

Playtime

# Christmas



Storybook for  
toddler groups

## CHRISTMAS WEEK ONE:

# MARY AND THE ANGEL

Here are some ideas for your toddler group based on the first part of the Christmas story. This session explores how the angel visited Mary to tell her that she had been chosen to give birth to Jesus and how Mary had to wait for this to happen – just like we have to wait for Christmas.

## READY

- ➔ Read Luke 1:26-56 and take some time to reflect on the range of emotions Mary felt when she heard the news.
  - ➔ Find some props to illustrate the story e.g. an angel and a Mary figure that you can hold up at the appropriate points in the story.
  - ➔ Make some reaction cards by drawing faces on paper plates to show the different emotions that are talked about in the story e.g. sad, happy, excited and scared. You might want to attach sticks to the faces, so that you can hold them up at different parts of the story and ask the children to copy the face. Or you could simply model the facial expressions yourself.
  - ➔ You may like to begin to put up some Christmas decorations in your venue. Maybe you could display an Advent candle or calendar, so that you can count down and look forward to Christmas together.
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# TEDDY

Explain to the children that Teddy is looking forward to Christmas and he is feeling lots of different things at the same time.

He is feeling **excited** because he has heard that Christmas is on the way, but he is also a little bit **sad** because he has been told he still has to wait for Christmas.

Ask the children if they are excited for Christmas, but also talk about how we need to wait for a little while yet.



## GO

Your aim is to explore how Mary felt when she was visited by the angel, and how she had to wait for Jesus to be born, just as we have to wait to celebrate Christmas.

### STORYTELLING TIP



Rehearse some reactions to the story – get the children to show a happy, sad, scared and excited face. You can either model the facial expressions or use the ‘paper plate faces’.

Use the angel and Mary play figures to help tell the story. If you have multiple nativity sets, you could give each of the children a figure to hold and move around as appropriate.

## THE STORY:

# MARY AND THE ANGEL



### Leader:

God's people waited a very long time for the first Christmas, and God had promised them something amazing was going to happen.

Sometimes we have to wait for things. We may have to wait for a bus or train, for mummy or daddy to come and play with us or for our tea to be ready, when we feel hungry.

We can do a lot of waiting.  
How do you feel when you have to wait?

Do you feel **sad**? Can you show me a sad face? (*Hold up the sad face*).  
Or, do you feel **excited**? Can you show me an excited face? (*Hold up the excited face*).

Today, we're going to hear about the story of Mary (*Hold up the Mary figure*).

Something exciting happened to Mary (*Hold up the excited face*).  
God chose Mary to do a very special thing for him.

How do you feel when you are excited?  
Do you want to jump on the spot, or maybe dance around?  
Shall we find out what the exciting thing was?

One day, Mary had a very surprising visitor!  
God sent an angel to Mary.  
Mary hadn't seen an angel before, so she was a bit **scared**.  
Can you show me a **scared** face? (*Hold up the scared face*).

The angel said to Mary, 'Don't be afraid, I have something wonderful to tell you.'  
The angel said, 'Mary, God is very **happy** with you.' (*Hold up the happy face*).

'He has chosen you. You will have a baby and you must call him Jesus. He is a very special baby because he will be the King who will look after God's people.'

Mary asked the angel, 'How can this happen?'

The angel told Mary that God would give her the baby through his special power because God can do amazing things!

Then the angel told Mary that her cousin Elizabeth, who was very old, would have a baby too. Mary was amazed and said, 'I am so **happy**.' (*Hold up the happy face*).

'God has chosen me.'

Then the angel left.

Mary was very **excited** to hear this wonderful news. (*Hold up the excited face*).

But she knew that she had to wait a little while for the baby to be born, just like we are waiting to celebrate Christmas.

While we're waiting to find out more about how Jesus was born, we're also going to find out who else heard this wonderful news.

Next week we're going to hear how some shepherds found out the news about Jesus. Show me if you are **excited** to hear that? (*Hold up the excited face*).

## CHRISTMAS COLLAGE



Throughout this series we will be creating a large nativity scene collage.

Today, we will be focusing on Mary and the angel. If you want to create a large display you could draw around a child to create the characters, but if you'd prefer to make something smaller you might want to draw the outline of each of the characters free hand.

Draw on the key features and then involve the children in cutting and sticking on different materials to create the collage. You could use small pieces of fabric, wool, shiny paper etc.

As you do so, you can talk about how we don't really know what angels look like but can we imagine how they look. The completed characters can be mounted onto thick card or a wooden board, which can be moved around, or stuck to a wall display. This will show the first part of the story and you will be able to add to it as more of the story is told.

# PLAYDOUGH MAT

Print out the attached playdough mat, and laminate it if you would like to use it again. Provide playdough and invite the children to explore the story through their play.

- ➔ Can you make an angel and Mary with the children?
  - ➔ Talk about the different emotions Mary felt and what Mary's face would have looked like when she was happy, sad, worried or excited?
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# PRAYER

Dear God  
Thank you for sending Jesus to us.

Thank you for being with us when we have to wait for things to happen, just like Mary had to wait for Jesus to be born.

Thank you God that you love us, just as you loved Mary and you are with us whenever we feel happy, sad, worried or excited.

