

Opening Hymn: In the bleak midwinter

In the bleak midwinter
frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron,
water like a stone:
snow had fallen, snow on snow,
snow on snow,
in the bleak mid-winter,
long ago.

Our God, heaven cannot hold him
nor earth sustain;
heaven and earth shall flee away
when he comes to reign:
in the bleak mid-winter
a stable-place sufficed
the Lord God Almighty
Jesus Christ.

Enough for him, whom Cherubim
worship night and day,
a breastful of milk,
and a mangerful of hay;
enough for him, whom Angels
fall down before,
the ox and ass and camel
which adore.

Angels and Archangels
may have gathered there,
Cherubim and Seraphim
thronged the air:
but only his mother
in her maiden bliss
worshipped the Belovèd
with a kiss.

What can I give him,
poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb;
if I were a wise man
I would do my part;
yet what I can I give him—
give my heart.

Cranham 28 NEH

The Collect

Almighty God,
who wonderfully created us in your own image
and yet more wonderfully restored us through your Son Jesus Christ:
grant that, as he came to share in our humanity,
so we may share the life of his divinity;
for he is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

The Old Testament Reading

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her vindication shines out like the dawn, and her salvation like a burning torch. The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give. You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

This is the word of the Lord.

Isaiah 61: 10–62: 3

Thanks be to God.

The New Testament Reading

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Galatians

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

This is the word of the Lord.

Galatians 4: 4-7

Thanks be to God.

The Gospel

Alleluia! Alleluia! The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory.

Alleluia!

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to St Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

When the angels had left the shepherds and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

St Luke 2: 15-21

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

The Creed:

Let us declare our faith in the living God.

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Offertory Hymn: See amid the winter snow

See amid the winter's snow,
Born for us on earth below;
See the tender Lamb appears,
Promis'd from eternal years:

*Hail, thou ever blessed morn;
Hail, redemption's happy dawn;
Sing through all Jerusalem,
Christ is born in Bethlehem.*

Lo, within a manger lies
He who built the starry skies;
He who, throned in height sublime,
Sits amid the cherubim:

Hail, thou ever blessed ...

Say, ye holy shepherds, say
What your joyful news today;
Wherefore have ye left your sheep
On the lonely mountain steep?

Hail, thou ever blessed ...

'As we watch'd at dead of night,
Lo, we saw a wondrous light;
Angels singing "Peace on earth"
Told us of the Saviour's birth:

Hail, thou ever blessed ...

Sacred infant, all divine,
What a tender love was thine,
Thus to come from highest bliss
Down to such a world as this:
Hail, thou ever blessed ...

Teach, O teach us, Holy Child,
By thy face so meek and mild,
Teach us to resemble thee,
In thy sweet humility:
Hail, thou ever blessed ...

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Anthem: In dulci jubilo

In dulci jubilo *in sweet delight*
let us our homage shew;
our heart's joy reclineth
in praesepio, *in the manger*
and like a bright star shineth
Matris in gremio. *in a mother's lap*
Alpha es et O. *you are Alpha and Omega*

O Jesu parvule! *O infant Jesus*
My heart is sore for thee!
Hear me, I beseech thee,
O Puer optime! *O holiest child*
My prayer let it reach thee,
O princeps gloriae! *O Prince of Glory*
Trahe me post te! *Lead me along with you*

O Patris caritas, *the Father's love*
O Nati lenitas! *the mercy of the Son*
Deeply were we stained
per nostra crimina; *through our sins*
but thou hast for us gained
caelorum gaudia. *the joy of heaven*
O that we were there!

Ubi sunt gaudia? *Where are joy and gladness?*
Where, if that they be not there?
There are angels singing
nova cantica, *new songs*
there the bells are ringing
in Regis curia: *in the King's hall*
O that we were there!

Arr. John Rutter (1945)

Thou didst leave thy throne

Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown,
when thou camest to earth for me;
but in Bethlehem's home there was found no room
for thy holy nativity:

*O come to my heart, Lord Jesus;
there is room in my heart for thee.*

Heaven's arches rang when the angels sang,
proclaiming thy royal degree;
but in lowly birth didst thou come to earth,
and in great humility:

Thou camest, O Lord, with the living word
that should set thy people free;
but with mocking scorn and with crown of thorn
they bore thee to Calvary:

When all heaven shall ring, and her choirs shall sing,
at thy coming to victory,
let thy voice call me home, saying, Yet there is room,
there is room at my side for thee:

Margaret 465 NEH