

St Cuthbert's Scottish Episcopal Church



Midnight Eucharist

11.30pm

A very warm welcome on this Holy Night
(online our YouTube Channel)

We meet to celebrate the coming of Christ into the world.
The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.

And we beheld his glory.

THE PEACE

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called the Prince of Peace.

We meet in Christ's name. **Let us share his peace.**

We offer one another a sign of God's peace with a smile, bow or wave.

HYMN 363 – It came upon the midnight clear

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 all,
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 blessèd angels sing.

For lo! the days are hastening on,
by prophets seen of old,
when, with the ever-circling years,
comes round the age of gold;
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendours fling,
and all the world give back the song
which now the angels sing.

Edmund Hamilton Sears (1810-1876) alt.

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COLLECT FOR PURITY

**Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of
your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

GLORIA (*Said*)

**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.**

COLLECT OF THE DAY

Eternal God, this holy night is radiant with the brilliance of your one true light. As we have known the revelation of that light on earth, so bring us to see the splendour of your heavenly glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING: ISAIAH 52. 7-10

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.' 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. Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. 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.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING: HEBREWS 1.1-4

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

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gradual Hymn 59 – Away in a manger

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.

The cattle are lowing,
the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus
no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus!
Look down from the sky,
and stay by my side
until morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus;
I ask thee to stay
close by me for ever,
and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children
in thy tender care,
and fit us for heaven,
to live with thee there.

*Original text: William James Kirkpatrick (1838-1921)
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GOSPEL: JOHN 1. 1-14

Hear the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

Glory to Christ our Saviour.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. 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.

Give thanks to the Lord for his glorious Gospel.

Praise to Christ our Lord.

SERMON

Light out of darkness: the hope that shines out to us at this Christmas time. As we hear in our reading from John's Gospel, 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.' Jesus' birth heralded our Lord's arrival as the light of the world, a world now enabled to move from darkness into light, a world engulfed in sin receiving the bright and glorious promise of salvation. 'As John affirms: 'What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.' What a wonderful promise! Our Gospel reading concludes with a mighty flourish: 'the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory....' But how does this notion of glory fit in with the birth of a tiny baby to a poor young woman in a meagre stable in Bethlehem?

It really depends on how we visualise glory. Let's ponder on how the arrival of the Messiah was prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures. Was it couched in terms of a powerful king, residing in a splendid palace and gaining victory at the head of a mighty army? I don't think so! I believe we can get a sense of how it was viewed by looking at the picture painted in our passage from the prophet Isaiah. In verse 7 Isaiah declared 'how beautiful' were the feet of the messenger announcing peace – NOT war – heralding good news and salvation. In verse 8 we hear of those on the lookout raising their voices in joy. No signs of war or power there! Then in verse 9 everyone was called to join in the rejoicing, for the Lord had comforted and redeemed his people. There's a sense of calmness, gentleness and sheer joy flowing out of these verses. And it gets even better in verse 10. The promise of salvation was being held out to everyone,

not just God's original chosen people: 'all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.'

So, this humble birth in the stable in Bethlehem doesn't seem to me in any way at odds with the prophecies. As with any human birth, once the inevitable stress and turmoil have passed, then calm and joy descend: a picture very much in tune with the tone of our passage from Isaiah. The first sounds of rejoicing came from the song of the angels announcing the glad news to a group of humble shepherds, the lowest of the low in their society, whilst they were tending their sheep on a hill near Bethlehem. Our opening hymn echoed their proclamation: 'Peace on the earth, goodwill to all, from heav'n's all-gracious King!' The fact that this most momentous, life-changing birth was announced first to the humblest of people, truly pointed the way to the nature of Jesus' ministry on earth, gathering into his arms the marginalised, the despised, the poor. But, as Isaiah had foretold, the salvation being brought by the Son of the Father was for everyone, was to reach to the 'ends of the earth.' So, the next visitors to the baby Jesus of whom we're informed in the scriptures were the three wise men, wealthy, privileged and intelligent, visitors representing people of a totally different background, from differing parts of the earth. And it's interesting to note that there's no record of these illustrious figures showing surprise at finding the king they were seeking lying in poor surroundings rather than in a royal palace. Their visit was conducted with a sense of awe, worship and an undoubted acknowledgement that they were greeting a very special child of no ordinary significance.

