

The Pop-Up Nativity



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Introduction

Based on Christmas story booklet, *The Well Good News Of Christmas*, this Nativity resource has been produced for churches wanting to put on an easy, fun and interactive Nativity-themed service this Christmas.

We know how difficult it can be to run a good Nativity service, without hours and hours of preparation and effort. That's why we've put together this resource; so you can forget about costume-making, script-writing and line-learning, and put on an interactive Nativity service that all ages will enjoy.

The story of the birth of Jesus is one of the most well-known stories in the Bible, but we hope that this fresh retelling brings the story to life for all ages, and explains just why the birth of Jesus is 'well good' news for everyone!



How to use this guide

In this guide you will find a narrator's script for retelling the Nativity story. All you need is one narrator to tell the story, although you could split up the sections between different readers.

The script is written in the format of a suggested service outline. We recognise that as well as telling the Nativity story, you will probably want to add other elements to your Christmas service, such as carols and prayers. We've made some suggestions, but they are all optional and can be mixed and matched around the Nativity retelling.

Throughout the script, there are various opportunities for making the Nativity interactive. These are all highlighted and explained. They are completely optional, but we would suggest you make the most of them so that everyone has the opportunity to engage (and have lots of fun!)

Additional resources

We have produced several other resources that you may find useful for your Christmas service(s):

Visuals

To accompany your Pop-Up Nativity, we have produced a PowerPoint presentation with images for you to use alongside the Nativity retelling. With hand-illustrated images from the *The Well Good News Of Christmas* story booklet, these backgrounds will add an extra visual dimension to your service as well as providing words for everyone to read together. If you have projection facilities, we suggest using this presentation. The PowerPoint file is available for download at:

biblesociety.org.uk/nativityvisuals

Refugee video

The Well Good News of Christmas resources have been funded generously by donations from supporters from Bible Society. As a charity, Christmas is a key time for us as we receive gifts from individuals and churches across the country.

If you are planning to hold a collection during the service, we'd love you to consider supporting our refugee work this year.

You can download our inspiring video from snowy Austria, which shows some of our key work with refugees, and explains how even a small donation can provide a Bible for a refugee, and show God's love this Christmas. It is available from:

biblesociety.org.uk/nativityvisuals

Booklet

The Pop-Up Nativity is based on *The Well Good News Of Christmas* booklet, a small storybook, ideal for retelling the Christmas story with children at home. You may wish to read through one for reference, or even give copies away at your Christmas service(s) to visitors. They are available to order from our website.

A video animation of the booklet is also available online and as a download – you can find this and links to all our other Christmas resources by visiting:

biblesociety.org.uk/Christmas



Counting down

Before your service, there are just a few things that are worth doing to make sure you're ready and the Nativity will be the best it can be:

Advertise

It's great fun if children come to the Nativity dressed up as one of the characters from the story. There's an opportunity in the script for those who are dressed up to parade with their costumes. Make sure you advertise this widely, so families know to come dressed up – and will be prepared for shepherds and wise men to be walking through your church doors!

Plan who does what

You will need a Narrator; somebody who is a confident, clear reader and can bring out expression in the story. Make sure they read through the script beforehand so they're aware of where everything goes and how the flow of the service will run.

You'll also need to decide whether you want to split up the sections between different readers. There are some refrains throughout the script for everybody to join in with. The words are on the accompanying PowerPoint presentation for you to show on a screen. But if you don't have a screen, the narrator could just read them.

Be interactive

There are a few different opportunities in the script for making the Nativity interactive, and some of these will need explaining before you get into the story. Make sure you decide which bits you'll include and let the congregation know at the beginning of the service what they'll need to do.

Have some extra props prepared

You could provide some tinsel halos for angels and some paper crowns for kings, plus tea towels (and cord to keep them on people's heads) for shepherds. This means that everyone can take part, even if they forgot or didn't know about coming in costume.



The Pop-Up Nativity

Slide 1 **Welcome** – Narrator/Service leader

Welcome everybody to the service and explain that today you will be retelling the Christmas story, and that there will be a chance for everybody to be involved.

Opening prayer

Dear God

Thank you for the fun and excitement of Christmas, and the chance to retell the wonderful story of Jesus' birth. We pray that you would be with us today and open our eyes in new ways to the Nativity story. Amen

Suggested carol – *O come all ye faithful*



Slide 2 **Introduction**

Explain that today you will be telling the Nativity story based on the *of The Well Good News of Christmas*, but you can't do it alone and will need help from everybody else.

