CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT



20th December 2020



INTRODUCTION

Hello and welcome to carols by candlelight from Bowthorpe Church. My name is Rev. Mark Elvin.

This has been a difficult year for many people across the world, and this Christmas may well be different from any other. So, we pray that through the carols and readings you will gain some hope

for the days ahead, and that you will come close to God today as you prepare for Christmas. Let's prepare our hearts to come close to God as we sing together, O come all ye faithful.



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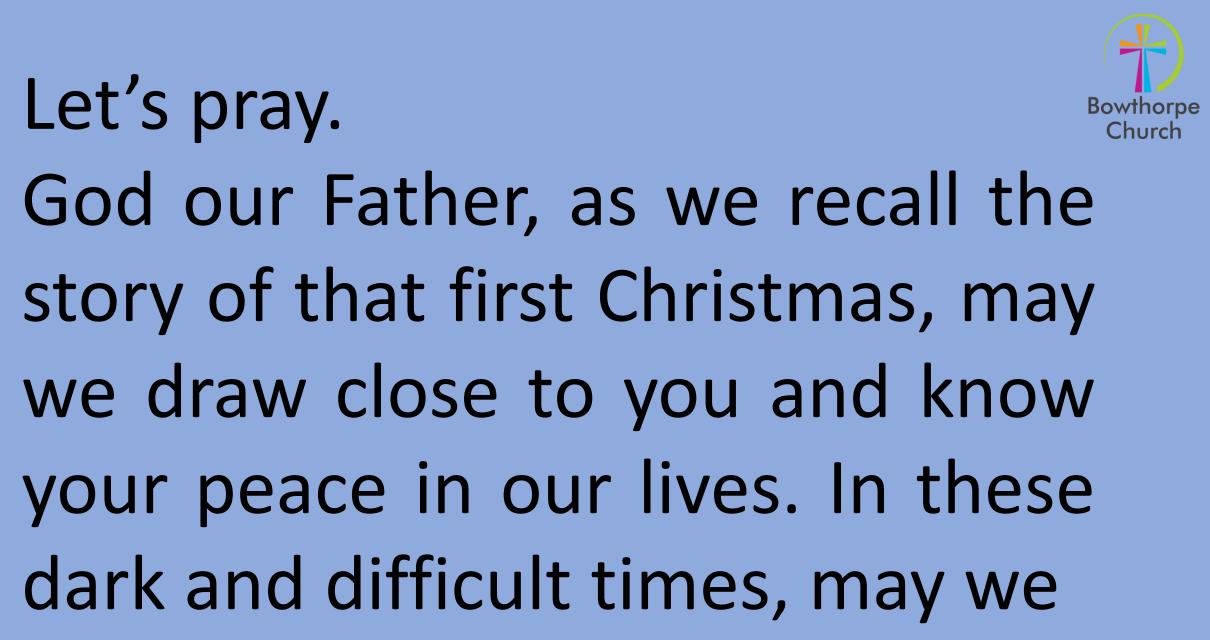
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We begin with some words from the prophet Isaiah, who seven centuries before the coming of Christ, said: `For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his



shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end' (Isaiah 9:6-7).





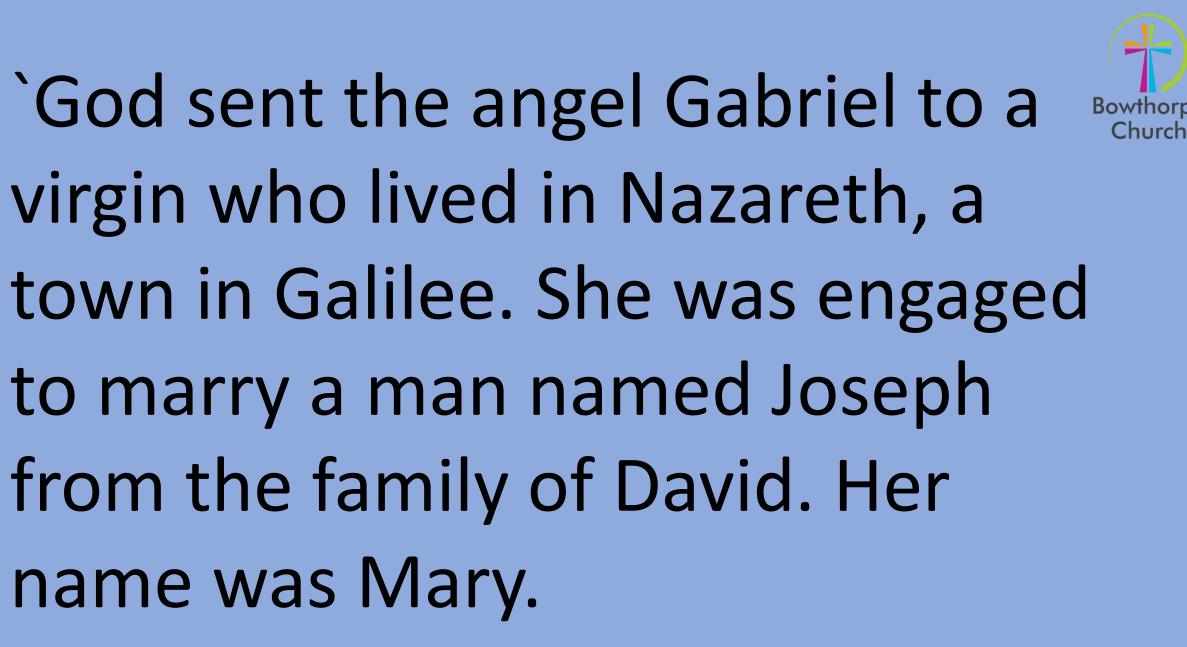
come into the light and peace of your presence; through Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

