



worship

The Christ Child: Christmas with Children
waiting, preparation, gathering and celebration



Written by Meg Everard
Ministry and Mission with Children and Families
Board of Education, NSW Synod, Uniting Church in Australia.
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Roundtree of the VicTas Synod.
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Artwork by Emily, Grace and Sarah Hobson



Storytelling

The storytelling section of these worship services has been intentionally left blank so that you can explore different avenues that suit your congregation best. Some congregations will use Godly play to tell the stories of Advent, other congregations might invite different guests each week to tell their story. Some might like to use children's story books to explore the themes. For book ideas go to: <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/children/resources>

Storytelling

Bible Reading

Conversation/Discussion:

Who has been to some kind of celebration: a baptism, a wedding, a birthday party? What was it like?

When Jesus was born, despite being born in a stable, people come from all around to celebrate his birth. There were the shepherds and the wise men, and probably others that aren't mentioned in the Bible. Today we are going to have a celebration to say thank you to God for bringing Jesus into our world, and showing us what it really means to live one's life with love, peace and faith.

Song

Activity

[Preparation: find a box (glittery ones can be purchased from the Reject shop and will hold attention as they are bright), inside the box, put some party hats, streamers, balloons, lolly bags, etc..., have each of these items grouped in a paper bag (so all the hats together, all the balloons together, etc...) Have enough for one item each for the children in your group.]

Invite the children one at a time to come and take a bag out of the box. Ask them if them to open their bag and share with the rest of the group what is inside.

Prayer: When you get to the streamers ask the children to hold them in their hands. One at a time say invite them to say something that they are thankful for and to throw their streamers (make sure you have blown out the advent candle). If you have been adding your prayers to a prayer tree each week, you might like to invite them to wind their streamer around the tree at this time. This will form your prayer for the day—a prayer of celebration and thanks.

Put on some party music.

Pass out some food and share in the party atmosphere.

celebration

Celebrate the Christ Child!
Celebrate.

Christmas for many of us is about celebrating the birth of Jesus and therefore the birth of our faith as we know it. It is a time to sing carols at the top of our lungs, to eat way to much food (!) and to attend worship to give thanks to God. We have waited, we are prepared, we are gathered and now it is time to celebrate.

In week 4 of Advent we enter a stage of celebration, a time to praise, to give thanks and to experience joy.

Physical preparation

Place on a low table your advent wreath, place cushions around the table in a circle (one cushion for each child). You will need a box with: party hats, streamers, balloons, etc... enough for each child.

Gathering

Before the children enter explain that you are going to have time with God, invite them to enter the space quietly and to take a seat on a cushion (explain that it doesn't matter where they sit).

Prayer: say the following together

**Creator God,
Its nearly Christmas.**

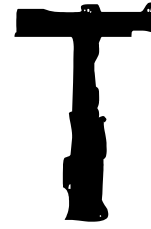
We are waiting, preparing and gathering

To share in the wonder of your great promise: the baby Jesus.

We light this candle to let you know that we are counting down the weeks until Christmas.

Amen

Ask one of the children to light the candle (as a safety and precautionary measure, it will be blown out during the song time).



This booklet is designed to assist your congregation, kids club, Sunday School group, to lead worship with primary school aged children in the days leading up to Christmas. Please feel free to use part or all of the ideas contained in this booklet. The booklet is divided into four sections:

- **Waiting;**
- **Preparation;**
- **Gathering and;**
- **Celebration.**

Worship is central to our practiced faith as Christians, it is a time when we gather to praise, celebrate and share with God. For children it can hold mystery, wonder and sometimes, let's be honest boredom. This booklet looks at new ways to worship and engage children with stories, imaginings and prayer that reflect the reality of Jesus' birth. Through this resource I hope that children will dive into the story that is Christmas, to see new wonder, experience the story anew and that together you will grow as a community of faith.

The central focus of worship in this booklet is based on ritual: each worship has the same elements which are explored differently each week. Ritual and routine help children to focus and to feel safe in the knowledge of what is happening next. Allow the children to lead the worship, try to be flexible and allow the children to wonder and explore the mystery that is Christmas for themselves.

These liturgies are designed to be used in short worship services with children, Kids Church, a half hour experience of worship with children. At the end of each worship time I would encourage you to sing a simple blessing song with the children to close.

waiting

Many families at Christmas time mark the coming of Christmas Day with an advent wreath. Each week as a new candle is lit, the children are brought closer and closer to the excitement that is Christmas Day. The anticipation builds and our preparation for the day grows, with present shopping, preparation of meals and the sending and receiving of cards. In week 1 of Advent we enter a stage of waiting.

