

# Christmas Special: No Rehearsal Nativity - Sunday 24th December 2023

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 24 December 2023

Preacher: Matt Wallace

- [ 0 : 00 ] Good afternoon everyone, good afternoon and a very warm welcome to St John's Community Church. If you don't know me, my name is Matt, the vicar here and I'll be leading us through what is our Christmas Eve Christmas special.
- And Christmas Day is very close, isn't it? Just a few hours away and if I reckon we can get another 12 hours before the kids wake up for presents in the morning, I think we'll be doing pretty well. But today, the day before Christmas Day, is our time at St John's each year where we have a chance to think once again about that first Christmas story, hence our Christmas special.
- And if you've been at things over the years, you might have seen previous times where we've been pretty rehearsed. We've had weeks and weeks of practicing with all the kids and the songs and so on. And this year, as I'm sure you're aware from the screens, we're going to do things slightly differently.
- So this is a no-rehearsal instant nativity today. Okay, so it's great to see so many of our younger ones and some older ones as well who are dressed up looking to part for our Christmas nativity in a bit.
- And the way we'll work it is, we'll have a bit of fun to begin with and then we'll tell the story. And when your turn comes, depending on your costume, you can come up at the right time and be all part of the Christmas story if that's all right.
- [ 1 : 17 ] But there's a little bit of audience participation that will be needed as well if that's okay if we're up for a little bit of Christmas spirit today. Is that? Yes? All right. Good stuff. Good stuff. Let's begin though. Let's pray and let's commit ourselves and our time well and truly into God's hands.
- And then we'll get going with our Christmas theme today. So dear God, thank you for Christmas. Thank you that after all the preparations, Lord, it's so very nearly there.
- Thank you for our friends and our family. Thank you for this time now that we can celebrate the Christmas story again in this way. And above all, thank you for Jesus, the one who comes to be God with us, to show us just how much you love us.
- And so with all we're about today, we pray that we would know your hope, your peace, your joy and your love with us this Christmas time and always.
- Amen. Amen. Now, the first Christmas had screaming babies as well. So we're all right. We're all right. It's a good soundtrack. Now, this afternoon, we've got plenty of songs that we're going to be enjoying.
- [ 2 : 22 ] We've got Phil and Ellen who are going to be leading us in some of our songs as well. A mixture of some Christmas stuff, a mixture of some carols and so on. So we thought we'd get warmed up if that's okay today with a bit of a traditional carol to begin with, which we can all join in with.

But it's got a bit of a country and western kind of holy hoedown feel today. All right. So you can swing your pants or whatever you want to do. But if you're able, do you want to be on your feet? Because we're going to sing a bit of Hark the Herald Angels Sing to get us nicely warmed up.

And Phil and Ellen will lead us in this countrified version of it. Hark the Herald Angels Sing  
Glory to the newborn King Be sonnet and mercy mild  
Gone and sinners reconciled Joyful all ye nations rise  
Join the triumph of the skies With angelic hosts proclaim  
Christ is born in Bethlehem Heart the Herald Angels Sing  
Glory to the newborn King Christ the highest heaven adored

Christ the everlasting Lord Late in time behold him come  
Offspring of the virgin's womb Failed in flesh the Godhead see  
Hail the incarnate deity Hail the incarnate deity Christ is born  
with man to dwell Jesus our Emmanuel Heart the Herald Angels Sing  
Glory to the newborn King Hail the Lord Hail the heaven for prince of peace  
Hail the son of righteousness Light and life to all he brings  
Risen with healing in his wings

Mild he lays his glory blind Born that man no more may die  
Born to raise the sons of earth Born to give them second birth  
Hark the Herald Angels Sing Glory to the newborn King Well done,  
well done You're in good voice This bodes well, this bodes well  
Do please take a seat Now as I say Obviously it's Christmas Eve today  
Which means Christmas Day is very, very nearly upon us  
Are you excited about Christmas Day being this?

[ 5 : 50 ] Yes Yes Are you excited about the fact That it's Christmas Day tomorrow? Yes  
Pantomime season is still with us I tell you So I don't know what you're going to be  
Most looking forward to About Christmas Day itself Or Christmas time in particular I don't know  
what your favourite stuff is Could be the presents Or the pantos Or the prosecco Could be  
the turkey Or the tinsel Could be family or friends It could be snow that may be coming It  
could be the fact that there's no school for us For a couple of weeks as well Which is great  
Thank you Could be the mistletoe smooch That you're looking forward to a bit later Could  
be the box set binge That you're really after Getting into after Christmas Day itself I don't  
know what your favourite thing About this time of year in But I've got a little question For  
us to consider Perhaps with those next to us What's your favourite thing About Christmas  
time?

