

# The Journey To Bethlehem

Together At The Manger – A Hope For The Future  
25th December 2021



# Welcome

Welcome to **Church Together**.

**No matter wherever you are, whatever you do, whoever you are, together we can grow as Church Together.**

Our flexible Sunday worship patterns blend together on - line services, home deliveries and E - mailed copies of Church Together.

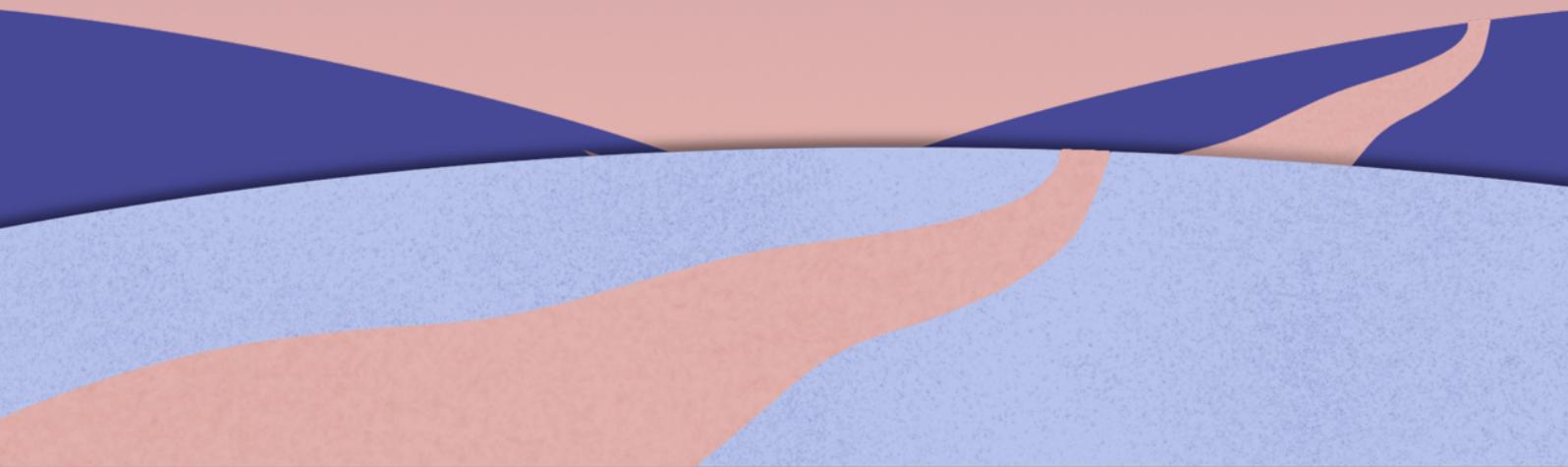
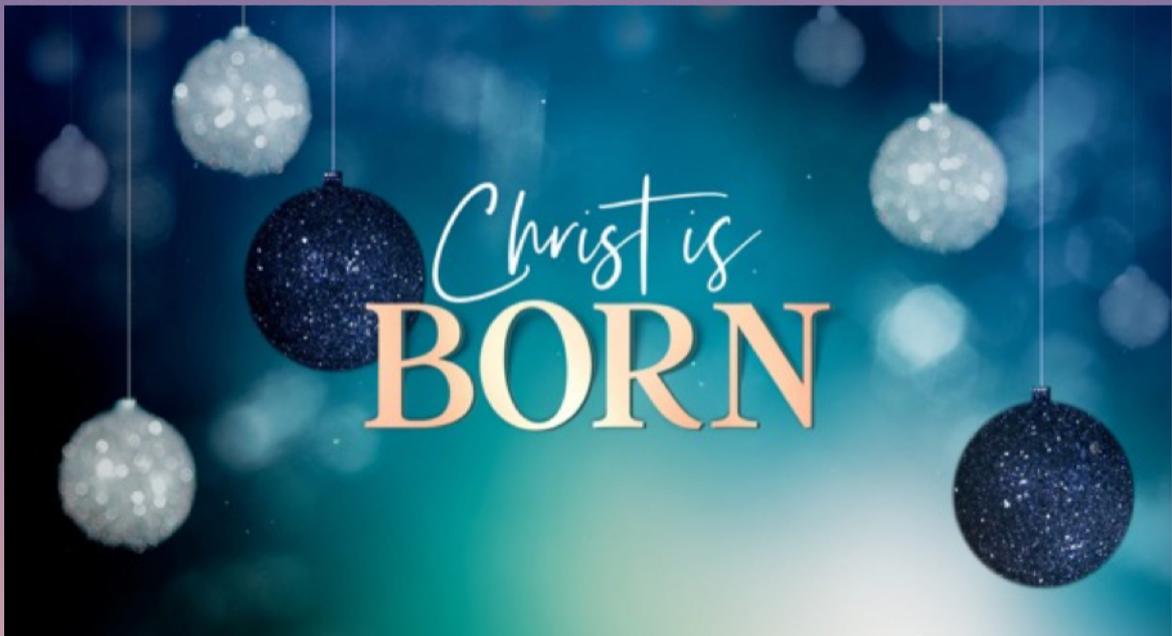
Today's Christmas Morning Celebration Service will be looking at **Luke 2 v. 1 - 10**

The theme for today's service is:

**Journey To Bethlehem - Together At The Manger - A Hope For The Future!**



This morning's service that is set out in this edition of **Church Together** is Christmas Morning Celebration Service. We hope that you will be able to engage with what has been produced for our **Special Christmas Morning Celebration Service** and that you would indeed **Know That When We Are Together With Jesus,**  
**There Is Always A Hope For The Future!**



# Call To Worship

## John 1 v. 1 - 14 NLT

Christ, the Eternal Word

In the beginning the Word already existed.

