

A Seasonal All Age Worship Service

(SAAW007)

Christmas Day

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ALL AGE WORSHIP
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CHRISTMAS DAY

Service Aim:

To enable all ages to engage with some of the surprising things that happened when God entered the world at Bethlehem. During the service five large cardboard boxes wrapped in Christmas paper will be unwrapped and a number of surprising things will happen.

Biblical Reference(s):

Luke 2:1-20

Outline of Service:

Welcome:	Include sharing of presents, lighting of candle & surprise entrance of one of the service leaders.
Link:	In the Christmas story surprising things happened.
Opening Prayer:	
Songs:	<u>Songs of worship</u> (See Appendix 1)
Link:	Introduce the reading
Reading:	Luke 2:1-20
Talk 1:	1) God chose to be born as a baby! Surprise giving of £5 note to person who answers question
Song:	<u>Song of worship</u> (See Appendix 1)
Talk 2:	2) God didn't choose someone famous to be his parents 3) Jesus was born in a place where animals had been kept 4) God chose to tell the amazing news of his arrival to ordinary shepherds.
Flash-mob:	Surprise singing of: <u>Joy to the World (1st verse only)</u>
Talk 3:	4) God chose to tell the amazing news of his arrival to ordinary shepherds 5) The gifts that were given to Jesus were unusual Surprise giving of large gold chocolate coin to person who answers question
Song:	<u>Songs of worship</u> (See Appendix 1)
Summary:	Summary of five points. The most surprising thing of all was that God came to earth because He loves us.
Receiving of coins:	Surprise "reverse collection" of chocolate coins
Intro to Confession:	With choice to eat chocolate coin
Confession:	
Prayers:	Prayers and Lord's Prayer
Cake:	Surprise appearance of cake and re-lighting candles
Song(s):	<u>Final Carol(s)</u> (See Appendix 1)
Blessing:	

Notes for the service:

General notes and instructions for the service are in black font.

Prayers or responses said by the congregation together are in bold purple font.

The full script of a talk or other activity is in purple font.

Before the Service:

Before the service begins prepare five large boxes, (20" house moving boxes are ideal) which are then placed at the front of the church. Each box is wrapped up in Christmas wrapping paper and numbered (for the service leader's benefit!). The boxes contain the following:

- Box 1 contains a baby doll (brown skinned if possible)
- Box 2 contains a "celebrity" magazine with famous people on the front cover
- Box 3 contains some hay
- Box 4 contains toy sheep
- Box 5 contains new baby clothes, new bib, rattle

Welcome:

Welcome everyone to the Christmas Day service and then explain that the person helping you to lead the service surprisingly hasn't turned up. Invite children to come and share with the congregation what presents they have received. Move on into lighting the Christmas candle (if you have one). Once the candle is lit, the other service leader appears, walking down the centre of the church towards the front, dressed in a donkey or sheep "onesie"

Link:

The two service leaders engage in some humorous repartee about why the other service leader has come dressed as a donkey/sheep, followed by saying something like:

What a surprise to see X coming to lead the Christmas day service dressed like that.

- *You probably didn't expect that did you?*
- *In the Christmas story many surprising things happened.*
- *We are going to look at some of them today as we celebrate together.*

Opening Prayer:

You may choose to use either:

- an informal prayer
- a prayer from the Church of England's "Time and Seasons"¹ material
- a short reading eg Luke 2:10b-11 *"I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."*
- or the following acclamation:

*We celebrate Jesus,
Born to be our Saviour
 We celebrate Jesus,
He is Christ the Lord*

¹ "Times and Seasons" material can be found at <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/41153/tandschristmas.pdf>
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Songs:

Songs of worship as per Appendix 1

Link:

You may like to introduce the reading by saying something like:

Sometimes when we've heard a story told lots of times we can stop listening.

- We're no longer surprised by it as we know what to expect, or at least we think we do!
- The Christmas story can be a bit like that....
- So let's listen to the story again as if it is the first time that we have heard it, and be surprised by what God did!

Reading:

The reading is Luke 2:1-20 and works well with two readers (see Appendix 2). Because it is quite a long reading, it benefits from being illustrated by using power-point slides.

