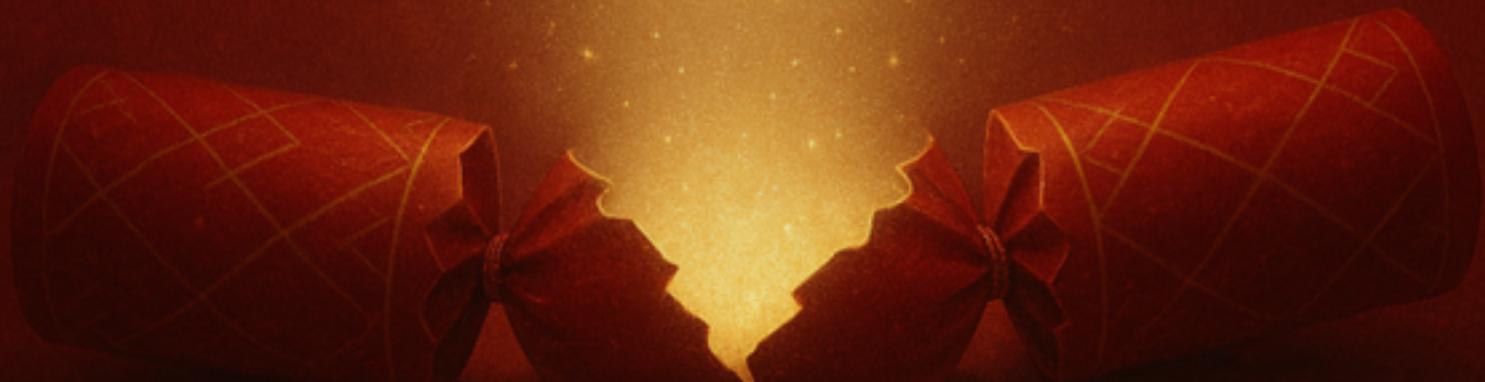


# Christmas Is Full Of Surprises

**A Surprise During The Night For The Shepherds**

**21st December 2025**



**Salendine Nook Baptist Church**

[snbch.org.uk/christmas-2025](http://snbch.org.uk/christmas-2025)



# Welcome

In today's Service we will be looking at: **Luke 2 v. 8 – 20**

The theme for our service today is: **Christmas Is Full Of Surprises – A Surprise During The Night For The Shepherds**

Today our service also includes: **Communion**

We hope that you will be able to engage with everything that has been produced for today's service and that you would be able to **Be Grateful For All The Surprises That God Gives To You This Christmas**

# Call To Worship

## **Isaiah 9 v. 6 – 7 NLT**

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us.  
And the government will rest on his shoulders.  
These will be his royal titles:  
Wonderful Councillor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
His ever expanding, peaceful government will never end.  
He will rule forever with fairness and justice from the  
throne of his ancestor David.  
The passionate commitment of the Lord  
Almighty will guarantee this!

# Opening Prayer

All praise be to you, O God, because you have come to give us of your precious love.

All praise be to you, O God, because you have opened up the way for us to experience love with you and each other.

