

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

A SERVICE OF
LESSONS AND CAROLS
FOR ADVENT

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2023 AT 5:00 P.M.



The Rev. Peter W. Mayer, *Rector*
The Rev. Patti Sachs, *Associate Rector*
Jim Douglas, *Director of Music & Organist*

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Cover Image: 'The Annunciation' (1913)
Stained glass window, St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Lewes, DE.
(Luke 1:26-38)

WELCOME TO ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH

If you are visiting us for the first time, let us offer you an especially warm welcome. We hope that you will enjoy worshipping with us. We would like to continue our relationship with you, so please fill out a visitor card which may be found in a pew packet or on our website's Newcomers page, www.st-margarets.org/newcomers.html.

SAFETY PROTOCOLS AT ST. MARGARET'S

Our COVID-19 safety protocols have been relaxed and mask wearing is optional. Hand sanitizer bottles are offered throughout the campus. **In the event of an emergency, please stay calm, stay seated, and listen for instructions.**

CHILDREN AT ST. MARGARET'S

Nursery care is provided on Sunday mornings by loving professionals for ages 0-3 from 8:45 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. in the lower level of the Annex, the building attached to the Sanctuary.

During the 9:00 a.m. service when the Hymn before the Sermon begins, children ages three and a half through fifth grade are welcome to follow the wooden cross out to attend **Children's Chapel** with an age-appropriate lesson and music. New this year, middle schoolers are also welcome to follow the wooden cross out to attend **Youth Chapel** for an age appropriate discussion with clergy and volunteers. Both Children's Chapel and Youth Chapel are held in the Annex and both groups return at the Peace.

We provide **Sunday School** for children ages 3-14 most Sundays from September through May. To sign up your child, email Emily DelSordo, Children's Formation Coordinator, at emily@st-margarets.org. Our Youth Group, fellowship for middle and high school students, takes place on Sundays at 4:00 p.m. To register your youth, email Jeff Conover, Youth Ministries Leader, at jeff@st-margarets.org.

On Mondays from September through May, we offer an evening of **Faith and Fellowship**, with choir rehearsals (grades K-5) and activities for their younger siblings at 5:15 p.m. followed by a Fellowship dinner for all ages at 6:15 p.m., with crafts for children afterwards. Adult choir rehearsal and adult formation take place after dinner at 7:00 p.m. Please check the church calendar at <https://www.st-margarets.org/church-calendar.html> to confirm programs are scheduled each week.

Our **Day School** has been accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and named a Green School by the State of Maryland. For ages 2-6, the school offers a quality curriculum and special activities such as Spanish, STEM lessons, music, and physical education. After school activities are also offered, such as soccer, ballet, and basketball. The school offers highly popular summer camps from June to August for ages 2-10. More information may be found on their website at www.stmargaretsdayschool.org.

ADULT FORMATION AT ST. MARGARET'S

We offer adults a variety of ways to grow in faith. Our **Thursday Morning Book Club** meets through Zoom at 9:00 a.m., while our **Senior Sessions** for those 65+ are held on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at 9:00 a.m., also on Zoom.

St. Margaret's is known for its support of **many outreach efforts** both locally and around the world. From Winter Relief, producing masks and prayer shawls, and assisting with feeding the hungry, we are an active and committed church. Our Endowment Grants annual program has provided millions of dollars to organizations here and across the globe. To get involved, visit the Missions page on our website at www.st-margarets.org/missions.html.

MUSIC AT ST. MARGARET'S

Here at St. Margaret's, we are blessed with a **vibrant music ministry** that has something for everyone, presently consisting of an adult choir, a K-12 chorister program (grades K-2, 3-5, 6-12), a handbell ensemble, and the contemporary music ensemble Third Sunday Band. If you would like to find out more about our music ministry and are interested in joining any of our ensembles, please email Jim Douglas, Director of Music, at music@st-margarets.org. You do not need to be a member of St. Margaret's to participate, and membership is open to all, regardless of religious affiliation or background. Please visit the music page on the website at <https://www.st-margarets.org/music-overview.html>. The Music Ministry calendar may also be found on the website at <https://www.st-margarets.org/music-calendar.html>.

