A SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS
FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

Sunday 29 November 2020
ORGAN RECITAL BEFORE THE SERVICE

Organist: John Colley

Dialogue from Suite du second ton — Jean Adam Guilain (c. 1680-1739)
O Radix Jesse from O Antiphon Sequence — Cecilia McDowall (b. 1951)
Pièce d'Orgue BWV 572 — J. S. Bach (1685-1750)

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THE BIDDING PRAYER

Beloved in Christ, be it this Christmastide our care and delight to hear again the message of the angels, and in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, and the Babe lying in a manger.

Therefore let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God and the glorious Redemption brought us by this Holy Child.

But first, let us pray for the needs of the whole world; for peace on earth and goodwill among all his people; for unity and brotherhood within the whole Church, and especially here within the fellowship and community of this our College and in our university and in the City of Oxford.

And because this of all things would rejoice his heart, let us remember, in his name, the poor and helpless, the cold, the hungry, and the oppressed; the sick and them that mourn, the lonely and the unloved, the aged and the little children; all those who know not the Lord Jesus, or who love him not, or who by sin have grieved his heart of love.

Lastly, let us remember before God all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore, and in a greater light, that multitude which no one can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom in the Lord Jesus we are for ever one.
These prayers and praises let us humbly offer up to the Throne of Heaven, in the words which Christ himself hath taught us:

All say

THE LORD’S PRAYER

Our Father, which 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 them that 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.

The Chaplain says

May the Almighty God bless us with his grace; Christ give us the joys of everlasting life, and unto the fellowship of the citizens above may the King of Angels bring us all.

All say Amen.

ANTHEM

Bethlehem Down – Peter Warlock (1894-1930)

“When He is King we will give him the King’s gifts, Myrrh for its sweetness, and gold for a crown, Beautiful robes,” said the young girl to Joseph, Fair with her first-born on Bethlehem Down.

Bethlehem Down is full of the starlight Winds for the spices, and stars for the gold, Mary for sleep, and for lullaby music Songs of a shepherd by Bethlehem fold.

When He is King they will clothe Him in grave-sheets, Myrrh for embalming, and wood for a crown, He that lies now in the white arms of Mary Sleeping so lightly on Bethlehem Down.
Here He has peace and a short while for dreaming,
Close-huddled oxen to keep Him from cold,
Mary for love, and for lullaby music
Songs of a shepherd by Bethlehem fold.

Words by Bruce Blunt

FIRST LESSON

read by Joe Al Khalili, Finalist and JCR Choir Member

Micah chapter 5, verses 1–3: The Promise to Bethlehem [in Hebrew]

Translation:
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.

All stand and sing

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 on earth.
For Christ is born of Mary;
And, gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love.

_How silently, how silently_
_The wondrous gift is given!
_So God imparts to human hearts_
_The blessings of his heaven.
_No ear may 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.

SECOND LESSON
_read by Joe Stephen, Finalist and JCR Choir Member_
_Isaiah chapter 9, verses 2, 6–7: The Prophecy of the Messiah’s Birth_
_[in French]_

Translation:
The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a dark 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.
ANTHEM

Drop down, ye heavens, from above – Judith Weir (b. 1954)

Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people; my salvation shall not tarry. I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions.

Fear not, for I will save thee; for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Redeemer.

Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness.

Text from the Advent Prose

THIRD LESSON

read by Cerian Richmond Jones, JCR President

Luke chapter 1, verses 26–38: The Annunciation to Mary

All stand and sing

It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold:
“Peace on the earth, goodwill to men
From heaven’s all gracious King!”
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come,
With peaceful wings unfurled;
And still their heavenly music floats
O’er all the weary world:
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hovering wing,
And ever o’er its Babel sounds
The blessed angels sing.
Yet with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long
Beneath the angel strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love song which they bring
O hush the noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing!

For lo! the days are hastening on,
By prophet bards foretold,
When with the ever-circling years
Comes round the age of gold,
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendours fling,
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing.

FOURTH LESSON
read by Georgios Roupas, JCR Fresher
Luke chapter 2, verses 1–7: The Birth of Jesus [in Greek]

Translation:
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 she wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.
ANTHEM
Ríu, ríu, chíu – Anon. (trad. Spanish, s.xvi)

*The guarding shepherd by the river: God protected the ewe from the wolf.*

The angry wolf tried to attack her, but Almighty God protected her: He created her so that she knew no sin and was a virgin unstained by Adam’s fault.

*The guarding shepherd by the river: God protected the ewe from the wolf.*

This newborn child is the Christ in flesh. He redeemed us by appearing small: he who was infinite became finite.

*The guarding shepherd by the river: God protected the ewe from the wolf.*

The prophecies told of his coming and now we see them fulfilled. God become man, we witness him on earth, and we see man in heaven because God loved him.

*The guarding shepherd by the river: God protected the ewe from the wolf.*

FIFTH LESSON
read by Ingvild Hvinden, MCR President
Luke chapter 2, verses 8–20: The Shepherds go to the Manger
[in Norwegian]

Translation:
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 also there, 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.

**ANTHEM**

*Tomorrow shall be my dancing day* – John Gardner (1917–2011)

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day:
I would my true love did so chance
to see the legend of my play,
to call my true love to my dance:
*Sing, O my love, O my love, my love, my love;*
*this have I done for my true love.*

Then I was born of a virgin pure,
of her I took fleshly substance;
thus was I knit to man’s nature,
to call my true love to my dance:
*Sing, O my love…*

In a manger laid and wrapped I was,
so very poor this was my chance,
betwixt an ox and a silly poor ass,
to call my true love to my dance:
*Sing, O my love…*
Then afterwards baptized I was;
the Holy Ghost on me did glance,
my Father’s voice heard from above,
to call my true love to my dance:
Sing, O my love…

All stand and sing

O COME all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him
Born the King of Angels:

O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him,
   Christ the Lord!

God of God,
Light of Light,
Lo! He abhors not the Virgin’s womb;
Very God,
Begotten, not created:

O come ...

Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing all ye citizens of heaven above;
Glory to God
In the Highest:

O come ...

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,
Born that happy morning;
Jesu, to Thee be glory given;
Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing.

O come ...
SIXTH LESSON
read by The Master, Dame Helen Ghosh
John chapter 1, verses 1–14: The Incarnation of the Word of God

All stand and 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 the 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 the incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with man to dwell,
    Jesus, our Emmanuel:

Hark! the herald ...

Hail, the heaven-born Prince of peace!
    Hail, the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Risen with healing in his wings;
    Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
    Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth:

Hark! the herald ...
Remain standing as the Chaplain says

THE BLESSING

May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the Magi, the obedience of Mary and Joseph, and the peace of the Christ child be yours this Christmas. And the Blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and those whom you love this day and always.

All say Amen.

ORGAN VOLUNTARY

_Fantasia on In dulci jubilo BWV 729 — J. S. Bach_

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Chaplain: The Reverend Canon Bruce Kinsey

Choral Director: Yasar Cohen-Shah
Organist: John Colley

The service this year has been based on our traditional annual service. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a reduction in opportunity to rehearse and to prepare the normal fuller service. We are hugely grateful to Yasar, John, the choir and the readers for all the work and effort which has gone into this service and recording. Our thanks are also due to Steve Swinden of Chorum Records for his kindness, patience and efficiency.

Cover image: Stained glass in a window on the north side of the Chapel, depicting the Virgin and Child, 16th century, following conservation work in 2017. Photograph by York Glaziers Trust.