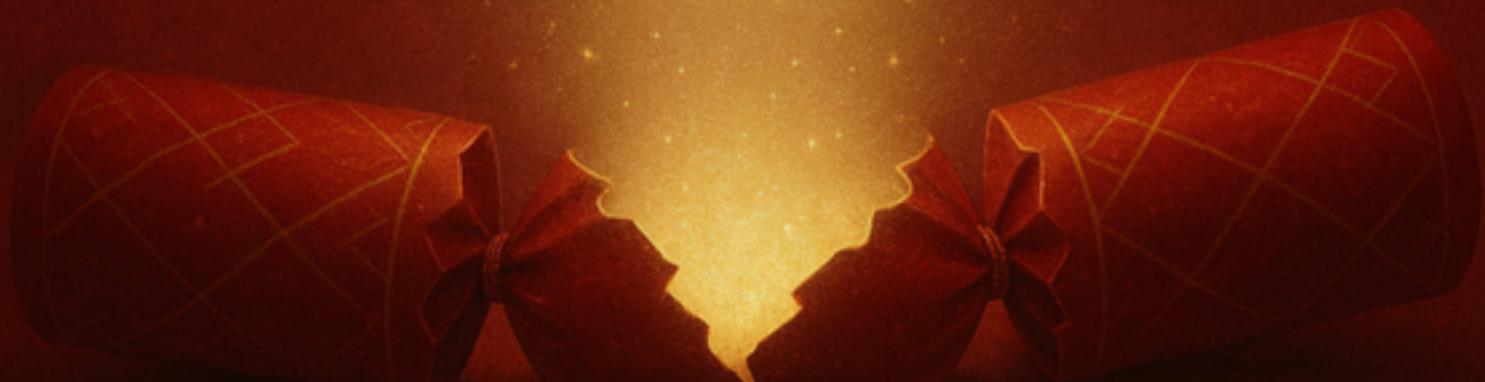


# Christmas Is Full Of Surprises

**A Surprise Visit For Mary**

**7th 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 1 v. 26 – 38**

The theme for our service today is: **Christmas Is Full Of Surprises – A Surprise Visit For Mary**

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 **Accept All The Surprises And Mysteries That Christ Brings To You!**

# Call To Worship

## Psalm 108 v. 1 – 5 NLT

My heart is confident in you, O God;  
No wonder I can sing your praises!  
Wake up, my soul!  
Wake up, O harp and lyre!  
I will waken the dawn with my song.  
I will thank you, Lord, in front of all the people.  
I will sing your praises among the nations.  
For your unfailing love is higher than the heavens.  
Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.  
Be exalted, O God, above the highest heavens.  
May your glory shine over all the earth.

# Opening Prayer

In this season of expectation we prepare to welcome you Lord Jesus.

Into the busyness of our lives and the hard to find moments of solitude we prepare to welcome you Lord Jesus.

Into our homes and situations along with our friends and families we prepare to welcome you Lord Jesus.

Into our hearts, and those often hidden parts of our lives we prepare to welcome you Lord Jesus.

For beneath the surface of your story is an inescapable fact that you entered this world as vulnerable as any one of us in order to nail that vulnerability to the cross.

Our fears, our insecurities and our sins all that can separate us from God was exchanged by your Grace for Love.

We cannot comprehend the reasoning only marvel that Salvation comes to us through a baby born in a stable, and reaches out to a world in need.

In this season of anticipation we prepare to welcome you Lord Jesus.

**Amen**

# Bible Reading

**Luke 1 v. 26 – 38 NIV**

## **The Birth of Jesus Foretold**

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you."

