

The Parish Church of St Matthew
Northampton

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

Year A



Let the Lord enter

The Parish Mass

Sunday 21 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. Anyone 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-specific 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.



The Fourth Sunday of Advent – O Oriens

*O Morning Star,
splendour of light eternal and sun of righteousness:
Come and enlighten those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.*

cf Malachi 4.2

A warm welcome to you all as we gather to celebrate The Parish Mass on The Fourth Sunday of Advent. Whether you are a regular member of this congregation, returning after some time away, or worshipping with us for the first time, we pray that you will find here a place of peace, prayer, and joyful expectation.

Today we stand at the threshold of Christmas, with the light of Advent growing ever brighter. In our readings, the prophet Isaiah speaks of a sign from God - *a young woman who shall conceive and bear a son*, a promise of hope given in a time of uncertainty. In the Gospel according to Matthew, we hear how this promise comes to fulfilment in the birth of Jesus Christ, revealed to Joseph in a dream and entrusted to his care.

As we prepare to celebrate the mystery of the Incarnation, we open our hearts once again to God's faithfulness and to the quiet, transforming work of the Holy Spirit among us. May our participation in this time of worship draw us more deeply into the love of God and strengthen us to bear Christ's light in the world.

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

Lord God, we give you thanks for Joseph
and for his courage to do your will.
Help us to bring in your kingdom by our obedience to you this day and always.
May we show that we dwell in you and you in us. Amen.

Settings

Mass of the Altar of Life (Kyries only)

David Halls b.1963

Mass of the Quiet Hour

George Oldroyd 1886-1951

Order of Service

¶ The Gathering

§ *Stand at the sound of the bell*

The Advent Prose

1. Choir
2. All



Drop down, ye hea-vens from a - bove, and let the skies pour down right - eous - ness.

Choir Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,
my salvation shall not tarry:
I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions:
Fear not, for I will save thee:
For I am the Lord thy God,
the Holy One of Israel, thy Redeemer.

Hymn

The procession enters

All **THE Lord whom earth and sea and sky
Adore and praise and magnify,
Who o'er their threefold fabric reigns,
The Virgin's spotless womb contains.**

**And he whose will is ever done
By moon and seas, by stars and sun,
Is borne upon a maiden's breast,
Whom God's foreseeing grace possessed.**

**How blessed that Mother, in whose shrine
The very Word of God divine,
The maker of the earth and sky,
Was pleased in fleshly form to lie.**

**Blessed in the message Gabriel brought,
Blessed in the work the Spirit wrought
Blessed evermore, who brought to birth
The long-desired of all the earth.**

**O Jesu, Virgin-born to thee
Eternal praise and glory be,
Whom with the Father we adore
And Holy Spirit, evermore. Amen.**

Words Latin Venantius Fortunatus c530-c609
tr John Mason Neale 1818-1866
and the Editors of *The New English Hymnal*, 1986

Music Eisenach
Melody by Johann Hermann Schein 1586-1630 in his revised *Cantional*, 1645
Harmony by Johann Sebastian Bach 1685-1750

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

*A member of the congregation lights the remaining purple candle,
signifying love*

All **Lord Jesus, light of the world,
blessed is Gabriel, who brought good news;
blessed is Mary, your mother and ours.
Bless your Church preparing for Christmas;
and bless us your children, who long for your coming.
Amen.**

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

The Greeting

All May the light and peace of Jesus Christ our Lord be with you.
and also with you.

The service is introduced

Invitation to Confession

Christ the light of the world has come
to dispel the darkness of our hearts.
In his light let us examine ourselves and confess our sins.

Silence is kept

Confession

All **Lord our God,
in our sin we have avoided your call.
Our love for you is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that goes away early.
Have mercy on us;
deliver us from judgement;
bind up our wounds and revive us;
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Kyries

Heavenly Father, you exalted the humble and meek:
give us humble and contrite hearts.
Kyrie eleison.

All **Kyrie eleison.**

Lord Jesus, you grew towards birth in the Virgin's womb:
be planted also in our hearts and lives.
Christe eleison.

All **Christe eleison.**

Holy Spirit, you overshadowed Mary,
that she might become the God-bearer:
fill us with your heavenly gifts.
Kyrie eleison.

All **Kyrie eleison.**

Absolution

May the God of love bring you back to himself,
forgive † you your sins,
and assure you of his eternal love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

The Collect

Let us pray.

God our redeemer,
who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary
to be the mother of your Son:
grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour,
so we may be ready to greet him when he comes again as our judge;
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.

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test. Then Isaiah said: 'Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.'

