

## A Messy church outline

## Theme: Advent

Advent means the arrival of a notable person or thing. Advent brings anticipation; excitement builds as we wait for something good to happen/look forward to someone important coming.

### Activities

Activity tables should be set up with all the materials needed, a completed sample of the activity or craft, and some questions or ideas to talk about written on cards and placed on the table or pinned up nearby. Ideally each table needs a leader to show people what to do and talk to them as they are creating! It's also a great idea to take photos of crafts people are making and put together a quick selection of PowerPoint slides which can be used as people are gathering for the celebration.

### 1. Someone special is coming


#### You will need

Paper plates

Scissors

Stick on gems /sequins /glitter

#### What to do

Draw straight lines in the inside of the paper plate in this pattern. 

Pierce the centre of the star shape with scissors.

(you could have these steps done in advance)

Cut along the lines and bend the base of each triangle so it projects upwards.

Decorate with glitter sequins and gems

Wear your crown!



**Talk about:** Advent means “the arrival of a notable person or thing”. What do you look forward to most about Christmas? What important person are we anticipating as we come into the season of Advent?

## 2. Ice-cream cone Angel ①

### You will need

Wafer ice-cream cones (flat bottomed ones are great for this craft)  
 Premade icing such as Betty Crocker's  
 Food colouring  
 Small round biscuit e.g. Fox's Crunch creams  
 Pretzels  
 Polo fruits  
 Cake decorating sprinkles  
 Tubes of coloured writing icing



### What to do

Cover the cone in coloured icing and decorate with your cake decorations.  
 If you wish, cover the biscuit with icing too and add the face with the writing icing.  
 Use some icing to "glue" on the biscuit head, the polo fruit halo and the pretzel wings.

**Talk about:** the part the angels played in announcing the birth of Jesus. How did this help Mary prepare for the coming birth?

## 3. Scripture Angels

### You will need

Photocopied sheets of Luke chapter 1  
 Angel templates  
 PVA glue  
 Glitter  
 Hole punch  
 Elastic cord or string for hanging  
 Card or laminator



### What to do

Print out the angel template and bible passage. If you set your printer to print both sides of the page, you won't have to cut everything out twice. If not using a laminator, print onto card.

Cut out the angel shapes

Turn over so that the scripture passage is face up

Put a thin line of PVA glue all around the outside (its best to give children the bottles with the directable lids)

Shake glitter all over the angel and then shake off the excess.

If using a laminator, make sure you allow time for the glue to dry before laminating (this tip comes from bitter experience!)

Punch a hole in the angels head and string some elastic cord or string on. You could add a few beads to decorate.

**Talk about:** Mary's response to hearing this good news. How would you have responded if you were Mary? Joseph?

## 4. Pregnant Mary biscuit

### You will need

Ginger bread man biscuit

Fondant icing

Blue food colouring

Marshmallow

Icing gel pens

Paper plates



### What to do

Place a marshmallow in the centre of the gingerbread figure

Lay coloured fondant clothing over the marshmallow

Decorate with icing gel pens

**Talk about:** The angel said to Mary "Nothing is impossible for God. Is there something in your life that you think is too big for God to solve? Trust God with something that is impossible for you.

## 5. Pillowcases/stockings ②

### You will need

Cheap pillowcases

fabric pens

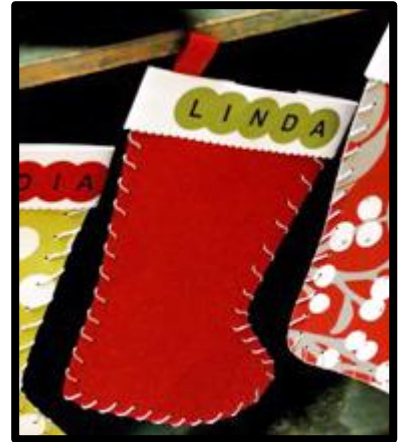
OR

stocking shapes cut from felt with holes punched along the sides  
wool to thread through in contrasting colours

### What to do

As part of getting ready for Christmas, decorate a pillowcase or stocking for yourself or someone in your family to leave out on Christmas Eve. If you are using felt shapes, sew up the stocking by threading the wool through the holes.

**Talk about:** the anticipation of the run up to Christmas and how Mary might have felt waiting for her baby to be born.