The Word was with God,  
and the Word was God.

2 He existed in the beginning with God.

3 God created everything through him,  
and nothing was created except  
through him.

4 The Word gave life to everything that  
was created,  
and his life brought light to everyone.

5 The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness can never extinguish  
it.

6 God sent a man, John the Baptist, to tell  
about the light so that everyone might

believe because of his testimony. 8 John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. 9 The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

10 He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. 11 He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. 12 But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. 13 They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

14 So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

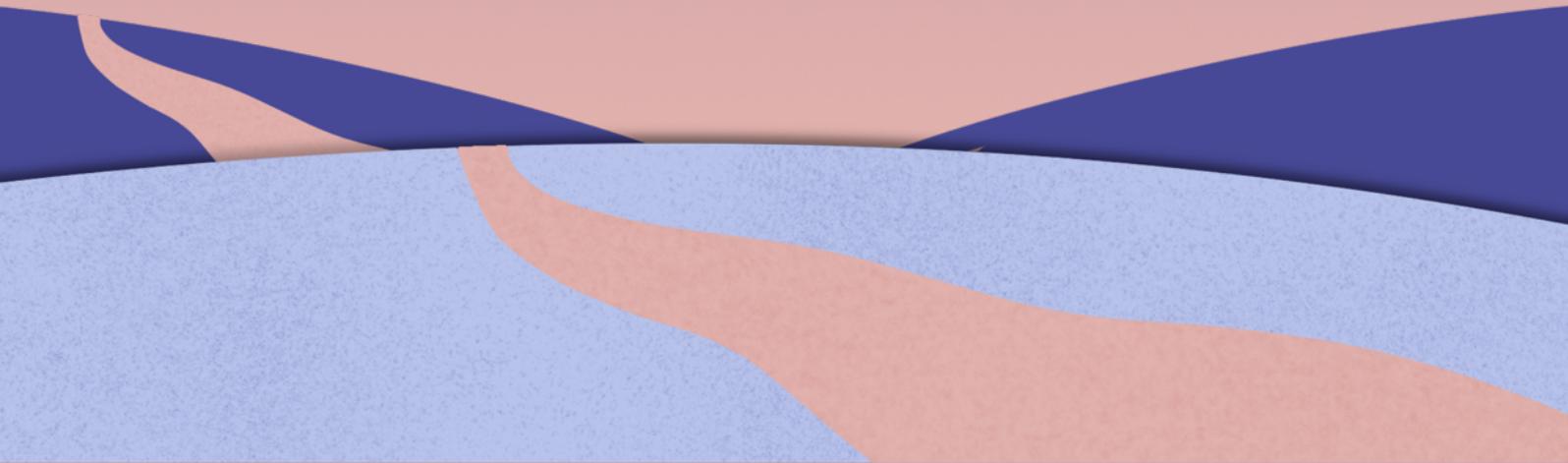
# Prayer For Christmas Day

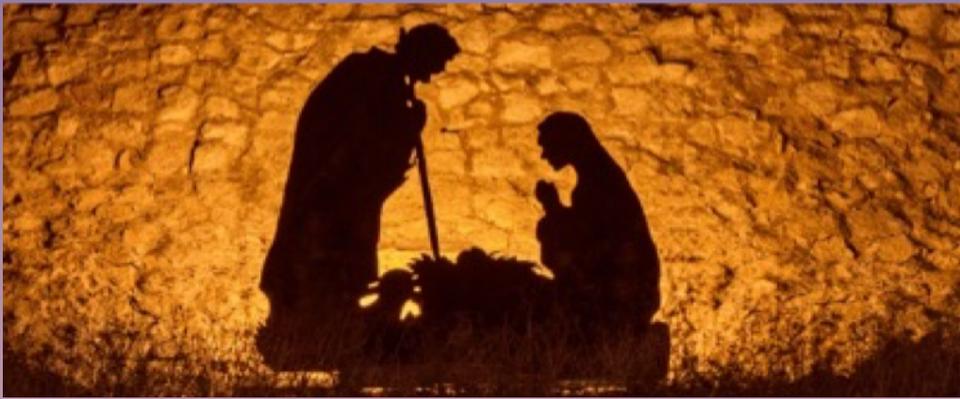
Lord Jesus, we lift up our voices of prayer and praise today as we think especially of Your birth on that first Christmas morning. Lord, many people today will be celebrating Christmas Day with little or no understanding that in coming to earth in the form of a man, You came to die so that all who believe on Your name might be saved from their sins and have life, and have it more abundantly.

As the story of the shepherds and the wise men are sung about in carols and acted out in classrooms, and as television programmers once again review the birth of Jesus Christ two thousand years ago, we pray that Your Holy Spirit will convict the hearts of many who have dismissed the truth of Christmas as a nice little story.

Bring many we pray, to see Christmas in a new light this year, and may they come to an understanding of the real meaning of Your birth at Bethlehem, so that they may see the Christmas story this year in all its glorious beauty. May Your holy name be lifted up and may Jesus Christ be glorified this Christmas for You alone deserve all honour and glory. In Jesus' name we pray.