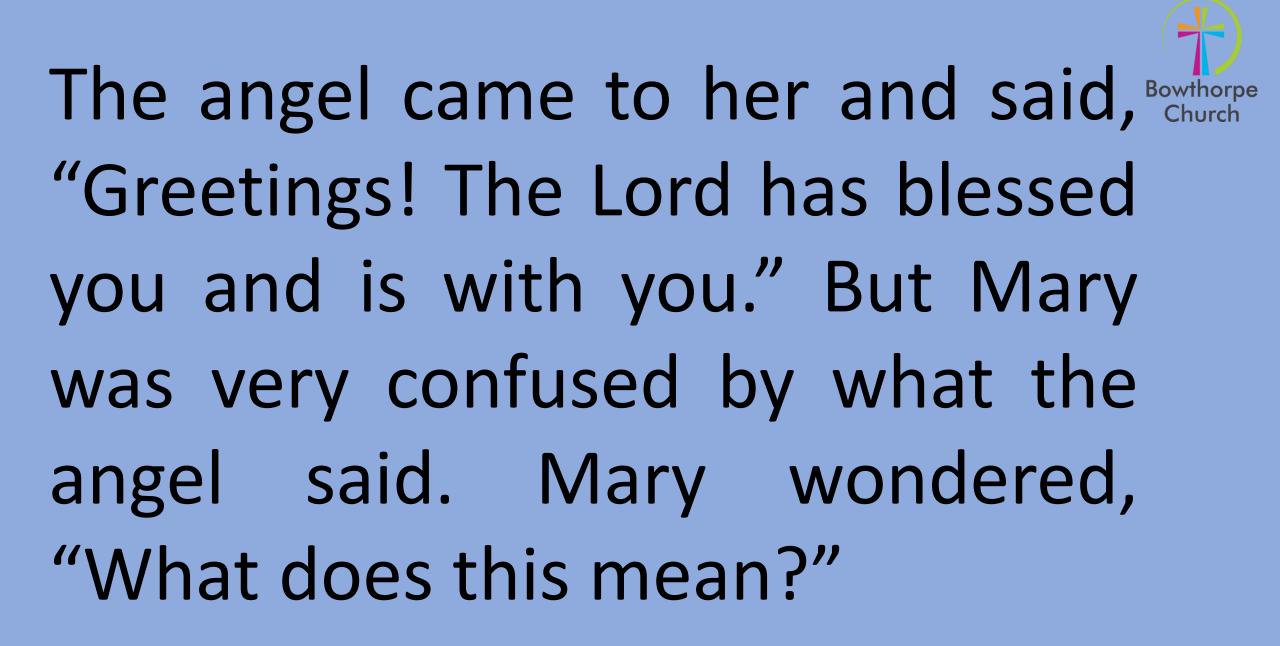






Eight hundred years after Isaiah spoke his words, a young unmarried girl received an unexpected visitor. Luke's gospel tells us what happened.