What's your very favourite thing About Christmas time? Do you want to just turn to the  
person next to you Either side And say actually My favourite thing is This Alright So If  
you've been to these kind of things before You know we like to do a little Roving mic kind  
of thing And if you're happy to answer this Little question here There's some chocolate  
coming your way If you fancy it So Any hands up Who wants to share What their favourite  
thing About Christmas time is Tom In your wolf shirt After a good 2-1 win today Go on  
then I like Open presents Christmas morning Open presents on Christmas morning Do  
you know what you're getting this year?

Nintendo Switch games Nintendo Switch games I like it You can have 2 coins for that My  
friend Well done Other favourite things This Christmas time What are we on? I like  
opening the presents Opening the presents What time do you think you'll be up in the  
morning?

7 7 7 I would get up at half 4 If it was me personally Alright So Have a coin There you go  
Any of the favourite things About Christmas Right at the back here What's your favourite  
thing mate?

Christmas love Christmas love You can have 4 coins for that Because that's the best  
answer ever My goodness Well done You are literally counting these out I love it Well  
done There we go What have we got?

[ 8 : 02 ] Family and friends Family and friends Have another handful Well done There you go A  
bunch of coins At least 10 One for you as well There you go Favourite things about  
Christmas time Come in and sky at the front here Christmas love Christmas love Love or  
lunch Which one?

Love I like it I like it There you go I have a few coins You can work your way through those  
Alright Let's go over Where we got Marg What's your favourite thing? 1, 2, 3 Bailey's  
Bailey's Lovely See Aldi were doing some Bailey's Mint pies this year I don't know if  
you've had those Gents what were you thinking?

Spending time with family Spending time with These are all pure answers I tell you There  
you go mate Well done What we got here? Presents Presents And do you know what you  
might be getting this year? Any ideas?

Punch bag Punch bag Maybe save that for boxing day Come on There you go Well done  
Well done Here we go Over here What we got?

Jesus is born Jesus is born You might as well have the whole box for that I tell you Double  
hands out There we go Great answer No one can top that really But we'll just continue a  
little bit Alright What we got?

[ 9 : 17 ] A unicorn A unicorn I like the sound of that If you get one of those I'll be very impressed I  
tell you Alright What we got over here? The presents The presents I like the theme that's  
going on here I tell you Another few coins for you there I like your outfit as well All the way  
back I'm going to come back around here Cheers Mike Come on then What we got?

What's your favourite thing about Christmas? Opening our presents Opening your  
presents This is a good theme going on There we go Well done George Well done Alright  
Couple more over here What we got Joss?

Decorating the Christmas tree Decorating the Christmas tree Take your pick out of those  
Very good What we got Bobby? Advent calendars Advent calendars I like it There you go  
mate Mr Mario Shepard Come on then What we got?

Christmas dinner Christmas dinner? You're a man after my own heart I tell you I tell you  
And what's your favourite bit about Christmas dinner? Is it the Brussels sprouts or  
anything like that?

The turkey What's your favourite bit? Having turkey Having turkey Good man Good man  
As long as there's a pig in blanket on my plate I'm happy I tell you What we got here?  
Spending time with family Family This is a good theme This is a good theme There you go  
There's a selection Maybe one or two more then At the back here Just going to sneak  
down here What we got mate?

[ 10 : 41 ] Like spending time with family Family Very good idea Alright A few coins there for you To  
tuck your way through One more then One more Any brave hands Save your legs Over  
there It's my mate Nate Come on then What we got?

My family, friends and grandparents Family, friends and grandparents as well This is good  
Covering all bases there Oh go on then There's a very eager hand over here What we  
got?

Presents Presents Excellent There you go mate There you go Alright So You got one? Go  
on Elsie Go on Giving presents to family Giving presents to family Is a good answer Elsie  
Well done Well done If you want to hand those around Zara You'd be most welcome For  
anyone else Who fancied them So Lots of favourite things About Christmas time For us to  
enjoy And hopefully I've already been enjoying together But One of my favourite things At  
Christmas time Is telling the story About that first Christmas And remembering all that that  
means Then And means for us now And so I reckon Should we Have our nativity time?

