

JOURNEYING TOGETHER THIS *Christmas*

AN ALL AGE WORSHIP RESOURCE FOR CHRISTMAS 2015

THE CHRISTMAS STAR

2015 has been observed as the United Nations International Year of Light (and Light-based Technologies).

We use a star – a source of light – as the symbol for our Christmas worship this year. The Christmas star points us to Jesus, the source of true light and joy.

We focus on Jesus, the light for our paths, the light that conquers darkness.

USING THIS WORSHIP RESOURCE

These notes have been prepared by the Uniting Young People Team of Mission Resourcing SA to help congregations plan worship that intentionally involves children as well as youth, young adults, middle-aged and older people.

This resource can be used by large or small congregations. It can even be adapted for use in a home setting.

Each planning group will need to adapt the ideas to suit their own particular situation; people and facilities.

You may make as many copies of the notes as needed for your worship planners and leaders. The use of music and other copyright elements is not covered in this permission.

Read through all the material. Discuss it as a planning team. You may use any of the ideas that are appropriate in your situation.

Bible quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Readers Version.

For other intergenerational worship ideas see: sa.uca.org.au/uypp/church-resources/all-age-worship/

If you use these resources, please let us know how you use them. Send a brief email to children@sa.uca.org.au.



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POSTCARD & THEME

Journeying together this Christmas

When they saw the star, they were filled with joy!
Matthew 2:10 (NLT)

Throughout the year, our individual journeys can often take us in vastly different directions. Christmas provides an opportunity for paths to cross and merge. It is a time for people to come together — to reflect on the past year's journey and on the continuing relevance of the Christmas story, to rejoice in Christ's birth and the hope represented by the Christmas star, and to renew our purpose as we prepare for the journey ahead.

Wherever your journey takes you throughout the year, there's a place for you in the Uniting Church.

Postcard designs

This year we have two options available for the postcard design, allowing your congregation to choose what you think will be most appealing to those in your local community.

Back cover verse & message

"When they saw the star, they were filled with joy!"
Matthew 2:10

Wherever your journey takes you throughout the year, there's a place for you in the Uniting Church. Join us this Christmas for a time of reflection, rejoicing and renewed purpose.

(Or provide your own message!)

Postcard cost and delivery options

Postcard cost: \$75 per 1,000 (minimum of 1,000)

Poster cost: \$10 for 10 A3 posters (minimum of 10)

Orders close: Wednesday 21 October 2015

Collection/Delivery: The postcards and posters will be available for pick-up at the October Presbytery & Synod meeting or from the Synod Office (L2, 212 Pirie Street, Adelaide) from Tuesday 3 November. Registered post can also be invoiced if you rather the items be sent once they have been printed.

Enquiries

Can be directed to the Communications team:

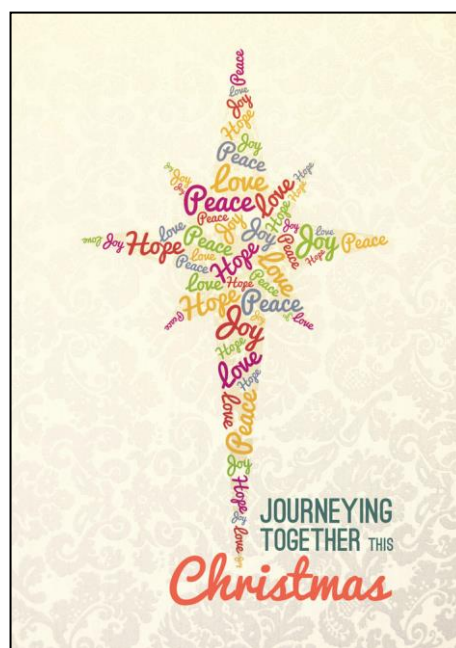
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SAMPLE WORSHIP SERVICE

The sample Christmas worship service develops the postcard theme in several ways:

- It is intentionally all-age so that families can share the worship experience **together**.
- It begins with a procession in which all worshippers **journey together** – following a star to the place of worship and to the One they worship.
- In the service we **journey together** with several people who experienced Jesus' light and joy.
- Like the postcards, the service uses a star as a visual focus.



MAGI

When Matthew writes of Magi following the star to find the new born king of the Jews, he is referring to priestly magicians from Persia.

These 'wise men' were apparently from the school of Magi whom Daniel encountered during the Jewish captivity in Persia. Daniel was appointed to oversee both the king's governors and his advisors — the Magi. Magi were scholars of science, mathematics, astrology, astronomy and history. From Daniel they learned about the God of the Jews and the prophecy of the coming King of the Jews. This knowledge was passed down through the generations so that when a strange new star appeared in the sky, Magi connected it with the Hebrew prophecy and set out to investigate — and to worship.

Christian tradition has embellished the story that Matthew tells in twelve short verses. Possibly concerned about using terms like 'magician' or 'sorcerer' when translating this text into English, they were identified simply as 'wise men' and sometimes 'kings'.

We often combine the visit to the Christ Child by wise men (Matthew 2) and by shepherds (Luke 2) into a single story. We place Magi and shepherds together around a Christmas manger in artwork and drama productions.

