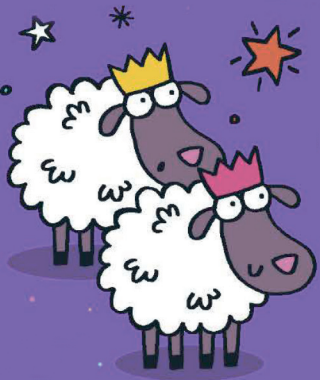


INSTANT
NATIVITY

THE IMPOSSIBLE PROMISE

A Christmas Story



Instant Nativity



The Impossible Promise – Instant Nativity

A few ideas and tips to put the instant into your instant nativity.

What should you do before the service?

Let people know they can come dressed as Mary, Joseph, Angels, Shepherds, Animals or Star-watchers/ Wise Men.

Give those reading aloud the script so they can read it before the service.

How many people do I need to tell the story?

We suggest you have an enthusiastic Narrator with a lectern/pulpit/music stand on one side and the person playing the Angel/Herod on the other side, also with a lectern/pulpit/music stand. They have the most lines and this arrangement will allow them to read from the script.

It will also be helpful to have a leader for each group of those who dress up or want to participate – Mary, Joseph, Shepherds, Angels and Star-watchers/ Wise men. They will lead the actions of their respective groups. And of course we want them to have fun with it. (For example, 'Come on Marys, the angel is scary. Let's all tremble!')

Do we have to use the suggested songs?

We were trying to create as little work as possible so have suggested songs but please use what you like and sing as many verses as you want.

Accompanying resources

We have created a set of visuals you can use alongside your nativity. Download the PowerPoint from our website.

This nativity is based on our new children's Christmas booklet *The Impossible Promise*. Why not give away copies as a gift at the end of your service? You can order them online at special bulk discounted rates. We have also created a video animation of *The Impossible Promise* that you can download or stream and show in your church service.

Check these out and all our other Christmas resources for you and your church at biblesociety.org.uk/christmas



NOW HERE'S THE SCRIPT



Narrator (Slide 1)

Welcome to *The Impossible Promise: A Christmas Story!*

My name is _____ and I will be narrating our story today; and, more or less, directing our little Instant Nativity.

On the other side is my friend _____, who will mostly be playing an angel and, eventually, a very grumpy king. Many of you have come dressed as characters from the Christmas story. Thank you for that. From time to time, we will be asking you to come to the front to help us tell the story.

You simply have to follow the lead of our helpers, here. Move when they move! Repeat what they say. Do what they do!

So let's give a great big 'Blessed are you among women!' for _____, who will be leading our Marys.

And let's give a great big 'No need to worry!' for _____, who will be leading our Josephs.

And let's give a great big, 'MOO! BAAA! HEEHAW!' for _____, who will be leading our animals.

And let's give a great big, 'Surprise! Don't be afraid!' for _____, who will be leading our angels.

And let's give a great big, 'Don't be afraid? Are you baa-rmy' for _____, who will be leading our shepherds.

And, finally, let's give a great big, 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star!' for _____, who will be the Star leading our Star-watchers.'

(Slide 2)

There will be a lot of BOOMING in the story – the sound everyone in the room will make together whenever God does something amazing. When you see the BOOM! sign (you can create a sign or write it on a piece of paper) all you need to do is throw your arms in the air and shout 'BOOM!' Let's have a little practice. BOOM!

Excellent!

Narrator

Now let's sing 'O Come All Ye Faithful.' And as we do, would all the Marys come to the front and stand before our angel.



Just like that! Out of nowhere! There he was!

(Slide 3)

An angel.

And Mary was terrified! (*All the Marys tremble.*)

Maybe it was the suddenness of his arrival. Maybe it was the shock of the surprise. Maybe it was because he was no 'fat baby with wings' but a bright shiny otherworldly creature sent down from the throne of God.

Or maybe it had to do with what he said:

Angel

'Hello, Favoured One! God is with you.'

Narrator

Mary was simply a young woman from a little town called Nazareth, in the region of Galilee. She had never expected anything like this to happen to her. What did the angel mean? What was this all about? She was confused and troubled, to say the least. And the angel, Gabriel, understood that.

