

Carols by Candlelight Service

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Preachers: Nate Taylor, Stephen Strong

[0 : 00] Good evening everyone. Welcome to Glasgow City and Partick Free Church's carol services together. If you're a visitor tonight and I do see faces I don't recognise, which is a fun challenge because getting to know people's names is always difficult, but that's always fun as well.

A very special welcome to yourself. I hope you do enjoy yourself here and especially enjoy the snacks that are happening after the service. Got loads of time, we've got an earlier service, loads of time for eating.

If you do enjoy yourself tonight and you're a visitor and you ever feel want to come back, feel free to speak to me, speak to Nate, speak to almost anyone here and they'll tell you when we meet, when we get together and what other stuff we do throughout the week. I am not planning to introduce every item this evening, but I'll lay out a road map for you so you know what's going on, especially if this is a strange setup for you.

So we come to church to hear from God through reading his Bible and hearing it preached. We speak to God in prayer and we also sing in thankfulness to God for what he has done for us.

Tonight, particularly, we will have many carols, readings, which will hopefully tell you the full story of what Jesus, who came at Christmas, has done for us and what we have because of him.

[1 : 33] And Nate will speak later to tell you more of who Jesus is. Readers, and you know who you are because you've been really nice and offered to do it, well, been persuaded to do it in many cases. Just come up as you see your name and speak into this microphone here. The rest of us, we will take our lead from our wonderful musicians, when to stand up, when to start singing and when to sit down as well. So without any further ado, let's start worshipping God together and singing, O come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant.

O come all ye, O come ye, to heaven, ye.

O come ye, to heaven, ye. Come and behold him, Lord, the King of angels. O come, let us adore him. O come, let us adore him. O come, let us adore him.

O come, let us adore him. O come, let us adore him. Christ the Lord. O come, let us adore him.

Let us adore him Oh come let us adore him Oh come let us adore him Christ the Lord
Sing by salvation Sing in exultation Sing on each citizens of heaven above Glory to God in the highest Oh come let us adore him Oh come let us adore him Oh come let us adore him Christ the Lord

[4 : 42] Please be seated. Thank you again for coming out tonight. That was magnificent singing from everyone. Especially those who are willing to be here if you're football fans as well.

Let's join together in praying to our God and King. Our Heavenly Father we come to you this evening to bring you praise to celebrate the joy of this season.

We are brought together to remember and take great delight in the fact that you in a time and a place in history you Lord sent your son to come to earth to take on human form for us.

Almighty God lowering himself to become a baby who was cared for. You came to earth for our good. You knew there was a problem.

That sin had changed the way we should be living in community with you. But rather than destroy us you and your everlasting love and compassion for us and our confused state had a plan for saving us.

[5 : 54] That Jesus would not only come to earth but he would teach us love us and live a perfect life. And because of that perfect life when he died on the cross for us it was everything we needed to be brought back to you.

We thank you for this good news. At a time when we worry how much everything costs and poverty is a real reality to many we realise we can be poor in faith without you and the great news your offer of salvation is free to us.

In a world where the weather is cold outside we recognise we can be cold to your truth in our hearts when we are cold make us alive with the warmth of your good news.

We praise you for being such a loving God towards us a God who is with his people not a distant and far off in a castle or a palace but with us and for us.

You are our great King worthy of all honour and glory and praise. Be with us as we continue in our service of praise to you in Jesus Christ's name Amen.

[7 : 15] Amen. The protection of Jesus Isaiah chapter 7 verse 14 Isaiah chapter 9 verse 6 verse 7 For us a child is born to us a son is given and the government shall be upon us his shoulder and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor Mighty God Everlasting Father Prince of Peace Of the increase of the increase of the increase of the government and of peace there will be no end of the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

The Lord to the Lord for wonders he has done his right hand and his holy the victory have won the Lord declared his taking work and made it to be known to all the nations of the world his righteousness is shown his steadfast love and faithfulness he has remembered well the covenant he made it there the house of Israel and all the nations of the earth have seen what God has done our God who brings deliverance by his right hand alone acclaim the Lord

O all the earth shout loudly and rejoice make music and be jubilant to him lift up your voice with heart make music to the Lord with heart his praises sing with trumpet and with heart rejoice before the Lord the King name this reading's from Luke chapter 1 26 to 35 in the sixth month the angel