More likely they were separate incidents. Luke's account places the shepherds in the hills near Bethlehem; the angel announces the birth as occurring 'today'; and the shepherds see 'the baby, lying in a manger.' Matthew's Magi, on the other hand, travelled a great distance and found 'the young child' in a 'house'. Their journey may have taken considerable time. Herod seeking out and killing boys up to two years, provides another hint about the timing of the visit.

In the church calendar, the festival commemorating the coming of the Magi is known as Epiphany (revealing). It is observed on 6 January (twelve days after Christmas). The season of Epiphany lasts from then until the start of Lent. It focusses on Jesus revealed to the Gentiles (non-Jewish people), beginning with the Magi.

Matthew does not give a specific number for his visitors. Perhaps there were two; perhaps there was a 'school' of several masters and their students; perhaps there were three.

The idea of three is linked to the presentation of three gifts: gold (said to identify the child as a king); frankincense (said to identify the child as God because incense was used as prayer to God) and myrrh (said to identify the child as 'born to die' because myrrh was used in burial rites).

The idea that these travellers were kings gave rise to names — Jaspas (Kaspar), King of Tarsus, Melchior, King of Arabia, and Balthazar, King of Sheba – and the idea that they represented different people groups coming from different parts of the globe.

Perhaps they travelled by camel; perhaps they rode horses or donkeys or were carried in litters; perhaps they walked or even made part of the journey by boat.

Many different cultures have legends of people whose lives were touched by the Magi on their journey – and miracles that occurred (see, for example, the delightful *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, a short opera by Gian Carlo Menotti — the TV production is available on DVD and several performances can be found on YouTube). Legends of the visits of the wise gift-givers may also have given rise to the idea of Father Christmas / Santa Claus.

There is a tradition in some places for families to place a star in the window of their home to let travellers know that here is a place where Jesus can be found today.

The Magi of old had observed and recorded the movement of moon and stars. Our modern astronomers tell us that sunset will be around 8:30 pm on Christmas Eve, with a full moon rising at 7:00 pm.

The key symbol in this service is the star. You might consider holding the worship 'under the stars', but this would mean a service time that is impractical for families with young children or for people who have other commitments.

ALL-AGE WORSHIP NOTES

WHAT IS ALL-AGE WORSHIP?

Intergenerational (all-age or whole-church) worship is, first and foremost, worship.

We worship to show the value (worth) we place on God and our relationship with God.

Worship is an encounter between God and God's people; a dialogue in which God speaks and people respond.

Intentionally intergenerational worship

- allows this dialogue to take place in a variety of ways, engaging several senses, possibly including a sense of wonder and a sense of humour
- focusses on a single, clear theme and connects that theme with the lives of the worshippers
- provides worshippers (young and old) with an experience they can remember and carry into their lives beyond the worship experience
- encourages interaction and dialogue among people of various generations and people with different personalities, experiences, lifestyles and interests
- takes seriously the understanding of the church as the multi-faceted body of Christ
- recognises and values the children present in the worshipping congregation and 'the child within' each youth and adult.

WHY HAVE ALL-AGE WORSHIP?

In worship, God speaks to and through people of all ages. When children (as well as elderly and differently-abled people) are present in worship, they grow through the acceptance and respect shown by others. They show others a different — possibly truer — face of God, and they force worship leaders to focus on the basics of theology and worship in a way that is clear and creative. This benefits everyone.

There are also some practical aspects to all-age worship at Christmas time, remembering, of course, that Christmas is all about a baby.

Australians see Christmas as a family time. We want worship to add to, rather than detract from, the family experience.

This applies to your church members and the extended families that join them at Christmas time. It also applies to guests, fringe-members and people from the community who are drawn to church at Christmas.

The guests you invite to your church at Christmas may be of any age. You want to plan worship that does not exclude anyone who comes — physically, by inference, or by what you do and say. You want to allow people to *journey together*.

PLANNING ALL-AGE WORSHIP

Any form of worship — from a high liturgical assembly to your congregation's regular Sunday practice to a simple, home-based prayer time — can be all-age worship. The requirements are

- that several generations are present
- that everyone is welcome
- that everyone participates in worship as they are able.

All-age does not necessarily mean something radically different. However, if you are considering a different format for a Christmas worship service, here are some things to keep in mind.

Keep the logistics as simple (and well planned) as possible, so that no one is overburdened or stressed at the last minute.

As early as possible, begin working with the individuals or teams who will be called on to help present the service. If needed, organise new teams for this particular service.

People who decorate the worship area have a key role and should be involved in planning so that visuals relate to the theme of the worship. The sample worship service may also require the assistance of a handy-person/carpenter.

Your hospitality team must be consulted in the planning stage, especially if you are asking them to do something different from their ordinary tasks.

Your tech team (people responsible for electronic or printed materials) has a vital role.

In choosing your up-front worship leader/s, try to balance the desire to be inclusive with the desire to have the 'best' presenters for what may be a larger-than-usual gathering. Make sure that young people, or people new to roles in leading worship are well-supported.

All-age worship has elements of spontaneity and the unexpected. This is one of the special gifts young children and new-to-church adults can bring to worship. Being familiar with and understanding the service plan makes it

easier for worship leaders to cope with and embrace spontaneous (spirit-led) participation.

