HYMN

Solo: 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.

Choir: 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.

All: For he is our childhood’s pattern,
Day by day like us he grew,
He was little, weak and helpless,
Tears and smiles like us he knew:
And he feeleth for our sadness,
And he shareth in our gladness.

And our eyes at last shall see him
Through his own redeeming love,
For that Child so dear and gentle,
Is our Lord in heaven above:
And he leads his children on
To the place where he is gone.

Not in that poor lowly stable,
With the oxen standing by,
We shall see him: but in heaven,
Set at God’s right hand on high,
Where like stars his children crowned,
All in white shall wait around.

Words: Mrs. C.F. Alexander (1818-95)
Music: IRBY, H.J. Gauntlet (1805-76)
Beloved in Christ, be it now our care and delight to hear again the message of the angels, and in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, and the Babe lying in a manger.

Therefore, let us read and mark the Holy Scriptures which tell of our Saviour’s birth. Let us contemplate therein the glorious mystery of Emmanuel, God with us; and let us give thanks for the wondrous grace and goodness of our heavenly Father in sending his Son to redeem us from our sins.

But first, let us pray for the needs of the whole world; for peace on earth and goodwill among all his people; for unity and fellowship within the Church he came to build, and especially in this city of Cambridge and diocese of Ely.

And because this of all things would rejoice his heart, let us remember, in his name, the poor and helpless, the cold, the hungry, and the oppressed; the sick and them that mourn, the lonely and the unloved, the aged and the little children; all those who know not the Lord Jesus, or who love him not, or who by sin have grieved his heart of love.

Lastly, let us remember before God all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore, and in a greater light, that multitude which no man can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom in the Lord Jesus we are for ever one.

These prayers and praises let us humbly offer up to the Throne of Heaven, in the words which Christ himself hath taught us:

*Please kneel*
Our Father,
which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive them that 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.

May the Almighty God bless us with his grace;
Christ give us the joys of everlasting life,
and unto the fellowship of the citizens above
may the King of Angels bring us all.
Amen.

Please sit

CHOIR

Moonless darkness stands between.
Past, the past, no more be seen!
But the Bethlehem-star may lead me
To the sight of him who freed me
From the self that I have been.
Make me pure, Lord: Thou art holy;
Make me meek, Lord: Thou wert lowly;
Now beginning, and alway:
Now begin, on Christmas day.

Words: Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-89)
Music: Amy Beach (1867-1944), adapted Simon Jackson (b.1983)
FIRST LESSON

MATTHEW 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

CHOIR

Infant holy, Infant lowly,
For His bed a cattle stall;
Oxen lowing, little knowing
Christ the Babe is Lord of all.
Swift are winging angels singing,
Noels ringing, tidings bringing,
Christ the Babe is Lord of all.
Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping
Vigil till the morning new;
Saw the glory, heard the story,
Tidings of a Gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow,
Praises voicing, greet the morrow,
Christ the Babe was born for you!

_words: Polish trad., trans. Edith M. Reed (1885-1933)

Please stand

HYMN

O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.

O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth
And praises sing to God the King,
And peace to men on earth;
For Christ is born of Mary;
And, gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love.
How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of his heaven.
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 to 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.

Music: FOREST GREEN, English Traditional, arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)
Words: Phillip Brooks (1835-93)

Please sit

SECOND LESSON

LUKE 2:1-7

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.
CHOIR

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day;
I would my true love did so chance
To see the legend of my play,
To call my true love to my dance;

Sing, oh! my love, oh! my love, my love, my love,
This have I done for my true love

Then was I born of a virgin pure
Of her I took fleshly substance
Thus was I knit to man’s nature
To call my true love to my dance.

Sing, oh! my love…

In a manger laid, and wrapped I was
So very poor, this was my chance
Betwixt an ox and a silly poor ass
To call my true love to my dance.

Sing, oh! my love…

Then afterwards baptized I was;
The Holy Ghost on me did glance,
My Father’s voice heard from above,
To call my true love to my dance.

Sing, oh! my love…

Words: Medieval English Carol,
first published Sandys Christmas Carols Ancient and Modern (1833)
Music: John Gardner (1917-2011)

Please stand
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.

“To you in David’s town this day
Is born of David’s line
A Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;
And this shall be the sign;

“The heavenly Babe you there shall find
To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
And in a manger laid.”

Thus spake the Seraph; and forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of angels praising God, who thus
Addressed their joyful song:

“All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace;
Good-will henceforth from heaven to men
Begin and never cease.”

Words: Nahum Tate (1652-1715)
Music: first published Thomas Este, Psalter (1592)
And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

CHOIR

Torches, torches, run with torches
All the way to Bethlehem!
Christ is born and now lies sleeping;
Come and sing your song to him!
Ah, Roro, Roro, my baby,  
Ah, Roro, my love, Roro;  
Sleep you well, my heart’s own darling,  
While we sing you our Roro.

Sing, my friends, and make you merry,  
Joy and mirth and joy again;  
Lo, he lives the King of heaven,  
Now and evermore. Amen.

Music: John Joubert (1927-2019)

Please stand

HYMN

God rest you merry, gentlemen,  
Let nothing you dismay,  
For Jesus Christ our Saviour  
Was born upon this day,  
To save us all from Satan’s power  
When we were gone astray:  
O tidings of comfort and joy.

