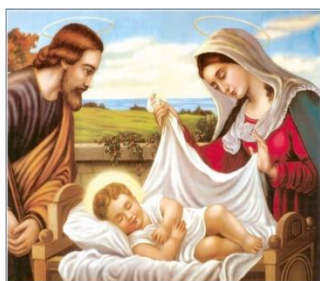




Ascension News
Church of the Ascension –
The Anglican Church in Hilton, KZN
Diocese of Natal in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa



This Advent Bev and I are thoroughly enjoying a Bible Plan entitled 'The Songs tell the Story' which explores the origin of many of our Christmas Carols. We would like to share some with you. It has been hard to select which of them to use.



O Come O Come Emmanuel

is typically sung during the final week of Advent and has been sung throughout the world by God's people for more than twelve centuries. It was originally written in Latin and came to popularity in an 1861 English translation by John Mason Neale titled Hymns Ancient and Modern.

This ancient song reaches even farther back, reminding us of the incredible moment that Mary praised God after realizing she'd been chosen to carry and give birth to God's Son.

In Luke 1:46–49, she sang, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name." This passage (and on into verse 55) is called "The Magnificat."

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" reminds us of that incredible moment.

The hymn has many stanzas, and each describes a hope that Christians have because of Christmas. The deepest meaning of the holiday is found in a name, Emmanuel, God with us.

At first, the song and its melody seem to be sad and reflective of hard times. The first verse reminds us of the many years Israel was held captive by the Babylonians and Assyrians. But the words tell those from Israel to “Rejoice! Rejoice!” Emmanuel, their promised Messiah, would come. God would be with them.

On the day Christ was born in Bethlehem, Emmanuel came to dwell on the earth—and Jesus is still Emmanuel, God with us, today.

Do you believe that?

God is with us

Mary may have been the first one to realize in amazement what it was like to have the Son of God alive and within her, but she was not to be the last.

Because of Christmas, Jesus dwells within the life of every believer.

Every Christian has received God’s Holy Spirit, and he is Emmanuel, God with us.

God with you.

“Until the Son of God appear,” may we “Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel has come!”

Let your soul magnify the Lord today. Rejoice in God your Saviour.

And thank him for the incredible gift of his Son on Christmas Day.



What Child Is This?

What Child is this who, laid to rest On Mary’s lap, is sleeping?

Whom angels greet with anthems sweet While shepherds watch are keeping?

This, this is Christ the King, Whom shepherds guard and angels sing,

Haste, haste, to bring Him laud, The Babe, the Son of Mary!

Imagine yourself as a first-century shepherd tending your flock in the dark Judean wilderness. Another night has fallen, and the night will likely be the same as every other mundane night: keeping watch, fending off would-be predators, and listening to the bleating of sheep who’ve yet to fall asleep. Your eyelids begin to droop. The sleep you crave washes over you. The crook you hold close by falls from your grasp. But then..... Something appears out of nothing. Bright lights dazzle you. And a voice speaks. Would you be afraid?

Luke tells us that the shepherds who were visited by an angel of the Lord on the night of Jesus' birth "were filled with great fear" (Luke 2:9). Given what their every other night had always been like, is that any wonder? Then, once their shock had worn away at just the sight and sound of the angel's visit, the words they heard must have shocked them even more. "A saviour? Here? The Christ? As a *baby*?"

Woken from their late-night shepherding, these men must have been incredulous. Instead, they believed the incredible news they'd just heard, telling each other, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us" (Luke 2:15).

This is the scene William Chatterton Dix was thinking about when he wrote "What Child is This?" Dix was born in 1837 in Bristol, England, and moved to Glasgow, Scotland, as a young man. While there, he worked in insurance, but his favourite pastime was writing poetry. (In fact, Dix's middle name was given to him by his father in honour of poet Thomas Chatterton.)

When he was twenty-nine, he contracted a near-fatal illness that forced him to stay in bed for months. Dix became discouraged and depressed during this time and began to question if God were real. Consequently, he began to read a number of Christian books. He also began spending ample time in prayer.

