

Church of Ireland Children's Ministry

Advent Newsletter



Advent is a time of waiting and anticipation. It is a time of hope even in the darkness. It is a time of knowing that Jesus the Light of the world has come and has brought light to all of us. At this time of the year we remember that we are called to be light and hope to others in dark times. When people are waiting in darkness – maybe they are waiting for test results from hospital or are worried because they have lost their job or are fleeing war or are lonely and are not excited about Christmas because they don't have anyone to celebrate with - Jesus calls us. Just as He is the Light of the world, bringing hope and joy and welcome to the majestic magi and the lowly shepherds, we also bring that Light to others at this time. Here are some ideas for including children in this time of waiting, hope, welcome and light this season.

Advent Talk: God of the Impossible:

This is suitable as an All Age Service Talk or as a Sunday Club Bible Story Time:

This section is taken from ministry-to-children.com

Supplies – index cards, dark marker, tape

The following tasks are considered (near) impossible for humans to complete. Try out these 'simple' tests to see if anyone can succeed.

- Twitch your nose (without moving the rest of your face)
- Lick your elbow
- Rotate your right leg in a clockwise motion, while drawing a '6' in the air with you right hand
- Wiggle your ears
- Place your palm on a flat surface with your middle finger curled underneath, then raise (only) your ring finger.

*This section is taken from Flame Creative Ministries: www.flamecreativekids.blogspot.com *

Nothing is impossible to God paper cutting illustration

Ask some children to come out to the front give each of them a sheet of A5 sized paper and some scissors.

Ask them to cut a hole in the paper that they will be able to fit their whole body through.

Some of the children will immediately decide that this is not possible, while some may have an attempt!

Sometimes we are faced with problems that really worry us and that we don't know how to solve!

Now take a piece of the A5 paper and follow these instructions...

1. Fold the paper in half lengthways
- 2 Cut alternating 'up' and 'down' slits in the paper as shown
3. Cut through the fold of the paper, leaving the fold of the end slit pieces in tact
4. Open the paper out into a big circle that you can pass your whole body through!

You may need to try this a few times before you actually do it for real so that you know roughly how many slits you need to make for your body to get through.

Talk about the fact that sometimes we are faced with problems that we don't know how to solve- things that seem



impossible to us. Ask children if they've ever felt like that in their lives. Talk about times when you've faced a problem like this yourself and how trusting in God has helped you. What amazing ways has God shown you that he cares and is helping you? Tell the children that the Bible says that all things are possible to God (Matthew 19:26, Mark 10:27) and that, knowing this, can give us hope that if we trust in Him he will do amazing things.

This section is taken from CofI Children's Ministry Network Advent Resource

There are lots of things that we can't do. But God is BIGGER and can do things that we can't do. In this story God sends an Angel to a young girl to tell her that God wanted her to have a special baby. Mary couldn't have a baby on her own, but she could listen to God, trust Him and do as he asks because he makes impossible things possible.

Listen in Numbers: Angel = 1; God = 3; Baby = 5; Mary = 7; Yes = 10.

Children hold up the correct number of fingers each time you say one of those words.

Mary was a young girl who lived a place called Galilee. She was soon to be married to a man called Joseph. It was normal for girls as young as 12 and 13 to get engaged and for her parents to choose her future husband for her. One day, God sent an Angel, Gabriel, to speak with Mary. Can you imagine the fright she got?! Maybe Mary thought it was impossible for an Angel to appear. It certainly wasn't something that happened on a normal day! 'Greetings', the Angel said, 'I have Good News for you. You are blessed by God.' Although Mary was really scared she didn't run away, she stayed and listened to what her special visitor had to say. 'You are to become pregnant and have a baby. You are to call him Jesus. He will be very important because he will be the Son of God'. Mary could hardly believe her ears. 'But how can I have a baby?', she asked. The Angel continued explaining: 'The power of God will come upon you and will cause this to happen.' Mary answered, 'I am God's servant. I will do as He asks.' Then the Angel went away.

