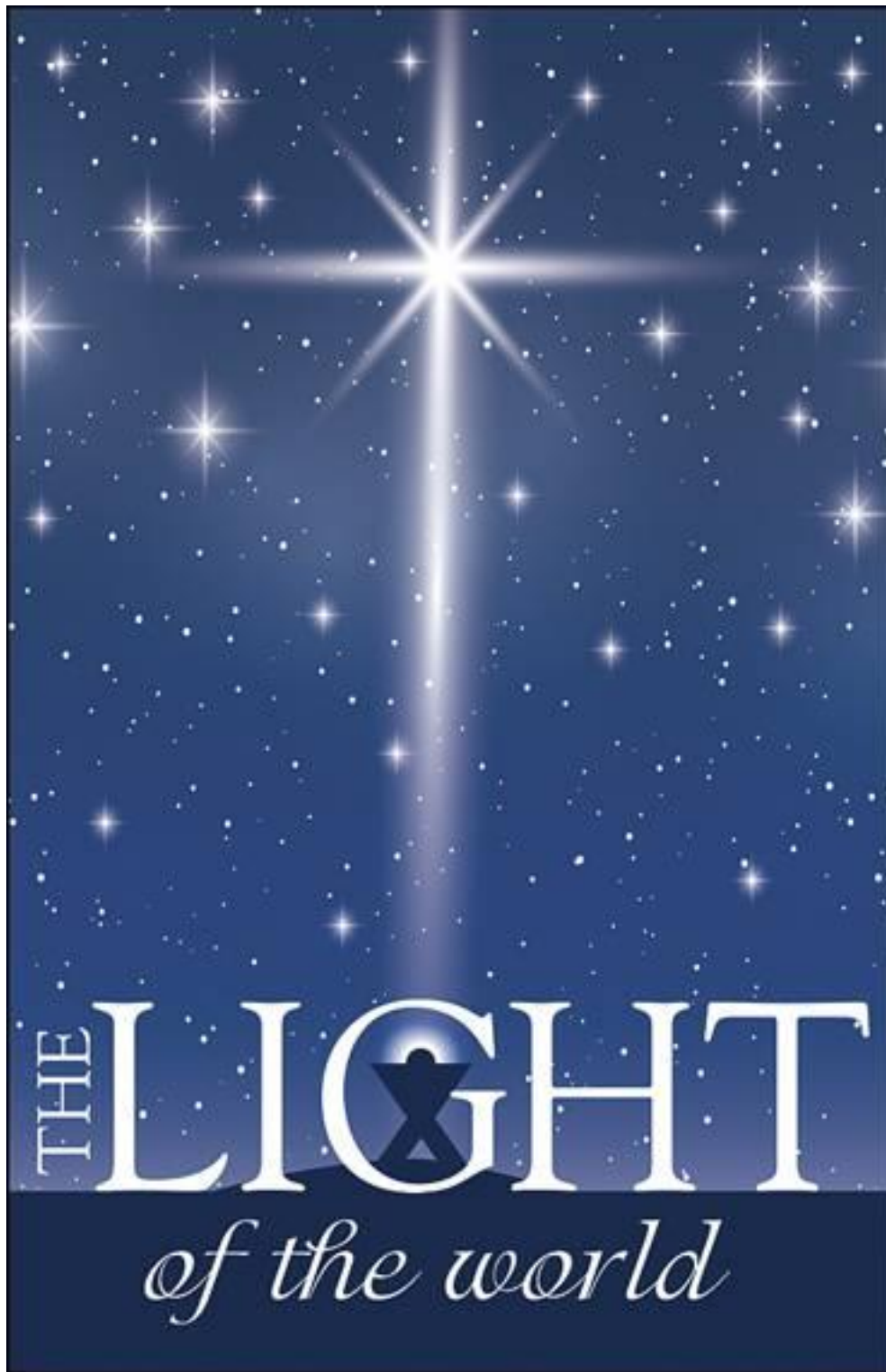


**St. Ninian's Parish Church
Corstorphine**



A Service for Christmas Eve

Saturday, 24th December 2023

Find us: <http://www.corstorphinestninians.org.uk> on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/stninianschurch/> & live on [YouTube](#)

