

REFLECTING

*hope*

# Prepare . . .

**Aftab Barki, Assistant Treasurer  
British Union Conference**



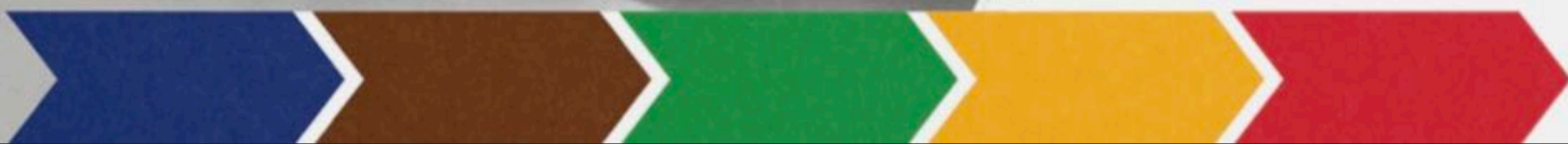


# GLOBAL

Total Member  
Involvement

**2024-2025**  
AND BEYOND

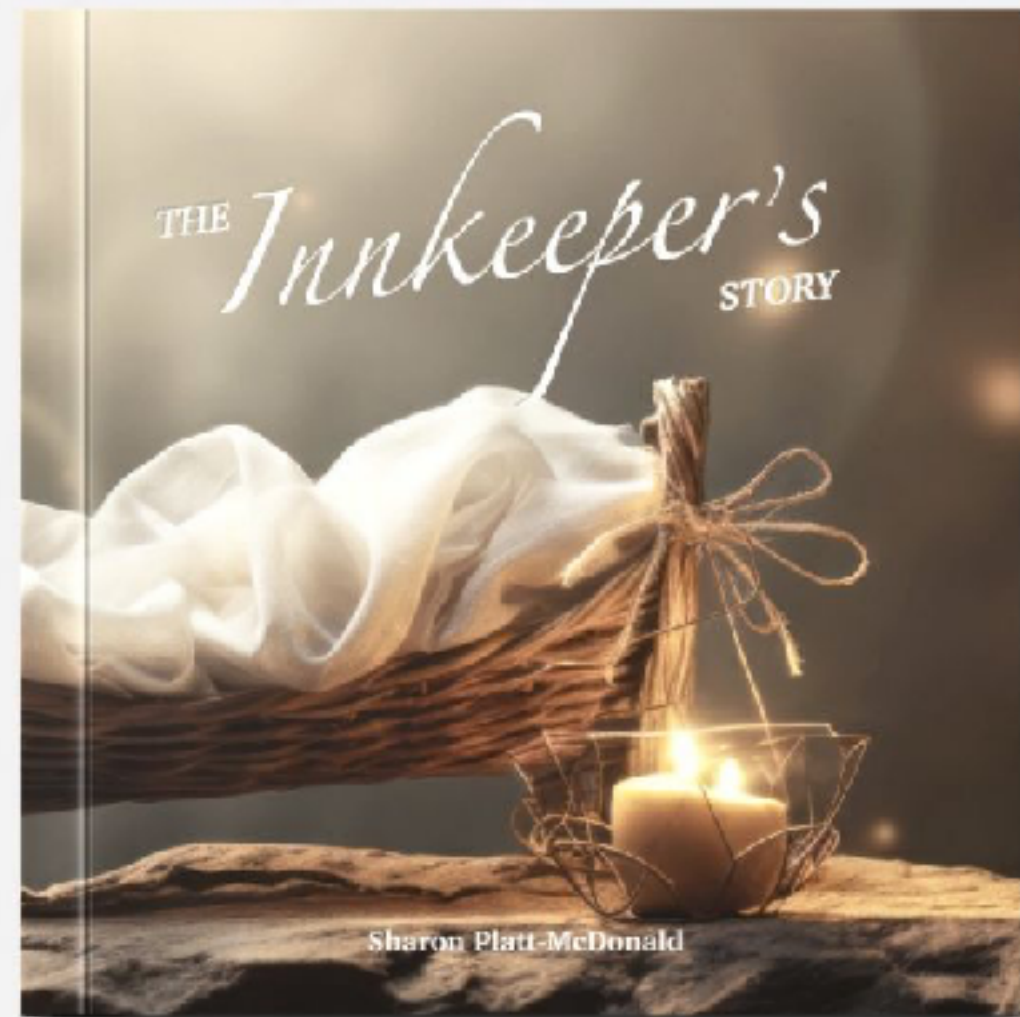
**CHURCH  
PLANNER**



**INPUT**

**PROCESS**

**OUTPUT**



# THE Innkeeper's STORY

Sharon Platt-McDonald



*This is the account of the Innkeeper in Bethlehem, Judea, whose story chronicles the most impactful experience of his life. In his own words...*



It was a full house.