It makes sense to have an intergenerational team help plan intergenerational worship. Planning as an intergenerational team can be a valuable experience for all involved. Older members help younger members understand worship practices; younger members give older members fresh insights and enthusiasm.

A team that represents the wider congregation will also have a broader awareness of people in the congregation who have skills and interests that can be drawn on in the worship, including hospitality, music, drama, visual art and technology.

Suggested planning steps:

1. Begin with prayer, and trust God's Spirit to guide your planning.
2. Identify your purpose, date and theme.
3. Look through these notes to see how they can help in planning the service God is leading you to hold. You may choose to use the sample service as written, adapt it to your situation or incorporate some ideas from it into your usual worship format. You may find other ideas in these notes that inspire your worship planning.
4. Develop a worship outline or flow chart.
5. Flesh out the outline, considering your own people, traditions and facilities.
6. Work with worship leaders to plan details: who does what? When? How?

AND

7. Practice!

If your service is going to involve movement, people, props and/or other elements that are different from your regular worship pattern, you will need a rehearsal.

Small groups may practice their part of the service individually, but you will also need a complete walk through or 'dress rehearsal'.

This will pinpoint any logistical problems, allow the worship leader/s to fine-tune instructions for the worshippers and ensure that the service itself runs smoothly.

You can use rehearsal time as an opportunity to pray together and to remind one another of the purpose of worship.

INVITATION AND ADVERTISING

The first people to speak to about your service are the worshipping members of your congregation. Begin early to let them in on the excitement of what is being planned. Help them catch the vision of a deliberately inter-generational Christmas worship.

Uniting Church SA postcards can be used as invitations to the Christmas worship. You could also order or make up posters using the artwork.

Some churches do a letter-box drop in their neighbourhood with invitational postcards. Members can give the postcards to special neighbours, friends and family.

Encourage members to think of acquaintances that may need some space/time to reflect and celebrate the birth of Christ in this season. They may invite those people to come and worship with them. And they may do more. They should be willing to follow through, listen to their guests' concerns and serve them in ways reflect the light and joy Jesus brings.

HOSPITALITY

Hospitality is the responsibility of all members of the congregation.

Members who invite and bring guests to the service have the primary responsibility for looking after their guests.

A designated **HOSPITALITY TEAM** may have special responsibilities for providing a welcome, comfort, safety and security and practical assistance to all worshippers.

The **HOSPITALITY TEAM** needs to be aware of the plan for the worship service and any special duties it involves for them.

WORSHIP SPACE

A clean, tidy and comfortable worship area can help guests and regular worshippers feel welcome. Make sure the people who keep your church clean know they are valued as part of the worship team.

An all-age approach to worship may work best with a rearrangement of furniture, or even in a hall rather than a sanctuary.

The sample service suggests considering outdoors 'under the stars' worship.

VISUALS

Some people who worship with you prefer to take in information and express themselves with images. Make sure that you provide images and decorations that they can respond to.

Involve people with artistic talent and your technology team (if you project images electronically) in creating memorable visual impact for all worshippers.

The postcard image can be a starting point for visuals. The sample worship service has a manger at the front or centre of the worship area. Consider adding runners of fabric flowing to the manger suggesting the different roads people travel, as in the postcard design.

You may also decorate the worship space with your church's traditional Christmas decorations.

The main image in the sample service is a four-pointed star. Use this image any way you can.

MOVEMENT

Some people who worship with you prefer to take in information and express themselves through movement and manipulation of concrete objects. Make sure that you provide something to do.

Some people may be reluctant to take part in unfamiliar physical activity in worship. Encourage them to give it a go or even to help someone who needs assistance.

The sample service has two strong elements of movement. It begins with a 'travelling together' procession. During the service people work with an origami-folded paper star.

The star pattern (page 9) shows a very simple origami pattern that can be accomplished with a very basic skill level. More complex plans are available on the web.

MUSIC

Some people who worship with you prefer to take in information and express themselves through music and rhythm. Provide music that they can respond to and participate in.

Your regular instrumentalists and vocalists (organist, band or choir) may perform some music as well as leading/accompanying congregational singing. You may also involve musicians of all ages who are not regularly part of your music team.

Small congregations, or congregations that do not have strong musical leadership, may use recorded music to lead singing.

Music in the sample service includes congregational singing – a mixture of traditional carols and more contemporary songs, instrumental chiming of familiar worship tunes and a performance item.

You'll find some song suggestions on page 8.

RELATIONSHIPS

Worship is about our relationship with God. Congregational worship is also about our relationship with other people. All-age worship encourages the growth of these relationships.

Some people who worship with you prefer to take in information and express themselves as they talk with other people or do an activity with others.

In the sample service, relationships begin with a star-folding activity, done by families or small groups with a facilitator. They continue as people join in a 'journeying together' procession. During the service people have several opportunities to talk together in families or clusters of people.

Some people may be uncomfortable when asked to talk to others in small groups. Let everyone know that it is perfectly OK if some people choose to think about their stories by themselves.

SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS

Some people who worship with you prefer to take in information and express themselves through facts, lists, graphs, and patterns.

The Magi in the story of the Christmas star were the scientists – astronomers — of their day,

In the sample service there is a pattern of repeated stories and the pattern of a folded origami star.

