

## Intergenerational worship links to the URC 2023 Advent packs

### Advent 1

#### Ordinary couple

Readings: Isaiah 7:13-15, Luke 1:26-31

“Let this happen to me as you say” – Luke 1:38 (International Children’s Bible)



#### Explore Ordinary Objects Stations worship

- Display a store cupboard Nativity and talk about the ordinary things which we use to create special foods, God does extraordinary things in ordinary people’s lives.
- Create a station to create extra special biscuits from ordinary things.
- Have a station to create an origami angel using ordinary paper, you could write prayers on the angels.
- Have a wondering station using the wondering questions where people can discuss them together.

#### Store cupboard nativity

You could use this [store cupboard nativity](#) with full service suggestion.

#### Emotions in Mary’s story worship

Place labels around the worship space with different emotions (happy, sad, worried, excited, puzzled, overjoyed, annoyed, scared). Encourage people to move to or shout out the emotions as the bible passage is read.

You could explore why they chose that emotion.

#### *Alternatively*

Using a line or horseshoe shape which moves from Positive to Negative (or happy to sad), think about the different factors affecting Mary’s emotions and ask them to move around the horseshoe as the passage is read slowly, pausing at each part where a different emotion is expressed or displayed.

Mary’s emotions!

God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, to visit Mary.

The angel shared a message that was .....

Mary was..... she wasn’t sure what the message meant.

The angel told Mary not to be.....

Mary found out she would have a son called Jesus.

Mary agreed. She felt.....

#### **Wondering questions to use in the service.**

Mary says yes to God – I wonder what would have happened if she’d said no?

I wonder why God chose Mary and Joseph?

#### **Prayer Ideas**

##### Cards prayer

Who are you giving cards to, pray for them.

What small but ordinary things can you find and then create prayers about the ordinary things of life?

##### Very Ordinary Prayers – tidying up prayers

Mary was an ordinary girl doing ordinary things when God sent an angel with an extraordinary message.

We often have ordinary things to do like tidying up, especially when we have been messy making or baking. The surfaces need wiping, things need putting away and the floor needs sweeping. Try talking to God as you do the tidying up. Here are some ideas.

Dear God

As I sweep the floor, help me to remember all the people who clean up and look after me....

As I put my rubbish in the bin, help me to remember not to be wasteful...

As I put things away in the cupboard, help me to remember the people who are without homes or places to stay...

As I wipe the surfaces clean, help me to be peaceful and calm when things feel all messed up...

These are just a few ideas try thinking of more prayers as you tidy up.

Spoken Prayer

God of challenge

It is easy to say 'yes' when we are asked to do something that we enjoy or want to do.

It is harder to say 'yes' when we are asked to do something that we are worried about, or afraid of, or think we might not be very good at.

We know that you will never ask us to do something that we can't, and that you will be with us, helping, supporting, and encouraging us all the time.

We pray that you will make us as brave as Mary so that we can do what you ask us to do, and we thank you for all that you have done for us.

Amen.



## Advent 2

### Ordinary Shepherds

Readings: Psalm 78:70-72, Luke 2:8-20

“Let’s see for ourselves what God has revealed to us” Luke 2:15  
(The message)



#### Newspaper worship

Have a variety of newspapers and maybe even a laptop for people to search for online news. In small groups, discuss if we trust all of the sources of the news. Can people find any good news? The shepherds heard the news from the angels on the hillside, they went to see Jesus for themselves and immediately went out telling others the good news. Now it’s our turn.

Ask the groups then to agree what you think the good news message is that you want to share with your community this Christmas. What does God want your community to know?

Once you have agreed the good news message, you now need to agree the best ways to share that news.

Think about who you are communicating it to and what the possible methods might be. This could be visiting your local senior home and performing songs or a drama to share the message, it could be being in the shopping centre on a busy Saturday Christmas shopping time to share the message, it could be handcrafted cards to deliver to all the homes in your road or a big banner outside your church.

As a continuation of worship, get the groups to meet together and do what they had discussed.

#### Wondering Stations type worship

Have some wondering stations around the church using these questions:



- I wonder what happened to the sheep while the shepherds were gone?
- I wonder why God chose shepherds to share the news?
- I wonder what it was like to be a shepherd in Jesus’ time?
- I wonder who’s told you about Jesus?

and encourage people to wonder as they wander.

Then invite everyone to write or draw some short responses or words onto pieces of brown paper and together create a path – like the path to the stable that the shepherds would have travelled. Invite everyone to prayerfully walk down this path.

### Prayer ideas

#### Blanket prayers

Have some blankets or other woollen items around the worship area, or pass them around the group, and pray for those who need comfort at the moment.

#### Paper Plane Praise

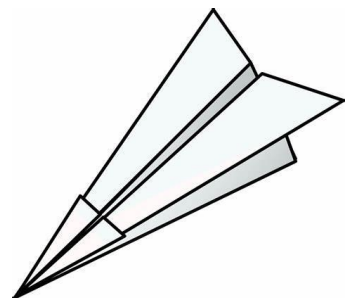
You will need – A4 paper, pens.

