

An Advent Prayer and Worship Resource for Churches and Schools

Diocese of Lichfield in partnership with 'Pray for Schools'

The Vision

Every school in the UK a prayed-for school! That's the vision of Pray for Schools: to mobilise local churches to support their school communities through prayer. This resource hopes to be part of that vision by encouraging churches and schools across the Diocese of Lichfield to be praying for one another and the communities they jointly serve over this season of advent. The resource also contains further ideas of how advent and Christmas can be celebrated together.

This resource offers:

- General guidelines to set up a Pray for Schools prayer group
- Guidelines for pupils who would like to be praying for their schools during advent
- An advent prayer calendar that can be used either in schools, churches or as part of a daily devotional – this has been written by pupils, clergy and staff.
- Prayers to be used alongside the advent crown focused on praying for our schools and churches
- Ideas for a prayer or reflection space – 'A Gift of a Child,' for use in a classroom, hall or church.
- A plan for a 'Journey through Christmas Day' that church and school could jointly run
- Five collective worships based on the gospel accounts of the Christmas story:



Treasured Tales- Christmas

<http://www.ldbe.co.uk/collective-worship/>

Group Guidelines (taken from the Pray for Schools website <https://www.prayforschools.org>)

Below are some guidelines which you may find useful when starting to pray for a school.

Getting Started

Begin praying however few you are, in a home or even over the phone. Ask God to draw together those who have a heart of prayer for the school – pray people into the group rather than cajole them! Have a definite leader of the group who is responsible for the overall running of it.

Be aware that Christian schools workers and clergy may be involved in the life of the school.

Consider how you can support them in prayer. Establish a regular time, frequency and place for the prayer meetings – e.g. once or twice a term, monthly...

Progressing

Consider and pray about how to seek the support and co-operation of the Headteacher and the local churches. If you are unsure of the school's enthusiasm about the prayer group it may be wise to pray together for a while first so that you can present a positive case for having a prayer group and give reassurance that you are acting in the best interests of the school – bearing in mind the Head's

responsibility for pastoral care. In some schools Heads and staff provide prayer points for each prayer group meeting.

- Try to hold the prayer meeting at the school if the Head is agreeable.
- Discuss appropriate ways of making the prayer group known to staff and parents, e.g. via the school newsletter, staff bulletin, letters to all staff.
- Consider forming a prayer chain for use in situations needing urgent prayer but be very strict about confidentiality and do not name people.
- Register your prayer group with Pray for Schools, and pray for other schools to be covered by prayer too as God puts this on the hearts of Christians involved.

Content of Meeting

- Start with a few verses from the Bible and a brief comment to focus thoughts on the Lord, followed by the Lord's Prayer/praise/confession/asking guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- List points for thanksgiving and prayer under such headings as pupils, staff, events, worship themes, Christian festivals and pray for each section in turn – this structures the prayer time and prevents prolonged discussion instead of prayer.
- Ask for other prayer needs from those in the group.
- Some groups have a book for recording prayer requests and how God answers them.
- **Confidentiality is essential.** Whatever is mentioned for prayer must remain in confidence. Do not circulate anything in writing without the approval of the Headteacher and do not use names without the person's permission, e.g. refer to a Year 2 pupil, a member of staff, a parent, etc.

These suggestions are based on the experience of leaders from several existing prayer groups. Every group will be different so let the Lord lead you in what is best for your school and do share your experience with us.

We have lots more resources available for prayer groups, including inspirational prayers, meeting outlines and prayer workshop materials. New ones are produced every school year.

Guidelines for pupils wanting to pray for their school over advent

You can always pray on your own at home but often it is encouraging if you decide to pray with others. You will hopefully find the ideas below helpful if you would like to set up a prayer group at your school:

- Pray about your plans, asking God to make it possible.
- Share the idea with some other pupils, church workers and staff who might be interested.
- Ask your teacher who you need to ask permission from to hold a meeting and which member of staff would be happy to support you. Always listening to the advice of your teacher and always keep them informed of what you are planning.
- Inform the local church of your plans, and ask for prayer support from them.
- Decide where and how often you would like to meet. You may want to meet each week over advent to pray but then going forward this could change.
- Publicise your advent meetings as soon as you can. You may want to produce a poster to put around school or ask if it can be advertised in the school newsletter or through the school text system.

Suggested Content for Meetings over Advent

- Start with a few verses from the Bible, during advent you may want to use the accounts that are linked with the advent wreath:
 - Week 1 – A Week of Hope, the people of God (Genesis 15)
 - Week 2 – A Week of Peace, the prophets (Isaiah 9:2, 6–7)
 - Week 3 – A Week of Love, John the Baptist (Matthew 3)
 - Week 4 – A Week of Joy, Mary (Luke 1:46-55)
- List points for thanksgiving and prayer under the week’s theme – you may want to focus on pupils, staff, school events, your local church or even events that you have heard about in your local community (e.g. give thanks for someone who has achieved something they had been hoping for or pray for someone who may need an extra helping of hope this week?). You may want to set up in advance a prayer box in the school where pupils and teachers could post their prayers based on the theme for the week.
- Ask for other prayer needs from those in the group.
- Some groups have a book for recording prayer requests and how God answers them.
- Remember the importance of confidentiality at all times.

Further resources can be found at <https://www.prayforschools.org/youth/youth-group-prayer-resources/> and <https://www.suscotland.org.uk/pray/prayer-resources/> and <https://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/resources/60>

Special Thanks

Thank you to members of the Pray for Schools team, clergy, staff and pupils for the following advent prayers.

I hope you enjoy sharing them with your schools and churches during this special time.



