

Choral Evensong

Sunday, 14th December, 2025

The Third Sunday in Advent



Welcome to this service of Choral Evensong, led by the Very Reverend John Witcombe, Dean of Coventry. The Reverend Gillian Roberts is preaching. The Chamber Choir is directed by Liam Condon, Assistant Director of Music, and the organist is Adam Heron, Organ Scholar. The responses are those by Thomas Tallis (1505-1585).

Introit

People, look east. The time is near
Of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able,
Trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the guest, is on the way.

Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,
One more seed is planted there:
Give up your strength the seed to nourish,
That in course the flower may flourish.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the rose, is on the way.

Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim
One more light the bowl shall brim,
Shining beyond the frosty weather,
Bright as sun and moon together.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the star, is on the way.

Angels, announce with shouts of mirth
Christ who brings new life to earth.
Set every peak and valley humming
With the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the Lord, is on the way.

*Words from a traditional French carol
Music by Martin Shaw (1875-1958)*

Psalm 12

1. Help me, Lord, for there is not one godly man left ♦
for the faithful are minished from among the children of men,
2. They talk of vanity every one with his neighbour ♦
they do but flatter with their lips, and dissemble in their double heart.
3. The Lord shall root out all deceitful lips ♦
and the tongue that speaketh proud things;
4. Which have said, With our tongue will we prevail ♦
we are they that ought to speak , who is lord over us?
5. Now for the comfortless trouble's sake of the needy ♦
and because of the deep sighing of the poor,
6. I will up, saith the Lord ♦
and will help every one from him that swelleth against him, and will set
him at rest.
7. The words of the Lord are pure words ♦
even as the silver, which from the earth is tried, and purified seven
times in the fire.
8. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord ♦
thou shalt preserve him from this generation for ever.
9. The ungodly walk on every side ♦
when they are exalted, the children of men are put to rebuke.

The First Lesson

- ⁸ Ah, you who join house to house,
who add field to field,
until there is room for no one but you,
and you are left to live alone
in the midst of the land!
- ⁹ The LORD of hosts has sworn in my hearing:
Surely many houses shall be desolate,
large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant.
- ¹⁰ For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath,
and a homer of seed shall yield a mere ephah.
- ¹¹ Ah, you who rise early in the morning
in pursuit of strong drink,
who linger in the evening

to be inflamed by wine,
12 whose feasts consist of lyre and harp,
tambourine and flute and wine,
but who do not regard the deeds of the LORD,
or see the work of his hands!
13 Therefore my people go into exile without knowledge;
their nobles are dying of hunger,
and their multitude is parched with thirst.
14 Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite
and opened its mouth beyond measure;
the nobility of Jerusalem* and her multitude go down,
her throng and all who exult in her.
15 People are bowed down, everyone is brought low,
and the eyes of the haughty are humbled.
16 But the LORD of hosts is exalted by justice,
and the Holy God shows himself holy by righteousness.
17 Then the lambs shall graze as in their pasture,
fatlings and kids shall feed among the ruins.
18 Ah, you who drag iniquity along with cords of falsehood,
who drag sin along as with cart-ropes,
19 who say, 'Let him make haste,
let him speed his work
that we may see it;
let the plan of the Holy One of Israel hasten to fulfilment,
that we may know it!'
20 Ah, you who call evil good
and good evil,
who put darkness for light
and light for darkness,
who put bitter for sweet
and sweet for bitter!
21 Ah, you who are wise in your own eyes,
and shrewd in your own sight!
22 Ah, you who are heroes in drinking wine
and valiant at mixing drink,
23 who acquit the guilty for a bribe,
and deprive the innocent of their rights!

²⁴ Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble,
and as dry grass sinks down in the flame,
so their root will become rotten,
and their blossom go up like dust;
for they have rejected the instruction of the LORD of hosts,
and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

²⁵ Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against his people,
and he stretched out his hand against them and struck them;
the mountains quaked,
and their corpses were like refuse
in the streets.

For all this his anger has not turned away,
and his hand is stretched out still.

²⁶ He will raise a signal for a nation far away,
and whistle for a people at the ends of the earth;
Here they come, swiftly, speedily!

²⁷ None of them is weary, none stumbles,
none slumbers or sleeps,
not a loincloth is loose,
not a sandal-thong broken;

²⁸ their arrows are sharp,
all their bows bent,
their horses' hoofs seem like flint,
and their wheels like the whirlwind.

