

# Christmas celebration

## Tell the Christmas story with multisensory activities and mini-bunting

### Introduction

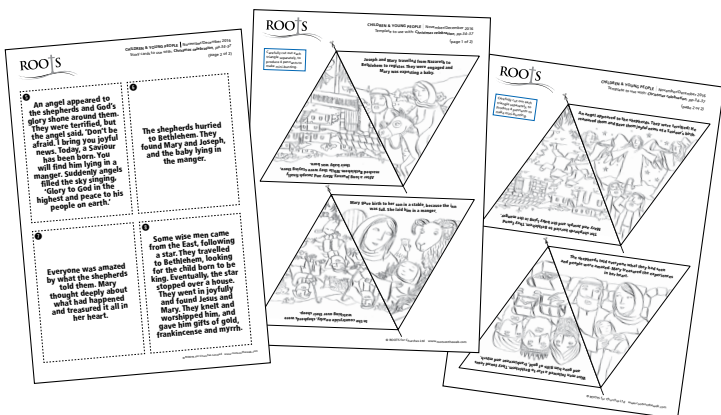
A Christmas party is a great way to celebrate the end of term. Use the following resources to organise a joint final session for all your children's groups, run an Advent activity morning/afternoon, or coordinate an outreach event for your local community. Alternatively, the story sections could be used over the four weeks of Advent – doing two each week – to explore the Christmas story with children in more depth. Prayers and song suggestions to support this approach are on the final page. Adult facilitation is required to supervise activities, and you could invite older children to help, too. Ensure you have parental permission if you plan to take photographs.

### Activity

The Christmas story has been divided into eight sections with a corresponding activity. The activities consist of arts and crafts, games, cookery and dance. At the beginning of each activity, a story card [WEB](#) is read out, preferably by a child, and there are questions to explore with the children as they do the activity. Some activities require team or pair work. The whole session lasts about 90 minutes, but can be adapted to fit a shorter timescale by combining sections of the story and selecting fewer activities. If you plan to do all the sections and have the space, set eight stations up beforehand. Alternatively, have all the equipment ready for each activity in turn.

### Mini-bunting

There is also a template [WEB](#) to make mini-bunting which summarises the Christmas story. A pennant can be collected at the end of each activity, or all eight pennants can be given out at the end of the party and the children can sequence the story themselves. The bunting will also work as a stand-alone activity and can be built up over the four weeks of Advent.



From left to right: Story cards and mini-bunting templates can be downloaded from the [WEB](#).

### 1 The journey

10 mins **W S**

Read the first story card together [WEB](#).

#### Activity

Make journey collages

**You will need:** coloured card, old maps, sandpaper, corrugated cardboard, coloured tissue paper, scissors, glue sticks.

- Encourage the children to create collages to represent the journey that Mary and Joseph made. They can make paths, mountains, deserts, rivers and forests using the available materials.



#### Mini-bunting

**You will need:** template [WEB](#), crayons or felt tips.

- Give each child the first pennant to colour in.

#### Talk together

- How did Mary and Joseph travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem?
- What might they have seen on the way?
- How long do you think it took them to travel 111km?

### 2 Arriving in Bethlehem

5 mins **W E**

Read the second story card together [WEB](#).

#### Activity

Play a destination game

**You will need:** 3-4 balls of different coloured wool, sweets/chocolates.

- Beforehand, lay some trails of coloured wool around the space which converge in one place. At the end of the trail, place a sign saying 'Bethlehem' and some sweets or chocolates. Children can work individually or in teams to follow the trails of wool. Once they reach their destination, the children can share the sweets/chocolates.

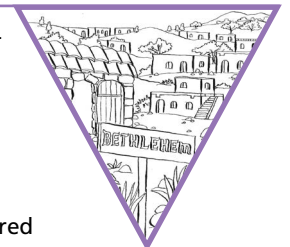
#### Mini-bunting

**You will need:** template [WEB](#), crayons or felt tips.

- Give each child the second pennant to colour in.

#### Talk together

- How might Mary and Joseph have felt when they finally reached the end of their journey?



Key to Spiritual styles: **W** Word **E** Emotion **S** Symbol **A** Action

**3 The birth**10 mins **W E**Read the third story card together **WEB**.**Activity**

Make Jelly Baby™ Jesus cakes

**You will need:** a microwave, a large bar/s of milk chocolate, a bowl, spoons, Shredded Wheat™, cupcake cases, Jelly Babies™ or similar sweets, white fondant icing, cut into small pieces.