Advent Prayer Calendar

Day 1	<p>At this special time thank you so much for our friends and our families. Please help us to be good friends especially to those who are lonely at Christmas.</p> <p>Thank you for the whole earth and for the animals and trees. Thank you for our food – sorry when we throw it away or waste it. Please help us to learn to share with those people who do not have food and those who will be hungry at Christmas.</p> <p>Help us to look after your beautiful world and everyone in it better. AMEN</p>
Day 2	<p>Thank you Lord for our teachers and the people at school that look after us.</p> <p>Help us to live in thanks and not in jealousy, enjoying the privileges of our lives and to not be in poverty, but let everyone have a nice time this Christmas. Keep us all safe as we come together and meet family to live, love and take in our beautiful surroundings together, snow, rain and glistening dew.</p> <p>Help us to be grateful for what we receive, to give more and to enjoy is the best gift of all. AMEN</p>
Day 3	<p>Dear Lord</p> <p>Let us be thankful for all the food and water we have and give thanks to the people who keep us warm and happy. Help all the people that find it hard to get the food and water that they need to live. Please help this to be a fairer world.</p> <p>Let there be peace on Earth this Christmas. Amen</p>
Day 4	<p>Come still the heart, O Lord, of all in our schools Calm their nerves and focus their minds. Father, we lay before you everything that is studied. May they channel all they have learnt into their lives for the good of all Please give me them faith to believe they can do all things in your strength Grant the peace of this season so that all can know that all can be well. Thank you that you are with all our staff and pupils Thank you that your friendship is eternal. Amen</p>
Day 5	<p>May our thoughts be calmed by our Lord, May the Lord focus our minds, May He inspire and help us. Let the Lord give us faith and self-belief. And the peace of this special season be with us all, Forever and always. Amen</p>
Day 6	<p>Thank you for the Advent season as we remember the birth of our Saviour – Jesus Christ. In this time of joy we remember all the people who give up their time at Christmas, for those who work in church, in shops and restaurants, in hospitals and with the emergency services. Please keep them safe. Please be with all our teachers at this busy time. Help the end of term to be a great one – full of fun and give us all a great Christmas holiday. AMEN</p>
Day 7	<p>Dear Father</p> <p>Thank you for all your generosity at Christmas and help us to remember all the families and people that don't have a home.</p> <p>Thank you that you love all people and thank you that you look after the homeless. Help us to also to be good neighbours and to look after people at advent. AMEN</p>
Day 8	<p>Dear Father God</p> <p>Thank you for making us happy this advent – a time to spread love and a special time to think of others and to spread your love around us.</p> <p>Please give strength to those who need it the most now and forever. AMEN</p>
Day 9	<p>Dear Lord</p> <p>Thank you for Advent and the coming of Jesus. Please help us to take care of our friends and to help the poor people in the cold.</p> <p>Help us to always remember to say thank you for all the lovely gifts that we have at Christmas and let us shine your light at this advent time. AMEN</p>
Day 10	<p>Dear God,</p>

	<p>Thank you for this terrific, special and wonderful time of preparing for Christmas. Thank you also for all the amazing things you give to everyone. Help us to think about those who need our help. Please forgive those who are unkind and instead help us to teach them your love.</p> <p>Help us to celebrate Advent with joy. Thank you for the birth of Jesus. Help us to remember His birth forever. AMEN</p>
Day 11	<p>Dear God, Thank you for the world that you have given us. Without it we would not have anywhere to live. At Christmas time please let everyone have enough to eat and drink and please let everyone have that little bit of extra money to share.</p> <p>Please let all the children have good health. We pray for the children who are in hospital over Christmas and we pray for their families too. Please help them not to be sad.</p> <p>Help me to remember to be kind and to spread Christmas happiness. Help me to find a better way to be kind to my brother and guide me to help the homeless people.</p> <p>Please forgive me when I don't do that. AMEN</p>
Day 12	<p>Dear God</p> <p>We pray for our school. Please let the teachers have a good rest at Christmas. Please let the schools have enough money so that we can have computers and books and enough teachers to teach us well.</p> <p>Please keep all of my friends safe this Christmas. Thank you for my friends and for what I have at home. Let me always be grateful. Guide us to do the right thing.</p> <p>We pray for the people who are sleeping on the streets this Christmas please send people to help them. Please help there to be homes enough for everyone. AMEN</p>
Day 13	<p>Lord, I believe that you created us all for a special purpose and that you have a perfect plan for life. I ask that you fulfil your purpose for all in our schools and churches. Help us all to do our part earnestly seeking you daily through prayer and your word. Thank you that as we seek you each day you will guide us along the best pathway for life. In Jesus' name, Amen</p>
Day 14	<p>Dear Lord</p> <p>Thank you for all of our celebrations leading up to Christmas. Please help us to pray for those who are less fortunate than ourselves. Please help us at Christmas time to help other people who might be hungry and homeless.</p> <p>Help us to remember to thank those who give us gifts at Christmas time. And thank you for all the you have done for us, especially at Christmas time. AMEN</p>
Day 15	<p>Dear God</p> <p>Help our teachers as they get ready for Christmas time. Help us to thank them for doing our decorations and Christmas plays. Thank you also for all the things that we eat at Christmas time. Thank you for the people who get our food ready for us at school and at home. Let us pray for those who don't have enough food. AMEN</p>
Day 16	<p>Dear Lord</p> <p>Thank you for Jesus Christ who forgives our sins. Please remind us that there are people out there who aren't as fortunate as us. Help them to find a church to go to at Christmas so that they won't be lonely.</p> <p>AMEN</p>
Day 17	<p>Dear Lord</p> <p>Help us as we get ready for Christmas during this Advent time. Help us to think of others above ourselves, Help us to think about the beautiful world that you have given us. We are sorry when we do not look after it properly. Help us to make more great memories with our friends and our families this Advent.</p> <p>Thank you for the greatest gift of all – the gift of Jesus and the love that he brought to earth. AMEN</p>
Day 18	<p>Dear Lord</p> <p>Thank you for the wonderful day when we can celebrate Christmas. We thank you for all the fun things that we can do in our school and in our church to remember Jesus coming to earth. Thank you for all that this means.</p> <p>We pray for people around the world who have not got the freedom to celebrate and have fun like we can. Please let there be peace all around the world at Christmas. AMEN</p>
Day 19	<p>Dear Lord,</p> <p>Thank you for the life of Jesus. Thank you that we can celebrate his birth at Christmas time. Thank you for Jesus our Saviour who showed us the way that we should live. Help us to love our neighbour as we love ourselves.</p> <p>Thank you for advent. Help us to appreciate more who Jesus is and the way that he made our world a better place. Please</p>

	<p>help us to follow his example.</p> <p>Thank you that Jesus' birth brought us love, hope, respect, friendship, happiness, kindness and trust. AMEN</p>
Day 20	<p>Dear God</p> <p>Please help us to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ with fun and happiness. Thank you for Advent and the time that we have to count down to Christmas. As we remember Jesus' birth help us also to remember his life too and the way that he showed us how to live.</p> <p>Thank you for letting us celebrate Advent because there are those who cannot and please keep them safe.</p> <p>We pray that we can be more like Jesus this Christmas time. AMEN</p>
Day 21	<p>Dear Lord,</p> <p>Thank you for Advent, for our families, our friends, our schools and our churches. Help us to love our neighbour as ourselves and to care for those in need.</p> <p>Our saviour in heaven and our protector help us to celebrate Advent in the way that you would want us to. AMEN</p>
Day 22	<p>Dear Lord</p> <p>Thank you for Advent, a time of preparing and a time of looking forward to Christmas. Help us as we get our schools, homes and churches ready for Christmas.</p> <p>Help us to be ready to celebrate Christmas with the love, peace and joy that you give us. AMEN</p>
Day 23	<p>Heavenly Father,</p> <p>Thank you for coming to earth as Jesus to show us how we should live. Help us this Christmas to be less selfish and to be more focused on the needs of others rather than on our own wants. AMEN</p>
Day 24	<p>Heavenly Father,</p> <p>Help me to listen more than to talk this Christmas. Help me to listen to others and also to you.</p> <p>Please give me the courage to do something special this Christmas that will touch the lives of others and bring some love into the world. Help me to choose joy and thankfulness over what I have and not moaning over what I didn't get.</p> <p>In Jesus' name, Amen.</p>
Day 25 A Special Gift	<p>Thank you Father God for your son Jesus and the blessing that he is for me. Thank you for the Bible and all the stories in it that teach us more about your love for us.</p> <p>At this Christmas time help me to love others as you have taught me to. AMEN</p>

