

Messy Church – December 2020

Christmas – the birth of Jesus

The activities are:

1. Angel
 - a. Annunciation – Mary and Joseph
 - b. Shepherds

2. Stable
 - a. Journey to Bethlehem – no room at the inn

3. Sheep
 - a. Shepherds

4. Star
 - a. Wise men

5. Marzipan gifts
 - a. Wise men

Stories and Activities

1 Angel

You will need: a paper doily, some card, colouring pencils, scissors, glue and/or stapler

Cut the doily in half. Fold one half in half again. Draw the angel's face on a small circle of card, about the size of a milk bottle top. Stick or staple the face to the pointed end of the quarter-size doily (so the angel stands on the frilly edge of the doily). Stick or staple the other half of the doily to the back of the angel, so that the curve of the doily makes the curve of the wings downwards. (See the picture in the pictures file.)

In the Bible, angels are God's messengers. They go from God to the people God wants to do things. In the Christmas story, an angel goes to Mary, to tell her that God wants her to be the mother of Jesus, his son.

When Joseph is worried about this, an angel goes to him in a dream to tell him that Mary is telling the truth, and he, Joseph, should marry her and be dad to the baby she is carrying.

When Jesus is born, an angel tells the shepherds that their long-awaited Messiah has been born, and where they can go to see him. Then lots of angels appear, and sing, like a choir.

Talk about: messengers – who might employ them now, whether they are important, what they might tell us.

2 Stable

You will need: A cardboard box, glue, paper and crayons or paints.

Your box needs to be the right size for your figures, if you already have some. If you haven't got figures, try either clothes peg dolls or cardboard tube figures. Cardboard tubes need to be about the size of toilet roll cores. They could be painted, or you could glue on fabric or coloured paper. Either paint/draw faces straight on to the tubes, or use paper then glue it on.

The stable is made by standing the box on it's side, and cutting into it so that you have a sloping roof facing forward, a bit like a lean-to. The flaps on the box can be trimmed to act as an extension to the roof, and the sides will give support. The inside of most boxes is plain, but the outside is often covered in tape or labels, so colour some paper to be like a straw roof, and some more to be like wooden walls and glue it to the outside of the box. If you have some hay, sawdust or straw, you can put it inside, like a stable floor.

Talk about: People today who have nowhere to live, particularly refugees who have had to leave their homes and run away.

3 Sheep

You will need: a paper plate, cotton wool, ribbon or elastic, glue, scissors, pencils to draw the rest of the face, (hole punch)

Use the hole punch (or scissors) to cut two holes on opposite sides of the plate. Cut out eye shapes in line with the holes at the edge so that they line up with your eyes. Draw a nose and mouth below the eyes, in the lower centre of the plate. Spread glue all around the edges of the mask, except over the holes at the side, and stick cotton wool on to finish the sheep's face. Thread elastic from one side of the mask to the other, making it long enough to go round your head, or thread two pieces of ribbon one on each side, long enough to tie at the back.

Sheep were (and are) very important in simple farming cultures. In cold countries they provide wool for clothing for old and young people, they provide milk for drinking and for cheese, and when they get old – or when you have too many male sheep – they provide meat.

Jesus told lots of stories about sheep and shepherds, but when he was born, the angel told the Bethlehem shepherds that the Messiah was born.

Talk about: sheep, what they look like, what we use them for, why Jesus used them as illustrations

4 Star

You will need: two pieces of card – or one piece large enough to cut two stars out of it – star template, (see pictures file) scissors, pencils, crayons, glitter, glue, shiny paper or paper shapes

Draw and cut out two copies of the template from card or stiff paper. Cut the line into both stars, and slot them together. Decorate as you would like. Make a hole at the top of the star, and hang it up.

If you go out at night in a dark place, you can see more stars than when you are in a light place. In the days before street lights, when people could see the stars easily, people studied how the stars and planets moved, and wondered if God was trying to tell them things through the movements.

After Jesus was born, some of these people, who were called “Wise Men” or “Magi” came to find Jesus, saying they had been led by a moving star from where they lived, to Bethlehem. They had set out possibly as much as two years earlier, and they had not known where they were going to end up. Traditionally, one wise man was African, one was European, and one was from “the East” – possibly Iraq, Iran or Afghanistan.

Talk about: setting out on a journey, not knowing where you might finish, or how long it might take. Think about how you would prepare for such a journey.

5. Marzipan gifts

You will need: marzipan, icing sugar, food colourings if wanted.

You can colour the marzipan before you make shapes, or you can paint the food colouring on when the shapes are complete. If you do it this way, remember that the food colouring will spread through the marzipan, so the colours will mix.

Traditionally, the **gold gift** comes in a box shape, the **frankincense** can be a tall bottle, like a fancy shaped spaghetti jar, and the **myrrh** comes in a small jar like a fancy honey or cranberry sauce jar.

The wise men brought gifts to the baby Jesus, gifts they believed had meanings to the new baby. They had chosen their gifts to the baby with great care, considering who they thought he was, and what they thought he would do. They brought gold for the King they believed him to be, frankincense for the God they also believed him to be, and myrrh, for his burial.

