

The Parish Church of St Matthew
Northampton

The First Sunday of Christmas

Year A



The flight into Egypt

The Parish Mass

Sunday 28 December 2025

10.15 am

Welcome to St Matthew's Parish Church



Safeguarding St Matthew's is committed to providing a safe environment for all who come. If you have any concerns, please speak with one of our welcomers or a churchwarden who may be identified by their lanyard. They will be happy to help you.

Live streaming Please note that this service is being streamed. You may sit where you wish. If, however, you prefer not to be seen online, please sit in a side aisle. The administration of Holy Communion will not be shown.

GDPR Some of St Matthew's services (most Sunday mornings and some special services) are live-streamed or recorded for those who cannot attend church in person. Under GDPR, the church must gain the consent of anyone whose image may be captured, as this constitutes collection of "personal data". This includes clergy, readers/intercessors, musicians and congregation. Whilst every attempt is made not to capture the faces of members of the congregation, this may occasionally happen if people turn around or move around the church during the service. The exception is communion, when the congregation is not filmed. The side aisles and back of the nave are so far as possible film-free areas not covered by the camera. Any-one whose personal data is collected must give their consent. Consent forms are available both in church and on the website. The full policy can be read on our parish website or on the noticeboards in church.

Toilet and baby changing facilities may be found at the base of the church tower. There is also a small servery.

For younger children In the north aisle (nearest to Collingwood Road), a carpeted area equipped with age-related Christian resources is provided. Please feel free to make use of these facilities.



Collection – ‘Building a Generous Church’



Our response to God’s generosity

We believe in a generous God, who longs for us to share his generosity with others. A generous life is therefore a hallmark of our faith and a testament to it, as the more generous we are, the more we reflect the generous God we believe in. Generosity is, therefore, at the heart of our faith, and our own generosity is a sure sign of our faith in action. Generosity is a spiritual gift, and we need to encourage people to seek this gift as they grow in their faith. The ministry and mission of The Church of England is largely funded through the incredible generosity of those who give to it.

* * * * *

We invite you to make a monetary offering towards the ministry and mission of St Matthew’s Church. You may do so using any of the following methods:

Cash, cheques, stewardship envelopes - using the receptacle provided at the back of church. If you are a taxpayer please use the envelopes in the chairs, and fill out the details in order that our parish may also benefit from the Gift Aid (an extra 25p for every pound given) associated with your giving.

Contactless giving - using the terminal provided. Just press the button for the amount you wish to give - £5, £10, or £20, and then hold your bank card over the reader.

Giving on your smart phone - using the QR code printed below. It gives you the option of any amount, Gift Aid, and making a regular payment.

Giving online - click the donate button on the parish website or Facebook page and follow the instructions.

Your generosity is gratefully received. Thank you.



Good morning! Welcome to St Matthew's on this First Sunday of Christmas, a day when the joy of Christ's birth is still fresh, yet the Gospel reminds us that the light of God has entered a world that is often shadowed by fear and struggle. Christmas does not offer a sentimental escape, but the astonishing truth that God chooses to dwell with us – Emmanuel - right in the midst of human frailty and uncertainty.

Our readings today trace this theme of God's steadfast presence. Isaiah calls us to remember the gracious deeds of the Lord, the God who has always acted with compassion, who has claimed his people as his own and shared in their suffering. The psalm then widens our vision, inviting not only humanity but all creation—from sea creatures to mountains, from rulers to the youngest among us—to join in praise. All life is summoned into a chorus of thanksgiving for the God who gives breath and hope.

The Gospel according to Matthew brings us to the difficult and moving story of the Holy Family's flight into Egypt. The joy of Bethlehem is quickly followed by danger and displacement, as the Christ child becomes a refugee. This narrative reminds us that God's salvation unfolds in real history, where injustice threatens and innocent lives are harmed. Yet even here, God's protective care is at work, guiding Joseph and Mary, fulfilling ancient promises, and revealing that nothing—not oppression, not violence, not fear—can thwart God's redemptive purpose.

As we gather to worship, may we hold together both the wonder and the weight of the Christmas story. May we find comfort in God's faithful presence, courage to trust his guiding light, and hearts open to those who, like the Holy Family, seek safety and hope. Let us worship the God who enters our world in love and remains with us always.