And, of course, he wrote poetry. Many of the lyrics to his hymns were written during this time of his life, including *The Manger Song*, the longer poem in which "What Child Is This?" first appeared in 1865. The poem was set to the melody of "Greensleeves," a famous tune of his day, and "What Child of This?" became a Christmas classic. Eventually, Dix recovered from his illness and became a man of great faith—something his poetry evidences.

Dix didn't ask "What child is this?" because he didn't know the answer. I don't think those first shepherds asked out of ignorance either. After all, the angel had *just* told them who the child was. Rather, they may have asked such a question out of amazement: "What child *is* this?" The Jewish people expected a reigning King, not a wailing child. They longed for one who would conquer, not one who needed swaddling. Yet this was the Saviour whom God saw fit to send to earth.

When you realize Who this child really is, you can know that the answers to life's toughest questions are true:

Is God real? Absolutely.

Does he love me? More than you can know.

The baby sleeping in Mary's lap was Jesus, and he was—and is—Christ the King. This Christmas season, let's all "make haste to bring him laud (honour)." The Babe, the Son of Mary, is our Lord and Saviour. What child is this indeed.

Before reading the story behind this carol please try to listen to it as sung by Pentatonix. Here is the link <https://youtu.be/ifCWN5pJGIE>



Mary, Did You Know?

By simply changing the perspective of the song, as if it had been written to Mary, the mother of Jesus, the songwriter had caused us all to consider the Christmas story in a new and startling way.

Mark Lowry is a popular Christian comedian who began his career in the late 1980s. In 1984, Lowry was asked to write a Christmas play, so he sat down with pen and paper and imagined Mary holding her newborn baby. He thought about all the things the baby Jesus would do once he became a man. Eventually, the words became a poem. In 1991, the poem became a powerful song.

Lowry said that he "started thinking and wondering if Mary realized the power, authority and majesty that she cradled in her arms that first Christmas. I wondered if she realized those little hands were the same hands that scooped out oceans and formed rivers. I just tried to put into words the unfathomable. I started thinking of the questions I would have for her if I were to sit down and have coffee with Mary.

You know, 'What was it like raising God?

What did you know? What didn't you know?'"

We look back so we can look forward.

Every new mom holds her baby and wonders about the life her child will have when he or she is grown. Mary knew her baby was special because God was his only Father. Mary knew she held a miracle in her arms, but I don't think she could have imagined all the miracles her baby would do when he grew to be a man. It's comparatively easy for us to read the Bible and nod our assent: Fed five thousand? Sure! Walked on water? Of course! Raised from the dead? Absolutely.

But do what the song encourages you to do: place yourself in Mary's shoes *before* any of that happened. Then imagine how her joy, her faith, and her trust increased as she saw her son—God's only Son—do incredible works throughout his life.

God entrusted Jesus to Mary, and Mary believed the angel's words to her in Luke 1:37: "For nothing will be impossible with God."

May we echo Mary's response this Christmas: "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).



Joy To The World

*Joy to the world, the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare him room
And heaven and nature sing!
And heaven and nature sing!
And heaven . . . and heaven . . . and nature sing.*

"Joy to the World" wasn't written as a Christmas carol. In fact, it wasn't a song until a hundred years *after* its initial words were penned within a poem. Then again, the poem was based on words composed thousands of years before. So, how exactly did one of the most beloved Christmas carols originate?

Isaac Watts was an English minister in the early 1700s, credited with writing approximately 750 hymns. In 1719, he wrote a book of poems based on the Psalms, titled *The Psalms of David: Imitated in the language of the New Testament, and applied to the Christian state and worship*.

As his lengthy subtitle reveals, he wanted his readers to see Old Testament passages through a New Testament perspective. As it pertains to "Joy to the World," Watts longed for people to see Jesus as their King.

Consequently, he used Psalm 98:7–9 as inspiration for his poem: "Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world, and those who dwell in it! Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity."

"Joy to the World" was written one hundred years after Isaac Watts had written his book. It is an adaptation of Psalm 98 from Isaac Watts' book. The last stanza of "Joy to the World" says:

*He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love
And wonders of His love
And wonders, wonders of His love.*

When we sing “Joy to the World,” we’re called to remember that Jesus isn’t just a baby whose birth we celebrate at Christmas. Rather, he’s the King of Christmas.