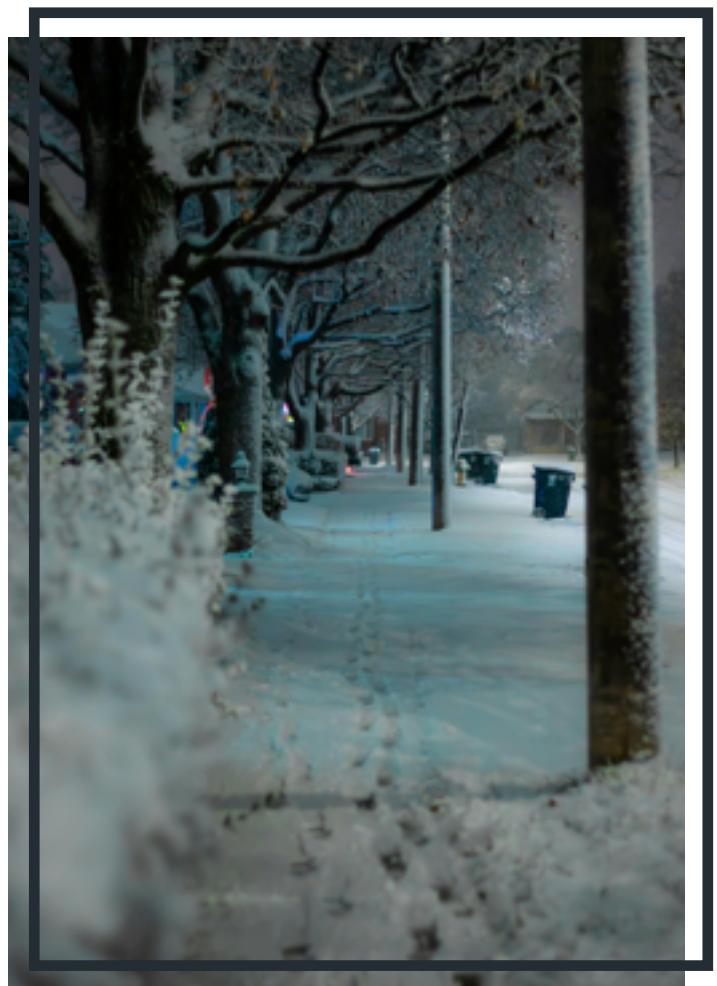
All praise be to you, O God, because you give us love, hope, joy and peace when our heart is troubled.

All praise be to you, O God, because you are in the process of establishing your love, hope, joy and peace on earth. May the celebration of the angels fill our hearts today as we hear those beautiful words: 'Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased'.

**Amen**

# Song Suggestion

See Amid The Winters Snow



# Bible Reading

## Luke 2 v. 8 – 20 NIV

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.”

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

# Lighting The Fourth Advent Candle

Jesus said: You are the world's light ..... Let your light shine in the sight of men. Let them see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven.

We light this fourth Advent Candle to remind us of our calling to reflect the light of Jesus in this dark world.

We remember that the Love Jesus brought, is the Good News.



A PRAYER FOR THE  
Fourth Sunday of Advent

Jesus, you are constantly coming to your people,  
even when we fail to see you.

In each and every moment that we are blessed  
to recognize you here and now,  
give us the courage to leap with joy at your coming.  
Amen.

# Communion

Jesus said: 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty'. **Romans 5 v. 8** also tells us: 'God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us'.

## **An Invitation to the Table:**

Come to this table, not because you must but because you may, not because you are strong, but because you are weak. Come, not because any goodness of your own gives you a right to come, but because you need mercy and help. Come, because you love the Lord a little and would like to love him more. Come, because he loved you and gave himself for you. Come and meet the risen Christ, for we are his Body, his People.

## **A prayer of Approach:**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secret is hidden; 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, we pray. Amen.

## **As we prepare to receive the bread and the cup, we hear the words of The Institution:**

The Apostle Paul tells us of the institution of the Lord's Supper, when he says: 'For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night that he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said: 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me'. In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying: 'This cup is

the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me'. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 1 Corinthians 11 v. 23 - 26

### **A Prayer of Thanksgiving before we eat the bread and drink the cup:**

Loving God, we praise and thank you for your love shown to us in Jesus Christ. We thank you for his life and ministry, announcing the good news of your kingdom and demonstrating its power in the lifting of the downtrodden, and the healing of the sick, and the loving of the loveless. We thank you for his sacrificial death upon the cross, for the redemption of the world, and for your raising him to life again, as a foretaste of the glory we shall share. We give you thanks for this bread and wine, symbols of our world and signs of your transforming love. Send your Holy Spirit, we pray, that we might be renewed into the likeness of Jesus Christ and formed into his body. This we pray in his name and for his sake. Amen.