**Amen**





# Bible

# Reading

**Luke 2 v. 1 – 10 NIV**

## **The birth of Jesus**

2 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to their own town to register.

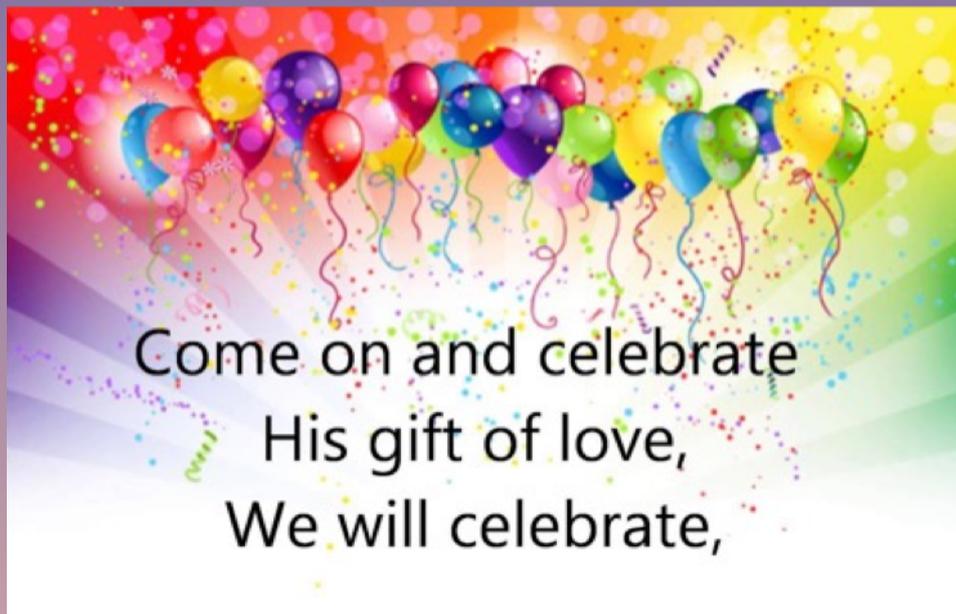
4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields near by, 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.'

# Song Suggestion

Come And Join The Celebration





Come on and celebrate  
His gift of love,  
We will celebrate,

# Tithes, Gifts & Offerings



No matter wherever you are, whatever you do, whoever you are, together we can grow as Church Together here at Salendine Nook.

Now that we find ourselves once again holding services in Church, we are able to give of our finances to the work of the Lord when we are in church.

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

# Church Together

# Thought

## **A CHRISTMAS STORY – TOGETHER AT THE MANGER**

*The congregation joins in providing sound effects and actions for the characters in your story. Without moving people around, they are divided into five groups, each briefed to respond to one of the following key words whenever it appears in the story. If it is not appropriate for all to join in, five smaller groups could do this:*

**'Mary'** (fingers on lips, rocking 'baby', say 'Sssh!')

**'People of Bethlehem'** (arms folded, look up and around, whistling)

**'Shepherds'** (stand up, arms raised and shout 'Hallelujah!')

**'Herod'** (crouch in seat, arms over head, making whimpering sounds)

**'Wise Men'** (cup hands around mouth, shout Hellooooo!')

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Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin. I want to tell you a story of Christmas presence. No, not those things you put at the bottom of the Christmas tree — they are presents. I'm talking about presence — knowing someone is with you. And that someone is God.

You see God had made a promise that one day a baby would be born. The baby would have the special name **'Immanuel'** which means God with us. Through this baby God would be present with people in a new

and special way. But no one could have imagined just how amazing a thing God was going to do. So, it came as a bit of a surprise to the people who first heard about it.

It was a surprise for a very ordinary peasant girl when she heard that she was a vital part of this plan and that she would bring God's Son into the world. Her name was **MARY**.

It came as a tremendous surprise to the **SHEPHERDS**, who were definitely not expecting angels to show up that night, much less to invite them personally to the welcome party.

The **PEOPLE OF BETHLEHEM** missed out on the surprise. They did not know the marvellous event happening in their own back garden.

It came as more of a nasty shock to **HEROD** who did not like the idea of a new king being born one bit.

And for the **WISE MEN** there was the wonder they saw in the stars that made them set out on a long journey to see the special baby.

Of course, not everyone welcomed God's presence. People responded in different ways to the news that God had come in this new and special way.

