

LIGHT THE WAY

This adaptable nativity sketch can be used with pupils in school or children in church. Its purpose is to help them reflect on the wonder of the Christmas story and the true meaning of Christmas.



- ★ This activity is suitable for children of all ages.
- ★ Feel free to adapt it to suit the needs of your school or church.
- ★ The sketch will work best if you rehearse it beforehand.
- ★ If the script for the sketch is too long for your pupils, you can shorten it or adapt for your setting.
- ★ For more information on Christian Aid's Christmas appeal, visit christianaid.org.uk/christmas-appeal

Introduction

Stand at the front and invite seven children up to pull items out of a large stocking. Items should include: an unlit candle, a torch, a star, a sun, a light bulb box and a glow-stick. The last pupil will find that the stocking is empty.

- Ask all the pupils to stand at the front and hold out the items, including the empty-handed pupil.
- Ask the children in the audience to work out what all the items have in common.

The answer is: they all give off light.

• Ask pupils which of these things are particularly associated with Christmas. The answer is: the candle, the star and the empty-handed pupil.

• Ask the empty-handed pupil to sit at the edge of the stage. Take the items from the other pupils and ask those pupils to sit down in the audience again.

[Hold up the unlit candle.]

Presenter: Candles have been used to celebrate Christmas for as long as anyone can remember. Because it is dark and cold at this time of year, candles are a good way of making things feel bright, cheerful and special, especially in the days before people had electric lights. They also have special significance for Christians – we'll come to that later.

[Hold up the star.]

Presenter: The star has special significance at Christmas time because of its importance in the Christmas story. Around 2,000 years ago, in the town of Beth...

[A loud knocking is heard.]

Presenter: Wait a second... who on earth is that?

[Enter the three wise men, proclaiming loudly.]

Three wise men: We followed a star, it rose in the east.

Presenter: Just a minute! It's not time for you guys yet!

Wise men, in unison: We search for a boy, born to be king.

Presenter: Look, I told you, I'm a bit busy.

Wise men, in unison: Bearing gifts, we've travelled so far.

Presenter: For goodness' sake, now is really not the time; I'm in the middle of a talk here. These people [*gesture at the audience*] have come a long way to listen to me. Go on, get out.

[The presenter ushers the wise men out.]

Presenter: At Christmas time, many of us like to shut the door and block out the outside world. We like to feel relaxed and comfortable. We like to spend time with our family and friends. We like to feast and open presents. I mean, really, who wouldn't want to do that? But, at Christmas, there is something else going on. We celebrate a story about the birth of someone very special. Does anyone know who that special someone is?

The answer, of course, is Baby Jes...

[A loud knocking is heard.]

Presenter: [*shouts towards the knocking*] I told you, I'm BUSY!

[Mary and Joseph enter.]

Joseph: [*gesturing at Mary*] She needs to have a baby.

Mary: I can speak for myself, thanks... I need to have a baby.

Presenter: OK, I've just about had enough of this. First I'm interrupted by some star-gazing wise men, and now I'm expected to give over the stage for a birth. I'm trying to tell the Christmas story and you people are getting in my way.



Mary: Please, we've travelled a really long way. It's cold outside and the roads are a nightmare.

Presenter: Tell me about it. I got stuck in traffic on the *[insert name of a local road]* this morning.

Mary: I was on a donkey.

Presenter: *[with dawning recognition]* Ohhhhhh.

Mary: No one else will let us stay.

Presenter: Aaaaaah.

Mary: They said there was no room at the inn.

Presenter: OK, I get it. Yeah, maybe you do have something to do with this story.

[The presenter points at Mary.]

Presenter: Go on then, have your baby!

[Mary gives the presenter a look, but produces the baby from behind her back.]

Joseph: He's beautiful. Let's call him...

Presenter: Jesus?

Joseph: Oh, I like it. Yeah, let's call him Jesus.

[Mary, Joseph and baby settle down on the stage.]

Presenter: Baby Jesus grew up to be someone amazing. In spite of how we tend to celebrate his birthday at Christmas time, his message was not about shutting the door and feeling relaxed and comfortable. It was not about being kind to just our friends and family. It was not about feasting and presents. Christians believe that baby Jesus was the son of God.

[Someone could ring a triangle or bell three times as angels enter and gather around Mary, Joseph and baby. While they do so, the presenter can mime a resigned acceptance and continue.]

Presenter: And this is a really important part of the Christmas story. Christians believe that the way Jesus lived his life showed us what pleases God. Jesus told his followers they should love God and love their neighbour as themselves, no matter who they are. When Jesus grew up, he inspired his followers by caring for those who were considered to be less important. Jesus lived a life devoted to helping the sick, the poor and the needy. He wasn't interested in having lots of money or nice things. He spoke out against things that were unfair, even when that made things very difficult for him. He saw the light shining in every human being, especially those who had nothing.

[Get the empty-handed pupil to stand up, give him/her the unlit candle and ask him/her to go and sit in the centre of the family scene, next to baby Jesus.]

Presenter: This message has real importance for us all today. We live in a troubled world, where people are still often selfish and mean; where things are still very unfair; where lots of people still have very little, but others have more money and more things than they need. But Christians believe that there is light in every human being, and that every human life is important.

In the Christmas story, we hear about the long and difficult journey that Mary and Joseph made. We hear about the unfriendly way that they were treated when they arrived at their destination. 'No room at the inn,' they were told, again and again. We hear about how baby Jesus arrived

in this world in the poorest surroundings, when he was born in a stable.

The messages of this story are just as important today. At Christmas time, particularly, we may want to block our ears to these messages. But it is at Christmas that we should remember them. So let's take a moment to think about them.

All over the world, people are making long and difficult journeys right now. In the Middle East, the region where Jesus was born, conflict has caused a lot of people to flee their homes and take incredibly difficult journeys to places of safety. Often, when they arrive, they are treated no better than Mary and Joseph were. 'No room here,' they are told, 'we cannot help you.'

Those fleeing are refugees. But sometimes a word like refugee can stop us from really understanding that they are just like us. Not very long ago, many of them were living perfectly normal lives in their home countries. Children attended school, parents had jobs, and no one ever imagined that they would have to leave their homes and run for their lives. Christian Aid has been working to help refugees who are arriving in Europe and elsewhere.

This Christmas time, let's try something a little different. Instead of shutting the door and blocking out the outside world, let's open our eyes and our hearts to the true message of Christmas. Let's remember the example Jesus set when he said we should welcome strangers and help people who are suffering.

[The presenter reads Matthew 25:35-40.]

It is easy to feel helpless when we hear about people's suffering. But even small gifts can help light the way for those seeking safety in our troubled world.

£3 could provide a full nutritious meal to a refugee in Serbia, and £20 could provide a basic set of clothes and shoes.

Please consider supporting Christian Aid's Christmas Appeal.

Presenter: Now, I think we'd better get those shepherds in!

[The shepherds enter with the wise men.]

The rest of the group: Welcome!

[Everyone sings the carol 'We Three Kings'.]

[If it is safe and sensible to do so, ask the pupil with the candle to step forward while you light the candle.]

Presenter: At Christmas time, we light candles to celebrate Jesus and the message of hope he brought to the world. Jesus said: 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.' [John 8:12] Let's try to let the light in all of us shine stronger, by helping others whenever and wherever we can.

[As the pupils leave, you could hand out glow-in-the-dark stars to them.]

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