MERTON COLLEGE
The Chapel of St Mary and St John

CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE
8.30pm Thursday 2 December
Welcome to Merton College Chapel for this evening’s Christmas Carol Service.

There will be a retiring collection for Oxford Winter Night Shelter, an Oxford based charity providing shelter to rough sleepers during some of the coldest nights of the year. Please give generously.

This evening’s carol service includes the world premiere of John Rutter’s *Was I the lamb?* which has been written to celebrate the Chaplain’s 20 years of service as Chaplain of Merton and dedicated to the College Choir.

There will be an Epiphany Carol Service in the Chapel at 5.45pm on Sunday 16 January 2022. All welcome.

If anyone would like to discuss the possibility of being baptized or confirmed, or explore the Christian faith, please have a word with Simon.

Copies of all the College Choir’s recordings, including their Christmas disc, *O Holy Night!*, and *Sleeper’s Prayer*, as well as the brand new, debut recording of the Merton College Girl Choristers *In the Stillness: Christmas at Merton* are on sale at the Porters’ Lodge priced at £14. Friends of the Choir can buy them from the Verger (leah.collins@merton.ox.ac.uk) at a reduced price. All members of College will be able to buy them for £10 at our CD sale tomorrow from 12noon–2pm in the Sacristy.

**Organ Music before the Service will include:**

*Canonic Variations on “Vom Himmel hoch da komm’ ich her” BWV 729a*
JS Bach (1685–1750)

*Variations sur un Noël*
Marcel Dupré (1886–1971)
At the beginning of the service the lights are dimmed and all remain seated as the choir sings the Introit from the Ante-Chapel.

Choir

*In the bleak mid-winter*  
Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

In the bleak mid-winter  
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 Beloved  
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.

Christina Rossetti (1830-94)

First Reading
Isaiah 9.2-7
Christ’s birth and kingdom are foretold by Isaiah

The Chapel bell is rung and the congregation stands.

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 heav’n 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.

Cecil Alexander (1818-95)

The Associate Chaplain reads the Bidding Prayer  
and all say together the Lord’s Prayer.

All

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed by thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who 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.
All sit. Choir

In dulci jubilo

In dulci jubilo
Let us our homage show;
Our heart’s joy reclineth
In præsepio
And like a bright star shineth
Matris in gremio.
Alpha es et O!

O Jesu parvule!
I yearn for thee alway!
Hear me, I beseech thee,
O Puer optime!
My prayer let it reach thee,
O Princeps gloriae!
Trahe me post te!

O Patris caritas,
O Nati lenitas!
Deeply were we stained
Per nostra crimina;
But thou hast for us granted
Coelorum gaudia.
O that we were there!

Ubi sunt gaudia,
If that they be not there?
There are angels singing,
Nova cantica,
There the bells are ringing
In Regis curia:
O that we were there!

tr. Reginald Jacques (1894-1969)

Second Reading

Micah 5.2-5

The prophet Micah foretells the glory of Bethlehem
All stand to sing

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 wond'ring love.

Choir

How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of his heav'n.
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.

Phillips Brooks (1835–93)
All sit.
Choir  There is no rose  John Joubert (1948–2019)

There is no rose of such virtue
As is the rose that bare Jesu;
Alleluia.

For in this rose containèd was
Heaven and earth in little space;
Res Miranda.

By that rose we may well see
There be one God in persons three,
Pares forma.

Then leave we all this worldly mirth,
And follow we this joyful birth;
Transeamus.

Anon.

Third Reading  Luke 1.26–38
The angel Gabriel salutes the Blessed Virgin Mary

Choir  O holy night  Adolphe Charles Adam (1803–56)
arr. John Rutter (b. 1945)

O holy night! The stars are brightly shining,
It is the night of the dear saviour’s birth.
Long lay the world in sin and error pining.
Till he appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.
Fall on your knees! Oh, hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born;
O night divine, O night, O night divine.
Led by the light of faith serenely beaming,
With glowing hearts by his cradle we stand.
So, led by light of a star sweetly gleaming
Here came the wise men from the Orient land.
The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger;
In all our trials born to be our friend.
He knows our need, to our weakness no stranger;
Behold your king! Before him lowly bend!
Behold your king! Your king, before him bend!

Truly he taught us to love one another;
His law is love and his Gospel is peace.
Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother,
And in his Name all oppression shall cease.
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we,
Let all within us praise his holy Name.
Christ is the Lord, then ever, ever praise we.
His power and glory evermore proclaim,
His power and glory ever, evermore proclaim.

Placide Cappeau (1808–87)

All stand to sing

It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth
To touch their harps of gold:
‘Peace on the earth, good will to men,
From heaven’s all-gracious king!’
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come,
With peaceful wings unfurled;
And still their heavenly music floats
O’er all the weary world:
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hovering wing;
And ever o’er its Babel sounds
The blessed angels sing.
Yet with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love-song which they bring:
O hush the noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing.

For lo, the days are hastening on,
By prophet-bards foretold,
When, with the ever-circling years,
Comes round the age of gold;
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendours fling,
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing.

Edmund Sears (1810-76)

All sit.
Fourth Reading Luke 2.1-7
St Luke tells of the birth of Jesus

Choir Sleep. little Jesus, sleep Roxanna Panufnik (b. 1968)

Sleep, little Jesus, my gentle dove
Sleep, dearest treasure and precious love
Sleep, little Lord Jesus, hush don’t you cry,
Mary will comfort you with her lullaby.

