

# **A Seasonal All Age Worship Service**

(SAAW020)

## **Christmas Day: A very special gift**

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## CHRISTMAS DAY: A VERY SPECIAL GIFT

### Service Aim:

To enable all ages to see that at Christmas God came close to us through Jesus; making it possible for us to live in close relationship with Him both now and eternally.

This is a non-Eucharistic All Age Service. If you wanted to celebrate Communion but keep the service short you could stop after Talk 2 and move to the Peace.

### Biblical Reference(s):

John 1:14, Luke 2:1-20, Philippians 2:7, Matthew 20:28, John 1:12-13, James 4:8

### Outline of Service:

Welcome:	Include lighting the Christmas candle if you have one
Opening Prayer:	
Opening carols:	<u>Opening carols</u> (See Appendix 1)
Warm up:	<p>“Who has made the longest journey?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The longest journey was made when God’s Son Jesus came down from heaven and came to earth. (John 1:14 MSG)</li> </ul>
Reading 1:	Luke 2:1-20 dramatized
Talk 1:	<p>Unpacking a suitcase to discover that Jesus:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Took off his “best robes” to come to earth. (Philippians 2:7)</li> <li>Was born in poverty</li> <li>Came to serve us. (Matthew 20:28)</li> <li>Came to give us a special gift</li> </ol>
Song:	<u>Song of worship</u> (See Appendix 1)
Link:	Jesus came because God the Father loves us
Show and tell gifts:	Children show people their Christmas gifts
Talk 2:	Opening a large gift to show that Jesus came to give us the gift of becoming a child of God. (John 1:12-13)
Song:	<u>Song of worship</u> (See Appendix 1)
Link:	The shepherds were chosen to go and see Jesus
Projected Song:	“He chose the shepherds”
Response:	<p>We are invited to see Jesus for ourselves and to receive the gift He came to give us.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coming near to God (James 4:8) using a lit votive candle and meditation.</li> </ul>
Lord’s Prayer:	
Link:	The shepherds responded with praise.
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.

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## Welcome:

Welcome everyone to the Christmas Day service. If your church has a Christmas candle, either light it yourself or invite a child to light it. Then say:

*"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."* (Luke 2:10b-11)

## Opening Prayer:

You may choose to use either:

- an informal prayer
- a prayer from the Church of England's "Time and Seasons"<sup>1</sup> material
- or the following acclamation:

Lord Jesus, on the first Christmas Day,

**You came to us**

Lord Jesus, on this Christmas Day,

**Come to us**

And be at the centre of our celebrations.

**Amen**

## Opening Carols:

Opening Carols as per Appendix 1

## Warm up:

The purpose of the "warm-up" is to discover who in the congregation has made the longest journey to spend Christmas with their family/friends. You could say something like:

How many of you have family or friends staying with you this Christmas?

- Of those of you who have travelled to be with your family or friends, let's find out who has made the longest journey.

Has anyone travelled for over an hour to get here? *(Receive response)*

- How about over 2hours? *(Receive response)*
- 3hours? *(Receive response)*
- More? *(Receive response)*
- Where have you come from? *(Receive response)*

Welcome to all of you who have made long and short journeys to be with your family and friends and with us this Christmas.

- It is good to see you.

Long though some of your journeys may have been, the longest journey of all was made over 2000 years ago, on the very first Christmas,

- when God's Son, Jesus came down from heaven to earth.

<sup>1</sup> "Times and Seasons" material can be found at <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/41153/tandschristmas.pdf>  
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The Bible says this: *“The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood”* (John 1:14 Message Version)

- Let’s hear how this happened.

## Reading 1:

The reading is Luke 2:1-20. This can be read straight from the Bible or you could use the dramatized reading in Appendix 2.

## Talk 1:

For this talk you will need a suitcase. Inside the suitcase you need to pack: 1) A smart jacket or dress, 2) a box of luxury minces pies, 3) a pair of slippers and 4) a couple of wrapped gifts.

What an incredible journey God’s Son Jesus made that first Christmas.

- coming all the way from heaven to earth to be with us.

When people come to stay with us...to be with us... they will often bring a suitcase with them with all of the things that they will need for their stay. *(Show suitcase)*

- Shall we see what is inside this suitcase?

Look at this. *(Pull out jacket or dress)*

- This is very smart.
- It looks like this person has brought something special to wear to join in with the Christmas celebrations.
- It might be their best jacket / dress.

When Jesus came to earth for that very first Christmas he didn’t come wearing His best clothes.....His kingly robes.

- Jesus actually took off his kingly robes (Philippians 2:7) and came to earth clothed in human flesh,
- being born as a baby to live among us.
- Isn’t that incredible?

What else is in the suitcase? *(Pull out a box of luxury mince pies)*

- A box of luxury mince pies.
- It looks like this person has brought something to add to the Christmas feast.

When Jesus came to earth there was no big celebration.

- He was born in poverty; in a room where animals had been kept,
- and where His bed was an animal feeding trough.

