

St Cuthbert's Scottish Episcopal Church



Wednesday 23 December &
Christmas Day 2020

A very warm welcome at this special time.

Welcome to this service, where we are pleased to be able to gather together to worship God. We are only allowed to do this because precautions have been put into place to protect each other as sisters and brothers in Christ during the current pandemic. Please follow the precautions given on the order of service and verbally by the worship leader or welcomers. Face coverings must be worn throughout the service.

PLEASE STAND

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.

Please sit for the lighting of the Advent Candles

Joy to the world!

The Lord has come!

The candles are lit and this response is used -

Jesus is the light of the world.

A light no darkness can ever put out.

We pray together:

Lord, you come as a tiny, fragile baby; yet we know that you are God and you are with us. May the flame of this candle remind us that you are the light of the world and that if we follow you, we will never walk in darkness, but will have the true light of life. Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.

As we are not allowed to sing, please reflect on the words of the hymn and enjoy the music as Philip plays the organ.

HYMN 592 – Once in royal David's city

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 needy, poor and lowly,
lived on earth our Saviour holy.

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.

*Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895) alt. This version ©1996 Kevin Mayhew Ltd
©Copyright 2008 Kevin Mayhew Ltd, Anglican Hymns Old & New*

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)

Please stand

**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

God our Father, whose Word has come among us in the Holy Child of Bethlehem, may the light of faith illumine our hearts and shine in our words and deeds; through him who is Christ the Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Please sit

FIRST READING: Isaiah 62.6-12

Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, I have posted sentinels; all day and all night they shall never be silent. You who remind the LORD, take no rest, and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it renowned throughout the earth. The LORD has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm: I will not again give your grain to be food for your enemies, and foreigners shall not drink the wine for which you have laboured; but those who garner it shall eat it and praise the LORD, and those who gather it shall drink it in my holy courts. Go through, go through the gates, prepare the way for the people; build up, build up the highway, clear it of stones, lift up an ensign over the peoples. The LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to daughter Zion, 'See, your salvation comes; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.' They shall be called, 'The Holy People, The Redeemed of the LORD'; and you shall be called, 'Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.'

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

As we are not allowed to sing, please reflect on the words of the hymn and enjoy the music as Philip plays the organ.

GRADUAL HYMN 265 – Good Christians all, rejoice

Good Christians all, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice!
Give ye heed to what we say:
News! News! Jesus Christ is born today;
ox and ass before him bow,
and he is in the manger now:
Christ is born today, Christ is born today!

Good Christians all, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice!
Now ye hear of endless bliss:
Joy! Joy! Jesus Christ was born for this.
He hath opened heaven's door,
and we are blest for evermore:
Christ was born for this,
Christ was born for this.

Good Christians all, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice!
Now ye need not fear the grave:
Peace! Peace! Jesus Christ was born to save;
calls you one, and calls you all,
to gain his everlasting hall:
Christ was born to save,
Christ was born to save.

John Mason Neale (1818-1866) alt.
©Copyright 2008 Kevin Mayhew Ltd, Anglican Hymns Old & New

Please stand

GOSPEL: Luke 2. 8-20

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

Glory to Christ our Saviour.

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!' When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her

heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Give thanks to the Lord for his glorious Gospel.

Praise to Christ our Lord.

Please sit

SERMON

I wonder what traditions you have in your homes at this time of year? Have you carried on the 'magic' from your childhood to adulthood, passed it down to your own children or children in your wider families?

As a young child, my Christmas consisted of Santa keeping a naughty or nice list. (December was a long month!) Hanging the stocking on the mantelpiece, leaving carrots and milk out for Rudolf and Santa and listening for jingle bells while we were in bed on Christmas Eve. Christmas Day, we gathered at a relative's house with many other aunts and uncles to sing carols and, being the youngest, I always had to sing Away in a Manger, which included the 'ickle' Lord Jesus, as I couldn't say 'little'. Strangely I have no memory of attending church on Christmas Day; maybe my local Baptist Chapel didn't have a service?

Iain and I have carried on similar traditions with our own girls and now start again with our grand-daughter.

In the Episcopal tradition, this time of year we would normally have more people in church than usual for our Christmas services. Sadly, we can't this year and we are even having to celebrate Christmas over three days to give as many people as possible the opportunity to attend church physically. I wonder what it is that draws non-church people into our services at Christmas?

I also wonder what it is that draws us to Santa, Rudolph and the rest of the reindeers? Something magical, something mysterious? I must confess I don't have an issue with this side of Christmas, along with the food, drink, presents, decorations, Christmas jumpers – I like them all!

The shepherds in our story didn't have any of these though; they were just sat on the hillside doing their job, looking after their sheep when the angel of the Lord came to them. If you heard my sermon from last Sunday, you would know that I called it a 'wow' story, when Mary said yes to God. This is also a 'wow' story. Can you imagine what you would think if you were sat out on the Pentlands at night amongst the sheep and an angel came to speak to you? I think I would be more than terrified – even if the angel did tell me not to be afraid. The angel must have impressed them though, as they did what they were told and left the hills and headed to Bethlehem to find this baby lying in a manger. Here's that question about obedience again.

Shepherds were lowly people, not very well thought of in their culture. They were often dirty, ceremonially unclean, and not the most respected people in the world. Yet, good news of great joy was even for shepherds.

And I think this story in today's Gospel reading is the reason why so many people who don't usually come to church, like to attend at Christmas.

I think it is because we are given a gift at Christmas – for everyone. As the angel said: “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people”.

