

"COME ALONG AND JOIN IN" NATIVITY!

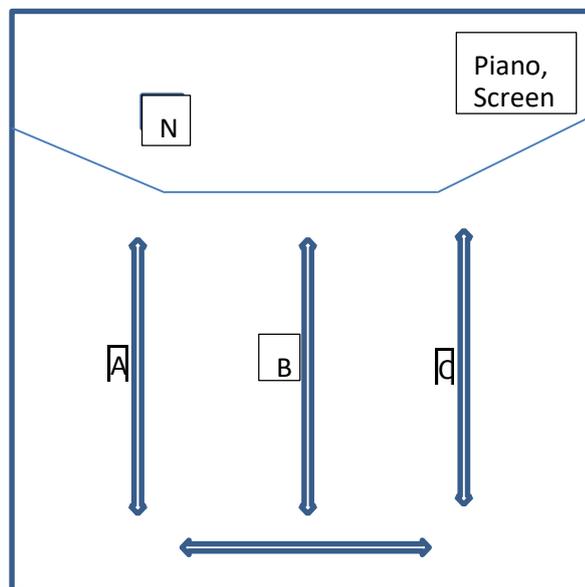
TRADITIONS – THE STORY THAT THE PROPHETS FORETOLD

Whether you're young or old, whether you're in costume or in everyday clothes we hope you will join in with enthusiasm! My name is And this is....

It doesn't matter if things go a bit wrong. The first Christmas was full of things that seemed to be going a bit wrong, but God's great plan still worked out. Also, we're very flexible... so if your child gets upset at all, please let them join in as much or as little as they would like! If you do find you need somewhere quiet to sit with them for a few minutes, we have a room at the back – one of the helpers at the back will show you where it is. They can also point you in the direction of toilets and a changing area.

We'll be using some carols in our service today – some have been written specially! Some are old familiar ones. Please join in with as much or little as you like. Each character has a line to say and an action to do, so do join in as they're learning what to do and say. Also each character is going to do a "journey" around the aisles of the church, so if you have little ones please do scoop them out of the way when one of the journeys is underway!

First of all, let's find out which characters have arrived for our play today. Wave from where you are if I call the name of your character!



As we get ready to celebrate Christmas tomorrow, many of us have traditions that we do each year. A tradition is something which started a long time ago and now helps us to remember things from the past which are important to us. Maybe you have a tradition about putting special decorations in

your home or on your tree. Perhaps there's a tradition about opening presents, or about a particular game you always play. Some of these traditions might have been started many years ago but still are important today.

The crib service today helps us remember events which happened more than 2000 years ago. That's a very long time for this story to be remembered. But today we're going to go even further back in time and hear about some people called PROPHETS who lived a long time before the Nativity. God showed these people some of the things which were going to happen long, long before they did happen when Jesus was born. As well as our nativity characters today, we welcome some Time Travelling prophets who have come to tell us some words from long ago.

We're going to sing the first verse of the famous carol, "O little town of Bethlehem". While we do this everyone who is going to be Mary, please come and stand with ADULT 1 – who is leading the Marys today! Bring a grown up, or not, one half of the front. Well done Marys!

We'll also need all of our angels to come up while MUSICIAN plays some music. ADULT2 - is going to lead the angels so watch what to do.

Everyone needs to learn an action and some words for our Nativity play.

Mary's words and actions are about a baby! So she says, "A baby? OK God." (Make baby sign and thumbs up)

Angels on other side, words are, "Don't be afraid! I bring good news." Hands with fingers outstretched by face then arms outstretched like wings.

(Prophet 1) Isaiah lived a long time before Jesus was born and he said;

"A young woman who is pregnant will have a son and will name him 'Immanuel.' That means, "God with us"

Listen to the first part of the story.

Mary was having a very ordinary day. Nothing strange or unusual was happening. Suddenly an angel appeared to her. He said, "DON'T BE AFRAID! I BRING GOOD NEWS."

"You're going to have a baby, he's going to be God's son! He'll be an amazing King, not just for now, but for ever."

Mary was very surprised and a bit confused too but she loved God and wanted to be part of his plan so she said, "A BABY? OK GOD"

Now we need our Josephs at the front. (Some music while they come) We often imagine Joseph with a long beard so he's going to fiddle with his beard and be rather confused and say, **"WELL, WELL, A BABY"**

Actually it wasn't just Mary who was confused. Her husband Joseph couldn't understand what was going on either. Just who was this baby, he wondered. But Joseph was to have his own surprise when an angel appeared to him.

