

## **Christmas Eve Sunday December 24, 2023 7:00 pm**

### **Carol: Once in Royal David's City**

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  
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.

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.

**Welcome and Christmas greetings Dr. Thompson**

## **Bidding prayer: Dr. Thompson**

Dear Friends:

Be it this Christmas Eve, our care and delight to prepare ourselves to hear again the message of the angels and in heart and mind to go to Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, and the Babe lying in a manger. Let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God from our first Days on this amazing planet, unto the glorious Redemption brought us by this Holy Child; and let us make this Church, glad with our songs of praise:

But first let us pray for the needs of the whole world; for peace and health over all the earth; for unity and goodwill within the Church he came to build, and especially in the Commonwealth of our sovereign King Charles, and here in Stratford.

And because this, of all things, would rejoice his heart of Love, let us at this time remember in His name the poor and the helpless, the cold and the hungry, the oppressed, those suffering in wars in the Ukraine, Palestine and Israel; the exploited and the downtrodden; the sick in body and in mind and those who mourn; the isolated, the homeless. the lonely and the unloved; the elderly and the little children; all who know not the Lord Jesus, or who love Him not, or those who have grieved His heart of love. 7 Lastly, let us remember before God all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore and in a greater light, and to that multitude of the citizens above, may The King of Angels bring us all. Amen.

## **1st Lesson Isaiah 9: Christ's birth and Kingdom are foretold by Isaiah in 740 B.C.**

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Thanks be to God.

## **The lighting of the Christ Candle**

## **Choir: Break forth O Beauteous Heavenly Light**

Break forth O beauteous heavenly light  
And usher in the morning  
Ye shepherds, shrink not with affright  
But hear the angel's warning  
This child now weak in infancy  
Our confidence and joy shall be  
The power of Satan breaking  
Our peace eternal making

## **Congregational Carol: It Came Upon the Midnight Clear:** (please stand if able)

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.

For lo! the days are hastening on,  
by prophet seen of old,  
when with the ever-circling years  
shall come the time foretold  
when peace shall over all the earth  
its ancient splendors fling,  
and the whole world send back the song  
which now the angels sing.

## **The Annunciation:**

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Lesson:**

And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

For with God nothing shall be impossible.

And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

Thanks be to God.

**Congregational Carol: Hark the herald Angels sing** (Please stand if able)

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 angelic host proclaim  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"  
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"

**3<sup>rd</sup> Lesson: St. Luke tells of the birth of Jesus**

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.

And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.

*(Enter Mary and Joseph with Baby, walk to the front and Mary is seated in front of cradle on a draped chair Joseph is seated on a stool.)*

And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

Thanks be to God.

*The children are invited to come to the front for the singing of Away in the manger and to see the first Ever Santa Claus! (Parents may come with the very young. The children can surround the cradle.)*

**Congregational Carol: Away In A manger (Seated)**

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

Be near me, Lord Jesus  
I ask You to stay  
Close by me forever  
And love me I pray

Bless all the dear children  
In Your tender care  
And fit us for heaven  
To live with You there.

**(St. Nicholas Enters as the Thaumaturge of Myra, The first Santa Claus.** Saint Nicholas of Myra lived from 15 March 270 – 6 December 343. He gives out chocolate gold coins to the children.)

*Music Interlude as the children return to their seats*

**Choir anthem: All is Well**

**4<sup>th</sup> Lesson: The Shepherds Go to the Manger**

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, 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, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

*(Shepherds go down the aisle)*

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

Thanks be to God.

**Congregational Carol: While Shepards Watched their Flocks by Night V:1-6**

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, all human kind.

'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 earth  
begin, and never cease!'

### **5<sup>th</sup> Lesson: The Wise Men are Led by the Star to Jesus**

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.



When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.  
And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Thanks be to God.

### **Congregational Carol: We three Kings** (Please remain seated)

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

Refrain:

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

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain,  
gold I bring to crown him again,  
King forever, ceasing never,  
over us all to reign.

Refrain:

Frankincense to offer have I;  
incense owns a Deity nigh;  
prayer and praising, voices raising,  
worshiping God on high.

Refrain:

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

Refrain:

Glorious now behold him arise;  
King and God and sacrifice:

Alleluia, Alleluia,  
sounds through the earth and skies.

Refrain:

**All stand (if able) at the fanfare for the Gospel Procession:**

**The Gospel according to St. John read by Dr. Thompson:**

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.  
Thanks be to God.

**The congregation is seated after the recession of the Gospel.**

**Offering Carol: Good King Wenceslas**

Good King Wenceslas looked out  
On the Feast of Stephen  
When the snow lay round about  
Deep and crisp and even  
Brightly shone the moon that night  
Though the frost was cruel  
When a poor man came in sight  
Gathering winter fuel

Hither, page, and stand by me,  
If thou knowst it, telling  
Yonder peasant, who is he?  
Where and what his dwelling?  
Sire, he lives a good league hence,  
Underneath the mountain  
Right against the forest fence  
By Saint Agnes fountain.

Bring me flesh and bring me wine  
Bring me pine logs hither  
Thou and I shall see him dine  
When we bear them thither.  
Page and monarch, forth they went  
Forth they went together  
Through the rude winds wild lament  
And the bitter weather

Sire, the night is darker now  
And the wind blows stronger  
Fails my heart, I know not how  
I can go no longer.  
Mark my footsteps, good my page  
Tread thou in them boldly  
Thou shall find the winters rage  
Freeze thy blood less coldly.

In his masters step he trod  
Where the snow lay dinted  
Heat was in the very sod  
Which the Saint had printed  
Therefore, Christian men, be sure  
Wealth or rank possessing  
Ye, who now will bless the poor  
Shall yourselves find blessing.

### **Meditation for Christmas Eve: Dr. Thompson**

#### **O Holy Night: Solo**

#### **Congregational Carol: 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 Savior is born!  
Christ the Savior is born

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

### **Congregational Carol: 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  
O come, let us adore Him  
O come, let us adore Him  
O come, let us adore Him  
Christ the Lord!

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation  
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God  
All glory in the highest  
O come, let us adore Him  
O come, let us adore Him  
O come, let us adore Him  
Christ the Lord!

### **Choir: We wish you a Merry Christmas**

**Benediction**

**Postlude**