

FLASH FORWARD

2. Unto Us

Start off with feedback from Sunday's message. What did those that were there - or those that have caught up online - take away from it? What encouraged them, what informed them and what challenged them?

Read Isaiah 9.1-7

*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.*

And he will be called

*Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

- An uncertain future, feelings of powerlessness, good things never last, conflict never ends. Do you identify with these issues? Which is the most relevant for you? Which is the most relevant for those you love who don't know Jesus?
- Zebulun and Naphtali was ground zero for the Assyrian invasion. Their people were the first to be deported from the land. What does it say about God that He chose to base the future Messiah there? How does this encourage you for your own areas of pain and disappointment?
- Unto **us** a child is born, unto **us** a son is given. Do you think of Christmas primarily as being about **us** – people walking in darkness? The Bible's emphasis is on God's response to people in distress – outsiders like the astrologers, the shepherds and the peasant parents – rather than the child himself. Do you agree? How should that good news change our priorities at Christmas?
- Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Go through the names and recap their full meanings. What new things did you learn? Which name/description encourages you the most, and why?
- Who are you inviting to Metro Carols this Sunday? How can we pray for them?

Big Idea: 'Christmas is not primarily about Jesus. It's actually about us - it's for everyone living in gloom and distress. It's good news to receive, celebrate and share on.'

Break down into smaller groups. Pray for the issues that you struggle with the most – uncertain future, powerlessness, good things never lasting, conflict never ending – and ask God to bring light into that darkness.

Pray for the friends, colleagues and family that you're inviting to Metro Carols, or other Christmas services. Pray for openness to the message of the Messiah. Pray for a positive experience. Pray for all those involved in making the events happen. Pray that this Christmas time God's Kingdom of righteousness and peace would increase in Bristol.