.

Luke 1. 26–38

The choir sings

Carol

B ŌGŌRODITSYE Dyevo, raduissya, Blagōdatnaya Mariye, Gospod s’Toboyu. Blagōslōvyenna Tyi vzhenakh, i blagōslōvyen Plod chryeva Tvōyego, yako Spassa rōdila, yessi dush nashikh. <i>souls.</i>	<i>Rejoice, virgin, God-bearer Mary, full of grace, the Lord be with you. Blessed are you amongst women and blessed is the Fruit of your Womb for you have borne the Saviour of our</i>
--	---

Words: *from* ‘Liturgy of Vespers’

Music: Sergei Rachmaninov (1873–1943)

Reading

The birth of Jesus

AND it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Luke 2. 1–7

The choir sings

Carol

I SAW three ships come sailing in
 On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
I saw three ships come sailing in
 On Christmas day in the morning

And what was in those ships all three ..
Our Saviour Christ and his lady ..
Pray whither sailed those ships all three ..
O they sailed into Bethlehem ..
And all the bells on earth shall ring ..
And all the angels in heaven shall sing ..
And all the souls on earth shall sing ..
Then let us all rejoice amain ..

Words: Traditional, English

Music: Traditional, English
Arranged by Philip Marshall (1921–2005)

All stand

Carol

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 blessèd 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!**

**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 (1810–76)

Tune: Noel

adapted by Sir Arthur Sullivan (1842–1900)

Descant by John Scott (1956–2015)

All sit

Reading

O Simplicitas

by Madeleine L'Engle

AN angel came to me
And I was unprepared
To be what God was using.
Mother I was to be.
A moment I despaired,
Thought briefly of refusing.
The angel knew I heard.
According to God's Word
I bowed to this strange choosing.

A palace should have been
The birthplace of a king
(I had no way of knowing).
We went to Bethlehem;
It was so strange a thing.
The wind was cold, and blowing,
My coat was old, and thin.
They turned us from the inn;
The town was overflowing.

God's Word, a child so small,
Who still must learn to speak,
Lay in humiliation.
Joseph stood strong and tall.
The beasts were warm and meek
And moved with hesitation.
The Child born in a stall?
I understood it: all.
Kings came in adoration.

Perhaps it was absurd:
A stable set apart,
The sleepy cattle lowing;
And the incarnate Word
Resting against my heart.
My joy was overflowing.
The shepherds came, adored
The folly of the Lord,
Wiser than all men's knowing.

The choir sings

Carol

QUEM pastores laudavere,
Quibus angeli dixere,
Absit vobis iam timere,
Natus est rex gloriae.

Ad quem magi ambulabant,
Aurum, thus, myrrham portabant,
Immolabant haec sincere
Nato regi gloriae.

Christo regi, Deo nato,
Per Mariam nobis dato,
Merito resonet vere
Laus, honor et gloria.

Words: Tr. Imogen Holst (1907–1984)

*Shepherds left their flocks astraying,
God's command with joy obeying,
When they heard the angel saying:
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."*

*Wise men came from far, and saw him:
Knelt in homage to adore him;
Precious gifts they laid before him:
Gold and frankincense and myrrh.*

*Let us now in every nation
Sing his praise with exultation.
All the world shall find salvation
In the birth of Mary's Son.*

Music: Medieval German Melody
Sir John Rutter CBE (b.1945)

All stand to sing

Carol

during which a collection will be taken in aid of the 'Music Fund' of St. Michael's.

We are grateful for your generous giving

All women:

**SEE amid the winter's snow,
Born for us on earth below;
See the tender Lamb appears,
Promised from eternal years:**

All:

***Hail, thou ever blessed morn!
Hail, redemption's happy dawn!
Sing through all Jerusalem,
Christ is born in Bethlehem.***

All men:

**Lo, within a manger lies
He who built the starry skies;
He who, throned in height sublime,
Sits amid the cherubim:**

Choir:

Say, ye holy shepherds, say
What your joyful news today;
Wherefore have ye left your sheep
On the lonely mountain steep?

All:

**'As we watched at dead of night,
Lo, we saw a wondrous light;
Angels singing "Peace on earth"
Told us of the Saviour's birth.'**

**Teach, O teach us, holy Child,
By thy face so meek and mild,
Teach us to resemble thee,
In thy sweet humility:**

Words: Edward Caswall (1814–78)

Music: John Goss (1800–80)
Arranged by: Sir David Willcocks

All sit

Reading

The wise men are led by a star to Jesus

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.

Matthew 2. 1–11

Carol

A GREAT and mighty wonder,
A full and holy cure.
The virgin bears the infant
With virgin-honour pure.

*Repeat the hymn again!
'To God on high be glory,
And peace on earth to men!'*

The word becomes incarnate,
And yet remains on high.
And cherubim sing anthems
To shepherds from the sky.

While thus they sing your monarch,
Those bright angelic bands,
Rejoice, ye vales and mountains,
Ye oceans clap your hands.

Since all he comes to ransom,
By all be he adored,
The infant born in Bethlehem,
The Saviour and the Lord.

