

The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols



**Truro
Cathedral**
sacred space, common ground

24th December 2025
7.00pm



ABOUT THIS SERVICE

Welcome to this service as we complete our spiritual preparation for the celebration of Christmas, and sing our carols of praise to welcome the God who comes among us as a child in a manger. This is the 145th year since the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols was instituted by Bishop Benson, the first Bishop of Truro. At the heart of tonight's liturgy the bishop will dedicate the Christmas Crib ready to receive the figure of the Christ-Child.

The lessons are read by representatives of various aspects of the life of the cathedral and partners within the wider community.

Truro Cathedral is open all year round. There is no charge for entry and a warm welcome for all, a feat that is only possible thanks to donations, grants, gifts in Wills and an amazing band of cathedral volunteers.

You are invited to make a Christmas donation to help care for this beautiful building and pass it on to future generations. A collection will be taken after the third lesson and contactless machines are available on your way out. Please use, or fill-in, a gift aid envelope. Thank you.

Please check that mobile phones are set to silent or do not disturb.

The congregation are invited to join in the text of prayers and carols marked in **bold type**. This order of service invites worshippers to sit, kneel or stand but these are suggestions and worshippers may sit or kneel at other times.

The congregation stands when the Cathedral lights are extinguished.

Opening Carol

The choir sings the opening verses

1. 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.

2. 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 join in singing the remaining verses as the procession moves to the Quire.

**3. And through all his wondrous
childhood
He would honour and obey,
Love and watch the lowly Maiden,
In whose gentle arms he lay:
Christian children all must be
Mild, obedient, good as he.**

**4. 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.**

**5. 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.**

**6. 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;
Where like stars his children crowned
All in white shall wait around.**

*Music: Henry Gauntlett (1805–1876),
arr. David Willcocks (1919–2015)*

Words: Cecil Frances Alexander (1818–1895)

The Bidding Prayer

read by the Bishop of Truro. Please sit.

Beloved in Christ, be it this Christmastide our care and delight to prepare ourselves to hear again the message of the angels, and in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, and the Babe lying in a manger.

Therefore let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God from the first days of our disobedience unto the glorious Redemption brought us by this Holy Child: and let us make this Cathedral Church, dedicated to his most pure and lowly mother, glad with our carols of praise.

But first, let us pray for the needs of the whole world; for peace on earth; for love and unity within the Church he came to build; and especially in this city and diocese of Truro, and this county of Cornwall.

And because this of all things would rejoice his heart, let us remember, in his name, the poor and helpless, the cold, the hungry, and the oppressed; the sick and them that mourn, the lonely and the unloved, the aged and the little children; all those who know not the Lord Jesus, or who love him not, or who by sin have grieved his heart of love.

Lastly, let us remember before God all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore, and in a greater light, that multitude which no one can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom, in this Lord Jesus, we for evermore are one.

These prayers and praises let us humbly offer up to the Throne of Heaven, in the words which Christ himself 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.**

Choir Carol

Nowell.

Who is there that singeth so? *Nowell.*

"I am here, Sir Christemas."

Welcome, my Lord Sir Christemas!

Welcome to all, both more and less, come near. *Nowell.*

Dieu vous garde, beaux sieurs, tidings I you bring:

A maid hath borne a child full young,
which causeth you to sing: *Nowell.*

Christ is now born of a pure maid;

In an ox stall he is laid,

Wherefore sing we at a brayde: *Nowell.*

Buvez bien, buvez bien par toute la compagnie.
Make good cheer and be right merry,
And sing with us now joyfully: *Nowell*.

Nowell!

Music: William Mathias (1934–92)

Words: Anon. (c.1500)

First Lesson

Genesis 2:15-16, 3:6-7, 17-19
read by a chorister.

This first lesson poetically explains how humanity lost its innocence and the life of paradise by disobeying God.

Choir Carol

Adam lay ybounden,
Bounden in a bond,
Four thousand winter
Thought he not too long

Ne had the apple taken been,
The apple taken been,
Ne had never our Lady
A-been heavene Queen.

And all was for an apple,
An apple that he took,
As clerkes finden
Written in their book.

Blessed be the time
That apple taken was,
Therefore we moun singen
Deo Gracias! (Thanks be to God)

Music: Boris Ord (1897–1961)

Words: Anon. 15th century

Second Lesson

Isaiah 11: 1-9
read by James Anderson-Besant, Director of Music.

Jesus, the Saviour will spring up from the remains of the family tree of Jesse.
When that day comes all will live in peace; animals will not threaten each other, and children will play in safety.

Choir Carol

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen,
aus einer Wurzel zart,
wie uns die Alten sungen,
von Jesse kam die Art.
Und hat ein Blümlein bracht
mitten im kalten Winter,
wohl zu der halben Nacht.