Special thanks to the staff and pupils of the following schools for the advent prayers:

- Bomere Heath CE Primary School
- St John the Baptist Primary School Ruyton XI Towns
- Horton St Michael's First School
- The King's CE School, Wolverhampton



Prayers for the Advent Crown

Week 1 – Hope	Week 4 – Peace
<p>‘May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.’ Romans 15:13</p> <p>Lord, in this season of hope when we look forward to Your coming, may children and adults in our schools receive a fresh understanding of who You are and all You long to do in their lives. In the midst of Christmas preparations: plays, concerts, celebrations, may they experience special moments. Instead of feeling disillusioned and fearful about problems in their lives may joy and peace break into people’s hearts and give them real hope for the future.</p> <p>May the wonderful truth of Christ’s birth still shine just as long ago Bethlehem’s star lit up our world with Your message of hope.</p>	<p>‘Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.’ John 14:27</p> <p>Dear Father, we pray for Your peace to dwell in our schools. In the classroom, on the playground, and in the staff room. We ask that you will be with all pupils, especially those who find sitting still and concentrating hard. Inspire their teachers to make learning fun. Be with children at break and lunchtime as they let off steam. Give your peace and refreshment to the whole school community.</p> <p>We thank you for all our teachers and pray that you will help them as they balance school and home. May they know your peace at the end of each day.</p>
<p>Week 2 – Love</p>	<p>Week 3 – Joy</p>
<p>Dear Father God Thank you for the birth of Jesus. Thank you that we can celebrate the build up to his wonderful birth. I thank you for the gifts of peace and love and the power of the Holy Spirit that helps us to show these. Be with the people living alone and on the streets. Help us who have so much to share our food and drink with them.</p> <p>Jesus Christ as we prepare to celebrate your birth, May we love others as you love us. As we get ready for Christmas, We thank you that you the greatest gift of all. Help us to find ways as we give, so that others will know your love.</p> <p>Help our schools and churches always to be known as places of love, where all are treated with dignity and respect and are valued as children of God. AMEN</p> <p>Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. 1 Peter 4: 8-10</p>	<p>Dear Lord Thank you for this very special time of Advent when we celebrate the amazing time when Jesus was born. Help us and other people to have a smile on our faces. Please give love, peace and joy to those who are alone at this special time.</p> <p>We thank you for our school and for our church and for all the work that they do. Thank you for the times that we can work together to spread joy to others. Please let there be joy, love and peace everywhere during this advent time.</p> <p>Thank you for your special advent light that brings joy and love to all. Help us to share that light with everyone we meet in our schools and in our homes.</p> <p>Please bless us through this Advent time with love, hope and joy. AMEN</p> <p>May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13</p>

God of hope, who brought love into this world, be the love that dwells between us.
God of hope, who brought peace into this world, be the peace that dwells between us.
God of hope, who brought joy into this world, be the joy that dwells between us.
God of hope, the rock we stand upon, be the centre, the focus of our lives always, and particularly this Advent.



A Prayer Space – A Gift of a Child

Begin with an empty manger and then add to the scene as you go through the weeks.

Week 1 – Mary and the Angel	Week 4 – Jesus, The Word Became Flesh
<p>Read Luke 1:26-38 Time to reflect (place the symbols for Mary and the Angel into the manger scene)</p> <p>Christ alone is the light of the world, yet in his wisdom and kindness God decided that the coming of the Saviour should depend on Mary. The World waited on her, 'Yes.' God himself waited on her, 'Yes'. His faithfulness needed hers. And when they met, then the Word become flesh and lived among us. (Fr Stephen Wang)</p> <p>Think What does God want us to say yes to? Are there things we need to say no to? In a time of silence think about the decisions we need to make – help us to have the wisdom to make good choices. Finish with – 'Mary Did You Know?' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifCWN5pJGIE</p>	<p>Read John 1:1-5 Time to Reflect (place the symbols for Jesus, into the manger scene)</p> <p>Have you ever thought why the incarnation happened? Why did the Word become flesh? The incarnation did not happen just to let us know that God exists – it wasn't about God popping down for a chat. What we celebrate at Christmas is God coming near to us, so that he can be with us and we can be with him.</p> <p>Think How does it make you feel to think that Jesus gave up all the glory of heaven to show us how much he cares? What can we do this Christmas to share that love and care with others? Finish with - Noel (Live) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Vwu-t7QRaE</p>
Week 2 -Shepherds	Week 3 – Wise Men
<p>Read Luke 2:1-40 Time to Reflect (place the symbols for the shepherds into the manger scene)</p> <p>Jesus Christ came as our Good Shepherd, the one who saves us, nurtures us, and seeks us when we are lost. In a few weeks we will celebrate his birth among us. For now, we think about those shepherds in Bethlehem. The first to hear the amazing news of God's arrival on earth were these tough outsiders, reminding us that God's love is for all people.</p> <p>Think In what ways do we all need to hear God's good news in the world today? When you think of God as your Good Shepherd, how does this impact your feelings and actions? Finish with - 'Rescuer (Good News)' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sAg7rn7fH3Q</p>	<p>Read Matthew 2:1-12 Time to Reflect (place the symbols for the wise men into the manger scene)</p> <p>As we read the story of the wise men who travelled far to see the child Jesus we are reminded that God's love poured out at Christmas is for everyone. And that love can bring together people from every country, nation, language and culture. We also remember the willingness of the wise men to give the best they had to God.</p> <p>Think Do you have a heart this Christmas to see people from around the world united in love? Is there someone we need to reach out to this Christmas? What sacrifice can we offer? Finish with – 'Oh Come All Ye Faithful.' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mj7Pr42rliI</p>

Christmas RE Day – A Journey Through Christmas

Themes:

1. Hope
2. Dignity
3. Wisdom
4. Community

Possible running order of the day:

Begin with a whole school Collective Worship, the focusing being on the Christmas story and celebration. End the day with a whole school time of reflection and sharing. At least one of these could be hosted in the church or led by a representative from the church.

The four themes could be run one after another in each classroom – with the same teacher and group of children working together for the day.

However the ideal would be for each classroom to be set up around one of the themes and then the children move around the classrooms so that there is a physical, as well as a spiritual journey, through Christmas. (If the staff members are willing – they could be dressed up to fit the theme of their room and the children could come dressed as explorers).

Each session will run for approximately 45 / 50 minutes. The staff can decide which of the activities they want to cover in that time (not all material has to be covered).

Key Stage 1

1. HOPE – Mary and Angel Gabriel

Big Question: What hope does Jesus bring?

