

What brings you here?



What brings you here?

A Christmas Sermon Series

Outlines by Andrew Turner (Director of Crossover for ABM)


crossover
Helping Australian Baptists Share Jesus

What brings you here?


crossover

Dear Church Leader Friends,

What Brings You Here? is an Advent and Christmas series that's adaptable for use in all kinds of churches, highly invitable, and full of the great news about Jesus.

It's free for you to use because Crossover exists to help Australian Baptists Share Jesus.

The series explores the big reasons for the coming of Jesus – and so the question 'What brings you here?' is posed from us to him. It's the polite-but-slightly-nervous question one puts when the boss suddenly turns up in one's office! Or that one might put to a chief invading alien, if aliens existed and invaded, and paused to take questions. Are you here for good or ill? And what will it mean for me and my people?

The idea for this series – a Christmas series from the book of Exodus - came from a sermon I heard over 20 years ago by Rev Dr Peter Adam, then vicar of St Jude's church in Carlton. Three times in Exodus, God says that he is going to 'come down', each time for a different purpose – to rescue, to covenant, and to dwell. There's a sermon outline on each purpose, plus an introduction sermon and summary sermon. In this way the series can fit with the four Sundays of Advent plus Christmas Day.

Also included is a whole suite of artwork that's easily customisable (using Microsoft PowerPoint in the absence of something fancier) to include your church details and service times etc. There are postcards, social media tiles and posters for invitation and promotion, as well as presentation slides for use during services.

We hope you find it helpful. And if you've developed Christmas and/or Easter series that you're willing to share, we'd love to hear from you as we build our resource collection.

Every blessing as you share the true wonder of Christ this Christmas,



Andrew Turner
Director of Crossover for Australian Baptist Ministries

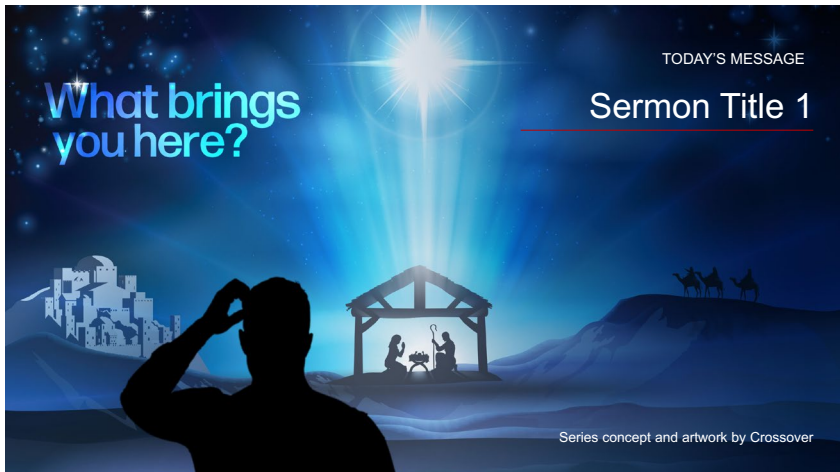
CONTENTS:

Note About Attribution	3
Potential Comedic Sketch / Running Illustration	4
Sermon #1 Introduction – The Sudden Arrival.....	5
Sermon #2 What Brings You Here? – To Rescue	6
Sermon #3 What Brings You Here? – To Covenant.....	7
Sermon #4 What Brings You Here? – To Dwell.....	8
Sermon #5 Summary – All Our Christmases.....	9
Overview of Editable Artwork.....	10
Finding this Helpful?	12

Note About Attribution

We don't want attribution to be a distraction from the message itself. However, there are a number of reasons why you'll want to acknowledge that you are building on the work of others.

We suggest that an optimal way to do this is to use the (included) PowerPoint title slide as the first slide, displayed as you take your position and begin to speak. It focuses on the series title, but also acknowledges that you've worked with us on this. That's it, we don't expect any vocal attribution if you show that slide at the start of each message.



