

WITH A WELCOME FROM ARCHBISHOPS
JUSTIN WELBY AND JOHN SENTAMU



12 Days of
Christmas Wonder



Welcome

**from the Archbishops
of Canterbury and York**

Christmas is a time for generosity. The gifts we give do not have to be expensive or extravagant – sometimes the gift of time spent with a neighbour or a smile at someone we see on the street can be just as meaningful. Like the shepherds, who have only their awe and devotion to bring to witness to the birth of Christ, the best gift we can give is the gift of our hearts.

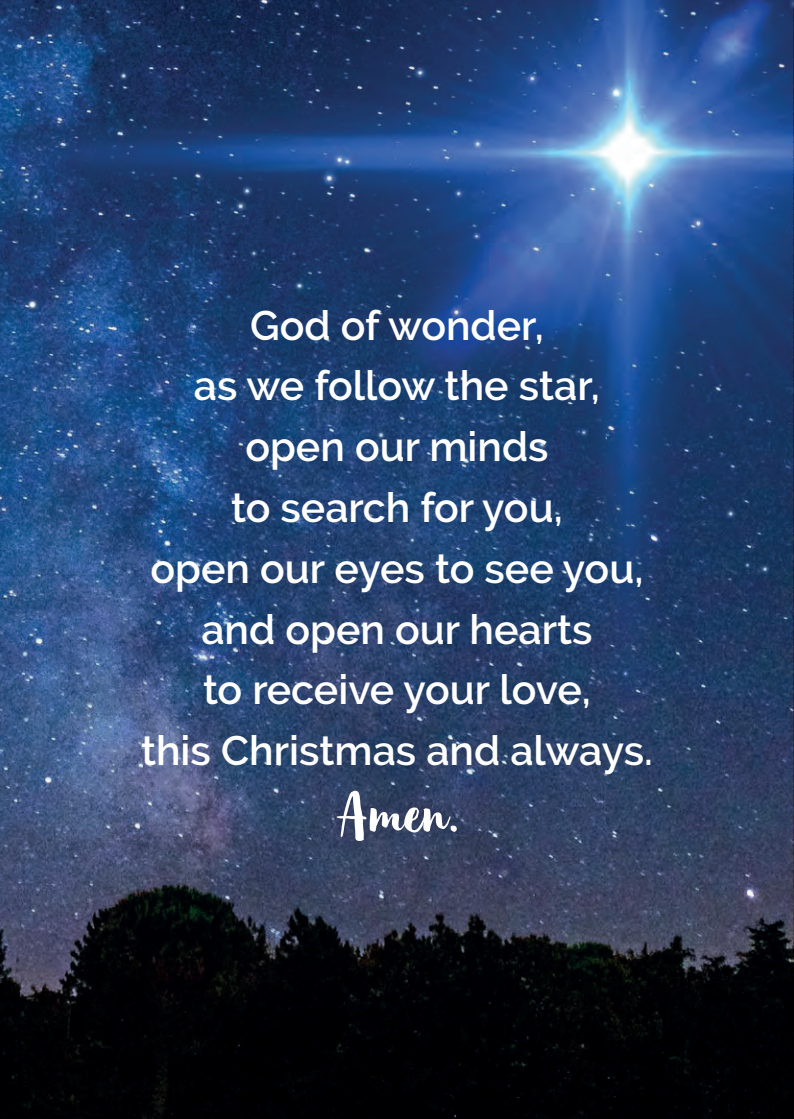
Just as we give, we must also be open to accepting the gifts of others. In Jesus, God gives us the most precious gift of all and invites us to know and follow his only Son. Whatever your Christmas looks like, everyone is invited to the birth of Jesus. From the lowliest shepherds to the wealthy Magi, all are welcome to gather together and delight in God's grace!

You too are welcome to follow the star this Christmas and find yourself in that humble stable, in a place where you are known and loved in the presence of God.

We hope that you have a blessed Christmas and pray that your journey following the star leads you ever closer to the joy and peace of knowing Jesus Christ.

Archbishop Justin Welby Archbishop John Sentamu





God of wonder,
as we follow the star,
open our minds
to search for you,
open our eyes to see you,
and open our hearts
to receive your love,
this Christmas and always.

Amen.

12 Days of Christmas Wonder

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How to use this booklet

'We Three Kings' is an incredibly well-known carol written from the perspective of the wise men (or Magi) as they follow the star to discover Jesus.

This year's reflections invite us to go on a similar journey of wonder and discovery, using daily themes suggested by the words of the carol's chorus:

*O star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading,
still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.*

John Henry Hopkins (1820–1891)

There are reflections for each of the 12 days of Christmas, starting with Christmas Day and ending on 5 January. (The Feast of the Epiphany is normally celebrated on 6 January, but in 2020 many churches will mark it on 5 January which falls on a Sunday.)

As well as the reflections, each day offers a practical challenge to bring the theme alive together with a short prayer. There is always a slightly longer suggested Bible passage to read if you want to go a bit deeper.

When Epiphany arrives and the wise men finally reach their destination, maybe you will have made some discoveries of your own about your journey of faith and the gifts you bring along the way.

Sharing the journey with children

'We Three Kings' is as well-known to children as it is to adults and there is plenty of scope to use the reflections with children. The introductions, challenges and prayers have been written to be accessible to all ages.

There are also accompanying craft activities designed to help families explore the daily themes. See overleaf for details of how to access these.

Other ways to join the journey

The free *Follow The Star* app – available for Android and iOS devices – allows anyone to join the journey. As well as the complete text of the booklet, the app also includes full audio for each day, including the Bible reading, the daily craft activities and a guide to Christmas and Epiphany services near you.

Alternatively, anyone can sign up for free e-mail versions of the reflections via www.churchofengland.org/followthestar where you will also find links to the family craft activities, videos and much more.

Social media is also a great way to join and share the journey. Make sure you're following The Church of England and look out for daily #FollowTheStar posts from Advent right through to Epiphany.

Day 1 Christmas Day



We all have questions: big ones and small ones. Some questions, though, might change the course of our lives when we search for the answers.

Read Matthew 2.1–8

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage.'

Curiosity is a powerful thing. The urge to find out more can lead us in all sorts of directions and it certainly leads the wise men to leave their homes and journey towards an unknown place, following only an unusual star. The wise men have noticed that something is out of the ordinary, something that pulls them, something they can't ignore.

Today, on Christmas Day, we celebrate the birth of Jesus. He is the promised king, the child the wise men eventually find and worship. But they're not there yet. For now, they're still on the journey. They still have questions. They're still searching but they know that what they find will be worth it.

CHALLENGE

**Where are you on your journey with God?
What questions do you have about Jesus?**

Write down your questions and your thoughts and see what answers you find through the next few days.

PRAYER

*God of surprises, we bring our questions to you.
Show us more about Jesus as we travel through
the coming days. Amen.*



Day 2 Boxing Day

Wonder

There are so many things in the world we can't quite explain or which take our breath away. And when we find something amazing it can be hard to stop ourselves trying to find out more.

Read Psalm 65.6–13

Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs; you make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy. You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide the people with grain, for so you have prepared it.

Full booklet available individually, packs of 10 or packs of 50
from www.chpublishing.co.uk