

# The Church of the Epiphany, Sudbury

Come as You Are. All Are Welcome!

Worship Celebration for **Pre-Recorded** Christmas Eve

**SERVICE OF THE WORD WITH CAROLS**

**Thursday December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

## WE GATHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE

**Carol**                      **O Come All Ye Faithful – CP 118**    (vs. 1, 2, 3 and 4)

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;

### **Refrain**

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: *(Ref.)*

3        Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,  
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;  
glory to God, glory in the highest: *(Ref.)*

4        See how the shepherds, summoned to his cradle,  
leaving their flocks, draw nigh with lowly fear;  
we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps; *(Ref.)*

## **Greetings**

## **Call to Worship**

*Rev. Elizabeth*        This, tonight, is the meeting place of heaven and earth.

For this, tonight, is the stable  
in which God keeps his appointment  
to meet his people.

Not many mighty are here,  
not many holy,  
not many innocent children,  
not many worldly wise,  
not all familiar faces,  
not all frequent visitors.

But, if tonight only strangers meet,  
that would be enough.

For Bethlehem was not the hub of the universe,  
nor was the stable a platform for famous people.

In an out of the way place  
which people never thought to visit –  
there God kept and keeps his promise;  
there God sends his Son.

## Carol

### What Child Is This - CP 137

- 1 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?

#### *Refrain*

This, this is Christ the King,  
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;  
haste, haste to bring him laud,  
the babe, the son of Mary.

- 2 Why lies he in such mean estate  
where ox and ass are feeding?  
Good Christians, fear: for sinners here  
the silent Word is pleading. (*Ref.*)
- 2 So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;  
come, peasant, king, to own him.  
The King of kings salvation brings;  
Let loving hearts enthrone him. (*Ref.*)

## The Gathering of the Community

*Celebrant* The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

*People* **And also with you**

*Celebrant* Almighty God,  
*People* **to you all hearts are open, all desires known,  
and from you no secrets are hidden.  
Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## Call to Confession

*Rev. Elizabeth* Dear friends in Christ,  
as we turn our hearts and minds  
to worship our Creator God, let us confess our sins against God and our neighbour, trusting the promise of forgiveness.

*Rev. Elizabeth* Most merciful God,  
*All* **we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done  
and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
have mercy on us and forgive us,  
that we may delight in your will,  
and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your name. Amen.**

## Declaration of Forgiveness

*Rev. Elizabeth* Merciful God,  
grant to your faithful people pardon and peace,

that we may be cleansed from all our sins  
and serve you with a quiet mind;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

*People*

**Amen.**

**Prayer of the Day**      *(Led by Rev. Elizabeth)*

*Rev. Elizabeth*      Eternal God, from the tabernacle of heaven to the poverty of a stable, your radiant light shines forth in a tiny baby wrapped in rags; such humble love astounds us. In Jesus you have become one with us, that we might become one with you. Open our hearts to joyfully receive his love that he may be born in us, and we in him through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Carol**      **It Came Upon the Midnight Clear – CP 140**      *(vs. 1, 2, 4 and 5)*

- 1      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, to all good will  
from heaven's all-gracious king!"  
The world in solemn stillness lay,  
to hear the angels sing.
  
- 2      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.
  
- 4      And you, beneath life's crushing load,  
whose forms are bending low,  
who toil along the climbing way  
with painful steps and slow;  
look now, for glad and golden hours  
come swiftly on the wing:  
O rest beside the weary road  
and hear the angels sing.

- 5 For lo, the days are hastening on,  
by prophets seen of old,  
when with the ever-circling years  
shall come the time foretold:  
when the new heaven and earth shall own  
the Prince of Peace their King,  
and the whole world send back the song  
which now the angels sing.

## ***We listen for God's Word spoken to us in Scripture***

### **The First Reading**

*(Isaiah 9: 2, 6 – 7)*

Reader A reading from 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 Counselor, 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 onward and  
forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

*All*

Hear what the Spirit is saying to us, the Church  
**Thanks be to God**

**Carol**

### **Once in Royal David's City - CP 123**

- 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.
- 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.

- 3 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 gather round.

## The Second Reading

*(Titus 2:11-14)*

Reader A reading from St. Paul's letter to Titus.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to us, the Church.

*All* **Thanks be to God.**

## **Carol** [In the Bleak Midwinter - CP 122](#)

- 1 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.
- 2 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.
- 3 Angels and archangels may have gathered there,  
cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;  
but his mother only, in her maiden bliss,  
worshipped the beloved with a kiss.
- 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.

**Carol**

**O Little Town of Bethlehem - CP 120**

(Tune: St. Louis)

- 1 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 For Christ is born of Mary;  
and, gathered all above,  
while mortals sleep, the angels keep  
their watch of wondering love.  
O morning stars, together  
proclaim the holy birth,  
and praises sing to God the King,  
and peace to all on earth.
  
- 3 How silently, how silently,  
the wondrous Gift is given  
as love imparts to human hearts  
the blessings of God's 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.

***The Gospel Story Luke 2:1-20***

***told by the Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Green***

**Homily**

## Carol

## Away in a Manger - CP 126

- 1     Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,  
      the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.  
      The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay;  
      the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.
  
