

Church at Home

Christmas Day



Before the Service

It is an enormous pleasure to welcome so many, this Christmas morning, to our Church at Home service for the Diocese of Oxford. We celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh.

We are delighted that the president and preacher today is the Right Revd Steven Croft, the Bishop of Oxford. He is assisted by the deacon, the Revd Claire Browes, curate at St Mary and St John's Church, Cowley. The Eucharist is celebrated by the Bishop from Christ Church Cathedral and the service also features the choristers of Christ Church Cathedral School.

This morning, we know that many people are separated from family members due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and that many will also be mourning the loss of loved ones. But we acknowledge with praise and thanksgiving the One who has come into the world - the Light who triumphed over darkness. As Christians, we pray that Christ, who by His incarnation gathered into one all things earthly and heavenly, will fill you this morning with peace and joy.

This service was made possible by the wonderful contributions of music, prayers and readings from across the diocese, including Witney, Reading, Twyford, Lambourn and Oxford. We open our worship with a specially recorded song from Year 2 pupils at St Mary's Infant School, Witney - *Angels Singing*.

Video Before the Service

'Angels Singing'

Sung by Year 2 pupils from St Mary's Infant School, Witney

Music Before the Service

Away in a manger, no crib for His bed
The little Lord Jesus lay down His sweet head
The stars in the bright sky look down where He lay
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay

The cattle are lowing, the Baby awakes
But little Lord Jesus no crying He makes
I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky
And stay by my side until morning is nigh

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever and love me, I pray
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care
And take us to Heaven to live with Thee there

'Away in a Manger'

Sung by the choir of Christ Church Cathedral School, Oxford

Greeting

President In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

Deacon **Amen.**

President The Lord be with you.

Deacon **and also with you.**

The president welcomes the congregation gathered online and introduces the service.

Blessing of the Crib

President Dear friends, as we meet to celebrate together the birth of Christ, let us pray that God will bless this crib, that all who worship his Son, born of the Virgin Mary, may come to share his life in glory.

God our Father,
on this day your Son Jesus Christ
was born of the Virgin Mary,
for us and for our salvation:
Bless this crib,
which we have prepared to celebrate that holy birth;
may all who see it be strengthened in faith
and receive the fullness of life that he came to bring,
who is alive and reigns for ever.

All **Amen.**

Lighting of the Christmas Wreath

By Tora Nilsson from St Margaret's, Oxford

All **Lord Jesus, Light of light,
you have come among us.
Help us who live by your light
to shine as lights in your world.
Glory to God in the highest. Amen.**

Carol

Solo 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.

All 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.

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.

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;
When like stars His children crowned
All in white shall be around

'Once in Royal David's City'
Sung by the choir of St Michael and All Angels, Summertown
Solo by Theo Knight

Confession

Deacon Christ, the light of the world, has come
to dispel the darkness of our hearts.
In his light, let us examine ourselves and confess our sins.

Silence is kept

Deacon God our Father,
you sent your Son full of grace and truth:
forgive our failure to receive him.
Lord, have mercy.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

Deacon Jesus our Saviour,
you were born in poverty and laid in a manger:
forgive our greed and rejection of your ways.
Christ, have mercy.

All **Christ, have mercy.**

Deacon Spirit of love,
your servant Mary responded joyfully to your call:
forgive the hardness of our hearts.
Lord, have mercy.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

Absolution

President May the God of all healing and forgiveness
draw you to himself,
that you may behold the glory of his Son,
the Word made flesh,
and be cleansed from all your sins,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

All **Amen.**

Gloria in Excelsis

All

**Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the
Father:
receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

*Sung by Susan Holmes, accompanied by Dr Stephen Holmes,
from St Michael and All Angels, Lambourn*

The Collect

President

Let us pray, in the peace of this Christmas celebration,
that our joy in the birth of Christ will last forever.

Silence is kept.

President

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.

All **Amen.**

We listen to God speaking through the Scriptures.

First Reading

Isaiah 52.7-10 (NRSV)

*Read by Revd Shemil Mathew, Anglican Chaplain,
Oxford Brookes University*

Reader A reading from the prophecy of Isaiah.

How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,
who brings good news,
who announces salvation,
who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”

Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,
together they sing for joy;
for in plain sight they see
the return of the Lord to Zion.

Break forth together into singing,
you ruins of Jerusalem;
for the Lord has comforted his people,
he has redeemed Jerusalem.

The Lord has bared his holy arm
before the eyes of all the nations;
and all the ends of the earth shall see
the salvation of our God.

Reader This is the word of the Lord.

