

Our Service Together

Christmas Day 2022



An Acclamation for the Season

All: Alleluia, alleluia. 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. Alleluia, alleluia!

Preparation

All: This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Through the brokenness of Christ, we become one body
as one body we now gather in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to receive God's holy word, to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Our Confession

The sun of righteousness has dawned with healing in his wings. Let us come to the light of Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

All: Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord, we come to you in sorrow for our sins, and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

Be still for a moment in confession and in receiving God's Grace in Christ

All: May Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive us our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord.

Amen.

The opening prayer

All: The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

All: As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and for ever. Amen.

The Psalmody Psalm 96 *We say the psalm aloud*

Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.

Sing to the Lord and bless his name; tell out his salvation from day to day.

Declare his glory among the nations and his wonders among all peoples.

For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; he is more to be feared than all gods.

For all the gods of the nations are but idols; it is the Lord who made the heavens.

Honour and majesty are before him; power and splendour are in his sanctuary.

Ascribe to the Lord, you families of the peoples; ascribe to the Lord honour and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name; bring offerings and come into his courts.

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; let the whole earth tremble before him.

Tell it out among the nations that the Lord is king.

He has made the world so firm that it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.

Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad; let the sea thunder and all that is in it;

Let the fields be joyful and all that is in them; let all the trees of the wood shout for joy before the Lord.

For he comes, he comes to judge the earth;

with righteousness he will judge the world and the peoples with his truth.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

Scripture Reading Hebrews 1.1-4

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, ²but 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. ³He 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, ⁴having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Gloria

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 Gospel John 1.1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ 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 of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

A Reflection for the day

After a year of everything royal, with pomp and celebration, and before another royal event in 2023 – the Coronation of King Charles III, it is good to pause for a moment and reflect on how the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, does things; how God is about his business in the world.

I love this little poem about God's way of things:

Shepherds, they say, were the fools of their day, the ones who were the butt of the jokes — Fred Flintstone with sheep, Homer Simpson asleep, imperfectly ordin'ry blokes.

They're nobody famous, just some ignoramus anyone might string along — neither pious or holy, they take things in slowly and often get much of it wrong.

So they're out on the downs, looking over the town, feeling vaguely that life's passed them by, just minding their own business, prob'ly having a moan, when an angel gate crashes their sky.

And that's how it is, this behaviour of God, it's his modus operandi:

he will choose the obscure, or the dull, or the poor — frankly, anyone who's handy...

It wasn't to the royal palace that the angels went, but to the hillside, to the ordinary folks. It isn't that kings and queens don't matter to God, they do, everyone does ordinary folks like you and me matter to God. Mary and Joseph may have been able, Shane Richey style, to trace their ancestry back to the great King David, but they were very ordinary folks!

Whilst there was no room left in the family home's guest room in Bethlehem they found room for Mary to give birth – probably the warmest and quietest place in the house, where the prized animals spent the night; they must have put them outside for the birth! But Mary had made room for God's possibility of bringing to birth His salvation in the world when she said to the angel, 'may it be as the Lord has said for I am his servant'. The lack of space in the guest room would not thwart them now, and together they made space for the birth of God's love in the world.

This was cause for celebration and God's angels went to the nearest folks outside of town, the shepherds – and the party began. And the shepherds, not wanting to miss on anything, came to town to see what had 'been brought to birth'. What they found was something wonderful, something miraculous, before their eyes. God's plan to 'so love' the world was there in the ordinary life of two ordinary people who had said yes to the possibility that God would act to love the world.

It was something wonderful, and it remains something wonderful; that God has come and love the world, to provide a way for peace and justice, and more, that God does this through ordinary folk's lives. The miracle continues, through the lives of ordinary folks, who are open to the possibility that God would love the world, bring peace and justice through His Son with them through the Holy Spirit.

All it takes, it would seem, is for ordinary folks like you and me to say 'may it be as the Lord has said for I am His servant'.

The 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.

Prayers *We make our intercessions*

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Father, your Son our Saviour was born in human flesh.
Renew your Church as the Body of Christ.
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

There was no room for your Son in the inn.
Protect with your love those who have no home and all who live in poverty.
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Mary, in the pain of labour, brought your Son to birth.
Hold in your hand all who are in pain or distress.
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Christ came as a light shining in the darkness.
Bring comfort to all who suffer in the sadness of our world.
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

The angels sang, 'Peace to God's people on earth.'
Strengthen those who work for peace and justice in all the world.
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Strangers found the Holy Family, and saw the baby lying in the manger.
Bless our homes and all whom we love.
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Heaven is come down to earth, and earth is raised to heaven.
Hold in your hand all those who have passed through death in the hope of your coming kingdom.
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Christians the world over celebrate Christ's birth.
Open our hearts that he may be born in us today.
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Father, angels and shepherds worshipped at the manger throne.
Receive the worship we offer in fellowship with Mary, Joseph and the saints
through him who is your Word made flesh, our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The Collect

All: Almighty God, you have given us your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin: grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; 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.

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

All: 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 those who 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 Conclusion

All: Christ, as a light illumine and guide me this day.
Christ, as a shield overshadow me.
Christ under me, Christ over me; Christ beside me on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me. Amen.