- 2     The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,  
      but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.  
      I love you, Lord Jesus -- look down from on high  
      and stay by my side until morning is nigh.
  
- 3     Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay  
      close by me forever and love me, I pray.  
      Bless all the dear children in your tender care,  
      and fit us for heaven to live with you there.

## The Prayers of the People

*Leader*

Glory to you, O God, for good news of great joy that you give to all people. Thank you for Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who lived among us and now reigns on high. Thank you for his light that shines in the darkness. With the angels, we sing to you, celebrating your glory in all the earth, in the Son given to us, and in your promised salvation.

*SILENCE*

*Leader*

Holy God, as we are gathered as a community – near and far – on this Christmas Eve, we pray for your church in every place, that we may make known to others what has been told to us about this child. Help us to bear Christ's light in every place of need. Draw near to those who are lonely, isolated, and who are spending this night apart from community: travelers, and those far from home, people who live alone, people who wait in hospital rooms, people who sit in prison cells, those who are working deep into the night, those who are estranged from family or friends, those who are suffering and dying from the Covid-19 virus. Comfort those who are poor and vulnerable: the child at risk, those who are addicted to opioids and other substances, for the homeless on the streets, for families without enough food, and for those contending with prejudice, racism and scorn.

*SILENCE*

*Leader*

Holy God, restore those who have lost faith, lost hope, or who have simply lost their way. End the hostilities and wars we construct by ushering in the endless peace of your design. Establish your reign of justice and righteousness. You are the Lord of hosts who, with zeal, will do this; on this Christmas Eve we pray through Jesus Christ who is our Light and our Savior. Amen.

**Carol**

**Hark the Herald Angels Sing - CP 138**

- 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 the angelic hosts proclaim,  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

***Refrain***

Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn 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 Godhead see;  
hail, the incarnate Deity,  
pleased as one of us to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel! *(Ref.)*
- 3 Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings,  
risen with healing in his wings,  
Mild he lays his glory by,  
born that we no more may die,  
born to raise each child of earth,  
born to give us second birth. *(Ref.)*

***SILENCE***

*Rev. Elizabeth*

When the world was dark  
and the village was quiet,  
you came.

You crept in beside us.  
And no one knew.  
Only the few  
who dared to believe  
that God would do something different.

Will you do the same this Christmas, Lord?

Will you come into the darkness of today's world;  
not the friendly darkness  
as when sleep rescues us from tiredness,  
but the fearful darkness,  
in which people have stopped believing  
that war will end  
or that food will come  
or that a government will change  
or that the Church cares?

Will you come into that darkness  
and do something different  
to save your people from death and despair?

Will you come into the quietness of this town;  
not the friendly quietness  
as when lovers hold hands,  
but the fearful silence when  
the phone has not rung  
the letter has not come,  
the friendly voice no longer speaks,  
the doctor's face says it all?

Will you come into that darkness,  
and do something different,  
not to distract, but to embrace your people?

And will you come into the dark corners  
and the quiet places of our lives?

We ask this not because we are guilt-ridden  
or want to be,  
but because the fullness that our lives long for  
depends on us being as open and vulnerable to you  
as you were to us,

when you came,  
wearing no more than diapers,  
and trusting human hands  
to hold their maker.

Will you come into our lives,  
if we open them to you  
and do something different?

When the world was dark  
and the village was quiet  
you came.

You crept in beside us.

Do the same this Christmas, Lord.  
Do the same this Christmas. Amen.

*SILENCE*

**Carol**

**Silent Night - CP 119**

- 1 Silent night! Holy night!  
All is calm, all is bright  
round yon virgin mother and child.  
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,  
sleep in heavenly peace,  
sleep in heavenly peace.
- 2 Silent night! Holy night!  
Shepherds quake at the sight:  
glories stream from heaven afar,  
heavenly hosts sing alleluia,  
Christ the Saviour is born!  
Christ the Saviour is born!
- 3 Silent night! Holy night!  
Son of God, love's pure light  
radiant beams from thy holy face,  
with the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord at thy birth.  
Jesus, Lord at thy birth.

## The Lord's Prayer

*Rev. Elizabeth  
All*

And now, as our Saviour Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,  
**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**

### **Shepherds in the Field Abiding - CP 135**

- 1 Shepherds in the field abiding,  
tell us, when the seraph bright  
greeted you with wondrous tiding,  
what you saw and heard that night.

#### ***Refrain***

Gloria in excelsis Deo!  
Gloria in excelsis Deo!

- 2 We beheld (it is no fable),  
God incarnate, king of bliss,  
swathed and cradled in a stable,  
and the angel strain was this: *(Ref.)*
- 3 Choristers on high were singing  
Jesus and his virgin birth,  
heavenly bells the while aringing,  
"Peace, goodwill to all on earth." *(Ref.)*
- 4 Thanks, good shepherds, true your story;  
let us go to Bethlehem.  
Angels hymn the king of glory;  
carol we with you and them. *(Ref.)*

**Dismissal**

**Acknowledgements for today's worship service**

Celebrant	Rev. Elizabeth
Lay Reader	Marion Collinson
Reader	Peter Williams
Chancel Cantor	Samuel Fritz
Transept Cantors	Gwen Crosdale and Bill Heathcote
Music	Norm Blanchard
Technical Support	Ralph Mounter and Hoi Cheu

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