



A welcoming, inclusive, Christian community

# **A FESTIVAL OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS**

**18 December 2022  
6.30pm**

## Welcome to Lancaster Priory

We are really pleased that you are worshipping with us today. Wherever you have come from, this is your church and you are unconditionally welcome.

The celebration of Christ's coming among us at Christmas (known as the 'Incarnation') is one of the two poles of the Christian year, along with the story of Christ's death and resurrection. Christmas is much more than the celebration of Jesus's birth: it reminds us of the central truth that 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us' (John 1.14), fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah (7.14) that 'a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.'

The Festival of Lessons and Carols, which we offer this evening, is itself an influential English creation of the late nineteenth century, made widespread by the choir of King's College, Cambridge, in the first half of the twentieth.

The restrictions under which our services are being conducted at the moment are part of our responsibility to ensure that all who worship and visit the priory feel safe and valued. These are available on an additional flyer at the back of church. Thank you for your patience.

Organ music before the service, played by Priory Organist, Ian Pattinson FRCO:

*Gottes Sohn ist kommen & Herr Christ der einige Gottes-Sohn* (J.S. Bach)

*Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen* (Johannes Brahms)

*In dulci jubilo* (Dietrich Buxtehude)

*Invention on 'Ding dong, merrily on high' & Meditation on 'Still, still, still'*

(David Stokes, a former Duchy of Lancaster Organ Scholar)

The service is led by The Revd Leah Vasey-Saunders, Vicar of Lancaster

The Choirs are directed by Mr Don Gillthorpe Director of Music

## A Merry Christmas from all at Lancaster Priory.

### Acknowledgements

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## Choir Introit

*O Rex Gentium* (Antiphon for December 22nd)

*O Rex Gentium, et desideratus earum, lapisque angularis, qui facis utraque unum: veni, et salva hominem, quem de limo formasti.*

O King of the Gentiles and the Desired of them, Thou Cornerstone that dost make both one, come and deliver man, whom Thou didst form out of the dust of the earth.

## Processional Carol *We stand.*

*The soloist sings*

1. Once in Royal David's City  
Stood a lowly cattle shed,  
Where a Mother laid her Baby  
In a manger for his bed;  
Mary was that Mother mild  
Jesus Christ her little Child.

*The choir sings*

2. He came down to earth from heaven,  
Who is God and Lord of all,  
And his shelter was a stable,  
And his cradle was a stall:  
With the poor and mean and lowly  
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.

*All sing*

3. And through all his wondrous childhood  
He would honour and obey,  
Love and watch the lowly Maiden,  
In whose gentle arms he lay:  
Christian children all must be  
Mild, obedient, good as he.

4. For he is our childhood's pattern,  
Day by day like us he grew,  
He was little, weak, and helpless,  
Tears and smiles like us he knew;  
And he feeleth for our sadness,  
And he shareth in our gladness.

5. And our eyes at last shall see him,  
Through his own redeeming love,  
For that Child so dear and gentle  
Is our Lord in heaven above;  
And he leads his children on  
To the place where he is gone.

6. Not in that poor lowly stable,  
With the oxen standing by,  
We shall see him; but in heaven,  
Set at God's right hand on high;  
Where like stars his children crowned  
All in white shall wait around.

C.F.Alexander (1818-95)

## The Bidding Prayer *We sit.*

In the name of Christ I bid you welcome to this Priory Church of Blessed Mary of Lancaster, to hear again the message of the angels, and in heart and mind to go to Bethlehem and see the Babe lying in a manger.

Let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God brought us by this Holy Child. But first, let us pray for the leaders of the world, that the peace Christ came to bring may be in their hearts. We remember Our Lord's Holy Land, and, in these troubled times, all other places of unrest that, inspired by the message of Christmas, peace, justice and freedom may be established. Let us remember, in his name, the poor and helpless, the cold, the hungry, and the oppressed; the sick and those who mourn, the lonely and the unloved, the aged and all those who know not the Lord Jesus, or who love him not. Lastly, let us remember before God all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore, and in a greater light, that multitude which none 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 taught us:

**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.**

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.  
**Amen.**

**Choir Carol** *Jesus Christ the apple tree* (Elizabeth Poston)

1. The tree of life my soul hath seen,  
Laden with fruit and always green:  
The trees of nature fruitless be  
Compared with Christ the apple tree.

2. His beauty doth all things excel:  
By faith I know, but ne'er can tell  
The glory which I now can see  
In Jesus Christ the apple tree.

3. For happiness I long have sought,  
And pleasure dearly I have bought:  
I missed of all; but now I see  
'Tis found in Christ the apple tree.