It is our custom to spend some time in quiet preparation before the liturgy begins, and save further conversation until we meet socially for refreshments afterwards. The following reflection, based on today's themes, may be found helpful:

Prayer

God of light, in you there is no darkness at all;
shine, we pray, your light into the darkness of our lives,
that we may know the truth of ourselves,
that we may bring healing to places of division and conflict,
and that we may see the path that you have set before us to walk in,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Order of Service

¶ The Gathering

§ *At the sound of the bell, **all STAND***

Hymn

The procession enters

All

**WHEN Christ was born in Bethlehem,
Fair peace on earth to bring,
In lowly state of love he came
To be the children's King.**

**A mother's heart was there his throne,
His orb a maiden's breast,
Whereby he made through love alone
His kingdom manifest.**

**And round him, then, a holy band
Of children blest was born,
Fair guardians of his throne to stand
Attendant night and morn.**

**And unto them this grace was given
A Saviour's name to own,
And die for him who out of heaven
Had found on earth a throne.**

**O blessèd babes of Bethlehem,
Who died to save our King,
You share the martyrs' diadem,
And in their anthem sing!**

**Your lips, on earth that never spake,
Now sound the eternal Word;
And in the courts of love you make
Your children's voices heard.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, eternal child,
Make thou our childhood thine;
That we with these the meek and mild
May share the love divine.**

Words Laurence Housman 1865-1959

*Music Winchester Old
Thomas Este's Psalter 1592*

† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All **Amen.**

The Greeting

We meet to celebrate the coming of Christ into the world.

Grace, mercy, and peace be with you

All **and also with you.**

The service is introduced

Invitation to Confession

As we kneel with the shepherds before the Christ-child
who came to save us from our sins,
let us open our hearts in penitence and faith.

Silence for personal reflection

Confession

**Lord of grace and truth,
we confess our unworthiness to stand in your presence
as your children.**

**Forgive our disobedience to your will,
our greed and rejection of your ways,
our self-interest and lack of vision,
and fill our hearts with your self-giving love
as we see it in your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

Absolution

May the God of all healing and forgiveness
draw you to himself,
pardon † and cleanse you from all your sins
that you may behold the glory of his Son,
the Word made flesh,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

All

Amen.

Gloria in Excelsis

All

**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 at 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 that our joy in the birth of Christ will last for ever.

Almighty God,
who wonderfully created us in your own image
and yet more wonderfully restored us
through your Son Jesus Christ:
grant that, as he came to share in our humanity,
so we may share the life of his divinity;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All

Amen.

§ Sit

¶ The Liturgy of the Word

First Reading

Reader A reading from the prophecy of Isaiah.

I will recount the gracious deeds of the Lord,
the praiseworthy acts of the Lord,
because of all that the Lord has done for us,
and the great favour to the house of Israel
that he has shown them according to his mercy,
according to the abundance of his steadfast love.
For he said, 'Surely they are my people,
children who will not deal falsely';
and he became their saviour
in all their distress.
It was no messenger or angel
but his presence that saved them;
in his love and in his pity he redeemed them;
he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

Isaiah 63.7-9

This is the word of the Lord.

All

Thanks be to God.

Psalm

Reader Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps;
Fire and hail, snow and mist,
tempestuous wind, fulfilling his word;
All **O praise the name of the Lord.**

Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars;
Wild beasts and all cattle,
creeping things and birds on the wing;
All **O praise the name of the Lord.**

Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the world;
Young men and women, old and young together;
let them praise the name of the Lord.
All **O praise the name of the Lord.**

For his name only is exalted,
his splendour above earth and heaven.
He has raised up the horn of his people
and praise for all his faithful servants,
the children of Israel, a people who are near him.
All **O praise the name of the Lord.**

Psalm 148.7-14

§ *Stand*

Holy Gospel

Acclamation



All Open our hearts, O Lord, to accept the words of your Son.
Alleluia.

§ *We turn to face the Book of the Gospels*

All The Lord be with you
and also with you.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

All



Glo - ry to you, O Lord.

After the magi had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.'

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

'A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.'

When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead.' Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, 'He will be called a Nazorean.'

Matthew 2.13-23

All

This is the Gospel of the Lord.



Praise to you, O Christ.

Homily

§ Sit

The Nicene Creed

§ *Stand*

Let us reaffirm our faith in God who, for love of us,
gave us his Son in our flesh.

All **We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

*All may
bow* ***For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.***

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son
is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.**

Prayers of the Faithful

Priest Let us now bring our prayers before God
from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name.

§ *Kneel*

After each petition

Intercessor God our Redeemer:
All **hear us and help us.**

After the final petition

Priest O God, Father of every family,
against whom no door can be shut,
convert our hearts and our homes into fit dwelling places
for your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
All **Amen.**

§ *Stand*

¶ The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Sign of Peace

‘I will comfort you,’ says the Lord,
‘as a mother comforts her child, and you shall be comforted.’