All **Thanks be to God.**

Second Reading

Reader A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

Long ago, God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the world. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Reader This is the word of the Lord.
All **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 98

*Recorded by Julia Hollander & Peter McMullin,
the University Church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford*

O sing unto the Lord a new song,
for he hath done marvellous things.
His right hand and his holy name
have gotten him victory.

The Lord hath made known his salvation:
his righteousness hath he openly shewed
in the sight of the heathen.

He hath remembered his mercy and his truth
toward the house of Israel:
all the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation of our God.

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth:
make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.
Sing unto the Lord on the harp;

with the voice of a psalm.

With trumpets and sound of the cornet
make a joyful noise before the Lord, our King.

Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof;
the world, and they that dwell within.

Let the floods clap their hands:
Let the hills be joyful together before the Lord;
for he cometh before the world:
with righteousness shall he judge the world,
and the people with equity.

Gospel Reading

John 1.1-4 (NRSV)

Read by Revd Claire Browes,

curate at St Mary and St Johns Church, Cowley

Reader Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.
All **Glory to you, O Lord.**

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.

Reader This is the Gospel of the Lord.
All **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Reflection

The Rt Revd Steven Croft,
Bishop of Oxford

Carol

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;
Verily God, begotten, not created:

O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

See how the shepherds, summoned to his cradle,
Leaving their flocks, draw nigh with holy 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.

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of Heaven above!

Glory to God, glory in the highest:

O come, let us adore Him,

O come, let us adore Him,

O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

'O Come All Ye Faithful'

Sung by the choir of Christ Church Cathedral School, Oxford

The Creed

All

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and
the Virgin Mary
and was made man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,**

**who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son
is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism
for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

Led by Revd Canon Toby Wright and family, Witney Benefice

The response to the prayers is:

Intercessor God of love,
All **hear our prayer.**

The Peace

President Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given,
and his name shall be called the Prince of Peace.

President The peace of the Lord be always with you
All **and also with you.**

*Christians have shared a sign of peace since the very earliest days of the Church.
Although we are separated by distance, we are one Body of Christ; the Spirit moves
among us as we share Christ's peace.*

Carol

Joy to the world! the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing,

And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! the Saviour reigns;
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

Sung by EMU choir of St Ebbe's, Oxford

Preparation of the Table

President Word made flesh, life of the world,
in your incarnation you embraced our poverty.
By your spirit may we share in your riches.

All **Blessed be God forever**

The Eucharistic Prayer

President The Lord be with you
All **and also with you.**

President Lift up your hearts.
All **We lift them to the Lord.**

President Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
All **It is right to give thanks and praise.**

President

All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere,
mighty creator, ever-living God.
We give you thanks and praise for your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who for love of our fallen race humbled himself,
and on this day was born of the Virgin Mary
by the power of your Spirit, and lived as one of us.
In this mystery of the Word made flesh
you have caused his light to shine in our hearts,
to give knowledge of your glory in the face of Jesus Christ.
In him we see our God made visible
and so are caught up in the love of the God we cannot see.
Therefore with all the angels of heaven
we lift our voices to proclaim the glory of your name
and sing our joyful hymn of praise:

All

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

President

Accept our praises, heavenly Father,
through your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ,
and as we follow his example and obey his command,
grant that, by the power of your Holy Spirit,
these gifts of bread and wine may be to us
his body and his blood;
who, in the same night that he was betrayed,
took bread and gave you thanks;
he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, after supper he took the cup of wine
and gave you thanks;
he gave it to them, saying:
Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

Therefore, heavenly Father,
we remember his offering of himself made once for all upon the cross;
we proclaim his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension;
we look for the coming of your kingdom,
and with this bread and this cup
we make the memorial of Christ, your Son, our Lord.
Great is the mystery of faith.

All **Christ has died.**
 Christ is risen.
 Christ will come again.

President Accept through him, our great high priest,
this, our sacrifice of thanks and praise,
and as we eat and drink these holy gifts
in the presence of your divine majesty,
renew us by your Spirit, inspire us with your love
and unite us in the body of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Through him, and with him, and in him,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
with all who stand before you in earth and heaven,
we worship you, Father almighty,
in songs of everlasting praise:

All **Blessing and honour and glory and power**
 be yours for ever and ever. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

President Rejoicing in the presence of God here among us,
let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

All **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.**

Breaking of the Bread

The president breaks the consecrated bread.

President We break the bread of life,
and that life is the light of the world.

All **God here among us, light in the midst of us,
bring us to light and life.**

Agnus Dei

All **Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Invitation to Communion

President God's holy gifts for God's holy people.