The **liturgy and music** for this evening is led by Director of Music Jim Douglas, organist Diane Kinsley, the Adult Choir, and the Adult Handbell Ensemble. Permission to print and live-stream music granted through OneLicense #A-709554 and CCLI #661345/#CSPL068962.

Please silence all electronic devices.
Thank you.

The service begins in darkness.

WELCOME

The Rev. Peter W. Mayer

The Choir sings

Prayer for the Blessing of Light

Malcolm Archer

*Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe,
eternal creator of day and night.*

Now, as darkness is falling, hear the prayer of your faithful people.

*Wash away our transgressions, cleanse us by your refining fire,
and make us temples of your Holy Spirit.*

*May we live in watchfulness as we wait for the coming of your Son Jesus Christ,
who shall judge the world and all its works.*

*Rouse us then from the sleep of sin
and make us ready to enter your kingdom where songs of praise forever sound.*

*For you are the true light, who lightens everyone,
and the new heavens and the new earth join to sing your praise now and forevermore. Amen.*

The People stand as they are able at the direction of the Clergy.

BLESSING OF THE LIGHT

Officiant The Lord is my light and my salvation:

People **Our God shall change the darkness to light.**

Officiant Blessed are you, Lord God, creator of day and night: to you be praise and glory for ever.
As darkness falls, you renew your promise to reveal among us the light of your presence.
By the light of Christ, your living Word, dispel the darkness of our hearts that we may
walk as children of light and sing your praise throughout the world.

Blessed be God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:

People **Blessed be God for ever. Amen.**

The People remain standing as the Choir sings verses 1 & 2 of the Hymn.

The People join in singing verses 3, 4, & 5 of the Hymn.

HYMN

Come, thou Redeemer of the earth

PUER NOBIS

1. Come, thou Re - dee - mer of the earth, and ma - ni -
2. Be - got - ten of no hu - man will, but of the
3. O e - qual to the Fa - ther, thou! Gird on thy
4. Thy cra - dle here shall glit - ter bright, and dark - ness
5. All laud, e - ter - nal Son, to thee whose ad - vent
fest thy vir - gin birth: let e - very age a -
Spi - rit, thou art still the Word of God in
flesh - ly man - tle now; the weak - ness of our
breathe a new - er light, where end - less faith shall
sets thy peo - ple free, whom with the Fa - ther
dor - ing fall; such birth be - fits the God of all.
flesh ar - rayed, the prom - ised fruit to all dis - played.
mor - tal state with death - less might in - vig - or - ate.
shine se - rene, and twi - light ne - ver in - ter - vene.
we a - dore, and Ho - ly Ghost for e - ver - more.

The People remain standing.

BIDDING PRAYER

Officiant Beloved in Christ, in this season of Advent we come to worship the one who is our Judge, our Redeemer and our Guide. He is our loving God, who created our world and the far reaches of the galaxy; who said "Let there be light," and light shined forth, in order that all things might reflect the glory of his presence.

Officiant The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Officiant Let us pray.

Officiant O Holy Spirit of God, kindle your fire of love in our hearts. That flame sees through us and reveals us as we are, but may it also heal us so that renewed in love and joy and peace we may shine as Christ's light in the world, and serve his people in the Father's name, for you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are our God for ever and ever.

People **Amen.**

The People are seated.

The Choir sings

CAROL

Adam lay ybounden

Martha Burford

*Adam lay ybounden, bounden in a bond.
Foure thousand winter thought he not to long.
And all was for an apple, an apple that he took.
As clerkes finden written in their book.
Nay had the apple taken been, the apple taken been.
Nay had never our lady been heavene queen.
Blessed be the time that the apple taken was.
Therefore we moun singen Deo Gracias!*

~ ~ ~

FIRST LESSON

Genesis 1:1-5 & John 1:1-5, 14

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

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.

A candle is lit.

The Handbell Ensemble plays

Creator of the stars of night

arr. Cathy Moglebust

~ ~ ~

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

A candle is lit.

The People stand as able and sing the Hymn.

HYMN

Hark, the glad sound!

