



## Where the star leads

Recently I was invited to share with some local churches as they explored aspects of the Christmas story. The element they particularly wanted to focus upon was the visit of the magi or wise men. They were wondering about what it meant to follow a star as the gospel of Matthew describes.

When I looked it all up in the commentaries I was offered all sorts of interesting theories about just how much of the story could be proved

historically. And there were all sorts of ideas about the nature of the star they followed. Was it an alignment of planets in our solar system resulting in an especially bright light in the night? Did a star explode in a super nova to briefly outshine other stars? Was it a comet blazing its trail of ice and dust across the night sky? Haley's comet would have made its regular return to our skies (as it does every 75 years) in 11 BC.

It's unlikely we'll ever be able to find the complete answer. But that doesn't seem to me to be the key thing. What matters more is the breaking in of God into the ordinary realities

of the world. The visit of the magi is a continuation of the unfolding drama of God's choosing to enter in to the ebb and flow of human history; our stories being touched by the story of heaven. The wise men stand within that story as people who noticed that something extraordinary was going on, and who acted upon what they perceived.

The star offers us an invitation to notice things. What is it that we should attend to as a sign of something new and wonderful? What might be revealed to us this Christmas? What is the new hope, the new gift, the new possibility God is offering to us?

*"Follow truth wherever you find it. Even if it takes your outside your preconceived ideas of God or life. Even if it takes you outside your own country into the most insignificant alien places like Bethlehem. Be courageous. But concentrate on your search. Truth is one. All roads lead to home."*

**George MacLeod**

*(who, as a minister in Glasgow, founded the Iona Community in 1938 to discover new ways to live the Gospel in today's world)*

## An app for Advent



The Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, has worked with the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) to create

a smartphone app that explores the Advent season. Called **A Good Advent**, the app is free to download for iOS and Android and is available in the usual ways.

Once on your phone it gives you, for each day: a high quality photo of a work of art; an introduction to what the day's themes might be; a conversation-starter; a prayer; a passage from the Bible (both as text to read and as an audio file); something practical to do.

If you want to explore things further there are links to a book of reflections on the themes written by Jane Williams. Her **The Art of Advent** is published by SPCK.