Potential Comedic Sketch / Running Illustration

This series lends itself to a running joke / illustration that highlights the core story of the series and shows how it develops. It could simply be mentioned during the sermons but would also make a fun and easy sketch for a couple of budding thespians in your congregation.

It features the dramatic trope of a 'damsel in distress' and a 'knight in shining armour' and so lends itself to some over-the-top, pantomime acting. It could go something like this:

RESCUE SERMON

The damsel is trapped in a dungeon and can't possibly find a way out. She's miserable. Eventually she calls for help, and the knight appears and releases her from her captivity. The knight is then clearly preparing to make some dramatic speech, but the damsel immediately dashes off with the shortest of 'Thanks, see ya!' over her shoulder. The knight is left hanging. It's a successful rescue, but the story somehow unfinished...

COVENANT SERMON

The story from the previous episode (above) is retold/re-acted. However this time, before the damsel can dash off, the knight manages to hold her attention and ... gets down on one knee to propose! She immediately cries 'Yes!' but when the knight moves in for an embrace and kiss, she dashes off, excitedly listing all the things she's going to get ready for the big day. It's a successful rescue, and a successful proposal, but again still seems unfinished...

DWELL SERMON

(The story from the episodes so far may be recapped.) The knight and damsel enter, having obviously just exited their lavish wedding ceremony. She turns to him and says 'Thank you so much for everything. It was wonderful to be rescued, and you've given me the most wonderful, romantic, overwhelming celebration – the best day of my life! I can't thank you enough, I really appreciate it. OK, I guess I might see you around...' and begins to head off. But the knight stops her and says 'But I thought ... hang on ... aren't we going to live together?'

#1 INTRO: What brings you here?

– The Sudden Arrival

PASSAGE: John 3:19-21

FOCUS: That God has drawn – and draws – near to us can be good news in theory but confronting in practice. When the God who sees all comes close, we can feel *very* exposed. But it can be the opportunity of a lifetime.

FUNCTION: 1) That hearers may understand that God is not merely a distant concept/possibility, but far more 'up close and personal'. 2) That if we have the courage to turn and face rather than avoid him, it makes all the difference in the world.

INTRO – What Brings You Here?

Have you ever been sprung by an 'official visit'? One moment you're living your ordinary life, and then there's a knock at the door, and it's a parent, or boss, or teacher, or even the police – right there, looking right at you. [Tell a personal story] It can be confronting. Often our first instinct is to blurt out 'Er,

What brings you here?

This series will look at the ultimate version of that. What happens when *God* shows up? What happens in us? It will greatly help if we know the answer to the question 'What brings you here?' And you may well be surprised.

We'll look back 4000 years (Exodus), where 3 times God says 'I'm coming down' – for 3 different reasons. And we'll look back 2000 years, to God's arrival in the flesh – and see that he had the same driving motives. And in doing so we'll get a fresh glimpse, right here and now, of the God who still turns up at our door and knocks.

Read John 3:19-21

1. Humans are nervous creatures...

- We really don't want to be exposed.
- We invest a lot in covering up! Shelter, clothes, facade, privacy, security.
- In fact, our instinct/desire to 'not get caught' can be stronger than our instinct/desire to 'be good' or 'do right'

2. And so we can be very wary of God ... jumpy at even the mention of God...

- In Genesis 3, when God approaches in the garden, Adam & Eve's instinct is to hide and to cover up.
- Our own instinct to hide and cover is a sign that something's not right with us. We can't have real peace in ourselves or real closeness with God and others unless we are able to live openly and confidently.
- And so, so many people live in a constant avoidance of God (re-read vv19-21)

3. But there's huge pay-off if we have the courage to turn and face him...

- What brings him here is not to crush us or humiliate us or to condemn us. (Now read vv 16-17)
- He comes to *help* us with our predicament. He is for us. Very, very, very much for us. [Story/Example]
- But truthfulness is needed. Like a doctor/surgeon needs everything brought to light so she can operate, we need the courage to bring ourselves into the light rather than scurrying off into the darkness.
- And we'll find that God is not merely a surgeon. The news will get better and better as we discover over the next few weeks, just what brings him here.