RICHMOND

1. Hark, the glad sound! the Sa - vior comes, the Sa - vior
 2. He comes, the pris - oners to re - lease in Sa - tan's
 3. He comes, the bro - ken heart to bind, the bleed - ing
 4. Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of Peace, thy wel - come

prom - ised long: let ev - ery heart pre -
 bon - dage held; the gates of brass be -
 soul to cure; and with the trea - sures
 shall pro - claim; and heaven's e - ter - nal

pare a throne, and ev - ery voice a song.
 fore him burst, the i - ron fet - ters yield.
 of his grace to en - rich the hum - ble poor.
 ar - ches ring with thy be - lov - ed Name.

The People are seated.

THIRD LESSON

Isaiah 40:1-11 & Matthew 3:1-7, 11

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever. Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.' This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, 'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."' Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 'I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

A candle is lit.

The Choir sings

CAROL

People, look East

arr. Susan Rucker

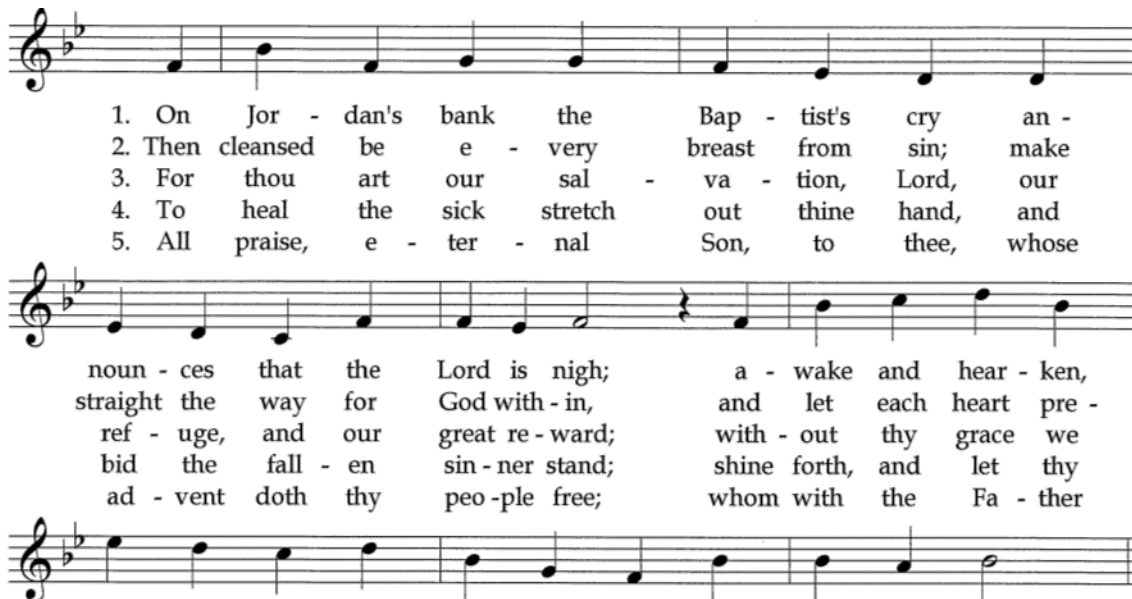
*People, look East, the time is near of the crowning of the year;
 make your house fair as you are able, trim the hearth and set the table.
 People, look East, and sing today: Love, the guest, is on the way!
 Furrows be glad! Though earth is bare, one more seed is planted there;
 give up your strength the seed to nourish, that in course the flow'r may flourish.
 People, look East, and sing today: Love, the rose, is on the way!
 Stars, keep the watch! When night is dim, one more light the bowl will brim,
 shining beyond the frosty weather, bright as sun and moon together.
 People, look East, and sing today: Love, the star, is on the way!
 Angels announce the blessed feast: He is coming from the east!
 Set ev'ry town and village humming with the news the Lord is coming!
 People, look East, and sing today: Love, the Lord, is on the way!*

The People stand as able and sing the Hymn.

