**Offa Mission Area**

**Christmas 2020**

**A Service of Lessons and Carols**

Introduction:

*(Rev Trish)*

Welcome to Offa Mission Area’s On-line Carol Service. Although physically separated by circumstances, we are united as we gather in God’s presence to celebrate the festival of Christmas. In this service we share the story and message of the birth of Christ, and we give our thanks and praise to God in the joyful singing of carols.

The carols that accompany this service are from the CD recorded by the choir of St Mary’s, Ruabon.

During the first carol, we will light the Christ candle and the Advent Wreath. You may like, carefully, to light candles of your own at home.

*Carol 1: Once in royal David’s city*

*(no 3 on CD)*

* 1st Reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah:

*(Cerys Bennett)*

*The prophet foretells the coming of the Saviour*

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 Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness
from this time onwards and for evermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

**Thanks be to God.**

*Carol 2: O, little town of Bethlehem*

*(no 12 on CD)*

* 2nd Reading from the book of the prophet Micah

*(Rev Phil)*

*A promised ruler from Bethlehem*

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.
Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labour has brought forth;

then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel.
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; and he shall be the one of peace.

**Thanks be to God.**

*Carol 3: Joy to the world*

*(no 1 on CD)*

* 3rd Reading from the gospel according to Saint Luke

*(Siân Matthews)*

*The Angel Gabriel announces the Good News*

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, ‘Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.’ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’ Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’ The angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.’ Then Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’ Then the angel departed from her.

*Thanks be to God.*

*Carol 4: Away in a manger*

*(no 2 on CD)*

* 4th Reading from the gospel according to Saint Luke

*(Jean Owen)*

*The birth of Jesus*

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

*Thanks be to God.*

*Carol 5: Silent Night*

*(no 10 on CD)*

* 5th Reading from the gospel according to Saint Luke

*(Chris Eardley)*

*The shepherds go to the manger.*

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.

*Thanks be to God.*

*Carol 6: While shepherds watched their flocks*

*(no 7 on CD)*

* 6th Reading from the gospel according to Saint Matthew

*The wise men are led by the star to Jesus.*

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 pay him homage.’ 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.” ’

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, ‘Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.’ When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

*Thanks be to God.*

*Carol 7: In the bleak mid-winter*

*(no 13 on CD)*

* 7th Reading from the gospel according to Saint John

*(Rev Kate)*

*St John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation.*

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.

*Thanks be to God.*

*Carol 8: O come, all ye faithful*

*(no 4 on CD)*

Collect:

*(Rev Heather)*

Almighty God, you have made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence, and at the last we may wake to the brightness of his glory; through your only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

Prayers:

*(Rev Yvonne)*

We pray for all people, that by this Christmas festival, they may be comforted, refreshed and given hope…

We pray for the world in which we live, that those who bear responsibility for its future, in politics, in industry, in commerce, in education, in the arts and the media, may be inspired by the message of Christmas to work together for the establishment of justice, freedom and peace…

We pray for all in special need, the sick, the anxious, the lonely, the fearful, and the bereaved…

We commend all whom we love, or who have asked for our prayers, to the unfailing love of our heavenly Father, and pray together, as Christ taught his disciples:

**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**

*Carol 9: Hark! The herald angels sing*

*(no 14 on CD)*

Blessing:

*(Rev Matt)*

May the humility of the shepherds, the faith of the wise men, the joy of the angels, and the peace of the Christ Child, be God’s gift to us and to all people, this Christmas and always. **Amen**.