

The Parish Church of St Matthew
Northampton

The Second Sunday of Christmas

Year A



The Parish Mass

Sunday 4 January 2026

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.



Welcome to our celebration of the Parish Mass on this Second Sunday of Christmas. As the season continues, the Church invites us to move more deeply into the mystery of the Incarnation, not simply rejoicing that Christ has been born, but reflecting on who he is for us and what it means that God has chosen to live among his people.

Our readings today offer a rich tapestry of this theme. From Ecclesiasticus we hear the beautiful portrayal of divine Wisdom, coming forth from God and seeking a dwelling-place among humanity. Wisdom finds her home in the midst of God's people, planted and rooted in their life. This ancient vision prepares us for the fullness of God's self-giving in Christ. The psalm continues the note of wonder and praise, celebrating the God who strengthens and blesses his people, who feeds and sustains all creation. The God who orders the stars and commands the seasons is also the One who cares intimately for his own.

In the Gospel according to John, the poetic prologue reaches its profound climax: "*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.*" The eternal Word through whom all things were made enters our human condition completely, sharing our life that we might share his. Though the world often fails to recognise him, to those who receive him he gives the astonishing gift of becoming children of God. In Christ we behold the fullness of grace and truth, God's glory revealed not in distant majesty but in a human face.

Let us prepare to meet the living Word in word, sacrament, and community, giving thanks for the God who has come to make his home among us.

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:

Reflection

When God's Son came on earth,
he came dressed in the cloak of our weak and mortal humanity:
'They wrapped the baby in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger.'
Like an acorn that falls to earth, silently and unheralded,
in a remote corner of the forest, and which grows into a great oak tree,
so from these lowly origins Jesus grew up
to show us the greatness of our humanity.

Order of Service

¶ The Gathering

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

Hymn

§ *The procession enters*

All

**A GREAT and mighty wonder,
A full and holy cure!
The Virgin bears the infant
With virgin honour pure!
Repeat the hymn again!
'To God on high be glory,
And peace on earth to men!'**

**The Word becomes incarnate
And yet remains on high!
And cherubim sing anthems
To shepherds, from the sky.**

**While thus they sing your monarch,
Those bright angelic bands,
Rejoice, ye vales and mountains,
Ye oceans clap your hands.**

**Since all he comes to ransom,
By all be he adored,
The infant born in Bethl'em,
The Saviour and the Lord.**

**And idol forms shall perish,
And error shall decay,
And Christ shall wield his sceptre,
Our Lord and God for ay.**

Words Greek, St Germanus of Constantinople c645-740
tr John Mason Neale 1818-1866

Music Es ist ein' Ros' Entsprungen
German carol melody
harmony by Michael Praetorius 1571-1621

† 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

Saint John said, 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.'
Our faith is founded on this great mystery.

As we kneel with the shepherds before the Christ-child
 who came to save us from our sins,
may we know that Christ is present among us now,
and let us open our hearts to him 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,
in the birth of your Son
you have poured on us the new light of your incarnate Word,
and shown us the fullness of your love:
help us to walk in his light and dwell in his love
that we may know the fullness of his joy;
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 book Ecclesiasticus.

Wisdom praises herself,
and tells of her glory in the midst of her people.
In the assembly of the Most High she opens her mouth,
and in the presence of his hosts she tells of her glory:
‘I came forth from the mouth of the Most High,
and covered the earth like a mist.
I dwelt in the highest heavens,
and my throne was in a pillar of cloud.
Alone I compassed the vault of heaven
and traversed the depths of the abyss.
Over waves of the sea, over all the earth,
and over every people and nation I have held sway.
Among all these I sought a resting-place;
in whose territory should I abide?
‘Then the Creator of all things gave me a command,
and my Creator chose the place for my tent.
He said, “Make your dwelling in Jacob,
and in Israel receive your inheritance.”

Before the ages, in the beginning, he created me,
 and for all the ages I shall not cease to be.
 In the holy tent I ministered before him,
 and so I was established in Zion.
 Thus in the beloved city he gave me a resting-place,
 and in Jerusalem was my domain.
 I took root in an honoured people,
 in the portion of the Lord, his heritage.'

Ecclesiasticus 24.1-12

This is the word of the Lord.

All

Thanks be to God.

