




words of peace



THE OPEN DOORS CHRISTMAS CAROL SHEET 2022



**“Glory to God in
the highest heaven,
and on earth peace
to those on whom
his favour rests.”**

LUKE 2:14

What was the last message you received? Perhaps it was something in the post or a phone call. More likely, given our technological age, it was an email, text or WhatsApp message.

These messages are mostly mundane and fairly inconsequential. But sometimes they're memorable. This can be for good reasons, such as a job offer. Or it could be bad news, like loss of a loved one.

The Christmas story is full of people receiving messages. Whether to a whole nation, a group of shepherds or an individual, the words comprising these messages are so memorable that their effect has been felt for more than two thousand years.

The heart of these words is peace. This doesn't mean the absence of uncertainty, pain and conflict, but a deep sense of trust and rest, rooted in Jesus, irrespective of outward circumstances. It's a peace felt by persecuted Christians, despite the cost that comes with following Jesus.

Using carols and readings – together with letters from children of the persecuted church – this service sheet seeks to celebrate the words that point to the Prince of Peace.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

**O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel;
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.**

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to Thee, O Israel**

**O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free,
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of Hell Thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.**

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to Thee, O Israel**

**O come, Thou Dayspring, from on high,
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.**

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to Thee, O Israel**

**O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.**

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to Thee, O Israel**

1 PRINCE OF PEACE

READ ISAIAH 9:6

The words in this message to the Israelites were written some 700 years before Jesus was born! Among the different names given to Jesus is 'Prince of Peace'. It means the peace given by Him is unrivalled. Sadly, in places across the world including parts of North Africa, Christians seeking to share this peace are instead viewed as troublemakers.

We love Christmas. Besides receiving gifts, we are reminded of the importance of the light of Jesus in our lives and want to show love to our loved ones and neighbours. If we would write a wish on a Christmas card to our country, we would say we hope our church will open and we can meet with other children. If we have to write a message to the persecutor (the government), the message to them would be: Jesus loves you. As Christians we don't want trouble, we just want a place where we can meet with other Christians.

**- Elmeera (12) and Aisha (8)
from North Africa**

Lord Jesus, soften the hearts of those who view Christians with suspicion. Speak to their hearts this Christmas and show them the peace that lies at the heart of faith in Jesus. Amen.

Silent Night

**Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright.
Round yon virgin, mother and child,
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.**

**Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar.
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia,
Christ the Saviour is born,
Christ the Saviour is born.**

**Silent night, holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light.
Radiant beams from Thy holy face.
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth,
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth.**

2 MIRACLE OF PEACE

READ LUKE 1:26-35

When the angel Gabriel brought Mary the message that she'd give birth to Jesus, she had a valid question: "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" But God did the miraculous – and a miracle of peace is what a group of Christian children in Syria are praying for following more than a decade of war and persecution.

Every Christmas I feel very happy knowing that Jesus was born on this day for me, to save me. If I could send a card to those who persecute Christians, I would write, "God loves and wants to give His light to us, but you want to destroy it, why do you want that? God can light up your lives as well if you want to let Him do that." Syria needs Jesus because He can do miracles with one touch, and He is able to change the situation. I pray that He indeed touches Syria so we can live happily in our country.

**- Anna (10), Sham (11) and Aziz (13,
pictured below right) from Syria**

Lord Jesus, peace can seem a distant dream in places ridden with war and conflict, such as Syria, Ukraine, Ethiopia and Myanmar. We cry out for miracles of peace in these places. Amen.



Once in Royal David's City

Once in royal David's city
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her Baby
In a manger for His bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little Child.

He came down to earth from heaven,
Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable,
And His cradle was a stall;
With the poor, and mean and lowly,
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.

And our eyes at last shall see Him,
Through His own redeeming love;
For that child so dear and gentle
Is our Lord in heaven above,
And He leads His children on
To the place where He is gone.

Not in that poor lowly stable,
With the oxen standing by,
We shall see Him; but in heaven,
Set at God's right hand on high;
Where like stars His children crowned
All in white shall wait around.

3 HAVEN OF PEACE

READ **MATTHEW 1:18-23**

Many thoughts must have troubled Joseph as he made the difficult decision to divorce Mary: "What is the best way to do it without causing shame and controversy? What will all of this mean for my future?" But an angel appears to reveal the central role Joseph has in God's plan. It gives Joseph peace to move forward, despite the challenges that it would involve. It's a peace known by our persecuted family, including in Colombia where Christians face opposition from criminal gangs and indigenous groups.