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

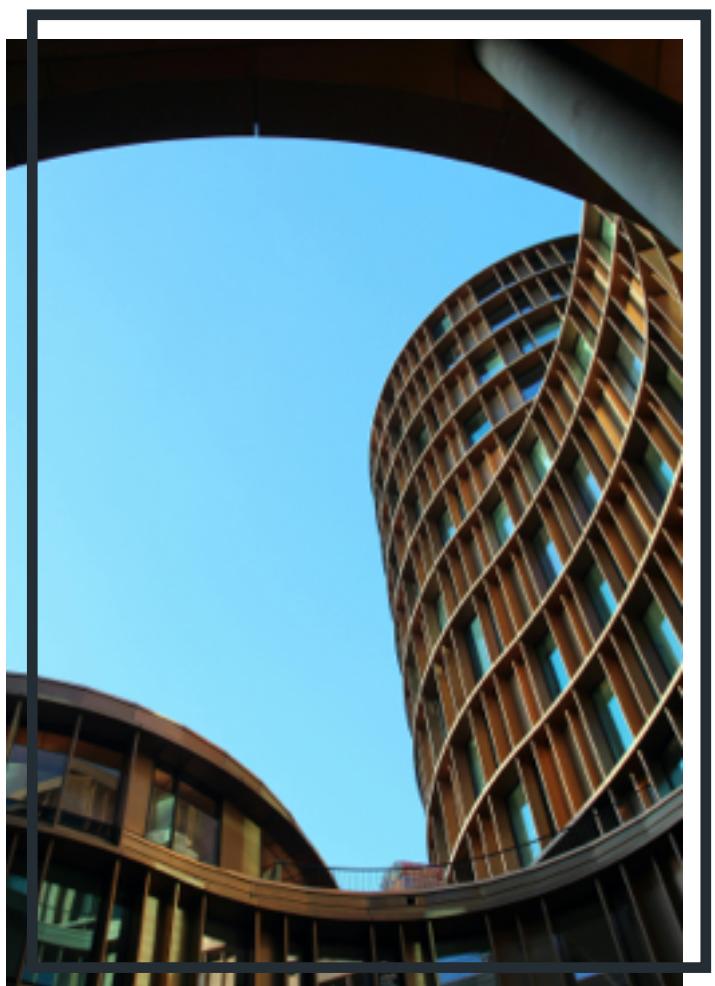
34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37 For no word from God will ever fail."

38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

# Song Suggestion

Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine



# Church

## Membership

Believers' baptism, reception into church membership around the Lord's Supper and the laying on of hands, all relate to our initiation into the Body of Christ.

As Judith Hollingworth is being brought into Church Membership this morning, we give thanks to God for all that Judith means to us as a church. We have heard at the recent Church Members Meeting a report from Karen Kent & Sue Thornton who visited Judith and gave a glowing report and recommendation that Judith be accepted as a Church Member.

Judith will be asked the following questions as we gather for Communion:

**'... do you believe God has called you to serve Christ as part of this local Baptist church? ... Do you commit yourself to love and serve the Lord within the church community and in the world; and being filled with the Holy Spirit, to fulfil your ministry in the Body of Christ ...'**

An invitation to the church members to stand will be given and the question asked:

**'... do you welcome ..... Into the family of God in this local church ... Do you promise to love, encourage, strengthen, guide, pray for, and care for ..... As an equal partner in the Body of Christ ...'**

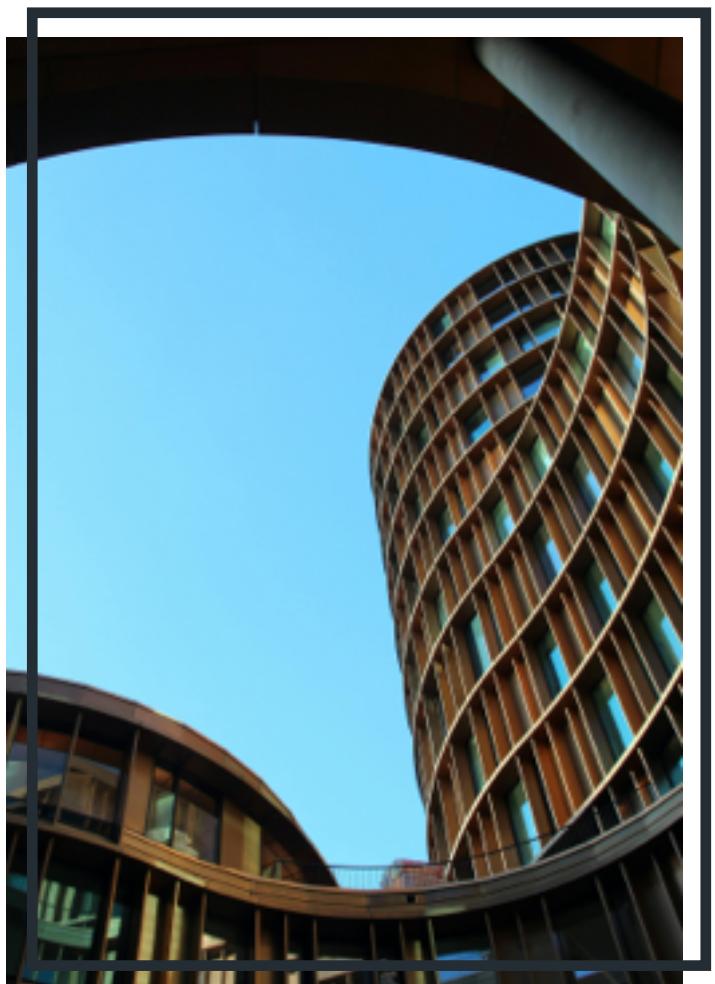
When answers are given to these questions, then the right hand of fellowship will be offered to Judith and the following words said:

