

Christmas

MEETING AIM

To explore the Christmas story and discover what it means for us today.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 2:1-20

BACKGROUND

Christmas can be a time of great spiritual connection, but the story is perhaps all too familiar for some. We often rush through the events of the narrative without reflecting on what it means. God sent his son to live with his people. The great Emmanuel: God with us. The saviour promised by the Old Testament prophets. Jesus' birth is an event that should engender joy, and mirroring the angels' celebrations we should also celebrate.

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WELCOME ACTIVITIES

OPTION ONE: Celebration preparation

You will need: tables arranged around your meeting space with lots of decorations

Set out the tables before the session. As people arrive, direct them to the different tables and challenge them to decorate the area of church around each table. Make sure you have one or two volunteers at each table to guide conversation around getting ready for Christmas and to discuss what people are looking forward to.

OPTION TWO: Who is Jesus?

You will need: words that could be used to describe Jesus, each written on a separate piece of card; blank pieces of card; marker pens; a Bible

Spread out the words and invite the congregation to choose ones they would use to describe Jesus. You could do this as people arrive or at the start of the service, inviting people of different ages to select a few. Have some blank cards available so that people can write their own if they want to. Invite people to say why they chose those words. Finally, read Isaiah 9:2,6-7.

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BIBLE STORY

You will need: live music of the songs mentioned in the story below or recorded tracks and the means to play them; volunteer readers

Before the service, ask the musicians playing in the service to prepare the carols listed in the story below or to find recordings of the songs to play at the appropriate times. Gather volunteers to read out the different

sections of the story. You could all practise beforehand or ask for volunteers on the day.

More than 2,000 years ago, a young couple was about to have their life turned upside-down. And the whole world was about to be turned upside-down, too! *Sing the first verse of 'O come, O come Emmanuel' together.*

God's special saviour, promised by various prophets hundreds of years earlier, was coming into the world. God was sending his son to be a light for the whole world. *Sing together the first verse and chorus of 'Light of the world' by Tim Hughes.*

Augustus, ruler of the Roman Empire, decided to find out how many people lived under his control. He ordered a census, and everyone had to return to their home town to register. Joseph and Mary had to go to Bethlehem. Mary was expecting a baby: Jesus, God's Son. Jesus was going to be God's special saviour! *Sing the first verse of 'O little town of Bethlehem' together.*

While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for Jesus to be born. As Bethlehem was extremely busy at this time there were no guest rooms for Mary and Joseph to stay in, so they had to stay in a place where they animals lived. And it was there that Jesus was born. Mary wrapped the baby in cloths and laid him in a feeding trough. *Sing the first verse of 'Away in a manger' together.*

Meanwhile, in the hills around the town, some shepherds were looking after their sheep. *Sing the first verse of 'While shepherds watched' together.*

The angel told them that God's special saviour – the Messiah – had been born in Bethlehem. Then a whole host of angels appeared, singing praises to God! *Sing the first verse of 'Angels in the realms of glory' together.*

The shepherds rushed off to Bethlehem to find the saviour of the world. When they got to where Mary, Joseph and Jesus were staying, they worshipped Jesus. Then they went back to their sheep, telling everyone they met about Jesus: Emmanuel! *Sing the first verse of 'Joy to the world' together.*

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SMALL GROUPS

You will need: copies of the questions below; Bibles

Break into small groups – made up of one or two families, or of different mixed-age groups – then give each group a copy of these questions and a Bible:

- What is your favourite part of the story?
- If you were Joseph's relative, what would you have thought of these events?
- What would you have thought if you were a shepherd?
- If Jesus is God's special saviour, what does that mean to you?

Give the groups time to chat through these questions, referring to the Bible passage if they need to.

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REVIEW

You will need: a roving mic (if needed)

Get some feedback on questions two and three from 'Small groups', using a microphone to hear people's contributions if your meeting space is large.

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RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

Set these three activities up in different parts of your meeting space. Explain what each one is and encourage people to go to the one that will be most helpful to them as they process what they have discovered.

OPTION 1: Paper chains

You will need: strips of paper; pens; sticky tape

Encourage people to write different reactions, adjectives or feelings about the story on the strips of paper. They can then make loops with the strips and join them together to make a chain. As they work, they should chat about the story and the words they have written down.