Isaac Watts wanted people to understand that this King rules the world with truth and grace. But it’s *our* job to help others know the “wonders of His love.” People need to experience those “wonders” in our service and know God’s love for them. People need to experience joy at Christmas (and all year round). And we all desperately need Jesus to be our King.

Jesus told his disciples, “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy might be in you, and your joy may be full” (John 15:11). He wanted them to have his joy, the joy that comes from choosing God as King.

Will you make Jesus your King and live with his joy?

And will you share that joy, both in word and deed, with all you meet?

That is how you give “joy to the world” and worship the King.



O holy night!

*O Holy night the stars are brightly shining,
It is the night of our dear Savior's birth.
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
Till He appear'd and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.
Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born;
O night divine, O night, O night divine.*

“O Holy Night” may have one of the more miraculous origin stories because the two men responsible for its creation weren't Christians. If you know the song, that might seem incredible. Its soaring music and moving lyrics have likely touched millions. So it's surprising that these two men could have created such an enduring, powerful hymn of wonder. But God tends to do surprising things around Christmastime.

In 1847, poet Placide Cappeau was asked to compose a poem for a Christmas service. However, he admitted that he didn't attend church very often. Nevertheless, he said yes to the request. While on a bumpy coach ride on a dusty road in France, Cappeau read the gospel of Luke for inspiration. He imagined what it must have been like for Mary and Joseph the night Jesus was born. His thoughts became his poem, "O Holy Night." Realizing that God had inspired his words, Cappeau asked Adolphe Charles Adams, a Jewish friend, to compose music for his words. Adams was a famous composer who didn't celebrate Christmas due to his Jewish heritage. Consequently, he didn't believe the subject of the poem was actually about God's holy Son. Yet Adams agreed to compose the music—and what a magnificent choice for posterity. "O Holy Night" has been sung in churches around the world for hundreds of years. Very few people realize it was written and composed by two men who knew very little about Jesus.

Sharing Jesus: When an opportunity to talk about Jesus arises with your friends, family, or coworkers, how do you respond? Do you immediately tell them about what he's done for you and what he can do for them? Or do you hang back and let them maybe say something spiritual so that you feel like you have a more open door for conversation? Or do you say nothing at all and hope that they might go to church somewhere so their pastor can share Jesus with them?

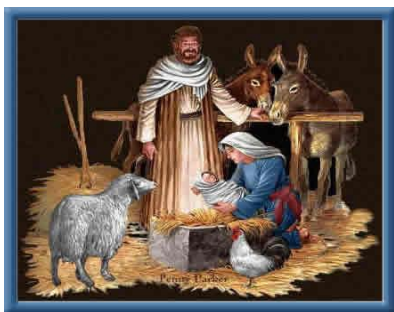
As Christians, we tend to vacillate between these responses depending on the person with whom we're talking. In other words, you may be more open to sharing Christ with a coworker than with your boss simply because of the power dynamics at play.

But consider what Jesus said to his disciples before they were sent out to tell others about him: "Do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour" (Matthew 10:19).

Jesus allows himself to be known by *everyone*. He can be seen in the miracles of nature, in the lives of believers, and in the words of the Bible. But, Jesus can also inspire and use people who don't have a strong faith.

God still inspires people today with great words and thoughts. If your friends, family, or co-workers are talking about Christmas or Christ and you want to help them believe, ask God what you should say. Let God's Holy Spirit give you his words. Then *speak*.

God gave words to two unlikely men, and Christians have been singing "O Holy Night" for hundreds of years.
What will God help you say today?



Away in a Manger

*Away in a manger,
No crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus
Lay down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky
Look down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus,
Asleep on the hay.*

The simple words and melody of "Away in a Manger" are purposeful. Though no one knows who wrote the hymn, tradition suggests it was written so that children could sing it at Christmastime.

Consequently, that could be why this song may be the first Christmas hymn you learned. And why it's a perennial favourite for children's choirs. The words are short and sweet, and the song is easy to remember.

But, don't let its simplicity fool you into thinking the song's not telling us a deep truth.