All **Jesus Christ is holy,
Jesus Christ is Lord,
in the glory of God the Father.**

The president receives the bread and wine on behalf of the community as we make our 'spiritual communion'; taking time to notice God's presence with us and trust that, as we desire communion with God, God will meet us in our hearts by faith. There are no special words or actions required for this; only true desire, lively faith and genuine love. If you find it helpful, you may wish to use the following prayer, or simply listen to the music and meditate upon God's love for you.

Lord, you stand at the door of my heart and knock. You wait for me and only I can let you in. I believe and trust in you and ask you now to fill me with your presence. Feed me with your body and unite me in your blood, that I may be your blessing to a world in need. Amen.

Music During Communion

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 the 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.

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? I give my heart.

*Sung by James Thomson,
St Aldates, Oxford*

Prayer after Communion

President

Let us pray.

God our Father,
whose Word has come among us
in the Holy Child of Bethlehem:
may the light of faith illumine our hearts
and shine in our words and deeds;
through him who is Christ the Lord.
Amen.

All

**Lord Jesus Christ,
we thank you that we have received the grace
of spiritual communion with you.
Feed us in mind, body and soul,
strengthen us to serve our neighbours in need
and guide us to walk with you
in the Way that leads to new life.
Amen.**

Carol

Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the newborn 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 newborn 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 angels sing
Glory to the newborn King!

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 newborn King.

'Hark the Herald Angel Sing!'

Pete Wilmot and the choir of Greyfriars, Reading

Blessing and Dismissal

President May the Father,
who has loved the eternal Son
from before the foundation of the world,
shed that love upon you his children.

Deacon **Amen.**

President May Christ,
who by his incarnation gathered into one
things earthly and heavenly,
fill you with joy and peace.

Deacon **Amen.**

President May the Holy Spirit,
by whose overshadowing Mary became the God-bearer,
give you grace to carry the good news of Christ.

Deacon **Amen.**

President And the blessing of God almighty,

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

Deacon

Amen.

Deacon
President

Go in peace, proclaim the Word made flesh.
Glory, thanks and praise to God.

Recessional

'In Dulci Jubilo' J. S. Bach (1685-1750)

Recorded by James Brown,

University Church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford

Music after the Service

We wish you a merry Christmas,
We wish you a merry Christmas,
We wish you a merry Christmas,
And a Happy New Year!
Good tidings we bring to you and your kin;
We wish you a merry Christmas
And a Happy New Year!

We wish you a merry Christmas,
We wish you a merry Christmas,
We wish you a merry Christmas,
And a Happy New Year!

Good tidings for you wherever you are
Good tidings for Christmas
And a happy New Year.

We wish you a merry Christmas,
We wish you a merry Christmas,
We wish you a merry Christmas,
And a Happy New Year!

‘We Wish You a Merry Christmas’
Recorded by the Choir of Christ Church Cathedral School, Oxford

A warm thank you to all those who have made this service possible:

The Rt Revd Steven Croft, Bishop of Oxford; Revd Claire Browes, curate at St Mary and St John’s, Cowley; St Mary’s Infant School, Witney; Christ Church Cathedral Choir; Tora Nilsson, from St Margaret’s, Oxford; Felix Knight and the choir of St Michael All Angels, Summertown; Susan and Dr Stephen Holmes, St Michael and All Angels, Lambourn; Revd Shemil Mathews, chaplain at Oxford Brookes University; Steven Buckley, director of communications for the Diocese of Oxford, St Mary’s, Twyford; Peter McMullin and Julia Hollander, the University Church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford; Revd Charlotte Bannister Parker; St Mary the Virgin, Oxford; Revd Canon Toby Wright and family and the Benefice of Witney E-Choir; James Thomson from the choir of St Aldates, Oxford; Pete Wilmot and the choir of Greyfriars, Reading; the choir of St Ebbe’s (EMU), Oxford; and the organist James Brown, the University Church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford.

Special thanks to the production team of the Revd Hannah Cartwright, curate St Mary and St Nicholas, Littlemore, Revd Ross Meikle, curate St Mary’s, Witney, and the lead liturgist Dr Matthew Cheung Salisbury, music lecturer at Oxford University and Worcester College and national liturgist and worship adviser for the Church of England. Mark Robinson, editor from Digital Media, Revd Charlotte Bannister-Parker, Associate Chaplain to the Bishop of Oxford and Steven Buckley, Director of Communications for the Diocese of Oxford.

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Join us for Church at Home on the First Sunday of Christmas



10am, Sunday 27 December
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