**Messy Church – December 2022**

**Christmas – dreams**

The activities are:

1. Joseph: Matthew chapter 1, verses 18 to 24
   1. Joseph asleep – food activity
   2. White wax angel – marbled
2. Shepherds: Luke chapter 2, verses 8 to 20
   1. Sheep (in the celebration)
   2. 3d Angel
3. Wise men: Matthew chapter 2, verses 1 to 12
   1. Starry skies (in the celebration)
   2. Gifts
   3. Dream
4. General activities
   1. Finger puppets
   2. Christmas stampers

**Stories and Activities**

**1 Joseph:** Matthew chapter 1, verses 18 to 24

Joseph was engaged to be married to Mary. Then he discovered that Mary was pregnant. She said it was God’s child, the promised Messiah, but Joseph was worried. If he broke the engagement, Mary would be in trouble with her family, and the village they lived in, but if he didn’t, he would be bringing up someone else’s child. He decided he would make a decision in the morning, and went to bed.

In his dreams, an angel came and spoke to him. The angel said that Mary was telling the truth – the child would be God’s Messiah. Joseph should marry Mary, as planned, and bring up the child as his own.

**a. asleep**

**You will need:** an ice cream wafter, a jelly baby – a large one, if you can get some – some ready to roll icing or marzipan, a plate to put the wafer on, a rolling pin, a knife

Put the wafer on the plate, and lie the jelly baby on the wafer. If you have a whole packet of marzipan or ready to roll icing, cut off a piece. Flatten it to make a blanket for the jelly baby, so that it looks like Joseph is in bed asleep. (If you are only working with a small piece of marzipan, you won’t need a rolling pin, just use your hands to flatten it out.)

**b. white wax angel**

**You will need:** a piece of white paper, a white wax crayon or a white wax candle, marbling inks and a bowl of water, or thin paint and a fat brush or piece of sponge

Using the white wax crayon or candle, draw and fill in an angel. If you are using marbling inks, follow the instructions to float ink on the water in the bowl, and then put your wax picture upside down in the bowl. Take it out, and leave it to dry somewhere safe

**Talk about:** dreams – do dreams tell us anything useful? What might we dream about, and would we be paying any attention? Angels are God’s messengers to people – but so can other people be – do we listen to them?

**2 Shepherds:** Luke chapter 2, verses 8 to 20

Bethlehem was a small town a little way away from Jerusalem, the capital of Judea. It was, and is, surrounded by hills. At the time of Jesus, the hills were used to pasture sheep. So when Jesus was born, there were shepherds looking after those sheep in the hills around Bethlehem. The Gospel of Luke tells us that in the night, angels appeared to the shepherds, telling them that the Messiah had been born in Bethlehem, and they would find him, if they looked, in a stable with the animals.

They went, and looked, and found the baby Messiah. They told Mary and Joseph what had happened to them, and then they went back to the sheep on the hills.

**a. sheep**

**You will need:** a copy of the template (sent with the booklet, or on the website) – if you want to make multiple sheep, you can print several copies, or you can draw round one print-out cut out – scissors, cotton wool, glue

Cut out the template and fold along the dotted line, so that your sheep will stand up. Glue small pieces of cotton wool to the body, so that you have a woolly sheep.

**b. 3D angel**

**You will need:** the first image on the angel 3 template, printed three times, scissors, paint, felt tip pens or crayons, glue

Print, colour the front and cut out the three angels, making sure that the base-line of the angel is straight. Fold each one in half, and label the backs A, B, C, D, E and F (you are going to glue over the letters!). Glue B to C, E to D, and F to A (see the picture with the template). Glue carefully, so that the outlines match. When the glue is dry, your angel should stand up – or you could put a thread through the head and hang it up.

**Talk about:** people who work at night. They may see different things from those we see in the daytime, which may be good or bad. If you have to go out after dark, is it scary?

**3 Wise men:** Matthew chapter 2, verses 1 to 15

The wise men came from wherever they lived (traditionally one was European, one was middle-Eastern and one was African, but the Bible just says they came from the east to Jerusalem!). They were looking for a new-born King of the Jews, they said to King Herod. They had been following a star which they said represented the announcement of the birth of this new king. Herod was the king of the Jews, and because he was not a very nice person, who had already had at least one son killed, he was very upset. He asked his advisors where the promised King would be born, and when he was told that Bethlehem was the place the prophets said, told this to the wise men, and advised them to look there. He then asked them to come back and tell him about the child – intending to get rid of the baby as soon as possible.