Gabriel was sent from God to the city of Galilee named Nazareth to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David and the virgin's name was Mary and he came to her and said greetings oh favoured one the Lord is with you but she was greatly troubled at the saying and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be and the angel said to her do not be afraid Mary for you have found favour with God and behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall call him his name Jesus and he will be great and will be called the son of the most high and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there will be no end and Mary said to the angel how will this be since I am a virgin and the angel answered her the Holy Spirit will come upon Matthew chapter 1 verses 18 to 25 the birth of

Jesus Christ now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way when his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit and her husband Joseph being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame resolved to divorce her quietly but as he considered these things behold an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying Joseph son of David do not fear to take Mary as your wife for that which is conceived in her is for he will save his people from their sins all this took place to fulfill what the Lord has spoken by the prophet behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel which means God is with us when Joseph woke from sleep he did as the angels the Lord commanded him he took his wife but knew her not until she had given birth to a throne and ■ to his sonos god lows

[14 : 01] Major baby, made a major for his men, Mary was a father, Jesus Christ, her little child.

He came back to earth from heaven, Who is God and Lord of all.

And his shelter was a stable, And his cradle was a song.

With the poor and weak and holy, Lift on earth our Savior holy.

And through all his wondrous childhood, He would honor and obey.

[15 : 11] Love and watch the lowly mother, In whose gentle arms he lay.

Christian children all should be, And no need as good as he.

For he is our childhood pattern, Day by day by God's he grew.

He was little weak and selfless, Tears and smiles by God's he knew.

And he fills for all our sadness, And he sheds in all our sadness.

[16 : 15] And our eyes and blood shall see him, Through his own redeeming love.

For that child so dear and gentle, Is our Lord in heaven above.

And he leads his children on, To the place where he is gone.

God in that pure holy table, With the odds who stand in high, We shall see him, As in heaven, Set as bones and land on high, There his children gather round, Bright like stars with glory crowns.

The shepherds and the angels. And in the same region, There were shepherds out in the field, Keeping watch over their flocks by night.

[18 : 03] And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, And the glory of the Lord shone around them, And they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, Fear not, For behold, I bring you good news of great joy, That will be for all the people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David, A Savior, Who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you.

You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths, And lying in a manger. And suddenly, There was with the angel, A multitude of the heavenly host, Praising God, Saying, Glory to God in the highest, And on earth, Peace among those with whom he is pleased.

When the angels went away from them into heaven, The shepherds said to one another, Let us go over to Bethlehem, And see this thing that has happened, Which the Lord has made known to us.

And they went with haste, And found Mary and Joseph, And the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, They made known the saying, That had been told them, Concerning this child.

[19 : 35] And all who heard it wondered, At what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, Pondering them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, Glorifying and praising God, For all they had heard and seen, As it had been told them.

Laugh from Goldist, Repository to the pure hand, And the praise of the Lord, For all theu en solders, Be alive and ■■■zystels, The wine rzecz The herald angels sing Glory to the newborn King Peace on earth and mercy mild God and sinners reconciled Joyful all ye nations rise Joyful the triumph of the skies When angelic hosts proclaim Christ is born in Bethlehem

Hark the herald angels sing Glory to the newborn King Christ my eyes and the door Christ the everlasting Lord Made in time the olden crown Offspring of the virgin's womb Filled in flesh the garden sea Filled in garment deity Jesus our Emmanuel Hark the herald angels sing Glory to the newborn King

Fill the hand for Prince of Peace Hail the smile of righteousness Light and life to all He brings Praise with healing in His wings Hark the herald angels sing Hark the herald angels sing Glory to the Lord Glory to the newborn King Born that man no more may die Born that man no more may die Born to raise her sons on earth Born to give her seventh birth Hark the herald angels sing Glory to the newborn King Glory to the newborn King The perfect life of Jesus

[23 : 14] He committed no sin Neither was deceit found in his mouth For we do not have a high priest Who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses But one who is in every respect Has been tempted as we are Yet without sin Again Jesus spoke to them saying I am the light of the world Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness But have the light of life Jesus said to them I am the bread of life Whoever comes from me shall not hunger And whoever believes in me shall never thirst You are at the Partic train station And a man you don't know walks up to you And gets closer than you are comfortable with And he leans in and he says to you The Latin name for the harlequin duck Is histrionicus, histrionicus, histrionicus