Amen

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# PARTY BAG

You might like to hand out the Christmas activity sheet for parents and carers to continue to explore the session's themes before the next session.

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# ACTIVITY SHEET:

# CHRISTMAS WEEK 1 - MARY AND THE ANGEL



## JUST FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

I wonder how you first felt when you discovered that your child would be joining your family? I wonder where you were when you realised or heard the news?

For some, it is an unusual reaction to the smell of coffee in the morning, for others it's the sight of two pink lines, after so many that only gave you one. Some hear the news from others; the fertility doctors in the clinic perhaps, or even the social worker with the emergency call. Some wait for long-expected babies and have cupboards prepared with clothes and accessories, others are caught unaware by surprising news.

When we hear the story of Mary and the angel as adults, we relate to it differently to how we did when we heard it as a child. Perhaps we catch a glimpse, beyond the incredible arrival of an angel, to the vulnerability of a young girl. But this is a big story, an incredible story of events that were not just life-changing for Mary, but world-changing, and it begins with a simple 'yes,' the remarkable willingness of Mary to play her part in the story.

In this interaction between Mary and the angel, we see Mary's emotions change from fear to acceptance to joy. In our journey to and through parenthood, we too experience a rollercoaster of emotions, but the incredible news is that God is right here with us, in every circumstance.

One of the names given to Jesus long before his birth was 'Immanuel,' which means God with us. As we look forward to celebrating this Christmas, we can remember that God is with us in everything that we experience, and in every emotion that we feel.

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# PLAY THE STORY

If you have a nativity set, you could set it up using only the Mary and angel figures at this stage. If you haven't got a nativity scene, maybe you could make your own using small word figures. Wonder about the story together.

- ➔ I wonder what your favourite part of this story is.
  - ➔ Can you remember what the angel said to Mary?
  - ➔ I wonder why God chose Mary.
  - ➔ What do you think Mary did to get ready for the baby?
  - ➔ What do we do to get ready for Christmas?
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# GAME

Play a simple game to teach your child how to wait. You could play a game of 'Sleeping Lions' or take it in turns to build a tower together and encourage your child to wait for their turn. Talk about how it is good to wait for their turn.

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# ACTIVITY

Involve your child in getting ready for Christmas. You could involve them in tidying up before you put your Christmas decorations up or in choosing and wrapping Christmas gifts for family and friends. Talk about what Mary may have done to get ready for baby Jesus arriving.

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# BEDTIME PRAYER

Father God, thank you that Mary said yes to you. Help us to wait patiently as we get ready to celebrate Jesus' birth this Christmas, just like Mary had to wait for Jesus to be born.

Amen



## CHRISTMAS WEEK TWO:

# JOSEPH'S CHOICE

This is the second part in our series of exploring the Christmas story. This session looks at how Joseph had a choice to make when God asked him to fulfil the special role of marrying Mary and looking after baby Jesus.

## READY

- ➔ Read Matthew 1:18-25 and take some time to reflect on the situation that Joseph faced and the special role that God had chosen for him.
  - ➔ Find some props to illustrate the story e.g. a Joseph figure that you can hold up at the appropriate points in the story. You will also need the Mary and angel figures you used in the last session.
  - ➔ Gather the reaction cards that you created for the last session.
  - ➔ Prepare some simple actions to use during the story. Perhaps you could lay down and pretend to be asleep, show a 'scared face' when the angel appears to Joseph or model a 'thinking' action, as Joseph thinks about what he should do.
  - ➔ You may take the opportunity to decorate your venue with some simple Christmas decorations, or add a few more decorations each week.
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# TEDDY

Explain to the children that Teddy has been thinking about Christmas. He has lots of choices to make. He has to choose what gift he will get his mummy or daddy and what gift he would like. Ask the children if they know what they would like for Christmas. Ask them if they are feeling excited? Remind the children that we still have a little while to wait, but we can start to get ready.



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## GO

Your aim is to explore how Joseph felt when he was visited in a dream by the angel, and how he had a choice to make. He had to decide whether to do the special job that God had chosen him to do or not.

## STORYTELLING TIP



Rehearse any actions you will use as part of the story with the children.

Use the Joseph, Mary and angel play figures to help you tell the story. If you have several figures, you could give one to each of the children to hold and move around as appropriate.

# THE STORY: JOSEPH'S CHOICE



## Leader:

Today, we're going to hear about the story of Joseph. *(Hold up the Joseph figure).*

Joseph had a very important choice to make. God had chosen him to do a very special job, and he had to choose what he would do.

Sometimes we have to make choices too. Some choices we have to make are nice and easy.

A grown up may ask us what we would like for dinner or what toys we would like to play with.

But sometimes, we have to make choices that are not so easy. A grown up may ask us to help put out toys away and we have to choose to do the job we've been asked to do or not.

Shall we see what job Joseph was asked to do and what he chose to do?

Do you remember last week we heard the story of Mary? *(Hold up the Mary figure).*  
Can you remember what happened?

*(Help the children to briefly retell how the angel had visited Mary to tell her she would have a special baby).*

Mary was going to marry Joseph *(Hold up the Mary and Joseph figures).*  
Do you remember how the angel told Mary she would have a special baby?  
Do you remember how she felt?

