

Introduction for Teachers / Leaders

The season of Advent is a time of preparation for Christmas; a time of anticipation and hope when we remember when Jesus was born into the world and that he will come again. Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve. This year it begins on Sunday, 28th November. Traditionally the primary colour of Advent is purple, which reflects the fasting and waiting that forms part of the build-up to Christmas. On the third Sunday of Advent the colour changes to pink/rose in anticipation of the end of fasting and the start of rejoicing for the birth of the Saviour. This Sunday is celebrated as Gaudete Sunday meaning 'rejoice.'



Our Resources and Activities

This year our resources include:

- a weekly liturgy to encourage children to think about the special journey we make together during Advent as we draw closer to the birth of Jesus. The liturgies also invite them to pray for refugee children and their families, as well as the missionaries who are caring for them around the world
- an Advent Activity Calendar with little acts of kindness for children to do each day
- our Christmas Colouring Competition, and
- a Christmas Crib Blessing

Setting the Scene

Please refer to the *Grow in Love* religious education series (theme 3 or 4) in each class year. It covers the Advent season and encourages you to place relevant items in your prayer space including the Advent wreath. Every element of the wreath communicates something special about our journey towards Christmas. Its circular shape represents God's never-ending presence. The evergreen leaves, which do not fade in colour, signify God's constant presence. The candles that we light represent hope, peace, joy, and love. The white candle in the centre is lit on Christmas day and represents Christ, the light of the world. Below are the suggested hymns and prayer for opening and closing each liturgy.

Opening Hymn

Our suggested opening hymn for each week of Advent is 'Come Lord Jesus' from the *Grow in Love* series.

Closing Prayer

Our suggested closing prayer each week is ***Children Helping Children's*** Mission Prayer.

Closing Hymn

Our suggestions include 'O Come O Come Emmanuel,' 'Angels We Have Heard on High,' 'The First Noel,' and 'Silent Night,' which can all be found in *Grow in Love*.

Our Mission Prayer

May all children
In the world
Share love
Share friendship and live
In the peace
Of God's love
Now and forever. **Amen.**

Advent Liturgy Week One

Light the first purple candle. This candle represents 'Hope.'

Opening Hymn (see page 1).

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Leader: Father in heaven, we need the warmth of your love in our hearts and the light of your Word in our minds. Help us to grow in our faith so that we will be prepared and filled with HOPE when Jesus comes.

When we light the first candle on the Advent wreath we are encouraged to think about hope. To help us think about hope today, we are going to use the example of two groups of people. The first group we usually hear about on Christmas Day. Let's see if you can guess who they are. This group had a very long journey to see Jesus. They travelled across the deserts of Jordan to Bethlehem so it was good they rode camels, or they would struggle to get over the sand! Can you guess who this group of people is? It's the three wise men. Let's hear a Bible reading (Matthew 2:9-10) about the wise men now. Listen carefully to how they felt when the star they were following finally led them to the baby Jesus.

Reader: On their way the three wise men saw the same star they had seen in the East. When they saw it, how happy they were; what joy was theirs! It went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. They went into the house, and when they saw the child with his mother Mary, they knelt down and worshipped him. They brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and presented them to him.
The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Leader: There's another group of people who can teach us about hope. They have also made long, difficult, and dangerous journeys, some over the deserts of Jordan too! They are refugees. Like the wise men, refugees have great hope that eventually, after their long journeys, they will find peace. We can strengthen the hope of refugees by sharing what we have with them so they may feel safe, be cared for, and know that Jesus loves them. We can also help by asking God to guide and protect all child refugees. Let's do that now as we join our hands and get ready to pray.

Reader: Dear Jesus, please guide and protect all refugee children. May they never lose hope as they journey onwards, knowing that you lead us always to love. Lord hear us.

All: Lord graciously hear us.

Reader: Dear Jesus, in Advent we remember the importance of hope. Help us to always have hope in you and to share this hope with others through our kindness and our joy. Lord hear us.

All: Lord graciously hear us.

