

## The Christian Story

The birth stories of Jesus are found in Matthew and Luke – they contain different elements (reflecting the interests of the gospel writers). The conflated version of the story is:

- ◆ The Annunciation
- ◆ The Birth of Jesus
- ◆ The Visit of the Shepherds
- ◆ The Visit of the Wise Men / Magi (with massacre of the male children by Herod) (**see Epiphany**)
- ◆ The Flight into Egypt

The theological meaning of the birth of Christ is given in the Prologue to John's Gospel.

## The Beliefs

- ◆ Incarnation – God became flesh in the birth of Jesus
- ◆ Jesus is the Son of God and shows God to us.
- ◆ God loves humanity, and intervenes in history through Jesus to save all mankind
- ◆ Christmas is traditionally a time for thinking of Jesus as “light of the world”, bringing the light of salvation into the realm of darkness and death.
- ◆ Jesus as Messiah / Christ

## CHRISTMAS

Matthew chapters 1-2, Luke chapters 1-2, John chapter 1 verses 1-18



## The Customs

25<sup>th</sup> December Western Church, 6<sup>th</sup> January for Orthodox

- ◆ Wide range of Christian Christmas customs in different countries of the world, most common probably making of crib scenes. Services linked with light, - Christingles.
- ◆ Church furnishings and vestments will be white or gold
- ◆ Christmas carols
- ◆ Other customs will be entirely secular or have pagan roots (e.g. holly, mistletoe), or be a mix of Christian and secular (e.g. Christmas cards, Santa Claus – originally St Nicholas).
- ◆ Christmas will be celebrated by non-Christians as a type of fun mid-winter festival.

## The Christian Experience

- ◆ Celebration & rejoicing
- ◆ Relationship with God
- ◆ Love
- ◆ Giving and receiving of gifts
- ◆ Identifying oneself as a Christian
- ◆ Faith
- ◆ Awe & wonder
- ◆ Mystery