When Mary heard the news, she told Joseph *(Hold up the surprised face).*  
Joseph thought about the news. He wasn't sure what he should do.  
Can you show me your thinking faces? *(Model a 'thinking expression').*

That night, Joseph went to bed. He was still thinking about what Mary had told him.  
Can you lay down, close your eyes and pretend to go to sleep like Joseph did?

While Joseph was sleeping, the angel came to visit him too! Joseph had never seen an angel before, so he was scared like Mary had been. Can you show me a scared face? (*Hold up the scared face*).

'Don't be afraid,' the angel said. 'God is going to give Mary a special baby and he has chosen you to take care of them both. You will call the baby Jesus because he will save the world!'

Joseph thought that was a very special job to do and he was not sure what he should do. He still had a choice to make. What do you think he would do?

Would he do the special job God had chosen him to do and take care of Mary and Jesus? What do you think?

Yes! Joseph did take care of them. Over the next few sessions, we will find out how Joseph did this and who else was included in this special story.

## CHRISTMAS COLLAGE



Throughout this series we will be creating a large nativity scene collage.

Today we will be focusing on Joseph and the angel. You may have completed one angel last week, but we will need lots of angels later in the story, so you could make another one today.

If you want to create a large display you could draw around a child to create the characters, but if you'd prefer to make something smaller you might want to draw the outline of each of the characters free hand. Draw on the key features and then involve the children in cutting and sticking on different materials to create the collage. You could use small pieces of fabric, wool, shiny paper etc.

As you do so, you could talk about how Joseph might have felt about doing this special job. The completed characters can be mounted onto thick card or a wooden board, which can be moved around, or stuck to a wall display. This will show the next part of the story and you will be able to add to it as more of the story is told.

# PLAYDOUGH MAT

Print out the attached playdough mat, and laminate it if you would like to use it again. Provide playdough and invite the children to explore the story through their play.

- ➔ Can you make an angel and Joseph with the children?
  - ➔ Talk about the different choices Joseph had to make and the different emotions he may have felt during this story.
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# PRAYER

Dear God

Thank you for sending Jesus to us.

Thank you that Joseph said yes to playing his part in your plan.

Thank you that you choose us to help you too, by telling other people about Jesus.

Help us to say yes to you.

Amen

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# PARTY BAG

You might like to hand out the Christmas activity sheet for parents and carers to continue to explore the session's themes before the next session.

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# ACTIVITY SHEET: CHRISTMAS WEEK 2 - JOSEPH'S CHOICE



## JUST FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Families come in all shapes and sizes, each one a unique combination of individual characters knitted together in love. In our last session, we explored the story of Mary, the young girl chosen to be the mother to Jesus.

Mary was engaged to be married to Joseph, a carpenter. No doubt the young couple had hopes and dreams for their future together. Perhaps they had planned their big day. Perhaps they had talked about how many children they would like to have in the family they would form together.

When Mary told Joseph that she was to give birth to a baby and that the baby would be the son of God, a million different thoughts must have flooded his mind. Mary was pregnant with a baby that was not his.

The dreams, plans and future they had anticipated would be different. What would people say? What would people think? What would Joseph do now? Not wanting to embarrass Mary, Joseph decided to call off their engagement quietly. But God had a different plan for Mary and Joseph. He sent an angel to share the news with Joseph and tell him that God wanted him to call the baby Jesus.

Joseph chose to say yes to God and raise the baby as his own. The amazing news is that we too can say yes to God and the plans he has for us. We can trust that however our lives work out, whatever surprises may come our way, God is with us, as he was with Mary and Joseph when he entered the world as a tiny baby.

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# PLAY THE STORY

Choose who will play the parts of the angel and Joseph. Set up a simple bed and invite Joseph to pretend to go to sleep. Then ask the angel to visit Joseph, tell him not to be afraid and ask him to take care of Mary and baby Jesus. Wonder about the story together.

- ➔ I wonder what your favourite part of this story is.
  - ➔ Can you remember what the angel said to Joseph?
  - ➔ I wonder how Joseph felt when Mary told him she would have a baby.
  - ➔ How do you think Joseph took care of Mary and baby Jesus?
  - ➔ What jobs might we do to get ready for Christmas?
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# GAME

Play a simple version of 'Would you rather?' by asking your child a series of questions where they have to choose between two options, such as:

- ➔ Would you rather go to the park or feed the ducks?
  - ➔ Eat pasta or pizza for dinner?
  - ➔ Be a cat or a fish?
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# ACTIVITY

Involve your child in getting ready for Christmas. Explaining that you have chosen to give them a special job to do – such as helping to tidy away their toys before you put the Christmas tree up or making some Christmas cards or cookies together. Talk about how Joseph was chosen to take care of Mary and Joseph, and how he said yes to God.

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# BEDTIME PRAYER

Father God, thank you that you chose Joseph to take care of Mary and Jesus and that you look after us too.

Amen.

## CHRISTMAS WEEK THREE:

# JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM

This is the third part in our series exploring the Christmas story. This session explores how Mary and Joseph journeyed to Bethlehem, so they could be counted for the census.