Give everybody a piece of paper and ask them to fold it to make a paper airplane (you can find printable [instruction sheets](#) online).

After hearing the message, the shepherds saw a heavenly host of angels filling the sky, singing of God’s glory. Have a go at filling the sky with thanks and praise!

Invite everyone to think about the things that they would like to thank and praise God for and write or draw them on the paper plane. (Remind everyone that other people may see this prayer.) Allow some time for quiet reflection as people do this.

Once the planes have been made, invite everyone to launch their paper planes towards the front of the room. (Take care not to throw the planes directly at other people.) As they let go of the paper plane, encourage people to shout: Praise God or alleluia!



Spoken prayer.

Listening God

We don't have to shout when we pray because we know, loving God, that you hear even the tiniest whisper.

But loving you, and being loved by you, is such good news that we WANT to shout it – so that others may hear.

The shepherds left the stable and spread the word about what they had seen and heard.

Give us the courage to spread the good news of your love to our friends.

Amen

## Advent 3

### Ordinary Stargazers

**“On their way they saw the same star they had seen in the East”**

**Matthew 2:9 (GNB)**

**Readings: Tobit 13:11, Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11**

*Tobit is a book from the apocrypha. Christians (and indeed members of the United Reformed Church) disagree about the apocrypha. It is a set of writings that were written in the period between the old and new testaments. The word apocrypha means “hidden”. During the Reformation, Martin Luther and Protestant Christians argued that everyone should be able to read the Bible in his or her own language. When they went back to the Hebrew texts of the Old Testament, they realized that the Latin Christian Bible included a number of books that Jews did not consider scripture. The Reformers stripped these books from the canon, calling them the “Apocrypha” or hidden books. They are a diverse set of writings which were respected from early times and were written in the time between the Old and New Testament. They are still included in some versions of the Bible. Within the URC we do not usually treat them as part of the Bible, but many people recognise that, like many other writings, they can sometimes help us understand things.*



*This passage from Tobit helps us, like the story of the stargazers, to think about God’s light reaching out to call people from all times and all places to an extraordinary Godly encounter. The Bible Project includes a really clear explanation you may wish to watch while you think about whether or not to include this passage in your session: <https://youtu.be/ak06MSETeo4>*

*You can find the passage here:*

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Tobit+13%3A11&version=CEB>

### Stargazing treasure hunt worship

Create 12 cards, each card tells a little bit about how Christmas is celebrated in another part of the world (or how it was celebrated in the past) reminding us that Jesus came for everyone – thousands upon thousands of people are celebrating the birth of Christ as we do.

You can find ready made cards here - <https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Week-3-treasure-hunt-cards-.pdf> - or draw on the cultures of people within your church.

On the back of each card, write or draw a clue of where the next card might be found, or alternatively have a star with a number in it for each card, and a Christmas greeting from that place (or a general one).

Then hide each card, except the first card.

Ask a group of people to go on a hunt and give the first card to the group. As the group find each card, one person could read out what it says on the card, and everyone could join in with the Christmas greeting written there. Maybe have a short discussion about that country or custom and explore together more about that place.

The final card could lead to where a nativity set/crib is set up. Alternatively, invite each group to bring a card to the nativity/crib.

Share this thought:

The Gospel reading reminds us of the stargazers coming to find Jesus from a distant country and the Tobit reading also calls to mind people across the world and through time seeing God’s light and following it to Jesus. We too, whoever and wherever we are, can follow the signs God sends to lead us in the right way.

### Share some wondering worship.

As you share in worship, spotlight different areas and explore some of these wondering questions together:

- I wonder how the star gazers knew it was a special star?
- We don’t meet God in person so how do we encounter God today – what is a Godly encounter?

- The stargazers followed the star, and it led them to Jesus – what guides you, what do you follow? And where might it lead you?
- I wonder how the people left behind felt when the stargazers just packed their bags and left?
- I wonder if and how God guides us today?
- The stargazers were looking forward to something special happening. I wonder what you are looking forward to most at the moment?
- I wonder if there's been a time you've felt close to God or seen something God is doing?



## **Prayers**

### Gifts prayer

Have wrapped boxes that look like gifts displayed and use them as a way to pray for those who will receive gifts and those who will not receive gifts this year.

### Star Prayers

You will need – Paper, Pens, Scissors, Bowl, Water.

Draw and cut out star shapes from a sheet of paper.

Think about the things that you would like to bring to God in prayer and write or draw these on the stars.

Fold each of the points of the star into the centre, so that the writing is covered.

Place the star gently into a bowl of water so that it floats on the surface. Watch as the star slowly opens and reveals the prayer.

Spend some time reflecting on the prayers and offering them to God. Close by inviting participants to join together in saying AMEN!

### Spoken prayers.

Ask everyone to point in the different directions as you pray.

Whether we are journeying **N**orth **S**outh **E**ast or **W**est  
 May your star shine above us to light our path  
 As we walk in your way  
 And spread your good NEWS.  
 Amen





## Advent 4

### Ordinary birth

Readings: 2 Corinthians 9:15, Luke 2:1-7

The time came for her to have the baby Luke 2:6 (Easy to read version)

This could be a toy service where people give a toy which can be given to local charities or foodbanks for children who will have very little this year.



