

# THE BENEFICE of WITNEY



St Mary  
the Virgin  
Witney

St John  
the Baptist  
Curbridge

St John  
the Evangelist  
Halsey

Holy Trinity  
Woodgreen  
Witney

St Kenelm  
Minster Lovell

Called to be a community of mercy and kindness



## **Benefice Advent Carol Service**

Advent Sunday

**Sunday 1st December 2024**

**6.00pm**

## **A Service of Music and Readings for Advent**

Welcome to this service of music and readings for Advent.

Advent is a season consisting of just under a month of restrained and prayerful preparation for the joy and jubilation of Christmas. But above all, it is a time to contemplate 'Emmanuel' ('God with us'). In our readings, music and prayers we try – in some small way – to encapsulate that most profound of all mysteries: **that God became a human being.**

Our service tonight has within it two of the great 'O' Antiphons. These originate from the monastic office of the Middle Ages. They draw on references to the Messiah in the Hebrew Bible, stressing the hope of the Saviour's coming.

In their structure, each of the seven traditional antiphons follows the same pattern, resembling a traditional liturgical prayer. Each 'O' Antiphon begins with an invocation of the expected Christ, followed by praise of him under one of his particular titles. Each ends with a petition for God's people, relevant to the title by which he is addressed, and the cry for him to "Come".

The seven titles attributed to Jesus in the antiphons are Wisdom (*Sapientia* in Latin), Ruler of the House of Israel (*Adonai*), Root of Jesse (*Radix*), Key of David (*Clavis*), Morning Star (*Oriens*), King of the Gentiles (*Rex*) and Emmanuel. In Latin the initials of the titles make an acrostic which, when read backwards, means: "Tomorrow I will be there" ("Ero cras"). To the medieval mind this was clearly a reference to the approaching Christmas vigil.

The 'O' Antiphons have been described as "a unique work of art and a special ornament of the pre-Christmas liturgy, filled with the Spirit of the Word of God".

**Choir Introit**  
*This is the Truth*  
R. Vaughan Williams

*This is the truth sent from above,  
The truth of God, the God of love;  
Therefore don't turn me from your door,  
But hearken all, both rich and poor.*

*The first thing, which I do relate,  
That God at first did man create;  
The next thing, which to you I tell,  
Woman was made with him to dwell.*

*Thus we were heirs to endless woes,  
Till God the Lord did interpose;  
For so a promise soon did run  
That He would redeem us by his Son.*

**Hymn**  
*Come thou Long Expected Jesus*

*During the hymn the clergy and choir process to the front and a  
light is passed around the church.*

Come, thou long-expected Jesus,  
born to set thy people free;  
from our fears and sins release us,  
let us find our rest in thee.

Israel's strength and consolation,  
hope of all the earth thou art:  
dear desire of every nation,  
joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver,  
born a child, and yet a king,  
born to reign in us for ever,  
now thy gracious kingdom bring.

By thine own eternal Spirit  
rule in all our hearts alone;  
by thine all-sufficient merit  
raise us to thy glorious throne.

Words: Charles Wesley, 1707-88  
Music: CROSS OF JESUS, John Stainer, 1840-1901

### **Bidding Prayer**

In the name of God, who had delivered us from the dominion of darkness, and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, we welcome you: grace to you, and peace.

We are gathered together to proclaim and receive in our hearts the good news of the coming of God's kingdom, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate with confidence and joy the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We pray that we may respond in penitence and faith to the glory of his kingdom, its works of justice and its promise of peace, its blessing and its hope.

And as we seek to renew our allegiance to God's loving purpose, we pray for all who at this time especially need God's pity and protection: the sick in body, mind or spirit; those who suffer from loss of dignity or loss of hope; those who face the future with fear, or walk in the shadow of death.