NATURE

Some people who worship with you have a special affinity with the natural world. They prefer to take in information and express themselves in a natural setting,

The sample service includes an outdoor procession. The entire service could be held outdoors — under the stars — on the church property or elsewhere. This would, of course, require special planning and preparation.

SERMON

Some people who worship with you process information best when they simply listen to a speaker (a person of knowledge and authority) who presents them with facts, ideas, challenges and encouragement. In traditional worship this happens in a sermon.

The sample service is in the tradition of carols-and-readings rather than having a sermon as the focal point. Information is presented in story form and through small group discussion.

For congregations that highly value a sermon presentation, there is an option for this within the story format.

HOLY COMMUNION

At Christmas we celebrate and reflect on Jesus, our Saviour, coming to us as an infant. In Holy Communion we celebrate and reflect on Jesus, our Saviour, coming to us in bread and wine.

It would be appropriate to celebrate Holy Communion in an all-age worship service — if your congregation's policy is truly that 'everyone is welcome at the table', [If there are any restrictions to the invitation to the sacrament, do not have communion during an invitational service of this sort.]

SOMETHING TO TAKE HOME

People like to have souvenirs of special events. People are more likely to remember and talk about your worship service if you provide them with a tangible memento or conversation starter.

In the sample service each worshipper has a folded star to take home with them.

It can be helpful to provide people with some questions or Bible verses related to the theme of worship that they can discuss in their household. Consider providing a list of 'star' and 'joy' verses (see page 10).

WORSHIP LEADERS

One person (or a pair of people) is the overall worship leader for the all-age service. Worshipers (particularly guests) will recognise this person as the host/compere who is responsible for helping them engage with what happens in worship.

Several other people (children, youth or adults) can lead different parts of worship. A younger person and an older person may share some of the leadership roles.

Leadership of the sample worship service may involve:

- a WORSHIP LEADER
- a HOSPITALITY TEAM (multi-generational)
- a CRAFT FACILITATING TEAM
- a STAR BEARER (individual or family)
- a MUSIC TEAM (multi-generational) and SONG LEADER
- a TECH TEAM (multi-generational)
- five STORY PRESENTERS (various ages)
- a PRAYER LEADER/S (any age or multi-generational).

TEXTS & SONGS

CHRISTMAS ACCOUNTS

The birth of Jesus, which we celebrate at Christmas, is recorded in three of the four Gospels.

- Matthew begins with a genealogy and tells the story more from Joseph's point of view. The account includes the visit of the Magi (often read on Epiphany) and of Herod's killing of children.

This version provides the theme of the postcard and our sample worship service: 'When they saw the star, they were filled with joy!'

Matthew 2:10 (NLT)

- Mark does not mention Jesus birth or childhood and begins with the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus' baptism
- Luke provides the familiar narrative of the Angel visiting Mary, Mary visiting Elizabeth, the birth of John the Baptist, the birth of Jesus and the visit of the shepherds
- John provides a more poetic version, introducing the image of Jesus as: 'the light shines in the darkness' and 'the light of the world'.

REVISED COMMON LECTIONARY

Christmas Eve

- Isaiah 9:2-7 (*The people who walk in darkness will see a great light*)
- Psalm 96 (*Sing a new song . . . the LORD rules . . . Let the heavens be full of joy*)
- Titus 2:11-14 (*We are waiting for Jesus Christ to appear in his glory*)
- Luke 2:1-14 (15-20) (The birth of Jesus and visit of the shepherds)

Christmas Day

- Isaiah 62:6-12 (*Tell the people of Zion, Look! Your Saviour is coming!*)
- Psalm 97 (*The heavens announce that what he does is right*)
- Titus 3:4-7 (*But the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared*)
- Luke 2:(1-7), 8-20 (The birth of Jesus and the visit of the shepherds)

SONGS

In choosing songs for this service consider some of these, which relate at least in part to the star/light/joy theme.

For congregational singing:

- *Amazing grace* (Newton)
- *Brightest and best of the stars of the morning* (Heber)
- *Christ, be our light* (Farrell)
- *Every star shall sing a carol* (Carter)
- *Hark the herald angels sing* (Wesley)
- *Light of the world, you stepped down into darkness* (Michael W Smith)
- *Joy to the world* (Watts)
- *Mary's child* (Ainger)
- *Now sing we now rejoice* (Medieval Latin)
- *O come all ye faithful* (Latin hymn)
- *O little town of Bethlehem* (Brooks)
- *O thou holiest* (Falk)
- *Silent night* (Mohr)
- *Splendid are the heavens high* (Grundtvig)
- *Sun gleams bright* (Wheeler, Australian)
- *The first noel* (trad English)

For performance groups

Little children:

*Twinkle, twinkle Christmas star.
How I wonder what you are.
By your light wise men were led
to Jesus' little manger bed.
Twinkle, twinkle Christmas star.
Yes, I know just what you are.*

Children's choir

- *While by my sheep* (Echo carol) (Baker)

Teen and adult singers

- *We three kings* (Hopkins)
- *O holy night* (Dwight)
- *You light up my life* (Joe Brooks; popularised by Debbie Boone) Insert the name Jesus in the chorus: 'Jesus, you light up my life', and omit the bridge 'It can't be wrong'.

