

LANGBANK CHURCH
Sunday 27 December 2020
Service of Readings and Carols



WELCOME

Happy Christmas everyone and welcome to our Service of Readings and Carols. Where the Carols are well-known, so no lyrics are given here. Apart from the first, from John 1, all Readings* represent the main Nativity characters, and were brought to life in church by Liz Hopkins and David Steele.

LIGHTING OF 5TH CANDLE

Today, on the fifth Sunday of Advent,
we light a candle for JESUS
the Babe of Bethlehem.

George lights the middle candle

We come to the Manger:
not because we should
but because we must:

We come with curious shepherds,
and with the heavenly host
to see this thing which has come to pass
Emmanuel – God with us.

CAROL

O come, all ye faithful

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kRq8eywc57I>

READING: John 1: 1-14

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.



There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

CAROL What child is this?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AUYM9dekWQ>

READING 'Mary'

read by Liz Hopkins

Your eyes are open now.
Those eyes which will open
the eyes of others.
You study my face
and, just for the moment,
though you came for the world,
you are mine and mine alone.
I made you and you made me
and we gaze at each other
in equal wonderment.



Your eyes are open now, and so dark bright...
sent from a night full of stars –
that I could watch you forever,
watch your chest rise and fall
as you breathe the cattle-soaked air.
I would like this moment to last forever,
you are so wonderful to me,
so truly wonderful as you are.

But not my will, Lord,
but yours be done.
I must hand you over
for the world cries out for you,
though I cry out to let you go.
Just for tonight
let the future
leave us in peace.
Close your eyes baby.
Close your bright eyes
on the dusty darkness
of the world.
There is majesty in you
but for now let it hide,
let it hide like a gem
while you sleep.

CAROL **Away in a manger**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9CJFt7BZKUU>

READING **'Joseph'**

My arm around your back
was all that I could offer as support,
as each unravelling chapter came.

read by David Steele



My arm around your back was there
when you first heard the news
that heaven dwelt in you,
and words fled faster from me
than response.

My arm around your back was all that I could offer you
to reassure you that I would never desert.

My arm around your back
was all that I could offer as support
on Bethlehem's weary road,
as the journey wound round path and street
and doors closed swiftly in our faces.

As the child emerged in an open barn,
my arm around your back
was all I had to help you through.
To be a leaning post
it seemed was all that I could do
to show I struggled with you
in the birth.

It doesn't seem enough for one
who's destined to endure so much.
I should have words and eloquence or
money, land and powers of protection
that would buffer you
against the harshness of the world.

But all that I can offer is my arm around your back.
Its strength will never be enough to show
the strength of love that holds me to your side.
But ready still to comfort, steady and to reassure
my arm around your back, if needed, will be there.

CAROL

It was on a starry night

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tWKMc4vwCU0>

READING**'Shepherd'***read by David Steele*

Until tonight
I could not fit the size of God
into my head.
I thought he was a God
for prophets and kings,
men of words and wisdom.
But tonight I am looking at God made small,
small enough for me,
small enough to pick up
and hold like a lamb.



I could not talk to a God in the clouds;
but tonight when I look and smile
and talk nonsense to this tiny thing,
And it is God who smiles back at me
and waves his perfect hands in delight.

And tonight in your smallness, God,
you seem bigger and more powerful to me
than you ever did before.
I can hold you now,
hold you in my head
and hold you in my arms,
and know that you are holding me in yours.

CAROL**See him lying on a bed of straw**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1UI5Ko34XQ>

How old were the angels?

About five years old,
appearing on stage,
blinking in the bright lights
with a tinsel halo askew.

But how old were those
in the Gospel story the children were
telling,
the angels that appeared
to Mary and then to Joseph and then
to the shepherds in the fields?

As old as the hills, and as here-and-now
as human hopes and fears.
What's more, those angels were frightening,
warriors with flaming swords,
not mixed infants with mums looking on:
that's why their first words were, *'Do not be afraid'*.

But how old were they?

Who can tell?
Angels exist in God's time,
not according to our clocks and calendars.
They see eternity in the blink of an eye.

More to the point, how old
were hands that held the newborn child,
faces on which those wide-open eyes focused,
voices which gave a blessing?
Simeon and Anna were rich in years,
who had waited so long to see their Lord,
who sang his praises and announced salvation.

How old were these angels?
About the age of many who sit in our pews:
as old as wisdom, as young as hope.



PRAYERS FOR OTHERS AND FOR OURSELVES

Let us pray

Loving God,
We thank you for your great goodness to us.
For you came to our world
 in the body of a tiny baby
 so that we might get to know you better.

You loved us so much that you staked everything
 to break down the barriers that keep us from you.
You became like us
 that we might become like you
 and know life in all its fullness.

Yet, your Peace is not yet a reality throughout your world...
 and so, we pray for people everywhere
 who carry the horrifying burden of war and civil disorder....
 ... the injured, the bereaved, the homeless and the hungry.

We pray for those who run, and those who use
 the Glasgow Mission Foodbank
 and for the children we support through Compassion UK.

We pray for people hurting from unsafe relationships
 and for those suffering mental health problems,
 whatever the cause.

We pray this week for the lorry drivers
 who have spent Christmas in the lorry park in Kent,
 unable to get home to their families.

We pray, too, for those caught in Storm Bella,
 and whose houses were flooded on Christmas Day.

And we pray for all who have been in hospital this Christmas.

Lord,

On this last Sunday of the year,
we remember all who
died as a result of Coronavirus
– those we never knew
and those who were close to us.

We thank you for the thousands
who have put themselves on the line
to help others this year,
in so many ways throughout the pandemic
and continue to do so.

As we face another strain of the virus,
we ask you to guard us
- and inspire us to guard others.

Give us confidence that one day this pandemic will end
and the strength to move forwards from that time.

Lord Jesus,

In our own part of the world
bring help and healing
- to those who are sick or weak
- to any who are separated from loved ones
- the depressed and the lonely
and to all who grieve the death of a loved one.

We place before you now quietly
any person or any situation in our lives
which needs your help today.....

[pause]

As we dedicate our Offerings to you
we also dedicate ourselves
to your service in the year ahead
knowing that wherever we are
and however we feel, you are with us.....

and we pray now together now in the words you taught us, saying,

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil
For thine is the kingdom, the power,
and the glory, for ever. *Amen*

CAROL **Hark! the herald angels sing**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDPwNPAV6tA>

BENEDICTION

**The JOY of the angels
the HUMILITY of the shepherds
and the PEACE of the Christ-child
be GOD'S GIFT to you this Christmas
And the blessing of God Almighty
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be with you all
now and evermore, *Amen***

