

CHRISTMAS

Saint Peter's Brighton Beach

The Feast of the Incarnation



Detail from window at Saint Peter's

Priest:
Father Ron White

Organist:
Andrew Kerr

Director of Music:
Pamela Wainwright

Choir: Saint Peter's Choir

**Choral Eucharist
Christmas Day
Sunday 24 December 2023
11.30PM**

Christmas

Introduction to the Season

The celebration of Christ's incarnation at Christmas is one of the two poles of the Christian year. The wonderful mystery of God's dwelling among us in the fullness of humanity, as Emmanuel, foretold by the prophets and born of Mary, provides the material of the feast:

Hark, hark, the wise eternal word,
like a weak infant cries!
In form of servant is the Lord,
and God in cradle lies. (*Thomas Pestel*)

Christmas is much more than simply the celebration of Jesus' birth, and neither of the great Christmas morning readings (Hebrews 1 and John 1) is taken from the infancy narratives. The task of the Christmas liturgy is to recall us, amid all the joyful customs and celebrations of Christmas, to this central truth of the Word made flesh for our salvation.

It is, of course, Christ's nativity that has provided the occasion for this festival of the incarnation, since the end of the third century. The Christmas crib and the nativity play can both be said to descend from the tableau of Christ's birth that Francis of Assisi arranged when he celebrated Christmas at Greccio in 1223. Christmas carols are a medieval tradition, which has been notably developed from the end of the nineteenth century. The Festival of Lessons and Carols is itself an influential English creation of the late nineteenth century, made widespread by the choir of King's College, Cambridge, in the first half of the twentieth.

The Christmas season is often celebrated for twelve days, ending with the Epiphany. Contemporary use has sought to express an alternative tradition, in which Christmas lasts for a full forty days, ending with the Feast of the Presentation on 2 February. The days around 25 December are a principal holiday in the secular calendar, and commercial pressures have led to much of Christmas celebration being displaced into Advent. It has become a still greater challenge to celebrate as they deserve the saints of the Christmas season: Stephen, who first paid with his life for following the incarnate Lord; John, who was believed to have lived to great old age in profound meditation on the Word made flesh; and the Holy Innocents, who draw our attention to the plight of children in a world where the implications of the birth of the Christ-child are

not yet manifest. Resources for these days may be found in *Common Worship: Festivals*. New Year's Day is an important moment in the civil rather than the Christian calendar, but it provides the original occasion for the searching Covenant Renewal service of the Methodist tradition.

From *A Common Worship*, Church of England

Please switch off all mobile phones

Please say the responses printed in bold

This is a COVID Safe service

- Please hand sanitise upon entry using the hand sanitiser provided
- Holy communion will be distributed in one kind only (i.e. the bread, with the wine already placed on it), at the rood screen

GATHERING IN GOD'S NAME

please stand

PROCESSIONAL HYMN

1

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 you, O Israel.

2

O come, O come, great Lord of might
Who to the tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times did give the law

In cloud and majesty and awe.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel

Shall come to you, O Israel.

3

O come, O key of David, come,

and open wide our heavenly home;

make safe the way that leads on high

and close the path to misery.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel

Shall come to you, O Israel.

The lighting of the Christmas candle

HYMN

Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright

round the virgin mother and child.

Holy infant, so tender and mild, 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!

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 your birth.

The crib prayers

The priest greets all in the name of the Incarnate Lord

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with you.

All: And also with you.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

The priest introduces the confession

Christ the light of the world has come
to dispel the darkness of our hearts.
In his light let us examine ourselves and confess our sins.

Pause for reflection

Lord of grace and truth,
we confess our unworthiness
to stand in your presence as your children.
We have sinned:

All: forgive and heal us.

The Virgin Mary accepted your call
to be the mother of Jesus.
Forgive our disobedience to your will.
We have sinned:

All: forgive and heal us.

Your Son our Saviour

was born in poverty in a manger.

Forgive our greed and rejection of your ways.

We have sinned:

All: forgive and heal us.

The shepherds left their flocks

to go to Bethlehem.

Forgive our self-interest and lack of vision.

We have sinned:

All: forgive and heal us.

The priest pronounces the Absolution

May the God of all healing and forgiveness

draw you to himself

and cleanse you from all your sins,

that you may behold the glory of his Son,

the Word made flesh,

Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE GLORIA

The Gloria is sung:

Glory to God in the highest,

and peace to God's people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,

almighty God and Father,

we worship you, we give you thanks,

we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,

Lord God, Lamb of God,

**you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High
Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen**

THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

The priest says the Collect

Let us pray in the peace of this Christmas celebration
that our joy in the birth of Christ will last for ever.

Silence is kept

Eternal God,
who made this most holy night
to shine with the brightness of your one true light:
bring us, who have known the revelation of that light on earth,
to see the radiance of your heavenly glory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

please sit

FIRST READING

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

9.2-7

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.
You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.
For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
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.

For the word of the Lord,
thanks be to God.

