

ST HILDA'S ASHFORD



CRIB SERVICE

24 DECEMBER 2023

<https://www.facebook.com/StHildaAshford/>

Welcome to this special crib service.

We will tell the Christmas story together, using bible readings from the Youth Bible, carols, actions and prayers.

Gradually, throughout the service, we will create our own special, living nativity scene, here in church, and you can be part of it! Special because we may have more or less characters than the traditional story.

If you have come in costume, please come forward and join our living nativity scene at the appropriate moment. If you would like a costume please speak to Christine (wearing a star crown) and we will find you something.

Also, if you would like to participate by reading one of the bible stories or a prayer please speak to Christine.

If the children are restless or noisy – do not worry Bethlehem would have been chaotic.

We will stand to sing the first carol and the last carol but at other times feel free to stay seated.

The Welcome

We have come together on this Christmas Eve to prepare for our celebration of the birth of God's beloved Son. We have made room in our busy lives to travel in spirit with Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, to sing with the angels of the coming of the Prince of Peace. Through Scripture, action, prayer and song, let us tell again the wonderful story of our redemption, and rejoice and respond with lively faith.

Almighty God
As we prepare with joy
to celebrate the gift of the Christ-child,
embrace the earth with your glory
and be for us a living hope
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen**

The Light of the World

The candles on the Advent wreath are lit.

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, merciful and gentle:
to you be praise and glory for ever.
Your light has shone in our darkened world
through the child-bearing of blessed Mary;
grant that we who have seen your glory
may daily be renewed in your image
and prepared like her for the coming of your Son,
who is the Lord and Saviour of all.

All **Blessed be God for ever.**

First Reading: Isaiah 9 v 2,6 & 7

Before those people lived in darkness, but now they have seen a great light. They lived in a dark land but the light has shone on them.

A child has been born to us; God has given a son to us. He will be responsible for leading the people. His name will be Wonderful Counsellor, Powerful God, Father Who Lives For Ever, Prince of Peace.

Power and peace will be in his kingdom and will continue to grow for ever. He will rule as king on David's throne and over David's kingdom. He will make it strong by ruling with justice and goodness from now on and for ever. The Lord All powerful will do this because of his strong love for his people.

Carol

**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, good will to men,
From Heaven's all gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay,
To hear the angels sing.**

**Yet with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love -song which they bring;
O hush the noise, ye men of strife
And hear the angels sing.**

We confess our sins

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.

Christ came in humility to share our lives:

forgive our pride.

Lord, have mercy.

All Lord, have mercy.

Christ came with good news for all people:

forgive our silence.

Christ, have mercy.

All Christ, have mercy.

Christ came in love to a world of suffering:

Forgive our self-centredness.

Lord, have mercy.

All Lord, have mercy.

May God who loved the world so much that he sent his Son to be our Saviour

forgive us our sins and make us holy to serve him in the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Glory to Christ, Son of Mary;

Born a child, you are one with us.

All Glory to God in the highest.

Glory to Christ, Son of David;

Born to rule, you reign in our hearts.

All Glory to God in the highest.

Glory to Christ, Son of man;

Born to save, you are the light of the world.

All Glory to God in the highest.

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 the dark streets shineth the everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.**

**How silently, how silently, the wondrous Gift is giv'n;
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his Heav'n.
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 on 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!**

Second Reading: Luke 1 v 26-38

During Elizabeth's sixth month of pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin. She was engaged to marry a man named Joseph from the family of David. Her name was Mary. The angel came to her and said, "Greetings! The Lord has blessed you and is with you."

But Mary was very startled by what the angel said and wondered what this greeting might mean.

The angel said to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary; God has shown you his grace. Listen! You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of King David his ancestor. He will rule over the people of Jacob for ever, and his kingdom will never end."

Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen since I am a virgin?"

The angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the most high will cover you. For this reason the baby will be holy and will be called the Son of God. Now Elizabeth, your relative, is also pregnant with a son though she is very old. Everyone thought she could never have a baby, but she has been pregnant for six months, God can do anything!"

Mary said, "I am the servant of the Lord. Let this happen to me as you say!" Then the angel went away.