- Melt the chocolate in the microwave, crumble in the Shredded Wheat™ and mix well. Each child puts a spoonful of the mixture in a cupcake case, places a Jelly Baby™ in the middle and uses a small piece of fondant icing to cover its body. It should look like baby Jesus wrapped in cloth, laid in a manger full of straw.

**Mini-bunting**

**You will need:** template **WEB**, crayons or felt tips.

- Give each child the third pennant to colour in.

**Talk together**

- What do you think it would have been like to sleep in a stable?

**4 Shepherds**10 mins **W E**Read the fourth story card together **WEB**.**Activity**

Create a shepherd and sheep scene

**You will need:** lots of white toilet rolls, dressing gowns/blankets, tea towels, cords, (optional) phone/camera.

- Divide the group into two teams. Challenge each team to create a hillside scene by using the clothes to dress one person as a shepherd and the toilet paper to wrap up the others as sheep. Once complete, you could photograph both scenes. Whose is the most convincing?

**Mini-bunting**

**You will need:** template **WEB**, crayons or felt tips.

- Give each child the fourth pennant to colour in.

**Talk together**

- What do you think it was like to earn your living as a shepherd?

**5 Angels**5 mins **W E**Read the fifth story card together **WEB**.**Activity**

Praise God like the Heavenly host

**You will need:** recorded 'angel' music, e.g. 'The First Noel', Phil Wickham on *Songs for Christmas*.

- Play the music and, individually, or in pairs, encourage the children to improvise their own 'angel dance'. Alternatively, you could sing a carol together, e.g. 'Hark! the herald angels sing'.

**Mini-bunting**

**You will need:** template **WEB**, crayons or felt tips.

- Give each child the fifth pennant to colour in.

**Talk together**

- How would you react if you saw hundreds of angels appear in the sky above you?

**6 The shepherds' visit**10 mins **W E**Read the sixth story card together **WEB**.**Activity**

Have a shepherd race

**You will need:** two sets of shepherd's clothes, e.g. dressing gown/blanket, tea towel, staff/walking stick and toy sheep.

- Divide the group into two teams and place the two sets of shepherd clothes at the opposite end of the room. The first person in each team runs to the other side, dresses in the outfit and runs back, then takes the items off and gives them to the next shepherd to put on. The winning team is the one whose members all return to their base the quickest.

**Mini-bunting**

**You will need:** template **WEB**, crayons or felt tips.

**Talk together**

- How do you think the shepherds felt as they ran towards Bethlehem?
- Why were they in such a hurry?

## 7 The holy family

15 mins W S

Read the seventh story card together [WEB](#).

### Activity

Make a cardboard nativity

**You will need:** cardboard boxes, cardboard tubes, coloured paper, fabric scraps, ribbon, scissors, glue, felt tips, straw, (optional) Lego™ or modelling clay/play dough.

- Using only cardboard, coloured paper and a handful of straw, invite the children to make a cardboard nativity. This could be one large scene or individual ones. Use the tubes to make the figures of Mary, Joseph and Jesus and decorate them with paper and scraps of fabric. Alternatively, provide Lego™ or clay to model instead.

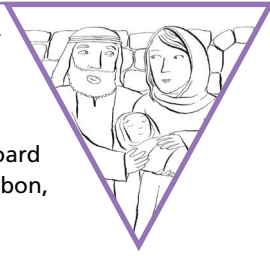
### Mini-bunting

**You will need:** template [WEB](#), crayons or felt tips.

- Give each child the seventh pennant to colour in.

### Talk together

- What do you think is the most amazing thing about Jesus' birth?
- What memory do you think Mary treasured most?



## Making the bunting

Gather everyone together and, if you haven't already, give out the pennants and encourage the children to sequence the story. Help them staple the pennants onto ribbon to complete their mini-bunting. If there isn't time to colour the bunting, they could do this at home. Finish by saying that the Christmas story is so special that we have remembered it for 2,000 years, and celebrate it every year.

## A closing prayer

Dear God,  
you sent your Son into the world  
as a tiny baby to be with us.  
Thank you, for the love that  
Mary and Joseph showed Jesus,  
for the angels singing God's praises,  
for the shepherds' wonder,  
the wise men's generosity  
and our excitement as Christmas approaches.  
Thank you that you are with us now,  
as we go out into the world,  
to celebrate and share the news of Jesus' birth.  
**Amen.**

## 8 The wise men

10 mins W S A

Read the eighth story card together [WEB](#).

### Activity

Decorate money boxes

**You will need:** small plastic pots with lids, coloured tissue paper, stickers, sequins, glue, scissors or a craft knife (supervise carefully).