OPTION 2: Biscuit decorating

You will need: biscuits; icing; edible Christmas decorations

Set out the biscuits and decorations, then invite people to decorate a biscuit to reflect what stood out for them in the story. As they work, encourage the group to chat about what they are doing and why.

OPTION 3: Discussion

Assign some volunteers to help guide a discussion about the story and what it might mean for the congregation today. What difference will this amazing story make to people's lives in your area?

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CLOSING

Bring everyone back together and ask if anyone would like to share what they did, thought about or discussed during the response time. Thank everyone for taking part and say an appropriate blessing to close the service.

ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children's Work*.

All together

MEETING AIM

To enjoy hearing and exploring the Christmas story together.

BACKGROUND

A family Christmas event allows everyone to engage with the good news together, providing opportunities for further discussion about what it means that Jesus came to live with his people.

WELCOME ACTIVITIES

You will need: stickers with the character names on them

Give each guest a character sticker. Read the story aloud, and when each character is mentioned, the relevant people should stand up and make the following sound effects:

Mary: tuneful humming

Joseph: hammering

Angels: choral singing

Shepherds: "Baa!"

Baby Jesus: baby crying

Wise men: say "Interesting!" and tap their temple

Mary, a teenage girl, was engaged to Joseph, a carpenter. One day, an angel called Gabriel visited her and told her she would have a baby and that he would be called Jesus. The angel said Jesus was going to be the king and saviour of the world!

A few months later, Mary had to travel with Joseph to his hometown, Bethlehem. It was very busy and there wasn't anywhere to stay. Mary just wanted a bed to sleep in! The only place available was where the animals lived. It was smelly and noisy. It wasn't somewhere a saviour should be born.

Mary soon went into labour, but when baby Jesus was born there wasn't a clean cot for him; only the animals' feeding trough. The king of the world was laid down in the hay.

Meanwhile, some shepherds were looking after their sheep in nearby fields. Nobody liked the shepherds because they were poor and a bit smelly. But a group of angels came and sang loudly to announce Jesus' birth to these shepherds. They went quickly to Bethlehem to see baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

A long way to the east, some wise men saw a star. They knew the meanings behind the stars, and this one told them that the king of the world had been born. They set out on their camels and travelled hundreds of miles just to see Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

The good news of Jesus's birth was for everyone. It was for the shepherds who were poor and smelly, and for the wise men who travelled far with presents. This good news is for us, too. It's good news because Jesus brings peace, hope and joy in the midst of mess, pain and tears.

Jesus is the best Christmas present because his birth changes everything!

INTRO ACTIVITIES

OPTION 1: Movie bingo

You will need: bingo sheets (see below); pens

Before the event, make bingo sheets with the names of various Christmas films (eg *Elf*, *The Polar Express*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Home Alone*). Make sure you have a mix of old and new films so that all the generations can join in.

Give out the sheets. Challenge everyone to find one person who has seen each film. The first to complete the whole sheet is the winner.

OPTION 2: Logos

You will need: brand logos; pens; paper

Before the event, find some famous logos and use a computer program to delete the brand name. Print the pictures and stick them around the room. Challenge everyone to work out which products the logos represent.

OPTION 3: Photo booth

You will need: photographer; props

Before the event, collect Christmas props (eg hats, decorations, cakes) and set up a photo booth area. Encourage people to have their festive photograph taken.

Make sure you follow your church's safeguarding policy with regard to taking photos. Work out a way for families to receive their photos as a memento of the event.

GAMES

OPTION 1: Snowman dress-up

You will need: snowman props

Working in small teams (or families), guests should dress one team member up as a snowman. Decide who is the best-dressed snowman!

OPTION 2: Santa limbo

You will need: a rope; Santa hat; music

Ask volunteers to stretch the rope between them. Take turns to limbo underneath the rope wearing the Santa hat. The rope is lowered each time until there is a winner.

OPTION 3: Christmas intros

You will need: festive songs; pens; paper

Play the introduction from each Christmas song. In teams, guess the name of the song. The winners are the ones with the most correct answers.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

OPTION 1: Christmas cards

You will need: blank cards; pens; decorations; glue sticks

Encourage the group to make a card for Jesus using the decorations you have provided. Chat together about the message they might write to him inside.

OPTION 2: Bunting

You will need: fabric or paper triangles; craft materials; glue; string

Give each guest a triangle and encourage them to decorate them however they like. Then string all the triangles together to create bunting. After the party, take it to a local care home and wish the residents a happy Christmas.

