



CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL, VICTORIA, BC

Christmas Lessons & Carols

Sunday, December 21, 2025 4.00 pm



CHRIST CHURCH
CATHEDRAL
A CATHEDRAL FOR THE CITY



ANGLICAN DIOCESE
OF ISLANDS AND INLETS
RENEWED HEARTS, RENEWED SPIRITS, RENEWED PEOPLE

Welcome to the cathedral church of the Anglican Diocese of Islands and Inlets. As a community of faith, we respectfully acknowledge that we gather to worship on the traditional lands of the Esquimalt and Songhees nations. We welcome and celebrate human diversity-including spirituality, age, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. We declare our commitment to be in solidarity with the poor and marginalized, and to cherish and sustain the created order. Here people of any faith or none can question and discover the sacred in life through openness, struggle, laughter, and prayer.

About the Service

This afternoon's service is modelled on the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols which originated in Truro Cathedral (UK) in 1880. Since then, it has spread around the world, made famous in particular by King's College, Cambridge and other Anglican cathedrals. The readings and music always evolve to respond to time and place, but the structure of scriptural readings and poetry interspersed with music sung by the choir and carols sung by the congregation, remains largely unchanged.

This afternoon's service begins at the time of the creation of the universe. The first reading ends with hints of humanity's loss of innocence and the breaking of our relationship with God. The unfolding story, told through scripture, tells how the coming of the Christ Child gives us hope that one day all will be restored. The lessons and carols tell how God has reached out to creation since the dawn of time with a message of comfort, renewal, and peace. Listen well. It is a magnificent story. It is the story of love.

Music plays a central role in the service and every year, this cathedral commissions a new carol to be sung by the choir. This year, we have commissioned "The Bells of Christmas" by Canadian composer Sarah Quartel with text by Timothy Dudley-Smith. Of her composition, Quartel writes, "This bright and sparkling carol sets a text celebrating the fulfillment of God's promised word—'born is our Saviour and our Lord, alleluia!' It invites the listener to join in the joy of the bells that ring out in praise."

If you would like to find out how you can be involved in commissioning the work from living Canadian composers, please contact the Director of Music.

Music before the service:

Played by Marianne Robinson, Organ Scholar

J.S. Bach (d. 1750) *Der Tag, der ist so freudenreich*, BWV 605

Played by Mark McDonald, Assistant Director of Music

Louis-Claude Daquin (d. 1755) *Noël IX (sur les Flûtes) & Noël X (Grand Jeu et duo)*

CHRISTMAS LESSONS AND CAROLS

Officiant: The Very Reverend Jonathan Thomas

This service is being broadcast live on the Internet, and rebroadcast on CHEK-TV.

THE ENTRANCE & BIDDING

The congregation remains seated as a solo voice and choir sings:

Hymn

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.

Choir 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 now stand at the entrance of the choir and chancel party.

All 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.

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.

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.

Text: Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895), alt.

Music: IRBY, Henry John Gauntlett (1805-1876). vv. 1-4 harm. A.H. Mann. Desc. David Willcocks

The Bidding Prayer

all remain standing

Officiant We gather today in the embrace of a loving God to celebrate the great festival of Christmas. In this service we hear and receive the good news of the birth of Christ and we offer to God our thanksgiving in the joyful singing of carols.

In gratitude for this divine gift, we pray for the world that Christ came to heal and redeem:

for the Church, that it may be enabled in our generation to surrender anew to the Wisdom from on high, and bear love and light to any in need;

for the earth itself, for the created order and the human community, that, inspired by the message of Christmas, all people may claim responsibility for a more just future, labouring together for the common good;

for those who suffer any illness or distress; the persecuted and poor, those who struggle with loss or addiction; those who long for meaning, companionship, or hope; that the peace and light of the Christ-child may illumine the present night.

We commend all whom we love, and all who have asked our prayers, to the unfailing mercy of our God in the words Jesus 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.**

All are now seated

Carol (world premiere)

Hear how the bells of Christmas play!
Well may they ring for joy and say,
O praise him! Alleluia!
God has fulfilled his promised word,
born is our Saviour and our Lord,
O praise him! Alleluia!

Let all the waiting earth rejoice,
lift every heart and every voice,
O praise him! Alleluia!
Sing now the song to angels given,
Glory to God in highest heaven!
O praise him! Alleluia!

As through the silence of the skies
shepherds in wonder heard arise,
O praise him! Alleluia!
So may we hear again with them
songs in the night at Bethlehem,
O praise him! Alleluia!

All nature sang at Jesus' birth,
Hail the Creator come to earth!
O praise him! Alleluia!
Sun, moon and shining stars above,
tell out the story of his love,
O praise him! Alleluia!

