



Christmas

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Christmas

This unit is one in a series about Jesus growing up.

AIM

To overcome the problem that many people see Jesus as a tiny baby one minute and grown up and dying on a cross the next. Also to demonstrate that, in the same way that we do, Jesus went through the process of growing up.

BIBLE BACKGROUND (Luke 2:1–21; Matthew 2:1–12)

Jesus the light for the world

Christmas is a perfect celebration for Messy Church: it demonstrates the way that God himself comes down and graces our ordinary everyday lives with his holy presence, bringing the sacred into the ordinary and hallowing it. God sent Jesus to be cared for—not, like the young Samuel, in a religious community set apart from the world, but in a family. If ever we needed assurance that God thinks families are fantastic, we find it here. What does Mary do? She wraps him in cloths—just as God made clothes for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21)—so the roles are reversed and humans care for God by keeping him warmly clothed. God wants to live in the lives of the most ordinary people.

FOOD

Christmas fare

Turkey pie and mash.

ACTIVITIES

Gift of time

You will need: Card, pens, envelopes

Prepare cards with the following wording.

I

.....
hereby give you

.....
a present of

.....
with lots of love

Invite people to decorate the cards and envelopes and fill in the gaps with the appropriate names and a present of ‘walking the dog once’ or ‘vacuuming the lounge in January’ or ‘painting your toenails’ or a similar gift of time and effort that they could give to someone.

Talk about

During this activity, talk about how to show love in different ways. It’s often about giving something up for the sake of the other person.

Wise person's hat

You will need: A selection of sticky tape, scissors, card, paper and decorations

Design and make a hat for one of the wise men to wear when they come to see Jesus. A few prototypes can get the creative juices flowing, or some pictures printed off from a search on 'hats' under Google images. You could do a search on 'Design your own hat'.

Talk about

During this activity, talk about the wise men who came to see Jesus when he was young (Matthew 2:1–12).

Angel mobile

You will need: Card, lots of glitter, holographic paper shapes and foil

Make an angel to your own design. Collect the angels and suspend them from a hoop, fairly densely packed but with enough room to move, and hang the finished mobile up in church to enjoy over the Christmas period.

Talk about

During this activity, talk about the angels telling the shepherds about Jesus' birth (Luke 2:8–20).

Nappies

You will need: A life-sized baby doll, terry nappies, disposable nappies, nappy pins, sheeting (optional)

Invite people to learn how to fold and put on a terry nappy with a pin, and how to put on a disposable nappy. If you had some squares of sheeting, people could also put nappies on each other over their clothes, which is fun if all parties are willing.

Talk about

During this activity, talk about Jesus being born as a baby, just like babies are born today.

Graffiti wall

You will need: A huge piece of card or thick paper marked out in brick shapes (you can buy wallpaper with a brick pattern as a more expensive alternative), paint, brushes

Invite everyone to paint Christmas greetings to passers-by on the wall.

Talk about

During this activity, talk about Jesus being born in a very rough place.

Edible baby

You will need: Bun cases, biscuits to fit in them, shredded wheat, icing, jelly baby, fondant icing

Make a manger for the baby by placing a round biscuit in the base of a bun case (you may have to use homemade biscuits to make them small enough). Stick on some shredded wheat cereal with a blob of icing for the hay and make a baby out of a jelly baby swaddled in fondant icing to place on top.

Talk about

During this activity, talk about the good things we have to eat at Christmas time.

Print wrapping paper

You will need: A star-shaped pastry cutter or a circular bottle top, tissue paper, metallic paint

Print a repeated pattern with metallic paint on to bright-coloured tissue paper. When the paper is dry, take it home and use it to wrap a present.

Talk about

During this activity, talk about the fun of giving presents.

Christmas bauble

You will need: Funky art foam or card, scissors, PVA glue, golden glitter, coloured sequins, strong, shiny thread and darning needle

Cut a circle (about 12cm diameter) out of white or golden card or art foam, and then cut out its middle to make a ring. Cut a blue or green circle of card or art foam to fit, freely moving, inside the ring. Cut a candle shape out of the blue or green circle. Glue golden glitter and sequins on to both sides of the outer ring to represent the brightness of heaven. Glue blue and green sequins on to both sides of the inner circle to represent the world. Thread the two pieces together with the world inside the heavens, using a shiny thread, so that the world rotates within the bigger 'heavenly' ring. You could write 'Jesus is the light for the world' on the outside ring. Hang the bauble on a Christmas tree at home.