Talk 1:

Explain that some of the surprising things about the Christmas story can be found in the five large boxes. Invite someone to come and open the first box and pull out the doll from inside. Then say something like:

The first surprising thing we want to mention about the Christmas story is that:

1) God chose to come to earth as a human being, and was born as a baby!

- Can anyone tell me the name of the baby?

When someone answers with the name Jesus, say something like:

That's right, it is Jesus,

- and today for answering that question correctly we have a five pound reward for you to come and collect.

If it is possible as the person walks forward to collect their five pound note, have a loud fanfare² play.

Follow this by saying something like:

That was a surprise wasn't it?

- But receiving a surprise five pound note in church for answering a question correctly is nothing compared to the incredible surprise that the God who made the heavens and the earth would choose to come to earth as a baby, to be our Saviour,
- but that is exactly what He did.

Jesus, the Son of God, left the glory of the heavens and came to earth as a helpless baby,

- A baby who cried and relied totally on his mum and dad for food, shelter and care,
- Just like we did as babies.
- How surprising is that?
- Let's worship Him.

Song:

A song of worship as per Appendix 1

² You can find a fanfare here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCqUESCoB1w>

Talk 2:

Invite someone to come and open the second box and pull out the “Celebrity” magazine from inside. Then say something like:

The second surprising thing we want to mention about the Christmas story is that:

2) God didn’t choose someone famous or special to be his parents,

- like the people you would find in this kind of magazine.
- God actually chose an ordinary young teenage girl, called Mary, to be His mother, and a carpenter called Joseph to be his father.
- God chooses ordinary people to serve him and to be part of His plans
- How surprising is that?

Invite someone to come and open the third box and pull out the hay from inside. Then say something like:

The third surprising thing we want to mention about the Christmas story is this:

3) Jesus was born in a place where animals had been kept.

- We know this because the Bible tells us that Mary laid him in a manger, which is an animal feeding trough!

Now God could have chosen anywhere on the planet to be born....

- A place where animals lived wouldn’t have been our first choice I am sure.
- When wise men came to look for the baby later on, they knew they were looking for a king, so they headed straight for Herod’s palace, only to be told that the new king hadn’t been born there.
- Once again, God chose to act in a totally surprising way that no one could have or would have expected.
- He chose to be born in poverty, so he was accessible to all people.

Invite someone to come and open the fourth box and pull out the toy sheep from inside. Then say something like:

The fourth surprising thing we want to mention about the Christmas story is this:

4) God chose to tell the amazing news of his arrival to ordinary shepherds

As soon as this is said the Flash-mob begin their song.

Flash-mob:

The flash-mob sings the first verse of the Carol, “Joy to the World”³ (Words Isaac Watts). The flash-mob consists of a number of members of the congregation who are seated all around the church in different places. It begins by someone from the front who stands and sings the words: “Joy to the world” then different people stand up and join in at different stages of the verse until it is sung, at which point they all sit down.

Talk 3:

You could say something like:

That was a bit of a surprise wasn’t it? I wonder if the angels who sang for the shepherds sounded as good as that!

- So the 4th surprising thing we want to mention about the Christmas story is that:
- ### 4) God chose to tell the amazing news of his arrival to ordinary shepherds.

³ If you don’t know “Joy to the World”, you can listen to it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNy2CEkIx4&list=RDPNy2CEkIx4>

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The shepherds were the first to be told of the arrival of the World's Saviour.

- They were not the important people in town.

Shepherds in 1st century Palestine often had a bad reputation and were looked down upon.

- It was to these despised people that the angels gave the good news about Jesus.
- The good news of a Saviour included everyone, and didn't leave anyone out.
- God acted in a surprisingly generous way.

Invite someone to come and open the fifth box and pull out the new baby clothes, bib and rattle from inside. Then say something like:

The fifth surprising thing we want to mention about the Christmas story is this:

5) The gifts that were given to Jesus were unusual

- When the wise men brought their gifts to give to Jesus, they didn't bring cuddly toys, nappies or clothing.
- Can anyone tell me what they brought?
- That's right they brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh,
- and today for answering that question correctly we have a large gold chocolate coin for you to come and collect. *(Give large gold chocolate coin to person who answers the question correctly and use the fanfare again if you want to.)*

The gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh that the wise men gave to Jesus spoke of the fact that Jesus was a King,

- that He would bring people to God and
- that he would do this through dying for them.

