

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT



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20th December 2020



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INTRODUCTION

Hello and welcome to carols by candlelight from Bowthorpe Church. My name is Rev. Mark Elvin.



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This has been a difficult year for many people across the world, and this Christmas may well be different from any other. So, we pray that through the carols and readings you will gain some hope

for the days ahead, and that you will come close to God today as you prepare for Christmas. Let's prepare our hearts to come close to God as we sing together, O come all ye faithful.



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O COME ALL YE
FAITHFUL



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We begin with some words from the prophet Isaiah, who seven centuries before the coming of Christ, said: `For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his



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shoulders. And he will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty
God, Everlasting Father, Prince
of Peace. Of the increase of his
government and peace there
will be no end' (Isaiah 9:6-7).



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Let's pray.

God our Father, as we recall the story of that first Christmas, may we draw close to you and know your peace in our lives. In these dark and difficult times, may we



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come into the light and peace
of your presence; through
Christ our Lord and Saviour.
Amen.

JOY TO THE WORLD



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Eight hundred years after Isaiah spoke his words, a young unmarried girl received an unexpected visitor. Luke's gospel tells us what happened.

`God sent the angel Gabriel to a virgin who lived in Nazareth, a town in Galilee. She was engaged to marry a man named Joseph from the family of David. Her name was Mary.



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The angel came to her and said,
“Greetings! The Lord has blessed
you and is with you.” But Mary
was very confused by what the
angel said. Mary wondered,
“What does this mean?”

The angel said to her, “Don’t be afraid, Mary, because God is pleased with you. Listen! You will become pregnant. You will give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus.



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He will be great, and people will call him 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. His kingdom will never end.”



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Mary said to the angel, “How will this happen? 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.”

The baby will be holy. He will be called the Son of God. Now listen! Elizabeth, your relative, is very old. But she is pregnant with a son. Everyone thought she could not have a baby, but she



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has been pregnant for six months. For nothing is impossible with God!” Mary said, “I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said!” Then the angel went away.



If the angel's words were true, then Mary faced a serious situation. An unmarried woman becoming pregnant was in danger of being stoned to death. The 'good news' that the angel



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spoke about may not seem such good news for this young girl. Despite being greatly troubled, Mary accepted the angel's words and remained obedient.

ANGELS FROM THE REALMS OF GLORY



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INTERVIEW WITH HELEN BLAKE



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Only the strongest confidence in God could sustain Mary through such an ordeal. Many people have been going through an ordeal this year. To help people in need, the Church set up a food parcel scheme in March.



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This community group is now known as Connecting Bowthorpe, and is staffed by a group of volunteers who distribute food to those in need locally. With me is Helen, one of the volunteers.



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Q. Helen, do tell us why you are part of this food scheme.

Q. How many families are you currently helping? (How many parcels have gone out since March?)



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Q. What are your hopes for people this Christmas and into the New Year?

Q. Do you have a carol you'd like to hear today?

IN THE BLEAK MIDWINTER



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LUKE 2: 1 - 7

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while



Quirinius was governor of Syria.)³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town



of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time



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came for the baby to be born,⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.



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The dramatic impact of the birth of the Saviour of the world is understated in Luke's gospel with the simple phrase: "she gave birth to her firstborn, a son." The birth of Mary's child was hardly

noticed. But God was not silent on this most holy night. Over distant fields, the night sky burst into light as the good news of Christ's birth was announced by the angel of the Lord.



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IT WAS A STARRY NIGHT



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The first to receive the good news about the birth of God's Son were simple shepherds. Shepherds were some of the lowest members of society, considered untrustworthy. Yet it is to such people that God

first brings the news of the
Messiah's birth.



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LUKE 2: 8 - 18

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord

shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town



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he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,



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“Glory to God in the highest, and
on earth peace to those on whom
his favour rests.”

When the angels had left them and
gone into heaven, the shepherds

said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing which has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.



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When they had seen him, they told everyone what had been told to them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.



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The angel announced the good news to lowly shepherds. Like a dam bursting open, a whole company of heaven's angels burst into song, praising God. Let us do the same as we sing the calypso carol 'See him lying on a bed of straw'.



**SEE HIM LYING ON
A BED OF STRAW**



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Matthew's gospel records for us that Magi from the East came looking for the new-born king. Like us, they too had come to worship King Jesus. We hear their story now.

MATTHEW 2: 1 – 12



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After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi[a] from the east came to Jerusalem 2 and asked, ‘Where is the one who has been born king of



the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.' 3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 When he had called together all the people's

chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 'In Bethlehem in Judea,' they replied, 'for this is what the prophet has written:



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6 “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them



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the exact time the star had appeared. 8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.'



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9 After they had heard the king,
they went on their way, and the star
they had seen when it rose went
ahead of them until it stopped over
the place where the child was. 10
When they saw the star, they were

overjoyed. | | On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.



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12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.



WHAT WILL
CHRISTMAS MEAN TO
YOU THIS YEAR?



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WE THREE KINGS





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PRAYER

Loving God, we thank you that you gave your Son Jesus as a gift for us all, to connect us to you. We thank you for Christmas when we celebrate his birth. Will you come



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and bring us your gift of hope
at this time. Lord Jesus, come
into our lives. **Amen.**



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O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM



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PRAYERS

Lord, your word says you are Immanuel – God with us. This Christmas we pray for all who feel isolated and alone, and for those who feel they don't matter.



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May they discover the truth
that your love is able to break
through the isolation. We pray
for families who will be apart.

Lord, your word says you came to bring hope to a troubled world. This Christmas we pray for all who are working, especially those working hard to keep us safe. We pray for those



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who cannot work because of ill-health, and for those who have lost their jobs because of the coronavirus.



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Lord, your word says you came
to bring good news to the poor.
This Christmas we pray for all
who are reliant on food banks
and voluntary donations.



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We pray for teams like
Connecting Bowthorpe and for
the wonderful work they are
doing through these difficult days.
We pray that one day we may live
in a world where all have dignity
and hope.



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Lord, your word says that you came to proclaim freedom for prisoners. This Christmas we pray for all who are in prison, who are struggling with boredom, guilt and fear. We pray for political prisoners and those imprisoned for their faith



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May they have hope this
Christmas that they are not
alone. We pray that all prisoners
may discover the freedom that
is found in Jesus.



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Lord, your word says you came to bind up the broken-hearted. This Christmas we pray for all who have lost loved ones and who are grieving. Give them strength to cope with the difficulty and pain of grief.



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preparing a place with you for
those who love you. So, help us
not to be afraid but to place
our trust in you now and
always. **Amen.**



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THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.



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**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.**



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HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING



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CLOSING PRAYER

Loving God, you came among us in your Son Jesus on that first Christmas. Be with each one of us this coming Christmas and in the coming year ahead. In Jesus' name. Amen.



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BLESSING

And now may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and all whom you love, now and for evermore. Amen.

Happy Christmas