From God our heav’nly Father  
A blessed angel came,  
And unto certain shepherds  
Brought tidings of the same,  
How that in Bethlehem was born  
The Son of God by name: Refrain

The shepherds at those tidings  
Rejoicèd much in mind,  
And left their flocks a-feeding,  
In tempest, storm and wind,  
And went to Bethlehem straightway  
This blessed babe to find: Refrain
But when to Bethlehem they came,  
Whereat this infant lay,  
They found Him in a manger,  
Where oxen feed on hay;  
His mother Mary kneeling,  
Unto the Lord did pray: **Refrain**

Now to the Lord sing praises,  
All you within this place,  
And with true love and brotherhood  
Each other now embrace;  
This holy tide of Christmas  
All others doth efface: **Refrain**

*Words and Music: English Traditional,  
arr. David Willcocks and David Hill*

*Please sit*

**FOURTH LESSON**

**MATTHEW 2:1-12**

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judæa: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.
Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

CHOIR

Our Gold, rich King of Poverty,
Our Incense, Infant Deity,
Our Myrrh for thy Humanity,
And our poor selves we bring to Thee.
In us our East is hither come,
To meet thine Eyes, its fairer Home.

O let this Gold wait on thy Crown:
This incense let thine Altar own;
And this Myrrh on thy Tomb be thrown;
And our East be thine Eyes’ sweet Dawn
So shall our other East and we
Adore no Sun, but only Thee.

Words: Joseph Beaumont (1616-99) Master of Peterhouse, 1663-99
Music: James Whitbourn (b.1963)
First performance: Commissioned for the Choir of Peterhouse in 2020
HYMN

Unto us is born a Son,
King of quires supernal:
See on earth his life begun,
Of lords the Lord eternal.

Christ, from heav’n descending low,
Comes on earth a stranger;
Ox and ass their owner know,
Becradled in the manger.

This did Herod sore affray,
And grievously bewilder,
So he gave the word to slay,
And slew the little childer.

Of his love and mercy mild
This the Christmas story;
And O that Mary’s gentle Child
Might lead us up to glory.

O and A, and A and O,
Cum cantibus in choro,
Let our merry organ go,
Benedicamus Domino.

Words: Latin, tr. G.R. Woodward (1848-1934)
Music: Piae Cantiones, 1582
FIFTH LESSON

MATTHEW 2:13-18

And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

CHOIR

Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child,
By by lully lullay.
O sisters too,
How may we do
For to preserve this day
This poor youngling,
For whom we do sing,
By by, lully lullay?
Herod, the king,
In his raging,
Charged he hath this day
His men of might,
In his own sight,
All young children to slay.

That woe is me,
Poor child for thee!
And ever morn and day,
For thy parting
Neither say no sing
By by, lully lullay!

Words: Coventry Carol, trad. (15th Century)
Music: Trad., arr. June Nixon (b.1942)

Please stand

HYMN

A great and mighty wonder,
A full and holy cure.
The virgin bears the infant
With virgin honour pure:

Repeat the hymn again!
‘To God on high be glory,
And peace on earth to men!’

The Word becomes incarnate
And yet remains on high,
And cherubim sing anthems
To shepherds from the sky:

Refrain
While thus they sing your monarch,  
Those bright angelic bands,  
Rejoice, ye vales and mountains,  
Ye oceans clap your hands:

**Refrain**

Since all he comes to ransom,  
By all be he adored,  
The infant born in Bethl’em  
The Saviour and the Lord:

**Refrain**

*Words: St Germanus (634-734), trans. J.M. Neale  
Music: 14th Century melody, harmonised by Michael Praetorius (1571-1621)*

*Please remain standing*

**SIXTH LESSON**

**JOHN 1:1-18**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his
name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

Please remain standing

HYMN

Hark! the herald-angels sing  
Glory to the new-born King;  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled:  
Joyful all ye nations rise,  
Join the triumph of the skies,  
With the angelic host proclaim,  
Christ is born in Bethlehem:

Refrain: Hark! the herald angels sing  
Glory to the new-born King.

Christ, by highest heaven adored,  
Christ, the everlasting Lord,  
Late in time behold him come  
Offspring of a Virgin’s womb!  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,  
Hail, the incarnate Deity!  
Pleased as man with man to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel: Refrain
Hail, the heaven-born Prince of peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Risen with healing in his wings;
Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth: **Refrain**

*Music: MENDELSSOHN, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-47)*
*Words: Charles Wesley (1707-88)*

*Please sit*

**HOMILY**

*Please kneel*

**INTERCESSIONS**

*Please stand*

**HYMN**

O come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him,
Born the King of angels!

**Refrain:**  
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!
God of God,  
Light of Light,  
Lo! he abhors not the Virgin’s womb; 
Very God,  
Begotten not created: Refrain

Child, for us sinners  
Poor and in the manger,  
Fain we embrace thee, with awe and love;  
Who would not love thee,  
Loving us so dearly? Refrain

Sing, choirs of Angels,  
Sing in exultation;  
Sing, all ye citizens of heav’n above;  
Glory to God  
In the Highest: Refrain

Words: Latin, 18th C, trans. Frederick Oakeley (1802-80)

BLESSING

The Lord be with you  
and with thy spirit.

Let us bless the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

May he who by his incarnation  
gathered into one things earthly and heavenly,  
bestow upon you the fullness  
of inward peace and goodwill;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be upon you and remain with you always.  
Amen.