

Who would you invite?

- Who would you invite to a party or celebration?
 - take initial suggestions with blank faces image up...
 - then take more suggestions with the famous faces page up...
- How do we go about inviting people?
 - popular, friendly, special, like to be seen with, who they know, ...
- Shepherds were very ordinary: good news was for everyone...
- *Get anyone who wants to make an invitation....*

Expect the Unexpected!

- Have expectations about what will happen on Christmas Day - but certain key details are hidden:
 - *(many presents image)*
 - there will be presents, but mostly we don't know what they will be!

Expected

- Various things were expected in all this:
 - the birth itself - hard, though not impossible, to avoid realising birth is imminent...
 - *(woman expecting image)*
 - particularly if that old phrase was true, and Mary was "great with child"!
- Wider sense of expectation:
 - *(angels/shepherds image)*
 - angels have been making announcements... (v.10,11)
 - OT hopes and promises - going all the way back to Abraham and David, and renewed by the prophets
- *(Get out the two presents and unwrap them: expected and unexpected gifts!)*

Unexpected

- *(Unexpected/box image)*
- So who did this message come to?
 - who first heard that the great Messiah King had arrived?
 - king in palace?
 - priests in temple?
 - local dignitaries near to where it happened?
 - *none of the above!!*
- They were religiously excluded - hard to get time to be at worship and do all the cleansing the Pharisees interpreted as part of the law if you are half way up a hillside with your sheep and they need fed...
- They were socially excluded - out on the hills, rather than in the villages - remember David nearly missing out on anointing as king 'cos he was tending the sheep?
- They were financially excluded - not a well paid profession, so not like our offshore oil workers...
- Luke returns to this theme as he talks through the gospel of Jesus:
 - friend of outcast and sinners, women and foreigners...
- Here is a truth that captivated Luke, and transformed the attitude of the early followers of Jesus:
 - perhaps one that familiarity dulls for us?
 - even shepherds were welcome - indeed honoured first guests - at the birth of the king over every king, the Lord of heaven and earth!!
 - *and so are we....!!*

Response

- PowerPoint meditation - amazing that Jesus, the very Son of God, creator, Lord, entered this world for us...
 - take time to marvel - *at the magnitude of these events and at God's goodness in sending Jesus...*