I know that amidst persecution God remains faithful and merciful. He is the best because He takes care of us. For me, Christmas is Jesus, who was born into a humble family, but at the same time He is the Son of God who came to seek and save us. I think it's the best occasion to remember the story of Jesus' birth and celebrate His love for humanity. Allow Jesus to be the centre of your family and your life. It is He who unites us and allows us to enjoy peace and hope.

**- Valentina (15, pictured above)
from Colombia**

Dear God, may Your 'perfect peace' (Isaiah 26:3) fill and strengthen Christians in Colombia, and elsewhere across the world, who are facing the storms of persecution today. May they know You as their haven of peace. Amen.

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Hark! The herald angels sing:
Glory to the newborn king;
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.
Joyful all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies.
With the angelic host proclaim:
Christ is born in Bethlehem.

Hark! The herald angels sing:
Glory to the newborn king.

Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of a virgin's womb:
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail the incarnate Deity.
Pleased as man with man to dwell:
Jesus, our Emmanuel.

Hark! The herald angels sing:
Glory to the newborn king.

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Risen with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by,
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.



4 CELEBRATION OF PEACE

READ LUKE 2:8-14

Celebrations are meant to be accompanied by unmistakable noises and sights – which is exactly what greeted the shepherds when angels brought word that the long-awaited Prince of Peace had been born. But in many places around the world, like parts of Egypt where Muslim extremists are active, Christmas must be celebrated in secret, otherwise Christians could be in danger.

There are no Christmas decorations in the streets or any signs of celebrations. Actually, Muslims in my village curse Christians and I feel depressed because I can't respond to defend my faith. We gather as a family and my father tells us Jesus's birth story that happened in Bethlehem. We can't go to the church. We stay up and watch the Christmas night prayer on TV. But we lower the TV volume so not to be heard by our neighbours. I pray that my friends and the country know that Jesus was born. He left heaven and came to earth to show the way. We were sinners and He came to save us and give us eternal life. I pray that God opens their hearts and is 'born within them' at Christmas.

- Ashraf (12) from Egypt

Lord Jesus, thank You for saving us from our sins, so that we can draw near to God and enjoy a peace, both now and into eternity, that truly 'transcends all understanding' (Philippians 4:7). We pray that persecuted Christians celebrating Christmas in secret will overflow with joy at this wonderful news. Amen.

O Come, All Ye Faithful

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant!

O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold Him born the King
of Angels:

O come, let us adore Him, (x3)
Christ the Lord.

God of God, light of light,
Lo, He abhors not the virgin's womb;
Very God, begotten, not created:

O come, let us adore Him, (x3)
Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, glory in the highest:

O come, let us adore Him, (x3)
Christ the Lord.

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,
born this happy morning;
Jesus, to Thee be all glory given!
Word of the Father,
now in flesh appearing!

O come, let us adore Him, (x3)
Christ the Lord.

ABOUT OPEN DOORS

Open Doors helps millions of persecuted Christians in more than 60 countries. Our global underground networks work in partnership with the local church to provide practical, spiritual and emotional support. Find out more at opendoorsuk.org.



WILL YOU BE A CHANNEL OF GOD'S PEACE?

In 2014, four-year-old Mimi (COVER) and her family from Iraq were forced to flee their home when so-called Islamic State invaded their village.

Unlike many Christian families from Iraq, Mimi and her family have been able to return home – helped by the gifts and prayers of Open Doors supporters. They were given a microloan to start a farm which is thriving. It's hope for today *and* tomorrow, because it secures Mimi's long-term future.

This Christmas, Mimi will play songs and decorate her house. She'll also give away eggs produced by her chicken, Lulu. "I like to wish people a happy Christmas and to give something to the people to make people happy," she says. "And when people are happy, Jesus is happy. It's His birthday."

The words of peace that accompany the Christmas story point to the 'Word [who] became flesh and made His dwelling among us' (John 1:14). The true wonder of this is most keenly felt amid pain, as God's close presence with us brings a peace that often belies outward circumstances.

You can become a channel of this peace to persecuted Christian children like Mimi. Please continue to remember our persecuted family who celebrate Christmas in the shadow of persecution.

**Every £8 could give a Bible
to a child, so they can meet
God in His Word.**



    
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