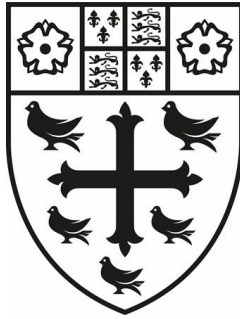


# Westminster Abbey



A service to celebrate  
Christian Witness in Advent

Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2025  
11.15 am





## BUCKINGHAM PALACE

It is a great joy to gather with you in the most glorious setting of Westminster Abbey as we celebrate the light, hope and, above all, the peace of this season of Advent.

This period is one of preparation, of readying ourselves and looking forward to the wonder of Christ's birth. Today, we gather for prayer, reflection and music, and to celebrate the Good News in which all Christians rejoice: those around us, and those in areas where it is not easy to live out one's faith. I am so pleased to be joined by church leaders from across the U.K. and Middle East, leaders of other faiths, charity representatives, and so many of you who contribute to your communities in myriad ways.

We come together this morning to lift our voices in that magnificent Advent hymn, *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*. The Hebrew word 'Emmanuel' means 'God is with us'. He is with us in our sorrows and in our grief. As we sing today, we anticipate Christ's coming into our world, in everlasting hope that he will:

*Dispel the long night's lingering gloom,  
and pierce the shadows of the tomb.*

May I wish you and your families every blessing of peace, joy and love in this holy season.

CHARLES R.



*Members of the congregation are requested kindly to refrain from using private cameras, video, or sound recording equipment. Please ensure that mobile phones and other electronic devices are switched off.*

*The whole of the church is served by a hearing loop. Users should turn their hearing aid to the setting marked T.*

*The service is conducted by The Very Reverend Dr David Hoyle KCVO MBE, Dean of Westminster.*

*The service is sung by the Choir of Westminster Abbey, directed by Andrew Nethsingha, Organist and Master of the Choristers.*

*The organ is played by Matthew Jorysz, Sub-Organist.*

*Music before the service:*

*Paul Greally, Assistant Organist, plays*

Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland *Nicolaus Bruhns (1665–97)*

Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland *Paul Greally (b 2001)*

Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme *Paul Greally*

Attende Domine *Paul Greally*

Rorate coeli *Paul Greally*

Christe, redemptor omnium *C. Hubert. H. Parry (1848–1918)*

Ach bleib' mit Deiner Gnade *Flor Peeters (1903–86)*

Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme *Flor Peeters*

Wachet auf,  
ruft uns die Stimme BWV 140 *Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)*

*The Under Sheriff of Greater London, Biago Fraulo JP, representing the High Sheriff of Greater London, is received by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster. Presentations are made and he is conducted to his seat.*

*The Right Worshipful The Lord Mayor of Westminster and Deputy High Steward, Councillor Paul Dimoldenberg, is received. Presentations are made. All stand as he is conducted to his seat, and then sit.*

*All stand.*

*His Majesty The King is received. Presentations are made.*

# ORDER OF SERVICE

*All remain standing. The choir sings the Introit, during which the clergy process to places in the Sacrarium*

**O** REX Gentium, et desideratus earum,  
lapisque angularis, qui facis utraque unum:  
veni, et salva hominem, quem de limo formasti.

*O King of the nations, and their Desire;  
the Cornerstone, who makes both one:  
come, and save mankind, whom you formed of clay.*

*Matthew Martin (b 1976)*

*antiphon for Vespers on 22<sup>nd</sup> December  
after Ephesians 2: 14, 20, and Genesis 2: 7*

*All remain standing. The Very Reverend Dr David Hoyle KCVO MBE, Dean of Westminster, gives the Bidding*

**A**S brothers and sisters in Christ, sharing a hope of the coming of God's kingdom we meet today in a royal church and on holy ground. We gather in penitence, acknowledging our need of grace and looking to the One who is our Saviour and Judge. We gather in Advent, looking, in the darkness of our times, for the light that cannot be overcome. We gather, as the churches of Christ, praying that we may be strengthened in faith and draw ever closer in love.