These are gifts that we wouldn't expect a baby to receive,

- they are very surprising,
- however these gifts spoke prophetically of the saving ministry Jesus would have.

So when God entered our world on the first Christmas, he acted in some very surprising ways.

- It wasn't what anybody was expecting from God,
- But it was much, much better

Song:

Songs of worship as per Appendix 1

Summary:

This morning we have heard of five surprising things about the Christmas story.

- 1) God chose to come to earth as a human being.
- 2) God didn't choose someone famous or special to be his parents.
- 3) Jesus was born in a place where animals had been kept.
- 4) God chose to tell the amazing news of his arrival to ordinary shepherds and
- 5) The gifts that were given to Jesus were unusual.

However, the most surprising thing of all about the Christmas story is this:

- God came to earth in the person of Jesus because He loves us.

Although we have done nothing to deserve His love and in fact have rejected him and trampled on his laws,

- God came to earth to rescue us from the mess we have got ourselves into.
- He came to earth to invite us back into relationship with himself.
- He came to be our Saviour.

On this Christmas Day, God is offering you, through Jesus, a fresh start.

- He offers to forgive you your sins and to give you His gift of relationship.
- To show that God offers this gift to everyone, we are going to have a surprise collection.

It is actually a reverse collection of chocolate coins.

- As the coins come round, please take one.....but don't undo it yet.

Receiving of Coins:

Pass around baskets of chocolate gold coins⁴. Ensure that you have enough chocolate coins for each person present to have one.

While the chocolate coins are passed around, have the musicians play something like: "Oh what a gift what a wonderful gift"⁵

Introduction to Confession:

Once everyone has received a chocolate coin you might like to say something like:

When you are given a gift you have a choice don't you? (Pick up 3 gold coins)

- You can either throw it away (*throw a coin away*)
- You can leave it unwrapped and look at it another day (*put a coin down*)
- Or you can receive it and enjoy it (*unwrap and eat a coin*)

What will you do with the gold coin you have just received?

- Will you throw it away, leave it unwrapped and maybe open it later, if you don't forget, or eat it now?
- The choice is yours!
- I'm going to eat mine now.....(*unwrap chocolate coin and eat it*)

What will you do with the gift God wants to offer you today, of forgiveness for your sins and a relationship with Himself?

- Will you think that it's not for you and so throw it away?
- Will you choose to leave it until another day and so leave it unwrapped?
- Or will you choose to receive it gladly?

The Bible tells us that if in order to receive this gift, we simply need to turn to God,

- confess our sins to Him and invite Him to come into our lives as Lord, and He will.

So let's take a moment of quiet as we think about how we will respond today.

PAUSE

Confession:

You may choose to use either:

- an informal Confession prayer
- a Confession prayer from the Church of England's "Time and Seasons"⁶ material,
- or the following prayer that the congregation can say together:

⁴ Chocolate coins can be bought at most supermarkets or on Amazon at www.amazon.co.uk

⁵ Words – Pat Uhl Howard and can be found in the book, "Christmas Source" (Kevin Mayhew)

⁶ This can be found at: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/41153/tandschristmas.pdf>

Lord Jesus,
Thank you for coming to earth to be our Saviour.
Please forgive us for the ways that we have rejected you and rebelled against you.
Please come into our lives by your Spirit, to be our Saviour and our Lord.
Thank you for offering us this wonderful gift of relationship.
Amen.

End with a prayer of Absolution

Prayers:

After the Confession and Absolution, lead a short time of prayer ending with the Lord's prayer. You may choose to use either:

- Informal prayers
- Prayers from the Church of England's "Time and Seasons" material (see below),
- or the following prayer that is a dialogue between service leader and the people:

Thank you Jesus for your gift of love

Help us respond to your love with our whole hearts

Thank you Jesus for humbling yourself and coming to earth as a baby

Lord please take our pride and help us walk humbly with you

Thank you Jesus for choosing ordinary people like Mary and Joseph to serve you,

Lord we offer ourselves to you - show us how we can serve you

Thank you Jesus for choosing to be born in poverty

Help us make your love known to all people

Thank you Jesus for welcoming the despised shepherds at your manger

Lord enable our church to be full of your welcoming love.