May God, in grace and mercy, grant to all peoples a new trust in his good providence and a new obedience to his sovereign word, for to him is most justly due all glory, honour, worship and praise, world without end. **Amen.**

**First Lesson**  
*A Prophecy of the Kingdom*  
*Isaiah 11.1-9*

**Choir Antiphon I**  
*O Sapientia*

*O Wisdom, coming forth from the mouth of the Most High,  
reaching from one end to the other,  
mightily and sweetly ordering all things:  
Come and teach us the way of prudence*

**Poem**  
*Sunday Before Advent*  
Christina Rosetti

**Hymn**  
*Creator of the Starry Height*

Creator of the starry height,  
Thy people's everlasting light,  
Jesu, Redeemer, save us all,  
Hear thou thy servants when they call.

Thou, sorrowing at the helpless cry  
Of all creation doomed to die,  
Didst come to save our fallen race  
By healing gifts of heavenly grace.

When earth was near its evening hour,  
Thou didst, in love's redeeming power,  
Like bridegroom from his chamber, come  
Forth from a Virgin-mother's womb.

At thy great Name, exalted now,  
All knees in lowly homage bow;  
All things in heav'n and earth adore,  
And own Thee King for evermore.

To thee, O Holy One, we pray,  
Our Judge in that tremendous day,  
Ward off, while yet we dwell below,  
The weapons of our crafty foe.

To God the Father, God the Son,  
And God the Spirit, Three in One,  
Praise, honour, might and glory be  
From age to age eternally. Amen.

Words: Latin, tr JM Neale 1818-1866  
Music: CONDITOR ALME, Mode iv

### **Second Lesson**

*A Prophecy of Freedom*  
Isaiah 42.5-9

### **Choir**

*O Emmanuel*  
John Stainer

*O Emmanuel, our King and law-giver,  
Hope of all nations, and their Saviour,  
Come and save us, O Lord our God.*

### **Poem**

*Abide with us, Lord Jesus*  
Jay Hulme

### **Hymn**

*O come, O come Emmanuel*

*All* O come, O come, Emmanuel  
And ransom captive Israel  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

*Men O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free  
Thine own from Satan's tyranny.  
From depths of Hell Thy people save  
And give them victory o'er the grave.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*Women O come, Thou Day-Spring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by Thine advent here.  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*All O come, Thou Key of David, come,  
And open wide our heavenly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,  
And close the path to misery.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, O come, Thou Lord of might,  
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,  
In ancient times did'st give the Law,  
In cloud, and majesty and awe.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

Words: Latin Advent Antiphons  
Music: VENI EMMANUEL, adapted from a French Missal

**Third lesson**  
*A Prophecy of a Child*  
Isaiah 7.10-15

**Choir**  
*Magnificat in C minor*  
George Dyson

*My soul doth magnify the Lord :  
and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.  
For he hath regarded :  
the lowliness of his handmaiden.  
For behold, from henceforth :  
all generations shall call me blessed.  
For he that is mighty hath magnified me :  
and holy is his Name.  
And his mercy is on them that fear him :  
throughout all generations.  
He hath shewed strength with his arm :  
he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.  
He hath put down the mighty from their seat :  
and hath exalted the humble and meek.  
He hath filled the hungry with good things :  
and the rich he hath sent empty away.  
He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel :  
as he promised to our forefathers,  
Abraham and his seed for ever.  
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son :  
and to the Holy Ghost;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be :  
world without end. Amen.*

*Luke 1.46-55*

**Poem**  
*O Sapientia*  
Madeleine L'Engle



**Hymn**  
*Hark the Glad Sound*

Hark! the glad sound! the Saviour comes,  
the Saviour promised long:  
let every heart prepare a throne,  
and every voice a song.

He comes the prisoners to release  
in Satan's bondage held;  
the gates of brass before him burst,  
the iron fetters yield.

He comes, the broken heart to bind,  
the bleeding soul to cure;  
and with the treasures of his grace  
enrich the humble poor.

Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,  
thy welcome shall proclaim;  
and heaven's eternal arches ring  
with thy beloved Name.