OPTION 3: Gingerbread reindeer

You will need: readymade gingerbread figures; black and white icing; small red sweets

Turn the gingerbread figures upside-down to make a reindeer shape. Use the icing to decorate the reindeer face and antlers with a red sweet as the nose.

ADDITIONAL IDEAS (if time)

OPTION 1: Christmas awards

You will need: certificates for the award categories; a ballot box

Before the session, pick categories for some fun awards, such as 'Cutest baby', 'Best teller of cracker jokes', 'Best Christmas jumper' or 'Most angelic singing voice'. Make up certificates for these categories.

Give each guest the list and ask them to write who they would vote for to win each award. Count up the votes and announce the winners!

OPTION 2: Christmas karaoke

You will need: festive song backing tracks

Use YouTube or a music streaming service to find backing tracks for various Christmas songs. Hold a Christmas karaoke contest or simply enjoy singing along to some Christmas favourites together.

OPTION 3: Christmas bring and share

Before the event, invite all the guests to bring a contribution towards a buffet meal.

HELEN HODGSON

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For the rest of this month's sessions go to youthandchildrens.work/resources.

Sam and the seasonal showdown

"Just one more string of lights," said Sam as he strained to attach the fairy lights to the guttering that ran across his house.

He climbed down the ladder and stepped back to admire his handiwork. The whole front of the house was festooned with Christmas lights, decorations and giant inflatables.

"Beautiful," he said to himself.

His eyes strayed to his neighbour Sian's house, which was also groaning under the weight of decorations. For years now the two families – Sam's and Sian's – had been competing in the Manchesterford Seasonal Extravaganza: an annual competition designed to pinpoint the best-decorated house in the town. The title had passed between the two each year to the exclusion of all other competitors.

This year, Sam and Sian had been allowed by their families to take the lead in designing and putting up the decorations. Sam had been planning what he was going to do for months. Early on, he had decided to convert last year's 'Chief Elf' into a life-sized representation of Ed Sheeran playing the guitar and pretending to sing 'I wish it could be Christmas every day'. His plans were finally complete, all the lights were up and it was almost time to switch everything on.

But before he did so, he looked again at Sian's house. He examined it for the weak link, the Achilles heel that meant Sam was bound to take the title. Then he saw it. A reindeer was straining against the sticky tape Sian had used to fix it to the side of her house.

"Surely she can't have just used tape," he thought to himself. "A small puff of wind and that reindeer will be venison burgers."

He couldn't wait for the judges to arrive. They were bound to mark her down for that terrible mistake.

It wasn't long before a small crowd arrived, with the three judges squashed in the middle. They stood outside Sian's house first.

"Here we go," thought Sam.

He sidled up to one of the judges: "That reindeer looks a bit precarious, don't you think?" he murmured.

Sian flicked the switch and her house lit up. The reindeer immediately fell off the wall and crashed onto the ground. The crowd gasped and Sian looked crestfallen.

Next it was Sam's turn. He walked up to the switch, but before he could touch it one of the judges rushed up to him.

"Stop! You can't turn that on! Look how many plugs you've got plugged into one socket! And those aren't even suitable for outdoors. You're disqualified!"

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do you think about Sam's attitude towards Sian?
- Should he have told Sian about the reindeer? Why? Why not?
- What do you think happened next?

This story is based on Luke 6:37-42. Read this passage to the group and compare Jesus' story and words with this one. Discuss what Jesus might have been saying through his parable, encouraging the group to think about it in a new way.

ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children's Work*.

Limiting beliefs

"Whether you think you can, or you think you can't – you're right."

For years the thought of completing an Ironman filled me with terror. There was no way a mere mortal like me could ever complete something like that, but it was something I really wanted to do: a 2.4 mile swim, 112 mile bike...then a marathon. Madness! So I signed up. Over the following year I followed a training plan, read everything I could and watched all the videos...and soon enough I began to see changes in my ability that allowed me to believe it might be possible, and then eventually to believe and then know that it is possible.