**'...In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and on behalf of this local fellowship, I welcome you into our fellowship here at Salendine Nook Baptist Church ...'**

A prayer will be shared with Judith and then we will sing a hymn, before sharing together in Communion.

# Song Suggestion

At The Name Of Jesus



# 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**

# Lighting The Second Advent Candle

The Apostle Paul writes: The word of prophecy was fulfilled in our hearing! You should give that word your closest attention, for it shines like a lamp amidst all the dirt and darkness of the world, until the day dawns, and the morning star rises in your hearts.

We light this second Advent Candle to remind us of God's gift of the Bible - the Bible that points us to Jesus, the light of the world and the peace that only he can bring.



## A PRAYER FOR THE Second Sunday of Advent

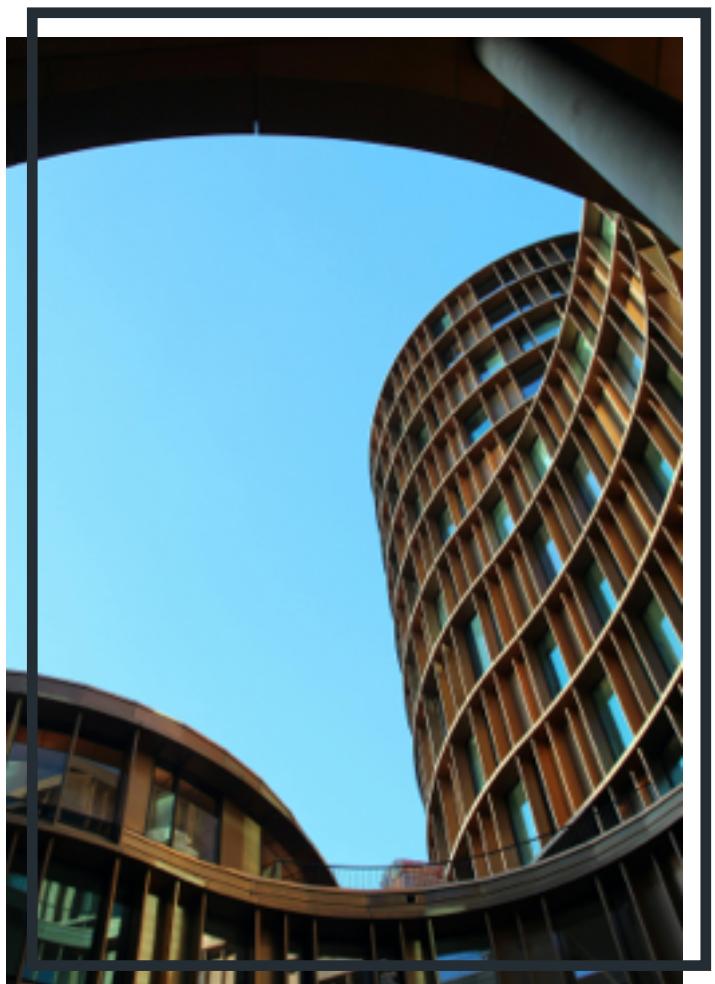
Jesus, you came among us  
with the irresistible power of a baby,  
requiring both our hands  
and captivating our whole hearts.

Help us to cast aside the sin  
and brokenness that we cling to,  
so we might be ready to hold you  
when you come again.

Amen.

# Song Suggestion

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling



# Church Together

## Thought

The Jews were expected a Messiah, a man sent from God who would lead them back to a time of peace and prosperity. The prophets of the Old Testament had foretold of his coming, and many a Jewish woman may have longed to be the one who would give birth to the Messiah, the anointed one. Maybe, Mary was one of those Jewish women who longed for this to happen!

On this Second Sunday in Advent, we are continuing our journey through December as we think about Christmas being full of surprises. We'll hear all the well – known stories about characters such as Mary, Joseph, The Shepherds, and of course ourselves.

