

**The Church of England  
in Central Windsor**

**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> December 2024**

**11:15pm**

**Midnight Mass**



**A warm welcome to St Stephen & St Agnes Church  
for our service tonight**

*Please stand for :*

‘Do I not fill heaven and earth?’ says the Lord.

*All* **Now the Word is made flesh and laid in a narrow manger.**  
From eternity to eternity you are God,  
*All* **and now we see you as a newborn child.**

*Please remain standing for :*

## **OPENING HYMN**

**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.**

**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)

## **BLESSING OF THE CRIB**

Dear friends, as we meet to celebrate the birth of Christ, let us pray that God will bless this crib, that all who worship his Son, born of the Virgin Mary, may come to share his life in glory.

God our Father,  
on this night your Son Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary for us and for our salvation: bless this crib, which we have prepared to celebrate that holy birth; may all who see it be strengthened in faith and receive the fullness of life he came to bring, who is alive and reigns for ever.

*All*      **Amen.**

## **THE GREETING**

*The priest says*

In the name of the Father†, and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit.

*All*      **Amen.**

*The priest greets the people*

The Lord be with you

*All*      **and also with you.**

*Please remain standing for the:*

## **PRAYERS OF PENITENCE**

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.

God our Father,  
you sent your Son full of grace and truth:  
forgive our failure to receive him.  
Lord, have mercy.

*All* **Lord, have mercy.**

Jesus our Saviour,  
you were born in poverty and laid in a manger:  
forgive our greed and rejection of your ways.  
Christ, have mercy.

*All* **Christ, have mercy.**

Spirit of love,  
your servant Mary responded joyfully to your call:  
forgive the hardness of our hearts.  
Lord, have mercy.

*All* **Lord, have mercy.**

*The Kyrie Eleison is said or sung:*

*All* **Lord, have mercy, Lord have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy, Christ have mercy.  
Lord, have mercy, Lord have mercy.**

## **ABSOLUTION**

*The priest says*

May the God of all healing and forgiveness draw you to himself,  
that you may behold the glory of his Son, the Word made flesh,  
and be cleansed from all your sins†,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## **THE GLORIA IN EXCELSIS**

*All* **Glory to God in the highest,  
and peace to his 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**

*The priest says:*

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.

*All*      **Amen**

## **THE LITURGY OF THE WORD**

Please sit for:

### **FIRST READING**

#### **Isaiah 52.7–10**

<sup>7</sup>How beautiful upon the mountains  
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,  
who brings good news,  
who announces salvation,  
who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'

<sup>8</sup> Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,  
together they sing for joy;  
for in plain sight they see  
the return of the Lord to Zion.

<sup>9</sup> Break forth together into singing,  
you ruins of Jerusalem;  
for the Lord has comforted his people,  
he has redeemed Jerusalem.

<sup>10</sup> The Lord has bared his holy arm  
before the eyes of all the nations;  
and all the ends of the earth shall see  
the salvation of our God.

At the end the reader says:  
This is the word of the Lord.

*All* **Thanks be to God.**

## **Second READING**

### **Hebrews 1.1–4**

<sup>1</sup>Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets,<sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. <sup>3</sup>He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup>having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

At the end the reader says:  
This is the word of the Lord.

*All* **Thanks be to God.**

*Please stand for:*

### **Gradual Hymn**

**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.**

**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  
shall come 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.

Edmund H. Sears (1810-1876)

*Please remain standing for:*

**GOSPEL READING**

*When the Gospel is announced the reader says or sings:*

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia  
*All* **Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia**  
The Word became flesh and dwelt among us,  
and we have seen his glory.

*All* **Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John  
*All* **Glory to you, O Lord.**

**John 1.1–14**

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup>in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. <sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup>The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.

<sup>11</sup>He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.

<sup>12</sup>But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

At the end the reader says:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.  
*All* **Praise to you, O Christ.**

*Please sit for:*

**SERMON**

*Please stand for:*

**THE APOSTLES CREED**

*All*      **I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ,  
his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.  
Amen**

*Please sit for:*

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

*These responses may be used*

*All*      **Lord, in your mercy  
hear our prayer.**

*All*      **Lord hear us  
Lord graciously hear us**

*And at the end*

*All*      **Merciful Father,  
accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
Amen.**



## THE LITURGY OF THE SACRAMENT

*Please stand for:*

### **THE PEACE**

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

*All* The peace of the Lord be always with you  
**and also with you.**

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

*You are invited to exchange a sign of peace*

*The offertory collection will be brought to the altar to be blessed. It will be used for the ministry, mission and outreach of the church. Please consider using the Gift Aid envelopes if you are able to do so.*

*If you give regularly via the collection when you attend Sunday worship in one of our churches, but are not with us every week, have you considered giving through the Parish Giving Scheme? It is very easy to do. Details are in the weekly Keeping Us in Touch leaflet or speak to any of our churchwardens*

### **OFFERTORY HYMN**

**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 men 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)

#### PREPARATION OF THE TABLE

*The altar is prepared and bread and wine are placed upon it.  
The priest takes the bread and wine.*

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

*All*     **Amen**

#### THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

*All*     The Lord be with you  
**and also with you.**

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

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

Father, we give you thanks and praise  
through your beloved Son Jesus Christ, your living Word,  
through whom you have created all things;  
who was sent by you in your great goodness to be our Saviour.

By the power of the Holy Spirit he took flesh;  
as your Son, born of the blessed Virgin,  
he lived on earth and went about among us;  
he opened wide his arms for us on the cross;  
he put an end to death by dying for us;  
and revealed the resurrection by rising to new life;  
so he fulfilled your will and won for you a holy people.