### Christmas Pass the Parcel worship

Use different types of wrapping paper for each layer with an object in each layer to explore the story.

Introduce the parcel and say that this is a special Christmas gift given for everyone. Play a game of pass the parcel. When the music stops, get the person holding the parcel to unwrap the layer, holding up both the paper and what's inside, and use the paper and the item to tell the story. As each layer is revealed, encourage everyone to wonder why each different paper has been chosen.

#### **First layer – Christmas paper hat and party blower**

More than 2,000 years ago, GOD began something new. He sent Gabriel, one of his angels, to visit Mary. Amazing! She was a teenager living in Nazareth. Gabriel has a message for her, from GOD...

*Blow the party blower.*

'You will have a baby. You will call him Jesus. He will be the son of GOD.'

#### **Second layer – brown paper and footprints or a donkey**

Mary was engaged to be married to Joseph. When the baby was nearly due to be born, they had to travel to Bethlehem, where they had been born, to be counted in a census.

#### **Third layer – 'new-born baby' paper and a piece of soft cloth and some straw/raffia**

When they arrived in Bethlehem, they could not stay in the inn because there was no room for them. The innkeeper said they could stay in the stable with the animals.

The baby was born, and Mary carefully laid him in a manger.

#### **Fourth layer – brown paper and a toy sheep**

Ordinary Shepherds out in the fields heard the good news of Jesus birth from the angels and went to find the baby.

#### **Fifth layer – star paper and a star**

A star led some star gazers from far away to the place where Jesus was born, they gave the baby gifts of frankincense, gold and myrrh and they worshipped him.

#### **Sixth layer – newspaper and a box of celebrations to share** (ensure there are alternatives for those who are diabetic or don't eat chocolate)

The gift of Jesus birth is good news for everyone and a time to celebrate. Share out the chocolates.

### What's in the box worship

Use the special box or bag and sing "What's in the box/bag? What's in the box/bag? Let's see, let's see, what's in the box/bag" (to the tune of The Farmer's in the Dell). You could tap the top of the box twice after the word 'box'. Pull out the things one by one and then let the younger children play with them, talking about the theme or the story.

- Paper and pens – Everyone had to go to their hometowns to be counted. Write some of the names of the congregation on the paper and put a tick by it to say, "I'm here". Count the congregation.
- Cloth/Blanket – Baby Jesus was wrapped in cloths when he was born. Notice how the material feels when you touch it or rub it on your skin.
- Straw (available from pet stores) – The straw reminds us that Jesus was born in a stable. Pass the straw around and feel it, talk about what sort of bed it would make.
- Toy animals – To represent the animals in the stable. Encourage the children to make noises together for the different animals.

- Wrapped present/gift bag – To remind us of God's gift to us. Say "Thank you God" together.
- Nativity Set – Figures to lay out as you tell the story.

Now talk together:

- Baby Jesus is sometimes described as a gift, I wonder why? Why is the gift described as indescribable? Do you agree?
- What do you wrap up carefully? Why would it need to be wrapped carefully?
- Where have you travelled from today? Who has travelled the furthest?
- I wonder if you'd like your birthday to be on Christmas Day? Would you consider it to be a good thing?
- I wonder what's the most incredible, unbelievable, indescribable gift you've ever been given? Or given to someone else?
- I wonder why God became one of us?

## Prayers

### Tiny prayers

Write some tiny prayers on small pieces of paper and place them in a manger.

### Gift tag prayers

What you need:

Gift tags (could cut out old Christmas cards)

Pens

String/ ribbon

Small Christmas tree (optional)



What to do:

Spend a minute or two thinking about who are like special gifts in our lives. It's ok to think of more than one person. Write or draw something that represents each person on a gift tag. It could be one word or a prayer or a couple of sentences.

Thread the string through the tag and hang on the Christmas tree, or on the Christmas tree in the church. Children might also choose to take their tags home to hang on their own Christmas tree.

Say together: Dear God, thank you for the gift of those people we have thought of today.  
Help us to be a gift to others. Amen.

### Spoken prayer

*Children could use the Makaton sign for "thank you" and say the words every time the words are used in the prayer and could jump and cheer and wave their hands in the air instead of saying amen at the end of the prayer.*

Dear God

The time for waiting is over. Christmas is here!

Thank you (*thank you*) for parties and presents, cards and carols,

Thank you (*thank you*) for fun and food, family, and friendship.

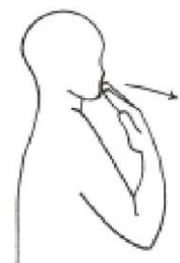
But most of all thank you (*thank you*) for the most extraordinary gift:

Jesus, your son, born just like an ordinary baby is born,  
bringing your extraordinary love into our ordinary lives.

So, like Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, and the stargazers,

We want to welcome you and celebrate.

**HOORAY!**



thank you