Talk about: being given presents, or giving presents – do you buy presents specially for people, or just get what seems fashionable at the time? Do you like some of your presents, and not others?

Celebration

Song Come and Join the Celebration

<https://youtu.be/pMqG5M76tFE>

Celebration Stories

There was a young woman called Mary. Mary was engaged to be married and one day while she was busy around the house, an Angel appeared to her. Well, she was amazed. The Angel, who was called Gabriel, said to her: "Don't be afraid, Mary, I've come to tell you something from God. God has a special job for you. God would like you to be the mother of his son, his son who's going to be the Messiah." "I'm not married," said Mary, "how can I have a child?" "Well," said the Angel "God can do anything. He will send his spirit to you and you will become pregnant and have a baby boy, who you will call Jesus." "Alright, if that's what God wants, I'll do it," said Mary.

Mary was very worried about what Joseph, her fiancé, would think. When Joseph knew that she was pregnant, he wasn't happy at all. He was thinking that he'd break off the engagement. Then one night he had a dream, and in his dream, the Angel appeared. "Don't worry, Joseph," said the Angel, "Mary's baby will be God's son. God wants this so that his Messiah can come to the world." So Joseph didn't call off the engagement, he got married to Mary.

Caesar decided that he wanted more taxes and to make sure he could get them, he wanted everybody in Judea to be counted. And you couldn't just go round and say 1, 2, 3, 4. No, they all had to go back to the place where they'd been born. Well, Joseph and Mary came from Bethlehem, and that was a long way away from where they were living now, so they had to travel all the way, walking. Now when they got to Bethlehem, they discovered that a lot of people had come there to be counted, so many that there wasn't any room for anybody else to stay. Mary's baby was due anytime and so they had to find somewhere to stay, and there wasn't any room in the proper lodgings. Fortunately they could stay in a stable. It was a bit smelly which wasn't very nice but it was better than being outside. So when Jesus was born he was put in the food trough, the manger which the animals fed from.

Song Away in a manger <https://youtu.be/pVSoAM7YrxE>

Angels get a lot of jobs to do. They are God's messengers and God sent his Angel to tell some people that his son had been born. Who do you think he told? Somebody important? Somebody powerful? Somebody rich? No, he told some smelly shepherds; smelly shepherds because anybody who spends a lot of time looking after sheep is going to be smelly, because sheep's wool, when it's still on the sheep, smells. The Angel appeared to the shepherds where they were looking after the sheep in a field one night, and said, "High folks, peace be with you! God has come to give you the good news that his son is going to be born in Bethlehem". The shepherds were absolutely amazed, they didn't know what to think. They

were a bit frightened, too. They were even more frightened when the one Angel was joined by lots and lots more; a whole choir of Angels singing: "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to people!" Well, just as suddenly as they had appeared, the Angels disappeared, and the shepherds looked at each other and said: "What are we going to do". "Why don't we go to Bethlehem?" said one of them. "What, leave the sheep?" "Well, it's more important than sheep" said the shepherd. So they hurried to Bethlehem and they found the stable where Mary and Joseph were and where Jesus was lying in the manger. They told them what had happened and then they went back to their sheep.

A long way away from Bethlehem, far to the East, some men were looking at the stars. They were trying to decide whether there was a message for them in the stars; whether the stars could tell them what was going to happen. One night they saw a new and unusual star, a different star a star they had never seen before. "Well," they said, "what does this star mean? And they puzzled and wondered and thought and tried to decide what a new star could mean. They decided that a new star must stand for a new King and that the King was being born. "We want to see this King", said the wise men, because that was what they were. "We want to see this King; how can we find him?" "Look, that star's moving. Maybe if we follow it, it will take us to where the new King is. So they packed up quickly and followed the star on and on and on, and we don't know how long they travelled, but we do know that it must have been something like 2 years, a long time to journey. So after some adventures, they got to a house and there they found Mary and Joseph and

baby Jesus. They brought gifts with them; gold for a King because that's who they thought was going to be born, and frankincense because that was for a priest, a person from God, and they brought myrrh which was a funny thing to bring because although myrrh was an expensive perfume, it was used for death, but they gave their gifts to Mary and Joseph for the baby and then they travelled home again.

Song Riding out across the desert.

<https://youtu.be/Mfhh-cBfS70>

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for Christmas and all the people who help make it fun. This year seems very odd, and we pray for all the people trying to keep us safe.

We pray for all the people we can't see this year. We pray for people who are missing their family and friends and who are lonely.

Amen

Enjoy our celebration.

Then have tea or a treat if it isn't tea time!

If you send me pictures of anything you do, I will share them on the Church Facebook page (if you want to send pictures that you don't want shared, just tell me. I'll only share the one's you're happy to share.)

Harlington Messy Church Team

Last month we managed the YouTube, and I hope you enjoyed it. This month, as well as the YouTube, we'll have a Zoom meeting open so that you can talk back to us. Our end of Zoom will be what is going on YouTube, but we won't put pictures from your end on. Contact me if you want the link for Zoom. Look out for the broadcast on the Harlington Methodist Church YouTube Channel. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTMWR_QCxujkh1zHjTFcoJw/videos