Setting

Mary's house – an area set up as a simple home – middle east / 1st century
A picture of an angel on the white board or cut out of paper / card and stuck on the wall

Bible Passage – Luke 1

Start by watching an account of or reading the following bible account:

26-27 During Elizabeth's sixth month of pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to a virgin who lived in Nazareth, a town in Galilee. She was engaged to marry a man named Joseph from the family of David. Her name was Mary. 28 The angel came to her and said, "Greetings! The Lord has blessed you and is with you."

29 But Mary was very confused by what the angel said. Mary wondered, “What does this mean?”

30 The angel said to her, “Don’t be afraid, Mary, because God is pleased with you. 31 Listen! You will become pregnant. You will give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great, and people will call him the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of King David, his ancestor. 33 He will rule over the people of Jacob forever. His kingdom will never end.”

34 Mary said to the angel, “How will this happen? I am a virgin!”

35 The angel said to Mary, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you. The baby will be holy. He will be called the Son of God. 36 Now listen! Elizabeth, your relative, is very old. But she is also pregnant with a son. Everyone thought she could not have a baby, but she has been pregnant for six months. 37 God can do everything! Nothing is impossible with God.”

38 Mary said, “I am the servant girl of the Lord. Let this happen to me as you say!” Then the angel went away.

Teaching Ideas

Introduction - Consider

Gabriel said to Mary "Nothing is impossible with God"

In earthly terms it was impossible for Mary to have a baby. What seems even more impossible was that the promised baby was to be God incarnate – God in flesh. The angel brought a message of hope both for Mary and the world as a whole.

Possible Follow-on Activities:

- Look at images of angels – messengers of God (not little girls with tinsel in their hair) to set the scene of what it would have been like for Mary to come face to face with an angel
- Have a collection of speech bubbles and ask the class what they would ask an angel if they saw one – record their ideas on the speech bubbles. Look at the questions you have written down and encourage the class to imagine what answers the angel would give to them. Really emphasise the fact that angels are nothing to be scared of – they are God’s messengers and they bring peace and love.

Craft ideas:

There are many craft ideas on Pinterest amongst other places – these are ones that I thought could be useful for you to have a look at.



Again an easy craft but the pupils could add the bible verse on the dress. Note that the wings are made from drawing around the pupils' hands.



Stained glass window design – this fits with the Christian tradition of retelling stories through the art of stained glass. These would look great created on acetate sheets. There are more simple designs on Pinterest if you feel this is too complicated.

Making Connections

- Read the conversation between Mary and the angel Gabriel. Think about what the angel said, 'nothing is impossible with God.' Think about your hopes and dreams, however impossible they may feel.
- Discuss:
 - What are your big hopes?
 - If you could make anything happen what would it be?
 - If you want to, you can write or draw these hopes onto strips of paper, and then add them to the paper chain to decorate your classroom with.
 - Take time to pray over the class' hopes and dreams

Helpful Resources

- Prayer Spaces in School – Christmas <https://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/>
- RE:quest – The First Christmas <http://request.org.uk/festivals/christmas/the-first-christmas/>
- RE:start <http://request.org.uk/restart?s=Christmas> there are a number of pages including games for Christmas on RE:start
- Images of Mary and the Angel as a discussion focus

Key Stage 1

2. Dignity – Angels and the Shepherds

Big Question: Does God value all people?

Setting

A starry night
The fields above Bethlehem
A flock of sheep

Bible Passage Luke 2: 1-21

Start by watching an account of or reading the following bible account:

2 At that time, Augustus Caesar sent an order to all people in the countries that were under Roman rule. The order said that they must list their names in a register. **2** This was the first registration[a] taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. **3** And everyone went to their own towns to be registered.

4 So Joseph left Nazareth, a town in Galilee. He went to the town of Bethlehem in Judea. This town was known as the town of David. Joseph went there because he was from the family of David. **5** Joseph registered with Mary because she was engaged to marry him. (Mary was now pregnant.) **6** While Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have the baby. **7** She gave birth to her first son. There were no rooms left in the inn. So she wrapped the baby with cloths and laid him in a box where animals are fed.

Some Shepherds Hear About Jesus

8 That night, some shepherds were in the fields nearby watching their sheep. **9** An angel of the Lord stood before them. The glory of the Lord was shining around them, and suddenly they became very frightened. **10** The angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, because I am bringing you some good news. It will be a joy to all the people. **11** Today your Savior was born in David's town. He is Christ, the Lord. **12** This is how you will know him: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a feeding box."

13 Then a very large group of angels from heaven joined the first angel. All the angels were praising God, saying:

14 "Give glory to God in heaven,
and on earth let there be peace to the people who please God."[b]

15 Then the angels left the shepherds and went back to heaven. The shepherds said to each other, "Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened. We will see this thing the Lord told us about."

16 So the shepherds went quickly and found Mary and Joseph. **17** And the shepherds saw the baby lying in a feeding box. Then they told what the angels had said about this child. **18** Everyone was amazed when they heard what the shepherds said to them. **19** Mary hid these things in her heart; she continued to think about them. **20** Then the shepherds went back to their sheep, praising God and thanking him for everything that they had seen and heard. It was just as the angel had told them.

21 When the baby was eight days old, he was circumcised, and he was named Jesus. This name had been given by the angel before the baby began to grow inside Mary.

Teaching Ideas

Introduction – Consider

Start by thinking about what happens when a new baby is born. What needs to be bought? What needs to be got ready? How is a name chosen? Who is told? Is there a special party or celebration to mark the birth?

When there is a royal birth today – what happens? How is the birth announced? Look at the news footage and newspaper articles from the birth of Prince George and Princess Charlotte for examples of this.

The angels were sent to announce the birth of a heavenly king – Jesus, God in human form. Emphasise the fact that the shepherds were seen in those days as fairly low in society – certainly no ‘decent’ person would associate with them. This makes the fact that they were the first people to hear the news about Jesus’ birth even more amazing and the fact that they heard it directly from heaven itself proves that God values all people and that He treats all people with dignity and respect regardless of how the world sees it.

Activities:

- Begin by considering how the shepherds would have felt. Collect some WOW words to describe the shepherds’ emotions throughout the story.
- Prayer Spaces in Schools – Amazing Angels
<https://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/resources/91> This combines the thoughts around how the shepherds would have felt with thinking about what makes us go WOW. The PDF contains the teaching ideas and a PDF for an angel template.

Craft ideas:



Sheep cupcakes – decorated with marshmallows



Mary, Joseph and Jesus made from pegs



The star could have a bible verse or a prayer written by the children

Shepherd Ornament

Use
cupcake
liners &
Craft
Sticks



Instructions for the shepherd ornament:

<https://www.daniellesplace.com/html/christmas-lesson-3-shepherds.html>

Making connections:

- Have a quiet time – consider the fact that the shepherds were seen as the lowest in their society but God made them feel special. Discuss what that can mean for us personally – we are all special in God's eyes. Think about what this means for how God wants us to treat others too.
- Have the children complete a 'All about me' sheet to show how special each person is <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/517421444666580892/>

All About Me!