Amen

End the prayer time with the Lord's Prayer

Cake:

Explain to people that one of the surprising things you talked about in the service was that God came to earth as a baby. Ask them what the day a baby is born is called. [Birthday] Ask them what people often do to celebrate a birthday.....and introduce the fact that people often have a birthday cake. Then say something like:

Our last surprise of the service is that we have a cake.....(*Produce a cake that can easily be cut into small pieces*)

- On our cake we have seven candles to celebrate Jesus' birthday – seven is a number that is often used in the Bible to represent perfection! (*the candles are the re-lighting⁷ kind*)
- After I have lit the candles we will all shout "Happy birthday Jesus"

Once you have lit the candles and everyone has shouted, "Happy birthday Jesus", invite someone to come and blow out the candles, which of course they won't be able to do. Then say something like:

⁷ These can be purchased from Amazon at www.amazon.co.uk or from ebay at www.ebay.co.uk

We shouldn't be surprised that we can't blow out the candles should we?

- After all they are Jesus' candles and His love and light shines on for ever.
- During our last song we will cut up the cake and if you would like a piece of it, it will be available for you on your way out of church.

Song:

Final carol as per Appendix 1

Blessing:

You may like to end by saying something like:

As we come to the end of the service today, go out rejoicing in the surprising goodness of our God, who loves you and me and who found such an incredible way to show us that love over 2000 years ago.

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

Appendix 1 - Ideas for Songs and Hymns:

i) Songs of worship. Ideas include:

- Angels from the realms of glory (J.Montgomery)
- Come and join the celebration (Valerie Collison © 1972 High-Fye Music Ltd)
- O come all ye faithful (John Francis Wade)
- See Him lying on a bed of straw (Michael Perry © 1965 Mrs B.Perry/Jubilate Hymns)

ii) A song of worship. Ideas include:

- Lord you were rich beyond all splendour (F.Houghton)
- My Jesus, my Saviour (Darlene Zschech © 1993 Darlene Zschech / Hillsong Publishing)
- O little town of Bethlehem (Phillips Brooks)
- Songs of gladness (Michael Perry © Michael Perry/Jubilate Hymns)

iii) Songs of Worship. Ideas include:

- Away in a manger
- From the squalor of a borrowed stable (Stuart Townend © 1999 Thankyou Music)
- In the bleak mid-winter (Christina G Rossetti)
- Silent night, holy night (Joseph Mohr)
- While shepherds watched (Nahum Tate)

iv) Final Carol(s). Ideas include:

- Christmas, it's Christmas (Alan Price © 1995 Daybreak Music Ltd)
- Hark the herald angels sing (Charles Wesley, George Whitefield)
- Unto us a boy is born (Puer Nobis nascitur © OUP)

Appendix 2 – Luke 2:1-20 for 2 readers

- Reader 1: The Emperor Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Roman Empire.
- Reader 2: When this first census took place, Quirinius was the governor of Syria.
- Reader 1: Everyone, then, went to register himself, each to his own town.
- Reader 2: Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to the town of Bethlehem in Judaea, the birthplace of King David.
- Reader 1: Joseph went there because he was a descendant of David.
- Reader 2: He went to register with Mary, who was promised in marriage to him. She was pregnant, and while they were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have her baby.
- Reader 1: She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger – there was no room for them to stay in the inn.
- Reader 2: There were shepherds living out in the fields near Bethlehem, keeping watch over their flocks at night.
- Reader 1: An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them:
- Reader 2: Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.
- Reader 1: Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God.
- Both: Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to all on whom his favour rests.
- Reader 2: When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another:
- Reader 1: Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened – which the Lord has told us about.
- Reader 2: So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby who was lying in the manger.
- Reader 1: When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.
- Reader 2: But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.
- Reader 1: The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.