

## A Crib Service for younger children.

Duration: 40 minutes

Welcome

Welcome Everybody! It's Christmas Eve, the night when we remember the birth of Jesus. For the last few weeks we have been getting ready for Christmas, preparing to remember how God came as a tiny child. It's almost Christmas now. Let us begin with our opening responses.

Mary and Joseph, looking for a room, waiting for the baby.  
Together we are waiting  
**We are waiting for Jesus**

An empty stable, a manger full of hay, everything is ready.  
Together we are waiting  
**We are waiting for Jesus**

Angels in the sky, singing glory and peace, Jesus is born.  
Together we are waiting  
**We are waiting for Jesus**

All the earth, silent and still, the day has come.  
Together we are waiting  
**We are waiting for Jesus**

Carol: O little town of Bethlehem

Jesus is foretold and the angel visits Mary

Many years before Jesus was born, some people called prophets had listened to God, and God had said.  
'The people who live in darkness are going to see a great light. A new light will shine on the earth that will make the world a better place. For a baby will be born who will change everything. His names will be, Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. He will be a great King and will show all people a new way to live.

A long time after this, a young woman was praying that this new light would come. Suddenly an angel stood beside her. She was frightened.  
"Don't be scared Mary," the angel said. "I have good news for you. You will have a baby and you must call him Jesus. He will be God's son, the one who has been promised."  
"How can this happen?" Mary asked.  
"God's Spirit will make it happen," the angel replied, "that is why your baby will be called the Son of god."  
Mary took a deep breath and said, "May it all be as you have said."

Then the angel went away.

Jesus is born

This requires a reader and a musician who can improvise brief musical interludes that capture the mood of the story.

So Mary's tummy started to get bigger, the baby was growing. She hoped she would have her baby at home with Joseph and her family to help, but just before Jesus was about to arrive they had to go on a long journey, all the way to Bethlehem.

"Oh dear," said Joseph to Mary, "it's a long way to go, and we have to walk all the way."

Mary and Joseph set off on their journey.

At first they walked quickly.

(Music)

Then a little slower.

(Music)

Then even slower.

(Music)

Then they were so tired, they could hardly walk at all.

(Music)

Suddenly Joseph shouted: "We're there! We've reached Bethlehem!"

This made them feel a bit happier.

(Music)

But all they wanted to do was to go to sleep. Mary and Joseph were very very very tired.

(Music)

But there was nowhere to stay! No one had a spare bed for them to sleep in. They were very sad.

(Music)

"I haven't got a room," said a man, "but you can stay in my stable with the animals." Poor Mary was so tired she just wanted to curl up and go to sleep on the hay. But something was happening. It was time for her baby to be born. Mary and Joseph were very worried. Their baby was going to be born in a stable!

(Music)

In the middle of the night, when it was still very dark, the little baby Jesus gave his first cry. An exhausted Mary held him close and looked into his eyes. "I'll keep you safe," she said. "I'll keep you safe."

Music

Later that night some shepherds came to the stable to see them. They said that an angel had told them about the special baby. The Shepherds were very excited.

(Music)

As the sun came up the next day, Mary and Joseph looked at the little baby Jesus. They were happy, very very happy. So happy that, if they hadn't been so tired, they would have got up and danced.

(Music)

Mary gave her new baby a big kiss, and, while Joseph cuddled little Jesus, she fell asleep, fast asleep.

Placing of the crib figures

Figures are carried from the back and placed in the crib as each response is said.

Mary carried Jesus all the way to Bethlehem,  
Thank you God,  
**Thank you for Jesus.**

Mary is placed in the crib

Joseph walked beside her, all the way to Bethlehem,  
Thank you God,  
**Thank you for Jesus.**

Joseph is placed in the crib

The Angels sang 'glory,' over the skies of Bethlehem,  
Thank you God,  
**Thank you for Jesus.**

The Angels are placed in the Crib

The Shepherds ran and searched, through the streets of Bethlehem,  
Thank you God,  
**Thank you for Jesus**

The shepherds are placed in the crib

The wise men followed the star, all the way to Bethlehem,  
Thank you God,  
**Thank you for Jesus.**

The wise men are placed in the crib

Jesus slept, in the manger in Bethlehem.  
Thank you God,  
**Thank you for Jesus.**

Jesus is placed in the crib

Carol: Away in a manger

The shepherds

This is an interactive story.