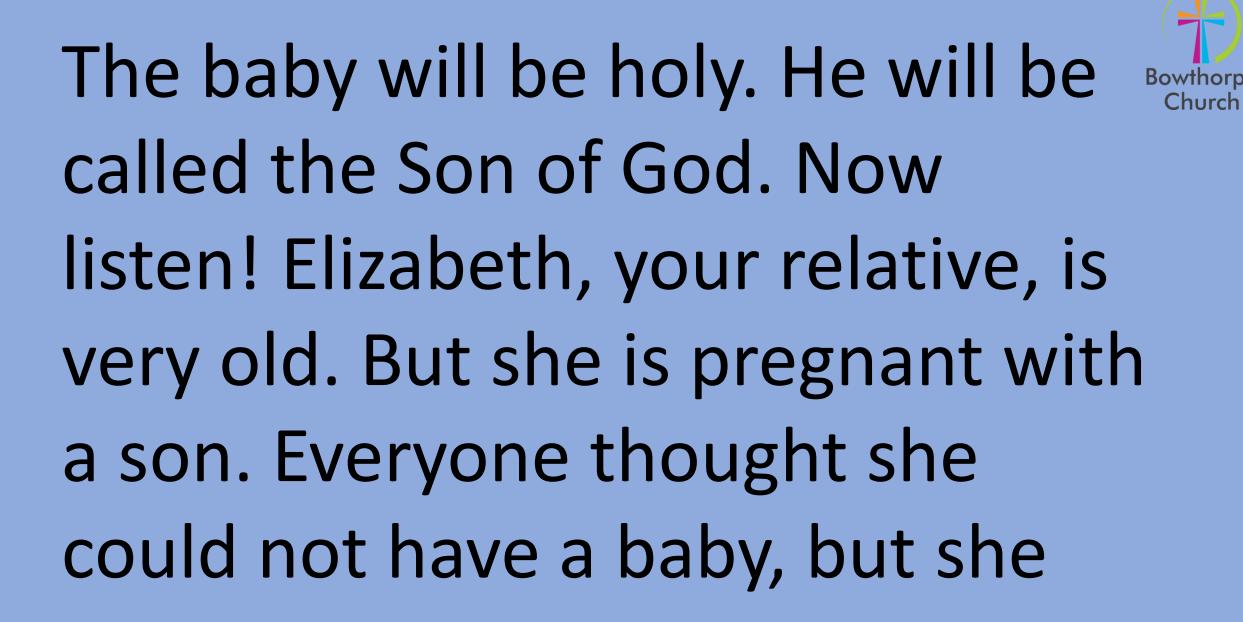


The angel said to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary, because God is pleased with you. Listen! You will become pregnant. You will give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus.

He will be great, and people will call him the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of King David, his ancestor. He will rule over the people of Jacob for ever. His kingdom will never end."



Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen? I am a virgin!" The angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will cover you.



has been pregnant for six Church months. For nothing is impossible with God!" Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said!" Then the angel went away.



If the angel's words were true, then Mary faced a serious situation. An unmarried woman becoming pregnant was in danger of being stoned to death. The 'good news' that the angel



spoke about may not seem such good news for this young girl. Despite being greatly troubled, Mary accepted the angel's words and remained obedient.



ANGELS FROM THE REALMS OF



Contraction Plants Proved



Only the strongest confidence in Church God could sustain Mary through such an ordeal. Many people have been going through an ordeal this year. To help people in need, the Church set up a food parcel scheme in March.



This community group is now known as Connecting Bowthorpe, and is staffed by a group of volunteers who distribute food to those in need locally. With me is Helen, one of the volunteers.



Q. Helen, do tell us why you are part of this food scheme. Q. How many families are you currently helping? (How many parcels have gone out since March?)