Leader: Let us all now say our Mission prayer (see page 1).

Closing Hymn (see page 1).

Advent Liturgy Week Two

Light the first and second purple candle. The second purple candle represents 'Peace.'

Opening Hymn (see page 1).

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Leader: Father in heaven, very soon the birth of your Son, Jesus, will light up the world. May his quiet coming bring us true inner PEACE.

When we light the second candle on the Advent wreath we are encouraged to think about peace. To help us think about peace today, we are going to use the example of Bethlehem's shepherds. Shepherds in Jesus' day had very hard lives. They lived far up in the hillside with their sheep so they could care for their flock all the time. This meant shepherds rarely came down from the hills to visit towns. When they did, the townspeople saw the shepherds as strangers and not trustworthy. This made shepherds feel upset and afraid, and when people feel upset and afraid it is difficult to feel at peace and be happy. Let's hear a Bible reading about the shepherds now (Luke 2:8-11). Listen carefully to how the shepherds felt when they saw God's angel and what the angel said to help them.

Reader: There were some shepherds in that part of the country who were spending the night in the fields, taking care of their flocks. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone over them. They were terribly afraid, but the angel said to them, 'Don't be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. This very day in David's town your Saviour was born – Christ the Lord!'

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Leader: The angel told the shepherds not to be afraid because Jesus was very close to them. Jesus is very close to us too and, just like the shepherds, this gives us a sense of peace when we feel afraid. Similarly, Jesus brings peace to refugee children. In countries where missionaries are helping refugee children, they are reminded that God loves them so much that he came down from heaven to live among us all. That is what we are waiting to celebrate at Christmas; the birth of Jesus who would show us how to love others just as God loves us. We can ask Jesus to guide and protect all refugee children. Let's do that now as we join our hands and get ready to pray.

Reader: Dear Jesus, please guide and protect all refugee children. May their journey lead to peace and help them to know God's love for all his children. Lord hear us.

All: Lord graciously hear us.

Reader: Dear Jesus, in Advent we remember the importance of peace. When we feel afraid may we know you are close, giving us peace that we can share with others. Lord hear us.

All: Lord graciously hear us.

Leader: Let us all now say our Mission prayer (see page 1).

Closing Hymn (see page 1).

Advent Liturgy Week Three

Light the first two purple candles and the rose candle. The rose candle represents 'Joy.'

Opening Hymn (see page 1).

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Leader: Father in heaven, we know that you love all your people. Your love brings the gift of JOY to our hearts.

When we light the third candle on the Advent wreath we are encouraged to think about joy. To help us think about joy today, we are going to use the example of some heavenly angels. When we read the Bible, we learn that God often gives angels an important job. Can anyone guess what that job is? God sends angels from heaven to deliver special messages to the world. In the Bible reading we will hear today (Luke 2:11-14), the message delivered by the angel is very special and joyful. Listen carefully to discover what that message is.

Reader: 'This very day in David's town your Saviour was born – Christ the Lord! And this is what will prove it to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.' Suddenly a great army of heaven's angels appeared with the angel singing praises to God: 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased!'

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Leader: Hands up if you like to sing when you feel joyful? Refugee children that are being cared for by missionaries in schools and camps like to sing too. They sing because they feel safe, they can go to school, they are surrounded by friends, and know that God is very close to them. Many of these children lived in countries where there was much fighting or famine. This was very dangerous and frightening, so the children and their families had to leave their homes and find somewhere safe to live. They became refugees. We can also bring Jesus' love, peace, and joy to the world by being kind, forgiving, sharing what we have, and praying for children who need our help. Let's join our hands and pray for those children now.

Reader: Dear Jesus, watch over the children who are refugees around the world. Help them to be healthy and happy and may their joyful songs tell of your love for all people. Lord hear us.

All: Lord graciously hear us.

Reader: Dear Jesus, in Advent and at Christmas we learn what it means to be joyful! Help us to always remember that real joy is not found in presents but in the love you bring into our lives. Lord hear us.

All: Lord graciously hear us.