Every time you say the following words, you need the congregation to join in by doing these actions and sounds:

Well good: Thumbs up

Shepherds: Hands out and bent forward, say 'Baa'

Wise men: Stroke chin wisely and say 'hmmm'

Mary: Hands up and shout 'Mummy'

Joseph: Hands up and shout 'Daddy'

Angel: Wave hands above head and sing a holy 'ahhh'

Have a practise by saying each word one or two times so everybody has got it. You may want somebody to help you lead the actions from the front. When the words come up in your script, they will be highlighted so you will know to give a little pause (and maybe some encouragement) for the congregation to join with the action.

Also let everybody know that anybody who has dressed up as one of the characters in the Nativity story will get a chance to join in and show off their outfits later in the service, and you'll explain how to do that.

Finally, explain that there will be some words within the story for everybody to join in with and read together. These will be shown on the screen.

Now ask everybody to settle down, and you're ready to begin telling the story.

Slide 3 **Creation**

Narrator: Our story starts a really, really long time ago. It was a time before
Toys
Trees
Birds
And animals (even before those big animals with the floppy ears and really big trunks).

Our story starts before humans like you and me...

Before **shepherds**

Before **wise men**

Our story begins so long ago, it was even before [*insert name of somebody who will make the audience laugh e.g. somebody famous, church leader's name*].

A time before everything

God made the world.

And it was **well good!**

Slide 4

But...the humans he made, like you and like me,
said mean things and were really quite nasty.
In fact the humans didn't listen to God.
They'd hurt each other and wouldn't make amends
So God and humans could no longer be friends.

But to be friends again, God had a plan.
And his plan was to send a very special young man.



Slide 5 **The angel appears to Mary**

Narrator: Many years later, there was a young lady called **Mary**.
From the Bible I mean
Not the baker off the telly!

This one day, or maybe even night
an **angel** appeared suddenly and gave **Mary** quite a fright.
The **angel** said:

Slide 6 **Everybody:** I bring good news
It's **well good** – honest!
There'll be a baby born
Just as God promised

Narrator: So **Mary** was going to have a baby, just as God promised. And the baby would be called, Jesus.

Suggested carol – *Once in Royal David's City*

Invite the angels to parade around the church during the carol.

Slide 7 **Joseph**

Narrator: There was a man called **Joseph** and he was going to marry **Mary**.
But **Joseph** noticed, she had a bit of a belly.

He saw her big belly bump, and wondered how'd it got there.
And so he scratched his head and twizzled his hair.

Slide 8

But one night, when **Joseph** was sleeping, an **angel** came to visit.
The **angel** said:
Mary will give birth through the spirit.

Slide 9

Everybody: I bring good news
It's **well good** – honest
There'll be a baby born
Just as God promised

Slide 10

Narrator: So **Mary** and **Joseph** – both of them!
Set off together on a journey, all the way to Bethlehem.

Suggested carol – *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

Invite the Marys and Josephs to parade around the church during the carol.

No room at the inn

Narrator: When they arrived in Bethlehem
Mary was ready to give birth to the baby who'll be King
But guess what? There was no room for them at the inn!

Slide 11

Everybody: Don't be afraid
Don't get uptight
Relax, take a breather
You'll be all right!

Slide 12

Narrator: So they managed to find somewhere to stay, in a stable,
In a place full of hay.

They stayed in the place where animals get fed.
And it was there that baby Jesus was born, with straw for a bed.



Slide 13

Now, in a field nearby, there were some **shepherds**.
They were just minding their own business,
Maybe cleaning their shoes
Maybe trying to scrape off the smelly sheep poos!
[React to a bad smell]
But all of a sudden, something really weird happened.
Out of nowhere, an **angel** appeared!



Slide 14

Everybody: Don't be afraid
That's what I say
Say hi to the baby
In a manger full of hay.

Slide 15

Narrator: Then as the **angel** said that, something even weirder happened!
Suddenly, loads of **angels** appeared! And I mean LOADS!

Slide 16

Everybody: We bring good news, they said
It's **well good** – honest!
There'll be a baby born
Just as God promised

Slide 17

Narrator: So the **shepherds**, having listened to what the **angels** said, hurried
off to Bethlehem to find the baby Jesus. And they found him there,
lying in a manger of straw in a stable.

Suggested carol – *See him lying on a bed of straw*
Invite the shepherds to parade around the church during the carol.

Slide 18

Wise men

Narrator: There were also some **wise men** in the story. They had been
travelling a very long way. But they didn't use Google maps, or a sat
nav – they followed a star!

They went to the King, King Herod, and asked where baby Jesus was
as they had seen his star.
So King Herod sent the **wise men** to Bethlehem, which wasn't all
that far.

Slide 19

Then the **wise men** found Jesus
Next to animals with fur
And they brought him some Gold
Frankincense and Myrrh.