## READY

- ➔ Read Luke 2:1-5 and take some time to reflect on the circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth.
  - ➔ Find some props to illustrate the story e.g. a hobby horse to represent the donkey and a small suitcase. You will also need the Mary, Joseph and angel figures that you have used in previous sessions.
  - ➔ Prepare your space so that you can move around while telling the story or act out going on a journey.
  - ➔ You might want to take the opportunity to begin to decorate your venue with some simple Christmas decorations, or add a few more decorations each week.
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# TEDDY

Explain to the children that Teddy has been thinking about Christmas. He will be taking a long journey to get to his grandma's house to celebrate Christmas with his family.

How do you think he will get there? He might travel by car or by train perhaps? Or maybe he will go by bus or bike? If it's a very long journey, perhaps he will have to go by boat or by plane?

Have you ever been on a really long journey? Where were you going? How did you get there?



## GO

Your aim is to explore the challenging circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth, and how God had planned every detail.

### STORYTELLING TIP



This story would work really well if you have a space where you can all move around together as if you are going on a journey. If space is more restricted, you could sit everyone down together and invite one family at a time to walk around your circle, while the rest of the group act as innkeepers and can shake their heads to show there is no room. Have some nativity figures ready to represent Mary, Joseph and perhaps the donkey.

## THE STORY:

# JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM



### Leader:

Do you remember who these special people are? *(Hold up Mary and Joseph and encourage the children to call out their names).*

Do you remember how an angel visited Mary and told her she would have a special baby? God's baby! *(Hold up the angel figure).*

Then the angel visited Joseph in a dream and told him all about the baby. Do you remember what name the angel told Joseph to give the baby?

That's right - it was Jesus!

It was nearly time for the baby to come. How do you think Mary and Joseph felt? Perhaps they were excited, perhaps Mary was tired too. I wonder what things they did to get ready for the baby. Perhaps Joseph had made a beautiful cot. He was a carpenter and was very good at making things out of wood.

One day, news came that the Romans - who were in charge - wanted to count all the people! Can we count to ten using our fingers?

The problem was, they wanted everyone to go back to the towns where their families had come from to be counted. So lots of people had to travel back to the places where they had been born.

Poor Mary and Joseph - they had to go on a very long journey to Bethlehem, where Joseph's family came from.

How do you think they would travel there? Do you think they would go in an aeroplane? *(Invite the children to put their arms out and pretend to fly like an aeroplane).*

No! Do you think they went by car? *(Encourage the children to pretend to drive a car).*

No! How else could they have got there? *(Mime together a few other means of transport as the children call them out).*

No! It was not any of those ways. Most of them hadn't even been invented! Let me tell you ... first, they packed up what they needed.

They couldn't take much so perhaps they left the cot behind. They could only take the things they really needed, like some clothes and food. *(Take out a suitcase and pretend to pack it).*

Then they walked to Bethlehem. Perhaps they used a donkey to help carry their bags. Perhaps Mary rode on a donkey, or perhaps they walked ... a very long way there.

They weren't the only people travelling to Bethlehem. There were lots and lots of people, all going to Bethlehem to be counted. *(Invite the children to stand up with their grown-ups and to walk around the circle, joining you in a long journey to Bethlehem).*

It took a very long time. I expect they felt very tired. Maybe they stopped for a rest. *(Pause).*

Maybe someone called out 'are we nearly there yet?' *(Encourage the children or parents to call out).*

After a long time, they came to Bethlehem. The town was very busy. Lots and lots of people were already staying there.

Joseph knocked on lots of doors and asked could they stay there. *(Encourage the children to mime knocking on a door).*

But there was no room! *(Shake your head).*

Eventually, one kind man let Mary and Joseph stay where his animals were sleeping. It would have been very smelly and noisy in the stable with all the animals. *(Model holding your nose and encourage the children to join in).*

Mary and Joseph were so tired, perhaps they wanted to sleep too. But they wouldn't have a quiet night. Something very exciting was going to happen. We'll find out what that was in the next few weeks.

# CHRISTMAS COLLAGE



Throughout this series we will be creating a large nativity scene collage. Today, you can create a stable outline and a donkey to add to the scene. Involve the children in cutting and sticking on different materials to create the collage. You could use small pieces of fabric, wool, shiny paper etc.

The stable can provide a backdrop for your scene, and you can now add Mary, Joseph and the donkey. The scene will now be developing as you place the completed parts together.

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## PLAYDOUGH MAT

Print out the attached playdough mat, and laminate it if you would like to use it again and again! Provide playdough and invite the children to explore the story through their play.

- ➔ Can you make Mary and Joseph and help them travel along the road?
- ➔ Talk about the journey they went on, and how God had planned for Jesus to be born in Bethlehem.

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## PRAYER

Dear God

Thank you for sending Jesus to us. Thank you that you planned his very special birth. Thank you that you looked after Mary and Joseph as they travelled on their long journey, and that you are with us wherever we go too.

Amen

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## PARTY BAG

You might like to hand out the Christmas activity sheet for parents and carers to continue to explore the session's themes before the next session.

# ACTIVITY SHEET: CHRISTMAS WEEK 3 - JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM



## JUST FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

I wonder how you prepared for the arrival of your child? Perhaps you had a birth plan. Perhaps you had to attend adoption panel meetings in anticipation of a match or you received a telephone call from a social worker looking for an emergency placement.

Every family will begin differently.

Mary heard the news that she had to travel all the way to Bethlehem, which must have been incredibly difficult as she was heavily pregnant. And yet, remarkably, it was all part of God's plan.