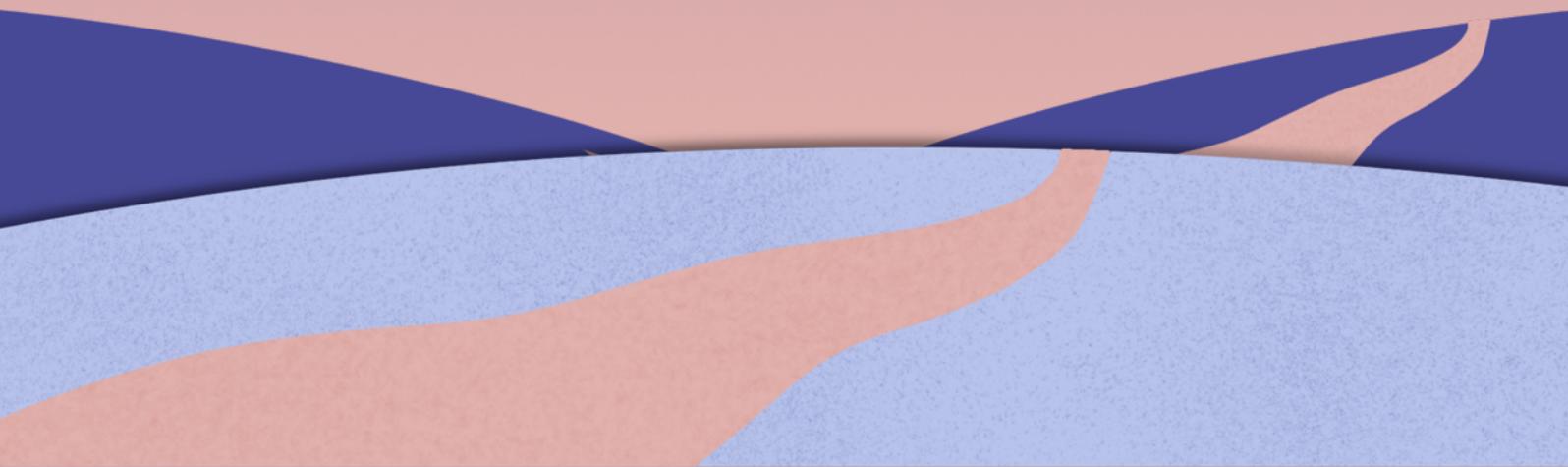
**MARY** said 'yes' to being part of God's plan; she stored up all that was said about the baby and remembered everything that happened.

The **PEOPLE OF BETHLEHEM** went about their everyday business.

The **SHEPHERDS** were excited by what they had heard and seen; they praised God, glad to be part of all that he wanted to give.

**HEROD** acted out of fear and had murder in his heart.

But the **WISE MEN**, drawn by the star, travelled eagerly to worship this new king and bring him precious gifts.



So God sent Jesus to be our Immanuel – God with us – not just for the time of his birth or his life on earth, but for all time. Jesus has been **'in it with us'**, experiencing all the good and bad of human life. He has given us his Holy Spirit, so that he is still **'God with us'** every day. He wants us to know that in every bit of our lives.

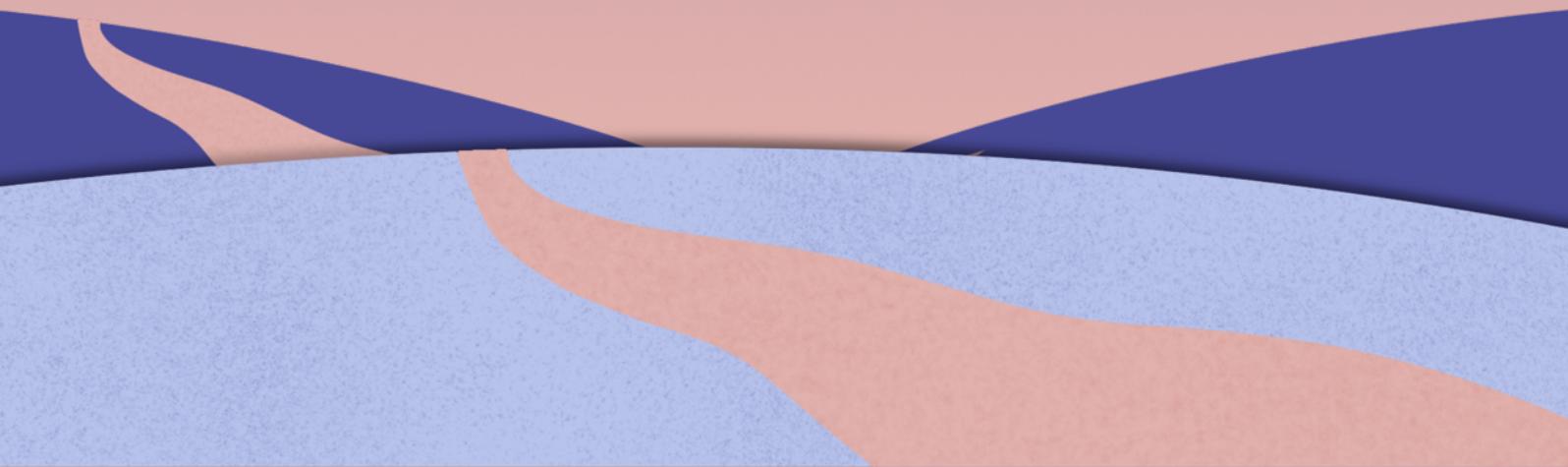
But we respond in different ways. Sometimes we react to God in anger and fear, not wanting to know him – like **HEROD**.

Sometimes we deliberately ignore him or just do not realise that he is with us – like the **PEOPLE OF BETHLEHEM**.

Sometimes we feel a long way off from God, but long to know him more – God calls us to himself, as he did with the **WISE MEN**.

Sometimes he breaks into our everyday lives and gladdens our hearts – as he did with the **SHEPHERDS**.

