

We have just run a pilot scheme for 'Coming Home for Christmas' It has gone down well in the parishes that tried it. It is an easy way to help adults and children reflect again on the Christmas story.

We suggest that parishes produce two types of goodie bag.

The adult one contains

- a copy of the 'Real Christmas' free on donation from Lifewords- www.sgmlifewords.com
- A "turn over a new leaf" prayer commitment card for New Year
- A small candle with an invitation to light it and place it on their Christmas dinner table or near to a crib scene if they have one.

In the children's bag is:

'A Little Story about Something Big' or

'Meet the cast' books (both from Lifewords - www.sgmlifewords.com)

An "interactive" Christmas story which includes:

- Paper blower **
- Party popper **
- Paper Crown **
- Star (*Boots at 3 for 2)
- Gold-covered chocolate coin (*Boots at 3 for 2)
- Cotton wool ball (*Boots)
- Feet picture from Internet
- Strip of cloth

These bags can be made for around 60p each

**Look at www.partypacks.co.uk for some of the items mentioned above. They also do little red bags which look Christmasy and yellow ones for Easter

† An idea for Easter - put a mini creme egg, 6 nasturtium seeds, an Easter garden picture to colour, and a "What's on" leaflet inside yellow cellophane packaging - thanks to St Peter & St Paul, Seal for this idea.

The Text for inclusion in the Children's Bag

In this bag you will find lots of interesting items to help you think about what happened at the first Christmas.

Lay the items out in this order in front of you:

Paper blower
Feet picture
Strip of cloth
Cottonwool ball
Party popper
Star
Paper crown
Gold-covered chocolate coin

Now read the story and follow the instructions:

More than 2,000 years ago, GOD began something new. He sent Gabriel, one of his angels, to visit Mary. She was a teenager living in Nazareth. Gabriel has a message for her, from GOD. **[Blow the paper blower]** 'You will have a baby. You will call him Jesus. He will be the son of GOD.' Mary was engaged to be married to Joseph. When the baby was nearly due to be born, they had to travel to Bethlehem to be counted in a census. **[Pick up the feet and think about walking a long way]**

When they arrived in Bethlehem, they could not stay in the inn because there was no room for them. The baby was born and Mary laid him in a manger.

[Touch the cloth and imagine it wrapped around baby Jesus]

Meanwhile, there were some shepherds looking after their sheep in a field.

[Stroke the cottonwool ball to think about the sheep] An angel appeared in the sky and spoke to them. **[Blow the paper blower]** 'Don't be afraid of me! Your Saviour has been born and you can find him in Bethlehem.' Suddenly a huge band of angels appeared in the sky, praising GOD. 'Glory to GOD in the highest.' **[Pull the party popper to imagine the angels in the sky]** The shepherds hurried to visit the new baby in Bethlehem and they were very excited.

A new star had appeared in the sky. **[Take the star and hold it high in the air]** The star had been seen by some kings from the east. **[Put on the paper crown and pretend to be one of the kings]** The kings followed the star until it stopped just where baby Jesus was to be found. They brought special presents for Jesus - gold, frankincense and myrrh. **[Eat the chocolate coin as you think about what present you would like to bring to Jesus]**

You may want to say this prayer:

'Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay close by me for ever, and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear children in your tender care, prepare us for heaven, to live with you there.' Amen

Have a very happy Christmas!



Suggested Prayer to include in adults' bag

Jesus said 'I am the light of the world' John 8 v12

A Prayer for Christmas

*Loving God,
we thank you for this season of Christmas
and all it means to us.
We thank you for the good food
and good company we will enjoy,
for the fun we will share,
for the friends and family we will see,
for the spirit of giving and receiving,
for the mood of goodwill and celebration.*

*Help us in all this to keep sight
of the real meaning of Christmas—
the celebration of the birth of the infant Christ.
Help us to worship him
as did the shepherds and wise men so long ago.
Help us to welcome him into our hearts and lives this Christmas time.*
Amen

*We invite you to light the candle you find in this bag
and place it on your Christmas dinner table
or near a crib scene if you have one*

A happy Christmas!



***Coming Home
for Christmas
bags***