Thousands of years before the event, there were prophecies that the son of God would be born in Bethlehem. It is wonderful to know that the same God who began this family's journey in Bethlehem knows everything about our families and is with us now.

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## PLAY THE STORY

Provide some building blocks for the children to build the houses in Bethlehem, and some figures that can be used to act out the journey Mary and Joseph took to Bethlehem. Wonder about the story together.

- ➔ I wonder what your favourite part of this story is.
- ➔ Can you remember why Mary and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem?
- ➔ I wonder how Mary and Joseph felt as they travelled to Bethlehem.
- ➔ What do you think it would have been like in the stable?
- ➔ Where might we travel to this Christmas?

# GAME

Play a simple, age-appropriate board game which involves rolling a dice and moving counters along a track. Talk about how long it takes to get your counter to the end and how you feel when you get there.

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# ACTIVITY

Next time you go on a journey – whether it's to visit family, or just to the shops – talk about how you get ready, and what you need to take with you in order to take care of yourself, such as an umbrella in case it rains. Wonder together about the sort of things Mary and Joseph might have taken with them on their journey. Talk about how God is with us wherever we go.

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# BEDTIME PRAYER

Father God, thank you that you are with us everywhere we go, and everywhere we stay.  
Amen

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## CHRISTMAS WEEK FOUR:

# SHEPHERDS AND ANGELS

This is the fourth part in our series of exploring the Christmas story. This session looks at how the angels visited the shepherds on the hillside and announced the birth of the new Saviour, Jesus.

## READY

- ➔ Read Luke 2:8-15 and take some time to reflect on this part of the story, where the angels announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds.
  - ➔ Find some props to illustrate the story. You could have some toy sheep to distribute among those who play the part of the shepherds, a pretend campfire or pile of sticks, and some percussion instruments for the angels' song. You will also need shepherd and angel play figures.
  - ➔ You may take the opportunity to decorate your venue with some simple Christmas decorations, or add a few more decorations each week.
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# TEDDY

Explain to the children that Teddy is still thinking about Christmas. He has been learning some Christmas songs to sing. Do you know any Christmas songs? (Invite the children to sing a line or two from a simple Christmas carol or song they all know). Guess what, Teddy? I think we're going to have some special songs in our story today!



## GO

Your aim is to share how Jesus' birth was good news for all people.

### STORYTELLING TIP



Ask the children who would like to play the parts of the angels, and sit them together just outside of the circle. Explain that everyone else will be a shepherd or sheep. Sit them in a circle, around the 'campfire,' with the toy sheep distributed among them. Invite the children to respond with simple actions as you tell the story (see the story below).

You may wish to have some simple percussion instruments ready for the angels' song. You could have an angel and shepherd figure to hold up during the story.



# THE STORY:

# SHEPHERDS AND ANGELS



## Leader:

Have you ever been out late at night, when the sky is dark? When you look up at the sky, what can you see? Have you seen stars twinkling up in the sky? *(Encourage the children to use their hands to make a simple star action).*

Our story today happened late one night, when all the stars were twinkling up in the sky. *(Get the children to sing 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star').*

Today's story is all about some shepherds who were visited by angels – just like Mary and Joseph were. *(Hold up the shepherd and angel figures).*

The shepherds were looking after their sheep on the hillside, late one night, under the twinkling stars. *(Repeat the action for stars).*

Perhaps it was cold. *(Encourage the children to mime a cold, shiver action).*

The shepherds warmed themselves by the fire. *(Act out warming your hands by the campfire and rubbing them together).*

They were sat there in the dark night when suddenly an angel appeared in the sky! Just like the angel who came to see Mary and Joseph. *(Invite one child who has chosen to be an angel to come forward).*

'Don't be afraid,' said the angel. 'I have good news for everyone! Tonight, a special baby has been born in Bethlehem.'

Suddenly the whole sky was filled with angels! *(Bring the other children forward or ask them to stand up).*

They were all singing their praises to God. *(Sing together, a simple 'la la la' or 'glory, glory,' or a simple praise song if it is known by the children. If you have provided percussion instruments, you can use them now).*

When the angels left, the shepherds hurried down to Bethlehem to find the baby that

the angels had told them about. This baby was good news for everyone. Good news for the shepherds, and good news for us too!

Next week we will be finding out who else was told about baby Jesus and how they travelled to visit him.

## CHRISTMAS COLLAGE



Throughout this series we will be creating a large nativity scene collage.

Today you can create shepherds and sheep to add to the scene, as well as some extra angels if you need them. If you want to create a large display you could draw around a child to create the shepherds and angels, but if you'd prefer to make something smaller you might want to draw the outline of each of the characters free hand. Draw on the key features and then involve the children in cutting and sticking on different materials to create the collage.

You could use small pieces of fabric, wool, shiny paper etc. The shepherds, sheep and angels can now be added to the scene. The scene will now be developing, as you place the completed parts together.

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## PLAYDOUGH MAT

Print out the attached playdough mat, and laminate it if you would like to use it again. Provide playdough and invite the children to explore the story through their play.

- ➔ Can you make the angels to add to the night sky? You may have a cutter shape you can provide for this.
- ➔ Talk about how excited the shepherds must have felt as they travelled to find baby Jesus.

# PRAYER

Dear God

Thank you for sending Jesus to us.