ORIGAMI STAR

1 Cut your paper to make a square.

2

Fold corner to corner to make a diagonal crease line.



Unfold.

3

Fold the other two corners to make another diagonal crease line.



Unfold.

Your two diagonal creases will be like little valleys in the paper.

TURN THE PAPER OVER.

4

Fold top edge to bottom edge to make a crease line



Unfold.

5

Fold side edge to side edge to make another crease line

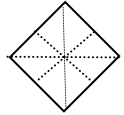


Unfold.

6

Squeeze the long diagonal folds to make the mountains creases stand up higher and the valley creases go deeper.

Hold up your four-pointed star by any corner.



JOY
HIGH
STAR
SHEDS

BIBLE REFERENCES

Here is a sampling of texts relating to our key words.

STAR

- God made two great lights. He made the larger light to rule over the day and the smaller light to rule over the night. He also made the stars. (Genesis 1:16)
- He decides how many stars there should be. He gives each one of them a name. (Psalm 147:4)
- Don't let anyone tempt you to bow down to the sun, moon or stars. Don't worship things the Lord your God has provided for all the nations on earth. (Deuteronomy 4:19)
- Praise him, sun and moon. Praise him, all you shining stars. (Psalm 148:3)
- They asked, 'We saw his star when it rose. Now we have come to worship him.' When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. (Matthew 2:2,20)
- 'I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this witness for the churches. I am the Root and the Son of David. I am the bright Morning Star.' (Revelation 22:16)

LIGHT

- God said, 'Let there be light.' And there was light. (Genesis 1:3)
- The people who are now living in darkness will see a great light. They are now living in a very dark land. But a light will shine on them. (Isaiah 9:2)
- . . . And where he is, everything is light. (Daniel 2:22)
- In the same way, let your light shine so others can see it. Then they will see the good things you do. And they will bring glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)
- Jesus . . . said, 'I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in darkness. They will have that light. They will have life.' (John 8:12)
- He made his light shine in our hearts. His light gives us the light to know God's glory. (2 Corinthians 4:6)
- At one time you were in the dark. But now you are in the light because of what the Lord has done. Live like children of the light. (Ephesians 5:8)
- But suppose we walk in the light, just as he is in the light. Then we share life with one another. And the blood of Jesus, his Son, makes us pure from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

JESUS

- In the past, God gave us grace through the law of Moses. Now, grace and truth come to us through Jesus Christ. (John 1:17)
- Then Jesus came to them. He said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (Matthew 28:18)
- ' . . . I was born and came into the world to be a witness to the truth. Everyone who is on the side of truth listens to me.' (John 18:37)
- The crowds were amazed at his teaching. That's because he taught like one who had authority. He did not speak like their teachers of the law. (Matthew 7:28,29)
- Jesus went through all the towns and villages. He taught in their synagogues. He preached the good news of the kingdom. And he healed every illness and sickness. (Matthew 9:35)
- Jesus said, 'I have come so that people who are blind will see.' (John 9:39)
- [Jesus said:] 'I leave my peace with you. I give my peace to you. I do not give it to you as the world does. Do not let your hearts be troubled. And do not be afraid.' (John 14:27)

JOY

- I will be glad and full of joy because you love me. (Psalm 31:7)
- Give me back the joy that comes from being saved by you. (Psalm 51:12)
- The Lord has done great things for us. And we are filled with joy. (Psalm 126:3)
- But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news. It will bring great joy for all the people.' (Luke 2:10)
- There is joy in heaven over one sinner who turns away from sin. (Luke 15:10)
- [When Jesus ascended into Heaven, his disciples] worshipped him. With great joy. (Luke 24:52)
- We are full of joy in God because of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of him, God has brought us back to himself. (Romans 5:11)
- But the fruit the Holy Spirit produces is love, joy and peace. It is being patient, kind and good. (Galatians 5:22)
- Always be joyful because you belong to the Lord. I will say it again. Be joyful! (Philippians 4:4)

JOURNEYING TOGETHER THIS *Christmas*

A SAMPLE ALL-AGE WORSHIP SERVICE FOR CHRISTMAS

(Suggested spoken 'script' is in italics; comments and instructions are in plain type.)

This service focusses on four Christmas words:

- Star
- Light
- Jesus
- Joy.

It is organised around the stories of four or five people who found joy when they 'saw the light':

- a shepherd (may be a female)
- a wise man
- a man who was blind (the story can be adapted to be told by the mother of the man if you want to have another female storyteller)
- a soldier
- a contemporary story

SPECIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATION

PROCESSION: As you plan the route of the procession, think of safety. You may have cars moving around your parking space. Also think of any worshippers who may have mobility problems.

Choose a family to be the star-bearers and lead the procession. Their role is similar to the national flag-bearer at the Olympic Games. Adults in the family will assist younger members as required.

CONSTRUCTION: You'll need a handy-person to make the guiding star-on-a-pole. The star can be a larger version of the origami star (see instructions on page 9) made of cartridge paper or tracing paper. Consider attaching two origami stars back-to-back with a LED light in between stars. The pole could be a broom stick.