*Music: Michael Praetorius (1571–1621),
arr. Jan Sandström (b. 1954)*

*Lo, how a rose e'er blooming,
From tender stem hath sprung.
Of Jesse's lineage coming,
As men of old have sung;
It came, a flow'ret bright,
Amid the cold of winter,
When half-spent was the night.*

Words: Anon. 16th century

Third Lesson

Isaiah 9.2, 6-7

read by Faye Edwardes, Church Buildings Support Officer for Truro Diocese

Isaiah prophesies of a day when the light of hope will shine. There will be a solution to the problem of death itself.

Congregational Carol

Please stand.

**1. Of the Father's heart begotten,
Ere the world from chaos rose,
He is Alpha: from that Fountain
All that is and hath been flows;
He is Omega, of all things
Yet to come the mystic Close,
Evermore and evermore.**

**2. O how blest that wondrous
birthday,
When the Maid the curse retrieved,
Brought to birth mankind's salvation,
By the Holy Ghost conceived;
And the Babe, the world's Redeemer,
In her loving arms received,
Evermore and evermore.**

**3. This is he, whom seer and sibyl
Sang in ages long gone by;
This is he of old revealèd
In the page of prophecy;
Lo! he comes, the promised
Saviour;
Let the world his praises cry!
Evermore and evermore.**

**4. Sing, ye heights of heaven, his
praises.
Angels and Archangels, sing!
Wheresoe'er ye be, ye faithful,
Let your joyous anthems ring,
Every tongue his name confessing,
Countless voices answering,
Evermore and evermore.**

Music: from 'Piae Cantiones', arr. David Willcocks (1919–2015)

Words: Prudentius, trans. Robert Davis (1866–1937)

Fourth Lesson

Luke 1: 26-35, 38

read by Adam Starr, Lay Assistant.

Please sit.

The angel Gabriel appears and delivers the news that the Blessed Virgin Mary will bear a son by the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit.

Choir Carol

*Lullay, myn Lykyng,
my dear son, mine sweeting,
Lullay, my dear heart,
mine own dear darling.*

I saw a fair maiden,
sitting and sing,
She lulled a little child,
a sweet lording.

That same lord is that that made
alle things;
Of alle lords he is Lord,
of alle kings King.

*Music: Bryan Dadson (b. 1970)
– Lay Vicar of Truro Cathedral*

There was mickle melody at that
Childes birth,
All that were in heaven's bliss,
they made mickle mirth.

Angels bright sang that song to the
Child,
"Blessed be Thou, and so be she,
so meek and mild."

Words: Anon. 15th century

Fifth Lesson

Luke 1: 39-45

read by Canon Sue Wallace.

Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth. Elizabeth prophesies and declares that Mary is carrying "The Lord" in her womb.

Choir Carol

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.

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.

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.

Music: Becky McGlade (b. 1974)

Words: Christina Rossetti (1830–94)

Sixth Lesson

Luke 2: 1-7

read by John Hereward, representing the cathedral bellringers.

St Luke explains why Mary and Joseph need to travel to Bethlehem, their ancestral home. The guest-rooms are full, so they stay with the animals.

Congregational Carol

during which the servers escort the Bishop to the Crib. Please stand.

**1.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 wondering love.**

The Bishop blesses the Crib in which the figure of the Christ-Child will be placed.

Let us pray:

God our Father, at this holy season
your Son Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary
for us and for our salvation.
Bless this crib, which we have prepared
to celebrate that holy birth;
may all who see it be strengthened in faith
and receive the fullness of life he came to bring,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

*The Bishop sprinkles the Crib with Holy Water
while the choir sings the following verse*

How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming;
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him, still
The dear Christ enters in.

The Bishop continues

We pray you, Lord, to purify our hearts,
that they may be worthy to become your dwelling place.
Let us never fail to find room for you,
but come and abide in us, that we also may abide in you,
for as at this time you were born into the world for us,
and live and reign, King of kings and Lord of lords,
now and for ever. **Amen.**

May the grace of Christ our Saviour be with us all.
Amen.

All sing the final verse as the Bishop returns to his seat

**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.**

Music: Traditional, arr. Thomas Armstrong (1898–1994)

Words: Bishop Phillips Brooks (1835–1893)

Seventh Lesson

Luke 2: 8-16

read by Gillian Wright, representing the Cathedral Friends.

Please sit.

The first recorded visitors to the manger are local shepherds, who are invited to see the wonderful sight by an angel.

Choir Carol

We stood on the hills, Lady
Our day's work done
Watching the frosted meadows
That winter had won.

The evening was calm, Lady
The air so still
Silence more lovely than music
Folded the hill.

There was a star, Lady
Shone in the night
Larger than Venus it was
And bright, so bright.

Oh, a voice from the sky, Lady
It seemed to us then
Telling of God being born
In the world of men.

And so we have come, Lady
Our day's work done
Our love, our hopes, ourselves
We give to your son.