## 6. Paper Bag Stick Horse ①

Young children will love playing with the stick horse or donkey, and it is so easy to make. If you don't have feathers or a feather boa, you can use rags ripped in strips or yarn.

### You will need

Construction paper

Brown paper lunch bag

Tape

Scissors

Feathers

Feather boas

Yarn

Gift Wrap Tubes or Newspaper



### What to do

Tear up newspaper into about 5" pieces. Wrinkle up the newspaper pieces and stuff them into the bag to make the horse's head.

Tape the bag head onto the end of a gift wrap tube by inserting the tube into the top of the bag a few inches and gathering the top edge of the bag around the tube. If you don't have a gift wrap tube, roll eight to ten pieces of newspaper together starting at one corner and going to opposite corner so that you have two pointy ends on your roll. Stuff in the newspaper at the ends to make them straight, and tape the centre of the tube with masking tape. Paint the tube to cover the newsprint.

Cut ears and eyes from construction paper and glue them to the head.

Glue feathers, feather boas, strips of rags or material, or yarn to the head and tube to make the mane.

**Talk about:** The role the donkey played in the Christmas story. How did the donkey help Mary and Joseph e.g. carried luggage, carried Mary, was a companion, helped keep Mary warm as she was travelling, was loyal, reliable. Everyone can have a role in God's story.

## 7. Mary and Joseph figures ❶

### What you will need:

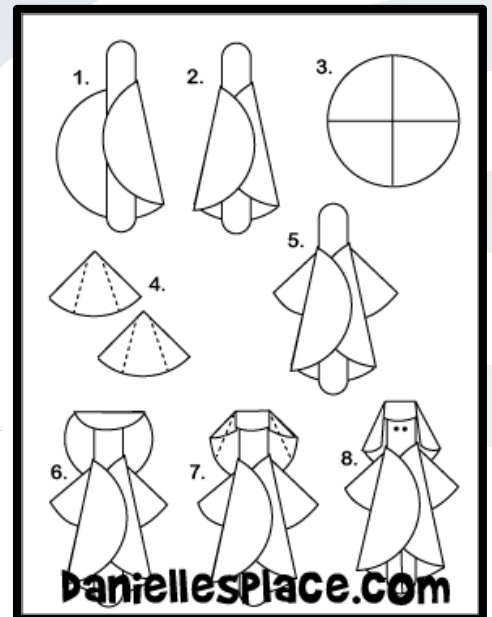
Two-inch and one-inch Cupcake Liners or Patterned Paper  
Jumbo Craft Sticks  
Tape or Glue  
Paper,  
Markers and Coloured Pencils

### What to do

Flatten two 2" cupcake liners. Tape or glue a jumbo craft stick in the centre of one of the flattened cupcake liners. (If you don't have cupcake liners, you can use 4 ½" circles cut from patterned paper. To make the robe fold one side of the cupcake liner over the jumbo craft stick as shown in the diagram.

Fold the other side over the jumbo craft stick overlapping the first fold.

Flatten a one-inch cupcake liner and cut it into quarters. (If you don't have cupcake liners, you can just use 3" circles.



Fold the sides of the cupcake liner quarters in on both sides to make the arms (See diagram).  
Cut tan Chenille stems a little longer than the arms and glue them inside the arm pieces.  
Glue the arms onto the body piece.

To make the head covering flatten a one-inch cupcake liner and tape or glue it behind the top of the jumbo craft stick. Fold down about 3/4" to cover the top of the jumbo craft stick.  
Fold in both sides as shown in the diagram.

Fold in the sides again so that the folds meet the sides of the craft stick.

To finish draw on the legs, sandals, and face features with markers and coloured pencils.

**Talk about:** Mary and Joseph were ordinary people who were chosen by God. What do we know about them and their lives? Where they lived, what they did, ages, occupations, family connections etc.

## 8. The Long Journey

### You will need

Printouts of maps of the journey taken by Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem

See: [http://www.sermonfollowup.org/Sermon\\_Follow\\_Up/Route\\_to\\_Bethlehem\\_files/dropped\\_Image.jpg](http://www.sermonfollowup.org/Sermon_Follow_Up/Route_to_Bethlehem_files/dropped_Image.jpg) (This shows the route Mary and Joseph may have taken)

Some facts about the journey printed out and pinned up on the wall.