PSALM 96

Repeat response after choir, then sing as indicated

Response

Today is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord

1. O sing to the Lord a new song:
sing to the Lord, all the earth.
2. Sing to the Lord and bless his holy name:
proclaim the good news of his salvation from day to day. **Response**
3. Declare his glory among the nations:
and his wonders among all peoples.
4. For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised:
he is more to be feared than all gods. **Response**
5. As for all the gods of the nations, they are mere idols:
it is the Lord who made the heavens.
6. Majesty and glory are before him:
beauty and power are in his sanctuary. **Response**
7. Render to the Lord, you families of the nations:
render to the Lord glory and might.
8. Render to the Lord the honour due to his name:
bring offerings and come into his courts. **Response**
9. Worship the Lord in the beauty of his holiness:
let the whole earth stand in awe of him.
10. Say among the nations that the Lord is king:
he has made the world so firm that it can never be moved
and he shall judge the peoples with equity. **Response**
11. Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad:
let the sea roar, and all that fills it.
12. Let the fields rejoice, and everything in them:
then shall all the trees of the wood
shout with joy before the Lord.
13. For he comes, he comes to judge the earth:
he shall judge the world with righteousness
and the peoples with his truth. **Response**

SECOND READING

A reading from the letter of Paul to Titus.

2.11-14

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

For the word of the Lord,

thanks be to God.

GRADUAL HYMN

please stand

1. O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see you lie;
above your deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by.

Yet in your dark streets shining
the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in you tonight.

2. For Christ is born of Mary,
and gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wondering love.

O morning stars together,
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the king,
and peace to all on earth!

3. 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.

4. 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!

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION & READING

The Gospel acclamation is sung.

Alleluia, alleluia!

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us,
and we have seen his glory

Alleluia!

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Saint Luke.

Luke 2.1-14

Glory to you Lord Jesus Christ.

The Birth of Jesus

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.

The Shepherds and the Angels

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!'

For the Gospel of the Lord,
praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

please sit

Sermon

Choral Anthem In the bleak midwinter

THE GREETING OF PEACE

please stand

The priest says

This holy night the angels sang,
'Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to all in whom he delights.' (Luke 2.14)

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

All are invited to turn to those around them and exchange a sign of peace.

THE OFFERTORY

*During the hymn the bread and wine are brought to the altar and
a collection is taken up.*

1 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.

2 Oh, that birth forever blessed
when the virgin, full of grace,
by the Holy Ghost conceiving,
bore the Savior of our race,
and the babe, the world's Redeemer,
first revealed his sacred face
evermore and evermore.

3 This is he whom seers and sages
sang of old with one accord,
whom the voices of the prophets
promised in their faithful word.
Now he shines, the long-expected;
let creation praise its Lord
evermore and evermore.

4 In the heights of heaven adore him,
angel hosts his praises sing,
all dominions bow before him
and extol our God and king;
let no tongue on earth be silent,
every voice together sing
evermore and evermore.

Word made flesh, life of the world,
in your incarnation you embraced our poverty:
by your Spirit may we share in your riches.

Amen.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The priest begins the Eucharistic Prayer

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

...for ever praising you and singing:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

...Let us proclaim the mystery of faith.

**Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.**

... in songs of never-ending praise:

**Blessing and honour and glory and power
are yours for ever and ever. Amen.**

Rejoicing in the presence of God here among us, as our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**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.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD AND COMMUNION

The priest breaks the bread

We break the bread of life,
and that life is the light of the world.

**All God here among us,
light in the midst of us,
bring us to light and life.**

The Agnus Dei is sung:

Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.

Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.

Jesus, redeemer of the world, grant us your peace.

The priest says

Christ is the true bread which has come down from heaven.

All Lord, give us this bread always.

All who are baptised, of all Christian denominations, are welcome to receive Holy Communion here at Saint Peter's. This includes children from the age of 5 at the discretion of their parents. If you would prefer to receive a blessing, please indicate this to the priest, by the crossing of the arms on the chest.

Communion Motet See amid the winter snow

THE SENDING OUT OF GOD'S PEOPLE

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

The priest says

please stand

Let us pray.

God of heaven, dwelling among us,
we thank you for feeding us with this holy food.
By your grace keep us ever faithful to your Word made flesh,
that, as his body in the world,
we may bring your presence to all people;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Announcement

The Parish Council invites you to make a Christmas gift to the parish to help meet the cost of repairs and maintenance in 2024 by taking away a letter with you today from a churchwarden located in the front porch as you leave. The Parish council thanks you for your generosity.

DISMISSAL HYMN

1. 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".

2. Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord.
Late in time behold him come,
Offspring of the virgin's womb:
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail the incarnate Deity,
Pleased, as man with man to dwell
Jesus, our Immanuel.
Hark the herald angels sing
"Glory to the new-born king".

3. 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 newborn king".

The priest pronounces the Blessing

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

May the Father,
who has loved the eternal Son
from before the foundation of the world,
shed that love upon you his children. **Amen.**

May Christ,
who by his incarnation gathered into one
things earthly and heavenly,
fill you with joy and peace. **Amen**

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

And the blessing of God almighty,
The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
Be among you and remain with you always. **Amen**

The priest says

Go in the peace of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

*All at Saint Peter's wish you
a most joyous and holy Christmas
and a blessed and peaceful New Year in 2024
All welcome.
All welcome to our Christmas Day service at 9am.*