



Advent Christmas Card Activity

A stand-alone activity, or one to incorporate with other aspects of the Advent Resource. If using as stand-alone incorporate an introduction and include a suitable prayer activity to begin and end.

Aim To engage young people in reflection on the Christmas story, using art and scripture.

Materials needed

- A selection of Christmas cards with Christian themes and messages, ideally with a good variety of art forms and depictions. *Religious organisations and charities often have the best selections. Gather and keep over the years.*
- Alternatively search on-line to find a range of suitable images and print these. Ensure there is at least one for each person plus a few spares.
- Participant Sheets containing Scripture passages – provided overleaf.
- Journals or sheets of A5 paper for group members
- Pens and pencils, including a selection of coloured ones (enough for each person to have a few different colours)

Step 1

- Each person to have a journal or A5 sheet, place the coloured pencils / pens within reach of all participants
- Invite the group members to close their eyes and bring to mind an image of the nativity scene (this may be one recently viewed, a favourite childhood one, or popular life image) and to note any emotions prompted in response.
- In just 3-4 minutes ask individuals to depict their nativity scene in their journal or on the sheet using the coloured pencils / pens, and also to note any emotions felt.
- Put pens down and turn over the sheet to hide the image.
- Check how the participants found the activity:
 - did any have difficulty bringing an image to mind?
 - how happy / unhappy were individuals with their depictions and why?
- ❖ *Explain how art is used to depict not just an event, but the context of it, with colour and detail used to portray a message, understanding or feeling, or to highlight importance. In addition to skill, connection with the event, life experience and culture will all influence how any individual might create an illustration.*

Step 2

- Spread the Christmas card images face up, one a table around which all can circulate.
- Invite group members to gently walk around the table, taking time to look at the images and then to select one, which they take back to their seat.
- Individuals are invited to spend a minute or so looking carefully at the card and then to note in their journals:
 - what drew them to the particular image
 - any feelings looking at the image has generated
 - messages being portrayed in the image
 - anything that poses a question
 - any cultural influence evident
- Drawn images are now turned over and placed alongside the card given, with individuals asked to compare the two – what are the similarities and differences?
- Depending on the time available some sharing in two's or threes might take place with each pair / group then invited to briefly share their observations with the whole group.
- ❖ *Comment as appropriate to draw together the threads.*
Some drawn images and cards may be similar, others quite different, but even if quite different images or styles some might express similar themes or messages.
Light and colour may make hugely affect the way individuals respond to illustrations, so too will the spiritual connection and lived experience of each person.

Step 3

- Spread on the table, face down, the short scripture quotes and ask each person to pick up one randomly. Ensure there are sufficient passages for two per person.
- Invite individuals to sit quietly with the card image and scripture passage side by side, and to see if there is any obvious connection between the two and note these in the journal.
- Repeat the process with the drawn image – if no tangible connections can be found between the scripture passage and either image, another can be chosen.
- Invite individuals to sit quietly with the card image and scripture passage side by side, and in the silence to read the scripture passage slowly, then on the signal to spend 30 seconds looking at the image, with open eyes and hearts. Then once more to read the passage slowly and allow the words to sink in.
- ❖ *Explain how the same scripture passage may link to a number of different images and vice versa. This is fine, it depends on what speaks to the heart and mind of each person. After sufficient time:*
- Invite each person in turn to hold up their card image, so others can see it, and to gently read aloud the scripture passage. Allow a few moments of quiet before the next person repeats the process.

- Invite response to the usefulness of the activities in helping deepen understanding of the Christmas story. Deal with any questions or gaps that need filling and talk about the importance of the Isaiah prophesies.

Step 3 Scripture Passages (15-18)

May the God who gives us peace make you completely his... at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. *1 Thessalonians 5:23-24*

God's grace has been revealed, and it has made salvation possible for the whole human race. *Titus 2:11*

It is full time now for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed:
Romans 13:11

That day, the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples. It will be sought out by the peoples and its home will be glorious. *Isaiah 11:10*

For there is a child born for us, a son given to us... and this is the name they will give to him: Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God, Eternal-Father, Prince of Peace. *Isaiah 9:6*

Joseph travelled from Nazareth to Judea in Bethlehem in order to be registered, together with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. *Luke 2:4-5*

O God, give your judgement to the king, to a king's that he may judge your people in justice and on your justice, and your poor in right judgement. *Psalms 71:1-2*

Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them at the inn. *Luke 2:7*

Let the heavens rejoice and earth be glad,... at the presence of the Lord, for he comes,
he comes to rule the earth.
Psalms 95:10 (cf Is 40.9-10)

In the region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch of their flock by night. *Luke 2:8*

You must stand ready because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. *Matthew 24:44*

An angel of the Lord stood before them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. *Luke 2:9*

“... the maiden is with child and will soon give birth to a son whom she will call Emmanuel, a name which means ‘God is with us.’” *Isaiah 7:14*

“look, your God is coming, He is coming to save you.” *Isaiah 35:5*

All who heard the shepherds’ story were amazed by it. The shepherds returned to the fields praising God for all they had seen and heard. *Luke 2:20*

God’s grace has been revealed, and it has made salvation possible for the whole human race. *Titus 2:11*

‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife. She has conceived by the Holy Spirit.’
Matthew 1:20-21

Joseph travelled from Nazareth to Judea in Bethlehem in order to be registered, together with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.
Luke 2:4-5

The angel said, ‘do not be afraid, I bring you news of great joy for all. To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour who is the Messiah, the Lord.’
Luke 2:10-11

This will be a sign for you, you will find the baby wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger. *Luke 2:12*

And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and singing: Glory to God in the Highest heaven, and peace on earth among all people. *Luke 2:13*

When the angel had left the Shepherds went to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph with the child lying in a manger. *Luke 2:14-16*

In the region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch of their flock by night. *Luke 2:8*

Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.
Luke 2:19

Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them at the inn. *Luke 2:7*

The angel said, 'do not be afraid, I bring you news of great joy for all. To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour who is the Messiah, the Lord.
Luke 2:10-11

This will be a sign for you, you will find the baby wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger. *Luke 2:12*

An angel of the Lord stood before them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. *Luke 2:9*

Wise men came on the East, to Jerusalem asking "Where is the child who has been born King of the Jews? For we observed it's star at its' rising and have come to pay him homage." *Mathew 2:1-2*

And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and singing: Glory to God in the Highest heaven, and peace on earth among all people. *Luke 2:13*

In a dream Joseph was told by an angel to take Mary and the child to Egypt, as Herod was searching for the baby to destroy him. *Mathew 2:13-14*

When the angel had left the Shepherds went to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph with the child lying in a manger. *Luke 2:14-16*

Having enquired about the whereabouts of the birth, Herod informed the wise men, requesting they later return to give him the exact location, so he too could pay homage. *Mathew 2:6-8*

The men followed the star, which stopped over the place where the child was. Overwhelmed with joy they entered, knelt to pay homage to the child and his mother and presented gifts of gold, myrrh, and frankincense.
Mathew 2:10-11

❖ *Commentary on some of these scripture passages may be found in the additional resource: Advent Wk 1 Scriptures_Commentary*