Tradition also holds that Martin Luther may have added the last stanza in his ongoing efforts to reform the church of his time. Back then, the church had begun to believe certain tenets the Bible didn't teach.

However, most people didn't own a Bible. They had to rely on the teaching of others, like Luther. The last stanza of "Away in a Manger" could be Luther's teachings:

*Be near me, Lord Jesus,
I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever
And love me, I pray*

*Bless all the dear children
In Thy tender care
And take us to heaven
To live with Thee there.*

It's possible that these words tell us what Luther thought was most important about Christmas: Jesus came from heaven, to be born as a baby. Then he grew to be a man who gave his perfect, sinless life so that anyone who would believe in him could live in heaven.

These are simple truths we may take for granted at Christmas. But pause and truly consider what you're affirming when you sing this song. Consider the ramifications for your life and for the world when you sing about "the little Lord Jesus."

No longer asleep - The final stanzas also remind us that Jesus is *still* with us. He did not only arrive as a baby and leave earth as a man. He promised us a Helper.

In John 14:16–17, Jesus said, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you."

God gives every believer his Holy Spirit, who is the Person and Presence of Jesus today. Jesus is *close* to believers now and forever. We are in his "tender care" until he takes us to heaven to live with him there.

Martin Luther would have wanted believers to think about that truth at Christmas.

Will you think about it today?



Good Christian Men Rejoice
*Good Christian men, rejoice
With heart and soul and voice;
Give ye heed to what we say:
Jesus Christ is born today!
Ox and ass before him bow,
and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today!
Christ is born today!*

We sometimes forget how ancient our songs of faith are. And we can't fathom how many other people have worshipped with the same words we sing every Christmas.

For instance, “Good Christian Men Rejoice” may have originated in the fourteenth century. To put that into perspective, 1325 marks the *beginning* of the Renaissance era in Italy. The Hundred Years’ War *started* in 1337. John Wycliffe *began* translating the Latin Bible into English in 1376. And Chaucer *started* writing the *Canterbury Tales* in 1387.

Good Christian men—and women—have been rejoicing through this song for seven hundred years now.

In the 1300s, most people couldn’t read. Only the wealthy could afford an education. Almost no one had a Bible in their home. Consequently, preachers often travelled from place to place. Only the larger cities had sermons or lessons each week. So, churches found different ways for people to learn about God.

They made stained glass windows that retold stories from the Bible. They painted pictures that reminded people of biblical characters and stories. They taught people to sing hymns so they could learn and remember important truths from the Bible. Because so many were illiterate, the church had to find ways to tell the old, old stories in mediums other than print.

Because of its antiquity, we don’t know who wrote “Good Christian Men Rejoice.” But its lyrics make clear that the author simply wanted people to sing about Christmas and rejoice.

The author wanted people to know that Jesus was laid in a manger and that all of creation was supposed to “bow” before the baby who was also God’s Son, a King. The author desired for people to know that Christmas was about the fact that “Christ is born today.”

Why *today*?

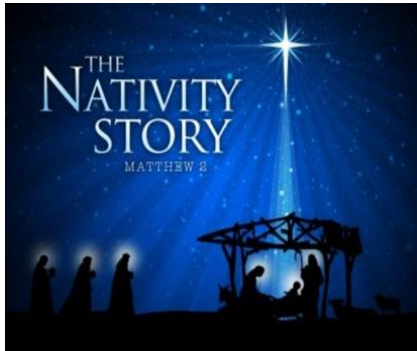
“Born today” to be “born again” As we read in 2 Corinthians 5:17

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” and in Romans 10:9 “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Chances are, there is still someone you know who needs to choose to confess Jesus as Lord and believe that truth with their whole heart.

If someone came to your mind when you read those words, pause now and pray specifically for them.

Maybe this will be the first Christmas he or she will celebrate as a “born-again believer” with Christ as their Lord. That would be a great reason for good Christians—and Christ—to *rejoice* today.



It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

*It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From Angels playing near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold;
“Peace on the earth, good will to men,
From Heaven’s all-gracious King.”
The world in solemn stillness lay,
To hear the Angels sing.*

Cultural upheavals didn’t begin in the twentieth century. Even though the last hundred years have resulted in both impressive and catastrophic change, one thing has remained the same ever since Adam and Eve first sinned: the yearning of the human heart for *more*.

