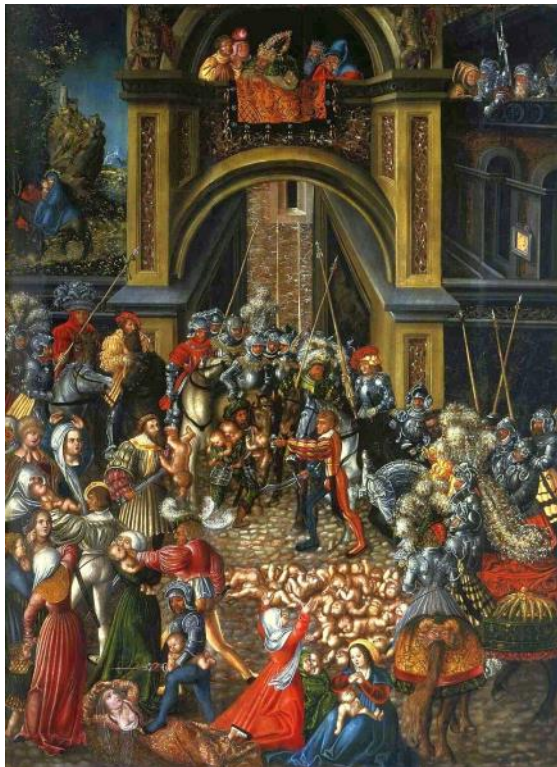


The Season of Christmas

Saint Stephen's welcomes everyone who wishes to follow Christ, worship together, grow in faith and share God's love through service to others.

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church THE FEAST HOLY INNOCENTS



The Feast of the Holy Innocents commemorates [The Massacre of the Innocents](#) is the incident described in the [nativity narrative](#) of the [Gospel of Matthew \(2:16–18\)](#) in which [Herod the Great, king of Judea](#), orders the execution of all male children who are two years old and under in the vicinity of [Bethlehem](#). The Catholic Church regards them as the first [Christian martyrs](#), and their feast – [Holy Innocents' Day](#) (or the [Feast of the Holy Innocents](#)) – is celebrated on 28 December.^[2] A majority of Herod biographers, and "probably a majority of biblical scholars," hold the event to be myth, or legend.^[3]

Biblical narrative

The [Gospel of Matthew](#) tells how the [Magi](#) visit [Jerusalem](#) to seek guidance as to where the king of the Jews has been born; King Herod directs them to Bethlehem and asks them to return to him and report, but they are warned in a dream that Herod wishes to find

[Continued Pg11](#)

Wednesday, 28 December 2022 9:30am

Welcome and Announcements

Rev Allison Cornell

The Greeting

Presider Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

People **And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever. Amen.**

Presider *Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Gloria: Hymnal 1982 #96 Angels we have heard on high

The Collect of the Day

Presider *The Lord be with you.*

People **And also with you.**

Presider *Let us pray.*

All: We remember today, O God, the slaughter of the holy innocents of Bethlehem by King Herod. Receive, we pray, into the arms of your mercy all innocent victims; and by your great might frustrate the designs of evil tyrants and establish your rule of justice, love, and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Lessons from Scripture *(please be seated for the lessons)*

First Reading from the book of **Jeremiah 31:15-17:**

Thus says the Lord:

A voice is heard in Ramah,
lamentation and bitter weeping.

Rachel is weeping for her children;
she refuses to be comforted for her children,
because they are no more.

Thus says the Lord:

Keep your voice from weeping,
and your eyes from tears;

for there is a reward for your work,
says the Lord:

they shall come back from the land of the enemy;

there is hope for your future,
says the Lord:

your children shall come back to their own country.

Reader: The word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Psalm 124

**1 If the Lord had not been on our side, *
let Israel now say;**

**2 If the Lord had not been on our side, *
when enemies rose up against us;**

**3 Then would they have swallowed us up alive *
in their fierce anger toward us;**

**4 Then would the waters have overwhelmed us *
and the torrent gone over us;**

**5 Then would the raging waters *
have gone right over us.**

**6 Blessed be the Lord! *
he has not given us over to be a prey for their teeth.**

**7 We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowler; *
the snare is broken, and we have escaped.**

**8 Our help is in the Name of the Lord, *
the maker of heaven and earth.**

Second Reading from the Book of Revelation 21:1-7

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

“See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them as their God;

they will be his peoples,

and God himself will be with them;

he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;

mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away.”

And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.” Then he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

Reader: The word of the Lord. **People: Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Reading Matthew (2:13-18)

Reader: The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.