Q. What are your hopes for people this Christmas and into the New Year? Q. Do you have a carol you'd like to hear today?







LUKE 2: I - 7

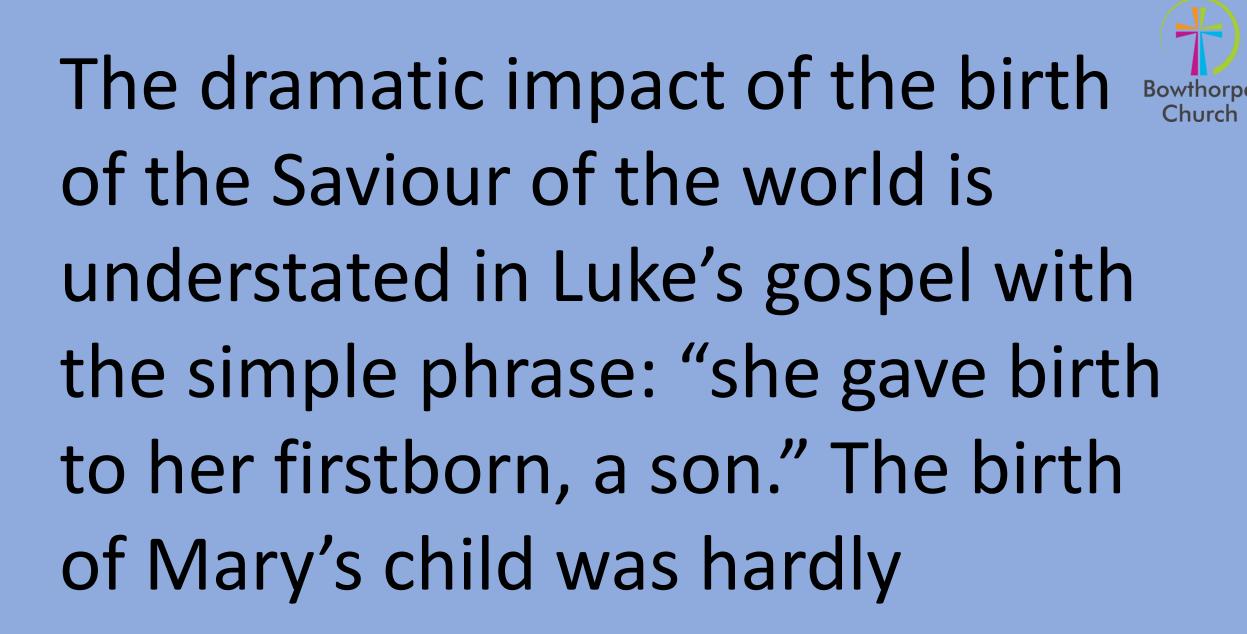
In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.² (This was the first census that took place while

Quirinius was governor of Church Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register. ⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town

of David, because he belonged to Bowthorpe the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time



came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.



noticed. But God was not silent Church on this most holy night. Over distant fields, the night sky burst into light as the good news of Christ's birth was announced by the angel of the Lord.



WAS A STARRY NIGHT

The first to receive the good news of the first to receive the good news of the second ne about the birth of God's Son were simple shepherds. Shepherds were some of the lowest members of society, considered untrustworthy. Yet it is to such people that God

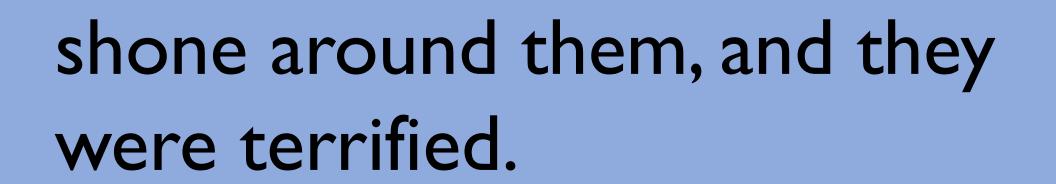


first brings the news of the Messiah's birth.