Thank you that his birth is good news for everyone!

Thank you that you included shepherds in your story, and you include us too.

Amen.

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# PARTY BAG

You might like to hand out the Christmas activity sheet for parents and carers to continue to explore the session's themes before the next session.

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## ACTIVITY SHEET:

# CHRISTMAS WEEK 4 - SHEPHERDS AND ANGELS



## JUST FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

I wonder how you announced the arrival of your child? Who were the first people to be told the news? How did you let them know?

I wonder how you might expect the birth of the son of God to be announced? Multi-media platform synchronised planning, choreographed state visits and competitions to produce the most impressive gift. Jesus' birth announcement was both surprising and deliberate. God chose who to share the 'good news' with first and he chose humble shepherds sat out on a hillside late at night, keeping watch over their sheep. In this announcement, God made a statement.

This birth really is good news for everyone, and God wanted the least and the lowliest to hear it first. Power and prestige held no authority here, this was God's good news, which he wanted to share with everyone.

This good news is for us too! God sent his son to the world for all the people throughout history. As we hang angel decorations on the tree and sing carols about shepherds watching their flocks, we can remember that this is good news for us too.

---

# PLAY THE STORY

Provide some play figures and act out the story of the angels visiting the shepherds to tell them the news of Jesus' birth. Wonder about the story together.

- ➔ I wonder what your favourite part of this story is.
  - ➔ Why do you think God chose to tell the shepherds the news first?
  - ➔ I wonder how the shepherds felt when the angels appeared in the sky.
  - ➔ How quickly do you think the shepherds hurried to Bethlehem?
  - ➔ Jesus' birth is good news for everyone, including us. How does that make you feel?
- 

# GAME

Play a simple sharing game where you share counters by counting them out so that everyone has an equal amount. Maybe you can share a cake or some grapes in the same way.

---

# ACTIVITY

Find a way to share the good news of Christmas with other people. You could bake some mince pies together to deliver to your neighbours or make some Christmas cards to give to family and friends. Talk about the way that the angels' announcement was for everyone, and we can carry on sharing that good news today.

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# BEDTIME PRAYER

Father God, thank you that Jesus is good news for everyone.  
Amen.

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## CHRISTMAS WEEK FIVE:

# THE WISE MEN'S JOURNEY

This is the fifth part in our series of exploring the Christmas story. This session looks at how the wise men journeyed from distant lands, following the star as they searched for the new king.

## READY

- ➔ Read Matthew 2:1-9 and take some time to reflect on how the wise men travelled from the east in search of the new king.
  - ➔ Find some props to illustrate the story. You could use a large star shape and three cardboard boxes wrapped up as gifts. You will also need 3 wise men figures to introduce the wise men characters.
  - ➔ Hide a large star shape and the three gifts around the room ready for the children to easily find, as you tell the story.
  - ➔ You may take the opportunity to begin to decorate your venue with some simple Christmas decorations, or add a few more decorations each week.
-

# TEDDY

Explain to the children that Teddy is still thinking about Christmas. He is getting so excited because Christmas is nearly here! Teddy has seen lots of clues around him that it is nearly Christmas, have you?

Teddy has seen Christmas trees up in people's houses, like the one in this room, and lots of twinkly lights up all over town. Have you seen the pretty Christmas lights everywhere? What clues have you seen that tell you it's nearly Christmas?



## GO

Your aim is to explore how the wise men knew that Jesus was a very special baby, so they travelled very far to find him.

### STORYTELLING TIP



Involve the children in the storytelling today with some simple actions. At the appropriate time in the story, invite the children to search for the star and the three presents, hidden around the room. You could also use three nativity figures to represent the wise men and hold them up as you introduce them in the story.

## THE STORY:

# THE WISE MEN'S JOURNEY



### Leader:

Do you remember our story from last week? It started late one night when there were lots of stars twinkling in the sky, do you remember? *(Invite the children to copy the action for stars again, twinkling their hands like stars).*

Today's story begins with a sky full of twinkling stars and some men who watched the stars very carefully. *(Hold up the wise men figures to introduce them).*

These men spent all their time studying the stars. They noticed the big ones, can you show me a big star with your hands?

One day, they noticed a brand new, gigantic, shiny star! 'Can you see a very big, gigantic star?' *(Have one placed in the room somewhere).*

These men were very wise and clever. They had read many, many books all about stars and they knew that this new star meant something very important. A new king had been born! Wow!

They really wanted to go and find the new baby. So, they decided to follow the star. *(Choose one or two children to go and find the star and bring it back to the group).*

They decided to take some special presents with them to give to the baby. So, they chose gold, frankincense and myrrh. *(Choose some children to find the presents).*

They followed the star out of the town where they lived and travelled a very long way. *(Hold up the star, and invite the children to jump up and make a star shape with their bodies again).*

They travelled for a very, very long time and the great, big star showed them the way to go. Then one day, they noticed a palace. They thought that a new king must be born in a palace, so they went in to see him - taking their presents with them. *(Hold up the presents).*



The ruler who was called Herod lived in the palace. He was not a good king. He didn't know about a new king, but he didn't like the sound of that. He told the wise men to find the new king and tell him where he was.

So, the wise men set off on their journey again, following the star. *(Hold up the star one last time, and ask the children to make their star shapes).*

They would keep on travelling until they found the new king.

