

Welcome

from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York



Christmas this year will feel different. The family gatherings may well be smaller. For at least some of us, we may be joining in the familiar carols online rather than in church. But it will still be – as always – a time to care for one another and to be together.

It will be a time to look back on a year when so much has changed. To remember those who have died, to support those who have lost jobs, to be thankful for all who have cared for the sick and the vulnerable.

What has not changed is the story and the meaning of Jesus' birth. *God is with us.* With us in the mess as in the good, in the disappointment and the difficulty, in sorrow and in celebration.

This booklet, like a traditional carol service, offers you nine lessons and carols and, with the help of a variety of contributors, an opportunity to hear again the story and reflect on its meaning in this time of challenge.

We pray that as you journey with this booklet through the Christmas season you will know that Jesus journeys with you. May you know God's comfort and, in whatever your circumstances, be surprised by God's joy.

Comfort and Joy

Nine Lessons and Carols for Christmas



Christmas Day

Comfort and joy

4

Justin Welby *Archbishop of Canterbury*

Boxing Day

Joy to the world!

7

Martha Collison *baker and food writer*

27 December

All is calm, all is bright

10

Guli Francis-Dehqani *Bishop of Loughborough and Vice-Chair of the Board of Church Army*

28 December

Rest beside the weary road

13

Kate Bottley *priest, media presenter and journalist*

29 December

Sing, choirs of angels

16

Bob Chilcott *composer and conductor*

30 December

O holy night!

19

Chine McDonald *Head of Community Fundraising and Public Engagement for Christian Aid, author*

New Year's Eve

Light and life to all he brings

22

Jonathan Bryan *author of Eye Can Write, blogger and founder of TeachUsToo.org*

New Year's Day

The hopes and fears of all the years

25

Stephen Cottrell *Archbishop of York*

2 January

What can I give him?

28

Sally Phillips *actor, presenter, comedian and disability advocate*

Next steps

31

Christmas Day

Comfort and joy

Day
1



Carol God rest you merry

*... Now to the Lord sing praises,
All you within this place,
And with true love and charity
Each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas
All other doth deface:
O tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy!*

Traditional

Introduction

Christmas is good news. After a tough year, Christmas brings comfort and joy to you and to a world that is weary and hurting.

The message of the baby born in Bethlehem is that God is in the mix. God does not stand far off, watching from a distance. God comes to us, walks with us and stays with us.

Reading Luke 2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Reflection

by Archbishop Justin Welby

A light amidst the difficulties of this year has been the way people have cared for each other with generosity and courage. Cynicism about community has often been overwhelmed by love for neighbour.

It has been stressful and anxious, but we have not shut ourselves off from each other. There have been countless wonderful acts of kindness and care, often sacrificial ones.

We've seen these acts of goodness in health and in care, we've seen them in the community and in our neighbourhoods. Most often they have come not from power or position but from love and vulnerability.

That's exactly the sort of love that we celebrate at Christmas. Love that gets its hands dirty. Love that is open and generous. Love that, without great ceremony, makes a difference.

May we find that love, God's love in Jesus Christ, this Christmas. May we share that love, God's love in us, this Christmas. And as we receive, and as we give, may we know the comfort and the joy that is God's gift to us.

Give

Is there a gift, not one bought from a shop or prettily wrapped, that you might need to give another person today?

How might such a gift bring comfort and joy to someone this Christmas?

Pray

God of comfort and joy, may we know your presence with us today and bring your gentle, joyful love to others, this Christmas and always. Amen.

Boxing Day

Joy to the world!

Day
2



Carol 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.*

*Joy to the earth! The Saviour reigns:
Your sweetest songs employ
while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
repeat the sounding joy.*

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)