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

Let us offer one another a sign of Christ’s peace.

The Offertory

Hymn

§ A monetary collection is taken. Please give as you are able using any of the ways indicated at the front of this booklet. Your generosity is much appreciated. Thank you.

All

**ON this day earth shall ring
With the song children sing
To the Lord, Christ our King,
Born on earth to save us;
Him the Father gave us.**

***Ideo-o-o, ideo-o-o,
Ideo gloria in excelsis Deo!***

**His the doom, ours the mirth;
When he came down to earth,
Bethlehem saw his birth;
Ox and ass beside him,
From the cold would hide him.**

***Ideo-o-o, ideo-o-o,
Ideo gloria in excelsis Deo!***

**God's bright star, o'er his head,
Wise men three to him led;
Kneel they low by his bed,
Lay their gifts before him,
Praise him and adore him.**

***Ideo-o-o, ideo-o-o,
Ideo gloria in excelsis Deo!***

**On this day angels sing;
With their song earth shall ring,
Praising Christ, heaven's King,
Born on earth to save us;
Peace and love he gave us.**

***Ideo-o-o, ideo-o-o,
Ideo gloria in excelsis Deo!***

Words Jane Marian Joseph 1894-1929
based on 'Personent Hodie' in *Piae Cantiones*, 1582

Music Personent hodie
Piae Cantiones, 1582
Harmony by Gustav Theodore Holst 1874-1934

Invitation to Prayer

Pray, my brothers and sisters,
that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God,
the almighty Father.

All **May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands
for the praise and glory of his name,
for our good, and the good of all his Church.**

Prayer over the Gifts

Eternal God,
in the Word made flesh you joined together heaven and earth.
Uniting our prayers with the intercession
of the Virgin Mother and Saint Joseph,
may our sharing in these gifts by your grace
make us holy to serve your Son.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

The Eucharistic Prayer

All The Lord be with you
and also with you.

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

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

All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere,
mighty creator, ever-living God.
We give you thanks and praise for your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who for love of our fallen race humbled himself,
was born of the Virgin Mary by the power of your Spirit,
and lived as one of us.

In the mystery of the Word made flesh
you have caused his light to shine in our hearts,
to give knowledge of your glory in the face of Jesus Christ.
In him we see our God made visible
and so are caught up in the love of the God we cannot see.

Therefore with all the angels of heaven
we lift our voices to proclaim the glory of your name
and sing our joyful hymn of praise:

All

**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.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
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.

Jesus Christ is Lord:

All



Lord, by your cross and re sur rec-tion you have set us free. You are the Sa viour of the world.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
In him we plead with confidence his sacrifice
made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with Mary the Virgin Mother of God,
Saint Joseph, and all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All



A- men.

The Blessed Sacrament is elevated and bells are rung

§ *Kneel*

The Lord's Prayer

Rejoicing in the presence of God here among us,
let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

All **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

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

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

Agnus Dei

All **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.**

Invitation to Communion

All Christ is the bread which has come down from heaven.
Lord, give us this bread for ever.

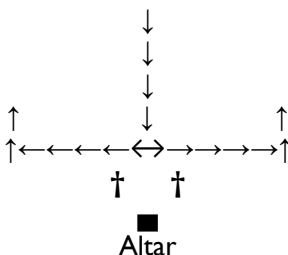
The priest receives Holy Communion

Giving of Communion

Our God has appeared in the earth, and has lived among us.

§ *Holy Communion, alternatively God's blessing, is administered standing at a 'station', as indicated below. Please approach the priest via the centre aisle and return to your seat via the side aisles.*

§ *If you wish to receive God's blessing please bring this booklet with you. Thank you.*



§ *Baptised persons who are communicant members of other Churches are warmly invited to receive Holy Communion.*

Alternatively, if you wish to receive a blessing, please bring this booklet with you as a sign.

Spiritual Communion – *for those at home*

Act of Reception

All In union, blessed Jesus,
with the faithful gathered at every altar of your Church
where your blessed Body and Blood are offered this day,

(and remembering particularly my own parish ...)

I long to offer you praise and thanksgiving,
for creation and all the blessings of this life,
for the redemption won for us by your life, death,
and resurrection,
for the means of grace and the hope of glory.

(and particularly for the blessings given me ...)

I believe that you are truly present in the Holy Sacrament,
and, since I cannot at this time receive communion,
I pray you to come into my heart.
I unite myself with you and embrace you with all my heart,
my soul, and my mind.
Let nothing separate me from you;
let me serve you in this life until, by your grace,
I come to your glorious kingdom and unending peace.
Amen.