Good evening and welcome to everyone who has joined us at St. Ninian's this **Christmas Eve**. We hope that you will enjoy worshipping with us this evening as we move towards Christmas Day and the celebration of the birth of the Light of the World, Jesus Christ represented by candles throughout the church.

As a congregation our mission is to **'Worship God together, encourage personal faith and prayer, spread the Good News about Jesus Christ, and love and care for others in our community.'** If you are a visitor, there is a **visitors' book** at the front door, please sign it. After the service we have **fellowship** in the Martin Shields' Hall, please join us.

The service begins with a sentence from the Bible, an invitation to stand and the procession of the Bible while the congregation sings the first hymn.

The service is led by the **Rev. James Aitken** and **Emma McMillan**, a student on placement at St. Ninian's. The organist is **Anne Kirkpatrick**.

THE ENTRANCE

The service begins with a sentence from the Bible from the rear of the church, a call to stand (if you are able), and the entrance of the Bible. We sit to pray and stand to sing, unless otherwise noted.

CAROL 25

Hark, the herald angels sing

WELCOME

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Life in this cold, dark universe is like a candle, flickering and vulnerable. But, life is light that pierces the darkness. God, life's creator, born in Jesus Christ, is the light of the world who brings life in all its fullness to the people of the world.

SCRIPTURE: John 1: 1 – 14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He 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.

CAROL 33

○ Little town of Bethlehem

As we sing about the 'everlasting Light' shining in the streets of Bethlehem, we light the candles on the communion table.

GATHERING PRAYER

THE PROMISE

The world is full of light and darkness. For millennia people have struggled to live in one and reject the other. The Bible tells the story of this struggle, and the hope that one day someone will show us the way out of darkness into light.

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 61: 1 – 4

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.
They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

CAROL 27 In the bleak mid-winter

THE BIRTH

The account of Jesus' birth told from Joseph's point of view, a man caught up in events outwith his control, but who responds with faithful dignity and duty.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 1: 18 – 25

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered 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 home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

CAROL 21

Child in a manger (*remain seated*)

SERMON

CAROL 31

Love came down at Christmas (*remain seated*)

THE WITNESSES

We sit with the shepherds and their dogs as they are directed to go to Bethlehem to witness the birth of Jesus.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2: 8 – 16

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see - I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

'Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favours!'

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' So, they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

CAROL 40

While humble shepherds

THE RESPONSE

We commit ourselves to respond to the presence on earth of Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, Emmanuel, God with us.

CLOSING PRAYERS

CAROL 38

Still the night, holy the night (*remain seated*)

POEM

Carrying a candle by Jan Sutch Pickard

Carrying a candle
from one little place of shelter
to another is an act of love.

To move through the huge
and hungry darkness, step by step,
against the invisible wind
that blows for ever around the world,
carrying a candle,
is an act of foolhardy hope.

Surely it will be blown out:
the wind is contemptuous,
the darkness cannot comprehend it.
How much light can this tiny flame shed
on all the great issues of the day?
It is as helpless as a newborn child.

Look how the human hand,
that cradles it, has become translucent:
fragile and beautiful; foolish and loving.
Step by step.

The wind is stronger than this hand,
and the darkness infinite
around this tiny here-and-now flame
that wavers, but keeps burning:
carried with such care
through an uncaring world
from one little place of shelter to another.
An act of love.

The light shines in the darkness
and the darkness can never put it out.

CAROL 32

O come, all ye faithful (vv 1 - 3)

BENEDICTION

RECESSIONAL

O Holy Night

sung by Emma McMillan