CONCLUSION

- Even simply from what we've explored today, will you – for the first time or afresh – say 'Lord Jesus, I choose to fight the instinct to run and take cover – I choose to face you and hear you and to step into your light.'

PASSAGE: Exodus 3:7-8a (Also Mark 10:45; John 3:17)

FOCUS: God is a great rescuing God, who genuinely cares for us and comes to break us out of captivity.

FUNCTION: That hearers will 1) see God's compassion and kindness and 2) seek his rescue and freedom.

INTRO – Have you ever needed rescue?

How did it feel when your rescuer showed up? *Am I glad to see you!* [Tell a story of a rescue]
We're beginning an Advent series, asking God the question 'What brings you here?' When God turns up, it can seem frightening. We can think God's attitude is threatening: "*Don't make me come down there...*"

But his arrival should be the best thing ever. We're looking at 3 times in the book of Exodus (4000 years ago) where God says he is 'coming down' – and they are for 3 different reasons. Good reasons.

The first time is in Exodus chapter 3. [Read Exodus 3:1-8a]

1. It's confronting when we discover God up close and personal

Do you see how scary this was for Moses? Firstly, a strange fire that doesn't go out. If that's not enough, a voice that comes from the fire. Then the voice *calls Moses by name*. (With sandals off it's hard to run away!) Moses hid his face and was afraid to look at God. At that time in his life he was a fugitive. He might have thought the reason for the fire was because he was toast. But he stayed and listened – would you?

2. But God has a different message

Recap vv 7-8a. It turns out that God is all-powerful and all-knowing – but also all-good.

In just these three sentences, we find that God is a God who *sees* (their misery), who *hears* (their prayers), and who *cares* (about their suffering). AND we find he is a God who *acts*. He *rescues*.

He doesn't merely empathise. Or give advice ('Fight back!'). No, he says *I have come down to rescue them*.

3. This is what we see when God comes down in the person of Jesus Christ

- Mt1: Name the child 'Jesus' because he will save his people from their sins. 'Jesus' means 'The LORD Saves'.
- Rescue means saving those who can't save themselves. When Homer Simpson dug himself (and others) into a hole, his solution was 'We'll dig our way out!' and dug deeper. Wiggum at least had the wisdom to say 'No, dig up, stupid'. Strange how we only use the word *redeem* along with *ourselves...* Rescue is what we need.
- It was Jesus' common practice to release people from impossible spots. Some bound by demons. Many sick or disabled. Even experienced fishermen terrified of a storm they couldn't out-sail. Some were even dead, making it quite hard to just sit. And ultimately, at the cross. (Read Mark 10:45, John 3:17)

4. This is great news

- The God who comes close wants to rescue us – and so he is the last person that we should avoid or shrink back from. You don't need to become a better person before seeking God - he is the key to becoming better.
- We have a God who comes down to rescue! Hallelujah! Next week we'll see the news gets better and better!

CONCLUSION

- [Tell a story of God's rescue]. Often we can pray 'God help me do this' or 'Help me do that'. But it's OK to simply pray 'Help!' To bring into his light all the mess we've gotten ourselves into. God sees us, he hears us, he cares about us, and he's come to rescue us.

PASSAGE: Exodus 19:3-11; (Also Matthew 1:21-23 and 1 Peter 2:9-10)

FOCUS: God is more than a rescuer. The freedom he releases us into – is an intimate relationship with him.

FUNCTION: That hearers will 1) glimpse the depth of God's love for us and 2) actively respond to it.

INTRO – Have you ever had a lingerer?

Someone who still hangs around after you've got what you want from them? Perhaps overseas, a waiter waiting for a tip? [Tell a quick story] It can be momentous: Someone helps you out and you say, 'Well, nice to meet you, thanks for the help.' And they *linger* ... and then say, 'Actually, would you have dinner with me?' Gulp!

