



A Eucharist on the Longest Night of the Year



Monday 21st December 2015 at 6 pm

Welcome to Coventry Cathedral

We are glad that you are able to join us at the Cathedral this evening. We hope you will find the service helpful – please take this booklet home with you if you would like to. There will be no announcements during the service. Instructions about when to stand or sit are clearly printed for you to follow.

This service is about the fact that not everyone feels happy about Christmas. Dealing with the loss of a loved one, facing life after divorce or separation, coping with the loss of a job, living with an illness that puts a question mark over the future... Things like this make the joviality of celebration painful for many people who feel ‘down’ at Christmas. Our intention this evening is to create some sacred space for people living through such dark times and to offer the opportunity to seek healing and hope.

A collection will be taken at the end of the service – please give generously. Running the cathedral costs a tremendous amount of money. Anything you can give to support our ministry will be gratefully received – and if you are a UK taxpayer, please use a Gift Aid envelope, filled in with your name, address and postcode, which will enable us to claim an extra 25p for every £1 you give, at no cost to you.

We hope you will want to come and worship with us again. Our regular Sunday services are at 8 am, 10.30 am, 4 pm and 6.30 pm, and you will receive a warm welcome.

The music for this service is provided by the Boy Choristers of the Cathedral Choir, directed by Kerry Beaumont, who also plays the organ.

You are welcome to take photographs, but not until after the service, please.

The Gathering

Before the service everyone remains SEATED as the choir moves to the Chancel and the ministers gather in the North Choir Aisle.

Silence is kept; then everyone STANDS to sing as the procession enters and moves to the Chancel.

Carol

**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.**

**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.**

**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.**

**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;
where like stars his children crowned
all in white shall wait around.

Words by C.F. Alexander (1818-1895)
Tune CP 66 Irby H.J. Gauntlett (1805-1876)

The congregation SITS.

The Greeting

The Reverend David Stone, Canon Precentor, presiding, says

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

All **Amen.**

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

All **The Word became flesh and lived among us,
full of grace and truth,
and we have seen his glory.**

In him was life, and that life was the light of all.

All **The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has never been able to extinguish it.**

The President welcomes the congregation and introduces the service.

Opening Prayer

God of love and understanding,
in this season of our longest nights,
we gather to acknowledge the pain of the world
and of our own lives,
offering to you that which some of us cannot put into words.
You came as light into the darkness.
Grant us a glimpse of the dawn
and a full measure of the hope, peace, joy and love
found in your presence.

All **Amen.**

Prayers for Mercy

The Reverend Kathryn Fleming, Canon Pastor, serving as Deacon, says

Friends in Christ,
God knows our needs before we ask
yet our asking prepares us to receive the gift of grace.
Let us open our lives to God's healing presence
and confess to God, in silence, those things which have wounded us
or brought injury to others, that we might be whole.

Silence is kept.

Heavenly Father,
you have created a universe of light;
forgive us when we return to darkness.
Lord, have mercy.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus,
you are the light of the world;
cleanse and heal our blinded sight.

Christ, have mercy.

All **Christ, have mercy.**

Holy Spirit,
you give us light in our hearts;
renew us in faith and love.
Lord, have mercy.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

The President says

There are times when all we see is the darkness;
and we may cry out 'The Lord has forsaken me, forgotten me'.
But God says 'I shall never forget you.
I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands.'
Therefore receive the assurance
of your acceptance and worth in God's sight:
May the God of all healing and forgiveness
draw you to himself and cleanse you from all your sins
that you may behold the glory of his Son,
the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

Choir Carol

A great and mighty wonder,
a full and holy cure!
The Virgin bears the Infant,
with virgin honour pure.

*Repeat the hymn again!
To God on high be glory,
and peace on earth to men!*

The Word becomes incarnate
and yet remains on high!
And cherubim sing anthems
to shepherds from the sky.

While thus they sing your monarch,
those bright angelic bands,
rejoice, ye vales and mountains,
ye oceans clap your hands.

Since all he comes to ransom,
by all be he adored,
the Infant born in Bethl'em
the Saviour and the Lord.