LUKE 2:8 - 18

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord



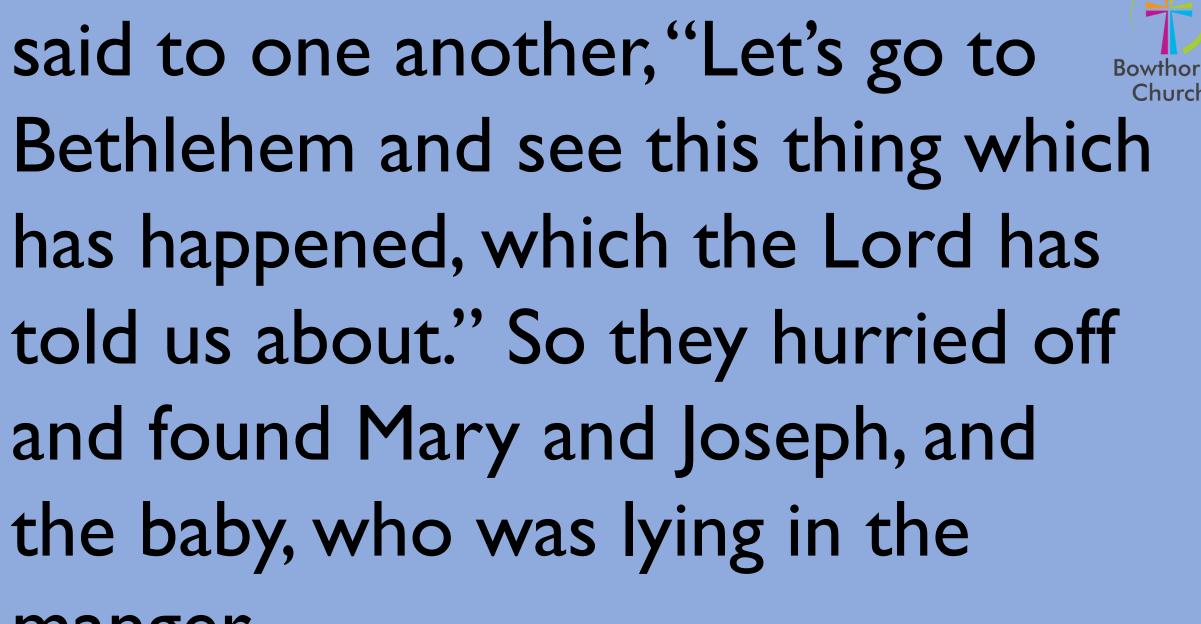


But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town

he is Christ the Lord. This will be a withorpe sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest, and Button on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds



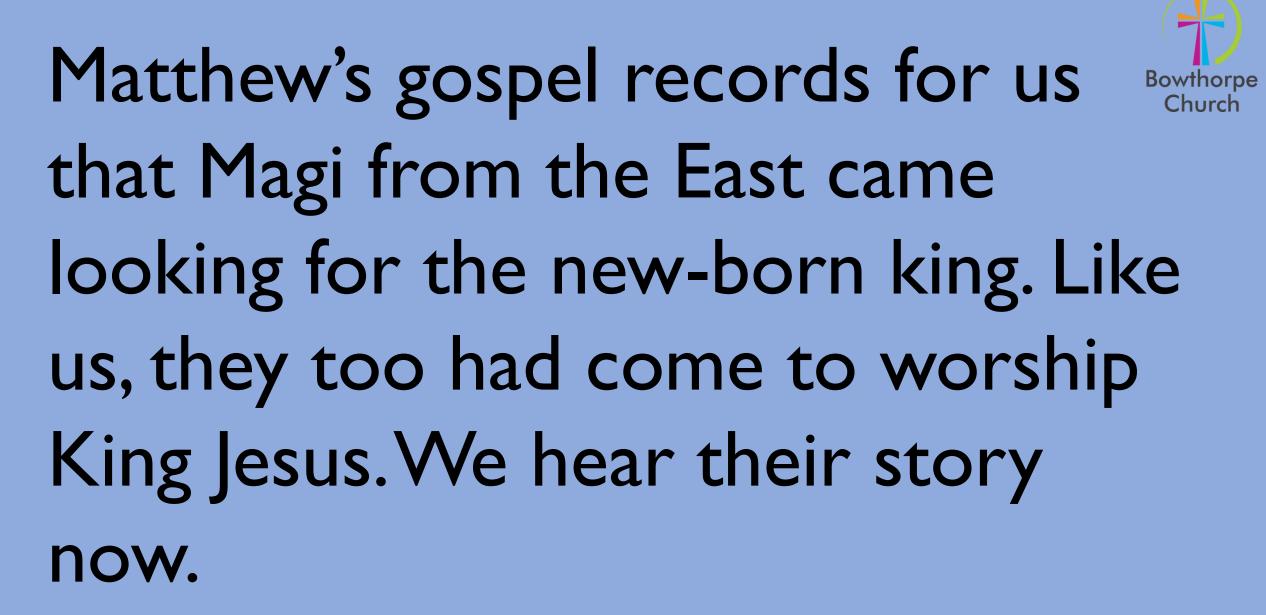
manger.

When they had seen him, they told everyone what had been told to them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

The angel announced the good news to lowly shepherds. Like a dam bursting open, a whole company of heaven's angels burst into song, praising God. Let us do the same as we sing the calypso carol `See him lying on a bed of straw'.