Should we tell the story? Is that alright? Alright so If you're ready Eyes down And if you're  
sitting comfortably Then I'll begin Alright so Time for our nativity And if you're Dressed up  
Keep an ear out And keep an eye out For as the story goes by Because your part will  
come As the story goes on And we'll all gather up here Out the front Okay And so this  
Ladies and gentlemen Boys and girls Is how our story begins It begins With a young  
woman Called Mary Who lived in a town Called Nazareth Let's give it up for Mary here  
Come on Well done Well done indeed Have we got just the one Mary today?

Is this it? There's something about Mary Excellent We might have loads of angels And loads of shepherds That's great But just the Mary today So that's good news Now Everyone Can you say Hello Mary?

[ 12 : 44 ] Hello Mary Can you say hello? Hello Excellent Good work Now Mary Was both Very kind And very courageous And maybe That's why God chose her For this very special task Because you see One day God sent an angel Called Gabriel To come And visit her Do we have a Gabriel In the house?

We do have a Gabriel Come on up Gabriel Well done Well done Just the one Gabriel today Is that the one anymore? Any more takers? Excellent One is enough One is enough So can you say Greetings Gabriel Greetings Gabriel Lovely Now When Gabriel appeared You're ready for some acting here Alright Mary Was shocked Can you turn around that way And show them your shocked face as well There's a BAFTA in this I tell you Mary Was shocked And a little bit frightened Is she shivering?

Yes Well done Well done Because As Angelica you are She's never seen an angel before But Gabriel Just to put Mary And her little Ticking heart at rest Gabriel gave Mary A thumbs up And a beaming smile Excellent Rock on Tommy And he told her Not to worry Because God Was with her In fact The angel Told Mary That she was going to have A baby Who would be God's son A son Who would be called Jesus Now Just for now Your work is done Gabriel So you can take a seat But spoiler alert We're going to need you again In a bit Alright So let's give it up for Gabriel Well done Well done Thank you And so when the angel Left her Gabriel No Mary Sorry It's a fine line Mary Went to tell her Boyfriend Slash Fiance Slash Soulmate Joseph All about the news

Now do we have a Joseph In the house Maybe one Maybe two Yes Come on Falling over his feet To see her Welcome Joseph Everyone say Alright Joseph Nice one Thumbs up from Joe Alright Now Joseph and Mary They were planning to get married And when Mary told Joseph That she was pregnant With God's son Joseph Was a bit surprised as well Can you do your surprised face for it That's the one And turn around and show them Your surprised face Excellent I think when he finds out Mary's pregnant He's going to be surprised To say the least But I'll let you parents Explain why that was the case Perhaps Later But Despite the fact that Mary was expecting And Joseph really didn't know Much about it Joseph Was a good man And he stuck Alongside Mary All the way through Everyone say Nice one Joseph Nice one Joseph Excellent Now Mary and Joseph Even though they were pretty poor

They did at least Have a donkey Is there a donkey here? Come on down Excellent Come on down Well done Well done Excellent Look in the parts I love it I love it Everyone say Howdy donkey Howdy donkey Excellent Well done All the way from Blackpool Pleasure Beach Today I tell you And it was a good job That Mary and Joseph Had a donkey Because Joseph And the pregnant Mary Had been told By the Roman government That they needed to travel Some 70 miles From Nazareth All the way To their original hometown Of Bethlehem To be counted And that meant That they needed to go On a long And tiring journey So As the donkey Leads Mary and Joseph Snaking their way All around the room And go as far away And near as you want to go Okay We're going to sing A little song To help you on your way Okay And we can all join in

[ 16 : 45 ] With this Christmas classic Little donkey Little donkey On the dusty road Got to keep on Plotting onwards With your precious love Been a long time Little donkey Through the winter's night Don't give up now Little donkey Bethlehem's in sight Ring out those bells tonight Bethlehem Bethlehem Follow that star tonight

Bethlehem Bethlehem Little donkey Little donkey Had a heavy day Had a heavy day Little donkey Carry Mary Safely on her way Little donkey Little donkey Journey's end Journey's end Journey's end Is near Journey's end Is near There are wise men Waiting for A sign to bring Than hear Do not fault A little donkey There's a star ahead It will guide you Little donkey To a cattle shed

Sh There are Little donkey, carry Mary safely on her way.