Leader: Let us all now say our Mission prayer (see page 1).

Closing Hymn (see page 1).

Advent Liturgy Week Four

Light the three purple candles and the rose candle. The third purple candle represents 'Love.'

Opening Hymn (see page 1).

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Leader: Father in heaven, bless our families and bring us a spirit of understanding and LOVE. May our homes be places of peace and laughter and may your love shine from each of us.

When we light the fourth candle on the Advent wreath we are encouraged to think about love. To help us think about love today, we are going to use the example of God's love for us by becoming one of us. Let's hear a Bible reading about the family the shepherds found when they went to Bethlehem (Luke 2:15-20). Remember how the angel told the shepherds that the baby was their Saviour, Christ the Lord? Listen carefully to how the shepherds felt when they saw God's love made flesh in the baby Jesus.

Reader: When the angels went away from them back into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord told us.' So, they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and saw the baby lying in the manger. When the shepherds saw him, they told them what the angel had said about the child. All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said. Mary remembered all these things and thought deeply about them. The shepherds went back, singing praises to God for all they had heard and seen; it had been just as the angel had told them.

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Leader: Jesus continues to bring hope, peace, and joy to the world, by showing us how to love one another and to live together. In some parts of the world where there is famine, poverty or fighting, the love that Jesus brings to children is especially important. How do you think it would feel to have to leave your home, all your belongings and loved ones behind, because it was too dangerous to stay? I'm sure you would feel very afraid and alone. This is why the work of missionaries is very important. They show great love for refugee children and their families. Many missionaries help refugee children and their families to find somewhere safe to stay, a place to go to school, and much needed food and drink. Let's join our hands and pray for missionaries who are working hard to make the lives of refugee children better.

Reader: Dear Jesus, please guide and protect all refugee children. Please keep those who are caring for them safe too. Lord hear us.

All: Lord graciously hear us.

Reader: Dear Jesus, in Advent we remember the importance of love. In everything we do and say, help us to show love to others. Lord hear us.

All: Lord graciously hear us.

Leader: Let us all now say our Mission prayer (see page 1).

Closing Hymn (see page 1).

Christmas Eve

Encourage the children to read any of these poems and say the prayer at home on Christmas Eve.

Christmas Eve

On Christmas Eve my mother read
The story once again
Of how the little child was born
And of the Three Wise Men.
And how by following the Star
They found Him where He lay,
And brought Him gifts; and that is why
We keep our Christmas Day.
And when she read it all, I went
And looked across the snow
And thought of Jesus coming
As He did long ago.
I looked into the East, and saw
A great star blazing bright;
There were three men upon the road
All black against the light.
I thought I heard the angels sing
Away upon the hill...
I held my breath...it seemed as if
The whole great world stood still.
It seemed to me the little Child
Was being born again...
And very near...and THEN somehow
Was NOW...or NOW was THEN.

(Grow in Love, Fourth Class)

Prepare, Prepare!

Prepare, prepare,
get ready, get set!
Prepare, prepare,
and don't forget!
This is a special time of year,
Christmas is coming.
Advent is here!
Prepare, prepare,
Make ready! Make way!
To hear the story
of Christmas Day.
Prepare, prepare
the time has come
soon we will welcome
Mary's Son.

(Grow in Love, Second Class)

Advent

Advent is a time to wait -
It's not quite time to celebrate!
Count the days down one by one
Until the Advent time is done.
Christmas Day will soon be here!
Time for joy and time for cheer!

(Grow in Love, Junior Infants)

Most Loving Father,
thank you for this night and for all it represents.
Thank you for the hope you bestow, the peace
you bring, the love you pour out,
and the joy you give.
We praise you most of all for Jesus,
your Word made flesh.
May he light our way as the holy star
lit the way for the wise men.
Amen.