### **WE NOW SHARE AND EAT OF THE BREAD AND SHARE AND DRINK OF THE CUP**

### **A Final Prayer of Acclamation:**

Your death, O Lord, we commemorate. Your resurrection we confess. Your final coming we await. Glory be to you, O Christ.

**Amen**

# A Poem For Advent

It is not true that creation and the human family are doomed to destruction and loss -

**This is the truth:** For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and discrimination, hunger and poverty, death and destruction -

**This is the truth:** I have come that they may have life, and life abundantly.

It is not true that violence and hatred should have the last word, and that war and destruction **rule forever** -

**This is the truth:** Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, his name shall be called Wonderful Councillor, Mighty God, the Everlasting, the Prince of Peace.

It is not true that we are simply victims of the powers of darkness and evil who seek to rule the world -

**This is the truth:** To me, Jesus says, is given authority in heaven and on earth, and I am with you, even until the end of the world.

It is not true that we have to wait for those who are specially gifted, who are the prophets of the Church before we can be peacemakers -

**This is the truth:** Jesus said: I will pour out my spirit on all flesh and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your

young men shall see visions and your old men shall have dreams.

It is not true that our hopes for liberation of humankind, of justice, of human dignity of peace are not meant for this earth and for this history –

**This is the truth:** The hour comes, and it is now, and all those who truly worship God shall worship Him in spirit and in truth.

So, as we draw to the end of this Advent season let us see visions of love and peace and justice. Let us affirm with humility, with joy, with faith, with courage that:

**Jesus Christ is The Best Surprise That We Can Have This Christmas!**

# Song Suggestion

While Shepherds Watched Their  
Flocks By Night





# Tithes, Gifts & Offerings

If you feel that you are able to, then please keep on giving to the work of the church here at Salendine Nook, with a generous and cheerful heart, praising God for all that he has given to you and share in the finances of the church.

# Church Together

## Thought

Because of the Roman decree that each family member return to their home town to participate in a census, Mary and Joseph, have made the trek to the town of Bethlehem. While they were there, it became time for Mary to give birth and there was no guest room available in all of Bethlehem for this young couple. So, they are left to sleep with the animals. And on that night, the greatest surprise of all happened, the King of all Creation is born into the world.

Outside the town at the same time as all of this is happening, a group of shepherds were keeping watch over their sheep. At night, shepherds slept among their flocks. Sometimes they sat and watched, silent figures silhouetted under the night sky and stars. When they slept, it was always with a readiness to respond to any bleating that warned of a nearby predator. When danger did come, a shepherd's grip tightened around his staff, and it became a weapon that would be used to defend himself and the flock in his care. Because there was always the sense of danger, the shepherds were not easily scared. After all, they were known to take on bears, wolves, and lions on their own. This was a rough and tough group of men. They were not easily startled or scared. In fact, fear probably wasn't even in their own vocabulary. But on that night in the hills outside of Bethlehem, underneath the stars everything changed for them.

The people of Jesus' day looked for and anticipated the promised Messiah to be one who would be a mighty military leader who would throw off the bonds of their oppressors and re-establish Jerusalem as the capital of their independent nation. Once the kingdom was re-established, the Messiah would rule over the nation and turn the people's hearts back to God. You would expect in all honesty for such a Messiah to arrive and be born in lavish surroundings that would be fit for a King. And when he was born, his arrival would be trumpeted throughout the land with much pomp and circumstance.

But that's not how God wrote the story. God chose a humble young girl and a carpenter from a small, unimportant and disrespected town of Nazareth. And when it came time for the Son of God to be born, His Father in Heaven decided to send His army of angels to announce his birth. But instead of celebrating with the kings and queens and priests and the rich and powerful, He chose to share it first with a lowly, outcast group of shepherds. He chose an unpolished, ragtag group of misfits.