Angel

'Don't be afraid. This is a good thing! God is pleased with you and wants to do something amazing for you. So here is what's going to happen:

You will give birth to a son called Jesus. He will be great. In fact, he will be called the Son of God.'

Narrator

(Slide 4)

It was the promise! The promise to Eve of a child to crush the serpent's head. The promise to Abraham that through his family God would one day bless the world. The promise would finally come true. And it sounded amazing.

But Mary had a practical question. Very practical. By the customs of her day, she was legally promised to be married to a man named Joseph, but they hadn't had the wedding yet. So she asked, quite rightly,

Marys

'I'm a virgin. How will I give birth to a son?'

Narrator

And, quite rightly, Gabriel gave her an answer. A mysterious answer guaranteed to surprise her even further.

Angel

'God's Holy Spirit will come upon you. His power will overshadow you. So your son will be holy, too – the Son of God!

It sounds incredible, I know. But your cousin Elizabeth is having a baby. She's six months pregnant, in fact. And as you know, she is well past childbearing age. For God can do anything. Even something that everyone else thinks is impossible.'

Marys

'Then let him do this "impossible" thing for me. I will be his servant and do what he has asked.'

Narrator

And, with that, just as suddenly as he had come, the angel disappeared!

(You could have the angel disappear at this point, but he would need to come back again during the next song, in time for the Josephs to arrive.)

(Slide 5)



Now let's sing 'In the Bleak Midwinter'. And as we do, would the Josephs come to the front and stand next to the Marys. *(Marys sit down during song so focus is on Josephs.)*



(Slide 6)

Just like that! Out of nowhere! It was the last thing that Joseph wanted to hear.

Mary, the woman he had promised to marry, was expecting a baby.

And there was no way that the baby was his.

(Josephs all sadly shake their heads.)

What could he do? She had broken her promise, broken the legal engagement that her family had made with him. And, worst of all, she had broken his heart.

He could have embarrassed her and made a big deal out of what she had done. But Joseph was a good man and a kind man. He decided to end their engagement, but to do it quietly.

Before he could put his plan into action, however –



He had a visit from an angel, as well!

The angel came to him at night, in a dream.

(Josephs all lay heads on hands as if asleep.)

Angel

'Joseph! Don't be afraid to marry Mary. She has not been unfaithful to you. The baby she is expecting is there by the power of God's own Holy Spirit. She is going to give birth to a son. And God wants you to call him Jesus, for just as that name means, he will rescue his people from their sins!'

Narrator

When Joseph woke up,

(All the Josephs wake up)

he did exactly what the angel told him and took Mary as his wife.

(Mary and Joseph leaders hold hands.)

(Maybe a bouquet appears from somewhere! And confetti. Have fun with it!)



But then, just like that! Another surprise!

The Roman ruler, Augustus, wanted to find out how many people were in his vast empire. So he ordered everyone under his control to return to their hometown to be counted.

Joseph was from Bethlehem, the town where King David once lived. So he and Mary had to travel way down south to be counted in the census. It was 90 miles or so. And despite what you might have seen in your school nativity play, they probably had to walk. (Sorry, little donkey!) It can't have been easy.

When they arrived they needed a place to stay, but so did all of Joseph's other relatives. And by the time they got to Bethlehem, all the nice upstairs rooms where families usually kept their guests, were full. So Mary and Joseph had to stay in a downstairs room, where the animals were kept for the night.

(Slide 7)

And it was there, among the animals and the straw, that Mary gave birth to Jesus.

So she wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger.

Everyone sings: *'O Little Town of Bethlehem.'*

Directions

During the song, sit the Marys in front of the Josephs, who stand behind them. Then pass around a baby Jesus between the Marys. Then the Animal Leader leads the animals to the front. They sit at the edges, or if they are little, in front of the Marys. This looks quite orderly on paper, but be prepared for chaos!

You can either have the Mary leader read this, or do it line by line and have the congregation repeat each line back to you, or have everyone read it off the screen.

Prayer

'Lord, help us be like Mary
Who answered when you asked.
Help us learn to give and serve
No matter what the task.'

Directions

You can either have the Joseph leader read this, or do it line by line and have the crowd repeat each line back to you, or have everyone read it from the screen.