Isaiah 7.10-16

All

Psalm

Response Andrew Moore



Show the light of your coun-te-nance, O Lord God of hosts, and we shall be saved.

Choir Hear, O Shepherd of Israel,
you that led Joseph like a flock;
Shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim,
before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. **Response**

Stir up your mighty strength
and come to our salvation.
*Turn us again, O God;
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.* **Response**

O Lord God of hosts,
how long will you be angry at your people's prayer?
You feed them with the bread of tears;
you give them abundance of tears to drink. **Response**

You have made us the derision of our neighbours,
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.
*Turn us again, O God of hosts;
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.* **Response**

Psalm 80.1-8

Holy Gospel

§ Stand

Acclamation



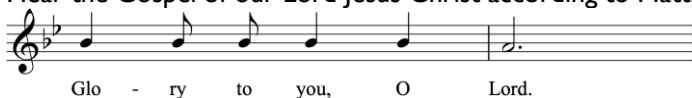
Choir Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son;
and they shall name him Emmanuel.

All **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.



Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel',

which means, 'God is with us.' When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Matthew 1.18-25

This is the Gospel of the Lord.



Homily

§ Sit

Affirmation of Faith

§ Stand

All We say together in faith:
**Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come.**

All We believe in God the Father, who created all things:
**for by his will they were created
and have their being.**

All We believe in God the Son, who was slain:
**for with his blood, he purchased us for God,
from every tribe and language,
from every people and nation.**

All We believe in God the Holy Spirit:
**the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!'
Even so come, Lord Jesus!
Amen.**

Prayers of the Faithful

Priest God sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world,
but to save it. Let us bring our needs before him with confidence.

§ *Kneel*

After each petition

All Lord, guide us:
let your kingdom come among us.

After the final petition

Priest God of love and mercy,
fill our hearts with your love
as we prepare to celebrate the birth of your Son.
Give us the grace to overcome our fears,
and keep us joyful in your service.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.
All **Amen.**

§ *Stand*

¶ The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Sign of Peace

God will speak peace to his people,
to those who turn to him in their hearts.

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

- § *The bread and wine are presented to the priest at the dais step, and the altar is prepared*
- § *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.*

Hymn

All

WHEN came in flesh the incarnate **Word**,
The heedless world slept on,
And only simple shepherds heard
That God had sent his Son.

When comes the Saviour at the last,
From east to west shall shine
The judgement light, and earth aghast
Shall tremble at the sign.

Then shall the pure of heart be blessed,
As mild he comes to them,
As when upon the Virgin's breast
He lay at Bethlehem.

As mild to meek-eyed love and faith,
Only more strong to save;
Strengthened by having bowed to death,
By having burst the grave.

Lord, who could dare see thee descend
In state, unless he knew
Thou art the sorrowing sinner's friend,
The gracious and the true?

Dwell in our hearts, O Saviour blest;
So shall thine advent's dawn
'Twixt us and thee, our bosom-guest,
Be but the veil withdrawn.

Words Joseph Anstice 1808-1836

Music Bishopthorpe (St Paul)
Jeremiah Clarke c1673-1707

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

O Lord, may the Holy Spirit sanctify these gifts
laid upon your altar,
just as he filled with his power
the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
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 thanks and praise.

It is indeed right and good to give you thanks and praise,
almighty God and everlasting Father,
through Jesus Christ your Son.

He is the one foretold by all the prophets,
whom the Virgin Mother bore with love beyond all telling.
John the Baptist was his herald
and made him known when at last he came.

In his love Christ fills us with joy
as we prepare to celebrate his birth,
so that when he comes again he may find us watching in prayer,
our hearts filled with wonder and praise.

And so, with angels and archangels,
and with all the company of heaven,
we proclaim your glory,
and join in their unending hymn of praise:

Choir *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts,
heaven and earth are full of thy glory.
Glory be to thee, O Lord most high.*

*Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.*

Accept our praises, heavenly Father,
through your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ,
and as we follow his example and obey his command,
grant that by the power of your Holy Spirit
these gifts of bread and wine
may be to us his body and his blood;

who, in the same night that he was betrayed,
took bread and gave you thanks;
he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:

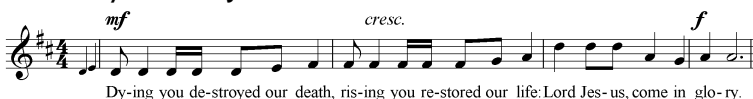
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

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.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus:

All



Therefore, heavenly Father,
we remember his offering of himself
made once for all upon the cross;
we proclaim his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension;
we look for the coming of your kingdom,
and with this bread and this cup
we make the memorial of Christ your Son our Lord.

