

Outdoor worship

Advent resources

Introduction:

It may be winter but we can still get outside and worship God. This resource would work whether you have a large grassy area, a small tarmacked space. However if you do not have access to an outdoor space or it really is too cold these ideas will work indoors too. The extra resources at the bottom of this resource suggests some trails which can be put up on the outside of your building and accessed by the community.

This style of worship works well as an informal, fluid and person led exploration rather than anything too regimental, opening up the opportunity for self reflection.

Bible prompt:

Matthew 2:1-12 <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%20%3A%201-12&version=NIV>

Luke 2:4-20 <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke%20%3A4-20&version=NIV>

The wise ones journeyed to Bethlehem, they realised there was a special message in the stars, one particular star was brighter than the others, they followed that star and it led them to Jesus.

Star trail ideas:

- Stone nativity or chalk nativity scene created as a centre point.
- Make a trail of cut-out star shapes for the group to follow. Could they make star paths for each other to follow?
- Place glow in the dark stars on the walls or ceiling. Sit together and turn the lights off. Do they glow more brightly in the dark? Can you still see the stars when you turn the lights back on? Do they look different?
- Encourage the group to lie on their backs and stretch themselves out wide – to be a big bright star that leads the Wise men. Then tuck themselves as small as they can – to be a small twinkling star. You could read the story again whilst the group make themselves into big bright stars, and small twinkling stars.

Alternatively use the following reflective story as your trail



Outdoor worship

Advent resources

Reflective story:

Begin by giving everyone a stick and have a selection of coloured wool and some metallic thread or cord.

Explain to the group that as the story is told, they should wind the wool onto their stick, winding lots on when they are excited by part of the story, and slowly at a part they need to take more time to think about.

If they have a question wind on some metallic cord.

Changing colours when the story moves to a new part. There are suggestions of when to change the colour.

A Star-lit Journey.

Invite everyone to pause. Let silence settle. Gaze at the sky.

Begin their story stick by choosing a coloured piece of wool and begin to wind it as they listen to the story.

Take a moment...

Look up. Can you see the stars?

Imagine one of them—is brighter than the rest.

A star that doesn't just shine...

but calls.

that's how this story begins.

Long ago, God placed a special star in the sky.

Not a decoration.

Not a coincidence.

A sign.

In a place far in the East, a group of wise men—Magi—saw it from each of their homes.

These weren't ordinary travellers.

They studied the stars. Ancient writings. Prophecies.

And when this star appeared, they knew:

a new King had been born.

Not just any king.

A King from heaven.

Change colour



Outdoor worship

Advent resources

So they each packed their things.
They gathered people to journey with them.
Gathered their gifts to give to the King.
They gathered gold.
They gathered frankincense.
They gathered myrrh.

They climbed onto camels,
and they followed the light.
Somewhere along the journey they met with each other and journeyed together.
They talked about what kind of King they were going to meet.
They kept looking at the star, and wondered.

Add the metallic question thread here.

Can you imagine that journey?

Change colour

Across dry deserts. Over hills.
Through strange cities and quiet nights.
Through dangerous places and places which were mysterious.

Add the metallic question thread here

Can you imagine how many cities they must have entered?
How many doors they must have knocked on?
How many places they found to sleep?

They had to keep going.
They didn't have GPS.
Only a star—and their faith.

Pause

Have you ever followed a path, unsure where it would lead,
but knowing in your heart it was the right direction?



Outdoor worship

Advent resources

Change colour

But King Herod...
 He hadn't heard of any baby king.
 And when they asked, "Where is the child who has been born King of the Jews?"
 Herod grew uneasy. Angry. Afraid.
 Still, he hid it.
 He asked his advisors.
 They searched the ancient scriptures.
 And they found it—
 The prophet Micah had written:
 A ruler will come out of Bethlehem.
 So, Herod told the Magi,
 "Go find him. And when you do, let me know,
 so I can worship him too..." But he was lying.

Change colour

So, the Magi left the palace.
 And the star appeared again.
 They travelled along the road some more,
 the star was there guiding them on.
 Until finally a small town appeared on the horizon.
 It wasn't a grand city.
 It didn't have a palace.

Change colour

It led them—not to a throne.
 Not to riches or power.
 But to a humble house...
 in Bethlehem.

Maybe add a metallic question thread here.

And inside—
 a child.
 They saw Him.
 Mary. Joseph.
 And the boy—Jesus.
 And they knelt down...
 and worshipped.



Outdoor worship

Advent resources

Pause

They opened their treasures:

Change colour

Gold—for a King.

Change colour

Frankincense—for God.

Change colour

Myrrh—a strange gift... used to anoint the dead. This was to a symbol of what would happen to Jesus when he was older.

Change colour

That night, God gave them a dream:
“Do not go back to Herod.”
So, they listened.

Change colour

And they went home another way—
a new road, a new beginning.

Change colour

Out here, under the stars,
we remember that journey.
Not easy.
Not perfect.
But full of purpose.



Outdoor worship

Advent resources

Add a metallic question thread here

Let us ask:

- What star are you following?
- Where is God leading you?
- What gift will you bring?

Like the Magi,
may we have the courage to journey,
the humility to worship,
and the faith to return changed.

May the light of Christ guide your steps,
fill your heart with wonder,
and lead you ever closer
to His presence this season.
Amen.



Outdoor worship

Advent resources

Wondering questions:

- I wonder who had the hardest journey, whose took longest, whose was most difficult?
- Wise ones, shepherds, Mary and Joseph.
- I wonder who was the most excited to meet the baby?
- Whose journey had the greatest impact?
- What was their carbon footprint?

Prayers:

Provide lights/ torches for people to use during the prayers. A phone light would work well. When the word 'dark' is used cover the light up. When the words 'shine your light' are said uncover the light. Invite people to join in with saying the words 'shine your light'.

Dear God,

Thank you that you are the brightest light.

When the world seems dark

Shine your light

When our lives seem dark

Shine your light

When our friendships and relations seem dark

Shine your light

When our minds and bodies seem dark

Shine your light

When the future seems dark

Shine your light

When the present seems dark

Shine your light

When this Christmas seems dark

Shine your light

When the world seems dark

Shine your light

Amen



Outdoor worship

Advent resources

Personal response:

As we gather in this sacred outdoor space, I invite each of you to take a few moments to reflect on the nativity story. Using items you find around you—stones, leaves, twigs, or anything at hand—create your own simple nativity scene. Let this be your personal response to the wonder of Christ's birth, a quiet act of worship shaped by the world God has made.

Further resources:

- Muddy church— www.muddychurch.co.uk/muddy-adventure
- Roots—<https://www.rootsontheweb.com/i-am-looking-for/public-copies/nativity-trail-a-fun-and-festive-event-for-all-the-family> (subscription/ cost involved)
- Engage worship—<https://engageworship.org/ideas/outdoor-worship-stations>