People: Glory to you, Lord Christ

When the wise men had departed, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

"A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled, because they are no more."

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord **People: Praise to you, Lord Christ**

Sermon

The Nicene Creed *All say together*

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.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from 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. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He 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 People

Leader: *Let us pray to God, who came among us in the birth of Jesus: Gracious God, as a star rose, and drew people from great distances to Bethlehem that they might greet the Christ-child; Draw us, your Church, and all of your people, to you – that we might be the Church and the People who you call us to be. Lord, in your mercy,*

People: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: *As you gave Mary your Holy Spirit, filling her with the delight of your Presence; Fill us with your Spirit, and renew our lives. Lord, in your mercy,*

Hear our prayer.

Leader: *As Gentiles streamed to Jesus' Light, and Kings to the brightness of his rising; Draw our nation, our President, and all in authority, to Your brightness. Lord, in your mercy,*

Hear our prayer.

Leader: *As angels sang 'glorias' to you and proclaimed peace on earth, and goodwill among all peoples; Bring us your peace, and bring an end to and terror, conflict, and strife. Lord, in your mercy,*

Hear our prayer.

Leader: *As shepherds were drawn away from their flocks by night; Draw those who do not know you yet to the knowledge and love of you. Lord, in your mercy,*

Hear our prayer.

Leader: *As Jesus was born in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn; Be especially present with those who have no where to lay their head, those who are vulnerable, and those who are hungry. Lord, in your mercy,*

Hear our prayer.

Leader: *As the Holy Family gathered together in Bethlehem, and traveled together to far off lands; Bless all families, especially the families of our parish, and protect those who travel. Lord, in your mercy,*

Hear our prayer.

Leader: *As your son came to proclaim the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of Life Eternal; Give to the departed eternal rest and let Light perpetual shine on them. Lord, in your mercy,*

Hear our prayer.

Leader: *Let us pray for our own needs and those of others, (people add their own prayers either silently or aloud). Lord, in your mercy*

Hear our prayer.

Presider: *O Lord our God, may the Light and Hope of this night and this Christmas season, and of your Son's Incarnation, reassure our hearts that you are among us, that you hear our prayers, and that you will be with us always, even to the end of the age. In the name of Jesus, the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, and Prince of Peace, we pray. Amen.*

Exchange of the Peace

Presider *May the peace of Christ be always with you*
All **And also with you.**

(The Ministers and People exchange socially distant signs of peace (peace sign, namaste, virtual hug)

Offertory

Presider: *Through Christ let us continually offer to God the sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his Name.*

The Holy Communion

The Great Thanksgiving

Rite II Prayer B BCP p. 367

Presider *The Lord be with you.*

People **And also with you.**

Presider *Lift up your hearts.*

People **We lift them to the Lord.**

Presider *Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.*

People **It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

Presider

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

Because you gave Jesus Christ, your only Son to be born for us, who, by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, was made perfect Man of the flesh of the Virgin Mary his mother, so that we might be delivered from the bondage of sin and receive power to become your children.

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

Sanctus: #S124

**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.

The people stand, sit, or kneel.

We give thanks to you, O God, for the goodness and love which you have made known to us in creation; in the calling of Israel to be your people; in your Word spoken through the prophets; and above all in the Word made flesh, Jesus, your Son.

For in these last days you sent him to be incarnate from the Virgin Mary, to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world. In him, you have delivered us from evil, and made us worthy to stand before you. In him, you have brought us out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life.

On the night before he died for us, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said,:

"Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he 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. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore, according to his command, O Father,

We remember his death,

We proclaim his resurrection,

We await his coming in glory;

And we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to you, O Lord of all; presenting to you, from your creation, this bread and this wine.

We pray you, gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts (+) that they may be the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and his Blood of the new Covenant.

Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice, that we may be acceptable through him, being sanctified (+) by the Holy Spirit.

In the fullness of time, put all things in subjection under your Christ, and bring us to that heavenly country where, with all your saints, we may enter the everlasting heritage of your sons and daughters; through Jesus Christ our Lord, the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church, and the author of our salvation.

By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and forever. **AMEN.**

And now as our savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say:

Lord's Prayer:

**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, and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

The Breaking of the Bread

Fraction: *(In silence the Presider breaks the bread)*

All Sing Gather Hymnal 813 Refrain only:

One bread, one body, one Lord of all.

One cup of blessing which we bless.

**And we, though many, through out the earth,
we are one body in this one Lord.**

Invitation to Communion:

Presider: The gifts of God for the people of God.

