You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.

May I speak in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Every year in church life, certain themes seem to capture the flavour of the year past. One theme that has emerged in the life of St Peter's especially strongly this year is that of 'ubuntu'. From services with our friends up at St James Clapton focussing on this theme, to our new community organiser - Aesha's - passion for 'ubuntu' as a foundation for how we life out our life in this place.

'Ubuntu' is a philosophy of humanity, a reminder of the solidarity and interconnectedness of all human life. Ubuntu is sometimes expressed with the phrase 'I am because, we are'.

Ubuntu is a reminder that as humans our humanity, mine and yours, is inextricably bound up with each and every other. It's a reminder that no woman or man is an island, a challenge and a responsibility to ask ourselves whether each and every thing we do is lifting up all those around us, or causing them to be torn down. I am because we are.

As Christians we are preparing to celebrate the birth of Christ, the birth of God as one of us in Jesus Christ. God enters into solidarity with us by being born as one of us. In becoming human, in being made flesh, God enters into all the messiness of human life, and lifts us up, redeems us from the inside.

If as human beings, I am because we are, as Christians we celebrate 'we are because God is'. God has become one of us in Christ to lift all of us up, to restore the interconnectedness of our humanity, and to open for us the new and Risen life.

At Christmas, we are reminded afresh of the interconnectedness of all humanity. God becomes human for us not as a great and mighty King, or a superhuman deity, or a magnificent hero, but in the vulnerability and dependence of a newborn. In Christ, God holds before us the very vulnerability of all our humanity, the fact of our dependence on and interconnectedness with each other, and reminds us of the responsibility the gift of humanity entails.

This Christmas, as we celebrate friends and family and we share and receive gifts, we are reminded of the gift that makes all this possible. Not just the gift of God's birth at Christmas, and the celebration of this great fact each year. But also the very gift of our humanity, the privelege and challenge of what it measn to be human, and the responsibility each of us has to each and every other, and how precious and fragile that gift can be.

How this year are we being called to lift up those around us?

How this year are we being challenged to discover afresh the truth at the heart of 'ubuntu' - that in lifting up others, we find we ourselves are being lifted up?

How is God calling you to play your part in sharing in the humanity of each and every one of siblings, all those God is each and every day lifting up?

However God is calling you, may the joy of this truth at Christmas sustain you and all those you love and upon you rely, today, tomorrow, and each and every day as each us of us is called to play our part in God's divine invitation to love and be loved. Amen.