Our series this Advent has been asking God the question 'What brings you here?' Why would he come among us? We've been looking way back in the story of the Exodus, where 3 times God says he is 'coming down'. Last week we saw the first time: To Moses at the burning bush, God said 'I'm coming down to *rescue*.

And rescue he does! There's a titanic struggle over the next 16 chapters, and then God's people are finally freed from slavery to Pharaoh. What a relief! Thanks Rescuing-God! We've got it from here. I guess you'll be flying off now to rescue some other people. Cheers! Er, God-speed! [wave]. But God lingers.

And then ... *proposes*. [Read Exodus 19:3-6]

1. We see that God is more than just a rescuer

- This is more than a road-side assist situation. This is a serious proposal: *You've seen with your own eyes how I carried you on eagles' wings – what a picture of God's rescue – now I want you to be my treasured possession, a holy nation, a kingdom of priests, if you will trust and obey me?* God is **proposing** that he and they be bound to one another. The bible word for this is *covenant*. A formal, serious, binding, lasting agreement.

2. God comes down for the ceremony

- Moses puts God's proposal to the people, and they say Yes (v8). Then the rest of the chapter is about all the preparations for the ceremony, and God comes down (v20). The ceremony of covenant, with all its vows and promises runs from chapter 20 to 24. It's *really* something. A defining moment in Israel's history and all history.

3. But what does all that have to do with Christmas?

- Well, there was yet to come an even more defining moment. For all the (literal) fireworks in Exodus, that covenant was just a shadow of something bigger to come. That grand ceremony: just a wedding *rehearsal*?!
• The coming of the Messiah is the coming of THE great Bridegroom. We saw last week: the angel told Joseph to call him **Jesus** because it means 'The LORD saves'. But two verses later Matthew quotes the prophet: A virgin will give birth to a son and they will call him... **Immanuel** which means God with us. Not just a Saviour. A bridegroom. Who comes so we can be totally *reconciled* – not merely not-fighting, but united with him!

4. We can be more than free. We humans are wired for and crave both freedom and belonging

- This idea of Jesus as Bridegroom and his people as the Bride runs right through the NT, from the parables to the end of Revelation, the *ultimate* wedding. To be a Christian is more than just to be 'saved'. Peter sums it up: [Read 1 Peter 2:9-10]. Does that sound familiar? We're more than simply set free (to drift until we get stuck again). We are given a purpose and an identity – a royal identity! To be a people *belonging to God*.

CONCLUSION

- Do you see that the God who dares to rescue you, really loves you? And he lingers! He doesn't just want you to be *out of trouble*, but *in with him*. What's your response to him? [And... could the news get even better...?]

PASSAGE: Exodus 25:1-8; 40:34-38 (Also John 1:14, Psalm 23, and Revelation 21:3-4)

FOCUS: God's more than a rescuer and offers more than mountaintop moment/s, indeed, to share life with us.

FUNCTION: That hearers will 1) understand God's desire for ongoing daily relationship, and 2) step into it.

INTRO – Are you very protective of your space?

Having our own private space is important. So we put up boundaries. Some of them are physical – like your front door. Others are rules or norms: "I'll let you through my door, but if you don't leave by 10pm, you're unlikely to be invited back." In our world, we need safe spaces (and feel deeply for those who don't have them).

During Advent we think about the coming of God into our world. When we think about and long for the coming of Jesus to sort everything out ... Will he still be out the door by 10pm? What's his plan? What brings him here?

We've been looking back to the story of the Exodus, where three times God says he will 'come down'. The first time, it was to *rescue*. Then last week, we saw that the second time, it was to *covenant* – like an amazing wedding, binding God and his people together. And then if those two things weren't momentous enough, this happens: [Read Exodus 25:1-8]

1. God says 'I'm moving in'

- The wedding has just finished (pretty lavish – takes 4 chapters and 40 days) and straight away God says 'Right, let's build a house, so I can move in.' The plans for the house (called a tabernacle) and building it take up the next 16 chapters – it's detailed. (If you've ever built a house, such paperwork won't surprise you!)