Limiting beliefs are the recurring thoughts you have that tell you can't do that thing you'd love to do. They remind you of all the reasons you're not good enough, qualified enough or connected enough, and fill you with anxiety, excuses, apathy and fear. But they are lies. These false assumptions about yourself form a glass ceiling that you will never break through unless you identify and replace them. Limiting beliefs keep you safe inside your comfort zone, but most growth and achievement happens when you go to the edge of your comfort zone and beyond. You'll still need help, strategy and hard work, but knowing that you can get there is the most empowering realisation you'll ever experience!

It typically happens as follows...you might be able to recognise the process by looking back over the ideas you or your mentee recently had:

- A. You have an idea and feel excited about it.
- B. After a while (could be two minutes, could be two weeks) doubts and deep-rooted beliefs limit your progress and discourage you.
- C. Here you have a choice. Do you accept those limiting beliefs? Does this lead to either D or E?
- D. Procrastination, giving up, deferring to others, self-sabotage.
- E. Creating a strategy, learning and growing, making progress, acquiring help.

HOW DO YOU OVERTURN LIMITING BELIEFS?

You can't just get rid of a belief. Most of the beliefs we hold took root before we were 6. Therefore, you have to replace it with a more positive belief. Create a new affirmation that you can repeat to yourself like a mantra, eg turn "I don't know how" into "I can learn"; "I never get more than 60 per cent in tests" into "I won't give up until I'm a 70 per cent student"; "I can't overcome limiting beliefs" to "I can achieve anything I want to achieve".

- What negative beliefs do you have about yourself?
- Do you really, actually believe this is true?
- Where do these beliefs originate from?
- What is the opposite of these thoughts? Which is better or healthier for you to believe?
- What does God believe about you? What do your friends believe about you?
- What kind of person would you be without these thoughts?
- What could you replace them with?

How can you use all this to aid your mentee?

JOEL TOOMBS

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Christmas

The Christmas season is packed full of parties and events designed to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Here are some games to spice up your party!



GINGERBREAD DECORATING

You will need: gingerbread people (bought or homemade); icing in different colours and piping bags (or bought letter icing); other cake decorations, such as chocolate chips, sugar strands or metallic balls

Give each child and young person a gingerbread person and show them the decorating materials you have brought with you. Challenge them to decorate their biscuit as best they can within a certain time limit.

Once everyone has finished, have a gingerbread parade and judge which should be the winners. You could have different categories, such as 'Best use of icing', 'Most ingenious hat decoration' or 'Most likely to be sold in a bake sale'.

PRESENT PANIC

You will need: lots of boxes; Christmas wrapping paper; sticky tape; scissors; paper; marker pens

Before the session, write out the words: "A Saviour has been born to you" on a sheet of paper and cut the sentence up into individual words. Put each word in a box and then wrap each box with Christmas wrapping paper.

Place the presents at one end of the room and line the children up at the other. One child runs to the pile of presents, brings it back to the group, unwraps it and finds the word. Then the next player brings back another present, and so on. The team then has to work together to put the words of the verse in the right order.

If you have a large group, create more than one set of presents using a different pattern of paper for each set. Split the group into smaller teams and play against each other. You could adapt the game for older age groups by including presents that contain forfeits or other challenges, such as "Do ten press-ups", "Tear up one of the words you have already collected", "Blindfold the next player and direct them using only your voice".

CHRISTMAS KARAOKE CHALLENGE

You will need: a karaoke machine or microphones and a PA; a laptop or tablet; access to the internet

Hold your own *Stars in their Eyes* or *X Factor* challenge. Invite the children or young people to select a Christmas song and prepare it for a performance. Karaoke tracks are widely available on music streaming services or YouTube. Once everyone is ready, ask the performers to sing their songs in turn.

You could make this a competitive event with *X Factor* judging or *Eurovision Song Contest* voting. Alternatively, you could simply enjoy the performances!

CHRISTMAS PUDDING

You will need: chairs

Create a Christmas version of the game 'Fruit salad'. Set out a circle of chairs, providing a chair for all but one player. Everyone should sit down except for the player without a chair, who stands in the middle of the circle. Choose four or five Christmas-related foods, such as turkey, mince pies, satsumas, roast potatoes or stollen and assign them to members of the group (including the player standing in the middle).

The player in the middle should shout out one of these foods, and all the players who were given it should stand up and run to an empty chair. The person in the middle should also try to sit in an empty chair. The person left without a chair shouts out another Christmas food, and so on. The player on the middle can also shout out 'Christmas pudding', at which point everyone should get up and find a new seat. Keep playing until the group runs out of steam.