HYMN

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry

WINCHESTER NEW



1. On Jor - dan's bank the Bap - tist's cry an -
2. Then cleansed be e - very breast from sin; make
3. For thou art our sal - va - tion, Lord, our
4. To heal the sick stretch out thine hand, and
5. All praise, e - ter - nal Son, to thee, whose

noun - ces that the Lord is nigh; a - wake and hear - ken,
straight the way for God with - in, and let each heart pre -
ref - uge, and our great re - ward; with - out thy grace we
bid the fall - en sin - ner stand; shine forth, and let thy
ad - vent doth thy peo - ple free; whom with the Fa - ther

for he brings glad ti - dings of the King of kings.
pare a home where such a migh - ty guest may come.
waste a - way like flowers that with - er and de - cay.
light re - store earth's own true love - li - ness once more.
we a - dore and Ho - ly Spi - rit e - ver - more.

The People are seated.

~ ~ ~

FOURTH LESSON

Isaiah 9:1-2, 6 & Matthew 4:12-17

But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.” From that time Jesus began to proclaim, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

A candle is lit.

The Choir sings

CAROL

Come, thou long expected Jesus

Marty Wheeler Burnett

*Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.
Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king,
Born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all sufficient merit, raise us to thy glorious throne.*

~ ~ ~

FIFTH LESSON

Isaiah 7:10-14 & Matthew 1:20-23

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test. Then Isaiah said: "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel.

But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."

A candle is lit.

The Handbell Ensemble plays

O come, o come, Emmanuel

arr. Karissa Dennis

The People stand as able and sing the Hymn.

HYMN

Savior of the nations, come! NUN KOMM, DER HEIDEN HEILAND

1 Sa - vior of the na - tions, come! Vir - gin's
2 Won - drous birth! Oh, won - drous child of the
3 Thus on earth the Word ap - pears, grac - ing
4 Come, O Fa - ther's sav - ing Son, who o'er
Son, make here your home. Mar - vel now, both
Vir - gin un - de - filed! Might - y God and
his cre - a - ted spheres; hence to death and
sin the vic - tory won. Bound - less shall your
heaven and earth, that the Lord chose such a birth.
Ma - ry's son, ea - ger now his race to run!
hell de - scends, then the heaven - ly throne a - scends.
king - dom be; grant that we its glo - ries see.

The People are seated.

~ ~ ~

SIXTH LESSON

Isaiah 42:5-9 & Luke 2:25-32

Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it: I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols. See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

A candle is lit.

CANTICLE

Nunc dimittis

Orlando Gibbons

*Lord God, you now have set your servant free
to go in peace as promised in your word;
my eyes have seen the Savior, Christ the Lord,
prepared by you for all the world to see,
to shine on nations trapped in darkest night,
the glory of your people, and their light.*

~ ~ ~

SEVENTH LESSON

Isaiah 35:1-6, 8a, 10 & Revelation 22:12, 16-17, 20

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you."

"See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone's work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." "It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let everyone who hears say, "Come." And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift. The one who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

The final candle is lit.

The People stand as able and sing the Hymn.

HYMN

O come, o come, Emmanuel

VENI, VENI, EMMANUEL

1. O come, O come, Em - ma - nu - el, and ran - som cap - tive
2. O come, thou Day - spring, come and cheer our spi - rits by thine
3. O come, thou Key of Da - vid, come, and o - pen wide our
4. O come, O come, thou Lord of might, who to thy tribes on
5. O come, O come, Em - ma - nu - el, and ran - som cap - tive

Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile
ad - vent here; dis - perse the gloo - my clouds of
heaven - ly home; make safe the way that leads on
Si - nai's height in an - cient times didst give the
Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile

here un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
night, and death's dark sha - dows put to flight.
high, and close the path to mi - se - ry. Re -
law, in cloud, and ma - jes - ty, and awe.
here un - til the Son of God ap - pear.

joice! Re - joice! Em - ma - nu - el shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el.

The People remain standing as they are able.

The Choir sings

VESPER RESPONSORY

Jim Douglas

Judah and Jerusalem, fear not nor be dismayed.
Tomorrow go ye forth, and the Lord, he will be with you.
Stand ye still, and ye shall see the salvation of the Lord.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

LORD'S PRAYER

Officiant And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we pray together,

Officiant and People

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,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

COLLECT AND BLESSING FOR ADVENT

Officiant O God, who makes us glad with the yearly expectation of your coming: grant that we, who with joy receive your only begotten Son as our Redeemer, may without fear behold him when he shall come to be our Judge, even your Son our Lord Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

People Amen.