Do you think they found him? Join us next week to find out if they did.

## CHRISTMAS COLLAGE



Throughout this series we will be creating a large nativity scene collage.

Today, you can create a large shiny star to add to the top of the scene. Create some wise men (and perhaps some camels) to add to the scene. Invite the children to help with the collaging by cutting and sticking on appropriate materials to decorate them. You could use small pieces of fabric, wool, shiny paper etc. These can now be added to the scene. The scene will now be developing, as you place the completed parts together.

## PLAYDOUGH MAT

Print out the attached playdough mat, and laminate it if you would like to use it again and again! Provide playdough and invite the children to explore the story through their play. Can you make the presents for the wise men to take to the new king? Talk about the journey they went on, and how they knew that this was a very special baby.

# PRAYER

Dear God

Thank you for all the stars that shine in the night sky.

Thank you that your special star led the wise men on their journey.

Thank you that you are with us everywhere we go.

Amen

---

# PARTY BAG

You might like to hand out the Christmas activity sheet for parents and carers to continue to explore the session's themes before the next session.

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# ACTIVITY SHEET: CHRISTMAS WEEK 5 - THE WISE MEN'S JOURNEY



## JUST FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Have you ever had the overwhelming sense that you just had to be there? Perhaps you've sat waiting in the car park outside the delivery suite awaiting the news that your new baby niece or nephew had arrived? Or stood and queued in the rain to get into the venue to see your favourite band? Maybe you've travelled long distance and made it home against the odds to be at that family celebration?

In today's story, we hear of men who journeyed from distant lands, compelled to follow a star because they knew it would lead them to someone they just had to see. This story raises many questions for us; who were these men? Where exactly did they come from? How did they know what the new star meant? Why did they choose those gifts?

While many of these questions remain unanswered, there is a message in this story that Jesus' birth really was good news for everyone, from the poor shepherds, to the wise men who understood that this was a deeply significant moment in history. And it remains good news for us today, no matter how much or how little we know or understand.

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# PLAY THE STORY

Dress up as the wise men, perhaps using blankets as cloaks and travel around your home or garden searching to find the new baby. Let your child take the lead on your journey. Wonder about the story together.

- ➔ I wonder what your favourite part of this story is.
  - ➔ Why do you think the wise men followed the star?
  - ➔ I wonder what they saw on their travels.
  - ➔ How do you think they felt as they followed the star?
  - ➔ Jesus' birth is good news for everyone, including us. How does that make you feel?
- 

# GAME

Play a game of hide and seek. You could play a game where you take turns to hide and be found, or you could hide a number of star shapes around your home and play a treasure hunt game.

---

# ACTIVITY

Involve your child in choosing and wrapping some Christmas presents for friends or family. Talk about how you choose special presents for people and what presents the wise men chose for the new king.

---

# BEDTIME PRAYER

Father God, thank you that Jesus' birth really was good news for everyone.  
Amen.

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## CHRISTMAS WEEK SIX:

# JESUS IS BORN

This is the sixth and final session in our series exploring the Christmas story. This session draws all the events together as we celebrate the birth of Jesus.

## READY

- ➔ Read Matthew 2:1-21 and take some time to reflect on the story, particularly the birth of Jesus.
  - ➔ Invite the children (and parents!) to come dressed up as characters from the nativity story. You could provide a box of simple costumes for anyone who has not been able to provide one. You will also need nativity figures to introduce the characters.
  - ➔ You will need a baby doll and perhaps a simple box to use as a manger. You could invite the parents to take photos at the appropriate point in the story, in accordance with your photography policy, or set up a simple 'photo booth' with the baby and invite parents to take photos of individual children at the end.
  - ➔ If you have not already done so, this is the perfect opportunity to decorate your venue with Christmas decorations and display the nativity scene you have been creating as a group.
-

# TEDDY

Explain to the children that Teddy is really, really, really excited about Christmas! There are hardly any chocolates left in his Advent calendar and he has only been eating one each day! At home, his Christmas tree is up and decorated and there are even some presents under the tree! Ask the children if they are feeling excited too, it's time to really celebrate Christmas now!

---



## GO

Your aim is to celebrate the birth of Jesus and enjoy the Christmas story together.

### STORYTELLING TIP



Involve the children in the storytelling today by inviting them, in advance, to dress up as a nativity character, or by providing a box of simple costumes which children can use. Encourage them to stand up or mime at the appropriate points in the story. You could also have some nativity figures ready to introduce the story.

# THE STORY:

# JESUS IS BORN



## Leader:

Do you remember our stories over the last few weeks? We have met all these different characters. *(Hold up the nativity figures in turn as you recap, briefly).*

Do you remember how the angel visited Mary and told her she would give birth to a special baby? Then the angel visited Joseph and told him to take care of Mary. Mary and Joseph had to travel all the way to Bethlehem to be counted.

Then we met the shepherds, do you remember? They were watching the sheep on the field at night when the angels appeared in the sky and told them to visit the new baby Jesus.

Who else was travelling to see Jesus, do you remember? Yes! The wise men. Do you remember what they followed to find the new king? That's right - they followed a star.

Today, we're going to celebrate this very special story together. When I say the name of your character, you can come and join in the story, and it doesn't matter how many Marys or Josephs or angels or shepherds we have because this story is for everyone.