2. And the people are actively involved

- Did you notice that the provision of the house rests on a free offering of the people? All that's needed – from wood and lamp-oil through to fine linen, gold and silver – is to come 'from all whose hearts prompt them to give.' God and his bride build it together. Our heart-response to God, inviting him in, joining in with him, matters.

3. But when God moves in, it's quite a 'shift'

- We've been saying that the news gets better and better. That God's a great rescuer - what an epic action story! And that God wants to bind himself to his people - what a magical, literal-mountaintop moment! Rescue and Covenant are wonderful moments. But God dwelling with us is an ongoing thing, day in, day out. That's something else. He doesn't want to just be in our lives for certain moments. He doesn't want to leave by 10pm.
- All this in Exodus is just a scale model of what God did, coming down in person as Jesus the Messiah. *The Word became flesh, and made his dwelling [tabernacled] among us.* (John 1:14) The Magi learned that Bethlehem was the place to find the one 'who will shepherd my people'. Shepherding is an ongoing, daily thing. And Jesus' teaching described a life of close, daily living with God, calling him *Abba* which means 'Dad'.

4. We can know this life.

- Exodus ends with [Read Exodus 40:36-38]. God led and protected them. The famous Psalm 23 describes such a life 'The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.' It describes being safe with God through all dangers and against all enemies, and finishes with 'And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.' Is that your reality? It's a promise for an eternal future with God, but an eternity that begins right here and now.

CONCLUSION

- So in the coming of Christ, there's a very full story. What brings him here? To rescue us, to bring us into full belonging in God's family, and to know his presence daily by the Spirit. We've looked right back to the start of the Bible. Right at the end we see [Read Rev 21:3-4]. And this is open to you, now, through Christ Jesus.

#5 SUMMARY: What Brings You Here? – ALL OUR CHRISTMASSES

PASSAGE: Exodus 3:7-8, 19:3-11, 25:1-8

FOCUS: The coming of Jesus is big news. Life-changing news. World-changing news.

FUNCTION: That hearers will get a taste of the breadth and depth of God's love for us in Christ.

INTRO – Have you ever had a lingerer?

It's Christmas! It's wonderful! And it's meant to be just that – full of wonder.

This month our church has been looking at just what big news the coming of Jesus. This is God – coming down to us.

When someone important and powerful shows up, it can make us nervous. Make us want to ask 'Er... What brings you here?'

(And we've checked out God's reasons for coming down – by looking right back in the book of Exodus.)

1. To rescue

- In Exodus God first came down to *rescue*. His people were in trouble, slaves in Egypt, and he says 'I've seen their misery. I've heard their prayers. And I care – so I'm gonna rescue them.' And he does.
- And that was a big reason for Jesus coming among us. To show us that God is a rescuing God. He rescued all kinds of people from all kinds of difficulties – can you think of some? And of course, when he died on the cross, he was rescuing us all. He called it 'paying a ransom.'
- Do *you* need God's rescue? We all need it in the biggest sense... but God's heart to rescue is not just theoretical or theological. If you've got yourself stuck, you can cry out to him today.

2. To covenant

- Having rescued his people out of slavery in Egypt, God didn't just say 'There you go, I'll leave you to it.' He wants to be bound to the people and they bound to him as his most treasured possession.
- Of all the deepest human needs, one is to be free. That's why it's *so wonderful* to be rescued. But an equally deep need of ours is to *belong*. Jesus showed us and taught us how phenomenally good it is to be perfectly safe knowing that God has us. One of his most famous stories is of a lost son who is welcomed home and given complete belonging.