Psalm



Cantor

Sing praise to the Lord, O Jerusalem;
 praise your God, O Zion;
 For he has strengthened the bars of your gates
 and has blest your children within you. **Response**

He has established peace in your borders
 and satisfies you with the finest wheat.
 He sends forth his command to the earth
 and his word runs very swiftly. **Response**

He gives snow like wool
 and scatters the hoarfrost like ashes.
 He casts down his hailstones like morsels of bread;
 who can endure his frost?
 He sends forth his word and melts them;
 he blows with his wind and the waters flow. **Response**

He declares his word to Jacob,
 his statutes and judgements to Israel.
 He has not dealt so with any other nation;
 they do not know his laws. **Response**

Psalm 147.13-21

§ Stand

Holy Gospel

Acclamation

1. Choir only
2. Choir and Congregation



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Christ was revealed in flesh, vindicated in spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among Gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory.

All **Alleluia.**

§ We turn to face the Book of the Gospels

The Lord be with you
and also with you.

All

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

All



Glo - ry to you, O Lord.

The true light was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.") From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

John 1.10-18

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All



Praise to you, O Christ.

Homily

§ Sit

At the end, a time for personal reflection

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 pray to Christ our Brother, who assumed our human nature
and showed us what we may become.

§ *Kneel*

After each petition

All Holy God, come among us:
hear us and help us.

After the final petition

Priest Father, your Son came down from heaven
to share our earthly lives.
May we come to share his glory in heaven,
where he 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

In Christ we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.

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 **IN the bleak mid-winter,
Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
Snow on snow,
In the bleak mid-winter,
Long ago.**

**Our God, heaven cannot hold him,
Nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away
When he comes to reign:
In the bleak mid-winter
A stable place sufficed
The Lord God almighty,
Jesus Christ.**

Enough for him, whom cherubim,
Worship night and day,
A breastful of milk,
And a mangerful of hay;
Enough for him whom angels
Fall down before,
The ox and ass and camel
Which adore.

Angels and archangels
May have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim
Thronged the air;
But only his Mother,
In her maiden bliss,
Worshipped the beloved
With a kiss.

What can I give him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man
I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give him
Give my heart.

Words Christina Georgina Rossetti 1830-1894

*Music Cranham
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

O Lord, sanctify the offerings we make
on the nativity of your only begotten Son,
for by it you show us the way of truth
and promise the life of the heavenly kingdom;
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

Jesus is the image of the unseen God. To see him is to see the Father.
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.

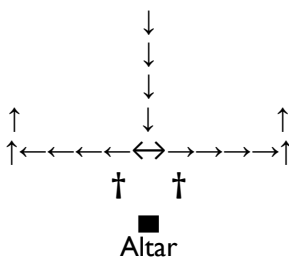
The clergy receive Holy Communion

Giving of Communion

To all who would accept him, he gave power to become children of God.

§ *Holy Communion, alternatively God's blessing, is administered standing at a 'station', as indicated below. Please approach the clergy 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

**SHEPHERDS left their flocks a-straying,
God's command with joy obeying,
When they heard the angel saying:
‘Christ is born in Bethlehem.’**

**Wise men came from far and saw him:
Kneel in homage to adore him;
Precious gifts they laid before him:
Gold and frankincense and myrrh.**

**Let us now in every nation
Sing his praise with exultation.
All the world shall find salvation
In the birth of Mary's son.**

Words Imogen Holst 1907-1984

Music Quem pastores
German carol melody, 14th cent
Harmony by Ralph Vaughan Williams 1872-1958

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

Prayer after Communion

Let us pray.

§ Stand

All praise to you,
almighty God and heavenly king,
who sent your Son into the world to take our nature upon him
and to be born of a pure virgin:
grant that, as we are born again in him,
so he may continually dwell in us
and reign on earth as he reigns in heaven,
now and for ever.

All

Amen.

Hymn

All

**ANGELS from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation's story
Now proclaim Messiah's birth.
*Gloria in excelsis Deo!***

**Shepherds in the field abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing;
Yonder shines the infant light.**

**Sages, leave your contemplations;
Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great desire of nations;
Ye have seen his natal star.**

**Saints, before the altar bending,
Watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly the Lord descending,
In his temple shall appear.**

**Though an infant now we view him,
He shall fill his Father's throne,
Gather all the nations to him;
Every knee shall then bow down.**

Words James Montgomery 1771-1854
from *Iris*, 1816 and *The Christmas Box*, 1825

Music Iris
French traditional carol
Harmony by Martin Shaw 1875-1958

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.

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

All **Amen.**

The priest stands in front of 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

Interlude on “God rest ye merry, gentlemen”

[from 6 Interludes on Christmas Carols No 6]

William Lloyd Webber 1914-1982

- § *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.*

This evening at 5.30 pm

Congregational Evensong

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 Carol Duff
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.**

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