Carol **During the carol Mary comes forward**

The angel Gabriel from heaven came,
His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame:
"All hail to thee, 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 Christmas morn,
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say:
Most highly favoured lady. *Gloria!*

Stop and Pray 1

Lord Jesus,
Your birth turned the world upside down.
We pray for those facing change,
and coming to terms with unexpected news.
Bless us in the opportunities we are given
and the challenges we face.
In your name we pray. **Amen**

Joseph joins Mary

Third Reading: Matthew 1 v 18-24

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about . His mother Mary was engaged to marry Joseph, but before they married, she learned she was pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. Because Mary's husband Joseph was a good man, he did not want to disgrace her in public, so he planned to divorce her secretly.

While Joseph thought about these things, an angel of the Lord came to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, descendant of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the baby in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All this happened to bring about what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be pregnant. She will have a son, and they will name him Immanuel" which means "God is with us".

When Joseph woke up, he did what the Lord's angel had told him to do. Joseph took Mary as his wife.

Stop and pray 2

Lord Jesus, we pray for all
Who have hard decisions to make,
And hold the lives of others in their hands.
Give them strength to do what is right,
and walk the path you have prepared for them
with courage and hope.
In your name we pray.

All Amen.

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.**

Fourth Reading: Luke 2 v 1 -5

At that time, Augustus Caesar sent an order that all people in the countries under Roman rule must list their names in a register. This was the first registration; it was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to their own towns to be registered.

So Joseph left Nazareth, a town in Galilee, and went to the town of Bethlehem in Judea, known as the town of David. Joseph went there because he was from the family of David. Joseph registered with Mary; to whom he was engaged and who was now pregnant.

The Donkey comes forward and joins Mary and Joseph

Carol

**Little donkey, little donkey,
On the dusty road,
Gotta keep on plodding onward
With your precious load.**

**Been a long time little donkey,
Through the winter's night;
Don't give up now little donkey:
Bethlehem's in sight**

***Ring out those bells tonight,
Bethlehem, Bethlehem
Follow that star tonight,
Bethlehem, Bethlehem***

***Little donkey, little donkey,
Had a heavy day.
Little donkey, carry Mary safely on her way;***

**Little donkey, little donkey,
Journey's end is near
There are wise men waiting for a
Sign to bring them here.**

**Do not falter, little donkey,
There's a star ahead.
It will guide you, little donkey,
To a cattle shed.**

***Ring out those bells tonight,
Bethlehem, Bethlehem
Follow that star tonight,
Bethlehem, Bethlehem***

***Little donkey, little donkey,
Had a heavy day.***

Little donkey, carry Mary safely on her way;

[Eric Boswell © 1959 & 2000 Warner/Chappell Music Ltd]

Stop and Pray 3

Lord Jesus,
we pray for those who cannot stop,
whose journey of life is hard and long,
who have heavy burdens to carry.
Give strength for each next step,
And light to show the way.
In your name we pray.

All Amen.

Jesus is born.

Fifth Reading: Luke 2 v 6-7

While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to have the baby, and she gave birth to her first son. Because there were no rooms left in the inn, she wrapped the baby with pieces of cloth and laid him in a box where the animals are fed.

Carol

**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.**

Stop and Pray 4

Lord Jesus,
your birth at Bethlehem
draws us to kneel in wonder
at heaven touching earth.
Accept our heartfelt praise
as we worship you,
our Saviour and Eternal God.

All Amen

Sixth Reading: Luke 2 v 8 -14

That night some shepherds were in the fields nearby watching their sheep. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them. The glory of the Lord was shining around them, and they became very frightened. The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I am bringing you good news that will be a great joy to all the people. Today your Saviour was born in the town of David. He is Christ the Lord. This is how you will know him: you will find a baby wrapped in pieces of cloth and lying in a feeding box."

Then a very large group of angels from heaven joined the first angel, praising God and saying: "Give glory to God in heaven and on earth let there be peace among the people who please God."

Angels come forward.

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 th'angelic host proclaim,
Christ is born in Bethlehem!"**

***Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"***

Stop and Pray 5

Lord Jesus,
the angels were glad
to share the good news of your birth.
Help us to tell the world the good news
that you are still with us,
and will never leave us.
In your name we pray.

All Amen.