Every people, tribe, nation, every ethnicity, economic class, age, every man, woman, child, every gender identity and sexual orientation, every region, language, position, every talent, lack of talent, athlete, band member, every academic, non-academic, every student, every teacher, every criminal, every judge, every police officer, every politician, every pacifist, soldier, terrorist, sinner, saint, every preacher, prostitute, gossip, every generous person, every greedy person, every country person, city person, homeless person, every minimum wage employee, every CEO, unemployed person, every winner and loser of Strictly and I'm a Celebrity, every parent, every child, every church member, every atheist, every king, and every shepherd. This gift is for everyone and anyone. All people – even those I've missed from my list!

Maybe that's why they come at Christmas.

Maybe, they get a little bit of what the shepherds experienced when they went to Bethlehem to find a baby wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger – our Saviour, Messiah, Lord. The excitement, amazement of the angel of the Lord telling them of the birth. The decision to go in haste and look for the manger and the joy of sharing

that good news with others, who were amazed to hear their story.

I may be speaking for myself, but it seems so easy for us to get excited for, or on behalf of, our children with traditions about Santa and the baubles and the presents, so let's get as passionate and excited about the birth of our Saviour.

Imagine you're one of those shepherds, imagine how awesome this must have been. An angel, the heavenly host, the journey and then the discovery of the child with his parents, just as they had been told.

Let's do what we will (not) sing in a carol later – Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies. With the angelic host proclaim, 'Christ is born in Bethlehem'!

I wish you all a happy, Christ centred, Christmas. Amen.

(We pause to listen to a short piece of music for personal reflection)

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Please stand

We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love. We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high. We believe in one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Please sit

INTERCESSIONS

Holy Jesus, for whom there was no room in the inn, give courage to all who are homeless, especially at this time of year.

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

Holy Jesus, who fled with his family into Egypt, give comfort to all refugees, wherever they are in this troubled world.

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

Holy Jesus, who fasted in the desert, give relief to all who are starving. May we, who will enjoy delicious food this week, help them how and when we can.

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

Holy Jesus, who hung in agony on the cross, give strength to all who are suffering from coronavirus and from other conditions and diseases. We thank you for the hope that scientists have given us for 2021 through the development of vaccines.

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

Holy Jesus, who died for our sins, give hope to those who have lost loved ones and understanding to those who comfort them, particularly in this festive season when they may feel their loss most keenly.

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

Here is a Christmas prayer written by Robert Louis Stevenson, who loved Colinton:

“Loving Father, Help us remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and the worship of the wise men. Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world. Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting. Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clear hearts. May the Christmas morning make us happy to be thy children, and Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus’ sake. **Amen.**”

Holy Jesus, Accept our prayers, and make us one in heart and mind to serve you with joy this Christmas tide and for ever. **Amen.**

Caroline Seville

As we are not allowed to sing, please reflect on the words of the hymn and enjoy the music as Philip plays the organ.

OFFERTORY HYMN 559 – O Little town of Bethlehem

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 all the earth.
For Christ is born of Mary;
and, gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wond'ring love;

How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heav'n.
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) alt.

©Copyright 2008 Kevin Mayhew Ltd, Anglican Hymns Old & New

Please stand

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. You made us, all the people of the world, and everything that is.

You give us the daylight. Your Word lights up our minds. Jesus was born among us to be light in our darkness. Your Spirit lives in us so that we can look at the world with your eyes.

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.**

Please sit

Father, you never forget us or turn away from us, even when we fail you. You sent your Son Jesus who gave his life for us. He healed those who were sick, cared for those who were poor, and cried with those who were sad. He forgave sinners and taught us to forgive. For all your love, we give you thanks in the way that Jesus showed us.

On the night before he died, while he was having supper with his friends, 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."

**So, as we do what he told us,
we open our hearts to him;
we remember how he died and rose again
to live now in us.**

Together with him we offer you these gifts: in them we give you ourselves. Send your Holy Spirit on us and on this bread and this wine, that they may be the Body and Blood of Christ, and that, sharing your life, we may travel in your company to our journey's end.

With all your people we give you thanks and praise through the Son and in the Spirit, now and for ever.

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.**

INVITATION

God's holy gifts for God's holy people.

Jesus Christ is Holy, Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

MUSIC for the sharing of Communion.

Please remain in your seat to receive Communion in one form only. The worship leader will bring it to you. Keep your face covering on until the person bringing the wafer has moved away and then you can lift it to eat the wafer.

THANKSGIVING AND SENDING OUT

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

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

Father of all, the child born for us is the Saviour of the world. May he who made us your children welcome us into your kingdom, where he is alive and reigns with you now and for ever. Amen.

As we are not allowed to sing, please reflect on the words of the hymn and enjoy the music as Philip plays the organ.

HYMN 289 – Hark, the herald-angels sing

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 th'angelic host proclaim,
'Christ is born in Bethlehem.'

*Hark, the herald-angels sing
glory to the new-born King.*

Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come,
offspring of a virgin's womb!
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
hail, th'incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with us to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.

*Hark, the herald-angels sing
glory to the new-born King.*

Hail, the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
ris'n with healing in his wings;

mild he lays his glory by,
born that we no more may die,
born to raise us from the earth,
born to give us second birth.

*Hark, the herald-angels sing
glory to the new-born King.*

Charles Wesley (1707-1788), George Whitefield (1714-1770), Martin Madan (1726-1790) and others, alt. ©Copyright 2008 Kevin Mayhew Ltd, Anglican Hymns Old & New

BLESSING

Christ the Son of God, born of Mary, fill you with his grace to trust his promises and obey his will; and the blessing of God almighty, 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.

VOLUNTARY

Please remain in your seats until invited to leave by a Welcomer. Keep your face covering on and use the hand sanitizing gel as you leave.

Thank you for joining us today and we look forward to the next time. Keep safe and God bless.

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



Wishing you joy at Christmas