Little donkey, carry Mary safely on her way.

Let's give Mary, Joseph and the donkey a nice round of applause. Well done. For no rehearsals, superbly timed there. Well done, well done. When they finally reached Bethlehem, the donkey had a well-deserved rest.

[ 20 : 01 ] So you can sit down on your four legs. There you go. Well done. And Mary and Joseph, they were very, very tired as well. And they wanted to find a safe place where Mary could have a baby.

But because there were lots of people who'd come to Bethlehem to be counted, there wasn't really any room for them. So at this point, we need an innkeeper.

Is there an innkeeper around? Any innkeepers here? I think we saw one earlier. Come on down, innkeeper. Where are you? Anyone be an innkeeper? Tom, you're going to step in for an innkeeper.

Come on. Let's give Tom a round of applause. Yes. Well done, mate. Well done. Good skills. Good skills. So Tom is our innkeeper. Oh, you've got one as well?

Are you an innkeeper as well? Two innkeepers. This is good. This is good. Let's give another innkeeper round of applause. Well done. There we go. Well done. Everyone say, good day, innkeepers.

[ 21 : 00 ] Good day, innkeepers. Now, we've got innkeepers, which is good news. But the Bible doesn't actually say there was an innkeeper in the story. But in keeping with tradition, let's keep the innkeeper included in keeping the couple cool, calm, and kept.

Because although the innkeeper didn't have a room for Mary and Joseph, he did have a place where they could stay. So everyone say, nice one, innkeeper.

Nice one, innkeeper. No mean innkeepers in our story tonight. I tell you, the only thing was, though, the only place that the innkeeper had for Mary and Joseph to stay was where all the animals stayed as well.

So, we've already got a donkey here with us. Are there any more animals who want to come and be part of this barn scene here? Any more animals who want to make their way up? I think there's a couple of sheep who might want to take part in this.

And then you can double up to be with some shepherds a little bit. Come on down. Go on. You can do it if you want to. Now, ladies and gentlemen. Come on up.

[ 22 : 04 ] This is little Leo, the lamb here. My goodness. Well done. Let's give Leo a gentle round of applause. Well done, mate. Excellent work, fella.

Well done. Well done. Hello. Hello. All right. Now, if you had to stay with lots of animals in a kind of barn or a stable or even a downstairs room, do you reckon it was noisy with all these animals that were there?

You reckon? Probably, yes. Probably, yes. All the moving. All the moving. I like it. Yes. And do you reckon it was a bit smelly, too? Yeah, it smells like fish. Smells like fish, says Tom.

Yes. Fish. Was there any other smells you think it might have smelt of with all these animals around as well? Should we get them? Do you want to say one, two, three, pooey? Okay.

One, two, three. Pooey. Yeah. It was a stinky stable, no doubt, that Mary and Joseph were given by the keeper. But the good news was, surrounded by some animals, even though it was a very simple, maybe a little bit skanky of a surrounding forum.

[ 23 : 12 ] But with Joseph by her side, Mary gave birth to a son whose name the angel had already told her was going to be Jesus.

And if you've seen One Born Every Minute, this is exactly how it happens. All right. So there you go, Mary. Well done. Well done. Can we give little baby Jesus a ripple of applause for arriving in the world?

Excellent stuff. Now, the thing that Mary had to lay Jesus in was called a manger. There was no cot. There was no crib. The best thing they could find was a feeding shop.

So Mary, do you want to place Jesus away in the manger there? And that's a cue for us to sing Jesus a little lullaby. Okay. So we're going to sing perhaps the most famous Christmas song of all.

Are you ready? Are you ready? Are you ready? Oh, yeah.

[ 24 : 12 ] Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Away in a manger, no crib for a bed. The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.

The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay. The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awaits. The little Lord Jesus, the crying He makes.

I love you, Lord Jesus. I love you, Lord Jesus. He'll lay down from all side. And stay by my side until morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus. God bless my heart. I ask you, Lord Jesus. I ask you to stay.

[ 25 : 32 ] God bless my heart. God bless my heart, and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear children in your tender care.

And bid us for heaven to live with you there Well done.