Officiant May the grace of Jesus Christ, who is the same today, yesterday, and forever, lead you to the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and prepare you for the greater glory which is to come.

People Amen.

The People remain standing and sing the Hymn.

HYMN

Lo! he comes with clouds descending

HELMSLEY



1 Lo! he comes, with clouds de - scend - ing, once for
2 Ev - ery eye shall now be - hold him, robed in
3 Those dear tok - ens of his pas - sion still his
4 Yea, a - men! let all a - dore thee, high on



our sal - va - tion slain; thou - sand thou - sand
dread - ful ma - jes - ty; those who set at
daz - zling bo - dy bears, cause of end - less
thine e - ter - nal throne; Sa - vior, take the



saints at - tend - ing swell the tri - umph of his
nought and sold him, pierced, and nailed him to the
ex - ul - ta - tion to his ran - somed wor - ship -
power and glo - ry; claim the king - dom for thine



train: Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!
tree, deep - ly wail - ing, deep - ly wail - ing,
ers; with what rap - ture, with what rap - ture,
own: Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!



Al - le - lu - ia! Christ the Lord re - turns to reign.
deep - ly wail - ing, shall the true Mes - si - ah see.
with what rap - ture gaze we on those glo - rious scars!
Al - le - lu - ia! Thou shalt reign, and thou a - lone.

ORGAN VOLUNTARY

Awake, awake, for night is flying

arr. J. William Greene

*All are welcome to remain for the closing organ voluntary.
Should you need to leave, please do so quietly. Thank you.*

ABOUT THIS SERVICE

The Service of Advent Lessons and Carols originated at King's College, Cambridge in 1934, created by the Rev. Eric Milner-White, then Dean of the College, who was responsible for the more widely known Christmas Service of Nine Lessons and Carols. He wrote, "In the old English liturgies, the Advent Offices made a preparation for the coming of our Lord to this earth far more vivid and eager than those (the Advent Offices) of the 1662 Prayer Book...The purpose of the service is 'not to celebrate Christmas, but to expect it.'" Today we recount the birth of Jesus by telling the story of the fall of humanity, the promise of the Messiah, and the birth of Jesus in a series of short readings from the Bible. The readings are interspersed with carols, choral music, and congregational hymns.

Throughout history, the Church kept Advent as a season of great solemnity - a time in which to meditate upon the ultimate issues of death, judgment, hell and heaven. Advent, though, was also a time of great rejoicing, for Christ would come, not only as Judge, but also as Savior, and would usher in the Kingdom of God. Advent, therefore, provided a vivid preparation for Christmas. Processions from west to east, and the use of lights, spoke of the Church's hope in the coming of Christ - the Light of the world - to expel sin and darkness. Antiphons were sung, calling upon God to deliver his people, and readings from the Old Testament were seen as pointing to the fulfillment of God's purposes in Jesus.

This specific liturgy has been developed and used at the great English Cathedral at Salisbury and at St. James' Cathedral in Chicago, and aims to recapture that Advent longing and hope. It begins in darkness with the Advent Responsory, in which Christ's coming is announced. The Blessing of Light follows, and, as the service unfolds, the sanctuary is transformed from darkness to light.

One noticeable change is a pairing of readings for each of the Lessons. The first reading (from the Old Testament) speaks of God's promise and it is paired with a second reading (from the New Testament) proclaiming how the promise is being fulfilled in Christ. Each Lesson is accented by a musical response (either a congregational hymn sung by all or a carol offered by our Choirs) that heightens our expectation and invites our trust in the coming of Christ as Judge and Redeemer.

Advent – A Reflection

By the Rev'd Canon Jeremy Davies, former Canon Precentor, Salisbury Cathedral

Advent is, with Easter and Christmas, the season that most speaks to our contemporary human condition. It is a season that has long been symbolized by the lighting of the candles of an Advent wreath representing the four weeks of the Advent season and culminating in the lighting of the fifth principal candle at Christmas. No doubt this tradition reaches back into our Jewish past and the Feast of Lights at Hanukkah, and has been popular within Christian celebrations particularly in Germany and Scandinavian countries down the centuries. Today the Advent wreath has become a universal symbol, to be found in many households as well as in churches.