Words: Philip Doddridge, 1702-51  
Music: BRISTOL from T Ravenscroft's *Psalmes* 1621

**Poem**  
*Holy Sonnet 15*  
John Donne

**Choir Antiphon II**  
*O Radix Jesse*

*O Root of Jesse, standing as a sign among the peoples;  
before you kings will shut their mouths,  
to you the nations will make their prayer:  
Come and deliver us, and delay no longer.*

## Hymn

### *Hills of the North Rejoice*

Hills of the North, rejoice;  
River and mountain spring,  
Hark to the advent voice;  
Valley and lowland, sing;  
Though absent long, your Lord is nigh;  
He judgment brings and victory.

Isles of the Southern seas,  
Deep in your coral caves  
Pent be each warring breeze,  
Lulled be your restless waves:  
He comes to reign with boundless sway,  
And makes your wastes His great highway.

Lands of the East, awake,  
Soon shall your sons be free;  
The sleep of ages break,  
And rise to liberty.  
On your far hills, long cold and gray,  
Has dawned the everlasting day.

Shores of the utmost West,  
Ye that have waited long,  
Unvisited, unblest,  
Break forth to swelling song.  
High raise the note, that Jesus died,  
Yet lives and reigns, the Crucified.

Shout, while ye journey home;  
Songs be in every mouth;  
Lo, from the North we come,  
From East, and West, and South.  
City of God, the bond are free,  
We come to live and reign in thee!

Words: Charles E. Oakley, 1832–1865  
Music: LITTLE CORNARD, Martin Shaw, 1875-1958

**Poem**

*World's End*  
Malcolm Guite

**Choir**

*Sleepers Wake (from St Paul)*  
Mendelssohn

*Sleepers, wake! a voice is calling,  
It is the watchman on the walls:  
Thou City of Jerusalem!  
For lo! the Bridegroom comes!  
Arise, and take your lamps!  
Hallelujah!  
Awake! His kingdom is at hand!  
Go forth, go forth to meet your Lord!*

**Fourth Lesson**

*Keep Awake*  
Matthew 25.1-13

**Solo**

*Comfort ye/Every Valley (from Messiah)*  
G.F. Handel

*Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

*Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; the crooked straight, and the rough places plain.*

## Prayers

As we watch for the signs of God's Kingdom among us,  
Lord teach us to 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.**

The night is far spent, the day is at hand.  
Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness  
and put on the armour of light.

Come, O Lord, comfort the soul of your servant.  
**Even so, Lord, come.**

O Lord Jesus Christ, come  
**at evening time, with light.**

and in the morning, with your glory,  
**to guide our feet into the way of peace.**

He who receives our prayers says:  
Surely I come quickly.  
I am the root and offspring of David,  
I am the bright and morning star.  
**Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.**

## Collect

Almighty God, give us grace  
to cast away the works of darkness a  
nd 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.

**All Amen.**

## Hymn

*Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending*

Lo, he comes with clouds descending,  
Once for favoured sinners slain;  
Thousand thousand saints attending  
Swell the triumph of his train:  
Alleluya! Alleluya! Alleluya!  
God appears, on earth to reign.

Every eye shall now behold him  
Robed in dreadful majesty;  
Those who set at nought and sold him,  
Pierced and nailed him to the tree,  
Deeply wailing, deeply wailing, deeply wailing  
Shall the true Messiah see.

Those dear tokens of his passion  
Still his dazzling body bears,  
Cause of endless exultation  
To his ransomed worshippers:  
With what rapture, with what rapture, with what rapture  
Gaze we on those glorious scars!

Yea, Amen! Let all adore thee,  
High on thine eternal throne;  
Saviour, take the power and glory:  
Claim the kingdom for thine own:  
O come quickly! O come quickly! O come quickly!  
Alleluya! Come, Lord, Come!

Words: Charles Wesley, 1707-88  
Music: HELMSLEY, T Olivers, 1725-99

### **Blessing**

The Lord be with you  
**All and also with you.**

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.**

**Organ voluntary**





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