They will also need to make a secure holder for the star-on-a-pole. Consider a free-standing flag holder placed beside the manger or a way of anchoring the pole to the manger itself.

If you use the 'soldier' story, provide a cross-piece, and a way of easily attaching it to the star pole to form a cross.

If you do not already have a sturdy manger, the handy-person will need to build one for

the service and design it so that it will hold the star pole.

Fill the manger with straw. You may place a life-like baby doll, wrapped in cloth in the manger, and/or you may have a light shining from the manger.

Decorate the worship space with stars. You may use the same origami star pattern in different sizes.

1. ARRIVAL ACTIVITY

HOSPITALITY TEAM directs people to an area apart from the worship space, where a **CRAFT TEAM** helps each person to make a paper star. (See instructions on page 9 or use your own star pattern.)

2. PROCESSION

As they complete their stars people take them and assemble in an area where they are invited to 'journey together' and 'follow a star'.

STAR BEARER/S carry a star on a pole, leading people into the church.

Depending on how much time you want to spend and on the configuration of your property, the procession may travel around the block, around the car park, around the outside of the church or on any other 'trek' — finally arriving at a manger at the front of the worship space.

From the manger, people move to seats. The 'guiding star' remains above the manger.

Once people have begun moving into the worship space, the **MUSIC TEAM** begins playing the tune of the 'star of wonder' chorus from the carol 'We three kings of Orient are'. If possible, use a single instrument with a clear, shimmering-star sound, perhaps a chime, flute, violin, bells or synthesizer. Student musicians might provide this tune here and at other places in the service.

TECH TEAM may show a slide of a night sky with many stars.

3. OPENING WORDS AND WELCOME

BIBLE READER (from lectern, using a large Bible so everyone can see the reading is from a Bible): *After Jesus' birth in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the east saw his star when it rose. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. They followed the star, seeking the child who had been born to be king of the Jews. The star went ahead of them. It finally stopped over the place where the child was. They went to the house. There they saw the child with his mother Mary. They bowed down and worshiped him.* (Matthew 2:9,10)

WORSHIP LEADER: *Welcome to Christmas worship at (name of church). We too, are journeying together. We, too, have come to worship the child who was born to be king of our lives and light in our world.*

My name is (name) and I'll be leading this worship journey.

4. THEME WORDS INTRODUCTION

WORSHIP LEADER: *As we worship (tonight/today), we're going to be considering four special Christmas words. You'll find them on your stars.*

Please take a minute to find the words, read them aloud to the people you are sitting near and tell one another what each word means for you today.

TECH TEAM may display a slide of the four key words: Jesus, Joy, Star and Light.

ALLOW TIME for people to do the activity.

As people chat, the **MUSIC TEAM** may quietly chime the tune of the 'Here I am to worship' chorus of the song that follows. As a sign that the chat time is ending, play the final line more loudly.

5. SONG: Light of the world

SONG LEADER: *Let's sing together a song for the start of our worship. It's all about Jesus — one of the words on your star. But the song doesn't actually say 'Jesus'. See if you can discover the name for Jesus that's used in the song.*

TECH TEAM displays the words of the song as **MUSIC TEAM** leads the congregation in singing: 'Light of the world' (Michael W Smith).

In this context: omit the bridge: 'I'll never know how much it cost . . .' Also consider using the words 'here we are (instead of here I am) to worship.

6. A SHEPHERD'S STORY

(based on Luke 2:8-20)

Choose the way of presenting the five stories in this service that is most appropriate for your situation.

Use the script: A costumed actor may tell the story, either standing beside the manger or standing at their place among the other worshippers. Or a reader (costumed or not) may read the story from a lectern at the front of the worship area.

OR a reader may read the text directly from a Bible.

WORSHIP LEADER: *We're going to journey with some people whose stories are in the Bible. As you hear their stories, listen for the special words. You may like to find the words on your star as you hear them.*

A SHEPHERD: *Star? No, we didn't notice any special star that night. We were nearly blinded by a light that was brighter than any star.*

It was angels.

That's right. Real, light-emitting angels.

They weren't just light, they were sound, too. It was huge sound, but a soft whisper at the same time. I never heard anything like it before.

One angel told us not to be afraid. We needed to hear that, 'cause we were terrified.

The angel said — and I'm quoting it exactly. I'll never forget — he said: 'I bring you good news. It will bring great joy for all the people. Today, in the town of David, a Saviour has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord. Here is how you will know I am telling you the truth. You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.'

The light seemed to get even brighter and the sound even bigger. A whole choir of angels was singing:

'Glory be given to God in the highest heaven! And may peace be given to those he is pleased with on earth!'

The only thing that could give us more joy than this angel light-and-sound show was if what they said was true. If God's own Son was actually here — as a baby in our little town of Bethlehem.

So we went to check it out.

It was all true. Everything the angels said.

And we spread our joy! We told everybody about what we heard and saw. Like, now, I'm sharing our joy with you.

WORSHIP LEADER: Thanks for telling us your story.

Which of our four Christmas words did you hear in the shepherd's story?

Please take a minute to find the words on your stars. Read them aloud to the people you are sitting near and tell one another what the words meant for the shepherds.

