

# St Andrew's and St George's West

24 December 2020

Christmas Eve



**Introit**

Cherry Tree Carol

**Welcome and Call to Worship**

(inspired by Isaiah 9:2, John 1:1,14)

Let it be our joy this Christmas Eve to celebrate the coming of our Saviour Jesus. And as we wait with great expectations of tomorrow, let us travel in heart and mind to Bethlehem, where Mary waited through the dark night to give birth to a son.

The impossible is about to happen in a stable.  
The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;  
**Those who lived in a land of deep darkness,  
on them has the light shined!**

This is the evening when creation stood still and held its breath,  
For God was doing the most unbelievable, dangerous thing.  
**This is the night when God embraced humanity  
from the inside, as one of us, from birth to death.**

In the beginning was the Word,  
And the Word was with God,  
And the Word was God.  
**And the word became flesh and dwelt among us  
Full of grace and truth.**

**Hymn 294** The Sussex Carol (verses 1, 2 & 4)

On Christmas night all Christians sing,  
to hear the news the angels bring,  
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.

Then why should we on earth be so sad,  
since our Redeemer made us glad,  
Then why should we 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!

All out of darkness we have light,  
which made the angels sing this night:  
all out of darkness we have light,  
which made the angels sing this night;  
'Glory to God, on earth be peace,  
Goodwill to all shall never cease.'

### **Prayer**

Tonight, O God  
the soles of your feet  
touch the earth.  
Tonight,  
the back streets, the forgotten places  
are lit up with significance beyond our wildest dreams.  
Tonight,  
the households of earth  
welcome the child of heaven.  
For you come among us  
You become one of us.  
So may our songs rise to surround your awesome mystery  
as our knees bend to approach your cradle.  
Amen.

### **Scripture Readings**

#### **Old Testament Micah 5: vv 2, 4, 5**

The prophets bore witness to the unbroken proclamation that God is Holy and that God takes the initiative. Hear these words from the prophet Micah:

<sup>2</sup> But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,  
who are one of the little clans of Judah,  
from you shall come forth for me  
one who is to rule in Israel,  
whose origin is from of old,  
from ancient days.

<sup>4</sup> And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,  
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.

And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great  
to the ends of the earth;

<sup>5</sup> and he shall be the one of peace.

## **New Testament Matthew 2: 1- 6**

Now hear the fulfilment of prophecy as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew:

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising and have come to worship him."

When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who is to shepherd my people Israel.’”

## **The Play    A Christmas Special**

### **Hymn 304    O little town of Bethlehem**

O little town of Bethlehem,  
how still we see you lie!  
Above your deep and dreamless sleep  
the silent stars go by;  
yet in your streets is shining  
the everlasting Light;  
the hopes and fears of all the years  
are met in you tonight.

O morning stars, together  
proclaim the holy birth,  
and praises sing to God the King,  
and peace to all on earth.  
For Christ is born of Mary;  
and, gathered all above,  
while mortals sleep, the angels keep  
their watch of wandering 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) (*alt.*)

## Prayer

Most loving God, whose gracious gift was given  
To lowly folk on Bethlehem's hills that night,  
Grant to us, like them, to see the dark clouds riven,  
and earth resplendent with a heavenly light –  
To know the wonder of that Holy Birth,  
The coming of the love of God to earth.  
Lord Jesus born in Bethlehem, in a world that has forgotten how to rejoice, give us joy;  
In a world that is looking for explanations, give us a sign. In a world of fear and failure, give  
us peace. For we and all the world need a Saviour.  
Lord Jesus, born in Bethlehem, open the eyes of our minds to the mysteries of our lives;  
and with open eyes may we behold you;  
and beholding you may we believe in you;  
and in believing in you may we become like you;  
and becoming like you may we join you in glory.  
And so may we rejoice in you, not just this Christmas but always.

## Hymn 309    Silent Night

Still the night, holy the night!  
Sleeps the world; hid from sight,  
Mary and Joseph in stable bare  
watch o'er the child beloved and fair,  
Sleeping in heavenly rest:  
Sleeping in heavenly rest.

Still the night, holy the night!  
Shepherds first saw the light,  
heard resounding clear and long,  
far and near, the angel-song  
'Christ the Redeemer is here!'  
'Christ the Redeemer is here!'

Still the night, Holy the Night!  
Son of God, O how bright  
love is smiling from thy face!  
Strikes for us now the hour of grace,  
Saviour, since thou art born!  
Saviour, since thou art born!