In society's view, the shepherds usually ranked right up there with tanners, sailors, butchers, camel drivers, and other despised occupations. Being away from home at night they were unable to protect their families, which was also considered quite dishonourable. Because they often grazed their flocks on other people's property, they were also considered by many to be thieves. Their work also kept them away from the Temple for weeks at a time. This was a problem because the nature of their work made them ritually unclean. And they could not go back to the Temple to become ceremonially clean again. The people

responsible for raising the very sheep that were used in the Temple worship to roll back people's sins and make them ceremonially clean were effectively unclean because of their occupation.

Luke does not tell us much about these shepherds though, only that they were watching their sheep and that it was night. Suddenly the darkness is filled by a light more brilliant than any they have ever seen and an angel tells them where they will find their Saviour. The skies are filled with a heavenly choir, and angels sing for joy at the birth of this child ~ Jesus.

Imagine a God who wants to do all this for his people! If I were a shepherd, **Ezekiel 34** would be my favourite part of the Scriptures. It is clearly a prophecy foretelling the coming of Christ, and shepherds are the first to be told of the birth of Jesus. They are given this astounding news: a Saviour has been born for them.

Of all the people sleeping nearby on the night when Jesus was born, the heavenly host appeared to a group of men sleeping outdoors with their animals. The angels could have commissioned any of the philosophers, or religious leaders of the day, but no, instead they appeared to untrained men of the field – not the most likely messengers.

Encounters with the living God inevitably elicit fear. So, the angels had to reassure the shepherds: 'Don't be afraid!' Once the shepherds realized that God wanted to communicate with them, they were free to worship the Christ child. The fact that Jesus came in the flesh reassures us that our holy and almighty God is also a personal God. God is with us and for us. When we put our faith in the living God, his perfect love expels all fear as we

are told in **1 John 4 v. 18**.

That surprise encounter with the Angels on that night for the shepherds was Good News and that's great news for us today as well. God wants to use you right where you are. We don't have to be super intelligent and have a degree to share the Good News of Jesus with our neighbour. We don't need to be fluent in ancient Greek and Hebrew to share with others what God's word tells us in Scripture. God just wants to use you right where you are. In our everyday, ordinary, unremarkable lives, God can do something remarkable and extraordinary.

The shepherds had a story of how God's light burst forth into their lives. And they shared it. The people who heard it were deeply affected by their story. Have you ever wondered how many of them were trained as public speakers? I think it's safe to assume that not one of them were. They were not the most eloquent bunch, but they simply shared their stories with everyone. And we are told in **Luke 2 v. 17, 18** that everyone who heard them was astonished.

Each one of us has a story of how we began to allow God to take control of our life. It's our story and people are dying to hear it. We live in a generation when the more polished, well – trained evangelist might not be the most effective person to switch on the spiritual lightbulbs with those around us.

When it comes to the people you know who are not yet followers of Jesus, YOU are the most qualified person to share the good news with them. Much more important than having all the wording perfectly worked out is the relational interaction you have with them that will enable them to trust you with your intentions. Untrained and

unpolished – but utterly genuine – people, simply prepared to gently and respectfully talk about their relationship with God, will best connect with people today. So, let's not be surprised if God decides to use us to share with others. All we need to do is start telling our stories, just as the shepherds did. God wants to use you: simple, ordinary, unpolished you, to share His extraordinary and amazing message just like he did with the shepherds.

# Prayers Of Intercession

We come on this Fourth Sunday in Advent and we pray: God our Creator, Father and Friend, we give thanks today on this fourth Sunday in Advent for the wonderful gift of life that is given to us through your son Jesus. We want to thank you for the Hope, Peace, Joy and Love that you show to us. We thank you today for the teaching and example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus and for the forgiveness and salvation we have received through him, for his presence with us always and for the service into which he has called us. Help us to express our thanks not only in our praises and prayers, but also through the lives we lead.