4. I'm weary with my former toil,  
Here I will sit and rest awhile:  
Under the shadow I will be,  
Of Jesus Christ the apple tree.

5. This fruit doth make my soul to thrive,  
It keeps my dying faith alive;  
Which makes my soul in haste to be  
With Jesus Christ the apple tree.

Compiled by Joshua Smith, 1784, from *Divine Hymns or Spiritual Songs*

**First Lesson** Genesis 1:26-28

*Read by a member of the Priory Choir.*

God creates human beings in God's own image and gives them authority over creation.

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'

Thanks be to God.

**Hymn** *We stand to sing*

1. O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
Redeem thy captive Israel,  
That into exile drear is gone  
Far from the face of God's dear Son  
*Rejoice, Rejoice!*  
*Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*Lower Voices sing*

2. O come, thou Branch of Jesse! draw  
The quarry from the Lion's claw;  
From the dread caverns of the grave,  
From nether hell, thy people save.  
*Rejoice ...*

*Upper Voices and Children sing*

3. O come, O come, thou Dayspring bright!  
Pour on our souls thy healing light;  
Dispel the long night's ling'ring gloom,  
And pierce the shadows of the tomb.  
*Rejoice ...*

*Please sit.*

*Lower Voices sing*

4. O come, thou Lord of David's Key!  
The royal door fling wide and free;  
Safeguard for us the heav'n-ward road,  
And bar the way to death's abode.  
*Rejoice ...*

*All sing*

5. O come, O come, Adonai,  
Who in thy glorious majesty  
From that high mountain clothed with awe  
Gavest thy folk the elder law,  
*Rejoice ...*

Transl T.A.Lacey

## **Second Lesson** Genesis 22. 15-18

*Read by a Churchwarden*

God promises to Abraham that through him the nations of the earth will be blessed.

The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, 'By myself I have sworn, says the Lord: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.' Thanks be to God.

## **Choir Carol** *Rorate coeli* (Byrd)

Rorate caeli desuper, et nubes pluant justum:  
aperiatur terra, et germinet salvatorum.

Benedixisti Domine terram tuam, avertisti captivitatem Jacob.

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto,

Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

*Drop down ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness:  
Let the earth open and bring forth a Saviour.*

*Lord, thou hast blessed thy land: Thou hast turned away the captivity of Jacob.*

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.*

*As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.*

## **Third Lesson** Isaiah 9:2,6,7

*Read by a member of the Congregation.*

Christ's birth and Kingdom are foretold by Isaiah.

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 *We stand.*



1 Hear on the heights the humble sheep are bleating,  
Mixing their voice with music from on high.  
Now is the time that heav'n and earth are meeting;  
The Word of God is heard in baby's cry.

2 See in the sky a single star is shining,  
Shedding its rays into the darkest night.  
Now is the time that heav'n and earth, combining,  
Behold the glory of the Light of Light.

3 Feel on the dawn a brand new day is breaking:  
Hope fills the air, and sin and sorrow cease.  
Now is the time that heav'n and earth are waking,  
A new creation in the Prince of Peace.

4 Come, let us join with sheep and seraphs singing,  
Come, let us see the Light of heaven on earth.  
Now is the time that every realm is ringing  
The joyful tidings of the Saviour's birth.

Words: C Thompson (b.1977)

Tune: *Willow Lane* by D Gillthorpe (b.1984)

*Please sit.*

## **Fourth Lesson** Malachi 3:1-4

*Read by a bellringer.*

The prophet Malachi reminds the people that the coming Messiah will judge them.

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.

But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years. Thanks be to God.

**Choir Carol** *Lift up your heads* (Mathias)

Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.

**Carol** *We stand.*

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.

2. O morning stars, together  
proclaim the holy birth,  
And praises sing to God the King,  
and peace to men on earth.  
For Christ is born of Mary;  
and, gathered all above,  
while mortals sleep, the angels keep  
their watch of wondering love.

3. 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.

4. 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 (1835-93)

*We sit.*



## **Fifth Lesson** Micah 5.2-5

*Read by a server.*

The prophet Micah foretells the Messiah's birth in 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.

## **Choir Carol** *Mary's lullaby* (Rutter)

1. See the child that Mary bore  
On her lap so softly sleeping:  
In a stable cold and poor,  
Ox and ass their vigil keeping.  
Sing lullaby, my own dear son, my child,  
Lullaby, my little baby.

2. Flights of angels round his head  
Sing him joyful hymns of greeting:  
'Peace on earth, goodwill to men'  
Each to each the song repeating.  
Sing lullaby...

3. Shepherds kneeling by his bed  
Offer homage without measure;  
Wise men by a bright star led,  
Bring him gifts of richest treasure.  
Sing lullaby...