Words: St. Germanus (c. 634–c734)
Tr. J. M. Neale (1818–66)

Music: M. Praetorius (1571–1621)
Arranged by James Whitbourn (1963–2024)

Reading

The second epistle from Joseph to the Corinthians

by Robert Salter

DEAR Corinthians,
I acknowledge safe receipt of your epistle, in response to my epistle (commonly known, for reasons that escape me, as the first epistle to the Corinthians) concerning the recent sojourn with my wife, Mary, in Bethlehem or, as your brochure puts it, «the City of David».

For a travel company of repute, both Mary and I find your explanations of the accommodation arrangements far from satisfactory. If we have to make the journey again - which I hope we do not in the light of what occurred once we were there - it will most certainly not be with Corinthians 18–30 Holidays.

I offer the following response to your explanations:

1. I have looked again at your brochure. I do not agree that the description of the Inn includes the outhouses. The words ‘travellers with cattle can expect the use of the stables’ surely refers to the cattle, not the guests. You may say that there are many worse off than ourselves - unfortunately they all seem to have booked with your company.

2. You will have to take it from me that Mary giving birth to the Son of God was totally unexpected, and I can assure you that had I known that He was on the way I would have given you the opportunity of bringing in your PR people.

3. I agree with your proposition that from every point of view the story has more appeal set as it is in a stable rather than in the twin-bedded room with half board which we had booked. I also agree that it was much more convenient for the angel to make his way across the yard and into the stable, rather than going through the resident’s lounge. Of course, I accept that the presence of the entire heavenly host praising God along the corridor on the second floor of the inn might have resulted in complaints from your other guests. But that does not address my main complaint. My wife, Mary, has little in common with shepherds. It was bad enough having to cope with livestock in the stable, but having to face a deputation of local sheep-farmers, who claimed they were tired of abiding in their fields at night was not our idea of ‘local colour’. Your decision to include them as an optional extra in next year’s brochure does not impress.

4. I know you are denying you had anything to do with the couriers who arrived from the east bearing gifts, but I still maintain that I had seen one of them in your office when I booked the trip. I do not wish to appear ungrateful, but at a time when I was struggling with a newly born child, an exhausted wife, a group of fanatical shepherds, assorted livestock, an angel explaining my son was the Everlasting Father, and the entire heavenly host, the arrival of three Corinthian Holiday Reps in fancy dress did little to help. And, by the way, they could have left something a little more practical.

Yours very truly,
Joseph.

Carol

*I*N *dulci júbilo* [in sweet jubilation]
Let us our homage shew;
Our heart's joy reclineth
In praesepio, [in a manger]
And like a bright star shineth.
Matris in gremio. [in mother's lap]
Alpha es et O! [you are Alpha and Omega]

O Jesu parvule! [O infant Jesus]
I yearn for thee alway!
Hear me, I beseech thee,
O Puer optime! [O best of boys]
My prayer let it reach thee,
O princeps gloriae! [O prince of glory]
Trahe me post te. [draw me after you]

O Patris caritas, [O love of the Father]
O Nati lenitas! [O mercy of the Son]
Deeply were we stained
Per nostra crimina, [through our sins]
But thou hast for us gained
Caelorum gaudia. [the joys of heaven]
O that we were there!

Ubi sunt gaudia, [where are those joys]
If that they be not there?
There are angels singing
Nova cantica, [new songs]
There the bells are ringing
In Regis curia. [in the king's court]
O that we were there!

Reading

Keeping Christmas

Eleanor Farjeon

HOW will you your Christmas keep?
Feasting, fasting, or asleep?
Will you laugh or will you pray,
Or will you forget the day?

Be it kept with joy or prayer,
Keep of either some to spare;
Whatsoever brings the day,
Do not keep but give away.

All stand

Carol

OCOME, 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.**

**Lo! Star-led chieftains,
Magi, Christ adoring,
Offer him incense, gold, and myrrh;
We to the Christ Child
Bring our hearts' oblations:**

**Sing, choirs of Angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
'Glory to God
In the Highest:'**

Words: Latin, 18th century
trans. Frederick Oakeley (1802–80)

Tune: Adeste Fideles
J. F. Wade (1711–86) and others
Descant by Christopher Robinson (b.1936)

Remain standing. The vicar leads

A Christmas Responsory

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light.

For to us a child is born
to us a Son is given.

His name will be called wonderful counsellor, mighty God,
the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Glory to God in the highest
and peace to his people on earth.

All kneel or sit. The vicar gives

The Blessing

MAY Christ, whose glory fills the skies, fill you with his light,
scatter the darkness from your path, gladden your eyes,
warm your heart, and guide your feet into the way of peace;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

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 (1707–88)
and others

Tune: Mendelssohn
and others Felix Mendelssohn (1809–47)
Descant by Sir Philip Ledger (1937–2012)

Organ Voluntary

Grand Choeur in D

William Faulkes (1863–1933)

Remain standing as the choir and clergy depart.

Please take this programme away with you to reflect on the words of the readings and carols and as a reminder of your visit.