I believe that the circumstances of this nativity story truly emphasise that God in the person of his incarnate Son came to

serve, to be a servant king, to offer salvation to all. And it wasn't a once off message. God's love and compassion, demonstrated by his Son, is with us all the time. It's a message of hope that we need more than ever this Christmas, as we battle the wearying and unpredictable Covid19 pandemic. As our opening hymn affirmed, regarding the announcement of the good news by the angels: 'and still their heav'nly music floats o'er all the weary world.'

As we once again celebrate the coming of the Christ child in the stable at Bethlehem, I feel we can indeed see ourselves bathed in the light of the world, in the light of his presence. Indeed, the promise of vaccination against the virus seems like a reflection of the sense of hope brought about by the arrival of our Lord on earth. As we rejoice at this Christmas time, although we can't actually sing in thanksgiving as God's people were encouraged to do by Isaiah, nevertheless each of us can in all joy receive this wonderful gift in the way suggested at the end of our hymn "In the bleak mid-winter": 'what I can I give him: give my heart.' A very happy and blessed Christmas to all. **Amen.**

Rev. Dr. Margaret Dineley

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We believe in God who made us, loves us and sent the Son for our salvation.

We believe in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, who came in humility and love to reveal his kingdom and welcome us home.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, by whose quickening power the Virgin conceived and who brings us all to life.

We believe we are all called to be the children of God born of water and the Spirit healed, restored, forgiven and assured of the world to come. Amen.

INTERCESSIONS

Heavenly Father, on this Holy night we come to you in prayer. We rejoice and give you thanks for the wonder of your love made known to us in the birth of your son Jesus Christ, your incarnate word.

We pray for your church.

Heavenly Father, may your church be a beacon of light and true witness to the gift of your son born to be our Saviour.

We pray for the witness of St Cuthbert's. We give thanks and pray for Christmas blessings on our leaders - Nicki, Margaret, Caroline and Philip. We remember our brothers and sisters worldwide - and especially those persecuted for their faith and celebrating in fearful silence.

Gift-giving God...**hear our prayer.**

We pray for the world crying out for the peace and goodwill of Christmas. Heavenly Father, we bring before you our country, the United Kingdom, at this time of uncertainty. Give wisdom and courage to our leaders. Inspire leaders worldwide with a vision of peace and justice for all - a world of reconciliation from violence and conflict, a world where the effects of climate change will be challenged and overcome. Especially at this time

we bring before God the many countries and people suffering with Covid 19. We give thanks for the development of vaccines and pray for them to be available to rich and poor countries.

Gift-giving God...**hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, we bring before you those in need, the many this year who will not know the joy of Christmas. We remember those in hospital, those in care homes and those who cannot visit them, those mourning a loved one, those alone and feeling isolated, those who have lost jobs and those not able to be with family at this time. In a moment of quiet we name those known personally who need our prayers.

Gift-giving God...**hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, gift-giving God, we pray that this Christmas we may be filled with a deeper sense of your great love for us and your world. May we reflect your love in thankful worship and service to others.

Accept this and all our prayers for the sake of God's new born Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

OFFERTORY HYMN 357 – In the bleak midwinter

In the bleak mid-winter frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
in the bleak mid-winter, long ago.

Our God, heav'n cannot hold him nor earth sustain;
heav'n and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign.
In the bleak mid-winter a stable-place sufficed
the Lord God almighty, Jesus Christ.

Angels and archangels may have gathered there,
cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;
but only his mother in her maiden bliss
worshipped the beloved with a kiss.

What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb;
if I were a wise man I would do my part,
yet what I can I give him: give my heart.

Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830-1894)

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LITURGY OF THE SACRAMENT

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation;
through your goodness we have this bread to offer,
which earth has given and human hands have made;
it will become for us the bread of life.

Blessed be God for ever.

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation;
Through your goodness we have this wine to offer,
fruit of the vine and work of human hands;
it will become the cup of our salvation.

Blessed be God for ever.

EUCCHARISTIC 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 God thanks and praise.