Hymn

All **LITTLE Jesus, sweetly sleep.
Do not stir;
We will lend a coat of fur.
We will rock you, rock you, rock you;
We will rock you, rock you, rock you.
See the fur to keep you warm,
Snugly round your tiny form.**

**Mary's little baby, sleep,
 Sweetly sleep;
 Sleep in comfort, slumber deep.
 We will rock you, rock you, rock you;
 We will rock you, rock you, rock you.
 We will serve you all we can,
 Darling, darling little man.**

Words Percy Dearmer 1867-1936
 based on Czech carol Hajej, nynjei, Jezisku

Music Hajej, nynjei, Jezisku
 Czech cradle song
 Harmony by Martin Shaw 1875-1958

§ *All sit for a period of silent reflection and thanksgiving*

Prayer after Communion

Let us pray.

§ *Stand*

Heavenly Father,
 whose blessed Son shared at Nazareth the life of an earthly home:
 help your Church to live as one family,
 united in love and obedience,
 and bring us all at last to our home in heaven;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

Hymn

All

**UNTO us a boy is born,
 King of all creation:
 Came he to a world forlorn,
 The Lord of every nation,
 The Lord of every nation.**

**Christ, from heav'n descending low,
 Comes on earth a stranger;
 Ox and ass their owner know
 Now cradled in a manger,
 Now cradled in a manger.**

**Herod then with fear was filled:
‘A prince,’ he said, ‘in Jewry!’
And all the little boys he killed
At Beth’em in his fury,
At Beth’em in his fury,**

**Of his love and mercy mild
Hear the Christmas story:
O that Mary’s gentle child
Might lead us up to glory,
Might lead us up to glory.**

**Omega and Alpha he!
Let the organ thunder,
While the choir with peals of glee
Doth rend the air asunder,
Doth rend the air asunder.**

Words vv 1,3,5 Percy Dearmer 1867-1936
vv 2,4, George Ratcliffe Woodward 1848-1934

Music Puer Nobis
Moosburg Gradual, 1360
First published *Piae Cantiones*, 1582
Harmony by George Herbert Palmer 1846-1926

Notices for the Community

§ Sit

¶ Sending Out

§ Stand

All The Lord be with you
and also with you.

Solemn Blessing

All May the Father,
who has loved the eternal Son from before the creation of the world,
pour that love upon you his children.
Amen.

All May Christ,
who by his incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly,
fill you with joy and peace.
Amen.

All May the Holy Spirit,
by whose overshadowing Mary became the God-bearer,
give you grace to carry the good news of Christ.
Amen.

All And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son †, and the Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always.
Amen.

The priest stands before the Crib

Angelus Domini

(Luke 1:28 ff)

All The angel of the Lord brought tidings to Mary,
and she conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. *(3 rings)*
Blessed art thou among women
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

All **Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners now
and at the hour of our death. Amen.**

Behold the handmaid of the Lord.
All **Be it unto me according to thy word.**
Hail Mary ... *(3 rings)*

And the Word was made flesh,
All **and dwelt among us.**
Hail Mary ... *(3 rings)*

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God,
All **that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.**

Let us pray.

Lord, open our hearts to your grace. *(9 rings)*
Through the angel's message to Mary
we have learned to believe in the incarnation of your Son.
Lead us by his † passion and cross
to the glory of his resurrection.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
All **Amen.**

The Dismissal

Go in peace. Proclaim the Word made flesh.
All **Glory, thanks and praise to God.**

Organ Voluntary

Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her BWV 700

J S Bach 1685-1750

§ *Please remain standing until the procession has departed*

- § *Those leaving immediately are asked to be aware of those who wish to listen to the organ voluntary*
- § *Refreshments are being served in the parish centre, please do join us*
- § *If you are a newcomer to the parish, please introduce yourself to the clergy or speak to a member of our Welcome Team.*

Christmastide Services

New Year's Day - The Holy Name of Jesus

Thursday 1 January 2026

10.15 am The Parish Mass

The Second Sunday of Christmas

4 January

10.15 am The Parish Mass

5.30 pm BCP Evening Prayer

The Epiphany of the Lord

Tuesday 6 January

7.30 pm The Parish Mass with the Offering of the Magi's Gifts

**Our thanks are due to Martin and Lindsey Stone
who have generously financed
the production of this week's service booklet.**

**Please take this booklet home
as an aid to prayer and reflection during the week,
and then re-cycle it.**

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