"DON'T BE AFRAID! I BRING GOOD NEWS." said the angel, and then explained about God's plan. So of course, Joseph wanted to help and said,

"WELL, WELL, A BABY"



Now the angels are going to sit down for a while. They have plenty of work still to do in the story, and we'll see them again later...

MUSICIAN play "Angels from the Realms" as the angels go back to their seats.

Prophet 2 Micah lived a long time before Jesus was born. He said;

"Bethlehem, you are one of the smallest towns in Judah, but out of you I will bring a ruler for Israel,

So Joseph and Mary started to get ready for the baby. There was lots to do. But when it was nearly time for the baby to be born they had the sort of news that no-one would want when they were expecting a baby. The Roman rulers wanted to count how many people lived in their lands. Joseph and Mary would have to go all the way to Bethlehem! What a long way to go, especially when Mary's baby was due any day.

We'd better see if there are any donkeys around to help.

MUSICIAN play "Little Donkey" as the donkeys come up to the front. (ADULT3- ANDY B leads the donkeys) Donkeys can be quite loud! The noise they make sounds like "Hee Haw" So the donkeys can make that noise, wiggle their ears and add a question that the donkey must have wondered about. **"HEE HAW, ARE WE NEARLY THERE YET?"**

So the Marys, the Josephs and the donkeys have a long journey to make. **They are going to be led on that journey by ADULT3 (Andy) holding a signpost to BETHLEHEM.**

Go up aisle C across the back and back down aisle A

Sing "Little Donkey" from Carol Book (words on screen) and keep playing quietly if they are not back at the front by the time the song finishes.

When they get back there is a sign on the screen saying BETHLEHEM.

Now we need the innkeepers to come to Bethlehem. (Led by ADULT4 ?) Your inn is full but you want to try to help Mary and Joseph, so you point them in the direction of your little stable. It's "**ROUND THE BACK**" as you point to where it is.

There were so many people in Bethlehem that Mary and Joseph were very worried that there were no rooms to stay in. They asked at every inn but the answer was always, "Go away! No room!" Finally one kind innkeeper remembered a place that he had "ROUND THE BACK" of his inn. It was only a little stable, a shed really where he kept his animals. He saw that Mary and Joseph might be glad of his little stable. They asked where it was and he said, "ROUND THE BACK" and pointed.

Baby Jesus was born there (ADULT1 please put baby in crib) ***and the new baby lay in an animal feeding trough.***

Marys pretend to rock the baby, and Josephs and the donkeys watch.

Sometimes people think that the little stable was quiet and peaceful that night, but I'm not so sure.

Animals can be very noisy! Let's spend a moment thinking about the sounds they might make.

(Tune Old Macdonald)

In a stable far from home
God's own son was born
The animals all greeted him
On that happy morn.

With a moo moo here and a moo moo there
With a ?? here and ?? there
With a ?? here and ?? there
With a ?? here and ?? there

Sarah will take a maximum of four ideas from the congregation.

We're going to look somewhere else now for our nativity story, so while there is some music ("While Shepherds Watched")

Donkeys go and sit down,

Josephs go and sit down and

Marys go and sit down (Space between each group so that no-one gets trampled).

Now we need to see if we have some shepherds. (led by adult 5) Please come to the front shepherds (more music) and any sheep? (led by ADULT 6)

The shepherds were very surprised at the news the angels brought too so their words go, **“OOOO, ARRRHH, THAT’S AMAZING!”** put one hand then the other on hips. Our sheep are going to shake their heads and say, **“BAA, BAA THAT’S BAAARILLIANT!”** That surprise was some angels, so we’re going to need our angels back.(Led by ADULT2) Remember your words? **“DON’T BE AFRAID! I BRING GOOD NEWS.”**

These shepherds were out in the fields, looking after their sheep. As they were doing this some angels appeared with a really bright light in the sky. The shepherds were very surprised indeed and they said, “OOOO, ARRRHH, THAT’S AMAZING!” The sheep said, “BAA, BAA THAT’S BAARILLIANT” The bright light was the angels who said, “DON’T BE AFRAID! I BRING GOOD NEWS.” A very special baby has been born in Bethlehem. You can go and meet him! The shepherds said, “OOOO, ARRRHH, THAT’S AMAZING!” and decided that they would go on the journey to Bethlehem. The sheep wanted to come too because they said, “BAA, BAA THAT’S BAARILLIANT”

Shepherds and sheep go up aisle B and back down A. Angels go back to seats.