My name is... _____

My favorite food is... _____

my family _____

My favorite thing is... _____

I am _____ years old.

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Helpful Resources

Pinterest has many more craft ideas on

<http://www.max7.org/en/resource/christmasstory> Just show the first part of the clip – end it after the shepherds

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WHhFU9IP5k> this is an instrumental piece of music that you could use as background for any reflection time that you have

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=83huFAM0te0> A worship song that could be used as a form of reflection with the older ages.

Key Stage 1

3. Wisdom – Wise Men and the Gifts

Big Question: What is true wisdom?

Setting

A Bedouin tent – this could be created with a small gazebo frame and plenty of voile and cushions

Create a sense of learning and star gazing.

The gifts – gold, frankincense and myrrh

Bible Passage Matthew 2

Start by watching an account of or reading the following bible account:

Wise Men Come to Visit Jesus

2 Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea during the time when Herod was king. After Jesus was born, some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem. 2 They asked, “Where is the baby who was born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east. We came to worship him.”

3 When King Herod heard about this new king of the Jews, he was troubled. And all the people in Jerusalem were worried too. 4 Herod called a meeting of all the leading priests and teachers of the law. He asked them where the Christ would be born. 5 They answered, “In the town of Bethlehem in Judea. The prophet wrote about this in the Scriptures:

6 ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
you are important among the rulers of Judah.

A ruler will come from you.

He will be like a shepherd for my people, the Israelites.’” Micah 5:2

7 Then Herod had a secret meeting with the wise men from the east. He learned from them the exact time they first saw the star. 8 Then Herod sent the wise men to Bethlehem. He said to them, “Go and look carefully to find the child. When you find him, come tell me. Then I can go worship him too.”

9 The wise men heard the king and then left. They saw the same star they had seen in the east. It went before them until it stopped above the place where the child was. 10 When

the wise men saw the star, they were filled with joy. 11 They went to the house where the child was and saw him with his mother, Mary. They bowed down and worshiped the child. They opened the gifts they brought for him. They gave him treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 But God warned the wise men in a dream not to go back to Herod. So they went home to their own country by a different way.

Teaching Ideas

Introduction- Consider

The wise men must have thought that Jesus was a very special person because they travelled along way and it must have taken them along time (some think that it could have taken them 3 years to make the journey). They also brought some very expensive gifts to give to Jesus – gold to show he was a king, frankincense to show that he was God and myrrh

- The wise men followed a star that they believed was put there as a guide to show them where they should go.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7t3aXb3LpWg> This is a fun film of a science song that teaches children what stars are.

Make a telescope - <http://www.moonfrye.com/diy/recycled-cardboard-telescope/>

- **Gifts to the world:**

The wise men gave very special presents to Jesus but if you could give a special present what would it be?

Have a shoe box wrapped up as a Christmas present but leave the lid so that you can open it easily. Have on the label – ‘To the World. Happy Christmas from St Anne’s Primary School.’ Each pupil needs a piece of paper or card. On one side they decorate it as a present but on the other side they decide what presents they would like to give to the world. (e.g. love, clean water for all people, happiness, smiles, chocolate every day for everyone). Place all these into the big present box – this could be used as part of your worship in the following days.

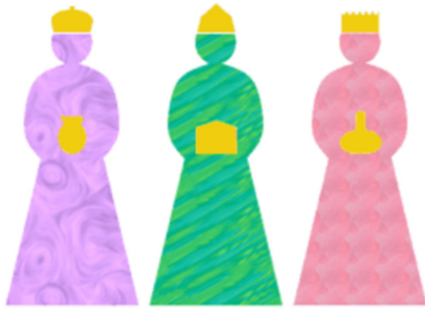
Craft ideas:



This star decoration could be made out of air drying clay (or simply make it on card) and if needs be decorated at a later date. The class could decide what part of the Christmas story they would like to depict on the star.



An easy star craft made from lolly sticks



Wise man collage. This picture could be extended to include a whole scene of the star, stable etc. and if produced on black paper could look very effective.

Making connections:

- Reflection activity focusing on the journey that the wise men took - <https://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/resources/89>

Helpful Resources

See above for relevant film clips

<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/explore/christmas-stars/?lp=true> this is a page full of craft ideas all around stars

Key Stage 1

4. Community – Christmas today

Theme: The ‘good life’ is with and for others in caring communities – how can the Christian celebration of Christmas reflect this?

Setting

Decorate the classroom ready for Christmas

Alternatively this station could also be held in the church.

Start and Video

- Have a collection of Christmas cards with a variety of designs on them (make sure that there is a mix a Christian and non-Christian images). Ask the children whether the card shows the Bible story of Christmas or not. Watch one of these simple films that retells the Christmas story if they need to recap
- <https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/landing/story-booklets/> - download Bob Hartman’s Christmas Poem for free.
- <http://request.org.uk/restart/2014/12/03/the-christmas-story/>
- Or look at this interactive picture of Christmas: <http://request.org.uk/restart/2014/12/03/whos-who-in-the-christmas-story/>
- Or retell the story using props and prompts

Teaching Ideas

- Discuss what the most important part of Christmas is for the class - ask whether their family has any traditions that they do each year to celebrate Christmas. Explain that for Christians Christmas is one of the most important days of the year for them because it is the day that they remember Jesus coming to earth as a baby – the incarnation. Explain that Christians love present and love the food but there is something more to Christmas than that. At the heart of Christmas for many Christians is a sense of love and community. Many Christians will go to Church on Christmas Eve or Christmas day to be part of their worshipping community or they will go out carol singing. Some will even use their Christmas day to help serve the community that they live in and in particular the lonely, the elderly or the poor of that community.
- Explain that the school would like to be part of this type of community project this year. So therefore the children are going to make a **Christingle**. This is a fun activity and is something that Christians have done as part of being a worshipping community. A full explanation can be found at <http://request.org.uk/restart/2016/11/30/christingle/>
- **Making cards for the community or for someone they love.** Encourage the class to make a card for someone they know who may be lonely this Christmas or someone that they want to say thank you to. There are many designs for Christmas cards on pinterest
- They could also make a small Christmas tree decoration that could be given alongside the card.
- The cards could be as complex or as easy as you wanted them to be but should be based on the Christmas story – they could be simple designs, pop-up cards, Stain glass window designs or 3D designs.
- Baker Ross has some great ideas and resources <https://www.bakerross.co.uk/arts-and-crafts/christmas> for cards and decorations

Making Connections

- <https://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/resources/84> this is a prayer activity based around the local community. Encourage the class to think about what they could do to help the local community this Christmas and beyond. You could begin to plan a community based project for later in the year.
- With some calming music and perhaps a candle – create a peaceful atmosphere. Spend a few quiet minutes thinking about the people in our communities who may not be looking forward to Christmas. If the children are willing ask any of them to pray their own prayers about these people or you could use a set prayer:

A Prayer for Loneliness

Dear Gracious and Loving God,

Help all people this Christmas to feel your presence.

