

Hi Everyone,

What a year it has been! We began by officially being commissioned as a Partnership and then instead of getting together to work together to make this work, we were together while apart and our church buildings were open then closed, then open again.

But the church has remained open throughout as the people of God have continued to keep in touch with members and friends and bring hope to the local community. Churches have joined together on Zoom and friendships have been forged, which may have taken longer if done in person.

Nothing can take away from the losses that have been suffered this year - financial, personal, freedom, but of one thing we can be certain - God's love throughout, strengthening us, supporting us, comforting us, enabling us.

So many of you have gone above and beyond what you thought was your job description, but have done it willingly and faithfully, so Thank You. I hope you can have some time out over the Christmas period to rest and recharge ready for a new year and all the challenges it will bring.

Remember always - a child is born to us, a son is given to us and he will be called Immanuel - God **with** us.

Keep safe this Christmas

RevRuth

PS Spoiler alert - the reflection attached will be used at the Christmas Eve service on Zoom for YourChurch!

Christmas Reflection

Our Christmas may be different this year, but the message is the same. "Immanuel", "God with us" is born to us. This is how Matthew records the events of that first Christmas.....

This was how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. His mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they were married, she found out that she was going to have a baby by the Holy Spirit. Joseph was a man who always did what was right, but he did not want to disgrace Mary publicly; so he made plans to break the engagement privately. While he was thinking about this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, descendant of David, do not be afraid to take Mary to be your wife. For it is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived. She will have a son, and you will name him Jesus—because he will save his people from their sins."

Now all this happened in order to make come true what the Lord had said through the prophet, "A virgin will become pregnant and have a son, and he will be called Immanuel" (which means, "God is with us"). So when Joseph woke up, he married

Mary, as the angel of the Lord had told him to. But he had no relations with her before she gave birth to her son. And Joseph named him Jesus.

I found this reflection in one of my Christmas resource books and am using it on Christmas Eve....

This is how the birth of Jesus came about.

With a betrayal. Or so it seemed to Joseph. He was pledged to be married to Mary. And then he discovered she was pregnant. And he knew the baby wasn't his.

This is how the birth of Jesus came about

With an act of compassion. An act of love. He could have disgraced her publicly. He could have let everyone know what she'd done. He could have punished her and shamed her. He could have destroyed her. But he didn't. He decided, instead, to bring an end to the relationship, quietly.

This is how the birth of Jesus came about.

With a divine message. An angel appeared to Joseph and explained to him that the baby Mary carried had been conceived through the Holy Spirit. And that wasn't all. Mary would give birth to a son and he would be called Jesus – the One come to save his people from their sins.

This is how the birth of Jesus came about.

With a promise. A promise made by a prophet hundreds of years before Joseph was born. A promise about a virgin giving birth to a boy called Immanuel. And the promise in the boy's name – God with us.

This is how the birth of Jesus came about

With a reconciliation. Joseph took Mary as his wife. He had no union with her until she gave birth. And when she did, he gave the boy the name the angel had told him. Another name of promise. Jesus.

This is how the birth of Jesus came about.

With a betrayal, an act of love, a divine message, a promise and a reconciliation. When you think about it, you could say the same about his death.

Something to think about.....

Merry Christmas!

Keep safe

RevRuth