Talk about

During this activity, talk about Jesus as the light for the world (John 1:4; 8:12).

Christmas noticeboard collage

You will need: Cardboard shapes to wrap, wrapping paper, prepared display, tag shapes, pens, sticky tape

Have the basics of a picture with a baby in a manger in the centre, appearing as if from a Christmas present. Everyone can take a cardboard shape, wrap it in Christmas wrapping paper with streamers and bows, and stick it around the manger. Each person also makes

a large gift tag that says 'Happy Christmas to [name] with love from God'. The tags are then stuck on to the manger.

Talk about

During this activity, talk about Jesus being the best present of all.

Junk stable

You will need: Lots of boxes and big containers, other junk, string and sticky tape

Invite everyone to make a stable for Jesus, complete with junk animals, manger and people.

Talk about

During this activity, talk about Jesus' birthplace.

CELEBRATION

Songs

- ❖ 'Show me the way to shine for Jesus' (Christmas song from the Ideas section on www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk)
- ❖ Christmas songs known to all

Show a PowerPoint display of photographs of the session as everyone comes in.

Storytelling

Begin by asking everyone if they are looking forward to Christmas. What are they looking forward to most? Perhaps... presents!

I wonder which you like best, getting or giving presents? When I count to three, shout 'We-hey!' if you prefer getting presents and 'Yabadoo!' if you prefer giving presents. I wonder why we give presents at Christmas. It's not everyone's birthday! Perhaps it's to show our love for one another... and perhaps to remind us of the first Christmas present.

The first Christmas present wasn't wrapped in bright shiny paper, but in strips of cloth. The first Christmas present wasn't under the tree or in a stocking: this present was lying in an animals' feeding trough. There was no tag to say who this present was for, but the angel told the shepherds that it was good news for everyone.

This was the first and best Christmas present: baby Jesus, God's Son.

The angels could have shouted 'Yabadoo!' because they knew God loves giving presents, but actually they sang, 'Praise God in heaven! Peace on earth to everyone who pleases God.' When the shepherds saw the baby, they could have shouted 'We-hey!' but in fact they praised God and said wonderful things about him, because of all they had seen and heard.

Christmas is a time to shout, 'We-hey!' We praise God because he gives us so many presents: our life, this wonderful world, our family and those who care for us, our friends, food and fun—and all the things we enjoy at Christmas. To show his love for the world, at Christmas God gave Jesus as a present to everyone. (*Show a picture of the crib with names on it from the craft session*). We-hey!

When someone gives you a present you need to:

- ❖ Receive it.
- ❖ Unwrap it.
- ❖ Say 'thank you'.
- ❖ Enjoy it.
- ❖ Share it by showing others.

It's the same with the first and best Christmas present. We need to:

- ❖ Receive God's present by welcoming Jesus into our homes and our lives.
- ❖ Unwrap God's present by listening to more of the story of Jesus' life and getting to know him better.
- ❖ Say 'thank you' for God's present by singing carols to praise and thank him.
- ❖ Enjoy God's present by treasuring and keeping Jesus as our friend, and by conversing with him in prayer every day.
- ❖ Share God's present by showing others what a wonderful present Jesus is, and how God loves to give his present to everyone. Yabadoo!

Prayer response

Display the response in bold on a projection screen. Invite people to hold their hands out and close their eyes as if to receive a present.

Leader: Our Father God, we thank you for giving us the gift of Jesus your Son. Help us all to receive him and know him with glad and thankful hearts, and to share your gift of love with everyone. Father God...

All: Thank you for Jesus, your present of love.

Invite everyone to open their eyes and then to place their hands over their eyes so that it is dark.

Leader: Our Father God, we think of all the people in the world for whom this Christmas will be a dark, sad or difficult time. Send them help, send them hope, send them the gift of your love and light. Father God...

All: Thank you for Jesus, your present of love.

Invite everyone to take their hands away from their eyes and reach up high.

Leader: Our Father God, thank you for Christmas. Help us to lift up Jesus with our carols and songs of praise so that everyone can see his glory and join the celebration. Father God...

All: Thank you for Jesus, your present of love.

Takeaway menu

- ❖ Provide a small present-shaped collecting box and a tealight candle. You could extend the angel-making activity above and invite families to take a bag of materials to give to another family they know, who could make an angel and bring it to church to add on to the mobile at a Christingle or carol service. The other church congregations could also be invited to contribute an angel to make a really spectacular mobile.
- ❖ Christmas is a time for giving: can you fill the box with money to give away to your favourite charity?
- ❖ Light the candle together and ask God to shine his light on someone who needs it.
- ❖ Explain to someone who wasn't at Messy Church what one of your crafts is all about.