My heart aches when I think of those who will be lonely at this time,

For those who just long to have someone to simply talk to.

Please send your Holy Spirit as comforter to be with the lonely especially at Christmas time.

Help me also to do what we can to help others in our communities.

Help us to know in our hearts that we are never alone because you are with us.

Your love and peace is with us, right now, in this moment and forever more
Amen

Key Stage 2

1. HOPE – Mary and Angel Gabriel

Big Question: What hope does Jesus bring?

Setting

Mary's house – an area set up as a simple home – middle east / 1st century
A picture of an angel on the white board or cut out of paper / card and stuck on the wall

Bible Passage – Luke 1

Start by watching an account of or reading the following bible account:

26-27 During Elizabeth's sixth month of pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to a virgin who lived in Nazareth, a town in Galilee. She was engaged to marry a man named Joseph from the family of David. Her name was Mary. 28 The angel came to her and said, "Greetings! The Lord has blessed you and is with you."

29 But Mary was very confused by what the angel said. Mary wondered, "What does this mean?"

30 The angel said to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary, because God is pleased with you. 31 Listen! You will become pregnant. You will give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great, and people will call him the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of King David, his ancestor. 33 He will rule over the people of Jacob forever. His kingdom will never end."

34 Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen? I am a virgin!"

35 The angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you. The baby will be holy. He will be called the Son of God. 36 Now listen! Elizabeth, your relative, is very old. But she is also pregnant with a son. Everyone thought she could not have a baby, but she has been pregnant for six months. 37 God can do everything! Nothing is impossible with God."

38 Mary said, "I am the servant girl of the Lord. Let this happen to me as you say!" Then the angel went away.

Teaching Ideas

Introduction - Consider

Gabriel said to Mary "Nothing is impossible with God"

In earthly terms it was impossible for Mary to have a baby. What seems even more impossible was that the promised baby was to be God incarnate – God in flesh.

The angel brought a message of hope both for Mary and the world as a whole.

Read and explore

Isaiah 9 was written many years before Jesus was born but Christians believe that it was a prophecy about Jesus and the things that would happen because of him coming to earth. Have the pupils read through the passage (it could be split into smaller sections and groups look at each section). What signs of HOPE are there in this passage?

Now those people live in darkness.

But they will see a great light.

They live in a place that is very dark.

But a light will shine on them.

3 God, you will cause the nation to grow.

You will make the people happy.

And they will show their happiness to you.

It will be like the joy during harvest time.

It will be like the joy of people

taking what they have won in war.

4 Like the time you defeated Midian,

you will take away their heavy load.

You will take away the heavy pole from their backs.

You will take away the rod the enemy uses to punish your people.

5 Every boot that marched in battle will be destroyed.

Every uniform stained with blood will be destroyed.

They will be thrown into the fire.

6 A child will be born to us.

God will give a son to us.

He will be responsible for leading the people.

His name will be Wonderful Counselor, Powerful God,

Father Who Lives Forever, Prince of Peace.

7 Power and peace will be in his kingdom.

It will continue to grow.

He will rule as king on David's throne

and over David's kingdom.

He will make it strong,

by ruling with goodness and fair judgment.

He will rule it forever and ever.

The Lord of heaven's armies will do this

because of his strong love for his people.

Possible Follow-on Activities:

- Look at images of angels – messengers of God (not little girls with tinsel in their hair) to set the scene of what it would have been like for Mary to come face to face with an angel
- Mary would have known the passage from Isaiah well. When the angel promised her the baby she would have remembered this passage. Write a blog page as if you were Mary. What has just happened to you? How are you feeling? What are your hopes for the future both for yourself and also for the world because of your baby?
- Write a blog as if you are angel Gabriel giving heaven’s view of all that has happened – bring in the passage from Isaiah to explain that this is something that has been planned for a long time.
- Get the pupils to pick a part of Isaiah that really speaks to them get them to draw a picture that illustrates that part of the passage; you could put these illustrations together to form a great Christmas display.

Craft ideas:

There are many craft ideas on Pinterest amongst other places – these are ones that I thought could be useful to have a look at



This is a quick craft that could be used as an plenary activity and it needs very few resources



Again an easy craft but the pupils could add the bible verse on the dress. I would make the angel look more male though to fit with the bible text.

This is a stained glass window design – I like this craft as it fits with the Christian tradition of retelling stories through the art of stained glass. These would look great created on acetate sheets. There are more simple designs on Pinterest if you feel this is too complicated.



Making Connections

- Read the conversation between Mary and the angel Gabriel. Think about what the angel said, 'nothing is impossible with God.' Think about your hopes and dreams, however impossible they may feel.
- Discuss:
 - What are your big hopes?
 - What needs to change that seems impossible?
 - If you want to, you can write or draw these hopes onto strips of paper, and then add them to the paper chain to decorate your classroom with.

Helpful Resources

- Prayer Spaces in School – Christmas <https://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/>
- RE:quest – The First Christmas <http://request.org.uk/festivals/christmas/the-first-christmas/>
- RE:start <http://request.org.uk/restart?s=Christmas> there are a number of pages including games for Christmas on RE:start
- Images of Mary and the Angel as a discussion focus

Key Stage 2

2. Dignity – Angels and the Shepherds

Big Question: Does God value all people?

Setting

A starry night
The fields above Bethlehem
A flock of sheep

Bible Passage Luke 2: 1-21

Start by watching an account of or reading the following bible account:

2 At that time, Augustus Caesar sent an order to all people in the countries that were under Roman rule. The order said that they must list their names in a register. **2** This was the first registration[a] taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. **3** And everyone went to their own towns to be registered.

4 So Joseph left Nazareth, a town in Galilee. He went to the town of Bethlehem in Judea. This town was known as the town of David. Joseph went there because he was from the family of David. **5** Joseph registered with Mary because she was engaged to marry him. (Mary was now pregnant.) **6** While Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have the baby. **7** She gave birth to her first son. There were no rooms left in the inn. So she wrapped the baby with cloths and laid him in a box where animals are fed.

Some Shepherds Hear About Jesus

8 That night, some shepherds were in the fields nearby watching their sheep. **9** An angel of the Lord stood before them. The glory of the Lord was shining around them, and

suddenly they became very frightened. 10 The angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, because I am bringing you some good news. It will be a joy to all the people. 11 Today your Savior was born in David’s town. He is Christ, the Lord. 12 This is how you will know him: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a feeding box.”

13 Then a very large group of angels from heaven joined the first angel. All the angels were praising God, saying:

14 “Give glory to God in heaven,
and on earth let there be peace to the people who please God.”[b]

15 Then the angels left the shepherds and went back to heaven. The shepherds said to each other, “Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened. We will see this thing the Lord told us about.”