Christmas Day

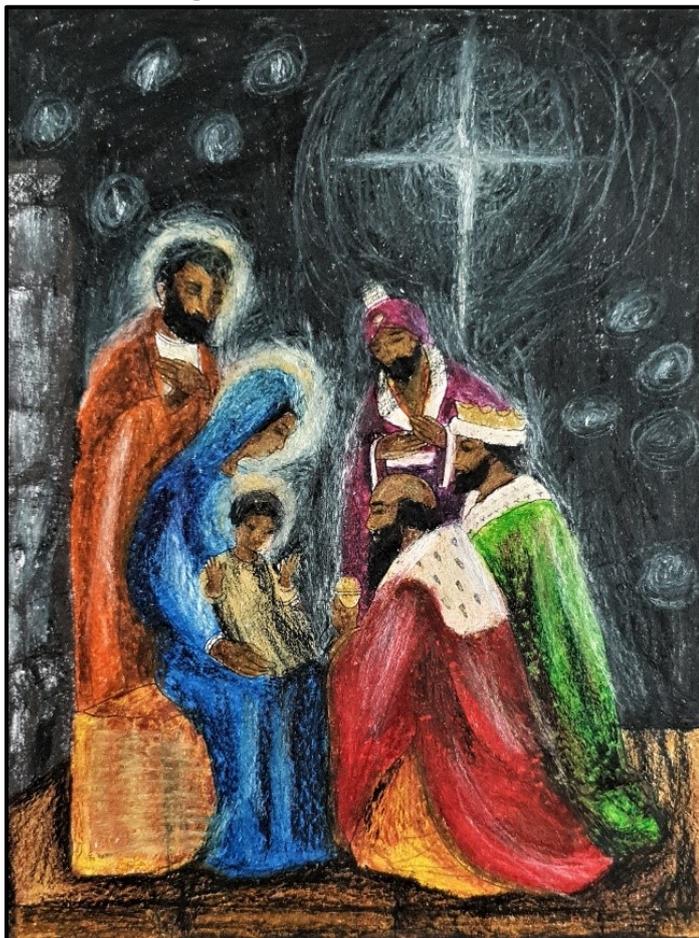
Light the three purple candles, the rose candle and the white candle. The white candle represents 'Jesus Christ.' Encourage the children to light a white candle at home if they do not have an Advent Wreath and invite them, and their families, to read the Gospel Story about the first Christmas below. We have included a simple family prayer for today too.

A Prayer When Placing the Baby Jesus in Your Crib

Baby Jesus, bless us today, your special day. We light this white candle to welcome you as our Saviour. As we carry you to our family crib, we think about what you have taught us. You taught us to share with others. You taught us to help one another. You taught us to be friends and you taught us to pray. When we look at the light of the candle, we remember these important lessons.
Amen.

Gospel Story of the First Christmas (Luke 2:1-20)

Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem to register for the census ordered by Augustus. The time came for Mary to have her baby. She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger – there was no room for them to stay in the inn. There were some shepherds in