Physical preparation

Place on a low table your advent wreath and then place cushions around the table in a circle (one cushion for each child).

Gathering

Before the children enter explain that you are going to have time with God, invite them to enter the space quietly and to take a seat on a cushion (explain that it doesn't matter where they sit).

Prayer: say the following together

**Dear God,
Its nearly Christmas.
We are waiting, preparing and gathering.
To share in the wonder of your great promise: the baby
Jesus.
We light this candle to let you know that we are
counting down the weeks until Christmas.
Amen**

Ask one of the children to light the candle (as a safety and precautionary measure, it will be blown out at the end of worship).

Conversation/Discussion:

Even though it happened over 2000 years ago we still celebrate Jesus' birth every year. Pretty amazing!

Show the children on the globe where Jerusalem is, and talk about some of the places across the world were Christians gather to celebrate Christmas.

Gathering people together can be really powerful, what is the biggest gathering any of the children have been to? A concert? A school assembly?

[If you have personal experience of a large gathering, talk with the children about the power of a crowd, of the anticipation and joy of being around people who are like minded—it can be a rock concert, it can be a large church service...]

Song

Activity and Prayer

Talk a bit about where we all come from, where our families come from, and point to different places on the globe. You might like to talk about different Christmas traditions from around the world (look at the website www.whychristmas.com.au for inspiration), and talk about how some faiths don't celebrate Christmas. Let the children ask questions and spend some time talking about this if needed.

Talk about hopes for people around the world. Ask the children if they have any hopes for other people in the world. Give each child a decorative Christmas ball, and ask them, whilst they are holding the ball, if they could pray one prayer for the world this Christmas what would it be?

Using bobble texta pens - write, scribble or draw on these Christmas balls (the small balls from the Reject Shop are cheap) a prayer that you have for the world.

When you add your prayer to the tree either do so silently or pray your prayer out loud.

**Alternatively you could provide plain balls, glue and newspapers—invite the children to cut out images from around the world that they want to pray for and to stick these on their balls and then hang them on your tree.*

gathering

Christmas for many of us involves family and friends, a time to gather together, to share food and to share in our hopes and dreams. Christmas is a time of celebration, a time when we see family members we may not have seen for months, if not years. Christmas is a time when we gather together family, and we gather together as a church community. In week 3 of Advent we enter a stage of gathering, a sense of community.

Physical preparation

Place on a low table your advent wreath, place cushions around the table in a circle (one cushion for each child) and place a globe of the world on the table also. You will need some plain coloured Christmas balls and some bobble pens for drawing on them.

Gathering

Before the children enter explain that you are going to have time with God, invite them to enter the space quietly and to take a seat on a cushion (explain that it doesn't matter where they sit).

Prayer: say the following together

**Creator God,
Its nearly Christmas.**

We are waiting, preparing and gathering

To share in the wonder of your great promise: the baby Jesus.

We light this candle to let you know that we are counting down the weeks until Christmas.

Amen

Ask one of the children to light the candle (as a safety and precautionary measure, it will be blown out at the end of worship).

Storytelling + Bible Reading

Storytelling

Bible Reading

Conversation/Discussion:

Talk with the children about times of waiting.
What are things that they have had to wait for?
What is hard about waiting?

At this stage the baby Jesus is safe and warm and protected in Mary's tummy. What do you think it is like in the darkness before you are born? What must it be like waiting and growing in a tummy?

Often we are afraid of the dark, we think of it as a scary place. But, really the womb where the baby grows is dark, the ground where a seed grows is dark, the cocoon a butterfly comes out of is dark...yet all of these places are safe, protected, comfortable, a place to grow.

Can anybody think of any other dark places that aren't scary?

Song

Activity

Close your eyes
What do you hear? (silence)
What do you feel?

Even when we close our eyes we can see the colours dance against our eyelids, can't we.

Draw a picture of how that darkness feels to you.
(Place the pictures carefully around the advent wreath)

Prayer (over next page)

P rayer for many of us is personal time with God. Time to close out the world and all of its distractions and to focus inward. For many children, prayer is tedious, boring and doesn't relate to their life experience. It is a time when they are required to sit still, be quiet and listen. Prayer in this form doesn't take account of a child's faith and ability to talk with God. I have found that children, when encouraged, can create the most amazing and mind boggling prayers that touch the soul.

Prayer is often for many of us about repetition, ritual, space and silence. Do you actively provide these when you pray with the children in your group/congregation? Many adults working with children fall into the trap of the adult saying the prayer, whilst trying to keep the children quiet and interested...hard isn't it? Why not trying to create prayer with the children rather than for them. Why not try making and building prayer together?