Accept through him, our great high priest,
this our sacrifice of thanks and praise,
and as we eat and drink these holy gifts
in the presence of your divine majesty,
renew us by your Spirit,
inspire us with your love and unite us in the body of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through him, and with him, and in him,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
with all who stand before you in earth and heaven,
we worship you, Father almighty,
in songs of everlasting praise:

All



The Blessed Sacrament is elevated and bells are rung

§ Kneel

The Lord's Prayer

God does great things for those who trust in him.
Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour Christ 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

All Every time we eat this bread and drink this cup,
we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Agnus Dei

Choir *O Lamb of God,
that takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.*

*O Lamb of God,
that takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.*

*O Lamb of God,
that takest away the sins of the world,
grant us thy peace.*

Invitation to Communion

Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
Blessed are those who are called to his supper.

All

**Lord, I am not worthy to receive you,
but only say the word and I shall be healed.**

Giving of Communion

Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son; and his name will be called Emmanuel.

§ *Baptized 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.

Motet

Choir

The Angel Gabriel from heaven came,
His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame:
'All hail,' said he, 'thou lowly maiden Mary.'
Most highly favoured lady. Gloria!

'For known a blessed mother thou shalt be;
All generations laud and honour thee.
Thy Son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold.'

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head:
'To me be as it pleaseth God,' she said.
'My soul shall laud and magnify his holy Name.'

Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ was born
In Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn;
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say:

Music Gabriel's message
Basque traditional carol
arranged by Charles Edgar Pettman 1866-1943

Words Sabine Baring-Gould 1834-1924

Hymn

All

**O CHILD of promise, come!
O come, Emmanuel!
Come, Prince of Peace, to David's throne;
Come, God, with us to dwell.**

**The Lord's true servant, come,
In whom is his delight,
On whom his holy spirit rests,
The Gentiles' promised light.**

**O come, Anointed One,
To show blind eyes your face.
Good tiding to the poor announce;
Proclaim God's year of grace.**

**O come, Messiah King,
To reign in endless light,
When heavenly peace at last goes forth
From Sion's holy height.**

Words James Quinn, SJ 1919-2010

Music Doncaster
Melody by Samuel Wesley 1766-1837

§ *All sit for a time of personal reflection and thanksgiving*

Prayer after Communion

Let us pray:

§ *Stand*

Heavenly Father,
who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary
to be the mother of the promised saviour:
fill us your servants with your grace,
that in all things we may embrace your holy will
and with her rejoice in your salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All

Amen.

**Generous God,
you feed us at your heavenly table.
Set us on fire with your Spirit
that when Christ comes again
we may shine like lights before his face;
who with you and the Spirit lives for ever.
Amen.**

Hymn

All

**JOY to the world; the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King:
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven, and heaven and nature sing.**

**Joy to the world, the Saviour reigns;
Let all their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

**No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground:
He comes to make his blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as the curse is found.**

**He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness,
And wonders of his love,
And wonders of his love,
And wonders, wonders of his love.**

Words Isaac Watts 1674-1748
based on Psalm 98

Music Joy to the World
William Holford's *Voce di Melodia*, c1834
arranged by John Rutter b 1945

Notices for the Community

§ Sit

¶ Sending Out

§ *Stand*

All The Lord be with you
and also with you.

Solemn Blessing

All May God the Father,
who loved the world so much that he sent his only Son,
give you grace to prepare for life eternal.
Amen.

All May God the Son,
who comes to us as redeemer and judge,
reveal to you the path from darkness to light.
Amen.

All May God the Holy Spirit,
by whose working the Virgin Mary conceived the Christ,
help you bear the fruits of holiness.
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 Dismissal

All As we await our coming Saviour,
go in the peace of Christ.
Thanks be to God.

Organ Voluntary

Fuga sopra il Magnificat BWV 733

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, adjacent to the carpark. Do please 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.*

Christmas Services

This evening at 4.00 pm
 A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

Christmas Eve
 Crib and Christingle Service
 at 4.00 pm

Midnight Mass of the Nativity
 with Blessing of the Crib
 at 11.30 pm

Christmas Day
 The Parish Mass of the Nativity
 at 10.15 am

Our thanks are due to Robert Wilson
who has 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.**

Copyright © The Archbishops' Council of the Church of England.
All of the official *Common Worship* publications are being published by Church House Publishing.
Church Copyright Licence No. 248548. Streaming Licence No. 93626.

St Matthew's Parish Church, The Parish Office, 27A The Drive, Kingsley, Northampton NN1 4RY
Tel: 01604 791251 www.stmatthews-northampton.org.uk office@stmatthews-northampton.org.uk