(In this church, everyone is welcome to receive the bread and wine of Holy Communion. Gluten free bread and real wine are used. Please extend your hand to receive the bread and hold it until offered the cup/chalice to intinct it/dip it into the wine. If you prefer not to have the wine, you may consume the bread when you receive it. If prefer, you can cross your arms over your chest to receive a blessing instead of the bread and wine).

Post Communion Prayer *The people stand as they are able.*

Presider: Let us pray: *Presider and People*

Lord Jesus Christ, by your incarnation you united things earthly and things heavenly. Fill us with the sweetness of inward peace and goodwill, that we may join the heavenly host in singing praises to your glory; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Blessing

The Presider says

May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the magi, and the peace of the Christ child. And may Almighty God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Deacon: *People of St. Stephen's, what does God call us to do?*

People: We are called to love and serve.

Deacon: *Let us go forth in the peace and spirit of Christ. Alleluia, alleluia!*

People **Thanks be to God. Alleluia, Alleluia, (Alleluia!)**

Continued...

the child and kill him, and do not do so. Matthew continues:

When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.

— [Matthew 2:16](#)

This is followed by a reference to and quotation from the [Book of Jeremiah \(Jeremiah 31:15\)](#): "Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: A voice is heard in [Ramah](#), weeping and great mourning, [Rachel](#) weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more." ([Matthew 2:17-18](#)). The relevance of this to the massacre is not immediately apparent, as Jeremiah's next verses go on to speak of hope and restoration.^[4]

History and theology

The story of the massacre is found in no gospel other than Matthew, nor is it mentioned in the surviving works of [Nicolaus of Damascus](#) (who was a personal friend of Herod the Great), nor in [Josephus's](#) *Antiquities of the Jews*, despite his recording many of Herod's misdeeds including the murder of three of his own sons.^[2] The event is alluded to by [Macrobius](#), a pagan writing in the early 5th century: "On hearing that the son of Herod, king of the Jews, had been slain when Herod ordered that all boys in Syria under the age of two be killed, [Augustus] said, 'It's better to be Herod's pig than his son.'"^[a] In view of the lack of independent confirmation that the event ever occurred, scholars consider it folklore inspired by Herod's reputation.^[6]

The author appears to have modeled the episode on the episode with the biblical story of [Pharaoh's](#) attempt to kill the Israelite children in the [Book of Exodus](#), as told in an expanded version that was current in the 1st century.^[7] In that expanded story, Pharaoh kills the Hebrew children after his scribes warn him of the impending birth of the threat to his crown (i.e., Moses), but Moses' father and mother are warned in a dream that the child's life is in danger and act to save him.^[8] Later in life, after Moses has to flee, like Jesus, he returns when those who sought his death are themselves dead.^[8] The story of the massacre of the innocents thus plays a part in Matthew's wider nativity story, in which the proclamation of the coming of the Messiah (his birth) is followed by his rejection by the Jews (Herod and his scribes and the people of Jerusalem) and his later acceptance by the gentiles (the [Magi](#)).^[9]

Numbers

The Greek liturgy asserts 14,000 Holy Innocents, while an early Syrian list of saints asserts 64,000. [Coptic](#) sources assert 144,000 and assert that it took place on 29 December.^[10] The [Catholic Encyclopedia](#) of 1907–12, recognising that Bethlehem was too small a town to provide such numbers, reduced the victims to between six and twenty children in the town, with a dozen or so more in the surrounding areas.^[b]

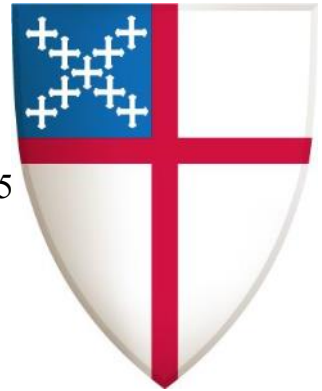
In Christian art

Medieval [liturgical drama](#) recounted Biblical events, including Herod's slaughter of the innocents. *The Pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors*, performed in Coventry, England, included a haunting song about the episode, now known as the [Coventry Carol](#). The [Ordo Rachelis](#) tradition of four plays includes the Flight into Egypt, Herod's succession by [Archelaus](#), the return from

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Welcome Visitor!!!

Please leave your name and contact info below. If you'd like to speak with someone, please check here

Or you can also use the QRC here to fill this out online.



Info Update Giving Envelopes Mail News Letter

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Adrs: _____
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