



MERTON COLLEGE

The Chapel of St Mary and St John

CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE  
8.30pm Thursday 30 November

**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.

There will be an **Epiphany Carol Service** in the Chapel at 5.45pm on Sunday 14 January 2024. 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 one of the Chaplains.

Copies of all the College Choir's recordings, including their Christmas disc, *O Holy Night!*, and their latest release *Bob Chilcott: Christmas Oratorio*, as well as the 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 (jennifer.crompton@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 11am-1pm in the Sacristy.

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

*A solis ortus* Nicolas de Grigny (1672-1703)

*La Vierge et l'enfant* Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)  
*Les anges*

*Von Himmel hoch, da komm ich her Op. 59 No. 3* Felix Woysch (1860-1944)

*Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy* Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)  
arr. Guillou

*Christum wir sollen loben schon*  
Bach (1685-1750)



*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      *Silent Night*

Franz Grüber (1787-1863)  
arr. John Rutter (b. 1945)

Silent night! Holy night!  
All is calm, all is bright  
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child;  
Holy Infant so tender and mild,  
Sleep in heavenly peace!

Silent night! Holy night!  
Shepherds quake at the sight;  
Glories stream from heaven afar,  
Heavenly hosts sing: 'Alleluia!  
Christ, the Saviour is born!'

Silent night! Holy night!  
Son of God, love's pure light,  
Radiant, beams from Thy holy face,  
With the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth!

*Joseph Mohr (1792-1848)*  
*trans. John F. Young (1820-1885)*

First      Isaiah 9.2-7

Reading    *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 priest 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            *The Holly and the Ivy*                            Matthew Owens (b. 1971)

The holly and the ivy  
when they are both full grown,  
of all the trees that are in the wood  
the holly bears the crown.

*The rising of the sun  
and the running of the deer,  
the playing of the merry organ,  
sweet singing in the choir.*

The holly bears a blossom,  
white as any flower,  
and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,  
to be our sweet Saviour.

The holly bears a berry,  
as red as any blood,  
and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ  
to do poor sinners good.

The holly bears a prickle,  
as sharp as any thorn,  
and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ  
on Christmas day in the morn.

The holly bears a bark,  
as bitter as any gall,  
and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ  
for to redeem us all.

*Trad.*

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.*

Third

Luke 1.26-38

Reading

*The angel Gabriel salutes the Blessed Virgin Mary*

Choir

*O magnum mysterium*

Gabriel Jackson (b. 1962)

O great mystery and wondrous sacrament,  
that the animals watched the Lord's birth,  
lying in a manger:  
Blessed Virgin, whose womb was worthy  
to bear the Lord Christ. Alleluia!

*Christmas Matins Responsory*

*\*World premiere: Commissioned for Merton College Choir, December 2023*

*All stand to sing*

Hymn

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)*



Choir

*Sleep, Jesus, sleep*

Roxanna Panufnik (b. 1968)

Sleep, Jesus, sleep, go to sleep!  
I will rock you 'til you're dreaming,  
Sing to you, 'til you're sleeping  
Hushaby, dearest, hushaby.  
Sleep, Jesus, sleep.

Sleep, my flower, sleep,  
Rest your head, fall deep.  
Mary's arms will hold you closely,  
Soothing you, she strokes you gently:  
Hushaby, dearest, hushaby.  
Sleep, Jesus, sleep.

Sleep, Jesus, sleep, open up your heart.  
Let me rest my soul beside you,  
Here on earth and in heaven, too.  
Sleep, Jesus, little one.  
Sleep, sweetheart, sleep

Sleep, Jesus, sleep,  
Close your eyes.  
Do not ask what life will do,  
When a cross is made for you.  
Hushaby, dearest, hushaby.  
Sleep, Jesus, sleep.

*Trad. Ukrainian Carol*

*All sit.*

Fourth  
Reading

Luke 2.1-7  
*St Luke tells of the birth of Jesus*

Choir

*All the stars looked down*

John Rutter (b. 1945)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's lap,  
His hair was like a light.  
*O weary, weary were the world,  
But here is all aright.*

The Christ-child lay on Mary's breast,  
His hair was like a star.  
*O stern and cunning are the kings,  
But here the true hearts are.*

The Christ-child lay on Mary's heart,  
His hair was like a fire.  
*O weary, weary is the world,  
But here the world's desire.*

The Christ-child stood at Mary's knee,  
His hair was like a crown.  
And all the flowers looked up at Him,  
And all the stars looked down.

*Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874-1936)*

*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.*



Herod the king, in his raging,  
Charg'd 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 may,  
For thy parting, nor say nor sing  
By, by, lully, lullay!

*Pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors, Coventry*

*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 tidings of comfort and joy...*



O tiny Jesus  
For thee I long always  
Comfort my heart's blindness,  
O best of boys  
With all Thy loving kindness,  
O Prince of glory  
Draw me unto thee!

O love of the Father  
O gentleness of the Son  
Deeply were we stained  
Through our sins  
But Thou for us hast gained  
The joy of heaven  
O that we were there!

Where are joys  
In any place but there?  
There are angels singing  
New songs  
And there the bells are ringing  
In the king's court  
O that we were there!

*Trad.*

*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 priest prays the Collect of Christmas Eve.*

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

*All* *The priest gives the blessing to which all respond*  
Amen.

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

VOLUNTARY    *Toccata in D major*

Marcel Lanquetuit (1894-1985)

*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.*

**RECORDINGS BY THE CHOIRS OF MERTON COLLEGE:  
THE PERFECT CHRISTMAS GIFT!**

Three of our CDs are available for purchase after the service:

***O Holy Night***, the College Choir's Christmas CD;

***In the Stillness***, the debut recording from the Girl Choristers,  
featuring Christmas music familiar and new; and

***Bob Chilcott's Christmas Oratorio***, the brand new release from the  
College Choir!

**CDs are priced at £14 each.**

**Payment can be made by card or cash.**



## ADVENT & CHRISTMAS AT MERTON

- 3 December**     **A Service of Music and Readings for Advent Sunday**  
sung by the Girl Choristers and Lower Voices  
5.30pm     *Doors open at 5.00pm, no tickets required.*
- 9 December**     **Gabriel Jackson's The Christmas Story**  
7.30pm     sung by the College Choir and Girl Choristers at  
Saint John's, Smith Square, London.  
Tickets available on [www.sjss.org.uk](http://www.sjss.org.uk)
- 10 December**     **Gabriel Jackson's The Christmas Story**  
7.30pm     sung by the College Choir and Girl Choristers in  
Merton College Chapel  
Tickets available on [www.ticketsoxford.com](http://www.ticketsoxford.com)
- 14 December**     **Christmas Carol Service**  
6.00pm     sung by the Girl Choristers and Lower Voices  
*Doors open at 5.30pm, no tickets required.*

### 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 Office & Choir Manager [chapel.administrator@merton.ox.ac.uk](mailto:chapel.administrator@merton.ox.ac.uk) or visit the Chapel and Choir pages on the College website: [www.merton.ox.ac.uk](http://www.merton.ox.ac.uk)





RECORDINGS BY THE CHOIRS OF MERTON COLLEGE:  
THE PERFECT CHRISTMAS GIFT!

**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.

"If you're in the market for a superbly sung collection of festive favourites old and new, look no further" *Presto Classical*

**In the Stillness: A Merton Christmas**

*In the stillness of a midnight stable, a babe is born ... In the stillness of an Oxford chapel on a winter's afternoon, a girl's voice sings.*

The newest star in Oxford's – and Delphian's – choral firmament, the **Girl Choristers of Merton College**, in their debut album recording supported by the Lower Voices of the Merton College Choir, tell once more in music from across the centuries the timeless Christmas story of light, hope and joy for a troubled world.

"this is one that in terms of interest and quality stands out from the crowd" *MusicWeb International*

"Prepare to be inspired and enchanted by exquisite singing from the heart ..." *Apple Music*

**Bob Chilcott: Christmas Oratorio**

Hailed as 'a palpable success ... and utterly new' at its premiere performance, **Bob Chilcott's Christmas Oratorio** brings the magic, wonder and joy of a centuries-old story to modern-day life. This first recording reassembles the glittering cast of soloists from the premiere: Nick Pritchard's Evangelist, intimately accompanied by harp and flute, is joined by mezzo-soprano Dame Sarah Connolly and bass Neal Davies.

Benjamin Nicholas's award-winning Choir of Merton College, Oxford enrich the Christmas story with carols that are sure to become instant favourites.

"expertly performed"

*The Guardian: Best Classical Christmas Albums of 2023*

CDs priced at £14, purchase after the service, or from the Porters' Lodge, or at [www.merton.ox.ac.uk/chapel-choir/recording](http://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/chapel-choir/recording).

Friends of the Choir can purchase them at a reduced price from the Verger: ([jennifer.crompton@merton.ox.ac.uk](mailto:jennifer.crompton@merton.ox.ac.uk)).