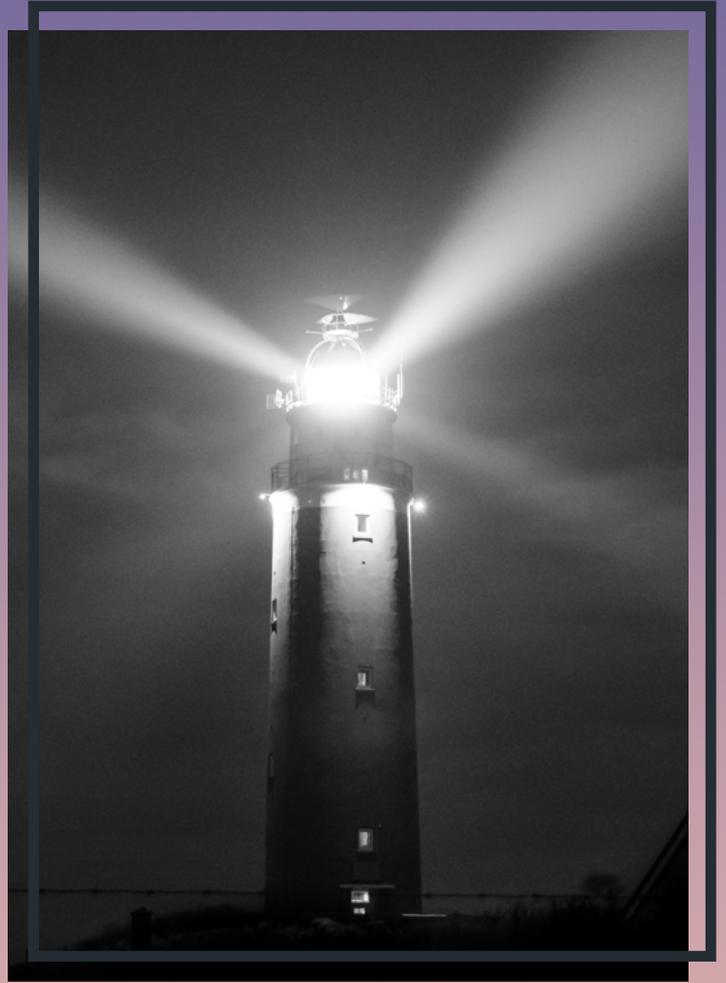
And sometimes we hear God inviting us to be part of his plans, bringing his presence to the world and meet him with our **'yes'** – just like **MARY**.



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# Song Suggestion

Joy To The World



# Prayers Of Intercession

Jesus Christ, born in a stable, be with the poor and homeless this Christmas time.

As we pray, live and give; shine your everlasting light.

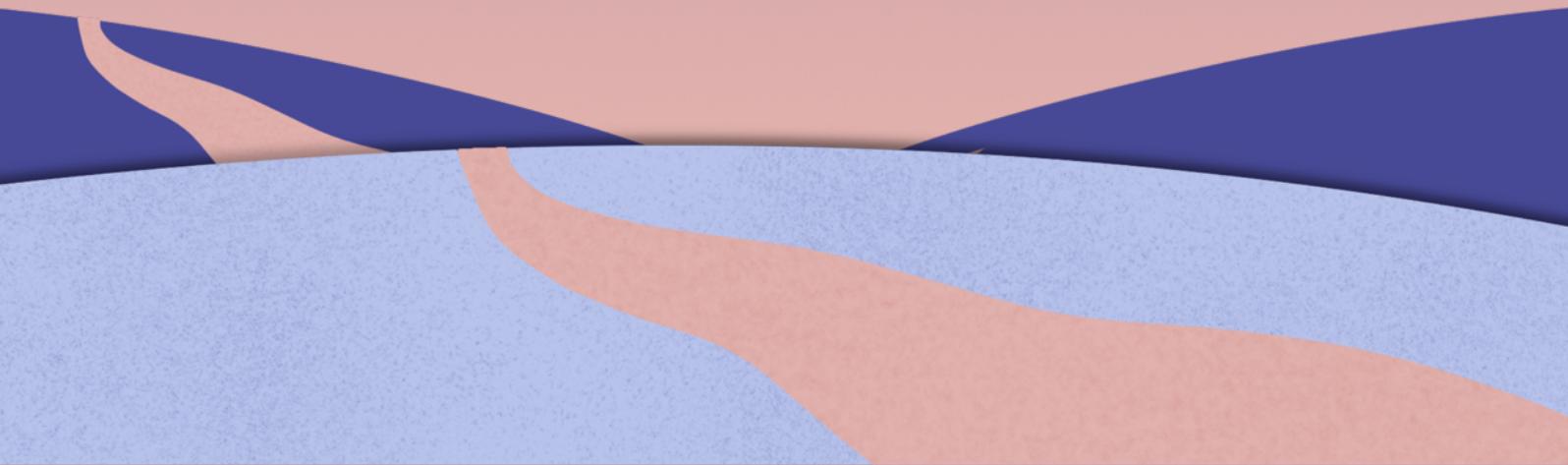
Jesus Christ, born of Mary, be with young mothers across the world this Christmas time.

As we pray, live and give; shine your everlasting light.

Jesus Christ, visited by Shepherds, be with all who have to work this Christmas, and those who long to work.

As we pray, live and give; shine your everlasting light.

Jesus Christ, who became a refugee, be with those who fear for their lives, and those who have left homes and families this Christmas.



As we pray, live and give; shine your everlasting light.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the joy of discovery that moment when hope and expectation were gloriously met by the illumination of one bright star.