You know we have been having all these readings And singing all these Christmas songs And it says a lot of nice things And we might understand the words in them And have some kind of idea what it is like But that is all that it amounts to It is just kind of confusing and meaningless And we do not really know what it means You can understand what that man just said to you At the Partic train station But you do not know what it means Until you understand a story behind it There is a philosopher named Alistair MacIntyre He came up with that quote I did not come up with it And he said you know what The way that you are going to respond to that man As he says that strange thing to you It depends on the story that you place behind it For instance Maybe he is a duck enthusiast Maybe he was at the library the other day And he saw someone who looked just like you And you had asked him what the Latin name for the harlequin duck is

And he is trying to relay this information to you Or maybe he is an undercover spy And the secret code to say You know this is where this is all going to go down Is the Latin name for the harlequin duck It is histrionicus Histrionicus Histrionicus Histrionicus You see you do not know how to respond to him In one sense you could just assume that he is a loon Or a quack Or what you could do is just to tell him I am sorry sir you have mistaken me for the wrong person Or you could go and turn him into MI6 It all depends on the story that is behind it You see the way that we make sense of facts Of truth Is in the story that we place around it And in the same way when we come to Christmas All these nice truths These nice feelings These things full of Christmas cheer These songs that we sing These images of light and darkness A manger Wiseman All of those things You make sense of them

By the story That is behind it In fact that is how we make sense of our lives The world that we live in Is the story that we tell around it That is how we know what type of purpose we have What a human being is supposed to be for What is going on in the world Turn on the news And it is not just reporting facts They are trying to put it in the context Of a story I wonder what How you would summarize the story of your life What kind of story is it?

Is it a drama? Is it a tragedy? Is it a comedy? Is it a tragic comedy? Maybe you are sitting there going There is nothing that exciting in my life That we even tell a story about The Bible What we are talking about At Christmas It actually helps us to make sense of our stories By placing our story in light of a bigger story That is being told Out on our sign out there is a verse from John 1-5 That kind of picked up the theme for this homily And it is this John the Gospel writer says The light shined in the darkness And the darkness didn't overcome it Again, it sounds so nice, doesn't it?

[27 : 38] It sounds like something that we can sit and nod at And think, man, that is what Christmas is all about But to actually understand what he is saying Is to understand the story of the Bible Now I know everybody is sitting there going Like, when is the mulled wine and the mince pies The preacher guy is talking about the story of the whole Bible How long is this going to take?

As long as it takes, guys No, I promise I am going to summarize it really quickly Because you see, here is the thing The story of the Bible It is the story of the world And any story Any good story that you hear Has all of these elements in it Because it is the story that God has written into the world And it is this That there is a creation There is a purpose Something has gone wrong And we are trying to scramble back And trying to find some sort of rescue And meaning again So act one It is creation, right?

The light shines in the darkness John, he has been echoing the very first pages of the Bible Where there is darkness And what does God the Creator say? Let there be light And there was There is light You were created for light To know things To enjoy life To know your purpose To know what your story is What kind of story it actually is You have to know the bigger story That there is a purpose behind your life You know, sometimes we ask the question You know, was Macbeth right?

Is life just a tale told by an idiot Full of sound and fury Signifying nothing? The Bible says no You were created with purpose And meaning And joy And that is why we still feel this And that is why we chase after those things In life But something has gone wrong Right?

Act two is There is a fall Darkness Enters in Darkness has come back into the world No matter who you are No matter what religion Or non-religion That you ascribe to I think most people would admit There is something wrong with the world Things aren't the way that they are supposed to be There is a darkness Remember as soon as my brother My little brother was old enough I was like you need to sit down buddy And we are going to watch Star Wars He was probably too young for it But I made him sit down and watch the trilogy And I asked him to summarize what he thought about it The whole thing And his summary is still something we joke about In my family He said this There was the good guys And there was the bad guys Isn't that sometimes what we like to look at in life And how we want to divide things Yeah there is the good guys And there is the bad guys Sure there is darkness But that is over there But you see what the Bible says

[30 : 33] The story of the world And what we need to see our story in light of Is that that darkness It is not just out there But it is also in here But it is also in here That things aren't right in our lives There is suffering There is death in this world And also in our own lives We don't act the way that we are supposed to There is this man named Alexander Solzhenitsyn He was a Russian communist dissident And he wrote a very famous book called Gulag Archipelago He was put in the Gulag for a while And tens of millions of copies have been sold for it And he is kind of reflecting on some of the things that he sees in human behavior And he has got this really famous quote in it He says, if only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds And it were only necessary to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them Wouldn't that be nice?