CHRISTMAS SCAVENGERS

You will need: a list of items to photograph; cameras or smartphones

Before the session, devise a list of items the young people or children have to photograph. Make sure they can find or create them all at the place you're playing. You could include things such as a mince pie, a Nativity set or a Christmas tree. To make it more imaginative, add in a few more abstract things, such as surprise, celebration or goodwill to all people.

Split the group into smaller teams and make sure everyone has a camera or smartphone. The teams should take photographs of the different items on the list. For the more abstract ideas they might have to create a tableau or scene they can photograph. (Make sure you follow your church's safeguarding policy when taking photos of children or young people.)

When everyone has finished, show the different teams' photos and, if you'd like to, choose a winner.

THE CLASSICS

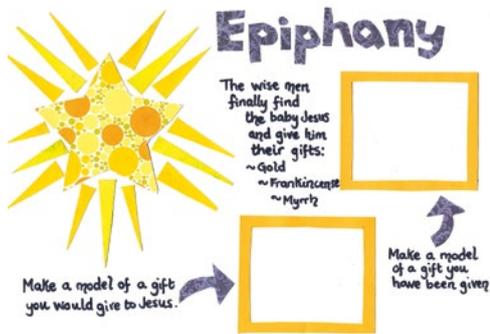
Don't forget all the classic party games, such as pass the parcel, musical chairs, musical statues, pin the tail on the donkey (or reindeer), blind man's buff, the chocolate game and more. No matter how old-fashioned they seem, it's more than likely that children and even young people will be happy to play them!

ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children's Work*.

Christmas

There is no shortage of Christmas craft ideas in books and on the internet, but here are some great activities to help children think more deeply about the Christmas story.



EPIPHANY PLAYDOUGH MAT

You will need: a printout of the playdough mat ([youthandchildrens.work/resources](#)); a laminator and laminating pouches; playdough

This craft helps children think about the journey of the wise men and the meaning of the gifts they brought Jesus. It's best to do it in a group so you can talk together as you are doing so.

Print out the playdough mat and laminate it for easy clean-up and future use. Use playdough to explore the mat's ideas about gifts and use the creative time to talk about the journey of the wise men, the gifts they brought to Jesus, the gifts we are given and the gifts we would like to give.



NATIVITY STORY FUZZY FELT

You will need: felt sheets to use as backdrops; pieces of felt in various shapes; scissors (optional)

It's always fascinating to watch children retell the stories they hear and to see their imaginations and ingenuity at work when they have a set of open-ended materials to use. This craft gives them the freedom to produce their own visual recreations of the Christmas story.

After telling the Christmas story, let the children make pictures of the story using felt pieces arranged on a felt backing. They might want to cut out their own pieces, so have some scissors on hand just in case. Leave some time so that when they have finished making their pictures you can have a chat about what they show.

CHRISTMAS PICTURE GLITTER GLOBE

You will need: clean jam jars and lids (labels removed); sticky dots or strong glue; glitter (the finer the glitter flakes are the better as bigger glitter flakes can clump – use white for a snowier effect); a laminated piece of Nativity-related Christmas card that will fit inside the jam jar; water

This is a lovely way to use up some Nativity-style Christmas cards or to make use of Nativity-themed pictures the children have drawn. Every time they play with the glitter globe it will remind them of the Christmas story.

Choose a Christmas card picture you like and cut it so that it's the right size to fit inside your jam jar. Laminate the piece of Christmas card and leave a border at the bottom that you can bend over to make a 'stand', so the card can be glued to the jam jar lid. Stick glue dots or strong glue to the bottom of the stand piece.

Stick the stand onto the inside part of the lid (the middle of the lid works better than right at the edge). Then put a teaspoon of glitter at the bottom of the jar and add water. Mix together. Leave a little pocket of space at the top of the jar so that it is not completely filled with water. Take your lid and put the laminated picture into the water (it will be upside down). Screw the jar lid on firmly. If you're going to glue it in place, wait until you've done a trial run! Turn the jar right side up and shake. Watch the glitter swirl around your Christmas picture!



JESUS IN THE MANGER DECORATED BISCUITS

You will need: plain biscuits; icing sugar; water; shredded wheat; jelly babies; white fondant icing; a rolling pin; a knife; spoons; bowls
Everybody loves an edible craft! This one is especially suitable for younger children and is a good way to prompt conversation about the special baby who has been born.

