

Carol Service – Caversham Park URC – Sunday 22 December 2024

Introduction

Good morning and welcome to our Christmas Carol Service at Caversham Park United Reformed Church, whether you are here in the school or watching online. Today we will be doing a lot of singing, as well as hearing God's word and praying.

Let's begin by lighting our candles. I am lighting our peace candle, which we have every Sunday to express our longing for peace throughout the world, and to represent the presence with us of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

Next, we will light the four red candles on our Advent Ring.

Four people come forward and light candles with readings.

And we have two more candles that we can light to pray for particular people or needs. Who would like to come and light a candle?

Choir practice

And now, before we start on the carols, let's have a short choir practice. Could you please stand, and when I ask you to sing, do it nice and loud but very beautifully?

Dorothy, can you give us a D please, just above middle C?

So now, let's all sing "DOH" on that note.

That's good. Now let's sing "ME" on this note – Dorothy, F# please.

And we'll go up a bit more, and Dorothy will give us an A and we will sing "SO".

And up again to another DOH, an octave above the first one, All together, "DOH".

Now please think about which note you are most comfortable with. Was it DOH, ME, SO or DOH?

Please choose one of them.

We'll start with the low DOH, then the MEs can join in, then the SOs and finally the high DOHs, and hold them all together for a bit..

DOH – ME – SO – DOH.

Thanks everybody. You are now all enrolled as members of the Caversham Park Church choir.

And while we are still standing, we will have our first carol. Some people like to have it at the end, but I think it's an invitation to join together in worship.

HYMN O come, all you faithful

Confession

Even on a day of celebration like this, we should come to God admitting that we fall short of perfection, and asking for his help.

Hear the words of the angel to Joseph: You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' Therefore let us seek the forgiveness of God through Jesus the Saviour of the world.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we have sinned against you and against our neighbour in thought and word and deed, through negligence, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault. We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us all that is past and grant that we may serve you in newness of life to the glory of your name. Amen.

Saint Paul wrote to Titus: "The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". So I declare to you that Jesus says to us, "Your sins are forgiven."
Amen. Thanks be to God.

HYMN Joy to the world

READING 1 Micah 5:2-5a

Many of you will remember Elizabeth Haywood, who was a long-standing member of this Church and who died recently. For the last few years she had been in a care home, but she regularly watched our services online. She was a gifted poet and musician, and we will now sing a Christmas song which she wrote for us to use.

HYMN Music and mirth

READING 2 Luke 1:26-38

HYMN Silent night, holy night

READING 3 Luke 2:1-7

Our next song was the first request I had, and the only request that I hadn't previously been thinking of. I felt it might be too hard for us to sing together, and you deserve a rest, so here is a recording from a recent King's College Cambridge carol service.

HYMN O holy night *Recorded*

Our next song tells the story of the shepherds. It is an adaptation of Luke's Gospel, so we will be reading the Gospel to one another.

HYMN While shepherds watched their flocks by night

READING 4 Philippians 2:5-7a

HYMN In the bleak midwinter

Dedication of collection

At Christmas we celebrate the greatest gift of all, the gift to us by God of his own self in the form of Jesus Christ. In recognition and thanksgiving, we offer these gifts to God. Lord, grant that this money may be used for the life of your Church and to spread the Good News of your Kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Collect

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.

Amen.

Intercessions

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour has taught us, so we pray:

Our Father in heaven, ...

HYMN Hark, the herald angels sing

Blessing

Our Lord says, 'I am coming soon.'

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

May the Lord, when he comes, find us watching and waiting.

Amen.