



The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.

Christmas

Benefice Service of Holy Communion



Newbury, St George & St John



About Christmas...

Christmas is much more than simply the celebration of Jesus' birth. The task of the Christmas liturgy is to recall us, amid the joyful customs and celebrations of Christmas, to this central truth of the Word made flesh for our salvation.

It is, of course, Christ's nativity that has provided the occasion for this festival of the incarnation, since the end of the third century. Christmas carols are a medieval tradition, which has been notably developed from the end of the nineteenth century.

The Christmas season is often celebrated for twelve days, ending with the Epiphany. Contemporary use has sought to express an alternative tradition, in which Christmas lasts for a full forty days, ending with the Feast of the Presentation on 2 February

Benefice Eucharist Celebration for Christmas Season

The Gathering

The presiding priest greets the people:

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you
and also with you.

Words of Welcome and Introduction

The Prayer of Preparation is used.

**Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known, and from whom
no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

The lighting of the Advent Wreath [p.16]

Prayer of Penitence

Hear the words of the angel to Joseph:
'You shall call his name Jesus,
for he will save his people from their sins.'
Therefore let us seek the forgiveness of God
through Jesus the Saviour of the world.

A short silence follows offering space for reflection.

God our Father, you sent your Son full of grace and truth:
forgive our failure to receive him.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Jesus our Saviour, you were born in poverty and laid in a manger:
forgive our greed and rejection of your ways.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Spirit of love, your servant Mary responded joyfully to your call:
forgive the hardness of our hearts.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

The presiding priest says:

May God who loved the world so much
that he sent his Son to be our Saviour
forgive you your sins
and make you holy to serve him,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Gloria in Excelsis

We join in the angel's hymn of praise.

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:

have mercy on us;
you are seated on the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Collect

Let us pray

The Collect is preceded by a short period of silent prayer.

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.

The Liturgy of the Word

First Reading

At the end:

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Reading

Alleluia, alleluia.

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

John 1.14

Alleluia.

The Lord be with you,
and also with you.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to *N*
Glory to you, O Lord

At the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon or Presentation

A short period of silence for reflection may follow the sermon.

The Creed

We stand to say together and affirm our faith;

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?
We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?
We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?
We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.
This is our faith.
We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Please sit or kneel as we pray

One of the responses below may be used at the end of each prayer.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

And at the end:

Merciful Father,
accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

The Peace

Please stand as the presiding priest introduces the Peace with these or other suitable words:

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given,
And his name shall be called the Prince of peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you
and also with you.

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

Preparation of the Table

Taking of the Bread and Wine

*The altar is prepared and bread and wine are placed upon it.
The presiding priest takes the bread and wine and praises God in
these or similar words:*

Word made flesh, life of the world,
in your incarnation you embraced our poverty:
by your Spirit may we share in your riches.
Amen.

Alternative Form

As the grain once scattered in the fields
and the grapes once dispersed on the hillside
are now reunited on this table in bread and wine,
so, Lord, may your whole Church soon be gathered together
from the corners of the earth
into your kingdom.
Amen.

The Eucharistic Prayer

[Eucharistic Prayer E]

The presiding priest says:

The Lord is here;
His Spirit is with us.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give thanks and praise.

You are worthy of our thanks and praise,
Lord God of truth,
for by the breath of your mouth
you have spoken your word,
and all things have come into being.

You fashioned us in your image
and placed us in the garden of your delight.
Though we chose the path of rebellion
you would not abandon your own.

Again and again you drew us into your covenant of grace.
You gave your people the law and taught us by your prophets
to look for your reign of justice, mercy and peace.

As we watch for the signs of your kingdom on earth,
we echo the song of the angels in heaven,
evermore praising you and saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Lord God, you are the most holy one,
enthroned in splendour and light,
yet in the coming of your Son Jesus Christ
you reveal the power of your love
made perfect in our human weakness.

Embracing our humanity,
Jesus showed us the way of salvation;
loving us to the end,
he gave himself to death for us;

dying for his own,
he set us free from the bonds of sin,
that we might rise and reign with him in glory.

On the night he gave up himself for us all
he took bread and gave you thanks;
he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

Bells may be rung at this point.