16 So the shepherds went quickly and found Mary and Joseph. 17 And the shepherds saw the baby lying in a feeding box. Then they told what the angels had said about this child. 18 Everyone was amazed when they heard what the shepherds said to them. 19 Mary hid these things in her heart; she continued to think about them. 20 Then the shepherds went back to their sheep, praising God and thanking him for everything that they had seen and heard. It was just as the angel had told them.

21 When the baby was eight days old, he was circumcised, and he was named Jesus. This name had been given by the angel before the baby began to grow inside Mary.

Teaching Ideas

Introduction – Consider

When there is a royal birth today – what happens? How is the birth announced? Look at the footage and newspaper articles from the birth of Prince George and Princess Charlotte.

The angels were sent to announce the birth of a heavenly king – Jesus, God in human form. Emphasise the fact that the shepherds were seen in those days as fairly low in society – certainly no ‘decent’ person would associate with them. This makes the fact that they were the first people to hear the news about Jesus’ birth even more amazing and the fact that they heard it directly from heaven itself proves that God values all people and that He treats all people with dignity and respect regardless of how the world sees it.

Activities:

- Begin by considering how the shepherds would have felt. Collect some WOW words to describe the shepherds’ emotions throughout the story. You could even plot an emotions graph as a class for the shepherds from them just sitting around watching their sheep – the angel appearing – all the sky being filled with the angels – deciding what to do next – running down to Bethlehem – finding Jesus in the manger- afterwards.
- Prayer Spaces in Schools – Amazing Angels
<https://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/resources/91> This combines the thoughts around how the shepherds would have felt with thinking about what makes us go WOW. The PDF contains the teaching ideas and a PDF for an angel template.
- Shepherds On The Hill - World Map.

Equipment: Felt tip pens, post-it notes, world map, cushions.

Set-up: Put the world map on the floor and place the cushions, pens and Post-its around it.

Think about how God chose to share the news about the birth of Jesus with shepherds first, people who weren't considered important at that time. Think about people in our world that might not be considered important. If you want to, you can write a thought or prayer for them onto a Post-it note and stick it onto the map. You could adapt this to think about people in our own society who are forgotten and looked down on – consider how they are treated. You could go on to write a prayer for them. Look at an organisation like the Salvation Army and the work that they do as an example of a group that works to bring dignity back to all people.

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/>

Craft ideas:

Following on from the discussion about the emotions graph. Make a nativity cube to tell just the story of the shepherds. Before making the cube up you could flip the cube over and the children could write a short description of how the shepherds were feeling at that stage of the story.



Sheep cupcakes – decorated with marshmallows



Mary, Joseph and Jesus made from pegs



The star could have a bible verse or a prayer written by the children

Making connections:

- Have a quiet time – consider the fact that the shepherds were seen as the lowest in their society but God treated them with dignity. Discuss what that can mean for us personally but also what does that mean for how God wants us to treat others.

Helpful Resources

Pinterest has many more craft ideas on <http://www.max7.org/en/resource/christmasstory> Just show the first part of the clip – end it after the shepherds
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WHhFU9IP5k> this is an instrumental piece of music that you could use as background for any reflection time that you have
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=83huFAM0te0> A worship song that could be used as a form of reflection with the older ages.

Key Stage 2

3. Wisdom – Wise Men and the Gifts

Big Question: What is true wisdom?

Setting

A Bedouin tent – this could be created with one of the gazebos and plenty of voile and cushions
 Create a sense of learning and star gazing.
 The gifts – gold, frankincense and myrrh

Bible Passage Matthew 2

Start by watching an account of or reading the following bible account:

Wise Men Come to Visit Jesus

2 Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea during the time when Herod was king. After Jesus was born, some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem. 2 They asked, “Where is the baby who was born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east. We came to worship him.”

3 When King Herod heard about this new king of the Jews, he was troubled. And all the people in Jerusalem were worried too. 4 Herod called a meeting of all the leading priests and teachers of the law. He asked them where the Christ would be born. 5 They answered, “In the town of Bethlehem in Judea. The prophet wrote about this in the Scriptures:

6 ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
 you are important among the rulers of Judah.

A ruler will come from you.

He will be like a shepherd for my people, the Israelites.” Micah 5:2

7 Then Herod had a secret meeting with the wise men from the east. He learned from them the exact time they first saw the star. 8 Then Herod sent the wise men to Bethlehem. He said to them, “Go and look carefully to find the child. When you find him, come tell me. Then I can go worship him too.”

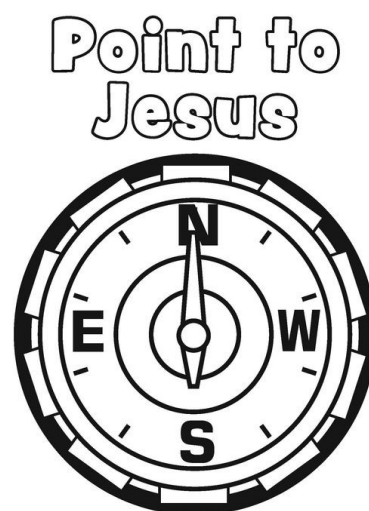
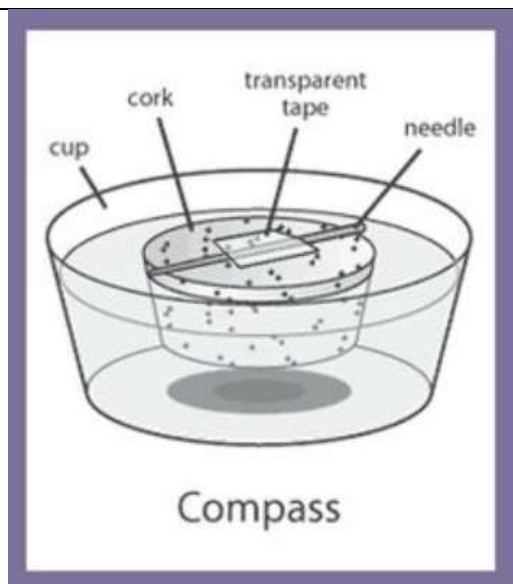
9 The wise men heard the king and then left. They saw the same star they had seen in the east. It went before them until it stopped above the place where the child was. 10 When the wise men saw the star, they were filled with joy. 11 They went to the house where the child was and saw him with his mother, Mary. They bowed down and worshiped the child. They opened the gifts they brought for him. They gave him treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 But God warned the wise men in a dream not to go back to Herod. So they went home to their own country by a different way.

Teaching Ideas

Introduction- Consider

We often think of the wise men arriving at the same time as the shepherds but this was not the case. The wise men would have arrived to visit Jesus a few years later when he was a toddler. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDkt2kOfFMw> – this is a very interesting introductory to whom the wise men may be and how the traditions around them have grown up.