We cannot imagine what words were spoken by visitors or if first impressions left them somewhat confused.

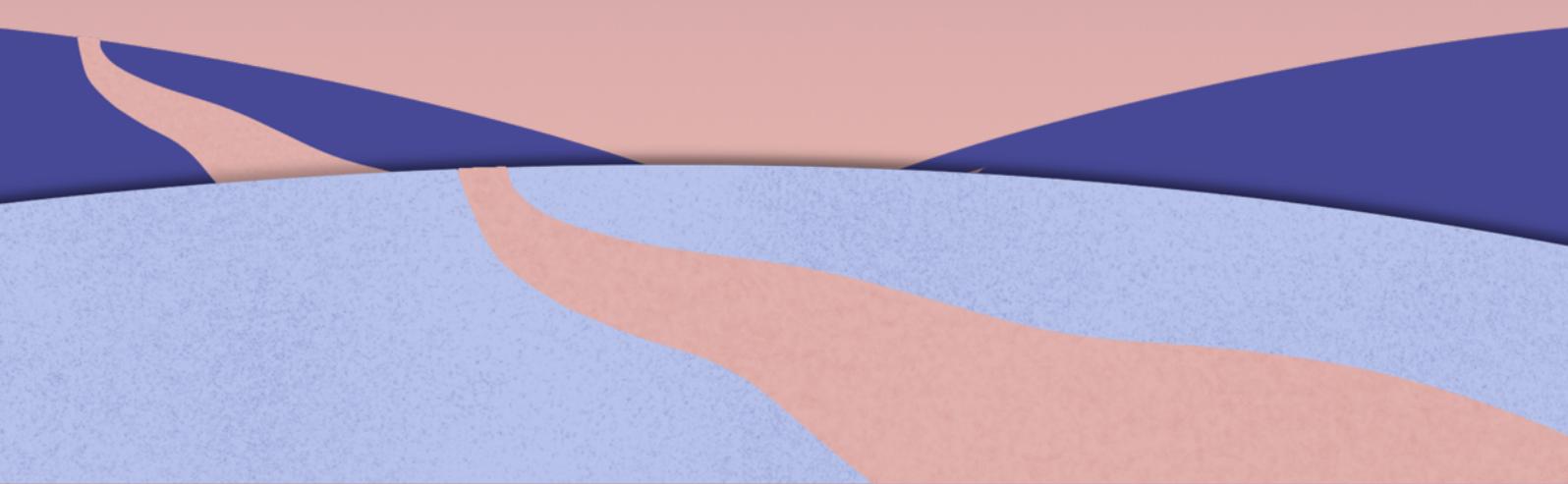
Messiah, Saviour, a King born in the barest of palaces. Yet they saw and fell down on their knees in adoration. Lord, they saw you and knew whom they had met.

As we meet around our advent wreath and candles draw us into that stable in our imagination.

In the quiet moments of prayer this Christmas, that brief oasis from the bustle of the world bring alive to us the smell of the hay the sound of the animals the cry of a baby.

Draw us close to our Saviour, Messiah and King as we bring not Gold, Myrrh or Frankincense but the gift of our lives the only offering we can bring.