(To the tune of London Bridge is falling down)

**Shepherds watched their sheep all night
Angels came, shining bright
Filled the sky with songs and light
News of Jesus**

**God’s own son is born today
Lying there, in the hay
Showing love in God’s great way
Welcome Jesus.**

The shepherds got to the stable and found baby Jesus. They said , “OOOO, ARRRHH, THAT’S AMAZING!” The sheep said, “BAA, BAA THAT’S BAARILLIANT” They thought he was so amazing and brilliant that they decided to go and tell everyone they could find about the new baby.

Shepherds and sheep go back to seats while music plays.

Now we need a star, or lots of stars. (led by ADULT7) We also need some kings/wise men (or women) (led by ADULT8) Come up while “Twinkle, twinkle” plays. The stars say, **“TWINKLE, TWINKLE, TWINKLE, TWINKLE”** and do disco hands on each side. The Wise Kings are going to say, **“FOLLOW THAT STAR”** and point to the sky. We need king(s) Herod too to be waiting near the door at the back of the church.(It’s a great role for a Dad/Grandad who enjoys overacting) The star and the wise kings will stop their journey when they reach him. He/they say, **“HEE, HEE, HEE”** and rub their hands together.

When Jesus was born a bright star appeared. The star said, “TWINKLE, TWINKLE, TWINKLE, TWINKLE” In a far off country some wise kings saw the star and said, “FOLLOW THAT STAR” Their journey was a really, really long one but they didn’t need a signpost, they had the star to follow. (led by Adult 7) can lead the stars down aisle A and back down C – stop when you get to Herod.

Prophet 3 Jeremiah lived a long time before Jesus was born. He said; The time is coming when I will choose as king a righteous descendant of David.

Jerusalem is called "The City of David, so that is where the Wise Kings went. They saw mean King Herod in Jerusalem. He thought he was the best, most important King in the world and said, "HEE, HEE, HEE". He was very surprised and very cross to hear about another King! He pretended that he wanted to come and worship the baby too. The Wise Kings said they would tell him where the baby Jesus was, so he said, "HEE, HEE, HEE". But God warned the Wise Kings not to go back to nasty King Herod, so Jesus was kept safe.

The Wise Kings said, "FOLLOW THAT STAR" and eventually they found Jesus when the star stopped moving over the place where Jesus was. They gave him some amazing presents: gold for a king, frankincense for a holy priest and myrrh for a saviour.

It was a long way home but it had been worth it to meet an amazing king!

Wise Men and Kings go back to seats as MUSICIAN plays and we sing the version of "Twinkle twinkle little star" that's in the carol books.

Add in this verse if there isn't one about the kings:

**Twinkle, twinkle wise men came
Travelling across the plain
Following the star so bright
Watching for its shining light
Twinkle, twinkle
wise men came
Here to share the new
king's reign.**

Place a crib with a baby in in the centre of the front. All children now are back in places. Leaders of each section plus ADULT7 with star to stand around as in traditional crib scene.

So everyone had come to see this special baby. Can we all remember what our characters said?

Mary "A BABY? OK GOD"

Angel, "DON'T BE AFRAID! I BRING GOOD NEWS."

Joseph, "WELL, WELL, A BABY"

Donkey, "HEE HAW, ARE WE NEARLY THERE

YET?" Innkeeper, "ROUND THE BACK"

Shepherds, "OOOO, ARRRRH, THAT'S AMAZING!"

Sheep, "BAA, BAA THAT'S BAARILLIANT"

Star, "TWINKLE, TWINKLE, TWINKLE, TWINKLE"

Wise Kings "FOLLOW THAT STAR!"

Herod, "HEE, HEE HEE"

Brief talk about how this story of a king born in Bethlehem has travelled to us through so many years. As the story reaches us today we need to think what we do with it. Will we keep passing it on because it's a lovely story, or will we try to find out how this story carried on and decide to be part of it ourselves?



I wonder which part of the Christmas story you like the best? I wonder if you were amazed at how this story has been remembered for more than 2000 years. Maybe you'd like to hear what happened next in the story. This isn't the end, this was just the beginning. At the end of the book in the bible called John, the writer says that if all the things that Jesus did were written down, that the whole world wouldn't be able to hold the books that would be written! Have a Happy Christmas, and see if in the place that you are celebrating tomorrow, you can make a little time to remember the story from long ago, that still is for us today.

Sing "Away in a Manger"

Choose a card or two to take home. (And chocolate coin)