The number actions have now finished. Ask the Children to stop doing the numbers and to listen. They can sit on their hands if they feel tempted.

Well done! You had to listen really carefully to get hear the words and show the right numbers. When you held up your fingers with the right numbers it showed you were really listening. You didn't just listen, you responded. Mary didn't just listen to the Angel, she responded (answered)

In our lives, we are told we should listen to God. We know from the Bible that God says we should love one another, we should love our neighbours, we should take extra special care of people who are left out, who are sick, who are weak or who feel alone or unloved. But it's not enough to listen. We have to answer! We answer by doing the things that God asks us to do.

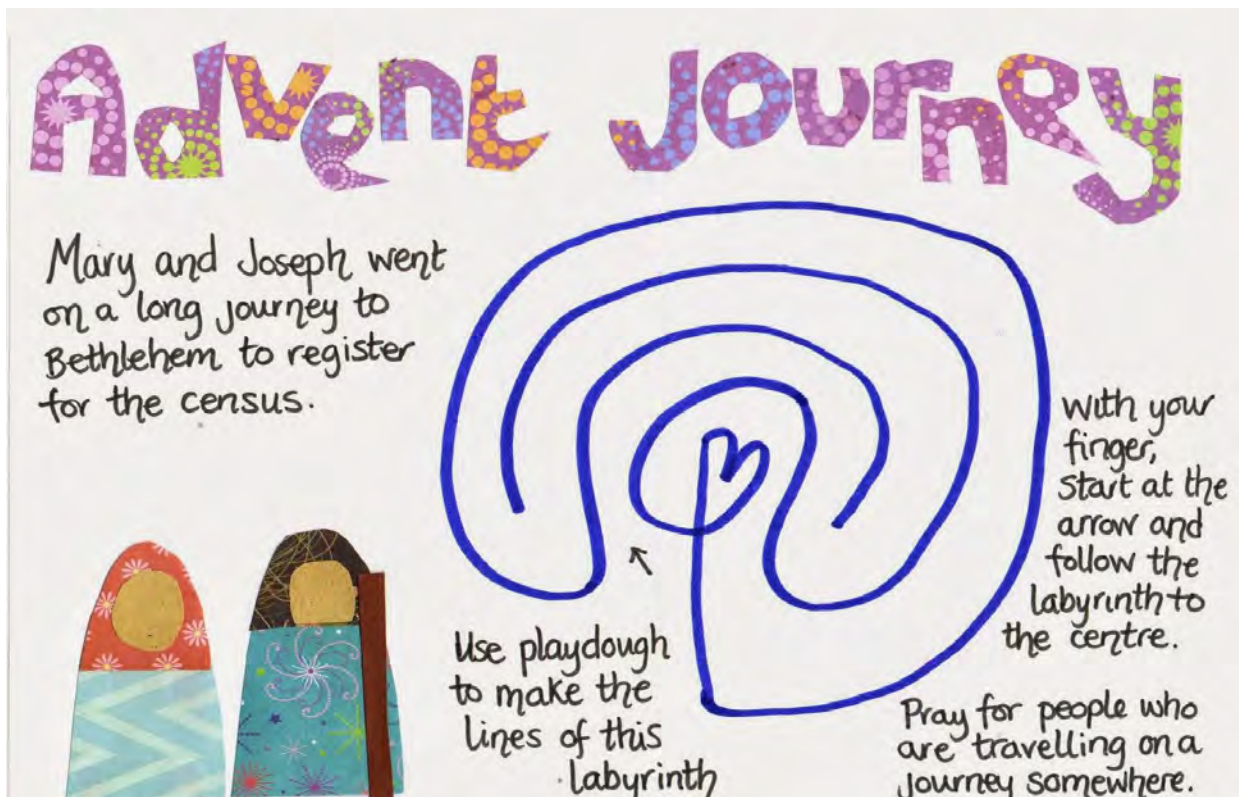
How can you listen to God in your own life? How can you show your response?

