



## Royal Carols: Together at Christmas Friday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2023

### A reflection by the Very Reverend Dr David Hoyle, Dean of Westminster

We are in Westminster Abbey, the House of Kings, the place of Coronation. We are in Westminster Abbey at Christmas, to celebrate the birth of the King of kings. What company we keep.

Mary and Joseph arrive in Bethlehem in time for a birth, there are shepherds, angels, and there will be three more kings.

In this holy season, there are similar services taking place all over the United Kingdom, we share our celebration with them.

Tonight, across the world children, women, and men long for peace and we join our prayers with theirs.

The world around us, all our hopes and fears, our history, and our faith gather here, all of us hoping for what is still to come. *What company we keep.*

Here in the Abbey, we have heard the story of a baby, born on a dark night when you could see the stars. A family is far from home, near a city full of soldiers, barely welcome, and finding what shelter they could. Against the odds, and with the support of others, a mother will keep her child safe. Such small beginnings, and yet that quiet moment tipped the scales of history. The baby born in Bethlehem would keep the long, deep promises of God.

A child that changed the way we hope and began a different future for us all.

Here, now, in the Abbey we learn that a human child is a glimpse of glory. We gather to thank God for what a child is and what a child can be. It takes a village to raise a child, it takes a child to save a world. Tonight, in an Abbey where such great promises have been made, such noble things proclaimed, we are here to learn from a child. We are here to love as a child can love and should be loved. We are also here to live as this child lived, free of fear, full of hope, confident in the promises of God.

What company we keep and what a moment this is. A moment to learn, and love, and live.

---