

Sunday 14 December
First Sunday of Advent

All are welcome

What Child IS This

Call to Worship

Prayer of Invocation [unison]

**What Child is this, who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems
sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?**

Readers 1 & 2 then congregation sings;

**This, this is Christ, the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels
sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!**

Here, at the nativity of your birth,
give us the courage to face this
moment
with an uncanny joy.
Open up our hearts to new
understandings of
the unfolding story of your presence
among us.
Show us how to praise you even when
songs and carols feel empty.
We pray in the name of the Child,
the One Who Uplifts our hearts and
lives.
Amen.

Hymn CH4 291

When out of poverty is born
a dream that will not die,
and landless, weary folk find strength
to stand with heads held high,
it's then we learn from those who wait
to greet the promised day,
'The Lord is coming; don't lose heart.
Be blest; prepare the way!'

When people wander far from God,
forget to share their bread,
they find their wealth an empty thing,
their spirits are not fed.
For only just and tender love
the hungry soul will stay.
And so God's prophets echo still
'Be blest; prepare the way!'

When God took flesh and came to earth
the world turned upside down,
and in the strength of woman's faith
the Word of Life was born.
She knew that God would raise the low,
it pleased her to obey.
Rejoice with Mary in the call,
'Be blest; prepare the way!'

Kathryn Galloway (b. 1952)

PRAYER & LORD'S PRAYER

Silent Night, Holy Night

1. 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,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.
2. Still the night, Holy the night,
Shepherds first saw the light,
Heard resounding clear and strong,
Far and near, the Angels song,
Christ the Redeemer is here,
Christ the Redeemer is here.
3. Still the night, Holy the night,
Son of God, love's pure light,
Love is smiling from thy face,
Strikes for us now the hour of grace,
Saviour since thou art born,
Saviour since thou art born.

ALL AGE TIME

**Be near us, Lord Jesus; we ask
Thee to stay
close by us forever, and love
us, we pray.
Bless all the dear children in
Thy tender care,
and make earth a heaven,
where all have a share.**

Child in the manger,
infant of Mary;
outcast and stranger,
Lord of all!
Child who inherits
all our transgressions,
all our demerits
on him fall.

Once the most holy
child of salvation
gently and lowly
lived below;
now, as our glorious
mighty Redeemer,
see him victorious
o'er each foe.

Prophets foretold
him,
infant of wonder;
angels behold him
on his throne;
worthy our Saviour
of all their praises;
happy for ever
are his own.

Mary Macdonald (1789–1872)
translated Lachlan Macbean (1853–1931)

Reading:

Luke 1:26-56

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you.'

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants for ever; his kingdom will never end.'

'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?'

The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.'

'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May your word to me be fulfilled.' Then the angel left her.

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her!'

And Mary said:

'My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me – holy is his name.

His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants for ever, just as he promised our ancestors.'

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

SERMON

Hymn305

In the bleak midwinter
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 midwinter,
long ago.

Our God, heaven cannot hold him,
nor earth sustain;
heaven and earth shall flee away
when he comes to reign:
in the bleak midwinter
a stable-place sufficed
the Lord God Almighty,
Jesus Christ.

Enough for him whom cherubim
worship night and day,
a breastful of milk,
and a manger full of hay;
enough for him whom angels
fall down before,
the ox and ass and camel
which adore.

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)

Announcements and Intimations

Prayer of Intercession

Hymn - CH4 286 Tell out my soul

Tell out, my soul,
the greatness of the Lord:
unnumbered blessings, give my spirit
voice;
tender to me the promise of His word;
in God my Saviour shall my heart
rejoice.

Tell out, my soul,
the greatness of His name:
make known His might, the deeds His
arm has done;
His mercy sure, from age to age the
same;
His holy name: the Lord, the Mighty
One.

Tell out, my soul,
the greatness of His might:
powers and dominions lay their glory by;
proud hearts and stubborn wills are put
to flight,
the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Tell out, my soul,
the glories of His word:
firm is His promise, and His mercy sure.
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the
Lord
to children's children and for evermore.

Timothy Dudley-Smith in 1962.

Benediction

**This, this is Christ, the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!**

Amen