Make some icing with the icing sugar and water. Roll out the fondant icing into a thin sheet and cut it into squares that are big enough to cover a jelly baby. Cover the top of a biscuit with icing and sprinkle on some crumbled shredded wheat to look like hay. Put a jelly baby in the middle of the shredded wheat, then cover it with a fondant icing blanket.



Nativity (U)

CLIP: 00:12:14 – 00:18:40

SYNOPSIS

It is Christmas, and primary school teacher Paul Maddens is charged with producing the school's Nativity play. Competing against the posh rival school for the honour of best-reviewed show in town, the stakes are raised when Paul boasts that his ex-girlfriend Jennifer, a Hollywood producer, is coming to see his show with a view to turning it into a film. The only trouble is they haven't spoken in years. With eccentric assistant Mr Poppy fuelling his 'little white lie', Maddens suddenly becomes a local celebrity, finding himself at the centre of quarrelling parents and overexcited children, desperate in their bid for fame and fortune. Maddens' only hope is to get back in touch with Jennifer and lure Hollywood into town so that everybody's Christmas wishes can come true.

Although it initially received some poor reviews, *Nativity* continues to be a crowd-pleasing film ten years and three sequels later, especially among younger viewers.

The clip for this session sees Mr Maddens and Mr Poppy taking a road trip to collect a Christmas tree for the school. There is obvious disdain from Mr Maddens with regard to both Christmas and Mr Poppy, though Mr Poppy is completely unaware of this. While browsing for Christmas trees, Mr Maddens bumps into an old drama acquaintance called Gordon Shakespeare. Shakespeare is a pompous individual who works at a private school down the road from Mr Maddens. As they catch up, Shakespeare is condescending towards Maddens to such an extent that Maddens creates a lie that his ex-girlfriend will be returning to the UK with a Hollywood entourage to watch their nativity and turn it into a film production. This lie spirals quickly out of control when Mr Poppy overhears the conversation and tells the children back at school.

DISCUSS

After showing the clips as a stimulus, break into small groups (you may wish to have a designated discussion leader in each group) and discuss the following questions:

- How would you describe the character of Gordon Shakespeare? Why is he such an unlikeable character?
- What does Paul Maddens do wrong in this clip, and how might it impact other characters in the film?
- What is so exciting to the children at the school? Should they be told the truth?
- Is it always wrong to lie?

After discussing these questions, read Ephesians 4:29 together, then return to your smaller groups and discuss the following questions:

- What might 'unwholesome talk' mean in this verse? (This is the phrase used by the NIV. If you're using a different translation, substitute the words accordingly.)
- Why is it important to tell the truth?
- How can we 'build up' those we care about?
- Do you think this verse could support lying in some cases?

Nativity is now available to stream on Netflix.

TOM WADE

is the head of philosophy and theology at Haileybury and Imperial Service College.



Soon you'll get better

ARTIST: Taylor Swift

SUITABLE FOR: Under-10s

INTRODUCTION

This song tells the story of a young woman's pain in relation to the serious illness of her mother. While it may not be suitable for all children's groups, the sad reality is that many of our children and young people will have experienced the illness of a parent, sibling or grandparent. We believe in a God who has authority over all things, including sickness and disease, yet there are times when our prayers appear not to be answered, and our loved ones don't always recover. This session creates a space where children can talk about some of the issues they are facing and how they feel about them.

The way you choose to introduce this session, and the issues raised by this song, will depend on the children in your group and the particular issues involved. You may find it helpful to talk to parents before the session to explain some of the themes you will be exploring so they are well placed to follow up on some of the discussions at home. For some of the situations your children are facing it may be appropriate to seek help from your wider church leadership, or from relevant professionals or charities.

LISTEN AND DISCUSS

Create a safe space, explaining to the children that you understand this is a tough subject. Be clear that you want them to feel safe as they explore how they feel about these issues and to be able to take their questions and frustrations to God, rather than feeling that it wouldn't be appropriate to do so. Set up your venue so that it is comfortable and welcoming before you begin the session.

Play the track, distributing copies of the lyrics if needed and inviting the children to listen in the quiet. As you ask the following questions, invite them to share how they are feeling, whether they choose to respond verbally or by other means.