All right. So meanwhile, in the fields just outside Bethlehem, there were a group of shepherds who were looking after their sheep. And they said, shepherds, get ready.

Now, I think we have a good few shepherds among us. You can stay up, mate. That's fine. You can be a shepherd as well if you want to. So shepherds and any other sheep, do you want to come on down? This is good news.

You can take your seats on for a moment if you fancy. Well done, mate. Look at this. Look at this indeed. That's it. Well done, shepherds. Now, if you want to gather around the fire, you're going to be warming yourself in the fields.

[ 26 : 47 ] Gather around the fire where you can perhaps dry the socks you've been washing all night or whatever you've been doing. Some sheep as well. Hello, hello. Great to see you here. All right.

So this is our shepherds and our sheep. You want to say, what's up, shepherds and sheep? What's up, shepherds and sheep? Excellent. Now, the shepherds are all here minding their own business, looking after their sheep in their fields.

When suddenly, including Gabriel, a great crowd of angels came and appeared towards them. So Gabriel, any other angels want to come on down as well?

Look at this, Jan. Well done. Come on down, angels, with your halos and everything. That's it. Do you want to come up on the stage? Come up on the stage where everyone can see you. Well done. Well done. Excellent work.

Excellent work, angels. Good stuff. A whole host of angels. And they come all the way from Hawaii. Do you want to say, aloha, angels?

[ 27 : 47 ] Aloha, angels. Excellent. Now, you're Gabriel, aren't you? What are you? Angel delights, are we? Yeah. All right. Excellent. If you were a Villa fan, you could have been Juan Pablo angel, but we'll leave that.

We'll leave that. All right. Now, a bright light shone around them as the angels appeared. But we've got some great lights from Mark here today. But I think we need a few more lights.

So, if you've got a phone, do you want to get your phone out? And if you can turn the torch on, please, that would be great. So, we'll have a bright light shining all the way for these angels. As many as you can.

As many bright lights just shining on us here. That would be great. Now, as the bright lights shone and the angels appeared, the shepherds and their sheep were all shaking with fear.

Can you be all shaky and fear-free and scared and stuff? Yeah, well done. Mario Shepherd down there doing especially good shaking. But because the shepherds were a bit afraid, the angels said, don't worry.

[ 28 : 47 ] Don't be afraid. In fact, the angels all gave them a double thumbs up with massive smiles. Excellent work. They said they'd got good news of great joy for all people that a saviour had been born in Bethlehem.

Jesus, God's own son. And suddenly, because all the people's torches were on their phones, the shepherds began to hear a stadium-filling song in the background.

One that maybe they felt they could all sing along with in honour of the appearance of the angels. Okay. So, if you want to be on your feet, please, people, let's be standing if we can.

And let's sing an anthem to these angels, which sounds a little bit like a prayer to me. Are you ready? When I'm feeling weak and my pain walks down a one-way street.

I look above. I look above. And I know I'll always be blessed with love.

[ 29 : 52 ] And as the feeling grows, she breathes flesh to my bones. When love is dead, I'm loving angels instead.

Everywhere. I look above. Oh, she offers me protection. A lot of love and affection. Whether I'm right or wrong.

And down the waterfall. Wherever it may take me. I know that life won't break me. When I come to call.

She won't forsake me. I'm loving angels instead. We need some air guitar now, okay?

Air guitar. We need some air guitar now, okay?

[ 30 : 58 ] Air guitar. We need some air guitar. Oh, she offers me protection A lot of love and affection Whether I'm right or wrong And down the waterfall Wherever it may take me I know that life won't break me When I come to call She won't forsake me I'm loving angels instead Well done, everyone. Well done.

Sounding beautiful. Do you want to take a seat? You can turn your torches off so you can save your batteries for your Christmas selfies tonight, I tell you. Well done. Well done. All right. So, the angels, with their soundtrack in the sky, they told the shepherds that they'd find the baby in Bethlehem wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

And so, the shepherds decided they had a bit of a journey to go to get to the stable. So, they needed to leg it. They needed to make a run for it all around here if they can. So, you're going to love this, Dave. I know.

So, watching out for your long robes and all that. The shepherds need to make a run for it to try and get to the stable as quick as they can. So, should I have a little soundtrack for them? Come on, little tippers. Oh, there we go. Yes, well done.

Come on, Tom. You can make it too. That's good. Well done.

[ 32 : 55 ] Well done.