Hear how the bells of Christmas play!
Well may they ring for joy and say,
O praise him! Alleluia!
Come now to worship and adore,
Christ is our peace for evermore,
O praise him! Alleluia!

*Text: Timothy Dudley-Smith (1926-2024) © 1987 Hope Publishing Company
Music: Sarah Quartel (b. 1982)*

THE LESSONS & CAROLS

The First Reading: The Garden of Eden

Genesis 2.4b-9, 15-17

Reader The Word of the Lord.
People **Thanks be to God.**

Carol

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Text: Richard Hutchins (18th century priest and poet)
Music: Elizabeth Poston (b. 1905-1987)

The Second Reading: God's Covenant with Humankind

Genesis 9.12-15, 17

<i>Reader</i>	The Word of the Lord.
<i>People</i>	Thanks be to God.

Carol

When I consider your heavens, even the works of your fingers,
the moon and stars you have set in their courses,
what is man that you should be mindful of him?
And the son of man that you should seek him out?
You have made him but little lower than the angels,
you adorn him with glory and honour,
when I consider your heavens even the works of your fingers,
the moon and stars you have set in their courses.
Amen.

Text: Psalm 8.4-6

Music: Mark McDonald (b. 1987)

The Third Reading: The Righteous Reign is Coming

Isaiah 9.2, 6-7

<i>Reader</i>	The Word of the Lord.
<i>People</i>	Thanks be to God.

Carol

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:
and the government shall be upon his shoulder:
and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor,
The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Text: Isaiah 9.6

Music: Georg Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

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.

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.

Choir 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.

All 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.

Text: Phillips Brooks (1835-1893), alt.

Music: FOREST GREEN Melody English trad.; coll. and harm. Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958). Desc. Thomas Armstrong (1898-1994)

The Fourth Reading: A Vision of Universal Peace

please be seated

Isaiah 11.1-3a, 4a, 6, 9

<i>Reader</i>	The Word of the Lord
<i>People</i>	Thanks be to God.

Carol

A spotless rose is blowing,
sprung from a tender root,
of ancient seers foreshowing,
of Jesse promised fruit;
its fairest bud unfolds to light
amid the cold, cold winter,
and in the dark midnight.

The rose which I am singing,
whereof Isaiah said,
is from its sweet root springing
in Mary purest maid;
for through our God's great love and might,
the blessed babe she bare us
In a cold, cold winter's night.

Text: 14th century

Music: Herbert Howells (1892-1983)

The Fifth Reading: Mary Receives Good News

Luke 1.26-35, 38

<i>Reader</i>	The Word of the Lord.
<i>People</i>	Thanks be to God.

Carol

The angel Gabriel from heaven came,
His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;
“All hail,” said he, “thou lowly maiden Mary,
Most highly favoured lady,” Gloria!

“For know a blessed mother thou shalt be,
All generations laud and honour thee,
Thy Son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold,
Most highly favoured lady,” Gloria!

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,
“To me be as it pleaseth God,” she said,
“My soul shall laud and magnify his holy name.”
Most highly favoured lady,“ Gloria!

Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ, was born
In Bethlehem, all on a Christ-mas morn,
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever sing:
“Most highly favoured lady,” Gloria!

*Text and Music: Basque carol, trans. Sabine Baring-Gould (1834-1924),
arr. Edgar Pettman (1866-1943)*

The Sixth Reading: The Birth of Jesus

Luke 2.1, 3-7

Reader The Word of the Lord.
People **Thanks be to God.**

Carol

<i>In dulci jubilo</i> let us our homage show; our heart’s joy reclineth <i>in praeseptio</i> ; and like a bright star shineth <i>Matris in gremio!</i> <i>Alpha es et O!</i>	In sweet rejoicing in the manger in the mother’s lap You are Alpha and Omega
<i>O Jesu parvule</i> I yearn for thee alway! Hear me, I beseech thee, <i>O puer optime!</i> My prayer, let it reach thee, <i>O princeps gloriae!</i> Trahe me post te!	O little Jesus O best of boys! O prince of glory draw me unto thee

*O Patris caritas,
O nati lenitas,
deeply were we stained
per nostra crimina;
but thou hast for us gained
coelorum gaudia.
O that we were there!*

O Father's caring
O newborn's mildness
by our crimes
heavenly joy

*Ubi sunt gaudia
if that they be not there?
There are angels singing
nova cantica.
There the bells are ringing
in Regis curia:
O that we were there!*

Where be joys
new songs
at the King's court

Text and Music: German Traditional, arr. R.L. Pearsall (1795-1856)

Carol

Nowell, nowell.
Who is there that singeth so, Nowell, nowell?
I am here, Sir Christèmas.
Welcome, my lord Sir Christèmas!
Welcome to all, both more and less!
Come near, come near, Nowell, nowell.