The lighting of a candle reminds us that though we live in a dark world, at the heart of the Christian Gospel is a message of hope. Flickering and fragile though the light of a candle may be yet the flame of such a candle lights up a dark room. It represents that Light of the World which illuminates our world and our lives with its transforming radiance which guides us into all truth. It is in the belief that God is with us even in the darkness – as the story of Jesus will reveal as we travel the journey of his life from Advent to Pentecost – that many churches begin this Advent Season by lighting a single large candle in a dark church at the start of an Advent Procession. The candle recalls the hope incarnated in Jesus that

shines in our dark world, and the procession reminds us that Christians are a pilgrim people, ever on the move for, as the Epistle to the Hebrews says: We have here no abiding city but we seek one to come.

Of course Christmas awaits us at the end of this season, and we will then be back in our comfort zone: back with the baby and hovering angels, the ox and the ass, the shepherds and their sheep, and the incense and the gold (let's forget myrrh for a moment with its darker implications!) Christmas, profound festival though it is, as we celebrate the Word made flesh and dwelling among us, often triggers our sentimentality and a superficial optimism. We forget that, much as we enjoy Christmas, often to excess, many in our world live without the basic necessities we take for granted, and for whom life is often 'nasty, brutish and short'. It was among them that Jesus was born, and for them he died. Just as we cannot celebrate Easter without plumbing the depths, as Jesus did, of Good Friday, so we cannot celebrate Christmas without the sobering preparation of Advent.

Advent is rich in music and verse, including some of the finest poetry in scripture, dominated by the prophecies of Isaiah and the heroic stories of John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary. For many of us Advent's rich texture is exemplified in the Advent hymns with their declamatory message and their thunderous melodies. But for all its plangent beauty Advent begins in darkness and silence, reminding us of the real world beyond the shrine, where God himself was content – indeed determined – to pitch his tent.

As well as preparing for Christmas Advent has traditionally focused on more somber themes as well, reminding us not only of the first coming of Jesus, but also of his second coming when as the Creed rehearses 'he will come again in glory to judge both the living and the dead'. This is a theme picked up in Thomas Cranmer's peerless Advent Collect where he talks of Jesus who 'comes at the last day in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead'. Some of our Advent hymns like 'Lo he comes with clouds descending' focus on the Four Last Things – death, judgment heaven and hell – adding a penitential note to our Alleluias. Though not much preached about these days those traditional Advent themes do concentrate on the ultimate things that confront us as human beings, and we need such opportunities as the Advent season provides to reflect on them. These themes reveal us – and indeed the whole of humanity – as we truly are. Not a pleasant sight, but extraordinary though it may seem, it is in us, – frail, wayward, prodigal humanity that we are – that God sees himself reflected and longs to get his own back – that is to bring us back home. That is why God, in Jesus, gave himself (emptied himself and was obedient even unto death is how St Paul puts it) so that all who believe should not perish but have eternal life.

Our world is dark – despite our human ingenuity and inventiveness – and our lives are dark as well, but year by year we light a candle in a dark room, as a sacramental affirmation that God has already lit a candle in our dark world. That light of the world has a name – his name is Jesus. 'That light was the true light that enlightens everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never overcome it'. We will hear those words from St John's Gospel again on Christmas Day. That is the Christian good news, that though our world is dark, a light shines. Its meaning is this: God loves us and he will never leave us. That conviction gives hope to our world and to each one of us. That is the message of Advent. Thank God!

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Diane Kinsley, *Guest Organist*

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Hilary Bolea	Russell Jackson
Doreen Campbell	Jennifer Jones
Les Carter	Mary Kirkeby
Alice Conover	Mitch Owens
Sally Curtin	Anne Paul
Sarah Dolbec	Anne Sessions
Peter Estabrook	T.J. Thomas
Virginia Estabrook	Robert Thomas
Grant Harmon	

Adult Handbell Ensemble

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Barbara Blass	Hope Stinson
Roddie Brunstrom	Robert Thomas

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