I'm sorry. Thank you. Let's give it up for the shepherds there. Well done, well done. Come on down. Come on down. Well done, shepherds.

A little bit out of breath, no doubt, but you made it. Well done. It's warming that headscarf, I tell you. Now, I appreciate with shepherds, you might have heard this before, and I don't want to ram the point home to you, but when these shepherds of all sheeps and sizes arrived at the stable, they found the baby Jesus lying in the manger just as the angels had said.

Now, Mary and Joseph, they welcomed the shepherds in. They even let them hold the newborn baby Jesus. So any shepherds want to rock baby Jesus, you'd be very welcome there.

What a nice thing of Mary and Joseph to do. And as they cradled the baby Jesus in their arms, they sang their own little lullaby to the screaming baby just to help him calm down a bit.

[ 34 : 23 ] So, do you want to join in with another classic for us? Silent night, holy night.

All is calm, all is bright. Holy infant, so tender and mild.

Sleep in heavenly peace. Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night.

Shepherds quake at the sight. Glorious stream from heaven afar.

[ 35 : 54 ] Heavenly hosts sing alleluia. Christ the Savior is born.

Christ the Savior is born. Christ the Savior is born. Christ the Savior is born. Silent night, holy night.

Silent night, holy night. Son of God.

Love's pure light. Radiant beams from thy holy face.

Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

[ 37 : 09 ] Jesus, Lord, at thy birth. Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Love's pure light. Amen. Lovely, lovely, lovely, lovely. Well done, well done. All right. So, while the shepherds would soon go and tell all their friends about Jesus, we're missing some other people, aren't we, from the story?



oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh by westward leaning still proceeding guidance  
to thy perfect life well done indeed let's give the chocolate giving wise men in the star and  
have applause well done so the bible tells us that these wise folks they arrived with their  
gifts of gold and frankincense and gifts which spoke of their belief that Jesus would be a  
king and a priest and a saviour and these wise men wise in name wise in nature because  
they then worshipped Jesus but because it's also

Downloaded from <https://vetanothersermon.host> - 2025-12-15 08:34:55

[ 44 : 09 ] I tell you but I'm not going that route but they were presents nevertheless which Mary and Joseph were very grateful for so we have our forecast here at the front which is great we're nearing the end of our nativity story but I think in all of this what's perhaps most important for us to remember is that from the word go Jesus coming to be with us was for everyone if you look at who's up here all different shapes and sizes all people from all sorts of background from the lowliest of shepherds to the poshest of wise men from teenage mums to bewildered dads from the fearful to the hopeful from animals to angels Jesus came to include everyone and to invite everyone to be his friends promising to help them at a time and to help us these days get the most out of his gift to us of life and that for me that's my favourite thing that's the beauty of Christmas for me that because of Jesus we get to share the goodness and the love the hope the peace and the joy of God not just that God gives to us but that he gives us to share and give out to all those who God has given us to love and live alongside in this life indeed just as we finish our little story

I wonder if we might just be able to say a prayer together but to do this be good to use our hands to do this so keep your eyes open for this one but just got some prompts for us to use our hands if we can and everyone can join in up the front here as a way of praying sometimes put our hands together when we pray helps us focus but we can use our hands in a slightly different way this time so first up just as the angels did do you want to give a massive thumbs up to us hold your thumb up high and we might say thank you God that you made us thank you for giving us so much in this world to enjoy thank you for our homes our families our friends and our community if you agree with that you can say Amen Amen next up can you do a double thumbs up both thumbs up together so we want to doubly thank you especially at this time of year for Christmas and most of all for Jesus who came to show us just how much you God love us Amen Amen now do you want to give a little thumbs down little thumbs down at this point so dear God we're sorry that we're not always as kind or loving of other people as we could be but then turn your thumb back the right way up help us to be more like you Jesus

Amen Amen next up do you want to find someone to point at okay you can point at anyone you like it's not rude today find someone to point at anyone you like and as we point at that person we say thank you God for the person I'm pointing to please bless them with good things in their life because of your love for them Amen Amen and then lastly do you want to point to yourself maybe put your hand on your heart this one's for us this one's for you and so finally we think of ourselves and just for a couple of seconds in the quiet do you want to just ask God quietly for maybe the one thing that you'd like for him to do for you this Christmas time maybe just think about that one thing you might ask God to do for you this Christmas time and so as you hold that request in our hearts thank you God that you hear all of our prayers

