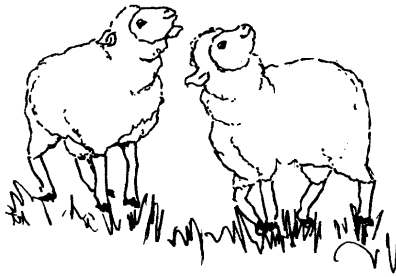


# Sunday Celebration



## Session Three: Advent/Nativity

**WELCOME** (5-7 minutes)

**PRAISE AND WORSHIP** (8-10 minutes)

**SAINTLY VISITOR** (3-5 minutes)

**PRAYER TIME** (5-7 minutes)

**MEMORY VERSE** (8-10 minutes)

*"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Luke 1:38*

**CRAFT** (18 minutes): Nativity Scene

Materials Needed (per child):

- 8½ X 11 inch sheet of brown cardstock
- picture of Nativity (Template is provided on accompanying CD.)
- 1 X 1½ inch piece of felt
- 10 to 15 1-inch pieces of yellow yarn
- glue stick
- crayons or markers
- 8 4-inch popsicle sticks
- 4 2-inch popsicle sticks
- 18-inch length of twine

Also Needed: hole punch

Preparation:

1. Cut out picture of Nativity along bold black lines.
2. Punch a hole in the upper left and right-hand corners of the cardstock.
3. To make the hanger, string twine from front to back through the holes, and tie a knot at both ends to secure in place.
4. Lay out supplies for each child before the students arrive.

Assembly Instructions (by student, with assistance as needed):

1. Color the picture of the Nativity.
2. Glue the picture onto the cardstock.
3. Glue yarn pieces onto the manger to represent straw.
4. Glue felt piece over Baby Jesus for His blanket.
5. Glue popsicle sticks to the scene to represent a stable.



**STORY TIME** (18 minutes)

Note: This story time can be as simple or elaborate as you would like. Have fun with it, and use your own ideas. The following description is one option.

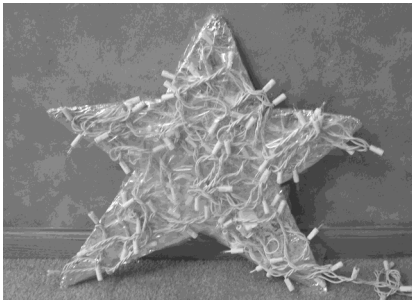
Materials Needed:

- Nativity set, including a stable, the figures of Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus, a donkey, the manger, an angel, shepherds, sheep, and barnyard animals
- a structure to be used for Mary's house (This could be a stable or even a cardboard box.)
- a structure to be used for the inn in Bethlehem
- a structure to be used for the stable in Bethlehem
- brown cloth (or plastic tablecloth)
- green cloth (or plastic tablecloth)
- a lighted star (optional: See instructions on the following page.)
- electrical outlet
- extension cord (as needed)
- 2 flashlights: one larger and brighter, and one small
- 3 tables or chairs (or 1 table and 2 chairs)



### Preparation:

1. Set up three separate areas in your story room. You will travel from one area to the next as the story unfolds.
  - Area 1—Mary's house: On a table or chair, set up the structure to be used for Mary's house. Place the figure of Mary there and anything else you would like to add.
  - Area 2—Bethlehem: Place a table next to a wall with an electrical outlet, and cover it with the brown cloth. (This makes the table resemble the ground, and it will also serve to hide the person holding the flashlight.) Set up the inn, stable, and animals (except for the sheep). Leave the manger empty inside the stable. Optional: Hang the lighted star on the wall above the stable.



**Optional Lighted Star:** (While this is not required, it is very fun for the children!) Cut out a large star, approximately two feet wide, from corrugated cardboard, and cover it with aluminum foil to make it shiny. Attach a string of white Christmas lights to the front surface of the star, using clear tape.

- Area 3—the field with the shepherds: Cover a chair or table with the green cloth, and place the shepherd figures and sheep on it.
2. Become familiar with the following story.

## **The Nativity Story**

To tell this story, you will need three people: a narrator, a flashlight holder, and someone to light the star.

