The man and the birds

There was once a man, he wasn't a scrooge or a mean person, he was kind, decent, mostly good. He was generous to his family, treated other people well, but he just didn't believe in all that incarnation stuff that churches talk about at Christmas. It didn't make sense, and he was too honest to pretend otherwise. He just couldn't swallow the Jesus story about God coming to earth as a man.

Because he was an honest man, when it was Christmas eve and his wife and family were going to church he took his wife aside. He told her quietly "I'm truly sorry to distress you, but I'm not going to come with you to church tonight", he said he'd feel like a hypocrite, and would much rather stay at home and wait up for them. So he did. He stayed as his family went to the late vigil service.

It wasn't long after his family drove away that the snow began to fall. He went to his window to see it getting heavier and heavier and then returned to his warm fireside chair and his comforting novel. Minutes later he was startled by a large thud. Then another. And another. At first, he thought it must be someone throwing snowballs at his living room window. But when he went to look out the window he didn't see any trace of snow.

So back to his chair he went. It wasn't long until there were more thuds. It seemed like they were coming from all around the house. This time he went outside, holding his overcoat and scarf tightly around him. But the wind was too strong and his scarf was pulled up and out of his reach. As he watched it fly away he noticed a flock of birds huddled miserably as they were buffeted by the snow. It was these that were making the thudding sounds as flew towards his windows desperately seeking shelter from the storm.

The man was kind and couldn't let the poor creatures lie there and freeze, so he remembered his barn where his children had stabled their pony. That would provide warm shelter if he could direct the birds there. Quickly, he trudged off through the deepening snow to the barn. And, opening the doors wide he light a lantern to entice the birds. A few minutes passed and maybe one or two flew in the barn, but there was still hundreds in the air being blown around.

He thought some food might entice them, so went back to the house and returned with some bread crumbs, sprinkling a bready trail towards the barn. But to his dismay, most of the birds ignored the crumbs and continued to flop around helplessly amidst the snow. He tried to call them. To catch them. To 'shoo' them. But this only seemed to make things worse as they scattered in every direction except the warm lit barn.

He realised, to the birds, he was a strange and terrifying creature. He scared them. He thought to himself - if only I could let them know they can trust me. That I'm not trying to hurt them, but I want to help them. But how?

... "If only I could be a bird", he thought to himself, "and mingle with them, speak their language and tell them to not be afraid. Then I could show them the way to the safe warm..." he had a realisation "...to the safe warm barn, but I would have to be one of them - so they could see, hear and understand." It was at this moment that miles away church ended and the bells begin to ring. The sound reaching his ears above the call of the wind.