Seventh Reading: Luke 2 v 15 -20

When the angels left them and went back to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem. Let's see this thing that has happened which the Lord has told us about".

So the shepherds went quickly and found Mary and Joseph and the baby, who was lying in a feeding box. When they had seen him, they told what the angels had said about this child. Everyone was amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured these things and continued to think about them. Then the shepherds went back to their sheep, praising God and thanking him for everything they had seen and heard. It was just as the angel had told them.

Shepherds come forward

Carol

**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 all mankind.**

Stop and Pray 6

Lord Jesus,
you came in the silence of the night,
an extraordinary gift to ordinary people.
Help us to see the wonderful things you are doing
in the ordinary experiences of our lives.
In your name we pray.

All Amen.

Eighth Reading: Matthew 2 v 1 -12

Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea during the time when Herod was king. When Jesus was born, some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem. They asked “Where is the baby who was born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him”

When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, as were as all the people in Jerusalem. Herod called a meeting of all the leading priests and teachers of the law and asked them where the Christ would be born. They answered, “In the town of Bethlehem in Judea. The prophet wrote about this in the Scriptures: “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are important among the tribes of Judah. A ruler will come from you who will be like a shepherd for my people Israel”.

Then Herod had a secret meeting with the wise men and learned from them the exact time they first saw the star.

He sent the wise men to Bethlehem, saying, “Look carefully for the child. When you find him, come and tell me so I can worship him too.”

After the wise men heard the King, they left. The star that they had seen in the east went before them until it stopped above the place where the child was. When the wise men saw the star they were filled with joy. They came to the house where the child was and saw with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. They opened their gifts and gave him treasures of gold, frankincense and myrrh. But God warned the wise men in a dream not to go back to Herod, so they returned to their own country by a different way.

The Wise Men (Magi) and camels come forward.

Carol

**We three kings of Orient are;
Bearing gifts we Traverse afar,
Field and fountain, moor and mountain,
Following yonder star.**

*O star of wonder, star of light,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light.*

Stop and Pray 7

The kings, Lord,
Brought myrrh, frankincense and gold.
Lord, we have nothing of our own to bring;
We bring you what you have given
our lives for your life. **Amen.**

Carol

**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.**

**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.**

**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 fit us for heaven, to live with thee there.**

[Anonymous]

Stop and Pray 8

We have shared in the wonderful story of Mary and Joseph, of the Angels, the Shepherds and the Magi, and of Jesus himself: God with us. This Christmas, in the midst of our busy lives, we are invited to make room for the manger, and kneel in wonder at the miracle of heaven touching earth.

Rejoicing in the presence of God here among us, let us pray with confidence as Jesus himself 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.

Carol

See him lying on a bed of straw:
A draughty stable with an open door;
Mary cradling the babe she bore -
The Prince of Glory is his name.
*O now carry me to Bethlehem
To see the Lord appear to men -
Just as poor as was the stable then,
The Prince of Glory when he came.*

Star of silver, sweep across the skies,
Show where Jesus in the manger lies;
Shepherds, swiftly from your stupor rise
To see the Saviour of the world!

chorus

Angels, sing again the song you sang,
Bring God's glory to the heart of man;
Sing that Beth'lem's little baby can
Be salvation to the soul.

chorus

**Mine are riches, from your poverty;
From your innocence, eternity;
Mine, forgiveness by your death for me,
Child of sorrow for my joy.**

***O now carry me to Bethlehem
To see the Lord appear to men -
Just as poor as was the stable then,
The Prince of Glory when he came.***

*[© Words: 1965 Michael Perry - The Jubilate Group (Admin. by Jubilate Hymns Ltd, sub to Hope Publishing for various regions)
Music: 1965 Michael Perry - The Jubilate Group (Admin. by Jubilate Hymns Ltd, sub to Hope Publishing for various regions)]*

Blessing

May the joy of the angels,
the eagerness of the shepherds,
the perseverance of the wise men,
the obedience of Joseph and Mary,
and the peace of the Christ-child
be yours this Christmas;
and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
be among you and remain with you always.

All Amen.

