

All-Age Nativity

Preparation:

This all-age nativity offers maximum involvement with minimum rehearsal. The nativity uses props. A tableau of characters is gradually arranged and a simple challenge is included at the end.

I have led it many times, including at Messy Church and it works really well. Invite people to come dressed as a 'Delightful Angel', 'Funky Shepherd' or a 'Splendid Wise Man' (or similar). This adds to the atmosphere and the participation. You can have additional costumes ready, but not necessary.

You can adapt the script to suit your context and to make it your own. For example, the carols help tell the story along with your storytelling, but you may wish to limit the number you sing and the number of verses. I haven't suggested carols in the script. The ones I use are the obvious ones, e.g. 'while shepherds watched' at the appropriate place. Again you can adapt to your context.

I have also omitted most / all of the readings, but have included them here for you to use depending on your context.

If you make changes watch the numbering on the boxes!!!! The whole thing lasts around 20minutes. It tells the story of the first Christmas and is great fun.

Wrap the boxes attractively as Christmas presents. The key thing is getting the numbering correct. It's easy to get confused in the wrapping. Boxes of different sizes work well, the more varied the better. This adds to the excitement and the surprise.

Each box needs to be clearly labelled with the **appropriate number** and the instruction: **'Don't open until asked'**.

In the script there are 17 gifts. You will need at least 20 boxes. Depending on how many sunglasses you have for the shepherds, whether you have both a mobile and a toy phone and how many carols you sing I have had 30+ boxes wrapped. Present no. 12 is 3 boxes (see below).

Presents: **2, 5, 7, 9, 11, 14** and 17 each contain a slip of paper with the title of a carol or song. Make sure the **number 9** (nine) isn't confused with **number 6** (six).

The contents of the other boxes are as follows:

- 1 **A Bible**
- 3 For **Isaiah** – a telephone (toy phone & mobile phone to suit both adults and children)
- 4 For **Mary** – an engagement ring – \$2 shop, the bigger the better, be aware that the girls always want to keep them!
- 6 For **Joseph** – a tax form (find a spare IRD one)
- 8 For the **Innkeeper** – a large sign saying **'No Vacancies'**
- 10 **Shepherds** - several presents with this number; each containing a pair of sunglasses, a mixture of adult and child sizes
- 12 **Wise men** - three presents, each numbered 12; one should contain a **horoscope page** from a magazine (**don't panic – look at the script!**) another a **map** and the third a **travel brochure**
- 13 **Star**
- 15 A plastic rubbish sack
- 16 A doll, **or**, if you have a real live baby, a baby shawl

Give out the presents as people arrive. It works well for the presents to be given in family units. This helps keep the children from opening them ahead of time.

Present 4 needs to be female – Mary

Present 6 needs to be male – Joseph

As you hand out the gifts re-enforce the message not to open the box until requested.

You will need a manger.

Script:

'Today we are going to hear the story of Jesus, born at the first Christmas - Jesus, who is the Son of God. At Christmas, we think about presents - presents we give and presents we receive.

Today, you have been given a present.

Don't worry if you weren't given one, as they are for all of us to share. (You'll find that most people will have a present, so adjust your introduction depending on how many are present.)

We will open them one by one.

When you are asked to open it, come out to the front so that we can all see and join in the excitement!

- Would the person with **present number 1** please open their box. (**Bible**)

This is a reminder that the story we are going to hear is from the Bible.

- Would the person with **present number 2** please open their box. (**carol / song**)

- Would the person with **present number 3** please open their box. (**telephone**)

What do we use a telephone for? - To communicate and send txt messages.

All through the Bible there are messages from God.

Many of the messages in the Old Testament are about God's special person who was coming.

Reading: - Isaiah 9: 2, 6-9

God has promised his special person is coming. But how is this going to happen?

- Would the person with **present number 4** please open their box. (**ring**)

It's a ring because this young lady, Mary, is engaged to be married.

But before she gets married, something very strange and wonderful happens.

She has a visit from an angel!