And the **wise men** bowed down and worshipped him.

Suggested carol – *We three kings*

Invite the Wise Men to parade around the church during the carol.

Slide 20 Escaping from Herod

Narrator: The **wise men** remembered that King Herod wanted them to report back to him.
But Herod wasn't very nice, and so they were warned in a dream not to go back to him!

Slide 21 Everybody: Don't be afraid
Hear what I say!
Just don't visit Herod
Go home another way.

Slide 22 Narrator: Herod searched high
And Herod searched low,
but where was Jesus? He just didn't know.

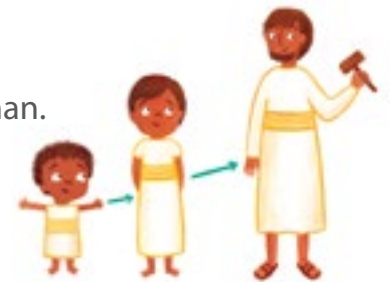
Slide 23 An **angel** appeared to **Mary** and **Joseph** to warn them to hide from Herod in a different country.

Slide 24 Everybody: Don't be afraid
Don't get uptight
Relax, take a breather
You'll be alright!

Narrator: So they escaped to a different country, until Herod was gone.
And then they were no longer afraid.
They travelled back home, and that's where they stayed.

Slide 25 Jesus fulfils God's promise

Narrator: So Jesus grew up, from a baby, to a boy, to a man.
Jesus grew up to be a carpenter man.
And he did amazing things



Slide 26 He healed the sick, he told great stories.
Was amazing all the time
He also walked on water and even turned water into wine!

Slide 27 And do you remember that time, long, long ago, when humans like me and you were mean and not very nice?
When we were nasty to each other and we wouldn't make amends?
And when God and humans could no longer be friends?

But then God had a plan to make us friends again?
Well Jesus the baby and Jesus the man;
Was the exact same Jesus and God's rescue plan.

Jesus lived, then he died, for you and for me,
He did it to make our wrong, history.
To take the blame for all the mean things we've ever done.
But something amazing happened, because he's the most powerful
one.

He came back to life! And it's worth a big high five
Because the **well good** news is Jesus came alive!

Slide 28 **Everybody:** So don't get scared, or jumpy
And don't be afraid
'I will be with you always' – says Jesus
'Not for a bit, but always.'

Slide 29 **Narrator:** And that's why Christmas is the **well good** news, honest!
When Jesus came, just as God promised.

Slide 30 The end.



Extra bits – Narrator/Service leader

At this point there are several options for what you might do next. The Nativity story has ended, and you may choose to not do anything else and just end your service. Or you might do any or all of these other options:

- A short talk/sermon on the meaning of Christmas
- Say some prayers
- Remind people that Jesus and his family were refugees, and show the Bible Society video about how your congregation can help refugees this winter, and explain that the Pop-Up Nativity was produced by Bible Society and funded from generous donations by churchgoers across the UK.

Suggested carol – *Come and join the celebration*

Conclusion – Narrator/Service leader

You have come to the end of the service now. You may want to thank everybody for coming and say this final prayer:

Closing prayer

Dear God

Thank you that Christmas is 'well good' news. Thank you that you sent your son to show your love for us, so that we could be friends with you.

We pray that you will be with people in need this Christmas, especially refugees, just like Jesus' family were. We pray that you'd comfort everybody, and help everyone to know your love and enjoy this Christmas.

Thank you that we are able to celebrate Christmas with presents and fun.

Amen.

End



Thank you for taking part in the Pop-Up Nativity, we hope you enjoyed your service. We have even more resources for you and your church at:

biblesociety.org.uk/resources

Or if you'd like more Christmas materials check out:

biblesociety.org.uk/Christmas

At Bible Society we believe the Bible can be a catalyst for change for good around the world. Working across Africa, China and the Middle East – in places where Christianity is growing fastest – we’re translating, distributing and helping people to relate and make sense of the Bible. And we’re advocating for its place in society so that its wisdom, inspiration and relevance are not lost.

Here at home, where the Bible is readily available but rarely read, we’re introducing a new generation to the life changing stories it contains and helping people engage with it better so that the Bible will continue to shape our communities.

We were founded over 200 years ago by a passionate group of people who believed God’s word should be shared across the world, and we’ve been sustained by the commitment of thousands of supporters – people like you – who’ve joined our mission to bring the Bible to life.

Everything we do is driven by one conviction: that when people engage with the Bible lives can change, for good. So if the Bible has made a difference to your life, please join with us through prayer and support to bring the Bible to life around the world.

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