That would be so cut and dry And he says this But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?

And that is the question that is driving the whole story of the Bible That is getting us to this place at Christmas Is this, what is God going to do about the darkness? Is the darkness going to win?

Is this all that there is? Is this as good as it gets? Act one, creation Act two, the fall Act three, rescue Redemption Any good story has some sort of redemption Some sort of rescue The problem has occurred and there is a resolution towards it And this is what the rescue, the redemption in the Bible is all about At Christmas It is that the light of the world has come You see John, when he says the light shone into the darkness He is talking about the light as Jesus And he uses these two metaphors of light And he also uses the word He talks about the word And he says this in verse 14 of John chapter 1 The word became flesh and dwelt among us You know, the question that we ask when we see all of the darkness is Does God care?

Is he there? Is he going to do anything about it? Is he there anything about it? And the answer at Christmas is yes Not only has he seen it But he cares so much that he would come and become enmeshed in it That God has punched a hole through the cosmos Has entered in in flesh and blood And has come as a small baby in a manger There is an author named Dorothy Sayers She wrote later in her life about theology Earlier on she is famous for her detective novels The Lord Peter Wimsey series My mom read a lot of them I read a couple of them growing up Maybe you know some of those You know, in that story that she writes Lord Peter Wimsey He is this aristocratic detective And he is single and he is alone And he is brilliant and he solves all these crimes And then you get a few novels in And there is this tall woman named Harriet Vane And she appears in this series And people have pointed out After the fact many years later

[33 : 47] That Dorothy Sayers, the way she describes this character Who enters in, Harriet Vane Who ends up falling in, her and Lord Peter Wimsey Fall in love and they get married It is interesting because the descriptions of this woman Harriet Vane kind of describe Dorothy Sayers In the novels, Harriet Vane, she is the first woman to graduate And be awarded a degree from Oxford Guess who that was true of in real life?

Dorothy Sayers So it is like they say, looking back on these stories It is like she sees this character who she has created Lord Peter Wimsey And this character who she loves And she sees as she is writing and creating this story A loneliness Even in his brilliance Even in all the good and the glory There is a loneliness There is an ache There is a darkness And what she does Is because of the love she has for this character It is like she writes herself into the story That is kind of a silly example But what the Bible says Is because of the Creator's great love The one who said, let there be light And he has seen the darkness And how much he loves you He has written himself into the story The author of the story Enters into the story It is because God so loved the world He wrote himself into the story And the person of Jesus Christ And you are thinking Yeah, it is okay Where I am in a church

That is fine and dandy I am going to hear Jesus stuff like that What does that have to do with me And my story? Well you see the claim of the Bible And the claim at Christmas Is what he has come It is not just to be the shining example Of love It is not just to be the one Who is going to be an example That you have to follow after It is actually the one who has come To rescue people Who could not rescue themselves See what we read a second ago One of the things Jesus said Is he says, he is the light of the world And whoever follows him Won't walk in darkness But will have the light of life And that is what he offers He offers to people Who will come after him And the one who is the light of the world He actually goes to the cross And you know what the Bible says Happens at the cross You look up at the sky And it gets dark The one who is light and life himself Doesn't just enter into the darkness He takes on the darkness

The darkness That we have participated in The guilt and the punishment For our own darkness He takes on himself in the cross And he goes to the darkness Of the tomb But it doesn't just stop there The tombstone is rolled away And out comes resurrection light Hail the sun of righteousness Of righteousness As we just talked about As we just sang And that's the story The story of rescue Actually you are invited To come in and participate in it To see your story All the things in your life The glory and the heartache In light of a bigger story And do you know what?

It can actually change you right now Last story I promise And then I'll pray And we'll continue singing Some Christmas carols There was a Scottish minister Named Murdo McDonald I've told this story in America But I just happened to Google His name again today And I was like I want to learn a little bit more about him He was actually a minister In a parish church in Partick In the 1940s And he served during World War II And he was captured by the Germans And he was put in a prisoner of war camp He and another Scottish minister friend They were chaplains in the army And he was put on the British side And his friend was put on the American side And there was a fence that ran down the middle Of this prisoner of war camp And they would kind of You know he and his friend They would minister and pray with people He was in this prisoner of war camp for two years And every once in a while And they were allowed to walk around He and his friend would come And they would speak to one another At this fence And they would speak in Gaelic Because none of the Germans knew Gaelic