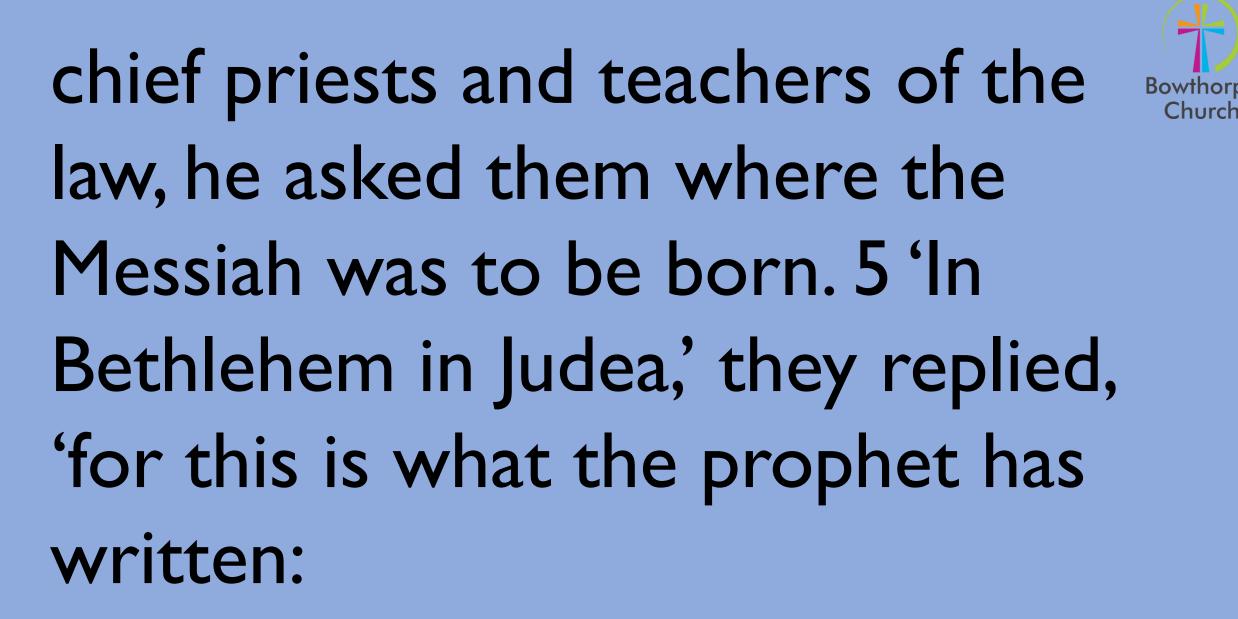




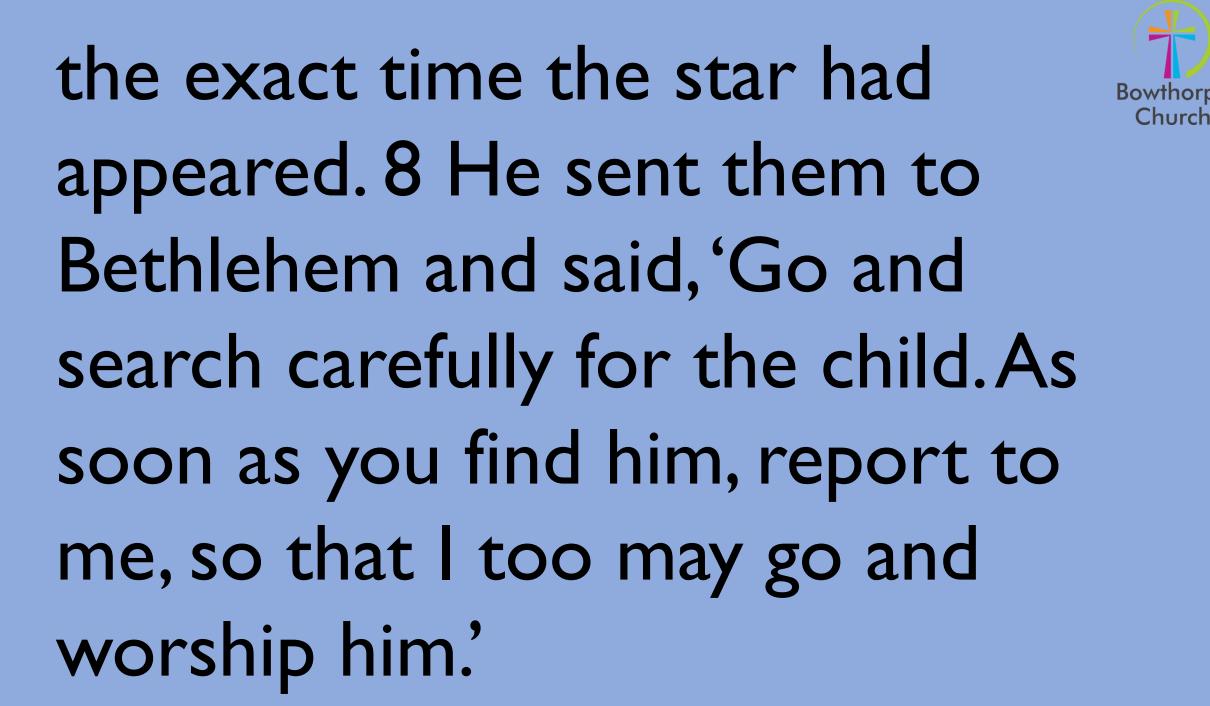
MATTHEW 2: I – I2

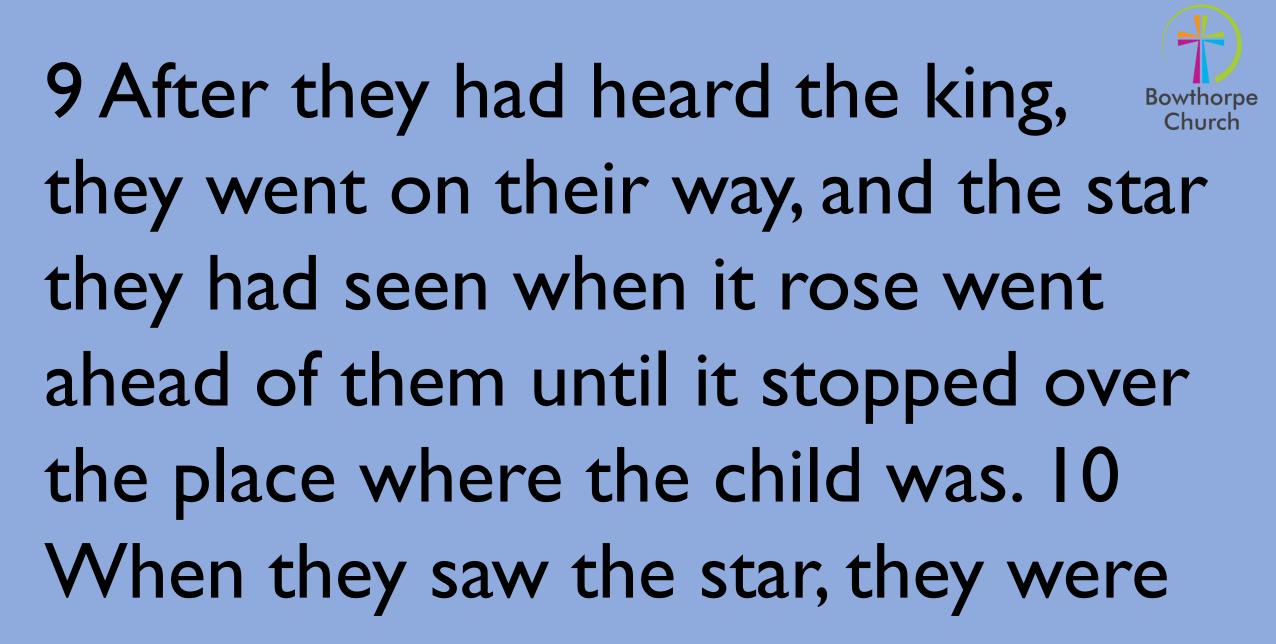
After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi[a] from the east came to Jerusalem 2 and asked, Where is the one who has been born king of

the Jews? We saw his star when it owtherpe rose and have come to worship him.' 3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 When he had called together all the people's



6 "But you, Bethlehem, in the land Bowthorpe of Judah, are by no means least Church among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel." Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them