- The wise men followed a star that they believed was put there as a guide to show them where they should go.
DISCUSS - What or who do you use as a guide when you make big decisions? Where do you get your wisdom from – who gives you your wise advice?
- **Using a guide for life.** The Wise Men followed a star which was not unusual in those days <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4DINhbkPiYY> this is a five minute film that talks about the ancient ways that people navigated. Talk about the ways people used to navigate and go onto think about what people use today. Now a-days people use 'sat navs' but before that there were compasses. Christians often refer to the Bible as a compass or 'sat nav' because they use it as a guide for their lives. Why do you think this is the case? There is a verse in the Bible that says: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119: 105). If there are any Christians available to talk to the class about this – it would be good to get them to speak about how they use the Bible as a guide and how they see the Bible as containing the wisdom they need for life – alternatively on RE:quest there is a short 2 minute film where a friar talks about how he views the Bible:
<http://request.org.uk/restart/2015/12/08/brother-loarne-and-the-bible/>
Make a 'Bible Compass' and create the mat for it to stand it on



Instructions for making a compass:

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/steering-science-make-a-homemade-compass/>

The gifts:

- Discuss the gifts that the wise men brought for Jesus. When you initially look at them you may well think that they are very strange gifts for a baby / toddler. It is important for the class to understand that the gifts were symbols that pointed to truths in Jesus' life:
 - Gold – king
 - Frankincense – to be worshipped (i.e. God)
 - Myrrh – this was used to wash dead bodies and so this pointed at the death and resurrection of Jesus.
- These gifts give us a good insight to who Christian believe Jesus is – **DISCUSS** – If you were to give Jesus a present what would you give him? Why would you give him that gift?

• **Gifts to the world:**



Have a shoe box wrapped up as a Christmas present but leave the lid so that you can open it easily. Have on the label – 'To the World. Happy Christmas from St Anne's Primary School.' Each pupil needs a square piece of paper with the corners folded into the middle (see the picture). On the outside they decorate it as a present but on the inside they decide what presents they would like to give to the world. They could decide one big one and then four smaller ones. (e.g. love, clean water for all people, justice, equality, chocolate every day for everyone). Place all these into the big present box – this could be used as part of your worship in the following days.



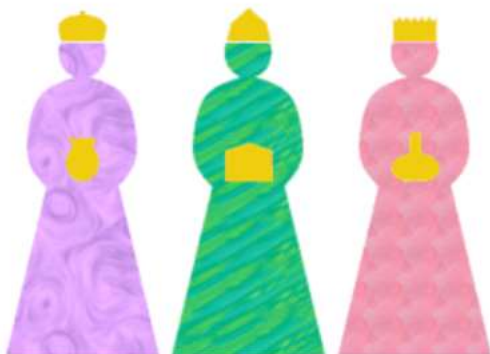
Craft ideas:



Folded stars – instead of a dollar note you could use monopoly money or just paper -

<http://www.makeiteasycrafts.com/2012/11/easy-money-folded-five-pointed-origami.html>

This star decoration could be made out of air drying clay (or simply make it on card) and if needs be decorated at a later date. The class could decide what part of the Christmas story they would like to depict on the star.



Wise man collage. This picture could be extended to include a whole scene of the star, stable etc. and if produced on black paper could look very effective.

Making connections:

- Reflection activity focusing on the journey that the wise men took -

<https://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/resources/89>

- Wise Men's Star Asking For Guidance
Equipment: Felt tip pens, star shaped post-it notes or cut-out stars and sticky tape, a big sheet of dark blue or black paper.
Set-up: Securely attach the paper (night sky) to the wall and put the other equipment nearby.
Suggested Instructions: God put a star in the sky to help guide the wise men find Jesus. Is there something that you need guidance about? Is there something you need help with? If you want to, you can write a prayer for help or guidance onto a star and stick it onto the night sky.

Helpful Resources

See above for relevant film clips

<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/explore/christmas-stars/?lp=true> this is a page full of craft ideas all around stars

Key Stage 2

4. Community – Christmas today

Theme: The 'good life' is with and for others in caring communities – how can the Christian celebration of Christmas reflect this?

Setting

Decorate the classroom ready for Christmas

Alternatively this station could be held within the church

Start and Video

- Have the class split into groups. Give each group with the question on 'What is Christmas all about?' Get each group to discuss the question and then come together to correlate the answers.
- Have a collection of Christmas cards with a variety of designs on them (make sure that there is a mix a Christian and non-Christian images). Get the children to divide the cards into two groups (at this stage don't suggest what those groups should be). Once they have completed the task discuss how they divided the cards and once you have their ideas explain that one way was the faith and non-faith cards. Explain that for today you are going to be thinking about the Christian view of Christmas. Watch the film:

<http://request.org.uk/festivals/christmas/why-christmas/>

- Bob Hartman's Christmas Poem can be downloaded for free here: <https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/landing/story-booklets/>

Teaching Ideas

- Discuss what the most important part of Christmas is for the class - ask whether their family has any traditions that they do each year to celebrate Christmas. Explain that for Christians Christmas is one of the most important days of the year for them because it is the day that they remember Jesus coming to earth as a baby – the incarnation. Explain that Christians love gifts and love the food but there is something more to Christmas than that. At the heart of Christmas for many Christians is a sense of love and community. Many Christians will go to Church on Christmas Eve or Christmas day to be part of their worshipping community or they will go out carol singing. Some will even use their Christmas day to help serve the community that they live in and in particular the lonely, the elderly or the poor of that community.
- Salvation Army is a great example of that, so are Street Pastors and Church Soup Kitchens. (Is there something that a local church does?).
- Once you have discussed about these community projects explain that the school would like to be part of this type of community project this year. So therefore the children are going to make a **Christingles**.
- This is a fun activity and is something that Christians have done as part of being a worshipping community. A full explanation can be found at <http://request.org.uk/restart/2016/11/30/christingle/>
- Christmas card (based around the Christmas story) that could be given out to some of the people in the local community or people they know who are lonely or just people who they want to say thank you to.

- They could also make a Christmas tree decoration that could be given alongside the card.
- The cards could be as complex or as easy as you wanted them to be but should be based on the Christmas story – they could be simple designs, pop-up cards, Stain glass window designs or 3D designs.
- Baker Ross has some great ideas and resources <https://www.bakerross.co.uk/arts-and-crafts/christmas> for cards and decorations

Making Connections

- <https://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/resources/84> this is a prayer activity based around the local community. Encourage the class to think about what they could do to help the local community this Christmas and beyond. You could begin to plan a community based project for later in the year.
- With some calming music and perhaps a candle – create a peaceful atmosphere. Spend a few quiet minutes thinking about the people in our communities who may not be looking forward to Christmas. If the children are willing ask any of them to pray their own prayers about these people or you could use a set prayer:

A Prayer for Loneliness

Dear Gracious and Loving God,

Help all people this Christmas to feel your presence.

My heart aches when I think of those who will be lonely at this time,

For those who just long to have someone to simply talk to.

Please send your Holy Spirit as comforter to be with the lonely especially at Christmas time.

Help me also to do what we can to help others in our communities.

Help us to know in our hearts that we are never alone because you are with us.

**Your love and peace is with us, right now, in this moment and forever more
Amen**