And now we give you thanks  
because, in the incarnation of the Word,  
a new light has dawned upon the world;  
you have become one with us  
that we might become one with you in your glorious kingdom

Therefore with angels and archangels,  
and with all the company of heaven,  
we proclaim your great and glorious name,  
for ever praising you and singing:

*All* **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.**

Lord, you are holy indeed, the source of all holiness;  
grant that by the power of your Holy Spirit,  
and according to your holy will,  
these gifts of bread and wine  
may be to us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ;  
who, in the same night that he was betrayed,  
took bread and gave you thanks;  
he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;  
do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, after supper  
he took the cup and gave you thanks;  
he gave it to them, saying:  
Drink this, all of you;  
this is my blood of the new covenant,  
which is shed for you and for many for the  
forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, as often as you drink it,  
in remembrance of me.

Great is the mystery of faith

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

And so, Father, calling to mind his death on the cross, his perfect sacrifice made once for the sins of the whole world; rejoicing in his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension, and looking for his coming in glory, we celebrate this memorial of our redemption. As we offer you this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, we bring before you this bread and this cup and we thank you for counting us worthy to stand in your presence and serve you.

Send the Holy Spirit on your people and gather into one in your kingdom all who share this one bread and one cup, so that we, in the company of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St Stephen, St Agnes, St John the Baptist and all the saints, may praise and glorify you for ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord; by whom, and with whom, and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory be yours, almighty Father, for ever and ever.

**All** **Amen.**

## **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

*The priest says*

Uniting our prayers with the whole company of heaven, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us.

*Please feel free to use either the traditional or the contemporary version as we pray together*

**All** **Our Father, who art in heaven, All**  
**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 those**  
**who trespass against us.**  
**And lead us not into temptation;**  
**but deliver us from evil.**

**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.**  
**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.

For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.

## **BREAKING OF THE BREAD**

*The priest breaks the consecrated 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**

## **AGNUS DEI**

*All* **Lamb of God,  
you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.  
Lamb of God,  
you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.  
Lamb of God,  
you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.**

## **GIVING OF COMMUNION**

*The priest says the invitation to communion*

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

*All* **Lord, give us this bread always.**

*If you are confirmed or a communicant member of the Church of England or any other Christian church, you are welcome to receive communion with us this morning. Otherwise, you are warmly invited to come forward to receive a blessing. Please bring the service booklet with you so we know you wish to receive a blessing.*

*Gluten free wafers are available on request.*

*During the administration of communion the following will be sung*

**1 See amid the winter's snow,  
born for us on earth below,  
see, the gentle Lamb of God  
appears,  
promised from eternal years.**

***Refrain:***

***Hail thou ever blessèd morn,  
hail redemption's happy dawn,  
sing through all Jerusalem:  
Christ is born in Bethlehem.***

**2 Lo, within a manger lies  
he who built the starry skies;  
he who, thronèd in height sublime,  
sits amid the cherubim.**

***Refrain:***

3 Say, ye holy shepherds, say,  
what your joyful news today.  
wherefore have ye left your sheep  
on the lonely mountain steep

*Refrain:*

4 "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."

*Refrain:*

5 Sacred Infant, all divine,  
what a tender love was thine,  
thus to come from highest bliss  
down to such a world as this

*Refrain:*

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

Edward Caswall (1814-1878)

1 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.

2 Silent night, holy night,  
shepherds quake at the sight,  
glories stream from heaven afar,  
heavenly hosts sing alleluia;  
Christ, the Saviour, is born.  
Christ, the Saviour, is born.

3 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 thy birth.  
Jesus, Lord at thy birth.

Joseph Mohr (1792-1848)  
tr S. A. Brooke (1832-1916)

## PRAYERS AFTER COMMUNION

God our Father,  
in this night you have made known to us again  
the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:  
confirm our faith and fix our eyes on him  
until the day dawns  
and Christ the Morning Star rises in our hearts.  
To him be glory both now and for ever.

*All* **Amen.**

*All*     **Almighty God,  
we thank you for feeding us  
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.  
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies  
to be a living sacrifice.  
Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your  
praise and glory  
Amen**

## THE DISMISSAL

*Please stand for :*

### **THE BLESSING**

May the joy of the angels,  
the eagerness of the shepherds,  
the perseverance of the wise men,  
the obedience of Joseph and Mary  
and the peace of the Christ child be yours this Christmas  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father†, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.

*All*     **Amen.**

### **Final Hymn**

**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.*

**God from God,  
Light from Light,  
lo! he abhors not the Virgin's womb;  
very God,  
begotten not created:  
*Refrain:***

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:*

Child, for us sinners  
poor and in the manger,  
we would embrace thee, with awe and love;  
who would not love thee,  
loving us so dearly?  
*Refrain:*

Sing, choirs of angels,  
sing in exultation,  
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;  
glory to God,  
glory in the highest;  
*Refrain:*

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,  
born this happy morning;  
Jesus, to thee be glory given;  
Word of the Father,  
now in flesh appearing;  
*Refrain:*

Latin 18<sup>th</sup> Century tr Frederick Oakley (1802-1880)  
and others

*The priest says*

Go in peace. Proclaim the Word made flesh.

*All* **Glory, thanks and praise to God**

*The ministers and people depart.*

If you are visiting today or attending for the first time, we hope that you have felt “at home” here, that you will be refreshed by this service of worship and that you will return in the future.  
We shall be delighted if you decide to make our church community your spiritual home.

**You are welcome to take this service sheet away with you for private reflection or to give to a friend.**

**If you would like to know more about the Christian faith, please ask!  
You can also find out more by following the “Our Faith” link on the Church of England website: [www.churchofengland.org](http://www.churchofengland.org)**

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