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SERVICE TIMES

This evening 11pm - Midnight Mass
Christmas Day 10am - Christmas Eucharist
Sunday 31st December 10am - Eucharist

The Sunday morning service is livestreamed and can be viewed later our Facebook page Following the teaching of 'Loving thy Neighbour' - If you feel unwell, we ask that you do not attend church in person so that we can maintain the health and safety of all who attend the services: the Sunday morning service is livestreamed and can also be viewed later our Facebook page.

Please remember in your prayers this week:

THE SICK:

Michael Brown	Melvyn Jansen	David
Lizio Cassar	Pat Kyle	Elaine
Ros Clifton	Finley Makriel	Rachel
Saffi Cobham	Ray Nation	Solange
Joan Davies	Lena Richardson	

If you would like a name added to or removed from the prayer list, please contact the Parish Office. If you know of someone ill or in hospital in need of prayer and support please tell our LLM Rosalyn Young (contact details on back cover).

THE RECENTLY DEPARTED

Peter Garner

THOSE IN OUR MEMORIAL BOOK THIS WEEK

Alexander Milton	Isobel Johnson	Dorothy Madeline Smith
Louie Maud Batchelor	Alfred George Barnes	Leonard Lambert
Edward George Clayton	Elsie Goodbarne	Eva Frances Voysey
Herbert Salter	Verna Rose Bembridge	Brenda Eaglestone

Please pray for our ALMA twin Parish, Holy Cross Murrupula

NOTICES

***** No Community Lunch this week *****

Please note that there will be no Community Lunch this week.
They will resume at noon on Wednesday 3rd January 2024.

Can EVERYONE help us with January's Messy Church?

At the back of church is a small Jar and a box of small strips of coloured paper. Could you sign your CHRISTIAN name on one slip of paper and put it in the jar. Ideally we would like every member of the congregation including little people to take part.

*** No Bible Study Group this week - next meeting 3rd January ***

We meet in Church on most Wednesday evenings at 7.30pm.
We are currently using an Advent-to Epiphany course: you are very welcome to come and join us even if for just one session.

Ambling through Acts course –Thursday 4th January

(7:30pm on the first Thursday of each month)

Everyone is very welcome to attend. There will be refreshments at the end. We finish by saying Compline (Night Prayer) together round about 9pm. I hope to see you there. Please bring a bible – ideally the NRSV, but any version will do.

Mothers' Union Lunch - Tuesday 9th January at 12.15pm

St Hilda's Newsletter

The latest issue of the Newsletter is available via the St. Hilda's web site (under "About Us"). We put a few printed copies at the back of church: please leave these for people without internet access and for visitors.

Contributions have been so few that we will be producing this every two months instead of monthly, and unless more people provide material the Newsletter will end.

This is your magazine -if you want it to continue, start writing!

The deadline for items for the **February/March** issue is **Sunday 7th**

January 2024. Please send your contributions to: editor@sthilda.org

Help Wanted

The team serving refreshments after Sunday services would appreciate more help. If you can volunteer please speak to Valerie Scott or Paula.

The cleaning team would also appreciate more help: they usually work on Thursday mornings at 10.30am. If you can spare about an hour every week or two, or occasionally, please speak to Rosemary Greenwood or Chris Holliday.

The Parish Office is available by phone or email.

Any appointments in person must be booked.

Our parish administrator is Laura Goodman. Her office hours are:

Monday:	3.30-5pm
Wednesday:	3.30-6.30pm
Thursday	6.30-9.30pm
Saturday:	9.45-11.15am

Covid Precautions

As Covid infections are increasing again, the PCC would like to remind you that masks and bottles of hand sanitizer are available at the back of church if you wish to use them.

During the Peace, please be considerate to those who feel vulnerable and only shake hands with people who are happy with the contact.

Praying for peace in Israel and Gaza

Bishop Sarah encourages us to join in with Archbishop Hosam Naoum of Jerusalem, who has offered the following prayer:

O God of all justice and peace, we cry out to you in the midst of the pain and trauma of violence and fear which prevails in the Holy Land.

Be with those who need you in these days of suffering; we pray for people of all faiths – Jews, Muslims and Christians and for all people of the land.

While we pray to you, O Lord, for an end to violence and the establishment of peace, we also call for you to bring justice and equity to the peoples. Guide us into your kingdom where all people are treated with dignity and honour as your children – for to all of us you are our Heavenly Father.

In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen

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