- Give everyone a pot and help them to cut a hole in the lid, big enough to fit coins through. The children can decorate their pots so they look as beautiful as possible.

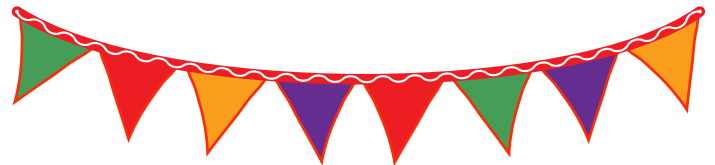
### Mini-bunting

**You will need:** template [WEB](#), crayons or felt tips.

- Give each child the eighth pennant to colour in.

### Talk together

- Which wise man's gift do you find the most interesting and why?
- If you saved up some money, who would you give it to?



## Party time!

Give everyone a party popper (be sensitive to those who don't like them) and let them all off at the same time to finish your celebration. You may like to serve party food or refreshments afterwards.



*Fiona Dorman is a freelance writer, and is currently doing an MA in theology at Trinity College, Bristol. Sarah Green is a children and families' worker at Homewood Road URC in St Albans.*

# Prayers and songs

## Christmas prayers

If you choose to spread the eight story sections and mini-bunting across the four weeks of Advent, or select fewer sections for a shorter session, you might like to say a prayer and sing a song to accompany each section. See below for suggestions.

### 1 The journey

God of all journeys and adventures,  
as we set out on our Advent journey,  
be with us, as you were with Mary and Joseph.  
Give us courage when the road is uphill,  
strength when we are tired,  
and good friends to travel with us.  
**Amen.**

### 2 Arriving in Bethlehem

Dear God,  
Mary and Joseph were tired, tired, tired.  
*Yawn.*  
They had travelled miles, miles, miles.  
*Mime walking.*  
They needed to rest, rest, rest,  
*Rest head on arms.*  
and have some food, food, food.  
*Mime eating.*  
Thank you for keeping them safe, safe, safe,  
*Wrap arms around you.*  
and for your love, love, love.  
*Make sign of a heart with two hands.*  
**Amen.**

### 3 The birth

Dear God,  
we pray for rabbits born in burrows and birds born in nests;  
for lambs born in fields – may all their births be blessed.  
We give thanks for baby Jesus, born on stable straw.  
As we celebrate his birth, may we grow to love you more.  
**Amen.**

### 4 Shepherds

Loving God,  
we pray as your sheep  
for all those who earn their living looking after animals;  
BAA!  
for those who work outside when it's hot and when it's cold;  
BAA!  
for those whose work is dangerous,  
BAA!  
and we pray for one another,  
as we learn together about the birth of your Son, Jesus.  
**Amen.**

### 5 Angels

Lord,  
when we are frightened, send angels to reassure us.  
When we are sad, send angels with good news.  
When we are happy, let us sing songs of celebration.  
And when we see others in need, help us to be angels to them.  
In Jesus' name.  
**Amen.**

### 6 The shepherds' visit

Eternal God,  
we pray for those today who are in a rush;  
*All run on the spot.*  
for those running to see something exciting;  
*All run on the spot.*  
for those running away from something scary;  
*All run on the spot.*  
and for those who feel they have too much to do.  
*All run on the spot.*  
May they know your peace, your hope and your joy.  
**Amen.**

### 7 The holy family

Little Lord Jesus, born in the hay,  
to bring us all joy on the first Christmas day.  
We pray for all families, the rich and the poor,  
for those with enough, and those who need more.  
Heavenly Father, watch over each one,  
and bless us here now as we welcome your Son.  
**Amen.**

### 8 The wise men

We bring to you, Lord Jesus, our desire to give and share.  
To the hungry we would bring the treasure of food;  
to the lonely, the precious gift of friendship;  
to the unhappy, the seeds of joy;  
and to all people, this Christmas, the gift of hope.  
**Amen.**

## Songs

**WEB** See *Music support* for key to abbreviations.

A special star (BBP, JP)  
Away in a manger  
Christmas, it's Christmas (KS)  
Come and join the celebration  
He came down that we might have love (CH4, SG)  
It was on a starry night (CJP, JP, KS2, SoF)  
Little donkey  
Mary and Joseph wait in the darkness (SB)  
Mary had a baby, yes Lord  
O little town of Bethlehem  
See him lying on a bed of straw  
Silent night  
Sing a song of Jesus (SB)  
The virgin Mary had a baby boy  
While shepherds watched