overjoyed. II On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.



12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route

WHAT WILL CHRISTMAS MEAN YOU THIS EAR?

Bowthorpe Church

WETHREE KINGS



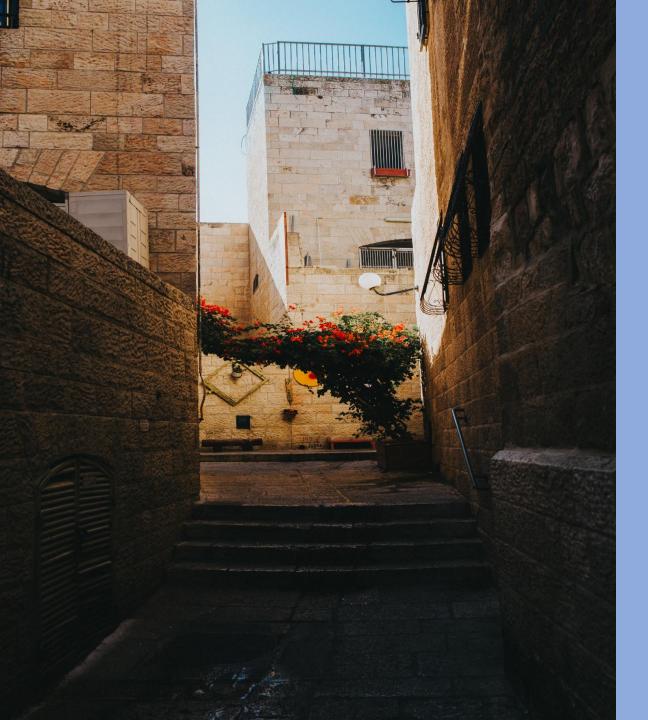


PRAYER

Loving God, we thank you that you gave your Son Jesus as a gift for us all, to connect us to you. We thank you for Christmas when we celebrate his birth. Will you come



and bring us your gift of hope at this time. Lord Jesus, come into our lives. **Amen.**



O LITTLE **TOWN OF** BETHLEHEM



PRAYERS



Lord, your word says you are Immanuel – God with us. This Christmas we pray for all who feel isolated and alone, and for those who feel they don't matter.



