

**A SERVICE OF LESSONS AND
CAROLS FOR CHRISTMAS
3pm Sunday 21st December
2025
at
ALL SAINTS CHURCH, SIDLEY**



THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

The tradition of Nine Lessons and Carols dates to 1880s Cornwall when Truro Cathedral was being constructed. The first services were held in the large wooden building that served as the temporary cathedral and organised by the then dean (later to become Archbishop of Canterbury) Edward White Benson. This service was later adapted in 1918 by Eric Milner-White, the dean of Chapel at King's College, Cambridge, who composed the bidding prayer at the beginning of the service. The simple beauty of this service has become much loved and very popular not only in England, but around the world. Nine Lessons and Carols is broadcast annually by the BBC World Service.

The service takes us through readings from Holy Scripture beginning with Genesis and traces the journey of God's faithfulness to His beloved Creation and particularly to men and women – human beings He has created in His own image and likeness. We hear of the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, and how they hide from the presence of God, even as God searches for them. As we hear the rest of the lessons, we find God constant and faithful in His promises to human beings, culminating in God's sending of His only begotten Son - in whom all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell¹ - in great humility to take our nature upon Himself and to be born of a pure Virgin. This is what we call to mind and celebrate tonight as we open the Scriptures and raise our voices in songs of praise and thanksgiving.

Though this beautiful tradition begun over 130 years ago has indeed reached great heights of sophistication and fame, we remember that it began, not unlike the sacred story we hear this evening, in the humility of a temporary home. Let us be glad then, that we are able to join together as sisters and brothers to hear again that our lives have meaning and purpose in Christ, and that the invisible God loved the world in this way: that He sent His only Son Jesus Christ, who is His image, to be born and dwell amongst us, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be healed and saved through trusting in Him – the One who *is* love, and *is* light, in a frightened, darkened world.

It is good to have you with us this evening, and if this is your first time with us, I pray that you will find a warm welcome!

- Fr Ian Edgar

¹ Colossians 1:19

As you are able, please stand to sing the carols and sit to hear the lessons read.

CAROL

1 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.

2 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.

3 And through all his wondrous
childhood
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.

4 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.

5 Not in that poor lowly stable,
With the oxen standing by,
We shall we 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.

Words: C. F. Alexander Music: H. J. Gauntlett; harm. A. H. Mann;

THE BIDDING PRAYER *said by the priest*

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive them that trespass against us;
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

THE FIRST LESSON -*the consequences of Adam and Eve's disobedience to God*
Genesis 3:8-14

CAROL

1 The first Nowell the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in
fields as they lay; In fields where
they lay, keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was so
deep:

Refrain:

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
Born is the King of Israel.

2 They looked up and saw a star,
Shining in the east, beyond them
far: And to the earth it gave great
light, And so it continued both day
and night: *Refrain*

3 And by the light of that same star,
Three Wise Men came from
country far; To seek for a king was
their intent,
And to follow the star wheresoever

Traditional English Carol

it went: *Refrain*

4 This star drew nigh to the north-
west;

O'er Bethlehem it took its rest,
And there it did both stop and stay
Right over the place where Jesus
lay: *Refrain*

5 Then entered in those Wise Men
three,

Full reverently upon their knee,
And offered there in his presence
Both gold and myrrh and
frankincense: *Refrain*

6 Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord,
That hath made heaven and earth of
naught,
And with his blood mankind hath
bought: *Refrain*

SECOND LESSON — *God's promise to Abraham of a blessing to all peoples.*
Genesis 22:15-18

CAROL

1 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.

2 Still through the cloven skies they
come,
With peaceful wings unfurled;
And still their heav'nly music floats
O'er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hovering wing;
And ever o'er it Babel sounds
The blessed angels sing.

Words: Edmund Sears Traditional English melody adapted by A. Sullivan

THIRD LESSON – *the prophet foretells the coming of the Saviour*
Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

CAROL

1 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.

2 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?

3 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!

4 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 give back the
song
Which now the angels sing.

3 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 new-
born King.

4 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 and music: Sussex Carol arr. Vaughan Williams, Novello

FOURTH LESSON – *the peace that Christ brings is foretold*

Isaiah 11:1-9

CAROL

1 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.

2 “Hither, page, and stand by me,
if thou knowest 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 St. Agnes’ fountain.”

3 “Bring me flesh and bring me
wine, bring me pinelogs hither;
thou and I will see him dine,
when we bear them thither.”
Page and monarch,

Words: Rev John Mason Neale Tune: Traditional

forth they went,
forth they went together,
through the rude wind’s wild
lament, and the bitter weather.

4 “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, my good page,
tread thou in them boldly.
Thou shalt find the winter’s rage
freeze your blood less coldly.”

5 In his master’s steps he trod,
where the snow lay dinted;
heat was in the very sod
which the saint had printed.
Therefore, Christians all, be sure,
wealth or rank possessing,
ye who now will bless the poor,
shall yourselves find blessing.

FIFTH LESSON – *the angel Gabriel greets the Blessed Virgin Mary*

St Luke 1: 26-38

CAROL

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 the angelic host proclaim,
Christ is born in Bethlehem:

Refrain:

*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 a Virgin's womb!

Words: Rev Charles Wesley Tune: Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail the incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel: *Refrain*

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:
Refrain

SIXTH LESSON — *Saint Luke tells the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ*
St Luke 2:1-7

CAROL

1 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 to-night.

2 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.

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.