And idol forms shall perish,
and error shall decay,
and Christ shall wield his sceptre,
our Lord and God for ay.

*Words by St Germanus (634-734), tr. J.M Neale (1818-1866)
14th century German melody harmonized by Michael Praetorius (1571-1621)*

The Liturgy of the Word

The President says

Holy God of Advent,
you became weak so that we could find strength
in moments of heartbreak;
you left the safety of heaven
to wander the wilderness of the world.
You set aside your glory
to hold our pain, so that we might be healed.
You became one of us,
flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone.
So come now, Child of Bethlehem;
you have promised to go before us
into our brokenness, into hospital rooms,
into empty houses, into our future.
to strengthen us through our longest nights.
Be born in our hearts, in our hopes, in our weakness.

The Deacon says

As four candles are lit and silence is kept we hold our lives before
God.

First Candle

The President says

This candle represents our stresses and strains.
When burdens pile on top of other burdens, the load can crush us.
In silence, we hold our burdens before Christ;
who stands ready to shoulder them with us.
'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest.'

Matthew 11.28

Silence is kept.

All Lord, into our darkest night
may your light come.

Second Candle

This candle represents our griefs and sorrows.
The pain of losing loved ones can be acute at Christmas.
In silence, we hold our griefs before Christ;
who gathers each one of our tears.
'He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and
God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their
eyes.'

Revelation 21.3-4

Silence is kept.

All Lord, into our darkest night
may your light come.

Third Candle

This candle represents our disappointments and anger.
The pain of dreams that go unfulfilled,
of hopes which evaporate,
of love that has gone unacknowledged or has been betrayed.
In silence, we hold our disappointments and anger before Christ;
who took them into himself on the cross.
'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Yet it was you who took me from the womb;
you kept me safe on my mother's breast.'

Psalm 22.1,9

Silence is kept.

Lord, into our darkest night
All **may your light come.**

Fourth Candle

This candle represents our courage.
The courage to confront our sorrow,
to comfort one another and to dare to hope,
even when the night seems long and dark.
In silence, we shelter the flame of courage within us,
asking Christ to fan it with the breath of his Spirit.
'In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who
loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels,
nor rulers, nor things present, nor height, nor depth, nor anything
else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God
in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

Romans 8.37-38

Silence is kept.

Lord, into our darkest night
All **may your light come.**

Everyone STANDS.

The Gospel

The Deacon says

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.

John 1.1-5

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All **Praise to you, O Christ.**

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

The Peace

The President says

In the tender mercy of our God,
the dayspring from on high shall break upon us,
to give light to those who dwell in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

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

The Deacon says

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

All may exchange a sign of peace.

Preparation of the Table

The bread and wine are placed on the altar.

The President says

Look upon us in mercy not in judgement;
draw us from hatred to love;
make the frailty of our praise
a dwelling place for your glory.

All **Amen.**

The Eucharistic Prayer

The President says

All The Lord be with you
and also with you.

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

All Let us give thanks to the Lord our God
it is right to give thanks and praise.

It is indeed right and good to give you thanks and praise,
almighty God and everlasting Father,
through Jesus Christ your Son.
He is the one foretold by all the prophets,
whom the Virgin Mother bore with love beyond all telling.
John the Baptist was his herald
and made him known when at last he came.

In his love Christ fills us with joy
as we prepare to celebrate his birth,
so that when he comes again he may find us watching in prayer,
our hearts filled with wonder and praise.

And so, with angels and archangels,
and with all the company of heaven,
we proclaim your glory,
and join in their unending 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.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
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.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice
made once for all upon the cross.
Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Christ is the bread of life.

All **When we eat this bread and drink this cup,
we proclaim your death, Lord Jesus,
until you come in glory.**

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All **Amen.**

Silence is kept.

The Lord's Prayer

Please feel free to say the Lord's Prayer in any language or version you prefer.

The President says

Awaiting the coming of the kingdom,
as our Saviour taught us, so we pray

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.

Breaking of the Bread

The President breaks the consecrated bread, saying

We break this bread
to share in the body of Christ.