John Rutter (1945-)

## **Sixth Lesson** Luke 1.28-38

*Read by a member of staff.*

The angel Gabriel greets the Blessed Virgin Mary.

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.

### **Choir Carol** *A Christmas Eve Choral* (Katy Lavinia Cooper)

Why is thy gentle smile so deep, Mary, Mary?  
It is the secret I must keep, Joseph, Joseph.  
The glory of the coming days,  
When all the world shall turn to praise  
God's goodness, Joseph.

What is the message come to thee, Mary, Mary?  
I hear the wind within the tree, Joseph, Joseph.  
His deathless voice proclaiming peace,  
And bidding ruthless wrong to cease  
For love's sake, Joseph.

What sound is this across the dark,  
While all the world is sleeping? Hark! Hallelujah!

Moving as rain-wind in the spring,  
She hears the angel chorus sing Hallelujah!

Why is thy voice so strange and far, Mary, Mary?  
I see the glory of the star, Joseph, Joseph. (Hallelujah!)

Clear as the bird that brings the morn,  
She hears the heavenly music borne,  
For love's sake, Joseph (Hallelujah!)

Her heart in that celestial chime  
Has heard the harmony of time.  
Hallelujah!

## **Seventh Lesson** Luke 2.1-7

*Read by a member of the youth group*

St. Luke tells of 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.

### **Choir Carol** *Wexford carol* (arr. Sarah Quartel)

1 Good people all, this Christmas time,  
Consider well and bear in mind  
What our good God for us has done  
In sending his beloved son

2 With Mary holy we should pray,  
To God with love this Christmas Day  
In Bethlehem upon that morn,  
There was a blessed Messiah born.

3 Near Bethlehem did shepherds keep  
Their flocks of lambs and feeding sheep  
To whom God's angels did appear  
Which put the shepherds in great fear

4 With thankful heart and joyful mind  
The shepherds went the babe to find  
And as God's angel had foretold  
They did our Saviour Christ behold

5 There were three wise men from afar  
Directed by a glorious star  
And on they wandered night and day  
Until they came where Jesus lay

6 And when they came unto that place  
Where our beloved Messiah lay  
They humbly cast them at his feet  
With gifts of gold and incense sweet.

7 Good people all, this Christmas time,  
Consider well and bear in mind  
What our good God for us has done  
In sending his blessed child, beloved son

Irish traditional carol

## **Eighth Lesson**     Luke 2.8-16

*Read by a supporting priest.*

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.

### **Choir Carol** *In the Bleak Midwinter* (Darke)

In the bleak mid-winter  
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 mid-winter,  
long ago.

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

3. Enough for him, whom cherubim  
Worship night and day,  
A breastful of milk  
And a mangerful of hay;  
Enough for him, whom angels  
Fall down before,  
The ox and ass and camel  
Which adore.

4. 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 Rossetti 1830-1894

*We stand*

**Ninth Lesson** John 1.1-14

*Read by the Curate.*

Saint 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** *A collection will be taken during this hymn as we all sing*

**1. 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.*

**2. God of God, Light of Light,**

**Lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb:**

**Very God, begotten not created:**

*O come...*

3. See how the shepherds, summoned to his cradle,  
Leaving their flocks, draw nigh with lowly fear;  
We too will thither bend our joyful footsteps,

*O come let us adore him,*

*O come let us adore him,*

*O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.*

4. Lo, star-led chieftains, Magi, Christ adoring,  
Offer him incense, gold and myrrh;  
We to the Christ-child bring our hearts oblations:

*O come . . .*

5. Child for us sinners poor and in the manger,  
Fain we embrace thee with awe and love;  
Who would not love thee, loving us so dearly?

*O come . . .*

6. Sing choirs of angels, sing in exultation,  
Sing all ye citizens of heaven above;  
“Glory to God in the highest”

*O come...*

J.F.Wade (c.1711-86)

## **The Collect for Christmas**

Almighty God, you have given us your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin: grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**Amen.**

## The Blessing

Christ, who by his incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, fill you with the sweetness of inward peace and goodwill: and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be upon you and remain with you always.  
Amen.

## Carol *We sing*

1. 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 th'angelic host proclaim.  
Christ is born in Bethlehem.

*Hark! the herald angels sing  
Glory to the new-born King.*

2. 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 God-head see!  
Hail th'incarnate Deity!  
Pleased as man with man to dwell  
Jesus our Emmanuel.

*Hark! the herald angels sing  
Glory to the new-born King.*

3. 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 angels sing  
Glory to the new-born King.*

Charles Wesley (1707-88)

## Organ Voluntary

*In dulci jubilo* (J.S. Bach)

*Fugue in G* (Hubert Parry)