TECH TEAM may display a slide of the four key words: Jesus, Joy, Star and Light.

ALLOW TIME for people to do the activity.

As people chat, the **MUSIC TEAM** may quietly chime the tune of 'Hark, the herald angels sing'. As a sign that the chat time is ending, play the final line more loudly.

7. SONG: Hark the herald angels sing

SONG LEADER: Let's sing about the angel's message. As we sing, listen for our Christmas words: star, light, Jesus and joy. When you hear one of these words you may hold up your star and let it twinkle.

Demonstrate shaking a star at this point and also for the word 'joy-ful' (verse 1) and 'light and life' (verse 3) during the song.

TECH TEAM displays the words of the song as **MUSIC TEAM** leads the congregation in singing: 'Hark, the herald angels sing' (Wesley).

In this context sing just verses 1 and 3.

8. A WISE MAN'S STORY (based on Matthew 2:1-12)

Star? Oh, yes. We saw it when it first rose in the sky. And we knew what it meant.

You see, we study the stars and we study mathematics, and history and religions. We know pretty much everything there is to know. That's why we're called wise men.

We sometimes advise kings – but this new star-announced king would not need our advice.

The star led us to Judea — the land of the Jews. This star-announced king would be the greatest ever king of the Jews.

When we went to Herod, who was king of Judea at the time, he didn't know anything about the star. But his advisors said we should try in Bethlehem – the home town of David, the great king from their history.

That made sense. There was an old prophecy that said: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are certainly not the least important among the towns of Judah. A ruler

will come out of you. He will rule my people Israel like a shepherd.' (Micah 5:2)

As we headed towards Bethlehem the star was right ahead of us. When we saw the star, we were filled with joy.

It was right over a house. We went in and saw the child and his mother Mary. We bowed down and worshiped the star-announced child.

You see, it wasn't the star that was important. The star simply showed us where to find the child. As your song says, the star led us to the perfect light – Jesus.

We gave him our treasures: gold and spices and ointment.

And then we went home. God warned us not to go back to Herod, so we went home another way.

We'll keep on studying the stars, but never will another star give us as much joy as that one.

WORSHIP LEADER: Thanks for sharing your story with us.

Which of our four Christmas words did you hear in the wise man's story?

Please take a minute to find the words on your stars. Read them aloud to the people you are sitting near and tell one another what the words meant for the wise men.

TECH TEAM may display a slide of the four words: Jesus, Joy, Star and Light.

ALLOW TIME for people to do the activity.

As people chat, the **MUSIC TEAM** may quietly chime the tune of chorus of 'We three kings of orient are'. As a sign that the chat time is ending, play the final line more loudly.

9. MUSIC: carol or performance music

MUSIC TEAM or special performers present a music (or music and dance) item related to the theme.

OR

MUSIC TEAM leads the congregation in singing a favourite Christmas carol.

10. THEME DEVELOPMENT: Jesus is light

BIBLE READER: One of the men who journeyed with Jesus during his time on earth wrote: 'In the beginning, the Word [Jesus] was already there. The Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . Life was in him, and that life was the light for all people. The light shines in the darkness. But the darkness has not overcome the light . . . The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.' (John 1: 1-9)

WORSHIP LEADER: *As we journey through life, alone or together, we may not have a star to guide us. We have Jesus – to light up our darkness and show us his way.*

11. A BLIND MAN'S STORY (based on John 9)

BLIND MAN: *Star? I'd never seen a star. People told me it was a shimmering pin prick of light in a blanket of black sky. I had no idea what that meant. You see, I was born blind.*

Then came that special Sabbath day.

The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed.

I could see — buildings, trees, sunlight and shadows. Can you imagine my joy when I first saw my parents' faces?

Went to look for Jesus then, and that night I looked at the stars.

People – including the Pharisees — wanted to know what happened, so I told them.

The Pharisees were arguing about healing on the Sabbath day and about whether Jesus is a prophet or a sinner

I don't know about that kind of thing, I just know that I was blind, but now I can see.

WORSHIP LEADER: *Thanks for sharing your story.*

Which of our four Christmas words did you hear in the story or the man Jesus gave sight?

Please take a minute to find the words on your stars. Read them aloud to the people you are sitting near and tell one another what the words meant for the blind man.

TECH TEAM may display a slide of the four key words: Jesus, Joy, Star and Light.

ALLOW TIME for people to do the activity.

As people chat, the **MUSIC TEAM** may quietly chime the tune of chorus of *Amazing Grace*. As a sign that the chat time is ending, play the final line more loudly.

12. SONG: *Amazing Grace*

MUSIC LEADER: *Let's sing a song that echoes the man's words 'I was blind, but now I see.'*

TECH TEAM displays the words of the song as **MUSIC TEAM** leads the congregation in singing: '*Amazing Grace*' (Newton).

(Sing verse 1 and your choice of two or three additional verses.)

13. THEME DEVELOPMENT: darkness and light as metaphors

BIBLE READER: *Long ago the prophet Isaiah wrote:*

'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

They lived in a land of shadows, but now light is shining on them.