Questions printed onto sheet

### Some information about the Journey

- The distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem is about 70 miles as the crow flies but walking it through winding mountain trails is more like 90-100 miles.
- With Mary being pregnant, it is likely that the journey would have taken the couple around 7 or 8 days.
- Jews travelling from Nazareth to Bethlehem at that time would have wanted to avoid the mountainous terrain and Samaria. The route along the river Jordan is the most probable.
- Mary and Joseph may have travelled with a caravan of other travellers, perhaps with others returning for the census for the safety and companionship of travelling in numbers.
- While we celebrate the birth of Jesus in December, some scholars believe it is more likely that he was born in September, so Mary and Joseph may have journeyed in the oppressive heat of July or August.

### Sample questions to reflect upon

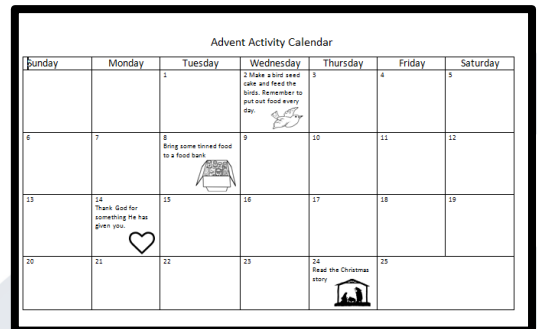
- How difficult do you think the journey was for Mary who was pregnant?
- What is the hardest thing you have had to cope with?
- What is the best way that you have found to stay calm in a crisis?
- How worried do you think Joseph was about his wife?
- Which is worse, worrying about yourself or worrying about a friend/loved one?
- How long can you cope when things are tough before you give up?
- Where do you think Mary and Joseph found reassurance?

Other resources – see The Journey to Bethlehem video from Paperless Christmas at <http://www.paperlesschristmas.org.uk/downloads/>

## 9. Advent Activity Calendar

### You will need

- Printouts of blank advent activity calendars
- Some suggestions of activities to include
- Pens, pencils, colouring pencils/markers



### What to do

- Encourage participants to fill in each one of the dates from 1<sup>st</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> December with an activity that will help them to love God and others. Tasks should be simple and do-able!
- Ask everyone to take their calendar home and try to do the tasks they have set themselves!
- Talk about: Ideas for adding to the advent calendar (see list of Advent Activity Calendar ideas)

## 10. Advent prayers ②

### You will need

- Wooden clothes pegs (pre-painted if you wish- 3 colours were used here for 3 different types of prayers)
- Black fine tipped pens
- Paper plates
- Pictures of the journey to Bethlehem
- Pipe cleaners
- Strong tape or stapler



Bend a pipe cleaner to make a hook to hang up your paper plate. Stick with strong gaffer tape (hidden round the back) or staple. Provide a large basket of clothes pegs (you might want to have 3 different colours of pegs for thanks, please and sorry prayers). With thin tipped markers people can write a few words about things they are thankful for/ things they want God's help with /or things they are sorry for. People can pray as they put their peg on the plate.



**Talk about:** Ideas for please, sorry and thanks prayers

## Celebration

### Talk outline ③

#### You will need

PowerPoint presentation or flipchart with a list of Christmas problems  
A small prize (optional)

Display a list of predictable things that might have happened to a family in the run-up to Christmas. Divide into groups of 4-6 people (keep group sizes as even as possible). Ask each group to keep a total of how many of these things has happened to one or more of their group this year

- Christmas tree bulbs blown
- Couldn't find where a present was hidden
- Items of food not obtained
- Unexpected visitors
- Family squabbles
- Outrageous gift requests
- Card received from someone you don't know
- Missed something good on TV
- Watched something bad on TV
- Zero idea what to buy close relative
- Run out of sticky tape for presents
- Forgot important item on shopping trip
- Couldn't find a parking space on Christmas shopping trip



- Disaster when making mince pies or Christmas cake
- Still waiting for item purchased online.

Marks out of 15 – applaud the group with the highest score and maybe award a small consolation prize.

Remind everyone that if they think they have had a lot of problems to overcome this Christmas we should remember what the run up to the first Christmas must have been like for Mary and Joseph. Review the key points of the nativity story, highlighting the potential problems such as an unplanned pregnancy, doubts about the legitimacy of the child, relationship almost ending, the journey to Bethlehem near Mary's due date, no room at the inn, giving birth in a cattle shed.