Let's begin this morning by asking a question: How would you react if an angel dropped by for a visit? For the news that the angel Gabriel brings to Mary is mind – blowing and full of surprises!

Mary, it would appear, was a young girl who was minding her own business when her life – and the direction of the entire human race – was forever changed by the appearance of the angel Gabriel. Very often when angels appear in the Bible, the people who see them are terrified. It appears that Mary was no exception to this surprise visitor.

After the initial greeting, the angel Gabriel said to Mary: 'Don't be frightened'. 'Do not be afraid' was it would seem a kind of catchphrase among angels in the Bible, a way of

telling the person in front of them to calm down before they had a heart attack. We find an example of this earlier in this very chapter of Luke, when we read in **Luke 1 v. 12 – 13**: 'When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. 13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John' In this passage where the Angel Gabriel appears to Mary, I don't think that it was so much his appearance that was giving Mary reason to fear. I think he spoke the words, 'Do not be afraid' to pre-empt the message he was about to deliver. It was a message fraught with danger, but also a message that brought good news that was full of surprises to both Mary and all mankind. It was the news that she was pregnant; pregnant with the Messiah – Jesus, the Saviour of all!

Now we need to remember that Mary is engaged which is legally binding, but not yet married, and so she is still living at home with her parents, and the assumption is that she would still be a virgin until she and Joseph came together and formed their own household. But now there's this angel in her room telling her that she is pregnant, and he tells her not to be afraid before he even gives her the news. He did this, I think because he probably knew the chain reaction that was about to follow.

It's important to remember that Mary was only in her mid – teens, possibly no older than 15 years old; but what an honour to be chosen to be the mother of the Messiah!

Mary humbly submitted to the Lord because she had faith that he would keep his promise. Her decision would bring her sorrow and suffering, in years to come, but she was willing to yield to the events that were beginning to unfold.

We are told in **Luke 1 v. 28, 30** that Mary was 'blessed among women' because the grace of God was given to her. All who trust Christ as their Saviour are highly graced by the Lord as we are told in **Ephesians 1 v. 6**, which says: 'to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves'.

It would appear, that the more Mary heard, the more surprising and confusing the angel's message became. God would visit her. She would become pregnant – even though she was a virgin. And this baby would somehow be the Son of God! Yet despite her fear and confusion, this young woman responded in a way that demonstrated her absolute faith in God: 'I am the Lord's servant, and I am willing to accept whatever He wants.' As we are told in **Luke 1 v. 38**.

Quite often, surprises can overwhelm us, and so it is that Mary is overwhelmed when the angel tells her that she, a lowly peasant girl, is to be the mother of the Messiah. I wonder how we would react to this awesome, out-of-this-world being bringing us such stupendous, almost unbelievable good news? Would we be surprisingly cynical, doubtful, or just plain terrified?

Mary doesn't doubt for one moment what the angel says – though she does want to sort out the practicalities as we are told in **Luke 1 v. 34**! which tells us: "How will this be", Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin'?

We too need to remember the angel's words when we feel that there is no hope left: 'Do not be afraid'. We need to know that those words still apply and that they apply to each one of us today. There will always be dangers and difficulties in and throughout our lives, there will always be something to fear, but we need not be afraid.

In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has brought an end to all our fears. God has and can overcome them. Surely, this is the best surprise and Good News that we need to hear.

All we must do in courage is to put aside our fear for a moment and say yes to God. Mary ultimately was not afraid and said yes to God, or perhaps she said yes to God and then became unafraid. Maybe it was some combination of the two. Maybe it's not possible to know which came first. Maybe it works that way for us. In saying yes, we become unafraid and in becoming unafraid we are ever more able to say yes.

To be clear: The Christian faith does not teach that our lives will not be perfect, not everything will go our way. After all, the child Mary bore, Jesus Christ the Word made flesh, the most faithful human being who ever lived, suffered and died a horrible death.

There's no promise that everything is going to go the way we want to. But that is not the end of the story. Christ suffered and died, but then he went through death and came out the other side more alive than ever. And so, his resurrection promises us that although we must face trials and difficulties in this life, in the end, in the life to come, all will be well. For in the life and the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the world has turned a corner. What the angel said to Mary, the risen Christ says to us: Do not be afraid, for in me there is hope! So, let's not be surprised by what God might be asking of us this Christmas time!

“God with us” calls for  
“us with God.”  
It starts with a holy yes.



