

The Christmas Story

St Michael at the North Gate



Welcome

Merry Christmas to you all, and thank you for coming. We hope you enjoy the service. For those who wish, please feel free to come up and look at our crib scene after the service. You are also very welcome to light a candle or write a prayer to decorate our tree.

For details of our usual weekly services, please contact the church administrator on church.administrator@smng.org.uk or childrenschurch@smng.org.uk for details of our weekly children's church which is run jointly by St Michael at the North Gate and St Mary Magdalen Churches. If you would be interested in volunteering with our children's church, please also get in touch with the address above.



The Church has a loop system for the benefit of those who use a hearing-aid. Microphones will be used during the service. Please use position T on the hearing aid.

Narrator 1

Mary sang a little song to herself as she swept and tidied the house in Nazareth. She was *so* happy! She was thinking about her wedding day. She was going to marry Joseph.

Mary was so busy with her thoughts that she jumped when she heard the voice. She turned to look...

....and her eyes grew round with surprise. For there, by the door, stood a shining angel!

Mary knew about angels: God sent them when he had something special to say. But she never expected to see one. The Angel Gabriel stood there a moment. He did not want to frighten her.

Narrator 2

This is what the angel said "I bring you good news, Mary. God has a wonderful plan for you. You are going to have a baby - a very special baby. His name is Jesus. God will take care of everything. Nothing is too hard for him."

Narrator 1

God told Joseph all about Mary's special baby. And soon they were married.

Meanwhile, in the far-away city of Rome, Emperor Augustus needed money. He said: "Write down the names of all the people in every country that I rule. I want to make sure they pay my tax."

Narrator 2

The Emperor's order went out, away across the sea, to the far-off land where Mary and Joseph lived.

"We must go to Bethlehem," Joseph said, "to put our names on the Emperor's list."

It was a long way, and Joseph was worried about Mary. Her baby was due soon. But they had to go.



**Little donkey, little donkey on the dusty road,
Go to keep on plodding onwards with your precious load
Been a long time, little donkey, through the winter's night
Don't give up, now, little donkey, Bethlehem's in sight.**

**Ring out those bells tonight
Bethlehem, Bethlehem
Follow that star tonight
Bethlehem, Bethlehem**

**Little donkey, little donkey
Had a heavy day
Little donkey, carry Mary
Safely on her way.**

Narrator 1

When they got to Bethlehem, the town was full of people. There wasn't one spare room. There wasn't one spare bed, not anywhere. The innkeeper said to Mary and Joseph: "We are full but there is room in the stable where the animals are kept."

Narrator 2

Mary's baby was coming soon. They had to find *somewhere* to stay. They got there just in time. *Very* soon, Mary's baby was born.

There was no place for him to sleep, except a manger, where the animals were fed. Joseph filled it with clean straw, while Mary wrapped the baby tight. Safe in the manger, little Jesus slept....



**Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
the stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep in the hay.**

**The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.**

**Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay
close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
and fit us for heaven, to live with thee there.**



Narrator 1

Outside on the hills, the sheep were safe in their pen and all night long the shepherds watched out for danger. All was quiet...All was dark...

Then suddenly, the sky blazed with light, too bright to look at. An angel was standing there. He spoke to the shepherds in a loud, clear voice:

“Good news! The best news ever! For you and the whole world! Today in Bethlehem, your king is born. God’s promised king! Go and see for yourselves. You will find him lying in a manger!”

Narrator 2

At once, the sky was full of angel voices - “Glory to God in heaven - and peace on earth!”





**While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
all seated on the ground,
the angel of the Lord came down,
and glory shone around.**

**'Fear not', said he (for mighty dread
had seized their troubled mind);
'Glad tidings of great joy I bring
to you and all mankind.**

**'To you in David's town this day
is born of David's line
a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;
and this shall be the sign:**

**'The heavenly babe you there shall find
to human view displayed,
all meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
and in a manger laid.'**

**Thus spake the seraph; and forthwith
appeared a shining throng
of angels praising God, who thus
addressed their joyful song:**

**'All glory be to God on high,
and to the earth be peace;
good will henceforth from heaven to men
begin and never cease.'**

Narrator 2

Then once again, all was dark; all was quiet. The shepherds took a deep breath and looked at each other. "Let's go to Bethlehem and find the baby."

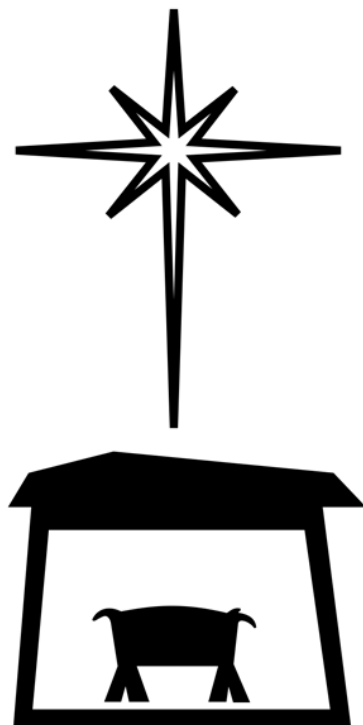
Narrator 1

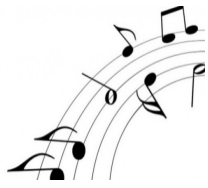
They hurried off to Bethlehem and there they found the new-born King, just as the angel had told them.

Not in a palace. Not in a house. Not even in the inn.

They found him lying in a manger, in the place where the animals slept.

And over the stable a bright star shone!!





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.

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.

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.

The Dedication of the Crib

God our Father, at Christmas Mary gave birth to your Son Jesus. He was born for us, to save us and give us life. Bless this crib, which we have prepared to celebrate His holy birth. May all who see it remember your love for us and may we all receive the fullness of life that Jesus came to bring us.

All: Amen.

At Christmas, Jesus came as a light shining in the darkness. Help us to look to Him, and share his light of hope with others. Lord, in your mercy

All: Hear our prayer

At Christmas, may we especially remember those who are poor and all who don't have a home. Bring comfort to all who suffer or are sad. Lord, in your mercy

All: Hear our prayer

At Christmas, as we remember Mary, Joseph and Jesus. Bless our homes, our families, our friends, and all whom we love. Lord, in your mercy

All: Hear our prayer

**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.**

Blessing

May the joy of the angels
the excitement of the shepherds
the hope of the wise men
the willingness of Joseph and Mary
and the love and peace of the baby Jesus
be yours this Christmas;
and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
be amongst you and remain with you
this Christmas and always.

All: Amen.



Merry Christmas



St. Michael At The North Gate | Cornmarket Street | Oxford OX1 3EY
01865 240940 | vicar@smng.org.uk | www.smng.org.uk