[38 : 03] And they could kind of talk Amongst themselves And nobody knew what they were saying And what Murdo McDonald found out Is that on the American side Some American soldier Had smuggled in a small CB radio And so in the dark of night On that side of the camp They would all huddle around And they would tune in And they would try to find Some sort of good news Some sort of light Some sort of light Some sort of light For the darkness of their life I mean there's guards And there's guns And the food tastes terrible And they're cold And they're sick And they're wondering What is the hope And night after night They would tune in And nothing And nothing Until one night They're tuning in And they hear the news That the Germans have surrendered And the allies have won And Murdo McDonald says There's this huge cheer That went up in the camp The only thing was At this point

All communication had broken down Amongst the German troops And so all of the guards In this prisoner of war camp Had no idea That the war was over And so The day comes And Murdo McDonald goes To the fence And meets his friend And he tells them That the war is over And so Murdo McDonald goes back And tells the British side All the prisoners there And another cheer goes up And still The German soldiers Have no idea What's going on And in fact What Murdo McDonald says Is for the next three days Absolutely nothing changed Still cold Food was still terrible Guards still had guns pointed at them But he said it was amazing Because this news had come This big story This true story Had come into their lives This light had shone Into the darkness Into the darkness Of them In this prisoner of war camp And he said All of a sudden The cold didn't bother them so much And they were actually able To smile at the guards Who were pointing these guns at them

Until all of a sudden One day they woke up And the guards had abandoned the camp And they were free to go You see what does it mean To have this Christmas story To understand it This creation This fall And this redemption Come into your life And shape your story And it's this This story This good news Can actually change you now I am not trying The Bible never sugar coats things And says that Oh life is just fine and dandy Just put a smile on your face And here's a little cup Of Christmas cheer Go on your way It's very very honest About the darkness But in that There's hope That the light of the world has come And you get to see your light Your life And your story In light of that Would you pray with me Would you pray with me Would you pray with me Father we do thank you For the good news Of great joy For all the people That the light Has shined into the darkness And the darkness Has not It will not It cannot Overcome it

And Father we pray Lord that Whoever we are This evening That we would think About these words We would think about Our story all the different parts of it, and then we'd think of the story of Christmas and ask ourselves, what does this have to do with us?

We pray that your light would shine into our hearts so that we can know the truth and so that we can have life. We pray this in the name of the light of the world.

[41 : 38] Amen. These are three different readings all about the death of Jesus.

Mark 8, verse 31, Jesus predicts his death. He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.

Luke 23. When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals, one on his right, the other on his left.

Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. And he divided up his clothes by casting lots. From noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over all the land.

About three in the afternoon, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, Eli, Eli, lemas sabachthani, which means, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[42 : 59] And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split.

When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified and exclaimed, surely he was the son of God.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. for God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

O where's the time O where's the time and all that may have thou still be seen in life?

Above your deep and dreamless sea the silent stars go by.

[44 : 24] Yet in your light's reach shining his everlasting light The hopes and fears of all the years are met in you tonight For Christ is born of Mary and gathered all among While mortals sing the angels sing Their watch of one day O Lord, we start together Proclame the holy birth And praises sing To God the King And peace to men on earth

How silently, how silently The wondrous gift is here So God implies to human hearts The blessings of his death No ear may hear his coming But in this world of sin Where mean souls will receive him still And hear Christ enters him O holy child of Bethlehem Descend to us Descend to us We pray P

O come to us, come, I pray for us, our Lord Emmanuel.

I need to adjust this a little bit. I might just manage. The grace of Jesus.

But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.

[47 : 51] For it is by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not from yourselves.

This, it is the gift of God. That if you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

God is good. and this points to our future hope in Christ and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and will take you to myself that where I am you may be also so Christ having been offered once to bear the sins of many will appear a second time not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him and now dear children continue in him so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming joy to the world the Lord has come let her receive her gain let her be all prepared in food at heaven and nature stay at heaven and nature stay at heaven and heaven and nature stay joy to the earth the Savior brings your sweetest songs to pour of fields and streams and hills and plains repeat the sounding joy repeat the sounding joy repeat, repeat the sounding joy hear all the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove the glories of his righteousness the wonders of his love the wonders of his love the wonders of his love

Merry Christmas we would love for you to stick around there's mulled wine and mince pies just through those doors and down the drive on the side in the large hall just stick around and enjoy yourself and get to know some people but before we do that let's go with the Lord's blessing now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you go in peace Amen