²⁹ Their roaring is like a lion,
like young lions they roar;
they growl and seize their prey,
they carry it off, and no one can rescue.

³⁰ They will roar over it on that day,
like the roaring of the sea.
And if one looks to the land—
only darkness and distress;
and the light grows dark with clouds.

Isaiah 5:8-End

The Magnificat

Evening Service in G by Herbert Sumsion (1899-1995)

The Second Lesson

¹³ Then Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. John, however, left them and returned to Jerusalem; ¹⁴but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵After the reading of the law and the prophets, the officials of the synagogue sent them a message, saying, ‘Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, give it.’ ¹⁶So Paul stood up and with a gesture began to speak: ‘You Israelites, and others who fear God, listen. ¹⁷The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. ¹⁸For about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. ¹⁹After he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance ²⁰for about four hundred and fifty years. After that he gave them judges until the time of the prophet Samuel. ²¹Then they asked for a king; and God gave them Saul son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, who reigned for forty years. ²²When he had removed him, he made David their king. In his testimony about him he said, “I have found David, son of Jesse, to be a man after my heart, who will carry out all my wishes.” ²³Of this man’s posterity God has brought to Israel a Saviour, Jesus, as he promised; ²⁴before his coming John had already proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. ²⁵And as John was finishing his work, he said, “What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but one is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of the sandals on his feet.” ²⁶ ‘My brothers, you descendants of Abraham’s family, and others who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent. ²⁷Because the residents of Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize him or understand the words of the prophets that are read every sabbath, they fulfilled those words by condemning him. ²⁸Even though they found no cause for a sentence of death, they asked Pilate to have him killed. ²⁹When they had carried out everything that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰But God raised him from the dead; ³¹and for many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, and they are

now his witnesses to the people. ³²And we bring you the good news that what God promised to our ancestors ³³he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.”

³⁴As to his raising him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way,

“I will give you the holy promises made to David.”

³⁵Therefore he has also said in another psalm,

“You will not let your Holy One experience corruption.”

³⁶For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, died, was laid beside his ancestors, and experienced corruption; ³⁷but he whom God raised up experienced no corruption. ³⁸Let it be known to you therefore, my brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you; ³⁹by this Jesus everyone who believes is set free from all those sins from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. ⁴⁰Beware, therefore, that what the prophets said does not happen to you:

⁴¹“Look, you scoffers!

Be amazed and perish,
for in your days I am doing a work,
a work that you will never believe, even if someone tells you.” ’

Acts 13:13-41

The Nunc Dimittis

Evening Service in G by Herbert Sumsion (1899-1995)

The Collect

O Lord Jesu Christ, who at thy first coming didst send thy messenger to prepare thy way before thee: Grant that the ministers and stewards of thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at thy second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in thy sight, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Anthem

A tender shoot has started
up from a root of grace,
as ancient seers imparted
from Jesse's holy race;
It blooms without a blight,
blooms in the cold bleak winter
turning our darkness into light.

This shoot, Isaiah taught us,
from Jesse's root should spring;
the Vrigin Mary brought us
the branch of which we sing:
our God of endless might
gave her this child to save us,
thus turning darkness into light.

*Words by Otto Goldschmidt
translated by W Bartholomew
Music by Otto Goldschmidt (1829-1907)*

The Sermon

Given by the Reverend Gillian Roberts.

Hymn

**God, that madest earth and heaven,
darkness and light;
who the day for toil hast given,
for rest the night;
may thine angel-guards defend us,
slumber sweet thy mercy send us,
holy dreams and hopes attend us,
this livelong night.**

**Guard us waking, guard us sleeping,
and, when we die,
may we in thy mighty keeping
all peaceful lie:
when the last dread call shall wake us,
do not thou our God forsake us,
but to reign in glory take us
with thee on high.**

*Words by Reginald Heber (1783-1826) and Richard Whately (1787-1863)
Tune CP 15 Ar Hyd Y Nos Welsh traditional melody*

Voluntary

*Please do stay for the organ voluntary, played by Adam Heron.
Variations on the Coventry Carol by Adam Heron (1998-)*

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DAILY SERVICES AT THE CATHEDRAL

Regular services at the Cathedral follow this pattern. For special services and up-to-date information about one-off cancellations of the services below, please check the calendar on the Cathedral website:
<https://www.coventrycathedral.org.uk/full-calendar>

Monday - Friday

8:30 – 9:00am: *Morning Prayer & Holy Communion*

12 – 12:10pm: *The Litany of Reconciliation*

(followed on Thursdays by BCP Holy Communion)