Children can experience prayer through the use of visual and tactile mediums. Create a time and place that the children know is prayer time. Take some time to talk about prayer with the children. Try to lose your perceptions of prayer and enter into the prayer with the children. Prayer is your conversation with God, we all converse in different ways, therefore prayer happens in different ways...

Space for leadership notes and ideas:

preparation

Imagining Prayer

Imagine being Mary.

Start by imagining a baby in your arms.

Ask the children to share what this feels like, is there a special way we should hold the baby? Who has held a baby before? What does a new baby feel like? What does a new baby smell like?

As the Leader you will start with the imaginary baby, say a word of hope. Then carefully pass the imaginary baby to the next person in the circle and encourage the children to share words of hope as they pass the baby around the circle.

If you have older primary children and a small group, you might like to invite a Mother/Father to bring along their baby and share this baby in your prayer.

For very young children, provide a real rag doll (preferably one with no features like a Steiner doll) and wrappings. Invite the children to make a bed for their doll using a cushion and wrapping fabric. Put on some gentle music while they wrap their doll. The prayers for "this baby" have a universal ring and become prayers for all people.

Imagination *n.*

The formation of a mental image or something that is neither perceived as real nor present to the senses, the ability or tendency to form such images

[Imagination is a powerful and wonderful tool, through our imagination we can escape reality, see the past clearly and have adventures through time and space. This prayer asks the children to image holding a baby. All children revel in play, and imagination is a big part of play - if anyone struggles with this prayer it will be adults! So, try your best and allow yourself to be led by the children.]

waiting

Prayer

God Sees and Hears Our Prayer

In this time of **waiting** for Christmas, talk about your hopes for Christmas, what are some of the things that you are looking forward to? Give each of the children a slip of coloured paper, and some textas, invite them to write or draw the things that they are looking forward to about Christmas.

*For younger primary you might like to have printed some words on the slips of paper: presents, Christmas carols, family, fun, joy, etc... Then let the children colour these in.

Play some music in the background whilst they do this, encourage conversation about this, and questioning.

When they have completed these (make sure that you as the leader also participate), invite everyone to sit in a circle, join each link of paper to the next with sticky tape or a stapler and have the children say:

**I link my prayer to yours
God Sees and Hears Our Prayer**

[God not only hearing but seeing our prayer, is valuable to the children.]

As you pray, the children might like to mention what they have written on their paper link, encourage this sharing. When you have completed your prayer link, have everyone in the circle hold a little part of it and say together:

**God Sees and Hears Our Christmas Prayer
As we wait for the Baby Jesus to be born.
Amen**

Hang your prayer links somewhere prominent, you might like to decorate a tree with them, and you can be sure that the children will remember this prayer next week - because it was visual, interactive and personal.

preparation

As we enter the second week of Advent, we light another candle and commence preparations for the celebration. As Mary most likely prepared swaddling cloth, and other necessary items for her baby's birth families today also prepare for Christmas. They might decorate their tree, their house, send cards and buy food. Invite the children during Discussion time to talk about their family preparations, each family will have different traditions.

Physical preparation

Place on a low table your advent wreath, place a long length of material around the table in a circle for the children to sit on.

Gathering

Before the children enter explain that you are going to have time with God, invite them to enter the space, as they do hand them each a square of material, invite them to take a seat on the material (explain that it doesn't matter where they sit).

Prayer: say together

**Creator God,
Its nearly Christmas.**

**We are waiting, anticipating, preparing and gathering
To share in the wonder of your great promise: the baby
Jesus.**

**We light this candle to let you know that we are counting
down the weeks until Christmas.**

Amen

Ask one of the children to light the candle (as a safety and precautionary measure, it will be blown out at the end of worship).

Storytelling

Bible Reading

Conversation/Discussion:

Who has had a party at their house?
Who has had lots of people to dinner?
What are the kinds of things that you do to prepare for people coming to share in a celebration at your house?

How do we prepare for Christmas?
What are some of the things that your family does to prepare for Christmas day?

When a woman is pregnant with a baby, she prepares for that baby. What are some things that a Mother might do to prepare for the coming of her child?

Song

Activity

[Preparation: find a box (glittery ones can be purchased from the Reject shop and will hold attention as they are bright), inside the box, put some nappies, wipes, baby bottle, baby socks, dummy...whatever baby things you think a mother would prepare for the coming of her child. Have enough for one item each for the children in your group. This activity aims at bringing the reality of Jesus as a baby home to the children. It makes Jesus as a baby more real. If you have a young pregnant Mum in your congregation you might like to invite them to come along to this worship and share with the children.]

Invite the children one at a time to come and take something out of the box. Ask them if they know what it is for and why a baby would need it.

Talk about the items, and the preparation a Mother and Father undertake for the coming of their child.