Mary and Joseph had arrived in Bethlehem but there was no room for them anywhere. A kind innkeeper let them stay with his animals. What animals do you think there were? Perhaps there were some cows, what noise does a cow make?

What else do you think there were? *(Encourage the children to call out the names of some of the animals and make the appropriate noises, whilst gathering the children dressed as Mary and Joseph at the front).*

Later that night, something very special happened. The baby, Jesus, was born. *(Give the baby doll to one of the 'Marys', or invite the children to pass it to one another).*

Mary wrapped the baby Jesus in a blanket and laid him in a manger to sleep.

Suddenly, there were some visitors. Who do you think they were? The shepherds had heard that the baby had been born and they hurried in to see the baby Jesus. *(Invite the children dressed as shepherds and angels to come to the front and join the scene).*

What a special night it was! Jesus, the baby, who had been promised long ago, was born in Bethlehem.

Sometime later, some special visitors came from very far away. Who do you think they were? That's right, it was the wise men bringing their special gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. *(Invite the children dressed as wise men to join the scene).*

But God had told them in a dream that they were to keep this special news to themselves and not go back and tell Herod where the new king was, so they went back to their home a different way.

Everyone was so happy that Jesus had been born. Show me a happy face.

This is the story of the very first Christmas, when God gave Jesus as a gift to the world.

Shall we say thank you to God for this special present?

## PRAYER

Dear God

Thank you for giving us the gift of Jesus and sending him into our world to be born as a baby on that first Christmas.

Amen

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# CHRISTMAS COLLAGE



Throughout this series we have been creating a large nativity scene collage.

It's now time to collect and display all the characters and pictures that you have created over the last few weeks and put them onto your Christmas collage. You may choose to put the display up in a prominent place where it can be seen by the local community. You can then work together to add the final details such as the baby Jesus laying in a manger and perhaps additional animals, angels, stars in the sky etc.

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# PLAYDOUGH MAT

Print out the attached playdough mat, and laminate it if you would like to use it again. Provide playdough and invite the children to explore the story through their play.

Can you add faces to each of the characters in the scene and create a baby to lay in the manger? Talk about how each of the characters must have felt on this special night.

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# PARTY BAG

You might like to hand out the Christmas activity sheet for parents and carers to continue to explore the session's themes to conclude this series.

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# ACTIVITY SHEET: CHRISTMAS WEEK 6 - JESUS IS BORN



## JUST FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

It is so easy in the busy Christmas season to lose sight of what it's all about. But sometimes, there will be a moment in the celebrations when we can pause and reflect. It may be when the light from a candle catches a special bauble on the tree perhaps, as we tuck our children into bed on Christmas eve or during the nativity play when we see our little ones gathered to tell this age-old story.

It is hard to imagine what that night must have been like for Mary, as she laboured in an animal shelter to give birth not only to her firstborn child, but the son of God. The pain of childbirth, the noise of the animals, the unexpected midnight visitors ... then perhaps she had a moment to pause and reflect, to begin to soak it all in.

This story is as beautiful as it is incredible. God became man, a helpless baby facing a vulnerable birth. This is God's gift of love for us, living among us so that we could be reunited with him.

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## PLAY THE STORY

Provide a simple nativity scene or improvise with play figures and retell the story. Wonder about the story together.

- ➔ I wonder what your favourite part of this story is.
- ➔ Which character do you like hearing about the most?
- ➔ I wonder how they felt on this special night.
- ➔ What makes this story special?
- ➔ How can we celebrate the story of Jesus birth?

# GAMES

Play a game involving presents.

- ➔ You could include the whole family in a game of pass the parcel.
  - ➔ Take turns to wrap different objects in a blanket or sheet and ask everyone to guess what it is.
- 

# ACTIVITY

Involve your child in finding a way to remember the story of Jesus' birth at home. You could display a simple nativity scene together or bake a cake and sing Happy Birthday to Jesus.

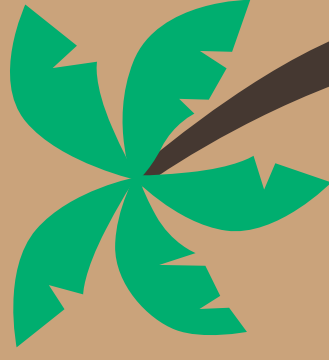
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# BEDTIME PRAYER

Father God, thank you for the first Christmas when Jesus came into our world as a baby.  
Amen

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# Journey to Bethlehem





# About Care for the Family

Since 1988 Care for the Family has been a UK charity with increasing international reach. We focus primarily on supporting parents, couples and those facing bereavement, in order to strengthen family life and help those who face family difficulties.

Our aim is to be accessible to everyone, whatever their circumstances, and to create evidence-based, preventative and easy-to-apply resources to help build firm foundations for family life.

## For more information

 [cff.org.uk](https://cff.org.uk)

 029 2081 0800

 [mail@cff.org.uk](mailto:mail@cff.org.uk)



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Written by Becky May.

Care for the Family is a Christian initiative to strengthen family life.  
A registered charity (England and Wales: 1066905; Scotland: SC038497).  
Registered office: Tovey House, Cleppa Park, Newport, NP10 8BA.