5 O holy Child of Bethlehem,
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in,
Be born in us today.

Philips Brooks (1868) Tune: Forest Green- Ralph Vaughn Williams

We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell:
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel.

SEVENTH LESSON – *the shepherds go to the manger to see the Christ Child*
St Luke 2:8-16

CAROL

1 While shepherds watched their
flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.

2 'Fear not,' said he (for mighty
dread had seized their troubled
mind); 'Glad tidings of great joy I
bring to you and all mankind.

3 '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:

4 The heavenly Babe
you there shall find
To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swathing
bands, And in a manger laid.'

5 Thus spake the seraph; and
forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of angels praising God, who thus
Addressed their joyful song:

6 'All glory be to God on high,
And on the earth be peace;
Good-will henceforth from heaven
to men begin and never cease.'

Words: Nahum Tate. Music first published in Thomas Este's Psalter 1592. Desc. Alan Gray

EIGHTH LESSON – *the wise men are led by a star to our Lord Jesus in Bethlehem*
St Matthew 2:1-12

CAROL

1 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 night,
star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.

2 Born a king on Bethlehem plain,
gold I bring to crown him again,
king for ever, ceasing never
over us all to reign: *Refrain*

John H. Hopkins

NINTH LESSON – *St John unfolds the Mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God*
St John 1:1-14

CAROL

1 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:

Refrain:

O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ
the Lord!

2 God of God,
Light of Light,
Lo! he abhors not the Virgin's

3 Frankincense to offer have I,
incense owns a deity nigh;
prayer and praising, all men raising,
worship him, God most high:

Refrain

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

Refrain

5 Glorious now behold him arise,
king and God and sacrifice.
Heaven sings: 'Alleluia';
'Alleluia,' the earth replies: *Refrain*

womb; Very God,
Begotten, not created: *Refrain*

3 See how the Shepherds,
Summoned to his cradle,
Leaving their flocks, draw nigh
with lowly fear;
We too will thither
Bend our joyful footsteps: *Refrain*

4 Lo! star-led chieftains,
Magi, Christ adoring,
Offer him incense, gold, and
myrrh; We to the Christ Child
Bring our heart's oblations: *Refrain*

5 Child, for us sinners
Poor and in the manger,
Fain we embrace thee, with awe
and love;
Who would not love thee,
Loving us so dearly? *Refrain*

Words: 18th C Latin tr. Frederick Oakeley Melody: J.F. Wade

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

COLLECT AND BLESSING

Priest. The Lord be with you.

All. And with thy spirit.

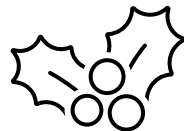
Let us pray.

O GOD, who makest us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of thy only son, Jesus Christ: Grant that as we joyfully receive Him for our Redeemer, so we may with sure confidence behold Him, when He shall come to be our judge: who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God world without end.

Amen.

THE BLESSING

CHRIST, who by His Incarnation gathered into one things earthly and things heavenly, grant you the fullness of inward peace and goodwill, and make you partakers of the Divine nature; and the blessing of Almighty God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost be upon you and remain with you always. Amen.



It has been a joy to have you with us at All Saints! We wish you a very happy, joyful and peaceful Christmas this year, and pray that 2025 will be a good one.

If you have questions about anything that you've experienced this evening, would like to learn more about the Christian faith, would like to come in and

have a look around the church and learn more about its history, or if there is something on your heart that you would like prayed for -whatever it is, please don't hesitate to be in touch with our vicar, Fr Ian, who will be very glad to help in any way that he can.

Special thanks to Mrs Rosamund Wood and the choir for leading us in singing these beautiful carols this evening!

THE COLLECT FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

ALMIGHTY God, who makest us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of thy only Son Jesus Christ: grant that, as we joyfully receive him as our redeemer, so we may with sure confidence behold him when he shall come to be our judge; who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

THE COLLECT FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

ALMIGHTY God, who hast given us thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin: Grant that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Common Worship: Pastoral Services, material from which is included here, is copyright © The Archbishops' Council 2000, 2005 and published by Church House Publishing. Hymns taken from the New English Hymnal, Canterbury Press, 1986

*The cover image is a contemporary Eastern Orthodox icon of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, painted in a traditional style. You will note that Christ is lying in cave, which was in fact a common place to stable animals in that part of His world. This also reflects the words of the Prophet Isaiah (ch.45:8) "let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation". The infant Christ lies in a manger which also resembles a coffin, and the cave the tomb He was laid in after His Passion and Death, reminding us that it was for this reason that Son of God came to dwell among us, that He might save us by His death and Resurrection. There are images of Christ being washed by midwives and a somewhat bewildered St Joseph talking with an old man, said to be the devil tempting him not to believe in this miraculous birth. The angels, shepherds and wise men are also seen, along with The Blessed Virgin Mary, treasuring, as it says in St Luke's Gospel, all these amazing things in her heart.

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CHRISTMAS SERVICES AT ALL SAINTS CHURCH

Monday 22nd, 3pm Nativity

Christmas Eve: 4:00pm Christingle

10:30pm First Mass of Christmas

Christmas Day: 8:00 Dawn Mass

10:00 Sung Mass with Carols

Friday 26th: *St Stephen's Day* 10am Low Mass

Saturday 27th *St John the Evangelist's Day* 10am Low Mass

Sunday 28th *The Holy Holy Family* 10am Parish Sung Mass

Every Sunday: 10:00 Parish Sung Mass. Wednesdays and Fridays:
10am Low Mass. Saturdays: 10am Low Mass (once a month at 9am
because of coffee morning).