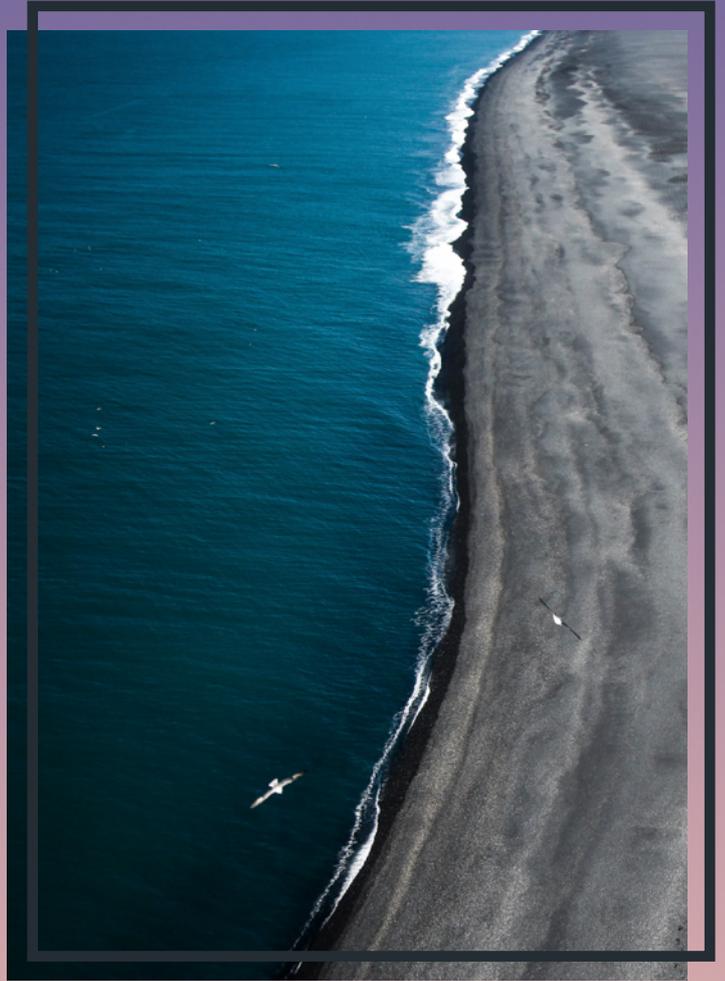
**Amen.**



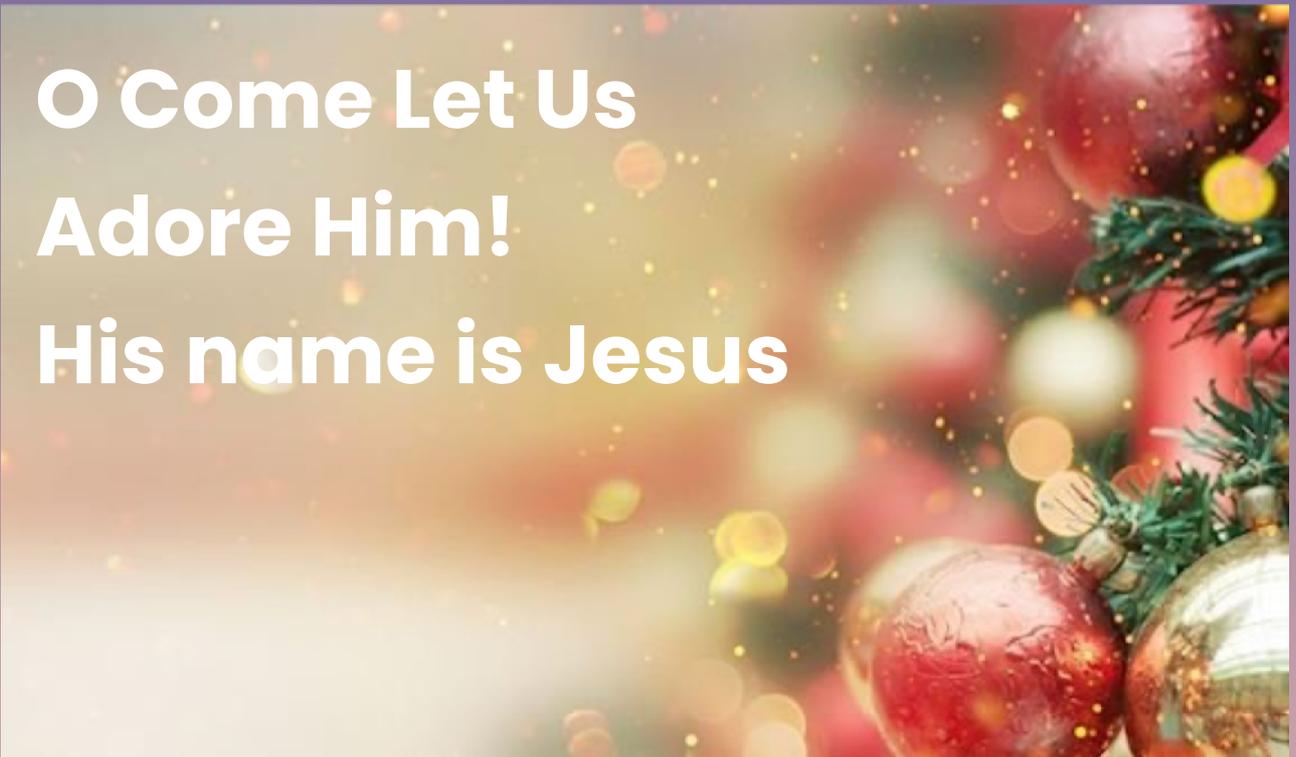
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# Song Suggestion

O Come Let Us Adore Him



**O Come Let Us  
Adore Him!  
His name is Jesus**



# Church Together

## Thought

Having created an atmosphere for people to come in to, which is expectant but not overly jolly; use appropriate music, candles and other lighting in order to create this effect.

Have a Christmas tree with just some of its lights glowing and a few candles. Light all five candles on the Advent Crown to complete the scene that we have been using over this Advent period.

The aim is to set apart an extra – special part of the day – to make it different.

**Main Talk:** *Prepare a set of letters, each on a card about 40 cm high. On one side they should spell 'GOD WITH US' and on the other, in a different colour 'FOR ALWAYS'*

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### **GOD WITH US – A HOPE FOR THE FUTURE!**

Have someone hand you an envelope containing the prepared letter cards. Remove these and ask some volunteers to rearrange them to make sense of the message.

Make sure they are on the '**GOD WITH US**' side.

Remind people again of how amazing it is that, in Jesus, God came to be with us. We have a hope for the future!

Point out that Matthew's Gospel starts with that truth: **'Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and he will be called Immanuel (meaning, God is with us)'. (Matthew 1 v. 23)** as it tells of Jesus' birth. But it ends with the same truth: **'Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age'. (Matthew 28 v. 20).**

After Jesus has died and risen again, and before he went back to be with his Father God, he promised his followers that he will still be with them. He does that by giving us his Holy Spirit — the Spirit of Jesus.

Talk about the impact of God's presence on our lives today. Have two or three people primed to share their own experiences with the congregation.

Have the letters turned over to reveal the words **'FOR ALWAYS'**, adjusting the spacing between words.

Finish by encouraging people with practical ideas for ways in which they can consciously choose to recognise God's presence: every day — involving him in everything we do; and today — in the middle of a busy or lonely Christmas.