Explain that this Christmas you are encouraging everyone to give thanks to God that, despite all the stress and problems faced, the birth of Jesus was the best gift God could ever give to his people.

## **Response ②**

Give everyone a nicely designed card, ideally with a magnetised strip on the back so it can be stuck to the fridge at home with these words on it.

This year we'll prepare for Christmas by making space to....

On display at the front show some suggestions for ideas to help people live happily as a family to help them remember Jesus and to help them to "love our neighbours". Choose suggestions from the list below that you think are most appropriate for the families who come to your Messy Church.

Help each other to say sorry when we get stressed.

Say "I love you" to people in our family once a day.

Get rid of one bad habit that annoys other people in our family.

Light a candle once a day to remember what is really important.

Get an Advent calendar with Jesus on it

At one of our mealtimes say "thank you" to Jesus for all that he gives us

Buy an Advent book with one thought for each day

Read the Christmas story together.

Give a present to children who really need it through a charity  
Give something to our local foodbank  
Sell some toys and belongings at a car boot sale and give some of the proceeds away to church or another charity.

Invite families to talk about one thing they want to do as a family to make space for Jesus this year and to write it on their own card. Then invite families to hold the cards while you pray for them:

*Dear God*

*November and December can be very stressful and exciting months with so much to do, the school concerts, the plays the shopping and the preparations. Please join us in all the busyness. Help us to get everything done and to remember you are the most important part of Christmas. Amen.*

When we ask God for something he always answers us so let's watch out for how he helps us this year.

## References

- ① "Messy Church" by Lucy Moore Published by "The Bible Reading Fellowship"
- ② "Messy Christmas" by Lucy Moore and Jane Leadbetter Published by "The Bible Reading Fellowship"
- ③ "Christmas Wrapped up" compiled by Christine Wright Published by "Scripture Union"

## Websites

- ① <http://www.daniellesplace.com>
- ② <https://uk.pinterest.com>

## All Age Service Outline

## Theme: A Christmas Journey (Based on Luke 2 v 1-5)

### Introduction

How did people travel to the service today? Give a number of options including, walking, driving, minibus, car share, bike, buggy, etc.

Do a clap-o-metre to see what the most popular mode of transport is.

### Song

Come thou long expected Jesus

### Reading and Explanation

Luke 2 v 1-5

Show a PowerPoint visual of a map of the journey taken by Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem

See: [http://www.sermonfollowup.org/Sermon\\_Follow\\_Up/Route\\_to\\_Bethlehem\\_files/dropped\\_image.jpg](http://www.sermonfollowup.org/Sermon_Follow_Up/Route_to_Bethlehem_files/dropped_image.jpg)

Show some facts about the journey e.g.

### Some information about the Journey

- The distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem is about 70 miles as the crow flies but walking it through winding mountain trails is more like 90-100 miles.
- With Mary being pregnant, it is likely that the journey would have taken the couple around 7 or 8 days.
- Jews travelling from Nazareth to Bethlehem at that time would have wanted to avoid the mountainous terrain and Samaria. The route along the river Jordan is the most probable.
- Mary and Joseph may have travelled with a caravan of other travellers, perhaps with others returning for the census for the safety and companionship of travelling in numbers.
- While we celebrate the birth of Jesus in December, some scholars believe it is more likely that he was born in September, so Mary and Joseph may have journeyed in the oppressive heat of July or August.

Start with your location and pick out a few destinations of different lengths and calculate how long the journey would take if you had to walk or go by donkey with belongings e.g. 3 miles an hour/7 hours a day.

E.g.

Belfast – Dublin – 105 miles – 5 days

Belfast - Londonderry — 70 miles – over 3 days

Belfast – Cork - 266 miles – 12 ½ days

Cars mean we can travel long distances comfortably and quickly or do they?

Show “The Journey to Bethlehem” video from Paperless Christmas at

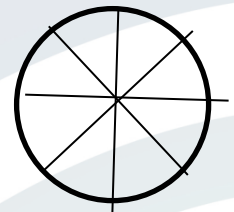
<http://www.paperlesschristmas.org.uk/downloads/>

Shows Mary and Joseph in a car stuck in traffic trying to get to Bethlehem.