Prayer

'Lord, help us be like Joseph
A man both kind and just
Help us listen when you speak
And teach us how to trust.'

Narrator

Everyone sings 'Silent Night' or 'Away in a Manger'

Directions

During the last verse of the song, Leaders lead everyone back to their seats. Then the Mary and Joseph Leaders need to return to the front (off to one side, if possible, to make room for shepherds, angels, star-watchers/wise men, etc. But still visible to the audience). Mary sits, holding baby Jesus, Joseph behind. (You can include the Animal Leader, if you like!)

Narrator (Slide 8)

Now shepherds gather and angels too. It's almost time for you to make your entrance.

(Shepherd Leader leads shepherds – and the odd sheep! – to the front during this first bit of narration.)

Nearby, in the hills outside of Bethlehem, there were shepherds, guarding their flocks of sheep.

The night was still. The stars were shining. All was quiet, apart from the odd sleepy baaaaa.

And then,



(Slide 9)

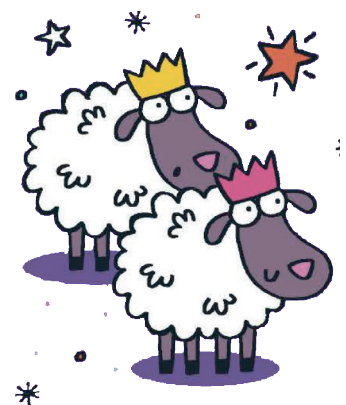
That angel appeared again. And the light that surrounded him surrounded the shepherds, too. It turned the night bright as white. And gave those shepherds an almighty fright!

(Shepherds tremble and shake.)

Angel

'Don't be afraid! The news I bring you is good! And it will fill everyone who hears it with joy! Today, in Bethlehem, in David's city, your saviour was born. That's right. The Messiah, the One God promised you. The one you have been waiting for, year after year after year. He's here!

'And this is the sign that points to him, so you will know for sure that you have found him: look for a baby, wrapped in cloths fit for a newborn, lying in a manger.'



Narrator

And when the angel had said that ...



A sky-full of angels joined him

(Angels come to the front)

– a crowd, a multitude, a heavenly host!

And, like an otherworldly choir or a flash mob sent from heaven, they shouted out their praises to God.

Angels

'Glory to God who reigns on high, and peace to those on earth who please him!'

Narrator

So let's sing with them. *'Hark the Herald Angels Sing'* or *'Angels We Have Heard on High'*.

Then away they went, as suddenly as they had appeared.

(Angels back to their seats)

And the shepherds, still shaking, said to one another ...

Shepherds

'God has told us this amazing thing! Let's go to Bethlehem and see!'

(Slide 10)

So off they went,

(Shepherds gather, kneeling, in front of Mary and Joseph)

hurrying, running, racing to the place the angel had revealed to them. And there was Mary. And there was Joseph. And there was a baby, just like the angel said, lying in a manger.

So the shepherds told Mary and Joseph everything the angel had told them about the baby – how he was the Messiah, God's long-promised one, finally come to his people.

And Mary kept those words, like a treasure, in her heart, to wonder and to ponder over, in the days and weeks and years to come.

Then back to the hills the shepherds went, praising God for all that they had seen and heard. No longer quiet, no longer still, but shouting and singing like angels.

Directions

You can either have the Shepherd/Angel Leader read this, or do it line by line and have the crowd repeat each line back to you, or have everyone read it from the screen.

Prayer

'Thank you, Lord for angel songs
That shout aloud the Saviour's birth.
Show us how to live in ways
That sing again of peace on earth.'

Narrator (Slide 11)

It's time for our Star-watchers, now. And our Stars. So as we sing this next song, we want you to come to the front. *(When they get there, put Stars behind and Star-watchers at the front.)*

Sing two verses of 'We Three Kings'



The Star-watchers knocked on the door of the palace – the palace of Herod, King of the Jews.

And when they were admitted, and when they stood before him, they gave him news that landed like an explosion on his ears.

Star- watchers

**'Can you tell us, please, where we can find the newborn King of the Jews?
We saw his star rise in the night skies and we have come to worship him.'**

Narrator (Slide 12)

It was all King Herod could do to keep from exploding with rage. He was the King of Jews and he had murdered anyone who had tried to take his throne, including members of his own family!