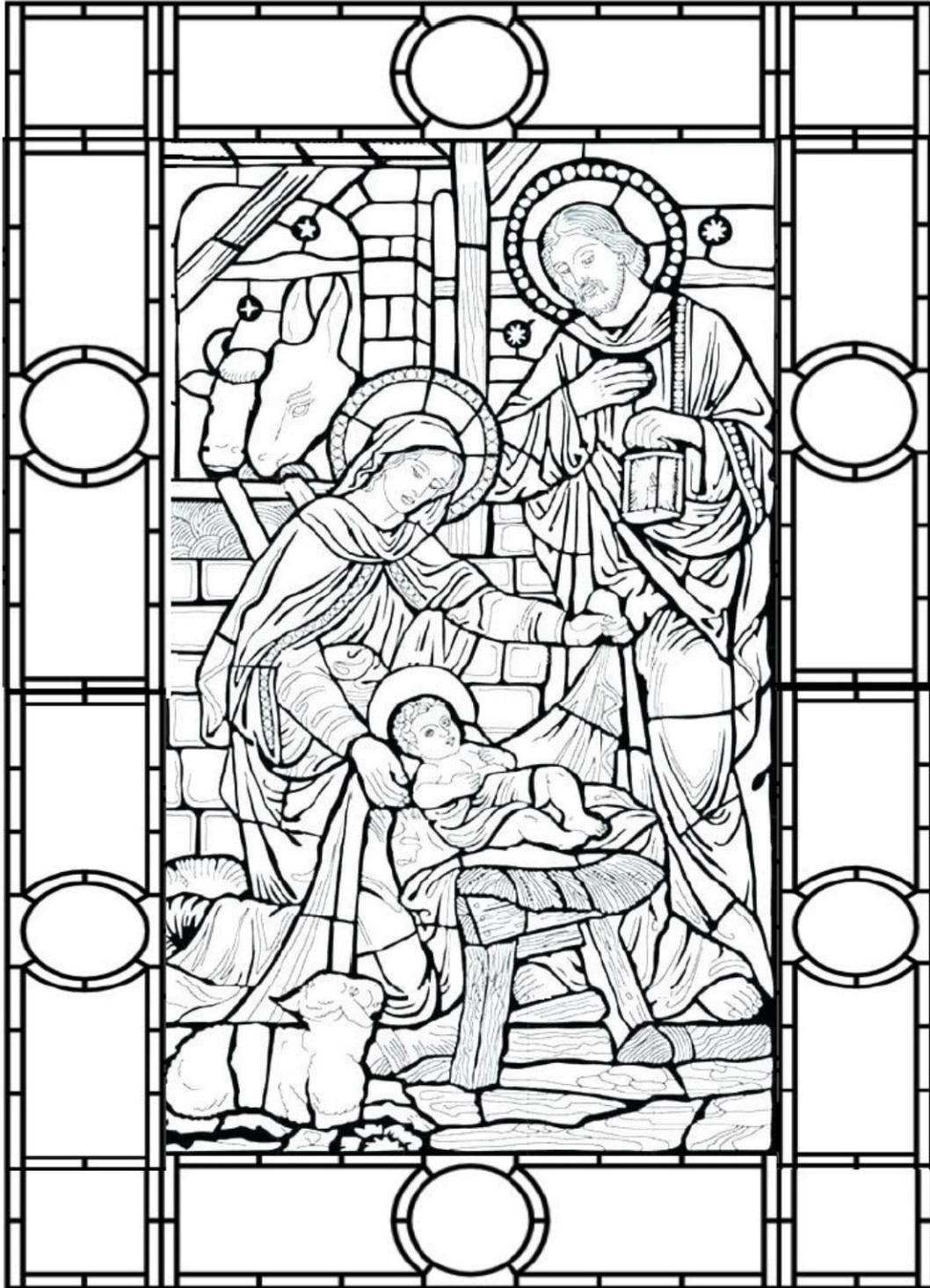
Christmas Scene by Sylvia Keogh, St Vincent's School, Dundalk. Winner in her category of Missio Ireland's Colouring Competition in 2020. This year's competition entry form is on page 9.

that part of the country who were spending the night in the fields, taking care of their flocks. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone over them. They were terribly afraid, but the angel said to them, 'Don't be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. This very day in David's town your Saviour was born – Christ the Lord! And this is what will prove it to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.' Suddenly a great army of heaven's angels appeared with the angel singing praises to God: 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased!' When the angels went away from them back into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord told us.' So, they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and saw the baby lying in the manger. When the shepherds saw him, they told them what the angel had said about the child. All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said. Mary remembered all these things and thought deeply about them. The shepherds went back, singing praises to God for all they had heard and seen; it had been just as the angel had told them.