More money. More time. More fame. More everything. We crave more of what we think we need only to discover it doesn’t satisfy. Ask nearly any famous actor or athlete who’s achieved the pinnacle of their profession if meeting their lofty goal ultimately satisfied their soul. Keep these thoughts in mind as you read on.

Reverend Edmund Hamilton Sears only wrote two hymns in his life. One of them was “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear,” which he composed in 1849. Reverend Sears lived in New England during a chaotic time in America’s history. The Gold Rush had caused many men to leave their families and go to California in search of money and notoriety. The mid-1800s also saw the rise of the Industrial Revolution, when America began to mass manufacture all kinds of materials. New machines required skilled workers, and many families left their farms and moved to the big cities. As more factories were built, the cities quickly became overcrowded. Consequently, American culture changed. Many didn’t live with the same priorities of church and family that had once characterized the farming communities. Rather, they competed for jobs and gold. Those waning priorities caused Reverend Sears to grow concerned for families and their faith, resulting in these words that could just as easily apply to twenty-first-century lives:

*And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow;
Look now! for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing.
Oh rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing!*

Do you need rest this Christmas? Christmas can be an especially busy season of rushing around and spending money on what we hope will be perfect gifts. But Jesus was and is the only perfect Christmas gift. Reverend Sears would suggest we sing his hymn and remember God's priorities at Christmas. Let's "rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing." What message did the angels sing? Peace on the earth, good will to men."

Will you make them yours? Those are God's Christmas priorities.



We Three Kings

*We three kings of Orient are
Bearing gifts we traverse afar;
Field and fountain, moor and
mountain,
Following yonder star.
O, star of wonder, star of light,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light.*

How many wise men saw the baby Jesus? It wasn't three, despite what this song may tell us. It may have been as many as twelve, but don't worry about buying more magi for your nativity scene. The actual number of magi isn't recorded in Scripture. Matthew 2:1 says, "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem." And nowhere else in that passage nor elsewhere in the Bible is the number of magi recorded. So why do we assume that there were three wise men? Likely due to the three gifts they brought to Jesus, i.e., the gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

“We Three Kings” was composed in 1857 and probably has more to do with our thinking than the actual passage of Scripture upon which it’s based. In other words, don’t take Christmas carols as Scripture. Rather, just as this devotional attempts, allow these lyrics to point you back to the Scriptures upon which they’re based.

This Christmas carol is based on Matthew 2:1–12 and describes the magi, - the wise men, who travelled from the East to find the new born King. We may think of the “Orient” as Japan or China, but the wise men were probably from the part of Asia known as Persia.

Why do we call these men “wise”? The word *magi* actually meant skilled magician or astrologer. We know these men followed the star, so we believe them to be astrologers.

But how did they know to follow the star?

It’s possible that, while the prophet Daniel was held captive in Babylon, he might have taught men about the promised Messiah of Israel. Daniel was considered a wise man in one of the most educated and advanced cultures of that time. Babylon was the eastern area that would be called Persia, which is known as Iran today. The distance from Babylon to Bethlehem is hundreds of miles. The wise men probably lived near that region and travelled the long distance by riding camels and walking. The magi were wealthy men, and the gifts they brought were expensive. They would have brought servants to protect them, and they would have packed food, water, and tents.

Most of us know too, that Jesus wasn’t a baby in a manger by the time the magi arrived. The Bible uses a different word for *boy* when describing a child under the age of two. The magi might not have begun their trip until *after* Jesus had been born.

And one more fun fact about those “three” kings is the gifts they brought. Those valuable gifts are probably the reason Joseph, a poor man, was able to care for his family when the angel told him they all needed to flee to Egypt. When you picture the arrival of the magi, think about *all* that the arrival meant, especially in the tiny village of Bethlehem! Wealthy, knowledgeable men worshipped the new born king, acknowledging that “thy perfect light” had finally come to a dark world.

A popular saying reads: “Wise men still seek him.” How will you be wise today?