What else is in the suitcase? *(Pull out a pair of slippers)*

- A pair of comfy slippers.
- It looks like this person has come to relax...to put their feet up and enjoy somebody else serving them for a few days.
- When Jesus came He didn’t come expecting us to serve Him,
- but He said that He had come to serve us. (Matthew 20:28)

And finally what is in the suitcase? *(Pull out a couple of wrapped gifts)*

- A couple of gifts.
- It looks like this person has brought some gifts to give to the people that they have come to be with.
- When Jesus came, He came with a special gift for each one of us, which we will unwrap in a moment.

What an incredible journey Jesus, God's Son, made from the glory of heaven to the darkness of earth.

- Coming to be with us as a baby,
- Coming to be with us in poverty,
- Coming to be with us to serve
- And coming to give us a special gift.

But why?

- Why did Jesus come?
- What is this special gift that Jesus came to give us?
- We will find out more after our next song.

### **Song:**

A song of worship as per Appendix 1

### **Link:**

For this next section you will need a large box wrapped up in gift wrap. Inside the box is a photograph album. Attached to the outside of the album is a label that says, "John 1:12-13." Inside the album are some photographs of people. Attached to the large box is a label that says, "To all people."

So why did Jesus come?

- He came partly for the same reason your guests might have travelled to see you.....because they love you.
- Jesus came because God the Father LOVES us.

Each one of us is deeply precious to Father God,

- and He loves us with an unconditional love.....
- a love that is not dependent on what we do or don't do.

Because Father God loves us so much He sent Jesus to give us a precious gift.

When people love each other, one of the ways that they show it is by giving each other gifts.

- Before we open this gift let's share the gifts that we have been given today.

### **Show and tell Gifts given:**

Using a "roving microphone," invite the congregation to share with you what gifts they have been given this Christmas Day, by their friends and family.

## Talk 2:

Who would like to come and open this large gift? *(Choose a volunteer to come forward)*

- This gift says that it is for all people....
- Let's open it. *(Volunteer opens box and pulls out the photograph album, then send them back to their seat)*

Look at that....it is a photograph album.

- What is that all about?
- On the outside of the album is a label that says, "John 1:12-13"
- Who would like to come and read out those verses for us? *(Volunteer reads out John 1:12-13)*

This photograph album has pictures of all kinds of people in it.

- It is here today to remind us of what Jesus came to give us on the very first Christmas.
- Jesus came to give you and me the precious gift of becoming a CHILD OF GOD.

God's Son has come close to us; making the big journey from heaven to earth so that we can come close to Him.

- We are invited to become members of His family and enjoy a life-giving and satisfying relationship with Him that begins now and goes on for all eternity.

That may be a little hard to get your head around that God loves you so much that He wants you to be close to Him; so close that you become His beloved child,

- but it is the truth and why we celebrate Christmas.

When Jesus grew up and became a man He served us in the most amazing way to make it possible for us to become children of God.

- He willingly gave up His life; being nailed to a cross for crimes that He hadn't committed; rising from the dead three days later.
- Jesus did this because it was the only way that sinful people could come close to a holy God.

Jesus willingly came to earth to give you and me a gift that we cannot earn ourselves; the gift of becoming a child of God.

- Because God loves us and has come close to us, we can come close to Him.
- What an amazing gift.
- Let's worship Him

## Song:

A song of worship as per Appendix 1

## Link:

On the first Christmas night somebody else also had to make a journey;

- a much shorter journey than Jesus made, but a journey nonetheless.

The shepherds, looking after their sheep in the hills surrounding Bethlehem were visited by some angels who told them that God's Son had been born in Bethlehem.

- They were chosen to go and see Jesus for themselves.

## Projected Song:

The projected song is: "He chose the shepherds."<sup>2</sup> If you are unable to project the song the service works without it.

## Response:

For the response you will need a votive candle in a holder<sup>3</sup> for each person present.

We, like the shepherds are invited to come and see Jesus for ourselves and receive the gift that He has come to bring us.

We will not find Jesus lying as a baby in a manger,

- for He is now living with Father God in heaven.

However, His presence is with us now and if we turn to Him by faith and put our trust in Him,

- we will receive the gift of becoming a child of God.
- The Bible invites us to "Come near to God and He will come near to you" (James 4:6)

We are going to pass around some votive lights now. (*Pass around lit votive lights*)

On a practical note you may find it easiest to have all the unlit votive candles on a table at the front of church. During the song, "He chose the shepherds" light them with gas lighters and then hand them around to people at the appropriate point. As the candles are distributed, you may wish to play some quiet music in the background. Once all the candles have been distributed lead the congregation in the following meditation.

As we look at our candle....a little light shining....so we are reminded of Jesus who came to earth as a baby.....God coming close to us on the first Christmas so that we might come close to Him. PAUSE

As we feel the warmth of the flame we are reminded that Jesus came because God the Father loves us and we are precious to Him. PAUSE

As we look at the light of the flame we are reminded that Jesus came to deal with the darkness of our sin by dying for us on a cross, but then rising from the dead three days later. PAUSE

As we turn to Jesus, believing and trusting in Him; so we receive His gift of becoming a child of God and the Holy Spirit comes to live within us....God's light now lives in us. PAUSE

Thank you Jesus that You came close so that we might live in close relationship with You. Amen.

