



Welcome from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York

For many of us, Christmas brings up so many emotions, memories and expectations. We have one nativity story, but it can seem like we all have very different Christmases.

For you it might be a time of joy and togetherness. Or perhaps it's all about planning and to-do lists.

Many others can find it a sad and lonely time – nagged by the feeling that your Christmas is not like those ‘perfect’ ones we see in the media.

But just like the unexpected assortment of people who were invited to meet the baby Jesus, #FollowTheStar doesn't ask you to be perfect. It says: come just as you are to take the life-changing Christmas journey.

Wherever you are this Christmas, you are invited to follow the star and to be with Jesus. You are welcome. You are deeply known and truly loved.

Mary and Joseph and all those caught up in the Christmas story were surprised by the astonishing way that God chose to live among us.

Each Christmas we are reminded of God's longing to surprise us with his gift of joy, love and new life. It's the greatest present we can receive and share with others!

We pray this booklet offers a path for your journey closer to Jesus – and we wish you every blessing this Christmas.

Archbishops Justin Welby & John Sentamu

How to use this book

There are 14 reflections in total, one for each day from Christmas Eve (24th December) throughout the 12 days of Christmas, ending with the Feast of the Epiphany (6th January).

Each reflection follows the same pattern:

- A **theme**
- A **picture**
- A very short **passage from the Bible** about the birth and early life of Jesus
- A **reflection** on the day's theme, focusing on a particular stage on the Christmas journey
- A **challenge** to consider how you might act or live differently
- A simple **prayer** you might want to make your own.

You can also share the **#FollowTheStar** journey with friends and family of all ages.

Find out more and join in at www.churchofengland.org/Christmas

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Day 1 CHRISTMAS EVE

God with us

Read Matthew 1.18-25

'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid...'

Organising Christmas can be quite a strain. Saving, present ideas, shopping, wrapping, planning menus, travelling to relatives... It's a long lead up, and at the same time many children feel like it will never arrive!

#FollowtheStar

The first Christmas was like that – nine months in the making. God's journey in human form began long before the star started shining. No one knew what he would look like, or what kind of person he would be. God was hidden – he was with the people, but they did not really know it yet.

How often is that the case? How often do we miss the presence of God because we do not know where to look? Or because life is hard and demanding and God feels distant? Joseph felt like that too. Frightened? Certainly. Confused? Definitely. Unsure of what the whole thing meant? Totally.

But neither fear nor confusion take away the fact that right then, before Joseph even knew it, God was there beside him.

**Where do you think God is right now?
Somewhere far away? Where could
you look for the presence of God?**

Loving God, open our eyes to see where you are around us, in expected and unexpected places. Amen.