



## Advent Christmas Card Activity

**A stand-alone activity, or one to incorporate with other aspects of the Advent Resource. If using as stand-alone, incorporate an introduction and include a suitable prayer activity to begin and end.**

**Aim** To engage young people in reflection on the Christmas story, using art and scripture.

### Materials needed

- A selection of Christmas cards with Christian themes and messages, ideally with a good variety of art forms and depictions. *Religious organisations and charities often have the best selections. Gather and keep over the years.*
- Alternatively search on-line to find images and print these. Ensure there is at least one for each person plus a few spares.
- Participant Sheets containing Scripture passages – provided overleaf.
- Journals or sheets of A5 paper for group members
- Pens and pencils, including a selection of coloured ones (enough for each person to have 2-3 colours)

### Step 1

- Each person to have a journal or A5 sheet, place the coloured pencils / pens within reach of all participants
- Invite the group members to close their eyes and bring to mind an image of the nativity scene (this may be one recently viewed, a favourite childhood one, etc)
- In just 3-4 minutes ask individuals to depict their nativity scene in their journal, or on the paper, using the coloured pencils / pens.
- Put pens down and turn over the sheet to hide the image.
- Check how the young people found the activity:
  - did any have difficulty bringing an image to mind?
  - how happy / unhappy were individuals with their depictions, and why?
- ❖ *Explain how art is used to depict not just an event, but also to share some of the meaning behind it. Colour and detail may be used to highlight a message, an understanding or a feeling, colour may also be used to indicate importance. Each of us will notice or respond to illustrations, or aspects of them in different ways.*

## Step 2

- Hand out a Christmas card image to each person, randomly, picture face down.
- On the signal the cards are turned over and individuals invited to look at the depiction and see what they notice – prompt questions might include:
  - what appeals to them and why?
  - is there anything they do not like, or understand, if so why is that?
  - what message might the artist be trying to convey?
- After a couple of minutes of reflection ask the individuals to jot down responses in their journal or on the back of the image they have created.
- The drawn images are now turned over and placed alongside the card. Encourage the two to be compared – are there similarities, what might be different?
- Depending on the time available sharing in twos or threes might take place with each pair / group then invited to make one comment or observation to the rest of the group.
- ❖ *Comment as appropriate to draw together the threads.*  
*Some drawn images and cards may be similar, others quite different, but even if quite different images or styles some might still convey a similar theme or message.*  
*Light and colour along with a persons lived experience and spiritual awareness will influence how individuals respond to the images.*

## Step 3

- Hand out the sheets containing short scripture passages and ask the young people to consider which passage might best fit with the story being told in their own drawing and within the Christmas card image. Ask them to explain their reasons in the column next to the relevant scripture passage.
- Check if anyone is struggling and assist as necessary.
- Invite individuals to sit quietly with the card image and scripture passage side by side, and in the silence to read the scripture passage slowly, then on the signal to spend 30 seconds looking at the image, with their eyes and hearts open. Then once more to read the passage slowly and allow the words to sink in.
- ❖ *Some may find this reflection difficult, but with a bit of help should cope.*  
*Explain how individuals might have assigned the same scripture passage to a different image and vice versa. This is fine, it depends on what speaks to the heart and mind of each person.*

## Step 4

- Invite the young people to work together using the card images to create a timeline that tells the story of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.
- Work together to add detail and fill in any gaps.
- Remind the group of the long and difficult journey, on foot from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and conclude with a few moments of quiet reflection and a prayer.

### Step 3 Scripture Passages (9-12)

✓	<b>Scripture Passage</b>	<b>Reasons the scripture passage fits the card image</b>
	‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife. She has conceived by the Holy Spirit.’ <i>Matthew 1:20-21</i>	
	For there is a child born for us, a son given to us... and this is the name they will give to him: Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God, Eternal-Father, Prince of Peace. <i>Isaiah 9:6</i>	
	Joseph travelled from Nazareth to Judea in Bethlehem to be registered, together with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. <i>Luke 2:4-5</i>	
	Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them at the inn. <i>Luke 2:7</i>	
	In the region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch of their flock by night. <i>Luke 2:8</i>	
	An angel of the Lord stood before them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <i>Luke 2:9</i>	
	The angel said, ‘do not be afraid, I bring you news of great joy for all. To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour who is the Messiah, the Lord.’ <i>Luke 2:10-11</i>	
	This will be a sign for you, you will find the baby wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger. <i>Luke 2:12</i>	

	And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and singing: Glory to God in the Highest heaven, and peace on earth among all people. <i>Luke 2:13</i>	
	When the angel had left the Shepherds went to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph with the child lying in a manger. <i>Luke 2:14-16</i>	
	All who heard the shepherds' story were amazed by it. The shepherds returned to the fields praising God for all they had seen and heard. <i>Luke 2:20</i>	
	Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <i>Luke 2:19</i>	
	Wise men came on the East, to Jerusalem asking "Where is the child who has been born King of the Jews? For we observed it's star at its' rising and have come to pay him homage." <i>Mathew 2:1-2</i>	
	Having made enquiries Herod informed the wise men, requesting they later return to give him the exact location, so he too could pay homage. <i>Mathew 2:6-8</i>	
	The men followed the star, which stopped where the child was born. Overwhelmed with joy they entered, knelt to pay homage to the child and his mother, presenting gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. <i>Mathew 2:10-11</i>	
	In a dream Joseph was told by an angel to take Mary and the child to Egypt, as Herod was searching for the baby to destroy him. <i>Mathew 2:13-14</i>	