Worship and praise belong to you, Father, in every place and at all times. All power is yours. You created the heavens and established the earth; you sustain in being all that is.

In Christ your Son, our life and yours are brought together in a wonderful exchange. He made his home among us that we might for ever dwell in you. Through your Holy Spirit you call us to new birth in a creation restored by love.

As children of your redeeming purpose for whom Christ Jesus humbled himself and became poor to make us rich, we offer you our praise, with angels and archangels and the whole company of heaven, singing the hymn of your unending glory:

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.

Glory and thanksgiving be to you, most loving Father,
for the gift of your Son born in human flesh. He is the Word
existing beyond time, both source and final purpose,
bringing to wholeness all that is made.

Obedient to your will he died upon the Cross.
By your power you raised him from the dead.
He broke the bonds of evil and set your people free
to be his Body in the world.

On the night when he was given up to death,
knowing that his hour had come, having loved his own,
he loved them to the end. At supper with his disciples he
took bread and offered you thanks.

He broke the bread, and gave it to them, saying:

"Take, eat. This is my Body: it is broken for you."

After supper, he took the cup, he offered you thanks,
and gave it to them saying:

"Drink this, all of you. This is my Blood of the new
covenant; it is poured out for you, and for all, that sins
may be forgiven. Do this in remembrance of me."

We now obey your Son's command. We recall his blessed passion and death, his glorious resurrection and ascension; and we look for the coming of his Kingdom. Made one with him, we offer you these gifts and with them ourselves, a single, holy, living sacrifice.

Hear us, most merciful Father, and send your Holy Spirit upon us and upon this bread and this wine, that, overshadowed by his life-giving power, they may be the Body and Blood of your Son, and we may be kindled with the fire of your love and renewed for the service of your Kingdom.

Help us, who are baptised into the fellowship of Christ's Body to live and work to your praise and glory; may we grow together in unity and love until at last, in your new creation, we enter into our heritage in the company of the Virgin Mary, the apostles and prophets, St Cuthbert, and of all our brothers and sisters living and departed.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom, and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory be to you, Lord of all ages, world without end.

Amen.

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

The living bread is broken for the life of the world.

Lord, unite us in this sign.

LORD'S PRAYER

As our Saviour Christ has commanded and taught us,
we are bold to say:

**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.**

COMMUNION

**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.**

A PRAYER FOR US TO PRAY AT HOME:

God of infinite mercy, we thank you for Jesus our Saviour, who feeds his people and gives them eternal life.

Though we cannot consume the gifts of bread and wine, we thank you that we do receive Christ's saving presence, the forgiveness of sins, and all other benefits of his passion. Grant that we may continue for ever in the Risen Life of our Saviour. Amen.

THANKSGIVING AND SENDING OUT

Give thanks to our gracious God
Whose mercy endures for ever.

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

Father of all, tonight you have united earth and heaven in sending your Son to take our human nature. May we who have tasted heavenly things share in the life of his eternal Kingdom. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

HYMN 534 - 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!*

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

O come, let us adore him

THE BLESSING OF THE CRIB

Dear friends in Christ, let us pray that God our Father will bless this crib, and that all who worship his Son, born of the Virgin Mary, may come to share his life in glory. God our Father, on this day 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 those who see it be strengthened in faith, and receive the fullness of life he came to bring; who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The hymn continues:

Sing, choirs of Angels,
sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above:
glory to God in the highest:

O come, let us adore him

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
born this happy morning,
Jesu, to thee be glory giv'n;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing:
O come, let us adore him,

*Attributed to John Francis Wade (1711-1786) trans. Frederick Oakeley (1802-1880)
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BLESSING

Christ, who by his incarnation gathered into one all things earthly and heavenly, fill you with his joy and peace; and the blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

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St. Cuthbert's Scottish Episcopal Church is home to a thriving congregation from Colinton and beyond.

The Eucharist is our central act of worship; through the Bread and the Wine, the beauty of music, and words and prayers offered in faith, we are fed on our earthly pilgrimage.

If you would like more information, please contact the Rector, Revd Nicki McNelly on 0131 441 7580.

We hope we can welcome you again and wish you a peaceful and blessed Christmas.