ADVENT ACTIVITY CALENDAR 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
28 Nov 1 st Sunday of Advent Light the 1 st purple candle	29 Nov Start Advent with a prayer For children around the world	30 Nov Instead of killing them, you could just put these little critters in the garden?	1 Dec Help put up The Christmas decorations	2 Make it your job to recycle at home	3 Ask if you can help out with the Christmas baking!	4 Do a chore You HATE to help out at home!
5 2 nd Sunday of Advent Light the 1 st and 2 nd purple candles	6 Ask an adult at home to read their favourite bible story to you	7 Think before you speak! <i>Even a fish can avoid problems if it keeps its mouth shut!</i>	8 We celebrate Mary, the mother of Jesus today - say a 'Hail Mary'	9 Spend ten minutes watching one of God's miracles of nature	10 Can you hold a fundraiser for us? Mad Hair Day Jersey Day or a Christmas jumper party??	11 Make sure there's a crib for baby Jesus in your home...you could make it!
12 3 rd Sunday of Advent Light 1 pink and 2 purple candles	13 What are you thankful for this year? Create a wall of thanks!	14 Pray for missionaries working away from home this Christmas	15 be kind	16 Say a prayer for peace in your	17 Sing Christmas Carols	18 Say Grace... <i>Grace Before Meals</i> Bless us, O Lord, As we sit together, Bless the food we eat today, Bless the hands that made the food. Bless us O God. Amen
19 4 th Sunday of Advent Light 1 pink and 3 purple candles	20 What are you thankful for this year? Create a wall of thanks!	21 Help with the cleaning before Christmas	22 Leave a note for someone in your family telling them how wonderful they are	23 Help someone in need by giving some pocket money to charity	24 Before you go to bed pray for all children in the world	25 Welcome Baby Jesus





Colour the Christmas scene above. Then fill in your name, school address, and age...simple!
Return your entry to the Society of Missionary Children, 64 Lower Rathmines Road, Dublin, D06 N2H1
by **CLOSING DATE: Friday, 24th December 2021**

There are €20 Book Tokens to be won and other small prizes for runners-up!

My Name: _____

School Address: _____

Please Tell Us
Your Age



Teacher/Guardian
Please Tick for Assisted Learning



Liturgy for the Christmas Crib Blessing

We suggest this crib blessing takes place near the end of term and, if possible, in the school hall, so that all pupils can journey to the crib. Please feel free to adapt this liturgy to suit the needs of your school, classroom, parish setting, or home.

Opening Hymn

Our suggested opening hymn is 'Come Lord Jesus' from the *Grow in Love* series.

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Pupils should be assisted by an adult when lighting the candles.

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Leader: Something wonderful is happening in churches, schools, and homes around the world. Christmas cribs, that have been stored away since January, are being unpacked and put on display. People are gathering around the cribs to pray and to get ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Today we gather around our school crib to do the same. Have you noticed anything unusual about our crib? Apart from the animals in the stall, it's empty! Who is missing? Shepherds, Wise Men, Angels, Mary, Joseph, and the Baby Jesus. The Advent wreath we lit at the start of our prayer time, reminds us that we are still waiting for the arrival of Jesus at Christmas, so today we will have to wait a little while until all the characters arrive in our crib. They'll get there one by one and as they do, we will find out why God invited them to be at the first Christmas.

Opening Prayer

Reader: God our Father, today we gather around our school crib. Help us to learn more about the birth of your son Jesus, so that we can prepare our hearts for Christmas day and be ready to celebrate with joy and hope, the love you have for all your children. Amen.

Arrival of Joseph

Leader: Now let's welcome our figures to the crib. Let's begin with Joseph.

Pupil carries Joseph to the crib

Reader: Joseph lived in Nazareth and was a faithful man. He was engaged to Mary; a life together they had planned. Then one night in a dream, an angel did appear, with news of Mary's baby, the saviour who was near! God had chosen Joseph to care for Mary and her son. They were to call him 'Jesus'. Now a new life had begun. *Based on Matthew 1:18-25*



Arrival of Mary

Leader: Now let us welcome Mary to our crib.

Pupil carries Mary to the crib

Reader: Mary was a humble lady who prayed to God each day. So, when the angel appeared to her, she didn't run away. The angel said 'rejoice Mary, for God has chosen you, to give birth to our Lord Jesus, and give hope to our world too. Mary answered, 'Be it done to me, just as you have said,' and life changed that very moment that Mary bravely bowed her head. *Based on Luke 1:26-38*



You will need

- A Christmas Crib Set
- An Advent Wreath
- Self-portrait drawing of each pupil (optional addition to the liturgy, see page 12)

Arrival of The Angel Gabriel

Leader: Let us welcome the Angel Gabriel to our crib.