Dieu vous garde, beaux sieurs, tidings I you bring:
a maid hath borne a child full young,
which causeth you to sing:
nowell, nowell.

Christ is now born of a pure maid;
in an ox-stall he is laid,
wherefore sing we at abrayde:
nowell, nowell.

Buvez bien, buvez bien par toute la compagnie.
Make good cheer and be right merry,
and sing with us now joyfully:
nowell, nowell.

*Music: William Mathias, (1934-1992)
Text: English traditional*

While shepherds watched their flocks by night
all seated on the ground,
the angel of the Lord came down,
and glory shone around.

“Fear not,” said he, for mighty dread
had seized their troubled mind.
“Glad tidings of great joy I bring
to you and humankind.

To you in David’s town this day
is born of David’s line
a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;
and this shall be the sign:

the heavenly babe you there shall find
to human view displayed,
all meanly wrapped in swaddling bands,
and in a manger laid.”

Thus spake the seraph; and forthwith
appeared a shining throng
of angels praising God, who thus
addressed their joyful song:

“All glory be to God on high,
and to the world be peace;
good will henceforth from heaven to earth
begin, and never cease.”

Text: Luke 2.8-14; para. Nahum Tate (1652-1715), alt.

Music: WINCHESTER OLD, Melody Whole Book of Psalms, 1592

Seventh Reading: Shepherds and Angels

Luke 2.8-16

please be seated

<i>Reader</i>	The Word of the Lord.
<i>People</i>	Thanks be to God.

Carol

There's a star in the East on Christmas morn;
Rise up, shepherd, and follow;
It will lead to the place where the Saviour was born;
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.

Refrain

Leave your flocks and leave your lambs:
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.
Leave your sheep and leave your lambs:
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.
Leave your ewes and leave your rams,
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.
Follow the Star of Bethlehem;
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.

If you take good heed to the angel's words;
Rise up, shepherd, and follow;
You'll forget your flocks, you'll forget your herds;
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.

Refrain

Text: African American Traditional
Music: Grayston Ives (b. 1948)

The Eighth Reading: Wise Men Visit Jesus

Matthew 2.1-12

<i>Reader</i>	The Word of the Lord.
<i>People</i>	Thanks be to God.

Carol

"When He is King we will give Him a 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.

Text: Bruce Blunt (1899-1957)

Music: Peter Warlock (1894-1930)

The congregation stands

The Ninth Reading: God's Promise is Fulfilled

John 1.1-14

<i>Reader</i>	The Gospel of Christ.
<i>People</i>	Thanks be to God.

THE OFFERING, CONCLUDING PRAYER & HYMNS

Hymn

During this hymn, a collection is received for the work of the cathedral. Our easy to use Tap machines are available at the Quadra Street and Burdett Avenue doors. Please use the QR code at the end of the leaflet if you would like to make an online donation. Thank you.

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,
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 ...

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 ...

Yea, Lord we greet thee,
born on Christmas morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory given;
Word of the Father,
now in flesh appearing:
O come ...

Text: St. 1, 2, 3, and 5, John Francis Wade (1711-1786); st. 4, Étienne-Jean-François Borderies, 1822; st. 5a, Thesaurus Animae Christianae, 1850?; 1, 2, 3, and 5, tr. Frederick Oakley (1802-1880); st. 4 and 5a, tr. William T. Brooke (1848-1917). Music: ADESTE FIDELIS Melody attrib. John Francis Wade (1711-1786), alt.; harm. The English Hymnal, 1906. Ref. desc. And altern. Har. David Willcocks (1919–2015) vv. 2 & 5 arr. Patrick Wedd (1948-2019).

Concluding Collect

please remain standing

Officiant The Lord be with you.
People **And also with you.**

Officiant Let us pray.
Holy God,
bring us to the manger to greet and adore your Son.
Grant us like John the Baptist

to prepare his way, our hearts and our homes, for his coming;
like Mary and Joseph,
to carry him in our very selves,
bringing him to birth in the most unlikely of places;
like Herod and the magi,
to understand the danger he poses to our way of being,
but to seek him nonetheless;
and like the angels and shepherds,
to spare no effort to herald and welcome his presence among us;
through the same your Son, Jesus Christ, our incarnate Lord.

People

Amen.

Hymn

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 one of us to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel!
Hark! the herald angels sing:
"Glory to the newborn King!"

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.
Hark! the herald angels sing:
“Glory to the newborn King!”

Text: Charles Wesley (1701-1788), alt.