Angels from the realms of Glory

*Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation's story
Now proclaim Messiah's birth:
Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.*

One day, I was at a stoplight, and my eyes were drawn to a man holding a cardboard sign. In moments like that one, I always try to pray and ask God what to do. That day, I just *knew*, in my head and heart, that I was supposed to give. When I pulled up next to him and looked him in the eyes, they were the bluest eyes I'd ever seen. I gave him some money, and he smiled and said, "God bless you." I drove off, knowing God *had blessed*.

Hebrews 13:2 says, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

I'm not certain I saw an angel that day, but one day in heaven, I'm going to ask! I just know the moment was special. I still think about it today.

The church seems to talk about angels more often during the Christmas season, which makes sense: angels played an important role in the Christmas story.

Scottish poet James Montgomery wanted us to consider the heralding angels when he wrote the well-known Christmas anthem "Angels from the Realms of Glory" in 1816. The carol wasn't sung in churches until nearly a decade later, in 1825, after its inclusion in a collection of Montgomery's works titled *The Christian Psalmist*.

One line from the song reads "Yonder shines the infant light." It's impossible to imagine what it must have been like for the shepherds when, in the middle of the night, the sky was illuminated by the glory of the heavenly host.

Shepherds lit fires at night, hoping to scare away wolves. Shepherds had the stars and the moon that gave some light during the night. But they had *never*, in all their lives, seen light like they experienced when the "angels from the realms of glory" appeared.

What are angels doing today?

So, what are angels doing today?

Angels are messengers and ministers from God. But what do angels look like?

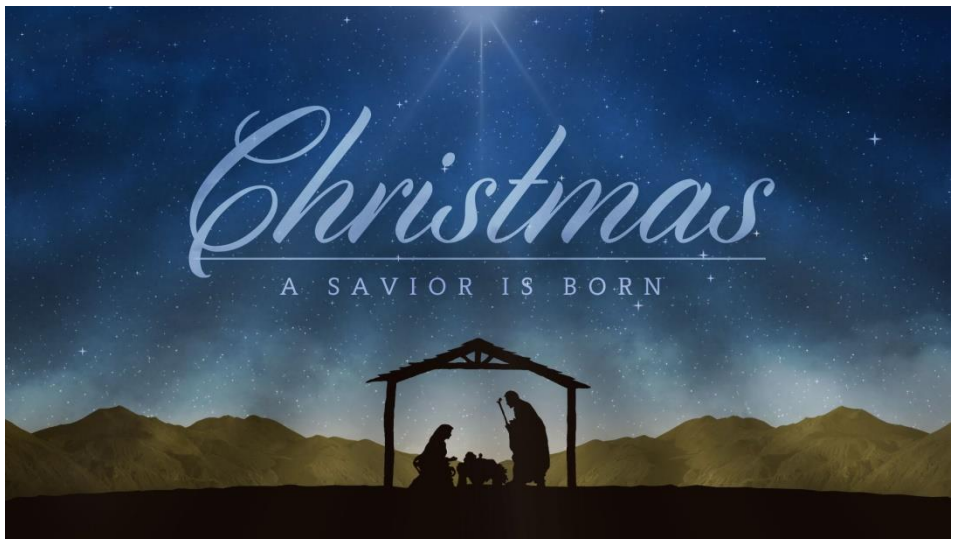
How do we know if we've seen one?

I've been asked a lot of questions about angels, and there is one thing I am certain of: angels exist. Jesus spoke of angels and believed in angels. We should too. Billy Graham's book *Angels* is my favorite book on the subject. While being interviewed about the book, someone asked Dr. Graham if angels were real. He said, "Yes, angels are real, just as real as you and I are. Although they are largely unseen by us, they exist in great numbers. The Bible speaks of 'thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly' (Hebrews 12:22 NIV). When Jesus' birth was announced to the shepherds outside Bethlehem, 'a great company of the heavenly host appeared . . . praising God' (Luke 2:13 NIV)."

God created angels in his realms of glory and uses them to serve him, speak for him, and bring him glory. I pray God will send his angels to you this Christmas season.