# Prayers Of Intercession

God of Hope be the Good News that we need during this season of Advent. Be with us in our gatherings and in our travelling together, be with us in our worship and in our praying together, be with us as we seek to hear the Good News of Jesus this Advent.

Lord in this season when every heart should be happy and joyful, many are struggling with the heaviness of life, with burdens that steal their joy; we pray that you would bring Good News into their lives. Fill us, we pray, with your light instead of darkness, help us clear the way in our hearts and minds to concentrate on the true meaning of Christ's coming and not on the worldly things, which so often block out our thoughts and worship of you.

Loving Lord, we live in disturbing days across the world; a world filled with doubt and conflict, inequality and injustice. Make this time of waiting throughout this Advent season a time of new awakening of thought, consideration, endeavour and action, by all leaders and all nations, to bring about health, peace, freedom and understanding. May the hope of Jesus be the Good News that they hear.

**Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We pray for all those we know and love, those who are unwell and those who need comfort and strength. May you be the Good News that they need this day. Lord Jesus, we pray you surround all those who mourn, with your

continuing compassion. In the stillness of these moments we lift them up to you this day.

We pray for our government – all governments and those in authority; help them we pray as they all struggle to seek to do what is right and fair in these difficult times.

We pray for all those in our fellowship who work especially in Education and the Health Service. May they know your loving presence in these days, as they seek to serve others around them.

**Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

God of hope, who brought love into this world, be the love that dwells between us.

God of hope, that brought peace into this world, be the peace that dwells between us.

God of hope, that brought joy into this world, be the joy that dwells between us.

God of hope, the rock we stand upon, be the centre, the focus of our lives

Always, and particularly this Advent time, be Good News to all.

**Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

**Amen**

# Song Suggestion

As With Gladness, Men Of Old





# 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.

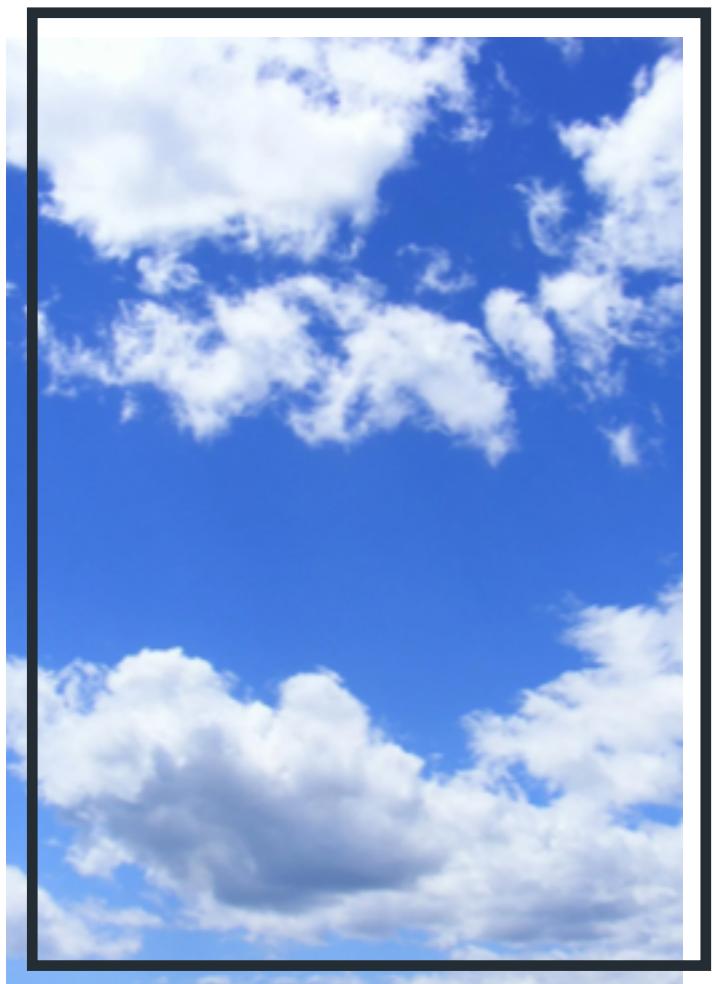
# The Lord's Prayer

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**

For unto us a child is born,  
given  
Unto us a Son is given  
Isaiah 9:6

# Music Video

Be Born In Me



# Blessing

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May the God who gives us peace  
Make us holy in every way  
And keep our whole being—  
Spirit, soul and body—  
Free from every fault  
At the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ  
**Amen**