The Star-watchers, of course, had no way of knowing this. They were not Jews, themselves. They were from another country, far away, east of Jerusalem, for God wanted everyone, everywhere, to know about Jesus – to bless the whole world, just as he had always promised.

King Herod sent the Star-watchers away, and immediately gathered every priest and scribe and expert that he could find. Then he asked them one question and one question only.

Directions

King Herod: (formerly the angel but now dressed as a king! Could address this to the narrator, who could look through a scroll and answer for the scribes.)

King Herod

**'Where do our holy books say that
God's long-promised Messiah will be
born?'**



Narrator

'In Bethlehem, of Judea,' they answered. 'For the prophet Micah says that even though it is just a little town, out of Bethlehem will come one who will be a ruler and a shepherd of his people.'

King Herod

'Search for the child. And when you have found him, come back and tell me exactly where he is, because, erm, I want to worship him, too!'

Narrator (Slide 13)

That was a lie, and King Herod knew it. He only wanted to find the child so he could kill him.

(Star-watchers go to Mary and Joseph and the child and give their gifts when the narration tells them to.)

The Star-watchers didn't know that, so off they went, following that star to Bethlehem. And when it stopped and rested above a house, they knew they had found the place.

Jesus was no longer a tiny newborn baby. No, he was a little toddler, living with Mary and Joseph in that house.

And when the Star-watchers entered the house, they fell on their knees before him and worshipped him. Then they gave him precious gifts – gold and frankincense and myrrh. Gifts fit for a king!

And when their visit was finished, did they return to King Herod and tell him where the baby was? No, they did not! For, in the night, God spoke to them in a dream that told them of the king's wicked plan.

So, in the morning, avoiding the palace, they returned home by another way.

Directions

You can either have the Star-watchers Leader read this, or do it line by line and have the crowd repeat each line back to you, or have everyone read it from the screen.

Prayer

Lord, help us be like Star-watchers
Following your lead
Looking for your guidance
In every word and deed.

Narrator

Sing two more verses of 'We Three Kings'

(Star-watchers return to their seats)

(Slide 14)

We've had a lovely time celebrating the Christmas story. We do it every year. And we do it for a reason. These events don't stand on their own. No, they are part of a much bigger set of events that link back to the beginning of everything, and forward to forever.

They link back to the creation of the world

Narrator



when God made men and women to love him, and each other, and the world he'd created.

And they link back



to the promise that God made to that nation – that one day he would send them a king like their best king, David, to set up God's own kingdom for everyone on earth.

Jesus, the baby born to Mary fulfilled all those promises, just as the Angel said. Descended from David, he was God's own Son, sent to crush the power of evil.

But that was just the beginning of the world-changing event that was his birth.

For it links forward to the grown up Jesus who ...



healed the sick and fed the hungry and welcomed the outcast to show what life in God's kingdom was like.

It links forward to his death, where his sacrifice ...



defeated the power of evil by taking away the shame and guilt and punishment for every wrong thing that anyone would ever do.

It links forward to his resurrection from the dead where ...



he paved the way for our resurrection.

It links forward to his ascension, where ...



(Slide 15)

Narrator

he reigns at God's side.

And it links forward to the coming of his Holy Spirit ...



who lives inside everyone who follows him and helps them to live like he did.

And finally it links forward even further still, through 2,000 years of history, to you and to me. And then beyond, to eternity, when ...



God will make a New Heaven and New Earth where he will be our king forever!

(Slide 16)

So let's celebrate God's Big Story as we sing together:

Sing either *'From the Squalor of a Borrowed Stable'* or *'The Servant King'*

Thank you so much for being with us today, and for helping us tell God's good news story.

So let's give a great big 'Blessed are you among women!' to all our Marys.

And let's give a great big, 'No need to worry!' to all our Josephs.

And let's give a great big, 'MOO! BAAA! HEEHAW!' to all our animals.

And let's give a great big, 'Surprise! Don't be afraid!' to all our angels.

And let's give a great big, 'Don't be afraid? Are you baa-rmy' to all our shepherds.

And, finally, let's give a great big, 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star!' To all our Stars and Star-watchers.

And let's finish by singing with those angels:

'Joy to the World!'



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