In the same way, after supper
he took the cup and gave you thanks;
he gave it to them, saying:
Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

Bells may be rung at this point.

Great is the mystery of faith:

Christ has died:

Christ is risen:

Christ will come again.

Therefore we proclaim the death that he suffered on the cross,
we celebrate his resurrection, his bursting from the tomb,
we rejoice that he reigns at your right hand on high
and we long for his coming in glory.

As we recall the one, perfect sacrifice of our redemption,
Father, by your Holy Spirit let these gifts of your creation
be to us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ;
form us into the likeness of Christ
and make us a perfect offering in your sight.

Look with favour on your people
and in your mercy hear the cry of our hearts.

Bless the earth,
heal the sick,
let the oppressed go free
and fill your Church with power from on high.

Gather your people from the ends of the earth
to feast with the Blessed Virgin Mary, St George, St John and all your
saints at the table in your kingdom,
where the new creation is brought to perfection
in Jesus Christ our Lord;
by whom, and with whom, and in whom,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory be yours, almighty Father,
for ever and ever.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us,
so we pray:

**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.**

Let us pray with confidence as our
Saviour has taught us

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be 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.**

Breaking of the Bread

The presiding priest breaks the consecrated bread.

We break this bread
to share in the body of Christ.

**Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

Or

We break the bread of life,
and that life is the light of the world.

**God here among us,
light in the midst of us,
ring us to light and life.**

We say the Agnus Dei (Lamb of God) as the bread is broken.

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Giving of Communion

The presiding priest says this invitation to communion:

Christ is the true bread which has come down from heaven.
Lord, give us this bread always.

The presiding priest says this invitation to communion:

Draw near with faith.
Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.
Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

The presiding priest and people receive communion.

Prayer after Communion

Silence is kept.

The presiding priest says a Post Communion prayer

God our Father,
whose Word has come among us
in the Holy Child of Bethlehem:
may the light of faith illumine our hearts
and shine in our words and deeds;
through him who is Christ the Lord.
Amen.

Ending with;

**Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out
in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.**

The Dismissal

Notices are given.

The Blessing

The presiding priest uses this or another suitable blessing:

May Christ,
who by his incarnation gathered into one
things earthly and heavenly,
fill you with joy and peace.
And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

Or

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.**
Amen.

The Dismissal

Go in peace. Proclaim the Word made flesh.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

The Advent Wreath Liturgy



As we have waited through Advent, with longing for the coming of God, it is a time when we can reflect on what we desire for the world and ourselves; and how we might anticipate and prepare for that coming.

The Advent Wreath has three purple candles, reflecting the liturgical colour for Advent, with a pink candle for the Third Sunday (Gaudete—a name taken from the traditional antiphon of the Mass, ‘Rejoice in the Lord always’), when rose-pink vestments are traditionally worn. The first candle is lit on Advent Sunday and then one on each Sunday, with the white candle on Christmas Day.

There are several traditions about the meaning or theme of each candle. The scheme that accords best with the Common Worship Principal Service Lectionary is:

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Advent 1 | The Patriarchs & Matriarchs |
| Advent 2 | The Prophets |
| Advent 3 (Gaudete Sunday) | John the Baptist |
| Advent 4 | Mary, the God-bearer |
| Christmas Day | The Christ |

Each of the four Sundays reminds us of those who prepared for the coming of Christ;

The Patriarchs (avot, אבות) **and Matriarchs** (imahot, אמהות)

Refer to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah and David - the ancestor in whose city Jesus was born.

The Prophets saw hope coming even in times of calamity. They help us reflect on the way the birth of the Messiah was 'foretold'.

John the Baptist, who, in the wilderness, proclaimed the coming of the Saviour.

Mary, who said 'yes' to God and so bore him in her womb, suffering the joys and pangs of motherhood.

On Christmas day we complete the advent wreath with the Christ Candle, praying:

Christmas Day

God our Father,
today the Saviour is born
and those who live in darkness are seeing a great light.
Help us, who greet the birth of Christ with joy,
to live in the light of your Son
and to share the good news of your love.
We ask this through Jesus Christ,
the light who has come into the world.

**Lord Jesus, Light of light,
you have come among us.
Help us who live by your light
to shine as lights in your world.
Glory to God in the highest.
Amen.**



Advent & Christmas

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