

A Modern Day Nativity

THINGS TO GATHER:

Materials

pencils

markers/crayons

paper

Introduce the Story

Even though it is still a month away, we are going to start talking about Christmas.

I want each one of you to tell me ONE thing about Christmas?

(let kids go on for a bit – make sure something about Jesus is at least mentioned)

Christmas is one of the most important festivals in Christianity. It is a celebration of this amazing and strange thing that happened – God became a human baby and was born, just like you were born and I was born. Can you think of anything more helpless and weak than a newborn baby? (no) Can you think of anything more powerful than God? (no) But God chose to become a baby so that we could have Jesus, the one who can save the world.

Of course, Jesus birth was not quite like yours or mine. He was not born in a hospital or even in a house and he had lots of unusual visitors after he was born.

The Christmas story that we are going to use is actually a combination of the stories that two different writers gave us and that were both collected in the bible. Parts of the story – the angel's visit to Joseph, the wise ones, King Herod – come from the writer we call Matthew and parts – the angel's visit to Mary, the trip to Bethlehem, the shepherds – come from Luke. But we don't want to miss anything from either story so we're putting it all together!

In a few weeks, we are going to present this story to everybody in church at the Christmas pageant. So listen carefully!!!!

Activity: Before you read the story, you need to give each child a blank piece of paper. As you read, they will be drawing the Christmas story as they hear it!

Read the Story:

God sent the angel Gabriel to a young woman named Mary who lived in the town of Nazareth. Mary was frightened when she saw the angel but he said, "Do not be afraid, Mary – God is happy with you! You are going to have a baby and you will call him Jesus. This baby will become a great man and people will call him the Son of God."

Mary was very surprised and very confused. She asked the angel, "How is this possible? I am a virgin."

The angel explained, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you for nothing is impossible with God! The baby will be holy. He will be called the Son of God."

Mary still didn't really understand but she said, "I am God's servant. Let it be as you said."

At this time, Mary was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendent of King David. When Joseph found out Mary was pregnant, he was very angry and sad and he decided to break the engagement off. But that night, an angel of God appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, do not be afraid to marry Mary and do not be sad or angry about the baby. He comes from the Holy Spirit. You will name him Jesus and he will save his people from their sins."

When Joseph woke up, he did as God had told him, even though he didn't understand it any better than Mary did.

While Mary was still pregnant, the Emperor Augustus decided he needed to count everyone in the country. Everyone had to go to the town their family came from to be counted so Mary and Joseph had to go to Bethlehem. It was a long way from Nazareth to Bethlehem and it took them a long time to get there. They were both very tired when they finally arrived – and poor Mary was completely exhausted.

To make matters worse, all the hotels and inns were full because of all the people travelling around because of the Emperor's order. No one had any room for even two more tired travellers. Finally, they found someone who let them sleep in his barn with the animals. Mary and Joseph didn't care – they

were just glad to be somewhere warm and dry where they could get some rest. But they didn't get very much rest that night because that was the night that Mary gave birth to a baby – to their son – to the Son of God – to Jesus.

After Jesus was born, Mary wrapped him in cloths and Joseph put clean straw in a manger, an animal feedbox. Jesus fell asleep and Mary laid him in the manger. Mary and Joseph couldn't believe what had happened. They could hardly take their eyes off their new son.

For the shepherds in Bethlehem, though, that night was just like any other night. They were outside in the fields, watching their sheep to make sure that nothing hurt them in the dark.

Suddenly, a bright light appeared in the sky and they saw an angel standing in front of them. The shepherds were terrified but the angel said, "Do not be afraid. I have joyful news for the whole world. The Lord's chosen one, the saviour of the world, was born today in Bethlehem. You will find him wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Then a whole choir of angels appeared, praising God and saying

"Glory to God in the highest and peace to God's people on earth.

When the angels had gone, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem to see this baby that the Lord has told us about!" They hurried to Bethlehem and found the barn with Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. They knelt down before them and gave thanks to God for the gift of the baby Jesus. Then the shepherds returned to their sheep, praising God and telling everyone about the amazing things they had seen.

Soon after Jesus was born, some people from the East came to Jerusalem. These were people who knew how to read messages in the stars and they had seen a special star rise – the star of the new King of the Jews, Jesus.

King Herod was the king in Jerusalem in those days and, when he heard about what these wise people were saying, he got worried about this new king. He asked his advisors where the new king would have been born. His advisors told him that the prophets said that a special ruler who would take care of all the people would be born in Bethlehem.

Herod called the wise people to a secret meeting and found out when they had first seen the star. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search for the baby and then tell me where he is. I want to go visit him, too."

The wise people set off and, there, ahead of them, was the star. It shone down on the place where the baby Jesus was. The wise people were filled with joy and they went in and saw Jesus with Mary and Joseph. They knelt down and gave them expensive gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

When the wise people left, they did not return to Jerusalem and they did not tell Herod where the baby was. They were wise and they knew that old kings do not often like new kings very much.

Mary and Joseph never forgot the wonderful events of that night, the night when their son, Jesus, the Savior of the World, was born.

Ok So- this is the play we are going to present to our church in just a few short weeks!