Words and Music: Bob Chilcott (b. 1956)

Eighth Lesson

Matthew 2: 1-11
read by The Dean.

The mysterious gifts offered by these wise travellers from Eastern lands are prophetic: Gold for a king, incense for a priest and myrrh for a prophet.

Choir Carol

Here is the little door,
lift up the latch, oh lift!
We need not wander more,
but enter with our gift;
Our gift of finest gold.
Gold that was never bought or sold;
Myrrh to be strewn about his bed;
Incense in clouds about His head;
All for the child that stirs not in His
sleep,
But holy slumber hold with ass and
sheep.

Music: Herbert Howells (1892–1983)

Bend low about His bed,
For each He has a gift;
See how His eyes awake,
Lift up your hands, O lift!
For gold, He gives a keen-edged sword.
(Defend with it thy little Lord!)
For incense, smoke of battle red,
Myrrh for the honoured happy dead;
Gifts for His children, terrible and
sweet;
Touched by such tiny hands,
and Oh such tiny feet.

Words: Frances Chesterton (1869–1938)

Ninth Lesson

John 1.1-14

read by Bishop Hugh Nelson.

Please stand.

The mysterious words of St John speak of the Word (the Reason behind all reason). God came and stooped down to live alongside us, that we might come to live with him forever.

The Procession of the Christ-Child

Please sit.

The baby Jesus is processed around the cathedral to the manger.

O magnum mysterium	<i>O great mystery</i>
et admirabile sacramentum,	<i>and wondrous sign,</i>
ut animalia viderent Dominum natum,	<i>that the animals should see the Lord</i>
jacentem in praesepio.	<i>born, lying in a manger.</i>
O beata virgo, cujus viscera meruerunt	<i>Blessed is the Virgin, whose womb was</i>
portare	<i>counted worthy to bear</i>
Dominum Jesum Christum.	<i>the Lord Jesus Christ.</i>

Music: Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943)

Words: from Matins on Christmas Day

All stand to sing the following hymn during which a collection is taken.

**1. 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.***

**2. 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.***

**3. 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...***

**4. 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...***

**5. Child, for us sinners
Poor and in the manger,
Fain we embrace thee with love and
awe;
Who would not love thee,
Loving us so dearly?
*O come, let us adore him...***

**6. Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above:
'Glory to God
In the highest:'
*O come, let us adore him...***

*Music: attr. John Francis Wade (1711–86),
arr. David Willcocks (1919–2015)*

Words: Frederick Oakeley (1802–80) and others

The Collect of Christmas Eve

*read by The Bishop.
Please remain standing.*

Almighty God, you have given us your only-begotten Son
to take our nature upon him
and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin:
grant that we, who have been born again
and made your children by adoption and grace,
may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Blessing

Christ, who by his incarnation gathered into one
things earthly and heavenly, fill you with peace and goodwill
and make you partakers of the divine nature;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Final Carols

Please sit for the final choir carol, standing as Hark the Herald begins.

Noe, noe!
Resonet in laudibus,
cum jucundis plausibus:
Sion cum fidelibus
apparuit quem genuit Maria.

*Nowell, nowell!
Let Zion and the faithful
ring with praise
and joyous applause:
he has appeared whom Mary bore.*

Noe, noe!
Parvulus filius hodie natus est nobis,
Salvator Mundi.
Cantemus et exulemus
et lætemur in eo dicentes:
Gloria in excelsis Deo!
Noe, noe!

*Nowell, nowell!
A tiny son has been born for us today,
the Saviour of the World.
Let us sing, rejoice,
and be glad in him, saying:
Glory to God in the highest!
Nowell, nowell!*

Music: David Bednall (b. 1979)

Words: Anon. 14th century

**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 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, the 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 heaven-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.**

*Music: Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847),
arr. David Willcocks (1919–2015)*

Words: Charles Wesley (1707–88) and others

Organ Voluntaries

In dulci jubilo BWV 729
Carillon de Westminster

*J.S. Bach (1685–1750)
Louis Vierne (1870–1937)*

*The Bishop, Dean, Chapter, and all at Truro Cathedral wish you a very blessed
Christmas and peaceful New Year.*

We hope you enjoyed the service. There is an opportunity to contribute to the collection as you leave. Thank you for supporting your cathedral, and please come again soon.

Christmas Services at Truro Cathedral

Christmas Eve

Midnight Mass – 11pm

Christmas Day

BCP Holy Communion – 8am

Choral Festal Eucharist – 10am

Mid-day Prayer – 12.15pm

Sunday 28th December

Children and Pets' Carol Service – 2pm

Truro Cathedral Choir – Chorister Opportunities

If you know a child who likes singing, and who may wish to have the life-changing experience of being a chorister in Truro Cathedral Choir, please do email jab@trurocathedral.org.uk. We are hosting a fun chorister experience day for those in school years 2-4 on Saturday 31st January 2026.

Please take this order of service away

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