Awaiting his coming in glory, so we say, each in our own language, the prayer that Jesus Christ 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**

*All sit. Bishop Mike Royal, General Secretary, Churches Together in England,  
reads the Reading*

**A** SHOOT shall come out from the stock of Jesse,  
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might,  
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.  
His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,  
or decide by what his ears hear;  
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.  
Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,  
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

The wolf shall live with the lamb,  
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,  
and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze,  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,  
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

They will not hurt or destroy  
on all my holy mountain;  
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord  
as the waters cover the sea.

*Isaiah 11: 1–9*

Thanks be to God.



*The Coptic Orthodox Diocesan Choir sings*

**ΠΙΧΙΠΙΙCΙ** ἁπαρθενικον: οὔτ' ἡ νῆα κ' ἁπνευματικον: οὐφ' ἡ  
ἁπαράδοξον: κατὰ τὴν νύκτα ἁπροφητικον.

**Α** Πενθοῖς Ἰησοῦς Πιχρίστος: φητάσματος ἦξε τ' παρθένος: ὅθεν  
Βηθλεὲμ ἦτε τ' Ἰουδαία: κατὰ τὴν νύκτα ἁπροφητικον.

**Π**ιχεροῦβιμ νευ νισεραφίμ: νιασσελός νευ νιαρχησσελός: νιστράτια  
νευ νιεζοῦσι: νιθρόνος νιμετῶσις νιχου.

**Ε**ὼν ἐβόλ' ἐν τῷ ἁμω: καὶ οὕτως ἁφ' ἡ νύκτα ὅθεν νηετῶσι: νευ  
οὐφ' ἡ νύκτα ὅθεν νηετῶσι: νευ οὐφ' ἡ νύκτα ὅθεν νηετῶσι.

**Α**λληλοῖα: Ἀλληλοῖα: Ἀλληλοῖα: Ἀλληλοῖα: Ἰησοῦς  
Πιχρίστος Πωμὴρ ἁφ': φητάσματος ὅθεν Βηθλεὲμ.

*The miraculous birth and spiritual pangs are a paradoxical wonder, according to the prophetic voices.*

*Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was born of the Virgin, in Bethlehem of Judea, according to the prophetic voices.*

*The Cherubim and the Seraphim, the angels and the archangels, the Principalities and the Authorities, the Thrones, the Dominions and the Powers.*

*Proclaiming and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will toward men.'*

*Alleluia, Alleluia. Jesus Christ the Son of God was Incarnate of the Virgin. Alleluia, Alleluia.*

*traditional chant*

*The Virginal Birth  
Hymn for the Nativity Feast*

Ἐν δὲ τῷ μηνὶ τῷ ἕκτῳ ἀπεστάλη ὁ ἄγγελος Γαβριήλ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς πόλιν τῆς Γαλιλαίας ἥ ὄνομα Ναζαρέθ πρὸς παρθένον ἐμνηστευμένην ἀνδρὶ ᾧ ὄνομα Ἰωσήφ ἐξ οἴκου Δαυίδ, καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς παρθένου Μαριάμ. καὶ εἰσελθὼν πρὸς αὐτὴν εἶπεν· Χαῖρε, κεχαριτωμένη, ὁ κύριος μετὰ σοῦ. ἡ δὲ ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ διεταράχθη καὶ διελογίζετο ποταπὸς εἶη ὁ ἀσπασμὸς οὗτος. καὶ εἶπεν ὁ ἄγγελος αὐτῇ· Μὴ φοβοῦ, Μαριάμ, εὗρες γὰρ χάριν παρὰ τῷ θεῷ· καὶ ἰδοὺ συλλήμψῃ ἐν γαστρὶ καὶ τέξῃ υἱόν, καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν. οὗτος ἔσται μέγας καὶ υἱὸς Ὑψίστου κληθήσεται, καὶ δώσει αὐτῷ κύριος ὁ θεὸς τὸν θρόνον Δαυίδ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ, καὶ βασιλεύσει ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Ἰακώβ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, καὶ τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔσται τέλος. εἶπεν δὲ Μαριάμ πρὸς τὸν ἄγγελον· Πῶς ἔσται τοῦτο, ἐπεὶ ἄνδρα οὐ γινώσκω; καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ ἄγγελος εἶπεν αὐτῇ· Πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐπελεύσεται ἐπὶ σέ, καὶ δύναμις Ὑψίστου ἐπισκιάσει σοι· διὸ καὶ τὸ γεννώμενον ἅγιον κληθήσεται, υἱὸς θεοῦ· καὶ ἰδοὺ Ἑλισάβετ ἡ συγγενὴς σου καὶ αὐτὴ συνείληφεν υἱὸν ἐν γήρει αὐτῆς, καὶ οὗτος μὴν ἕκτος ἐστὶν αὐτῇ τῇ καλουμένῃ στείρα· ὅτι οὐκ ἀδυνατήσῃ παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ πᾶν ῥῆμα. εἶπεν δὲ Μαριάμ· Ἰδοὺ ἡ δούλη κυρίου· γένοιτό μοι κατὰ τὸ ῥῆμά σου. καὶ ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ’ αὐτῆς ὁ ἄγγελος.