Music: MEDELSSOHN, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-1847); adapt. William Hayman Cummings (1831-1915); altern harm. and desc. David Wilcocks (1919-2015). Altern harm. and desc. © Oxford University Press.

The Blessing

Officiant Beloved family of God:
Life is short
and we do not have much time
to gladden the hearts of
those who travel with us.
So be swift to love,
make haste to be kind,
and go with the blessing of God;
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
People **Amen.**

Organ Voluntaries:

In dulci jubilo (BWV 729)
Carillon de Westminster

J.S. Bach (d. 1750)
Louis Vierne (d. 1937)

A NOTE ABOUT THE COMMISSIONED CAROL

From their beginnings in the Middle Ages, cathedrals have always had a role in fostering human creativity. This is, of course, in addition to that important work of being a community hub and of maintaining a rhythm of daily worship. One way that Christ Church Cathedral continues to join these mandates is through our commissioning of a new Christmas carol for this annual service. This year's carol, "The Bells of Christmas" is by Sarah Quartel.

This is the sixteenth year that we've commissioned a new carol. These commissions, along with choral scholarships for young artists, and our young chorister program with the Cathedral School, are paid for by the Music Fund, which is regularly supported by cathedral members and music lovers in the broader community. To those of you who support this important work: thank you!

Carol Commissions 2010-2024

2010: Paul Halley, O magnum mysterium

2011: Patrick Wedd, A Poor Place

2012: Stephanie Martin, Legend of the Bird

2013: Stephen Chatman, I Sing the Birth

2014: Zachary Windus, Rejoice Ye Peoples of the Earth

2015: Matthew Larkin, Sailor's Carol

2016: Rupert Lang, There is no Rose

2017: Christopher Goddard, The Time Draws Near

2018: Bramwell Tovey, Not very long ago

2019: Kathleen Allan, I Syng of a Mayden

2020: Sarah MacDonald, The Manger is Empty

2021: Andrew Balfour, Nowell Sing We

2022: Robert Busiakiewicz, Carol of the Bells

2023: Tobin Stokes, This the Happy Morn

2024: Marie-Claire Saindon, Allon gai bergères

Assisting with Today's Service

<i>Greeters</i>	Christ Church Cathedral Sidespeople
<i>Verger</i>	Bob Fearnley
<i>Musicians</i>	The Christ Church Cathedral Guild of Bell Ringers The Cathedral Choir Kellan McDowell, <i>treble soloist</i> Mark McDonald, <i>Assistant Director of Music</i> Donald Hunt, <i>Director of Music</i>
<i>Readers</i>	Gregory Andrachuk, Marilyn Dalzell, Julian Daly, Audrey Thomas, The Reverend Judy Rois, Christopher Thackray, Christopher Coleman, Anthony Danda, The Reverend Anna E. Rossi
<i>Production Team</i>	The Cathedral Technical Team Roll.Focus Productions

We wish to express our thanks to Jeff Bishop, PREC for his generous sponsorship of the broadcasts of this special service.

Broadcasts of this service will be aired on CHEK-TV at the following times:

Sunday, Dec 21—7pm-8:30pm
Wednesday, Dec 24—10pm-11:30pm
Thursday, Dec 25—11:30am – 1pm

If you would like to sign up for our E-news, or would like more information about the Cathedral, please visit www.christchurchcathedral.bc.ca

You can also use the QR code to make a donation, use our Welcome Card or to download the service leaflets and more.



CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS AT CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL

Monday, December 22 & Tuesday, December 23 / 7.30 p.m.

CapriCCio Vocal Ensemble: Illuminare (Night Before Light)

Tickets at capriccio.ca

Wednesday, December 24 / 4.30 p.m.

Peopling the Creche: A family Eucharist for Christmas Eve

Freewill offering

Wednesday, December 24 / 10.00 p.m.

Procession & Solemn Eucharist of the Nativity (incense will be used)*

Freewill offering

Thursday, December 25 / 10.30 a.m.

Christmas Day: Cathedral Eucharist*

Freewill offering

The cathedral will be closed on Fri, Dec 26 to Thurs, Jan 1, apart from advertised services and concerts.

There will be no Morning or Evening Prayer or midweek Eucharist during this period.

The office will be closed Dec 24 to Jan 1.

Sunday, December 28

8.00 a.m.—Holy Communion

10.30 a.m.—Cathedral Eucharist*

4.00 p.m.—Olivier Messiaen's 'La Nativité du Seigneur': An Organ Meditation
played by Donald Hunt*

Thursday, January 1 / 2.30 p.m.

Old Music for the New Year*

Admission by donation

Tuesday, January 6 / 7.00 p.m.

Solemn Eucharist for the Feast of Epiphany

Freewill offering

(*livestreamed)