3. To dwell

- A third deep, deep need of humans is for companionship. We saw in Exodus that God not only rescues dramatically, and covenants passionately – he also wants to dwell among the people and share their day to day lives as an adventure with him. He rescues, he marries, and he moves in.
- And we see this also in Jesus. He shared life with his followers. And even at his departure he promised this would continue powerfully by the Holy Spirit in and with us. Matthew's gospel ends with Jesus saying "And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20b)

CONCLUSION

All of this is to say that what God has done in coming down as Jesus is bigger and better and fuller than we imagine. If you receive Christ, you receive **all** of this. It's hard to put into words – but perhaps we could say that in Christ, 'all our Christmases have come at once.'

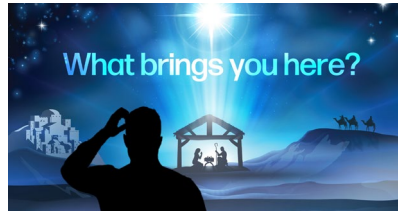
Themed Artwork

(1) Artwork for digital promotion

Instagram (1080x1080px)



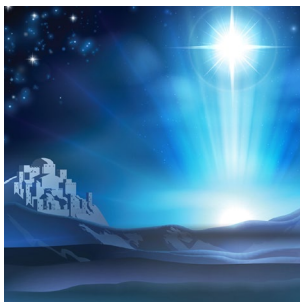
Facebook (1200x630px)



Twitter (1200x675px)



Gif/Movie (1080x1080px)



8 secs

Gif/Movie (1200x630px)



8 secs

(2) Artwork for print promotion

Artwork can be edited and customised using Microsoft Powerpoint.

A3 Poster (Powerpoint)



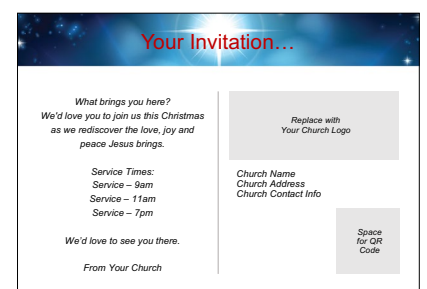
A6 Postcard (Powerpoint)



Front



Back A



Back B

(3) Artwork for use in service.

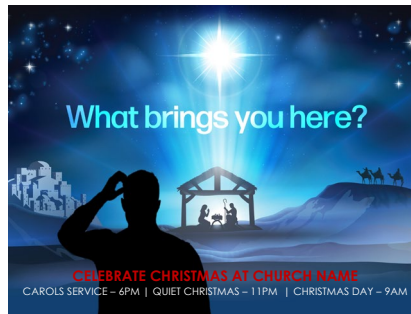
Themed Artwork

Artwork can be edited and customised using Microsoft Powerpoint.

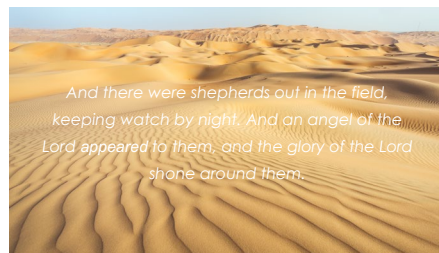
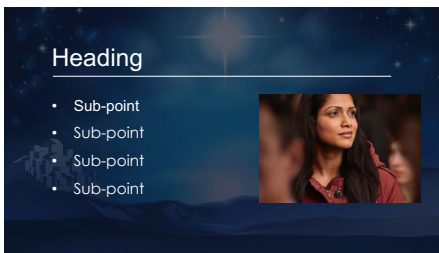
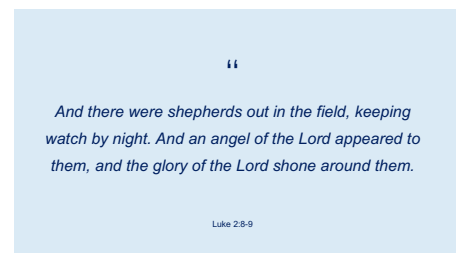
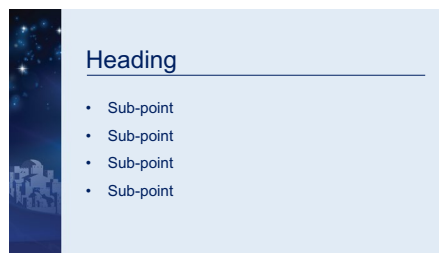
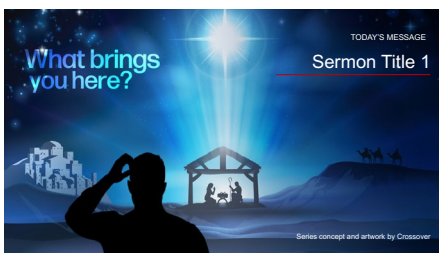
Church Promotional Slide 16:9