*(Before the children arrive, have the person who will light the star hide under the table where Bethlehem is set up.)*

*(Gather the children in the middle of the room, and have them sit down so that everyone can see. Turn off the lights in the room. Turn on the large flashlight, directing it toward the scene at Mary's house. Using the small flashlight to see, begin reading the following story, taken from Luke, Chapters 1 and 2.)*

Once upon a time, very long ago, there was a girl named Mary. She lived in a house with her mother and father. Their names were Anne and Joachim. They lived in a town called Nazareth. One day, an angel appeared to Mary. (*Hold the angel in the air to appear as if he is talking to Mary.*) The angel's name was Gabriel, and he said to Mary, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." *Luke 1:28*

Mary didn't know what to think about these words, and she was afraid. But, the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary. God is very pleased with you, and He loves you very much. You will become pregnant and give birth to a Son. You shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God. The Lord God will make Him a king, and He will save His people." (See *Luke 1:29-33.*)

Mary said to the Angel Gabriel, "I will serve the Lord. Whatever He asks of me, I will do." (See *Luke 1:38.*) Then the angel left her. (*Place the angel on the floor, out of sight.*)

Mary was married to a man named Joseph. (*Stand the figure of Joseph next to Mary.*) As they were waiting for the Baby to be born, they heard about an order from a man named Caesar Augustus. Caesar was a king and had made a law that everyone needed to be counted. This meant that all the people needed to go to the town where they had been born. Joseph had been born in a place called Bethlehem, so he and Mary needed to travel a long way.

Joseph and Mary had a long journey ahead of them. Joseph told Mary to ride on the donkey so she would not have to walk. She was going to have her Baby any day, and traveling was very difficult for her. She did not complain because she knew this was what God wanted. Joseph watched over Mary and took care of her. (*Holding the figures of Mary and Joseph, have them "walk" across the room to "Bethlehem," shining the flashlight on them as they go.*)

After many days of traveling, they were finally in Bethlehem. They were so glad to get there and were excited to finally rest. Joseph went to find a room for them. (*Move Joseph to the inn.*) He went to the inn, and knocked on the door. A man came to the door, and Joseph asked, "Do you have any rooms?" The innkeeper replied, "No, there are many people in town. All my rooms are full."

Joseph said to the man, "Please, Sir, my wife and I have been traveling a long way, and she is going to have a Baby soon. Is there any place where we can rest?" The kind innkeeper told Joseph, "I do have some room in my stable. At least, you will be able to rest and stay warm there." Joseph was very glad to have a place where he could take Mary. He wanted her to be comfortable and warm.

Joseph and Mary walked to the stable next to the inn and made a place to rest in the hay. *(Place the figures of Mary and Joseph in the stable.)* There were many animals in the stable. That very night, Mary gave birth to a little Baby Boy. They named Him Jesus. They had no crib, so they filled the manger, where the animals ate, with straw and made a nice bed for Him. Mary wrapped Baby Jesus in a blanket and placed Him in the manger. *(Place Baby Jesus in the manger.)*

That very night, in a field far away, a group of shepherds were out watching over their sheep. *(Shine the flashlight on the area where the shepherds are.)* The shepherds were tired from a long day of looking after their sheep, and they were resting. It was very dark. The shepherds noticed something in the sky. It was a star ... the brightest star they had ever seen, and it was shining far off in the distance. *(Have the person under the table plug in the star.)* All at once, the sky above them lit up with a bright light, and an angel appeared above them. *(Hold the angel figure above the shepherds.)*

The shepherds were very afraid, but the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy. It is for all the people. Today, in the town of Bethlehem, a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord. You will find a Baby wrapped in cloth and lying in a manger."

The angel left them and went into heaven. Then the shepherds said to each other, "Let us go to Bethlehem. Let us see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the Baby. *(Have the flashlight follow the shepherds as they "travel" to Bethlehem.)* The Baby was lying in the manger. The shepherds kneeled at the manger and thanked the Lord. Then, they went out and told everyone about Baby Jesus. The shepherds gave glory and praise to God.

## SAMPLE PARENT LETTER

Happy Advent!

We had a wonderful morning of Sunday Celebration! We learned about the Gospel of Luke, Chapters 1 and 2, in our story time. This is the story of the birth of Jesus. Using Nativity figures, we acted out the story of Mary and Joseph's travels to Bethlehem. They traveled throughout the room on their long journey. The children really liked watching the story unfold, especially the part when the star of Bethlehem lit up. Be sure to ask your child about it!

The children enjoyed our special visitor, Saint Nicholas, whose feast day is December 6. One way to celebrate this feast is to have your children set their shoes out before going to bed on December 5. Then, in the morning, they awake to find that "Saint Nicholas" has mysteriously left small gifts or candies in their shoes!

Your child is bringing home his/her Nativity scene. This is a reminder of our time of waiting for our Savior's birth. You could save it and hang it in your home as part of your annual Christmas tradition.

I hope your child is having fun with the W.O.G that was sent home last month. Keep reading Bible stories and making him furry.

Thank you for sharing your child with us in Sunday Celebration. If you have any comments or suggestions for us about how the year is going, I would love to hear from you.

May God bless you and your family during this Advent season. Please pray for all of the families in this ministry.

[Your name here]