Advent Prayer:

There are fantastic Advent and Christmas prayer ideas at www.prayerspacesinschools.com which explore prayer and reflection in a series of 5 themes:

- Gabriel and Mary – Hopes and Dreams
- Jesus, born in a manger – Saying Sorry
- Shepherds on a hill – World Map
- Wise men's star – Asking for Guidance
- Gifts for Jesus – Being Thankful

The Advent Playdough Prayer Mat (below) is a wonderful creation from Flame Creative Ministries. The website provides free downloads of the mat which you can laminate and use as a method for both story telling and prayer with children, particularly those under 7. www.flamecreativekids.blogspot.com



Prayer illustrations & craft below are from Jill Hamilton, Connor Diocesan Children's Officer, who runs Ripple Ministries: For full information see: www.rippleconnor.org.uk





Advent Craft:

You will need:

Ginger bread man biscuit.

Fondant Icing

Blue food colouring

Marshmallow

Icing Gel Pens

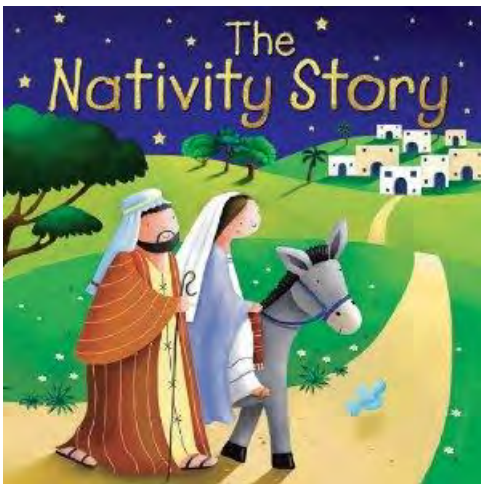
Paper Plates

What to do:

Place a marshmallow in the centre of the ginger bread figure. Lay the fondant clothing over the marshmallow and decorate with icing gel pens.

Talk about: The Angel said to Mary 'Nothing is impossible for God. Is there something in your life that you think is too big for God to solve? Trust God with something that is impossible for you.

Advent Echo Story



This is a great story for children under 7. The leader reads the phrases and the children provide actions and sounds.

Joseph & Mary went on a lo...o...o...ng trip (walk on the spot)

They went to Bethlehem to be counted in a census (count from one to five)

There was no room in the inn. (shake heads – 'no')

So they stayed in a stable. That night when all was quiet (shhhhhh), a baby boy was born to Mary (cradle arms)

Mary rocked the baby (rock cradled arms from side to side)

As she sang a lullaby (hum lullaby)

Out in the field there were shepherds

They watched over their sheep (baa baa)

An angel came to them (arms raised as if wings)

There was a bright light (shelter eyes)





The shepherds were afraid (look afraid, bite nails)

The angel said 'Do not be afraid' (shake head)

'Be Happy' (smile and in joyful voices say 'be happy')

Today Jesus is born in Bethlehem. He is the Lord. Go and look for him (point)

He is lying in a manger. Suddenly many angels sang, 'Glory to God in the highest'.

Peace on Earth, Good will to all people. The angels were gone (look all around)

The shepherds went to Bethlehem to look for Jesus (walk on the spot)

They walked fast (increase pace)

They found Mary (point) and Joseph (point) and the baby in the stable (point)

They were happy to see baby Jesus (clapping)



There are millions of people on a journey this Christmas time. Some are travelling home to see loved ones. Others are travelling to get away from fighting and dangerous places where they once lived and where their home is. This Christmas we remember that Jesus and his family were refugees who went to Egypt to escape danger. We write our prayers on luggage tags and decorate them with glitter and sparkle and hang them on the Christmas tree to remind us of all those who have to flee and of the welcome we can bring to those who need shelter, peace and light this Christmas.

*"It came without ribbons! It came without tags!
It came without packages, boxes or bags!"...
Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before!
"Maybe Christmas," he thought, "doesn't come from a store.
Maybe Christmas... perhaps... means a little bit more!"
Dr. Seuss, How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*

www.cm.ireland.anglican.org; www.facebook.com/churchofirelandchildrensministry