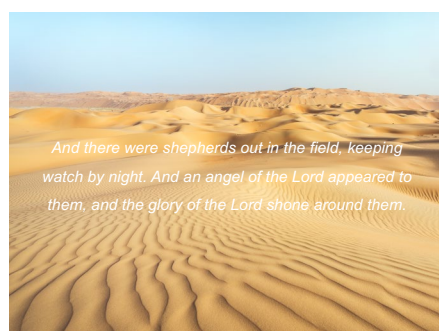
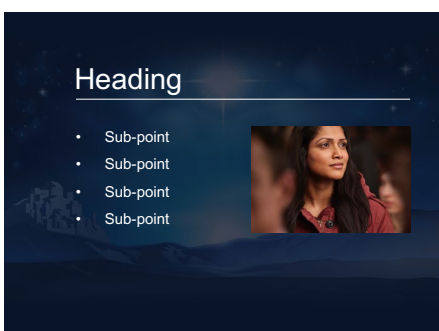
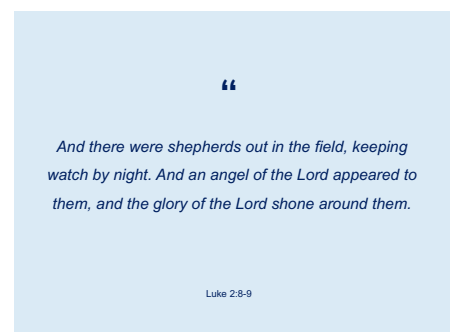
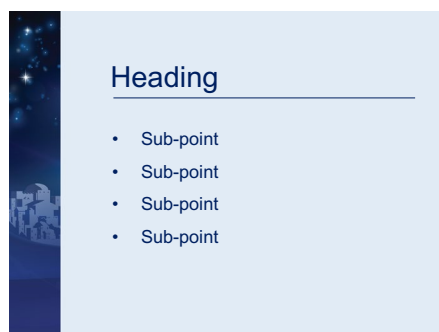
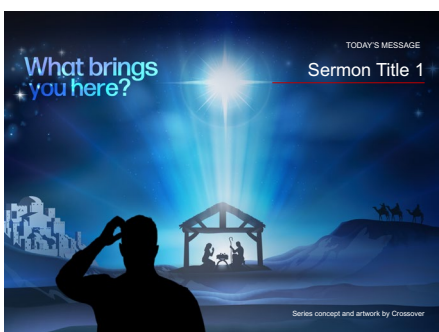
Church Promotional Slide 4:3



Church Sermon Slides 16:9



Church Sermon Slides 4:3



Finding this helpful?

We'd love you to partner with us

Help more people to share Jesus more confidently, lovingly, clearly and effectively - this is what transforms lives and changes the world.

Your church can support Crossover through the **National Baptist Christmas Offering**, or simply as part of your annual budget. It's also possible to become an individual supporter – see crossover.org.au for details.

And if you haven't already, **join our mailing list** for monthly updates on our latest resources. Go to crossover.org.au/subscribe




crossover
Helping Australian Baptists Share Jesus

Email: crossover@baptist.org.au
Phone: 02 9868 9236
crossover.org.au