In another Advent plan '**The Journey to Christmas**' we found this sequence of scripture readings meaningful. May you too be blessed in reading them. I have used the Message paraphrase.



Righteousness Restored

In a prophecy found in Zechariah 9, God promised that the future King would come with salvation and bring His righteousness. This means that on Christmas, God brought us “His righteousness” to earth in the person of Jesus Christ. This is exactly what the world needed (and still needs). In Romans 3:10, the apostle Paul describes the sad condition of humanity: “None is righteous, no, not one.” We are all in the same situation, born with a sin nature and unable to make ourselves righteous. But in Romans 1:17, Paul says, “The righteous shall live by faith.” Christianity is not about earning righteousness, it’s about receiving the righteousness of Jesus “by faith.” It’s not about who we are, it’s about who He is.

After Jesus was born, He continued to live in righteousness His entire life. He was perfect, staying close to God and following His Father’s plan without hesitation. On the cross, He made a transfer. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For our

sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” When Jesus died for us, He took on all of our unrighteousness and put it to death, giving His righteousness and intimacy with God to us.

Remember, God’s love for us is not based on anything we do or do not do. It’s based only on what Jesus has already done. Romans 5:8 says, God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” The Righteous One was born on Christmas to show us God’s love in the most powerful way possible, by making us righteous in His sight.

Prayer: Father, You are full of amazing grace! I receive Your righteousness today by faith in Your Son, Jesus. I realize that You are pleased with me only because of what Jesus has done for me. Thank You, Jesus, for covering me. Strengthen me with the confidence that I am secure in Your Righteousness. Help me remember I haven’t earned it myself so I can serve You with humility and gratitude all my life.



Zechariah 9:9-10 Shout and cheer,
Daughter Zion! Raise the roof, Daughter
Jerusalem! Your king is coming! a good king
who makes all things right, a humble king
riding a donkey, a mere colt of a donkey.

I’ve had it with war—no more chariots in Ephraim, no more war horses in

Jerusalem, no more swords and spears, bows and arrows. He will offer peace to the nations, a peaceful rule worldwide, from the four winds to the seven seas.



Romans 3:9-20 So where does that put us?

Do we Jews get a better break than the

others? Not really. Basically, all of us,

whether insiders or outsiders, start out in

identical conditions, which is to say that we

all start out as sinners. Scripture leaves no doubt about it: There's nobody living right, not even one, nobody who knows the score, nobody alert for God. They've all taken the wrong turn; they've all wandered down blind alleys. No one's living right; I can't find a single one. Their throats are gaping graves, their tongues slick as mudslides. Every word they speak is tinged with poison. They open their mouths and pollute the air. They race for the honor of sinner-of-the-year, litter the land with heartbreak and ruin, Don't know the first thing about living with others. They never give God the time of day. This makes it clear, doesn't it, that whatever is written in these Scriptures is not what God says about others but to us to whom these Scriptures were addressed in the first place! And it's clear enough, isn't it, that we're sinners, every one of us, in the same sinking boat with everybody else? Our involvement with God's revelation doesn't put us right with God. What it does is force us to face our complicity in everyone else's sin.

Romans 1:16-17 It's news I'm most proud to proclaim, this extraordinary Message of God's powerful plan to rescue everyone who trusts him, starting

with Jews and then right on to everyone else! God's way of putting people right shows up in the acts of faith, confirming what Scripture has said all along: "The person in right standing before God by trusting him really lives.

2 Corinthians 5:21 How? you ask. In Christ. God put the wrong on him who never did anything wrong, so we could be put right with God.

Romans 5:6-8 Christ arrives right on time to make this happen. He didn't, and doesn't, wait for us to get ready. He presented himself for this sacrificial death when we were far too weak and rebellious to do anything to get ourselves ready. And even if we hadn't been so weak, we wouldn't have known what to do anyway. We can understand someone dying for a person worth dying for, and we can understand how someone good and noble could inspire us to selfless sacrifice. But God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to him."



21 December	Quiet Christmas	18h30
24 December	Crib Service	17h00
25 December	Christmas day service	07h00
	Christmas day service	08h30

Please book at the Church office 033 343 3012 open from 9h00 - 13h00