*In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.*

*Luke 1: 26–38*

*All sit. His Eminence Timothy Cardinal Radcliffe OP gives the Address*

*The choir sings the Carol*

**T**HERE is no rose of such vertu  
as is the rose that bare Jesu.  
Alleluia! Alleluia!

For in this rose containèd was	By that rose we may well see
heaven and earth in litel space,	there be one God in persons three,
Res miranda. <i>Wonderful thing.</i>	Pares forma. <i>Equal form.</i>

Then leave we all this werldly mirth,  
and follow we this joyful birth.

Transeamus. *Let us follow.*

*John Joubert (1927–2019)*

*anonymous, 14<sup>th</sup> century*

### *Ribqa Nevash gives the Testimony*

*The choir of the Syriac Orthodox Church sing*

[illegible]

*Over Bethlehem of Judah I passed,  
and I heard the voice of rejoicing,  
the voice of love, and it captivated me with the awe of the Lord.*

*A little dove carried the eagle of the ancient days (Jesus Christ),  
bringing Him while singing praise in gentle, loving tones.  
'O noble Son, sought by both the small and the great, it is fitting that you  
be exalted.'*

*O harp, its strings silent like a whisper:  
'Let me sing to You, O Messiah,  
on a lyre whose rhythm delights the cherubim.*

*Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem,  
And from the east the Magi came to adore him,*

*Asking and saying:  
Where has been born the king of the peace?  
We have come to greet and adore him.*

*"Hallel! Hallel! Hallel!" they cried.  
And they said,  
"Hallelujah! How the shepherds shout praises within Bethlehem!"*

*O wise one, come see this wonder in swaddling clothes,  
and behold how all creation points toward this Child.  
Be amazed that He is in a manger in Ephrathah,  
but He set boundaries in the light and the dark,  
and controls the sea and dry land with His father.*

*Sing, sing, sing! the world seems to call,  
"Hallelujah! How the shepherds sing within Bethlehem!"*

*plainchant*

*Traditional Syriac Hymn*

*All stand as the Dean introduces the Creed*

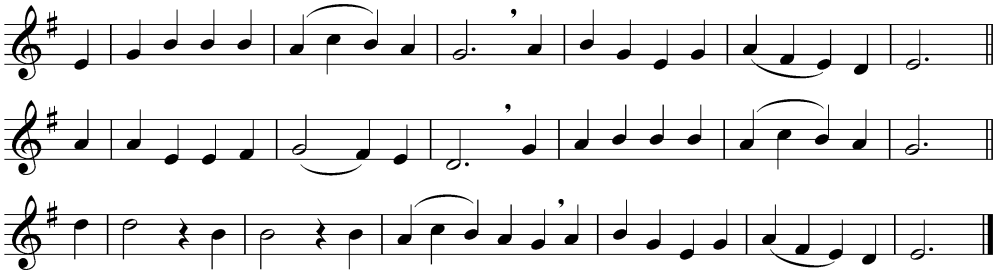
Rejoicing in our common heritage in this seventeen-hundredth anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, and looking forward to the coming of God's kingdom, let us profess together our faith in God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**W**E 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. 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, 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.