Amen Amen Amen Amen well done alright we're going to sing one more song in a moment but can you give this crowd this cast of nativity here a huge round of applause well done well done excellent work and there's a chance of proper photos and stuff in a minute but we're going to sing one more song so if you're able you want to be on your feet for one more time and we'll go out as we came in with a classic Christmas carol this one's called O Little Town of Bethlehem and as we know there's a lot going on for a lot of people in Bethlehem at this time so perhaps as we sing this we can use it as a prayer that God's peace would reign in that land that he was born in once again so let's sing O Little Town of Bethlehem together O Little Town

O Little Town of Bethlehem how still we see thee lie above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go high yet in the dark streets shines the everlasting light the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight For Christ is born of Mary and gathered all about while mortal sweetly angels keep their watch of wandering love O morning stars together proclaim the holy birth and praises sing to God the King and peace to men on earth how silently, how silently,G

[ 50 : 43 ] God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his men. No near may hear his coming, but in this world of sin, where big souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.

O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray.

Cast out our sin and enter it, be born in us today. We hear the Christmas angels in great glad tidings tell.

O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel. O come to us, our Lord Emmanuel.

Take a seat. O come to us, our Lord Emmanuel.

[ 52 : 19 ] O come to us, our Lord Emmanuel. All right. Well, son, do please take a seat. Thank you. All right.

So, as the shepherds might say, all's wool that ends wool. So, let's thank our cast again in a moment. But can we say extra special thanks to Phil and to Ellen and to Mark for all their sound and visual skill tonight.

Thank you. Thank you. And then there's been Gemma and Lindsay and Jane and Marissa and Cleona and Georgina and Heidi. They've helped get all the costumes ready tonight as well. So, let's thank them as well.

And there's Nigel and Mark behind the scenes as well. So, thank you very much indeed, everyone who's helped to make this happen. We'll thank the cast again in a moment. But a couple of things just to bring our attention to that are happening in the next 24 hours or so here.

So, tonight, if you fancy a different kind of Christmas Eve feel, I'm up at Hammerwich doing a service there at Midnight Communion. That starts at 11 o'clock and we'll go right through to the small hours of Christmas.

[ 53 : 24 ] So, if you fancy a communion service up at Hammerwich Church tonight, 11 o'clock. Do come on up there and it would be nice to see you there for an atmospheric evening service there. And then tomorrow morning, we've got a service here at 10 a.m., which is an all-age Christmas Day celebration.

We'll be sharing communion here as well. But it's a nice, relaxed, friendly feel. Just for an hour or so, if you want to come on down Christmas morning, once you've opened your presents and all that, it'd be good to see you there. And if you have got a present that you've opened, you want to come and show it, that'd be great.

We'd love to see what Santa's brought you this year. And then following that, we've got, at 1 o'clock, we've got our Christmas Day lunch, which is for those who might otherwise be on their own on Christmas Day.

Many thanks indeed to all those who've shared the invites and brought in supplies and food and gifts and stuff to bring to folks. I think at the last count, we've now got 56 or 57 people coming to eat with us here tomorrow.

We've got capacity for about 60 people. So if you're at a loose end and you'd be on your own and you fancy some good food and a good company, come and let us know. We'd love to have you here with us. Equally, if you know of neighbours or friends who are on their own, then there's always space for one or two more.

[ 54 : 33 ] So do let us know if that's the case. But that's 1 o'clock tomorrow afternoon. And all are welcome to that. Other than that, though, I reckon, the Nativity cast.

Do you want to be on your feet, please, for one more time, one last time? And if you want to come and take a photo in a moment, that's a good time to do it. But can we go wild for these guys, please? Well done, everyone.

Great stuff. Great stuff indeed. And if you want any cowpole or size 5 nappies, do come and grab them there.

We will be using them, I tell you. So you're more than welcome for those. Other than that, though, it's Christmas Eve. Have a lovely day. Have a merry, merry Christmas tomorrow. Let me say a prayer for us.

Let me say a final word of blessing as we go on our way and into Christmas Day tomorrow. So may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, may that blessing rest and remain on each of us and all those who God has given us to love both this Christmas time and forevermore.

[ 55 : 42 ]    Amen. Amen. Merry Christmas. And we'll see you again soon.