Reading: - Luke 1: 26-38

So Mary finds she having a baby - but she's not married! Many years ago this was shocking.

But the news is good, not bad, because this is no ordinary baby.

- Would the person with **present number 5** please open their box. (**carol / song**)

- Would the person with **present number 6** please open their box. (**tax form**)

Many of us have had these, and so did Joseph. Joseph is Mary's fiancé.

He has had problems accepting the news about the baby, but an angel visited him, and told him that it was all part of God's plan.

Now, just as the baby is due, Joseph has a summons from the Roman tax office to go and register at Bethlehem, a long way away!

Reading: - Luke 2: 1-5

- Would the person with **present number 7** please open their box. (**carol / song**)

What happened when Joseph and Mary arrived at Bethlehem?

- Who has **present number 8?** – (**'no vacancies' sign**)

There was no room for Mary and Joseph to stay. What were they to do?

Reading: - Luke 2: 5b-7

Please would our innkeeper come and show Mary and Joseph into the stable.

As they settle in, let's open **present number 9 (a carol / song)**

[*'Away in a manger' works well here*]

Mary and Joseph have found a safe place to stay in Bethlehem, and Mary's baby is born.

But what's in **present number 10?**

There seems to be a number of these. Would you all come to the front and open them together and put on the contents. (**sunglasses**)

You don't usually need sunglasses in the middle of the night, do you?

On this particular night these shepherds could have done with them.

A bright light shocked and scared them!

But then they heard the angels with an amazing message...

Reading: - Luke 2:8-16.

[If you don't use the reading here say:

'For today Saviour has been born whose name is Jesus

and you will find a young child wrapped in clothes, and laid in a manger.

And suddenly there were many angels praising God, and saying,

- 'Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to all men'.]

The shepherds couldn't wait to get to Bethlehem.

As they hurry on their way, let's have the angels come and join them too.

Let's open **present number 11** to find out which carol we will sing. (**carol / song**)

On that very special night, the baby was born and had his first visitors.

But others came to visit too.

Let's open **presents with number 12**

(1. **horoscope page** 2. **travel** brochure 3. **map**)

These wise men want to travel. Here is a travel brochure to prove it.

How are they to decide where to go? Is the horoscope page a clue?

Some people today use these pages as a guide through life.

And, yes, the wise men did study the stars, of course.

But following horoscopes can confuse us and lead us astray.

A map seems a much more sensible guide.

The wise men took a wrong turning and ended up at King Herod's palace.

It was only when they studied God's word that they got back on track.

Reading: - Matthew 2: 1 -11

Let's open **present number 13 (Star)** comes forward.

Let's sing about the wise men. Who has **present number 14?** (**carol / song**)

[*'As with gladness men of old', works well*]

As we sing, would our wise men make their way to Bethlehem.

So here is our story. A story of 2,000 years ago.

Here are the small group of people gathered together in Bethlehem, watching God's purposes being fulfilled.

But it's not only a story of 2,000 years ago, it's a story for us today.

You may have noticed that something is missing.

We have two more gifts to open. What might be in them?

Let's open **present number 15. (rubbish sack)**

Now, there's a surprise! A rubbish sack!

But it's something we need for all this used wrapping paper.

If we were expecting something else in that parcel, we need not be disappointed.

The real gift has been here all the time!

It is too big to put in a box and has already been given to us.

It is Jesus, the Son of God, given at that first Christmas.

To make our picture complete, we will use a doll (*or the baby*) to represent Jesus in our manger here.

Produce the **doll**.

[*or, alter the script to ask for a real baby and unwrap the baby shawl (**present number 16**)]*

But what will we do with the real Jesus?

Will we clear him away with all these boxes at the end?

Will he just be put out with the rubbish when Christmas is over?

Joseph and Mary, the poor shepherds and the rich wise men, all recognised who he was.

What about us?

Let's pray.

Present number 17 (final carol)

[*'See him lying on a bed of straw' works well.]*

As we sing, all the children might like to come and sit around the manger.