<sup>2</sup> The song "He chose the shepherds" can be found on YouTube at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) Put "He chose the shepherds Friends and Heroes" into the search bar to find the song.

<sup>3</sup> You can purchase votive lights from a supplier such as D M Hay at [www.dmhay.com](http://www.dmhay.com) Type in "votive lights" into the search bar and choose either 4hr, 6hr, 18hr or 24hr votives. If possible on the outside case of each votive light either write in pen or stick a label on with the words, "Come near to God and He will come near to you" (James 4:8)

**Lord's Prayer:**

Follow the meditation by saying the Lord's Prayer together. Encourage people to take their candles home with them and place them on their tables as they eat their celebration meals; lighting them to remember what Jesus has done.

**Link:**

After the shepherds had seen Jesus they returned to their sheep glorifying and praising God for what He had done.

- So let us now glory and praise God for what He has done for us.

**Final 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 that God loves you so much that He has come close to you so that you might live in close relationship with Him.....

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) Opening Carols. 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)
- Once in Royal David's city (Cecil Frances Humphreys Alexander, Henry John Gauntlett)
- See Him lying on a bed of straw (Michael Perry © 1965 Mrs B.Perry/Jubilate Hymns)

### ii) Song of worship. Ideas include:

- Away in a manger (John Thomas McFarland, Martin Luther, William James Kirkpatrick)
- Born in the night (Geoffrey Ainger © 1964 Stainer & Bell Ltd)
- Lord you were rich beyond all splendour (F.Houghton)
- Mary had a little baby (Andy Silver © 1986 Andy Silver)
- O little town of Bethlehem (Phillips Brooks)
- Silent night, holy night (Joseph Mohr)
- Songs of gladness (Michael Perry © Michael Perry/Jubilate Hymns)
- You laid aside your majesty (Noel Richards © 1985 Thankyou Music)

### iii) Song of Worship. Ideas include:

- From the squalor of a borrowed stable (Stuart Townend © 1999 Thankyou Music)
- In the bleak mid-winter (Christina G Rossetti)
- In the bleak mid-winter (Chris Tomlin & Matt Maher © 2015 Be Essential songs)
- Love incarnate, love divine (Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash & Matt Redman © 2015 sixsteps Songs)
- My Jesus, my Saviour (Darlene Zschech © 1993 Darlene Zschech / Hillsong Publishing)
- On Christmas day (Matt Osgood © Matt Osgood / RESOUNDworship.org)
- O what a gift! (Pat Uhl Howard © 1967 American Catholic Press)
- The first nowell (Patti Drennan)

### v) 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)
- While shepherds watched (Nahum Tate)

## Appendix 2 – Dramatized Luke 2:1-20

**Cast:** Joseph, Mary, Shepherd 1 and Shepherd 2

**Props:** You might want to dress up Joseph, Mary and shepherds

**Directions:** The Reading is “story-told” by Joseph and Mary and two shepherds. If it is possible for the words to be learnt and ad-libbed then the story will flow better.

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*(Enter Joseph and Mary)*

Joseph: I am Joseph and this is my wife Mary. We have come to tell you the amazing story of what happened on the very first Christmas.

Mary: Joseph and I were engaged to be married and one day an angel visited me and told me that I was going to have God’s baby. You can imagine that Joseph found it hard to believe me until an angel told him in a dream that it really was the truth.

Joseph: A little while later a Roman official came to our town of Nazareth. He told us that Caesar Augustus had ordered that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world and that we all had to travel to our home towns to register.

Mary: So we packed up our things and travelled up to Bethlehem as Joseph was a descendant of David. While we were there it was time for my baby to be born.

Joseph: All the inns were full so Mary and I had to stay in a place where animals were kept, which was where baby Jesus was born.

Mary: I wrapped the baby up in cloths and placed him in an animal’s feeding trough called a manger and then tried to get some rest.

*(Enter Shepherds)*

Shepherd 1: But Mary didn’t get much rest that night. We shepherds put a stop to that! It seemed like any other evening, sitting in the fields together, looking after our sheep when suddenly we got the shock of our lives.

Shepherd 2: An angel of the Lord appeared right in front of us and light surrounded Him.

Shepherd 1: He told us not to be afraid as he was bringing us good news for everybody living on earth.

Shepherd 2: This good news was that a Saviour had just been born in Bethlehem and this Saviour was Christ the Lord.

Shepherd 1: We were told that we were to look for a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

Shepherd 2: A whole load more angels then joined him and they all sang this beautiful song: *“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.”*

Shepherd 1: After the angels had gone we decided that we had to go to Bethlehem and see what had happened.

Joseph: I couldn't believe it when a bunch of shepherds came crashing into the place where Mary and I were staying.

Shepherd 2: It was wonderful to see baby Jesus; Christ the Lord, lying in the manger, just as the angel had told us.

Shepherd 1: We then went off and told everybody what we had seen.

Shepherd 2: We were so excited that we couldn't stop praising God for what He had done in sending His Son to earth.

Mary: That was a very special Christmas; the very first Christmas of all when God came to earth.

*(Exit all)*