- How do you feel about this song?
- What strikes you most about the lyrics?
- Which of the issues the singer mentions would you like to talk about?

Follow the lines of questioning that the children want to unpack together. It may be helpful to look at some of the passages from the Gospels that tell stories of Jesus' healing power, as well as helping them understand that God doesn't always physically heal people as the way we would want him to.

As you draw the discussions to a close, share Isaiah 43:1-3 with the group, explaining how God promises to be with us in the midst of every circumstance; in pain as well as when life is easy. Pray for the children and for their particular needs in the midst of the circumstances they are facing. Provide an opportunity for them to return to you with further questions at a later date.

BECKY MAY

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ADVENT WREATH

Light this Advent wreath by drawing a flame on the wicks of the candles.
For each week in Advent add your prayers inside the boxes.

WEEK 1: HOPE

Write the names of people you know who need hope:

WEEK 2: PEACE

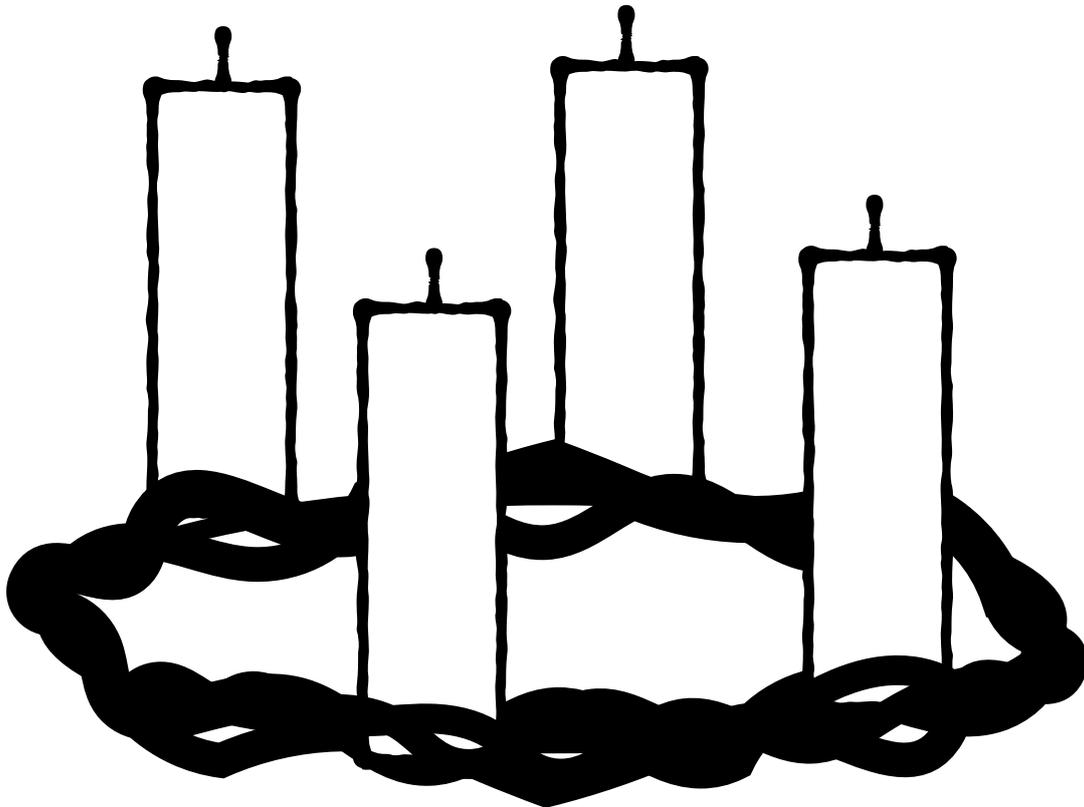
List places in the world that need God's peace right now:

WEEK 3: JOY

What brings you joy? Note these things down here and thank God for them!

WEEK 4: LOVE

How can you show God's love over Christmas? Write a prayer asking for his help.



We look forward to Christmas, when we remember Jesus being born as a baby and bringing hope to our world:

"THE TRUE LIGHT THAT GIVES LIGHT TO EVERYONE WAS COMING INTO THE WORLD" (JOHN 1:9).

SARA AND SAM HARGREAVES

lead *engageworship.org*, resourcing and training for creative and world-changing worship.