Shepherds – say, Oo-arr  
Sheep - Ba  
Angels) – (draw circle above head, point up and say 'ting.'  
Baby – cry like a baby  
Bethlehem – say, 'the town of David'

Some shepherds, (Oo-arr), were watching their sheep, (ba), in the fields outside Bethlehem, (the town of David). Suddenly an angel, (ting), appeared and said: "Shepherds, (Oo-arr), I have good news! A baby, (cry), has been born in Bethlehem, (the town of David), he is God's son and has come to bring peace to the earth. Leave your sheep, (ba), and go to Bethlehem, (the town of David), and look for the baby, (cry).

Suddenly hundreds of angels, (ting), appeared in the sky and sang: "Glory to God and peace to people on earth." Then they all disappeared.

The shepherds, (Oo-arr), jumped up. They left their sheep, (ba), and ran to Bethlehem, (the town of David), to find the baby, (cry), just as the angel, (ting), had told them.

They found him in a stable, sleeping in a manger with Mary and Joseph watching over him. They told them all about the angels, (ting), and what they had said. The shepherds, (Oo-arr), went back to their sheep, (ba). As they walked through the streets of Bethlehem, (the town of David), they praised God for the baby, (cry), they had seen and all that the angels, (ting), had told them.

Wondering

I wonder what it was really like in the stable?  
What do you think?  
Was it warm or cold? Was it clean or dirty? Was it fresh or smelly?

I don't think that this was how Mary wanted her baby to be born was it.  
She must have been very upset at having to stay in a stable, but at the same time  
she must have been very happy when her baby arrived.  
That's a bit strange really, being sad and happy at the same time.  
I wonder if you have ever been sad and happy all at the same time?

And I wonder what it must have been like for the shepherds.  
Everything was very ordinary at one moment and then everything changed.  
Angels and music and a message from God! Wow.  
I wonder if you have ever found that an ordinary time suddenly turned into a special  
time without any warning.

And then, I wonder what this is all like for Jesus?  
One moment he is warm and snug in Mary's tummy, the next he is in the cold and  
smelly stable and sleeping on scratchy, prickly straw. What a change that is for him.  
I wonder if you have ever felt that things have changed in your life and suddenly  
become much harder and more difficult?

So, I wonder why?  
I wonder why all this happened like this?  
I wonder why, when God came to the earth, he was born in a stable and had to sleep  
in a manger?  
Well I don't really know the answer to that, but what I do know is that however I feel,  
happy or sad, Jesus knows and is with me.  
Whenever things feel really ordinary or even boring in my life, Jesus knows and will  
always make things special again.  
Whenever the things I think are comfortable and cosy for me in life get taken away,  
Jesus knows and is there to help me and give me peace.  
And what I really wonder is why God should do all this for me? Why Jesus should  
do all this for me? Because that is the real wonder of Christmas. Jesus, this little  
baby in the manger, is here for you. And his little cry really says only one thing: I  
have come to love you, and I will always love you.

## Prayers

Bright and Holy God,  
You come among us.  
You fill us with awe and wonder.

Jesus, whose mother was Mary  
we pray for our families this Christmas.  
**Lord Jesus, come and stay with us.**

Jesus, lying in a manger,  
we pray for those who don't have anywhere to live.  
Help them to find shelter and helpful friends.  
**Lord Jesus, come and stay with us.**

Jesus, sharing a stable with the animals,  
we pray for all of your creation.  
Help us to look after the earth you have given us.  
**Lord Jesus, come and stay with us.**

Jesus, worshipped by shepherds and kings,  
we pray for all the different countries of the world, for an end to fighting and wars  
and unfair situations.  
**Lord Jesus, come and stay with us.**

Jesus, our Emmanuel,  
Be with us this Christmas  
**AMEN**

Carol: O come all ye faithful

Blessing

May the Lord Jesus  
be born in your hearts.  
May the light of Jesus  
light your way.  
May the love of God the Father,  
His Son, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit,  
surround you and keep you safe,  
today, tomorrow and always.  
**AMEN**