SAVOURY DISHES

Chicken or quorn korma

Cook chicken pieces and pour over a ready-made korma sauce (from a jar). Serve with rice, vegetables and poppadoms.

Ploughperson's tea

On each plate put a slab of cheese, half an apple, a wodge of cucumber and a roll or a chunk of French bread. Have pickle and pickled onions available for people to help themselves.

Sausage casserole

Brown the sausages in a grill or frying pan and chop them into slices or chunks. Add tins of butter beans. Soften sliced onions and add to the sausages. Pour over a stock or gravy and mixed herbs and cook until the sausages are piping hot and cooked all the way through. Serve with mashed potato and vegetables or baked beans. Use veggie sausages as an alternative.

French bread pizza

Slice baguette loaves open lengthways and top them with tomato sauce, grated cheese and different toppings, such as peppers, salami, ham or pineapple. Serve with cucumber slices and carrot sticks.

Soup sauce casserole

Spread out turkey pieces (and sliced vegetables, if desired) in casserole dishes. Pour tins of condensed soup over them (mushroom or chicken soups are ideal). Cook for about an hour. Have a quorn or mushroom soup option for vegetarians. If you are being posh, you could bake some star shapes out of puff pastry and deposit one on

top of each serving (however, 80 puffy stars in an unpredictable oven nearly drove poor Clare to drink).

Pitta pockets

Make up a basic mince-based sauce and fill a pitta pocket with it. Serve with cucumber or carrot sticks.

Hotdogs and wedges

This worked nicely when we had a summer Messy Church picnic tea in the garden. Hot dogs, salad bits, ketchup, finger rolls... For the wedges, slice up potatoes into wedges, boil for five minutes or so, pour over some oil and garlic if you like and give them a good oily shake. Bake in a really hot oven for about 40 minutes.

Pasta twirls with tomato sauce

It is easiest to make this by using ready-made pasta sauces (from a jar). Serve with French bread and grated cheese, cucumber and cold sweetcorn in bowls on the tables so that people can help themselves.

BISCUITS AND BREAD

Gingerbread biscuits

You will need: 300g plain flour, a pinch of salt, 1 tsp baking powder, 1 tsp ground ginger, 100g butter or margarine, 100g soft brown sugar, 2 eggs, 60g golden syrup, mixing bowl, mixing spoon or hand-held mixer, baking parchment or grease-proof paper, flour, mini chocolate or candy sweets, or currants

Put the flour, salt, baking powder and spice into a bowl. Rub in the butter or margarine, then stir in the sugar. Beat the eggs with the

golden syrup and add to the mixture. Mix well either by hand or with a hand-held mixer. **NB:** Make sure people wash their hands before the activity.

Divide the mixture into pieces sufficient for each person. Have a surface ready for rolling, such as pieces of well-floured baking parchment or greaseproof paper on your normal table covering. The mixture should be rolled out to about 5mm thickness and then the biscuits can be cut out with people-shaped cutters. Decorate with mini chocolate or candy sweets or currants. Place each biscuit on a square of baking parchment, marked with the person's name, then put the biscuits on a baking sheet and bake them in an oven preheated to Gas Mark 4 or 160°C for about 18 minutes.

NB: As the biscuit recipe has egg in it, make sure people don't eat the raw mixture.

Bread dough

You will need: 400g strong plain flour, 2 level tsp sugar, 2 level tsp dried yeast (the easy baking variety), 230ml plus 5 tbsps warm water, 1.5 level tsp salt, 2 tbsps olive oil, two mixing bowls, mixing spoon, sieve, clean tea towel, greaseproof paper

Sift the flour, sugar, yeast and salt into a bowl (if you are using yeast that needs to be reconstituted in water first, follow the instructions on the packet). Add the oil and water and knead well. Cover with a clean tea towel and leave in a warm place for approximately one hour until double in size. Turn out on to a floured surface and knead again evenly until smooth. Divide the dough and shape as required. Place the items on a greased and floured baking tray. Cover with the tea towel and leave until doubled in size.

Bake in the centre of an oven at Gas Mark 5 or 190°C for 45–50 minutes for a loaf and 15–20 minutes for rolls, until the top is golden brown and the base sounds hollow when tapped. Cool on a wire rack.



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