

## Expect the Unexpected!

### Picture Story

- Pass out stories; invite people to try and fill them in:
  - either seriously...
  - or to come up with the funniest combination!
- Then run through the story, seeking feedback on each entry:
  - why did you choose to put that character in that bit of the story?
- Observe that, mostly, we have expectations about what the right answer should be:
  - about place in society, the relative importance of people, etc
- **BUT** the story still makes sense with a completely different way of allocating the characters to roles:
  - could be the street sweeper who goes to the palace, and the Prime Minister who reads about it in the newspaper later...
- This morning thinking about how in the Christmas story, God brought the important news of Jesus' birth to a group of shepherds:
  - not the important people you might have expected...

## Expected

- Mary was expecting...
  - she knew she was going to have a baby...
  - not only had an angel announced it to her...
  - but her bump proved it!
- But there was a wider sense of expectation at the time:
  - those people who had heard from God in previous generations knew he'd promised a **Saviour**
  - from Abraham through David and the prophets of the Old Testament God had promised a Saviour, a Messiah, a king greater than any of his ancestors
- So, 2000 years ago, those who paid attention to God's word would have expected that someday a Saviour would come:
  - they didn't know when...
  - and they only had a few clues about where and how...
  - but expectation was in the air...
- **They were waiting for God to act**

## Unexpected

- But when God does act, sending his Son Jesus, born as a human baby, there is plenty that is unexpected too:
  - here is God entering human history...
  - yet he bypasses the religious hierarchy, the political powers and the wealthy
  - instead he uses poor peasants (**Mary and Joseph**) and announces the news to mere **shepherds**
  - later in his life Jesus will be described as the friend of outcasts and sinners, women and foreigners - those whom everyone with power and influence looked down upon...
- Perhaps for those who have grown up with the Christmas story, Jesus the baby, angels and shepherds and wise men, familiarity has robbed the reality of God entering our world of its power
  - what wonder there would have been for those to whom God first came - thinking particularly about the shepherds - that God would come to them!
- God hasn't changed:
  - he still comes, in Jesus Christ, to the poor, the outcasts, the sinners, women and foreigners, just as much as he does to the rich and powerful
- Question is how we react:
  - like the shepherds, in worship and wonder?
  - or indifferent...?
  - or outright rejection...?