*All remain standing to sing the Hymn, during which candles are lit*



**O** COME, O come, Emmanuel!  
redeem thy captive Israel,  
that into exile drear is gone  
far from the face of God's dear Son:  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel*  
*shall come to thee, O Israel.*

O come, thou Wisdom from on high!  
who madest all in earth and sky,  
creating man from dust and clay:  
to us reveal salvation's way:

O come, O come, Adonai,  
who in thy glorious majesty  
from Sinai's mountain, clothed with awe,  
gavest thy folk the ancient law:

O come, thou Root of Jesse! draw  
the quarry from the lion's claw;  
from those dread caverns of the grave,  
from nether hell, thy people save:  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel*  
*shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*The Reverend Dr James Hawkey, Canon in Residence, introduces the Prayers*

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ, the one who is Emmanuel, let us pray to the Father.

*All sit or kneel*

*The Right Reverend Christopher Chessun, Bishop of Southwark says*

**F**OR His Majesty The King and for the life of this nation, for the prosperity and well-being of the many communities from which we who are gathered here have come; that all who bear secular or sacred office may know themselves as servants of the Lord.

Lord, in your mercy

**hear our prayer.**

*His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos, The Coptic Church in Great Britain, says*

**F**OR Christians throughout the world whose witness to Christ shines forth as a burning lamp of hope in the midst of persecution and violence; that their lives may be preserved, their faith strengthened, and their joy made complete.

Lord, in your mercy

**hear our prayer.**

*His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas, Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain, says*

**F**OR all who dwell in the darkness of conflict, violence, or fear; that Christ's healing light might be poured out upon them, and hearts and minds bent on evil may be transformed for good after the example of Christ, who is the Prince of peace.

Lord, in your mercy

**hear our prayer.**

*His Grace Bishop Hovakim, Primate of the Armenian Diocese of Great Britain and Ireland, says*

**F**OR those who carry the burden of grief, for all who mourn beloved brothers and sisters, and for all who lament homes lost and communities scattered; that they may be comforted by Christ who safeguards for us the heavenward road.

Lord, in your mercy

**hear our prayer.**



*The Most Reverend Hosam Naoum, Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, says*

**F**OR all people of conscience and goodwill, of all faiths and none, who work to deepen trust and foster friendships wherever division may be found; that the message of the angels might guide us to seek the peace which is from above.

Lord, in your mercy  
**hear our prayer.**

*The Reverend Helena Bickley-Percival, Minor Canon and Sacrist, chants the Collect for Advent*

Let us pray.

**A**Lmighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, now and ever. **Amen.**

*All stand to sing*



O come, thou Lord of David's Key!  
the royal door fling wide and free;  
safeguard for us the heavenward road,  
and bar the way to death's abode:  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel*  
*shall come to thee, O Israel.*

O come, O come, thou Dayspring bright!  
pour on our souls thy healing light;  
dispel the long night's lingering gloom,  
and pierce the shadows of the tomb:

O come, Desire of nations! show  
thy kingly reign on earth below;  
thou Corner-stone, uniting all,  
restore the ruin of our fall:

*Veni Emmanuel 11 NEH  
adapted from a French  
missal by Thomas Helmore (1811–90)  
arranged by James O'Donnell (b 1961)*

*Veni, veni Emmanuel c 12<sup>th</sup> century  
after the Advent Antiphons  
translation in  
Hymns Ancient and Modern 1861*

*All remain standing. The Dean pronounces the Blessing*

**C**HRISt the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you, scatter the darkness from before your path, and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

*All sing*

**G**OD save our gracious King,  
Long live our noble King,  
God save The King.  
Send him victorious,  
Happy and glorious,  
Long to reign over us:  
God save The King.

*All remain standing as the procession moves to the west end of the Abbey Church*

*The organist plays*

Chorale Prelude on 'Dundee':

*C. Hubert H. Parry*

*The people that in darkness sat a glorious light have seen*

*The bells of the Abbey church are rung.*

**Members of the congregation are requested kindly to remain in their seats until directed to move by the Honorary Stewards.**