Pupil carries the Angel Gabriel to the crib

Reader: God sent his angel messengers on that first Christmas day. To tell the shepherds Christ was born and sleeping in some hay. And as the shepherds ran to see, they heard the angels sing, 'Glory to God and peace to those who joyfully welcome our king.' *Based on Luke 2:14*



Arrival of The Shepherds

Leader: Let us welcome the shepherds to our crib.

Pupils carry shepherds to the crib

Reader: Shepherds weren't liked a lot back then; the people thought them rough. But in God's eyes the shepherds were his children that he loved. He sent his angels down to them, and though they were afraid, they rejoiced when God chose them to see the saviour he had made. So off they ran and found Jesus, not surrounded by luxury or fuss. 'Look' they said, all smiling, 'at what the Lord has done for us!' *Based on Luke 2:1-20*



Arrival of The Wise Men

Leader: Let us welcome the wise men to our crib.

Pupils carry the wise men to the crib

Reader: The wise men lived in Asia, very far from Bethlehem. The star they followed to the town surprised and delighted them. It was leading to a saviour God had promised through the years. A saviour who'd reveal to us the things we need not fear. When people seem quite different, think of the three wise men, who some would turn away from as they didn't look like them. But God loves all our differences, and to help us understand, he led the wise men to the crib, to hold Jesus' little hand. *Based on Matthew 2:1-11*



Leader: You may have noticed that there's still somebody missing. Who might this be? It's Jesus! In churches around the world, baby Jesus isn't placed in the crib until late on Christmas eve. But as we won't be here then, we are going to put Jesus in the crib now.

Arrival of the Baby Jesus

Pupil carries the Baby Jesus to the crib

Christmas Carol

'Away in a Manger'

Leader: Today we've heard how God called Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the wise men, and the angels to the crib, to share the joy of Jesus' birth. God calls us to the crib too, so that we can be close to Jesus and, like the shepherds and wise men, we will leave the crib eager to tell others that God came into our world as a baby, to show us how to love and care for one another.



Come to the Crib

(This may not be practical in all schools so can be omitted)

Leader: Now it is time for you to come to the crib! Before we came together to pray, you all drew a picture of yourself. One by one, I'll ask you to bring your picture forward and place it near the crib.

Christmas Carol

'Silent Night'

Pupils bring their pictures to the crib. If this is being omitted, the Carol can be sung anyway.

Bidding Prayers

Reader: Dear Jesus, you came into our world to teach us how to love. Bless our homes and help them to be places where we learn to do the same. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: Dear Jesus, you came into our world to teach us how to live together. Bless our school, help it to be a place where we learn to do the same. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: Dear Jesus, you came into our world to teach us how to pray. Bless our teachers, priests and all those in our parish, so that they might help us all to grow in faith. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: Dear Jesus, you came into our world to teach us how to care for God's worldwide family. Bless all your children around the world, help us to see one another as brothers and sisters.

We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Let us say our Mission Prayer together. May all children in the world, share love, share friendship, and live in the peace of God's love, now and forever. Amen.

Leader: Before our prayer service ends today, we'll finish with a blessing and another one of our favourite Christmas Carols.

Christmas Crib Blessing

Leader: Heavenly Father, bless our school crib.

May Jesus remind us how to love.

May Mary remind us how to be brave.

May Joseph remind us how to be faithful.

May the angels remind us how to praise you.

May the shepherds remind us how to be joyful.

May the wise men remind us how to welcome others.

And may we remind everybody that we belong to God's family.

We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Closing Carol

'Little Drummer Boy' or 'O Little Town of Bethlehem'

Our Mission Prayer

May all children

In the world

Share love

Share friendship and live

In the peace

Of God's love

Now and forever. **Amen.**

Merry Christmas