

A Service for the Longest Night

22nd December 2025



StMARY *with* StALBAN
PARISH CHURCH of TEDDINGTON

WELCOME

We remain seated throughout the service, including for the singing of carols.

We meet in the name of a loving God,
All who knows our needs, hears our cries, feels our pain, and heals our wounds.

The Christ candle is lit.

Come, God-with-us: who braves our rejection and hurt, who holds us in acceptance and love.

Come, God-for-us: who whispers in our ears that we - each of us - are beloved children.

Come, God-under-us: who cradles us in arms that never grow weary; whose lap has room enough for all.

Come, God-over-us: who watches in the long silence of the night, that we might rest in peace.

Come, God-beside-us: who steadies us when we falter, who lifts us up when we fall.

Come, God-behind-us: who picks up all the faded dreams we drop along the way and patchworks them into hope.

O Come, O Come, Immanuel:

All and we will rejoice for ever!

CAROL

1. O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear:
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

2. O come, thou Key of David, come
and open wide our heav'nly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery.
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

3. O come, thou Day-spring, come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight:
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

READING - *Isaiah 9: 2-7*

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.

³You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.

⁴For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶For 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.

⁷His 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.

READING - *Luke 2: 1-5*

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.

Unlit candles are placed near the crib

CAROL

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 the 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 all on earth!
For Christ is born of Mary;
and, gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wondering love.

READING - *Luke 2: 6-7*

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.

CAROL

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 the 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

REFLECTION

You came as a baby, Lord, as a helpless little child who relied on a human family to care for him. You cried because you were hungry, because you were homeless, because you were a stranger, far away from home. You still cry with hunger, Lord, in the voices of the many starving; your tears still flow: for the homeless, the lonely and the forgotten; you still rely on human families to care for you.

And so this Christmas, Lord, we pray:

All help us to be the kind of people who look for you in the world and joyfully discover you as we care for one another. Amen.

CAROL

1. Away in a manger, no crib for a 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 thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky,
and stay by my bedside till morning is nigh.

3. Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay
close by me for ever and love me I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care
and fit us for heaven to live with thee there.

READING - *Luke 2: 8-20*

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: 11 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. 1When 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.

CAROL

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 mid-winter, long ago.

2. Our God, heav'n cannot hold him,
nor earth sustain;
heav'n 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. 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.

PRAYERS

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, come to your people.

All In your mercy, set us free.

Unlooked for, Christ comes. Loving God, we pray for our community. In the midst of our everyday lives, surprise us with glimpses of your glorious, humble love, at the heart of existence.

Lord, come to your people.

All In your mercy, set us free.

Searched for, Christ comes. Loving God, we pray for the leaders of the world. Guide them with your light, to seek wisdom, justice and peace. Lord, come to your people.

All In your mercy, set us free.

Longed for, Christ comes. Loving God, we pray for those whose lives are hard and painful, or whose existence is sorrowful, bitter or empty. In their need, may they know your healing touch, reaching out to comfort, strengthen and restore.

Lord, come to your people.

All In your mercy, set us free.

Loving God, come to us now, as you have come to your people in every age, as we gather our thoughts and prayers in the words that the adult Christ taught us:

All Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

People are invited to light their candles

BLESSING

Lord, in the beginning when all was very dark, you said: 'Let there be light.' and there was light and life throughout the universe.

And when the human race was exhausted, tired, and weary, in the darkness of anxiety, confusion and sin, into that darkness you came as light in Jesus Christ. God became a human being among us all.

Once again it is dark. Not just dark at midnight but dark in ourselves: dark with doubt, dark with fear and uncertainty, dark with confusing and conflicting voices in our ears.

Come, Light of Life, lighten the darkness in our lives with your mighty word of love. Lighten our hearts with the joy of your promised coming. Lighten our world with the hope that faith in you brings.

We travel towards Christmas Day in the peace of Jesus Christ.

May his peace, that lightens the soul with faith, lifts the spirit with hope and leavens the world with love, be yours tonight and always.
and the blessing of God, the Creator, the Son and the Spirit, go with you, and remain with you now and always. **Amen.**

CAROL

1. Silent night! Holy night!

All is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin and her child
holy infant, so gentle and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace;
sleep in heavenly peace.

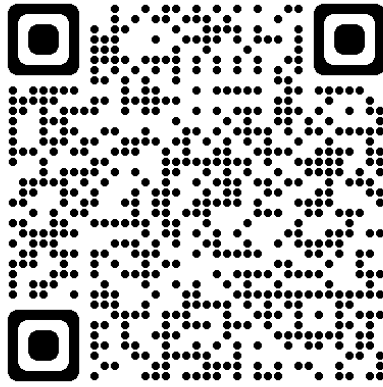
2. Silent night! Holy night!

Shepherds quail at the sight,
glory streams 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 your holy face
with the dawn of saving grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

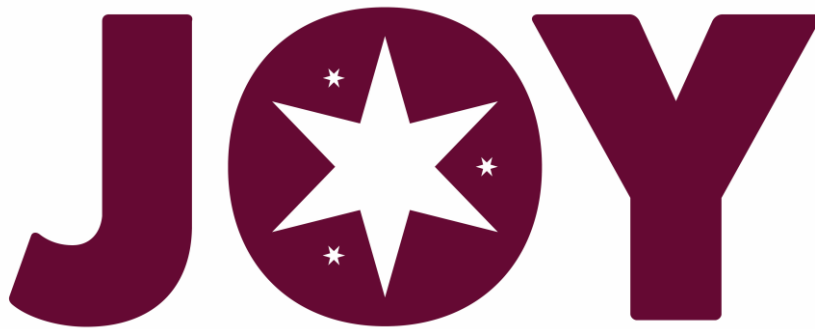
Please feel free to stay in the quiet for as long as you need.



Thank you for joining us today.

We rely heavily on our Christmas collections. If you are donating by card, you can use this QR code which takes you to our donate page. There is also a card reader on the collection plate and at the back of church.

Thank you



Sign up to the Church of England free Christmas reflection emails.

Receive daily messages straight to your inbox to help you to experience the Joy of Christmas, from Christmas Eve to Epiphany

– 24 December - 6 January (except Sundays)

<https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-life/what-we-believe/advent-and-christmas/sign-joy-christmas>