Every available space was occupied. More importantly, the best and most expensive rooms were now occupied, which would certainly be a financial boost – at last.

The entire property now teeming with fee-paying guests meant that we had to use the spare rooms usually reserved for visiting family members. We had even brought in extra camp beds to facilitate the larger-than-expected client families that had currently booked to stay

due to the latest government announcement. Well, the decree of the Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus, to be exact. People were flocking to Bethlehem, Judea, in order to register their families for the census.

I thought of what I would do with the extra money that these – how should I put it? – unexpected bookings would bring, and realised with a sense of smug satisfaction that I would be financially stable for a good while to come.

And why shouldn't I feel smug? Previously, business had been rather slow, but since the taxation announcement (which had certainly caused tremendous political upheaval) our somewhat quiet town was

now bustling with activity and noise. I'm usually a quiet type of person, but anything that brought in money, I could put up with – well, almost anything.

It was well into the evening when I heard the distinct, almost impatient knocking at the door. Irritated, I wondered whether the sign clearly displayed as *'FULL'* (*no one*) was being ignored.

Or maybe it was more likely foreigners, who couldn't speak Aramaic and read the word written in large lettering in plain sight! Well, it certainly wouldn't have been locals knocking at this undignified hour.

I gathered my robe around me and began making my way towards the door. The knocking started again, more desperate-sounding this time. *Perhaps it's an emergency*, I thought.



Lying in a bed of hay, a makeshift manger, at the feeding place of cattle, was the newly born infant.

Even now, it's difficult to describe what I felt as I caught sight of the baby wrapped in scraps of cloth. Obviously, the mother had anticipated a possible birth away from home, but the meagre cladding hardly appeared sufficient. Oh, the wonder in the parents' eyes as they gazed at this new life! My heart tugged for the second time.

I'm not sure how long I stood there, mouth agape, observing the scene. The shepherds again bowed low with their faces to the ground, in a posture of reverence. Why were they worshipping? Who were these strangers to whom

they paid homage? Was it the parents or the child? And why did it feel so momentous, as if this extraordinary moment would be long remembered?

There was a sense that its significance would somehow be a turning point in my life, although at that precise moment I didn't know what it was.

'Come and see our son,' the mother requested, punctuating my thoughts and the somewhat sacred atmosphere.

Hesitantly I stepped forward, as the father beckoned me closer.

'By the way, we are Mary and Joseph,' he said.

Finding my voice, I tentatively enquired, 'What have you called the child?' Then I suddenly remembered that, with some customs, children were named several days after a birth.

Jesus,' responded Mary.

Jesus?' I asked quizzically.

# Jesus



*'Mary brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.'* (Luke 2:7)



*'The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."'* (Luke 2:10-12)

DISCOVER JESUS' ENTIRE STORY!



# INPUT

1. **Name of the project** — The Innkeeper's story
2. **Aim** — share with people the story of Christmas in a non-threatening way, by distributing a nice seasonal brochure.
3. **Explore** - What would engagement look like?  
Set measurable goals.
4. **Audience** — local community
5. **Format** — distributing literature, visiting, witnessing

# PROCESS

## 1

1. **Venue / area** — homes, nursing homes, schools, high street, churches
2. **Team** — pastor, elder, PM leader, choir director, members, youth
3. **Resources** — printed brochure, digital version
4. **Budget** — costs for the materials, for advertising, other operational needs

# PROCESS

## 2

1. **Timeline** — last quarter, focus on December, dates of local performances
2. **Advertising & communication** — digital advertising, social media, local communication channels
3. **Preparation of the church** — Prayer meetings; Choir rehearsals, reading the story for devotional; Understanding the content you will share — what is on offer to the recipient?; Additional preparatory works; identify stakeholders and engage; Chat training



# PROCESS

## 3

1. **The activity** — Choir Performances
2. **Handing out The Innkeeper's Story**
3. **Offering Tea and Biscuits**
4. **Chatting with listeners**
5. **Key point of contact to curate and maintain new relationships (e-mail, call, message)**

# OUTPUT

1. **Outcomes** — “What did engagement look like?”  
Make this measurable
2. **Evaluation** — learning from the experience (Who is involved? Those from the choir? Those who we engaged with? Who leads the evaluation?)
3. **Strengths and weaknesses** of the project — what did we do best, what should we avoid, what areas we can improve, what could we do differently next time?
4. **Follow up** — visiting again, offering more services and resources, build relationships

# INPUT

**Name of the project**

**Aim**

**Explore**

**Audience**

**Format**

# PROCESS

**Venue / area**

**Team**

**Resources**

**Budget**

**Timeline**

**Advertising**

**Communication**

**Preparation of  
the church**

**The activity itself**

# OUTPUT

**Outcomes**

**Evaluation**

**Strengths**

**Weaknesses**

**Follow up**

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