May they discover the truth that your love is able to break through the isolation. We pray for families who will be apart.



Lord, your word says you came to bring hope to a troubled world. This Christmas we pray for all who are working, especially those working hard to keep us safe. We pray for those



who cannot work because of ill-health, and for those who have lost their jobs because of the coronavirus.



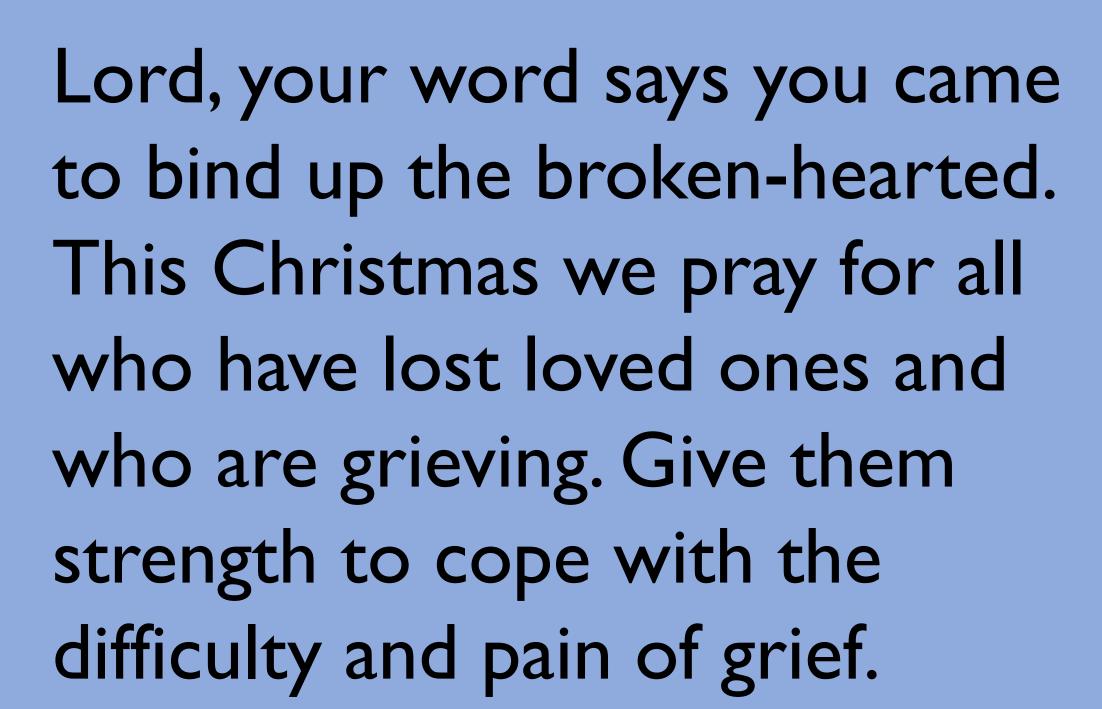
Lord, your word says you came to bring good news to the poor. This Christmas we pray for all who are reliant on food banks and voluntary donations.

We pray for teams like Church Connecting Bowthorpe and for the wonderful work they are doing through these difficult days. We pray that one day we may live in a world where all have dignity and hope.

Lord, your word says that you Church came to proclaim freedom for prisoners. This Christmas we pray for all who are in prison, who are struggling with boredom, guilt and fear. We pray for political prisoners and those imprisoned for their faith



May they have hope this Christmas that they are not alone. We pray that all prisoners may discover the freedom that is found in Jesus.







preparing a place with you for those who love you. So, help us not to be afraid but to place our trust in you now and always. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER



Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

Church



CLOSING PRAYER Church Loving God, you came among us in your Son Jesus on that first Christmas. Be with each one of us this coming Christmas and in the coming year ahead. In Jesus' name. Amen.



And now may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and all whom you love, now and for evermore. Amen.

BLESSING