You have given them great joy, Lord; They rejoice in what you have done.' (Isaiah 9:2,3. GNT)

WORSHIP LEADER: *Darkness and light aren't always physical things. Sometimes darkness is like a black blanket that covers our minds or our hearts and keeps us from experiencing joy and from seeing things as they really are — in God's eyes. God sent Jesus as the light that breaks through that kind of blindness.*

14. A SOLDIER'S STORY

(based on Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 23 and

SOLDIER: *Star? No, it wasn't a star that I was looking at. It was something else.*

(Attach a crosspiece to star pole to form a cross).

I didn't realise I'd been living in a kind of darkness. I was a soldier of Rome. I knew my place. I followed the orders of my superiors. When I gave orders, others followed them. We thought of Caesar as god — if we ever thought about it.

Then I saw Jesus — at the very end of his life. My detail was on crucifixion duty.

It was always gruesome.

But that day seemed different. It was just after noon, but the day actually seemed to get darker.

That man seemed different.

He spoke sometimes to the onlookers. The last thing he said was 'it is finished'. Then he died.

And I think, at that moment the whole world went black. And maybe there was lightning.

But suddenly it was if the blackness in my head and heart was shot through with light.

I could see clearly then that this man, Jesus of Nazareth, whom we crucified, was surely the Son of God!

The realisation made me feel terror and somehow at the same time, peace and joy.

WORSHIP LEADER: *Thanks for sharing your story with us.*

Which of our four special words did you hear in the wise man's story?

Please take a minute to find the words on your stars. Read them aloud to the people you are sitting near and tell one another what the words meant for the soldier.

TECH TEAM may display a slide of the four key words: Jesus, Joy, Star and Light.

ALLOW TIME for people to do the activity.

As people chat, the **MUSIC TEAM** may quietly chime the tune of bridge 'I'll never know how much it cost' from 'Here I am to worship' (Michael W Smith). As a sign that the chat time is ending, play the final line more loudly.

15. SONG: Here I am to worship (reprise)

MUSIC LEADER: *Let's sing about what that soldier may have been thinking, and what we think as we look at Jesus cross.*

TECH TEAM displays the words of the song as **MUSIC TEAM** leads the congregation in singing: portions of 'Here I am to worship': (1) *Light of the world . . .* (2) *I'll never know how much it cost . . .* (3) *Here I am to worship . . .*

16. A CONTEMPORARY STORY

There are three options for this component of the service.

- **TESTIMONY:** A member of the congregation may tell their own story of their joy as they came to see Jesus in their life. This could be presented as an interview with the worship leader prompting and assisting the presenter
- **SERMON:** The preacher/minister may speak briefly about the joy of seeing Jesus in our lives or about letting Jesus light our way.
- **HOLY COMMUNION:** Use your regular communion liturgy and practice. If possible link it to the theme: in communion we see Jesus.

Whichever option you choose, you may conclude with a similar activity to what was done with the other stories:

WORSHIP LEADER: *Which of our four special words did you hear?*

Please take a minute to find the words on your stars. Read them aloud to the people you are sitting near and tell one another what the words meant in this story/experience.

TECH TEAM may display a slide of the four key words: Jesus, Joy, Star and Light.

ALLOW TIME for people to do the activity.

As people chat, the **MUSIC TEAM** may quietly chime the tune of the chorus of 'Christ, be our light' (Farrell). As a sign that the chat time is ending, play the final line more loudly.

17. ANNOUNCEMENTS /OFFERING

WORSHIP LEADER or CONGREGATION LEADER may make any needed, brief, announcement. Include:

- invitation to future worship and fellowship opportunities planned by the congregation
- explanation of the way offering money will be used — and the assurance that visitors are not expected to contribute
- thanks to everyone for being part of the worship service
- suggestion that people take home their stars as a reminder of the worship experience — and to help them remember that Jesus is the light of the world
- hope that they have a safe journey home and whenever they travel during the holidays.

18. SONG: Christ be our light

MUSIC LEADER: *Let's sing about Christ, our light. When we sing the word 'light', raise your stars and let them twinkle. (Demonstrate as before.)*

TECH TEAM displays the words of the song as **MUSIC TEAM** leads the congregation in singing: 'Christ, be our light' (Bernadette Farrell).

During the song, the **HOSPITALITY TEAM** collects offerings in your usual manner.

19. FINAL PRAYER:

PRAYER LEADER may read out the verses of the previous song slowly as the congregation's prayer, perhaps adding extra petitions to the ideas expressed in the song. **MUSIC TEAM** leads the congregation in responding to each part of the prayer by singing the chorus 'Christ be our light'.

OR

PRAYER LEADER leads their own prayers for the church and the world.

20. BLESSING

WORSHIP LEADER: *As you journey from this special time and place of worship, may Jesus be your light and give you his joy.*

21. FINAL SONG: Joy to the world

MUSIC LEADER: *Let's sing about that joy.*

TECH TEAM displays the words of the song as

MUSIC TEAM leads the congregation in singing 'Joy to the world' (Watts)

At the conclusion of the song, the **STAR BEARER** may carry the star-on-a-pole from its place beside the manger and stand with it by the door leading out of the worship area.

HOSPITALITY TEAM and **WORSHIP LEADERS** may repeat the blessing to each worshiper as they leave.

MUSIC TEAM may continue playing the tune of 'Joy to the world', getting softer and softer as people leave.