# Church Moto 2022

## Isaiah 43 v. 19

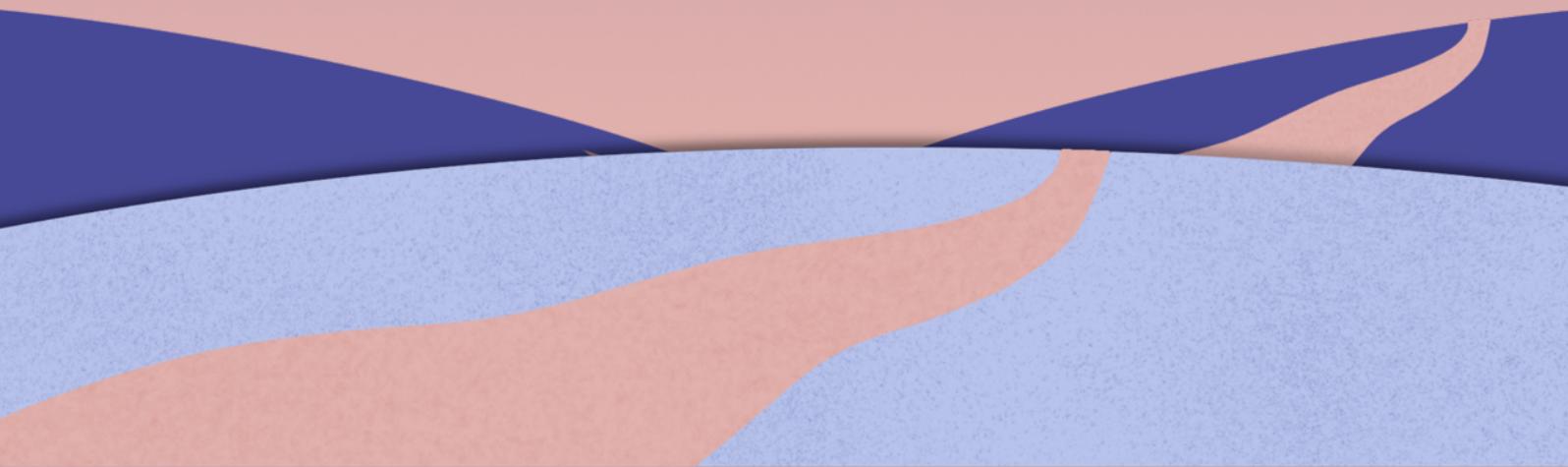
'For I am about to do a  
brand - new thing.

See, I have already begun!

Do you not see it?

I will make a pathway through the  
wilderness for my people to come home.

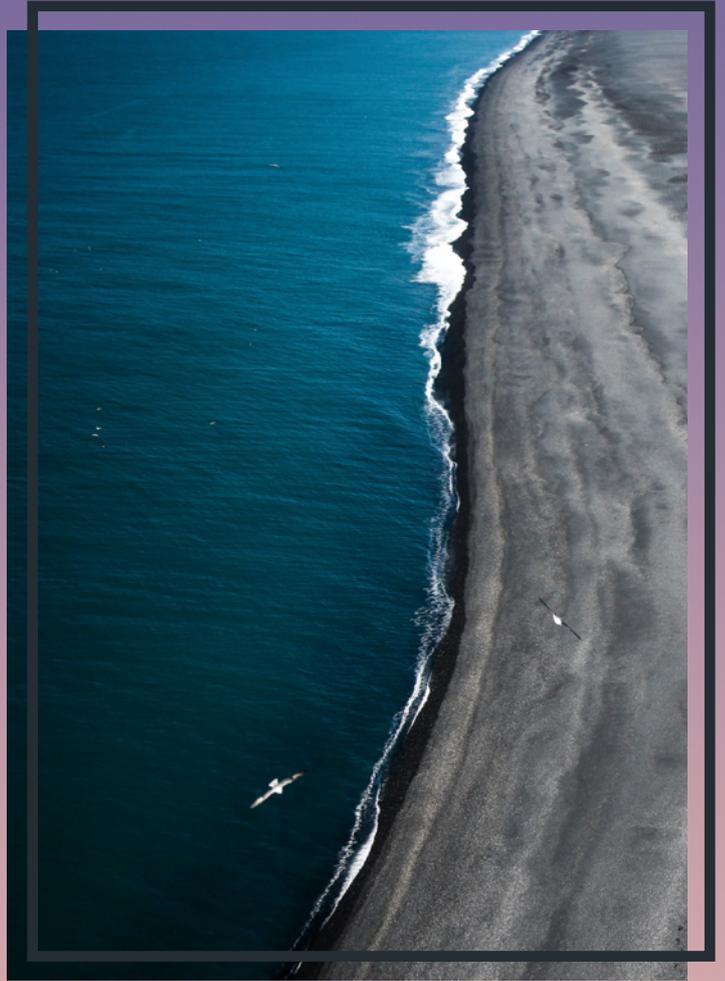
I will create rivers for them in the desert!



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# Song Suggestion

O Come All Ye Faithful (Chris Tomlin)



# Blessing

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Older than the stars  
Brighter than the burning flame  
Jesus, the Word made flesh  
Became as one of us: small, insignificant, and humble.  
All this, so that you and I may one day walk  
Amongst the starry host  
With the burning light of the face of God turned towards us.  
May we walk today in the joy of that knowledge  
And may his presence bring peace  
Today and always.

**Amen**