## Game and Quiz ①

### You will need

A wheel made from a hula hoop and 4 sticks (e.g. bamboo) wrapped in tinsel which are the same length as the diameter of the hoop. Tie 2 to one side of the hoop, turn over and tie 2 to the other side to look like spokes of a wheel.



Pieces of paper with points attached to pew ends saying 50, 100, 150, 200 spaced out down the aisle with the 50 very near the front (1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> pew) and the 200 at the back (last pew).

Divide the congregation into two teams (e.g. 2 sides of the church or adults verses kids) and ask some questions about the text in Luke 2 1-5.

Ask alternate teams a question from the list. Tell people to put up their hands if they know the answer.

If you get a right answer the person comes up and rolls the “wheel” down the aisle. The wheel must roll past the paper with the points to get that number of points awarded. If it lands between 50 and 100, then 50 points are awarded etc. Be strict as it adds to the fun!

### Example questions

1. Why was Joseph forced to make the trip to Bethlehem when Mary was soon to have a baby? **He had to register in the census**
2. Who was the Roman emperor (or Caesar) who issued the decree that a census should be taken? **Augustus**

1. How widespread was this census? ***Throughout the Roman empire***
2. Why could Joseph not have registered for the census in Nazareth where he lived? ***Everyone had to go to their ancestral (or home) town***
3. What well known important ancestor did Joseph have? ***King David***
4. Does the bible tell us that Mary travelled to Bethlehem on a donkey? ***Surprisingly no, it just says that Joseph took her with him***

Add up the points and give a cheer to the winning team at the end.

## **Song**

O come O Come Emmanuel

## **Talk outline ①**

### **You will need**

PowerPoint presentation or flipchart with a list of Christmas problems  
A small prize (optional)

Display a list of predictable things that might have happened in the run-up to Christmas. Ask everyone to keep a total of how many of these things has happened them this year.

1. Christmas tree bulbs blown
2. Couldn't find where a present was hidden
3. Items of food not obtained
4. Unexpected visitors
5. Family squabbles
6. Outrageous gift requests
7. Card received from someone you don't know
8. Missed something good on TV
9. Watched something bad on TV
10. Zero idea what to buy close relative
11. Run out of sticky tape for presents
12. Forgot important item on shopping trip
13. Couldn't find a parking space on Christmas shopping trip
14. Homemade mince pies or Christmas cake disaster
15. Still waiting for item purchased online.

Ask people to put their hand up if they got more than 6, more than 8 more than 10 etc. and maybe award a small consolation prize to the person/people with the most things that have gone wrong this year.

Remind everyone that if they think they have had a lot of problems to overcome this Christmas we should remember what the run up to the first Christmas must have been like for Mary and Joseph. Review the key points of the nativity story, highlighting the potential problems such as an unplanned pregnancy, doubts as to the legitimacy of the child, relationship almost ending, the journey to Bethlehem near Mary's due date, no room at the inn (or guestroom), giving birth in a cattle shed (or room where the animals were usually kept).

Explain that this Christmas you are encouraging everyone to give thanks to God that, despite all the stress and problems faced, the birth of Jesus was the best gift God could ever give to his people.

## Prayer - Advent Ribbons ①

### You will need

Thin purple ribbons, long enough to tie round wrists.

### What to do

Talk about purple being the colour that a lot of people use to decorate churches with in Advent. Talk about what hope means (dictionary definition – 1. a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen 2. A feeling of trust).

Discuss the idea that Advent is a time of hope and waiting not only for Jesus' birth but also for Jesus to come again- waiting for a better time when there will be no more death or sickness or crying. Give everyone a purple ribbon and ask them to tie it round the wrist of someone beside them, saying "May you have hope in Jesus this Advent".



## Prayer

Lord Jesus as we rush around shopping in preparation for Christmas  
*Lord, help us to find hope in You*

When we face irritations due to the busyness of the season  
*Lord, help us to find hope in You*

When we are worried about finances  
*Lord, help us to find hope in You*

When we quarrel and fight with our families  
*Lord, help us to find hope in You*

Help us to stop and remember to be joyful this advent  
*Lord, help us to find hope in You*  
Amen

The Lord's Prayer

## Song

Make Way Make Way for Christ the King

## References

① "Christmas Wrapped up" compiled by Christine Wright Published by "Scripture Union"

## Website

① <http://flamecreativekids.blogspot.co.uk>