



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 use an appropriate 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, especially for highlighting cultural perspectives. Gather, keep, re-use.*
- To ensure the inclusion of a range of cultural aspects, search on-line to find images and print these to add to the cards. At least one image 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 2-3 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, etc)
- 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 to write along-side the image the message it conveys to them.
- Put pens down and turn over the sheet to hide the image.
- Check how the young people 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 to shed light on the context, and to portray a message. Colour and detail are often used to express feelings or highlight importance. Cultural perspectives are often incorporated too.*

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 to select one that appeals to them. All return to their seats.
- Individuals are invited to spend a minute or so looking carefully at the card and then to note in their journals:
 - what they see - describe it
 - what feelings or emotions are expressed in the image
 - any cultural influence evident
 - the central message being portrayed
- Drawn images are now turned over and placed alongside the card given, individuals are asked to compare the two – take note of the similarities and differences.
- Depending on the time available some sharing in 2's or threes might take place with each pair / group then sharing an interesting observation with the rest of the group.
- ❖ *Comment as appropriate to draw together the threads, in particular the cultural perspectives, and how they speak of the different ways nation view themselves and God, and how they express personal circumstances and feelings in the art works. However, different images or styles may still express similar themes or messages. Light and colour may make affect how individuals respond to an illustration, as will the relevance the image has to their lived experience and spirituality.*

Step 3

- Invite the group members to try and place the images to tell the Christmas story as a timeline. Where there is overlap, place the extra images in a vertical strip either side of the timeline, so all are still visible. Place the spare images in view close to the time line.
- Looking at the card at the start of the timeline, ask if this is in fact the starting point – or are there important aspects of the Christmas story missing? If so, together identify what is missing. (most likely the Annunciation) Check if a spare image might fit there. (probably not, as too often Advent, the time of preparation for Christmas, is overlooked.) Create a simple card to add in.
- Invite one person to begin telling the story; others, in turn, continue, using the card images. Each time there seems to be a gap, check if another card can be added, or simply add the missing details.
- Group return to their seats and pick up their own drawing again. Hand each person three of the short scripture passages. Individuals read these quietly and slowly, looking at their image after each reading. They then identify which passage best relates to the aspect of the Christmas story depicted in their own drawing.
- In turn, each person places their image and the scripture passage in the relevant place on the timeline. All remain facing the timeline images, holding the additional scripture passages. Individuals are invited to place the additional scripture passages on any images on the timeline they seem to fit, or additional card added to help fill any gaps in the story.

- Prayerfully, gazing at the timeline with open hearts and minds, the group listen to the retelling of the Christmas story through the scripture passages.
- Leader(s), to read the text pausing for a short time for reflection in between – possibly concluding each period of reflection with a joint response, **‘Come Lord Jesus’**
- Possibly conclude singing a couple of Advent carols, and / or inviting each person in turn to offer a short prayer of hope, in response to the gift of God’s son given to us.

Step 3 Scripture Passages - 12-15 (34 in total)

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*

The angel said to Mary, ‘The Holy Spirit will come up on you, and the child that will be born will be holy, he will be called the Son of God. *Luke 1:35*

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*

Joseph had resolved to divorce Mary privately. An angel appeared to him in a dream, saying ‘do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. The child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you will call him Jesus. *Mtt 1:20*

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*

When Joseph awoke from sleep he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took Mary as his wife. *Matthew 1:24*

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*

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

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

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*

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*

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*

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

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*

‘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

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

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

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*

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*

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*

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*

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*

Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

Luke 2:19

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

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

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*

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*