

Crib Service



Background Information

This crib service is designed to involve every age in a short service on Christmas Eve, and is suitable for inviting families who come to your toddler group and the local school. You may like to give out invitations at your toddler group and ask for the service to be advertised in the school newsletter, encouraging all the children to come dressed up as shepherds, sheep, kings/wise men or angels, and to bring their parents and grandparents with them. Perhaps encourage your toddler group to hold a 'Shepherds and Angels' party before Christmas so that the children have their costumes already.



Practical information

In order to prepare for the service, identify children in advance to dress up as the main characters - Mary, Joseph, the Angel Gabriel, a 'lead angel' and a 'Christmas star'. We suggest that you ask specific children, aged 4-8, to take these parts - choosing carefully, and perhaps asking those who might not usually be chosen for these roles.

Identify some children aged 8-11 to help with the readings, and allow them to see their particular parts in advance so that they can read their lines with confidence. Whilst the children are reading their parts, include some appropriate pictures on screen, if possible, to help the younger children to visualise what they are hearing.

Invite all the children (from age 0 upwards) to come dressed to take part in the nativity story as shepherds, sheep, kings/wise men or angels. It doesn't matter how many you have of each, or if some choose to come in an alternative costume - all can come and worship the baby Jesus. If possible, it would be worth having a few spare costumes/props for those who arrive without their own.

Choose songs which are well-known, or easy to learn. If some of the older young people are musical, why not ask them to form a music group for the service and to lead the singing?

It is advisable to ask a few church members to be available to help direct the younger children, particularly if you are using a raised platform in the church to enable the children to be seen. On a practical note - it is worth advising any helpers to be prepared to spend much of the service on their knees, and to come dressed appropriately!

Recognising that the service may be chaotic, keep the message simple, and the service brief (up to 30 minutes). The aim is to remind families of the real meaning of Christmas and for the children to take part in a meaningful way.



Crib Service

Order of Service

Welcome

Prayer

Thank you for that very first Christmas, when you were born as a baby and thank you for this Christmas when we can celebrate your birthday again. Amen.

Song

Come and join the celebration

Bible Story - during which time the Angel Gabriel and Mary come to the front

God sent an angel to a girl named Mary. She was going to be married to Joseph "Good morning! You're beautiful, Beautiful inside and out! God be with you." said the Angel. Mary was frightened, and wondered what was behind a greeting like that.

"Mary, you have nothing to fear." the Angel told her, "God has a surprise for you: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus."

Mary asked how this could happen and the Angel explained that the Holy Spirit would come upon her, by God's power, and that the baby would be called Holy, Son of God.

Mary was ready to obey.

Then the angel left her.

Song

Joy to the world

Bible Story - during which time Mary, Joseph and the Angel Gabriel go to the crib where a 'Jesus' doll or real baby is lying

About that time Caesar Augustus ordered everyone to travel to their hometown to be counted. So Joseph went from Nazareth up to Bethlehem. While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. She gave birth to a son. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the inn.

Song

Away in a manger

Bible Story - during which time the 'lead Angel' gathers up the shepherds and any other angels and leads them to the crib

There were shepherds camping in the fields. Suddenly, an angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were very scared.

The angel told them, "Don't be afraid. I bring you good news. Today a saviour has been born for you. You are to look for a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

The angel was joined by a huge choir singing Glory to God in the heavenly heights, Peace to everyone on earth. The shepherds ran to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger.



Song

See him lying on a bed of straw (Calypso carol)

Bible Story - during which time the Christmas Star leads the wise men / kings to the crib

After Jesus was born some wise men went to find him in Bethlehem. They had followed a star which led them to the stable. When they saw Jesus they worshipped him and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Song

O little town of Bethlehem or We three kings

Prayer

Ask people to respond with the words, "Thank you God for Jesus" and copy your actions after each of your prayers.

Leader: Thank you God for Jesus, your very best gift to all of us
(arms stretched out to the side to indicate everyone)

All: Thank you God for Jesus

Leader: For Jesus, more precious than gold, frankincense or myrrh
(cup your hands as if holding something precious)

All: Thank you God for Jesus

Leader: For the gift of Jesus, Saviour of the world
(cup both hands as if holding a large globe)

All: Thank you God for Jesus

Leader: For the gift of Jesus, our Lord and our King
(stretch both hands up)

All: Thank you God for Jesus.
Amen

Invite all the children to come to the crib to worship the baby king during the singing of the last song

Song

O Come all ye faithful

Closing Prayer

This Christmas may we have the joy of the angels, the wonder of the shepherds and the giving hearts of the wise men; and may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest on each one of us. Amen.

Thank everyone for coming to the service, and invite the adults to take photographs of the children before they leave. Wish everyone a happy Christmas!



With thanks to Jo Whitaker for sharing her experience of leading crib services at the Ladygrove Church, Didcot.