

**The Christmas Story cont. - deepest joy, deepest sorrow**

**Welcome and opening prayer:** Bess Brooks

**Lord Jesus Christ,  
your birth at Bethlehem  
draws us to kneel in wonder at heaven  
touching earth:  
accept our heartfelt praise  
as we worship you,  
our Saviour and our eternal God.  
Amen.**

**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.

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.

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;  
When like stars His children crowned  
All in white shall wait around.

**Confession:**

When we have hidden our faith,  
Scared to speak out for what we believe,  
Protecting ourselves from hostility and conflicts,  
God who is for us,

**Forgive us and help us start again**

When we've shut others out of our lives without  
reason,  
Excluding those who are different or strange,  
Preferring the comfort of being with people like us:

God who is for us,

**Forgive us and help us start again.**

When we have closed our minds to new possibilities,  
Refusing to take the risks of exploration,  
Saying 'No' to the adventure of mission:  
God who is for us,  
**Forgive us and help us start again.**

When we have hoarded what we have,  
Keeping our resources under lock and key,  
Refusing to share the abundance of God's generosity:  
God who is for us,  
**Forgive us and help us start again.**

**Absolution:**

Merciful God,  
you love all that you have made,  
and welcome us with open arms,  
even when we fall short  
of your purpose for us.  
Forgive us our failings,  
and help us to begin again,  
made whole by the embrace of your love.

**Amen**

**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:  
*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:  
*O come ...*

See how the shepherds, summoned to his cradle,  
Leaving their flocks, draw nigh with lowly fear;  
We too will thither, bend our joyful footsteps:  
*O come ...*

Sing choirs of angels, sing in exultation,  
Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above;  
Glory to God... In the highest:  
*O come ...*

**Affirmation of Faith:**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,**

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand  
of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living  
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.  
**Amen.**

**We three kings of Orient are,**  
Bearing gifts we traverse afar  
Field and fountain, moor and mountain,  
Following yonder star.

*O star of wonder, star of night,  
Star with royal beauty bright:  
Westward leading, still proceeding,  
Guide us to your perfect light*

Born a king on Bethlehem's plain,  
Gold I bring to crown him again:  
King for ever, ceasing never,  
Over us all to reign.  
*O star of wonder...*

Frankincense to offer have I,  
Incense owns adeity nigh;  
Prayer and praising all are raising:  
Worship him, God most high.  
*O star of wonder..*

Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume  
Breathes a life of gathering gloom:  
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,  
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb.  
*O star of wonder...*

Glorious now, behold him arise,  
King and God and sacrifice!  
Heaven sings Alleluia.  
Alleluia the earth replies.  
*O star of wonder...*

**Bible Reading:** Matthew 2:13-18 Kristien Vanhuyse

**Sermon:** Dominic Newstead

**Intercessions:** Phil Lane

**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.**  
**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.**

**Notices:** Dominic Newstead

**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 th'angelic host proclaim,  
'Christ is born in Bethlehem.'  
*Hark! the herald angels sing:  
'Glory to the new-born King!'*

Christ, by highest heav'n adored,  
Christ, the everlasting Lord,  
Late in time behold Him come,  
Offspring of a virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see!  
Hail th'incarnate Deity!  
Pleased as man with man to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel.  
*Hark!..*

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail, the Sun of righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings,  
Ris'n 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.  
*Hark!..*

**Closing Blessing**

May the joy of the angels,  
the eagerness of the shepherds,  
the perseverance of the wise men,  
the obedience of Joseph and Mary,  
and the peace of the Christ-child  
be yours this Christmas;  
and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son  
and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with  
you always. **Amen**