Lulaj, lulajze Jezuniu

Look down from heaven all over this earth,
Bless us with happiness, goodwill and mirth.
Sleep, little Lord Jesus, hush don’t you cry,
Mary will comfort you with her lullaby.

Traditional Polish words
All stand to sing

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:
    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 let us adore him,
    O come let us adore him,
    O come let us adore him,
    Christ the Lord.

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 let us adore him,
    O come let us adore him,
    O come let us adore him,
    Christ the Lord.
Sing, choirs of angels,  
Sing in exultation,  
Sing, all ye citizens of heav’n above;  
Glory to God  
In the highest:  

O come let us adore him,  
O come let us adore him,  
O come let us adore him,  
Christ the Lord.

Latin 18th century,  
tr. Frederick Oakley (1802–80) and others

All sit.  
Fifth Reading  
Luke 2.8-16  
The shepherds go to the manger

Choir  
Was I the lamb?  
John Rutter (b. 1945)

Was I the lamb who woke that night  
When angels sang and all was bright,  
And slowly raised my sleepy head  
Out of my warm and sheltered bed?

Was I the lamb who was astray  
Till holy star did light my way,  
And gently then the shepherds bore  
Safe in their arms to the stable door?

Was I the lamb who saw the kings  
Bear the first gifts that Christmas brings  
To set before a baby born  
That first and precious Christmas morn?
Was I the lamb who kept
His vigil as God’s holy mother slept,
And as her single tear did fall
She dreamed that he would redeem us all.

Was I the lamb amid the hay
Beside the manger where he lay,
Who curled where Mary’s feet had trod
And bowed my head before the Lamb of God?

Marc Bratcher (b. 1972)

Was I the lamb? has been written to celebrate the Chaplain’s 20 years of service as Chaplain of Merton, and receives its first performance this evening.

All stand to sing
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, comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy.

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

O tidings of comfort and joy.
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 blessèd babe to find:

*O tiding of comfort and joy.*

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:

*O tiding of comfort and joy.*

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 deface:

*O tiding of comfort and joy.*

*Traditional English (18th century)*

All remain standing.

Sixth Reading  
*St John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation*

All sit.

Address  
*The Chaplain*
Choir  

_Hodie Christus natus est_  
Francis Poulenc (1899–1963)

Today Christ is born: today the Saviour appears:  
Today the angels sing on earth,  
and the Archangels rejoice.  
Today the just exult, saying:  
Glory to God in the highest. Alleluia.

_Anon._

All stand to sing

_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.  

_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 th'incarnate Deity!  
Pleased as man with man to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel.  

_Hark! the herald angels sing_  
Glory to the new-born King.
Hail the heav'n-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.

_Hark! the herald angels sing_
_Glory to the new-born King._

Charles Wesley (1707-88)

All remain standing as the Chaplain prays the Collect of Christmas Eve.

The Lord be with you
All  and also with you.

_The Chaplain gives the blessing to which all respond_
All  Amen.

Go in the light and peace of Christ.
All  Thanks be to God.

VOLUNTARY  _Final (Sonata No. 1 Op. 42)_
Alexandre Guilmant (1837-1911)

_There is a retiring collection for Oxford Winter Night Shelter, an Oxford based charity providing shelter to rough sleepers during some of the coldest nights of the year._
_There are collection baskets in the Ante-Chapel._
_Please give generously._
Have you thought of joining the Friends of the Choir?

Membership benefits include reserved seating for all special services (including our carol services), reduced ticket prices, and exclusive events and updates.

For more information please contact the Chapel Administrator chapel.administrator@merton.ox.ac.uk or visit the Chapel and Choir pages on the College website: www.merton.ox.ac.uk
CDs priced at £14 will be available for purchase after the service or at www.merton.ox.ac.uk/chapel-choir/recording
Members of College and Friends of the Choir can purchase them at a reduced price from the Verger: (leah.collins@merton.ox.ac.uk).
You can pay by cash or contactless card.

In the Stillness: Christmas at Merton
The brand new recording of the Merton College Girl Choristers is available tonight for purchase in a limited pre-release offer!
Accompanied by the Lay Clerks, this disc of classic carols is the unmissable debut album of the Girl Choristers, which will be released commercially in 2022.

O Holy Night: A Merton Christmas
The Choir of Merton College joins forces with the Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra for a recording of favourite carols.
Christmas old and new is celebrated with a fresh sense of all its magic and glory.
The perfect Christmas gift!

Sleeper’s Prayer: Choral Music from North America
Described by BBC Radio 3 as a ‘real feat of excellence and precision’ this CD focuses entirely on American music of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.
MERTON COLLEGE CHOIR

8th Week CD Sale!

We’re offering all of the College Choir’s recordings and Benjamin Nicholas’ organ discs at the reduced price of £10. They make the perfect Christmas gift, particularly the Girl Choristers’ new Christmas disc, In the Stillness, which is only available in College! To see what else is available, go to our online store!

To buy, visit Leah Collins (leah.collins@merton.ox.ac.uk) from 12 noon - 2.00pm on Friday 3 December in the Sacristy - through the door opposite Mob 1.1.

Please pay with cash, contactless card, or with a cheque payable to ‘Merton Enterprises Ltd’.
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