We come to you this morning Gracious Lord, praying, too, for peace in our world, and for an end to violence and hostility. May there be peace in our homes and in our hearts so that we may live and work together in harmony and with genuine concern for one another.

Loving Lord Jesus, we pray for our families and friends. Help us today we pray to face the different situations we might face with dignity and love. Give us peace in our hearts and minds if we are not able to see or be with our family or friends over this Christmas period.

We continue to pray for those who are unwell, both at home and in hospital, or hospice. We think of the elderly, the housebound and those in care homes, especially over this coming Christmas week. We pray for all those who

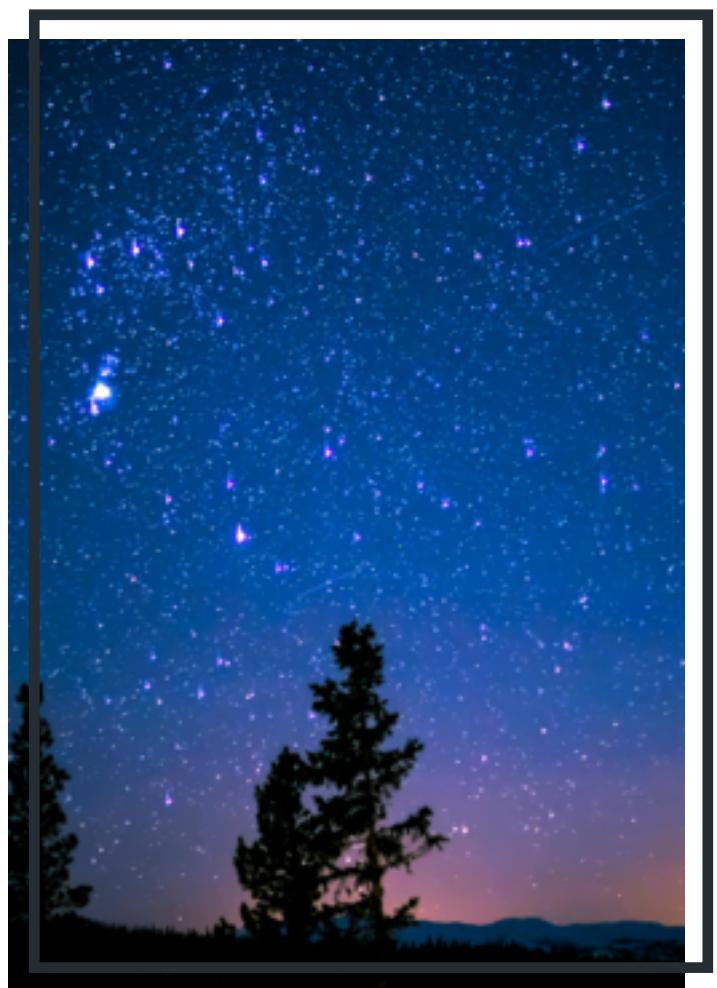
care for their needs, so again, as we share a moment of silence together, we bring before you those known only to ourselves and name them before you, Lord Jesus, in our hearts.

And finally, Lord we pray for ourselves. Help us this Christmas to follow your example in all that we do and say as we journey with you, through the remainder of this year and as we begin to move into 2026. We place ourselves, this Church and all your people into your loving care. Please accept these our prayers, in Jesus name.

**Amen**

# Music Video

Joy Unto The World





A manger scene is set against a dark, textured background. The manger is a simple wooden trough filled with straw. A small, dark, indistinct figure is visible inside the manger. The overall atmosphere is somber and focused on the message of the text.

*Will you accept Jesus  
this Christmas?*

# The 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.  
Lead us not into temptation  
But deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power  
And the glory, forever and ever.  
**Amen**



Christmas Is Full Of Surprises

# Song Suggestion

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel



# Blessing

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May the Lord bless you and keep you.  
May the Lord make his face to shine  
upon you, and be gracious to you.  
May the Lord lift up his countenance  
upon you, and give you peace.

**Amen**