The wise men went to Bethlehem, found Jesus and his parents, and gave him gifts – the Bible says the gifts were gold, frankincense (which was twigs which burned with a special smell), and myrrh (which was like a cream perfume). Then the wise men went home by a different route, which took them nowhere near Jerusalem. They had dreamed that going back to Herod would be a bad idea.

When Herod decided that the wise men had cheated him, he ordered his soldiers to go to Bethlehem and kill all the boys under 2 years old. He had worked out that Jesus had to be within that age group. Jesus wasn’t killed because Joseph had had a dream warning him about Herod, so he took Jesus and Mary away during the night, and they went to Egypt to live until after Herod died.

**a. starry skies** (in the celebration)

**You will need:** a piece of black paper (or paper painted black in advance and allowed to dry), stars, scissors, glue

Stick stars on the black paper, to look like a dark night.

**b. gifts**

**You will need:** the net of a box for each gift (on the website or the email), scissors, glue, fancy wrapping paper if you want, or felt tip pens or crayons.

Cut out the box shape, including the tabs (ignore the black slot on one side – this is for when we use the same shape for a money box, you won’t need it for a gift box). If you want to colour the box, this would be the best time, while it is flat. Use the back of the scissors to “score” the dotted lines between the tab and the sides of the box, or fold along the dotted lines and make a firm crease, then unfold. Glue the tabs and make the box up, and if you want, wrap it in nice wrapping paper.

**c. dream**

**You will need:** a rich tea biscuit (or other plain biscuit), squirty icing (or made up icing and a syringe or icing bag), paper plate to work on

Ice a dream onto your biscuit – what might the wise men have dreamed about to get them to go home without going back to Herod? A crown? A camel? Something else?

**Talk about:** Imagine what it would be like to sleep during the day and watch the stars all night. Do you know that as the Earth turns, we see different stars? Think about the presents the wise men brought. What sort of presents would you like to get?

**4 General activities**

These activities cover all or part of the Christmas story, including the bits before Jesus was born. You can choose to do any of the activities, telling any bits of the story you like.

**a. finger puppets**

**You will need:** finger puppet templates (on the website or sent with the email), paints, pencils, felt tips or crayons to colour in the pictures, scissors

Colour and cut out the puppets, (cut out the little holes towards the bottom of each figure very carefully), and tell the story. You will have to change figures for the various scenes. If you want to have more than one wise man, print the second page enough times – this will give you more than one shepherd, and more than one angel as well!

**b. Christmas stampers**

**You will need:** a piece of paper, and the Christmas stamps

Make a picture of the Christmas story using the Christmas stampers. You could use extra things, like stars, if you have them.

**Talk about:** the Christmas story – and that Christmas is just the beginning of Jesus’ life, not the end of the story!

**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.

Because the Roman Emperor wanted to count everybody, Mary and Joseph had to travel to Bethlem. When they got there, there was nowhere for them to stay except a stable. They used a manger as a cot for baby Jesus.

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

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.

Let’s make some sheep.

The Angel appeared to the shepherds where they were looking after the sheep in a field one night, and said, “Hi 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.

Let’s make a starry sky. Can we put in one big star?

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.

They didn’t go straight to Bethlehem, though. They thought a King would be born in a palace, so they went to Jerusalem, where King Herod had his palace. When they asked Herod about a new king, he knew nothing about it, and he was furious. He asked his advisors, and they said the baby would be born in Bethlehem. So Herod sent the Wise Men there, and told them to come back afterwards and tell him where the new king was. He said that because he wanted to kill Jesus.

The Wise Men went to Bethlehem. The star stopped over 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. But they didn’t go back to Herod, because they had a dream and God used it to warn them not to.

Song See him lying on a bed of straw.

<https://youtu.be/uKKTZgtf58Q>

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for Christmas and all the people who help make it fun.

Be with everyone who isn’t finding Christmas fun this year. Help them to know you are with them, and help us to help them if we can.

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

We’ll have a Zoom meeting open for those who can’t come to the church. Our end of Zoom will go on YouTube, but we won’t put pictures from your end on. Look out for the broadcast on the Harlington Methodist Church YouTube Channel. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTMWR_QCxujkh1zHjTFcoJw/videos>