ARCHBISHOPS JUSTIN WELBY,
STEPHEN COTTRELL & GUESTS

Follow the Star

The Great Invitation

12 Days of Reflections for Christmas & the New Year

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
Follow The Star
THE GREAT INVITATION

12 Days of Reflections for Christmas & the New Year

CHRISTMAS EVE  AN INVITATION TO … FOLLOW THE STAR
Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York

BOXING DAY  … SHARE GOOD NEWS
Naomi Metzger, 10-time British Champion in the triple jump and 2022 Commonwealth Bronze Medallist

TUESDAY 27 DECEMBER  … COME AND SEE
Victoria Johnson, Canon Precentor of York Minster

WEDNESDAY 28 DECEMBER  … FIND REST
Gemma Hunt, TV presenter, author, public speaker and children’s entertainer

THURSDAY 29 DECEMBER  … MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE
Zeb Soanes, broadcaster for Classic FM, a former BBC newsreader and children’s author

FRIDAY 30 DECEMBER  … UNEXPECTED JOY
Matt Woodcock, minister in York, author and regular contributor to Radio 2’s Pause for Thought

NEW YEAR’S EVE  … OPEN THE DOOR
Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Bishop of Dover

MONDAY 2 JANUARY  … A FRESH START
Ian Adams, Chaplain at Ridley College Cambridge, a poet, writer, photographer and retreat leader

TUESDAY 3 JANUARY  … SEE A GREAT LIGHT
Helen Dearnley, Anglican Chaplaincy Adviser for HM Prison and Probation Service

WEDNESDAY 4 JANUARY  … EVERYONE
Ben Woodfield, a priest in Bolton and co-leader of the Antioch Network in the Diocese of Manchester

THURSDAY 5 JANUARY  … RUN THE RACE
Anne Wafula Strike MBE, athlete, author and sporting ambassador

FRIDAY 6 JANUARY  … TAKE ANOTHER ROAD
Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

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Reflection

Exactly how wise are these Wise Men? And whose wisdom do we follow? These are some of the questions this story raises.

Arriving at Herod’s palace to see the new king and pay him homage, the Wise Men are not only in the wrong place, they’re jeopardising the very thing they’ve come to honour. Herod, fearful for his own position, calls his scribes together. Consulting the ancient wisdom of the words of Scripture, they direct the Wise Men towards Bethlehem.

Following Jesus isn’t easy. Other bright lights entice and fascinate. We can end up preferring our own ideas and trusting our own wisdom. We can finish up in the wrong place doing the wrong things. Only the light of Jesus – God’s Living Word – endures. And it leads to unexpected places: to God found in stables, not palaces.

Read Matthew 2.1-6

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…’ Calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, Herod inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet …’

Invitation

The invitation to all of us this Christmas Eve is to be re-directed towards the light that is Christ, and to allow ourselves to be surprised and delighted by where it leads us.

Jesus, Light of the World, be a light to our feet, and a lantern on our path, this Christmas Eve and always. Amen.
When I was young I really had no idea I would become an athlete.

I didn’t play many sports as a child. I had poor hand–eye coordination and I dreamed of pursuing other things. However, I gradually came to feel God wanted me to do sports for a bigger purpose.

But when training felt hard and competitions went badly, I started to question if this was my purpose and wondered what God wanted me to do with my talent.

Then a few months ago, I got a message from a supporter. He said that watching me compete and the small interactions we had really helped him when he was in a really dark period of his life. It then dawned on me that one of my purposes for being an athlete wasn’t the medals or the titles – but spreading joy.

Read Luke 2.8-16

The angel said to the shepherds, ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord ...’ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.’ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

Reflection

The shepherds were the last people you’d expect to hear the good news directly from the angels. They were just ordinary folk doing their unglamorous work. When they became shepherds, they would have thought their main purpose was to look after sheep and that was all. However, once they had received this news, they became a staple part in the biggest story ever and they helped to spread the good news to everyone. Sometimes we can all feel ordinary or that we can’t have much impact. But our seemingly small actions – such as checking up on a friend, helping a stranger in the shops or even just smiling at someone – can have a profound and lasting effect of spreading joy to the world around us. Today, like the shepherds, let’s make haste to find simple, ordinary ways to share the extraordinary joy of Christmas with others.

Lord, thank you for all you have given us. Help us to share our gifts, our joy and our love with the world around us. Amen.
‘We are all invited to #FollowTheStar and find out what it is pointing to: the person of Jesus and the light he brings to each of us.’

ARCHBISHOP JUSTIN WELBY

You are warmly invited to Follow the Star this Christmas in the company of Ian Adams • Stephen Cottrell • Helen Dearnley Rose Hudson-Wilkin • Gemma Hunt • Victoria Johnson Naomi Metzger • Zeb Soanes • Anne Wafula Strike Justin Welby • Matt Woodcock • Ben Woodfield

This booklet offers 12 reflections on the theme of invitation, one for each day (Monday to Saturday) from Christmas Eve through to the Epiphany on 6 January.

Each reflection is by a different contributor and contains a picture, a short Bible passage, an invitation to action and a simple prayer. Together, they form a journey that will help you take fresh encouragement and hope from the Christmas story into the year ahead.

#FollowTheStar – The Great Invitation is the Church of England’s Christmas theme for 2022.

You’re very welcome at a church near you this Advent and Christmas. Find your nearest services and events and get involved via AChurchNearYou.com

Available individually, in packs of 10 or 50, and in Large Print