All **Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

The Invitation to Communion

The President says

Jesus is the Lamb of God
who takes away the sin of the world.
Blessed are those who are called to his supper.
**Lord, I am not worthy to receive you,
but only say the word, and I shall be healed.**

The Giving of Communion

It is our custom for this part of the service to be a time of quiet reflection. Please wait in your seat to be directed by a churchwarden or steward.

Gluten-free bread is available – please ask the minister.

Those who do not intend to receive Communion, but would prefer to receive a blessing, are asked to carry this booklet as an indication to the ministers.

If you wish to receive prayer for yourself or for others during this time, please go to the area marked by a lit candle on the right-hand side as you face the tapestry.

You may also like to light a candle at one of the stands, either at this point or after the service.

The choir sings

Choir Carol

I wonder as I wander, out under the sky,
how Jesus the Saviour did come for to die
for poor orn'ry people like you and like I:
I wonder as I wander out under the sky.

When Mary birthed Jesus, 'twas in a cow's stall,
with wise men and farmers and shepherds and all.
But high from the heavens a star's light did fall,
and promise of ages it then did recall.

If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing,
a star in the sky, or a bird on the wing,
or all of God's angels in heaven for to sing,
he surely could have it, 'cause he was the King.

*Appalachian traditional carol
arr. Andrew Carter (b. 1939)*

Prayer after Communion

The President invites everyone to say

All **Almighty God,
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness
and to put on the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in which your Son Jesus Christ
came to us in great humility;
that on the last day,
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty
to judge the living and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal;
through him who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.**

The Dismissal

The Deacon says

All throughout these months
as the shadows
have lengthened,
this blessing has been
gathering itself,
making ready,
preparing for
this night.

It has practiced
walking in the dark,
traveling with
its eyes closed,
feeling its way
by memory
by touch
by the pull of the moon
even as it wanes.

So believe me
when I tell you
this blessing will
reach you
even if you
have not light enough
to read it;
it will find you
even though you cannot
see it coming.

You will know
the moment of its
arriving
by your release
of the breath
you have held
so long;
a loosening
of the clenching
in your hands,
of the clutch
around your heart;
a thinning
of the darkness
that had drawn itself
around you.

This blessing
does not mean
to take the night away
but it knows
its hidden roads,
knows the resting spots
along the path,
knows what it means
to travel
in the company
of a friend.

So when
this blessing comes,
take its hand.
Get up.
Set out on the road
you cannot see.

This is the night
when you can trust
that any direction
you go,
you will be walking
toward the dawn.

© Jan Richardson, from janrichardson.com

The President says

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you,
scatter the darkness from before your path,
and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory;

and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All **Amen.**

Carol

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.

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.

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.

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.

Words by Phillips Brooks (1835-1893)

Tune CP 63i Forest Green harmonized by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

Music after the Service

Do stay to enjoy

The Voluntary

In dulci jubilo, BWV 729

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

If you are visiting, or new to us, please introduce yourself to one of the ministers. If you are interested in any aspect of what Christians believe, what we do at Coventry Cathedral, or think we might be able to help you in any way, please ask a minister, or get in touch with us on 024 7652 1200 or via www.coventrycathedral.org.uk.

To make a donation by text message to Coventry Cathedral, please text **COVC155** to donate £5 or **COVC1510** to donate £10 to **70070** today. Charity donation service from UK mobile phones only. Texts cost £5 or £10. Standard message rates may apply. Coventry Cathedral receives 100% of the donation. To discuss the donation, call 02476 521226. UK registered charity number XN75352. We would be grateful if you would wait until the service has finished before texting your donation. Thank you.

Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England,
material from which is included in this service booklet,
is copyright © The Archbishops' Council of the Church of England 2000.

*Other material in this service was prepared originally by
the Reverend Tricia Hillas, Canon Pastor at St Paul's Cathedral.*

Other material is reproduced with permission under CCL 17597.

The generous sponsorship of the Cathedral Choir and Music by the Friends of Coventry Cathedral is about to come to an end. Please contact Christine Doyle (christine.doyle@coventrycathedral.org.uk) if you would like to contribute towards this vital area of our life and work in 2016.