4 – 4:30pm: *Evening Prayer*

(or Wednesday and Thursday during school terms: *Choral Evensong, 5:15 - 6pm*)

Saturday

12 – 12:10pm: *The Litany of Reconciliation*

Sunday

10:30 – 11:45am: *The Cathedral Eucharist*

4 – 5pm: *BCP Evening Prayer (Choral Evensong during term time)*

JOINING OUR CHOIRS

Do you know a child who loves to sing? Boys and girls between the ages of 7 and 10 are welcome to audition for the Cathedral Boys' and Girls' Choirs. They sing an average of four times per week during term time in recordings, services and concerts. Children receive a world-class music education completely free and even receive scholarship payments. Please get in touch with the Director of

Music to learn more:

rachel.mahon@coventrycathedral.org.uk

SAFEGUARDING AT COVENTRY CATHEDRAL

We are committed to the safeguarding of all people. For details, please visit www.coventrycathedral.org.uk/about-us/safeguarding

You can report a concern using the same link or by contacting Jane Williams, Cathedral Safeguarding Officer, calling 024 7650 2349 or by emailing janeMLWill@aol.com

Alternatively, you can contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team led by Sarah Price: 024 7652 1345 or safeguarding@coventry.anglican.org

COMMUNITY NEWS

Advent and Christmas Services

Please visit our Cathedral website for the upcoming Advent and Christmas services and events.

Please take a copy of the Christmas program on the community table or visit the Cathedral website. www.coventrycathedral.org.uk/christmas

Rest In Peace

We remember with gratitude those connected to the Cathedral who have died in recent days.

We give thanks for Geoffrey Holroyde, a founding member of the Cathedral Chapterhouse Choir for former robed choristers; for Debbie Colby, a cherished member of the Wonder community; and for Folasade Adaoye, mother of the Revd Modupe Adeoye, formerly of this Cathedral community, now serving in Nuneaton.

Please hold their families and friends in your prayers. The funeral for Folasade Adaoye will take place here on *Monday 15 December at 11am*. May they rest in the peace and kindness of God.

COMING SOON

Blue Christmas

TODAY - Sunday, 14 December at 6pm, Lady Chapel

It can be hard to feel joyful at Christmas. Join us for this service formed with care for those who find this time of year difficult, and those who wish to pray for them.

Britten's Ceremony of Carols

Thursday, 18 December, 5.30pm

The Cathedral Girls' Choir and Harpist Cecily Beer perform Benjamin Britten's much-loved Christmas gem, weaving Christmas texts to memorable music that will remain in your ears and your heart throughout the Christmas Season.

Composed in 1942, this is a twenty-minute, eleven-movement work scored for 3-part treble choir, soloists and harp. The words, from The English Galaxy of Shorter Poems, are in Latin and Middle English.

This meditative performance begins at 5:30pm.

Tickets £10 (Under 16s free) can be purchased on the cathedral website.

The Snowman

Saturday, 20 December, Various shows.

With a live Orchestra and a solo from the Cathedral's Choristers, this magical screening with live performance will be an experience that can't be missed.

The Snowman was first shown in the UK on 26 December 1982 and has since been shown every year on Channel 4; it has also delighted audiences across the world.

In keeping with the book, the film of *The Snowman* is wordless and free of dialogue, except for the now iconic, "Walking in the Air" which features as part of a now timeless musical score.

Book your tickets now and help us fill the Cathedral with joy and wonderment this Christmas!

Carols by Candlelight

Sunday, 21 December at 5pm

Our traditional carol service lit by hundreds of candles in the Cathedral. A chance to sing your favourite carols and hear stunning singing from the Cathedral Choirs with a sequence of Christmas readings.

La Nativité du Seigneur – Messiaen

Monday, 22 December at 5pm

Richard Lea will perform one of the greatest organ works of all time, Olivier Messiaen's festive masterpiece *La Nativité du Seigneur*. The work features 9 movements that meditate on the mystery of Christ's birth and these will be interspersed with reflective readings.

Carols for Families

Wednesday, 24 December at 2.30pm

A fun, interactive retelling of the Christmas story with singalong carols. A lighter take on Christmas, children are welcome to come dressed as nativity characters and everyone is welcome!

Form of A Servant

Wednesday, 24 December at 7pm

The Cathedral's unique reflection on the Christmas story with peace at its heart, a sequence of moving music, readings and prayers.