

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2008

From Barbara Meardon - Salisbury Diocesan Children's Adviser

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www.christmasnewswire.com/2008/10/24/survey-shows-brit-kids-weak-on-christmas

The report on this link shows that Children in this country don't know enough about Christmas but we can do something about it. Here are some ideas for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany both on the web and in books so that we can share the Good News. I hope you find something to inspire you. Do share ideas with us if you have time, we can put them on the website to encourage others.

Jesus is the Reason for the Season

Advent & Christmas on the web

www.bathandwells.org.uk/changing_lives/youth_and_children/InspirationIdeas.pdf

Leaflets full of ideas including ones for Advent and Christmas (e.g. how to organise a Christmas Posada) Compiled by Jane Tibbs, Children's Adviser for the Diocese of Bath and Wells. Alternative Advent Calendar from Jane - online Jesse Tree at:

www.bathandwells.org.uk/changing_lives/youth_and_children/jesse_tree

<http://www.churchpublishing.org/pdf/AdventChristmas2008.pdf>

Includes: Advent Wreath what, how and why, ideas to celebrate advent at home, Advent calendars, pageants, and a good Christmas pledge idea to explore what Christmas is really about.

www.SGMLifewords.com/christmas

Church - prayer stations, liturgy, PowerPoint's

Family - advent alphabet, a reading and thought for every day, game suggestions for children's parties, new children's booklet 'A little Story about Something Big'. Perfect for using alongside an advent calendar.

Community - How will you be celebrating the Christmas story with your community, friends, neighbours, and colleagues this year? This is where you'll find resources for sharing Christmas outside the church, with the people around you, whoever and wherever they may be.



www.londonchristmas.org.uk/Children

Modern take on Christmas includes Paperless Christmas (also at barnabasinchurches.org.uk with follow up ideas) an alternative online calendar of short video clips - one for each day of Advent. Short cartoon videos about aspects of Christmas, e-cards, Bible readings prayers etc

For Children's Leaders in School or Church

<http://www.cuf.org.uk/MADG08.aspx> : From Church Urban Fund A leaders' pack with characters to colour in and stick on to a nativity scene - colourful resource to engage the imagination of children whilst introducing them to the social issues that affect the poorest communities in our country.



Epiphany

<http://www.churchpublishing.org/pdf/Epiphany2009.pdf>

Some ideas from the Episcopal Church in the States, including a 'Chalking the Door' liturgy for blessing our homes at the start of a New Year, an explanation of Epiphany and a Feast of Lights liturgy.

Book Reviews

Thank you to Dave Rose CA, Diocesan Children & Youth Officer - Lincoln Diocese for the following reviews.

Play and Pray through Advent

Lynn Chambers, Kay Warrington, Nia Catrin Williams
barnabas ISBN 978 1 84101 567 5 £9.99

Described as 'A family resource: stories and activities for the Advent and Christmas season' this A4 sized booklet acknowledges its debt to Godly Play in the processes used, but does not stick to the standard GP formula. The authors are all part of the Church in Wales Children's Network and are all either past or present Diocesan Children's Officers, and their obvious experience shows in the content.

Based upon the bible readings for the revised common lectionary, this book provides material to be used during the week, either at home or in a school or daily club setting, so as to prepare for the Sunday lectionary theme. Aimed to start on the Monday of the week before Advent Sunday and end with The Presentation of Christ in the Temple, each week has a theme; a Bible focus; the story for the week (not a Godly Play type script, rather an outline to base the story on); six 'story cloth activities', which are craft based, using photocopiable templates; six starters to wonder or discuss; a prayer for the week; a specially written song for the week; and some ideas to use during the Sunday worship linking the week together.

I like this book; it takes some of the Godly Play processes, and uses them in a home context, children still being invited to wonder and explore. I especially like the idea of building up a collection of story boxes at home, which can be accessed by children at any time, and making the home the focus of the Christian experience which is reinforced on Sunday.

Well produced, well thought out piece of kit, highly recommended.



Bethlehem Carols Unpacked

Lucy Moore and Martyn Payne with BibleLands

barnabas ISBN 978 1 84191 534 7 £8.99

Sub titled 'Creative ideas for Christmas carol services'; this paperback sized book takes eleven well known Christmas carols that appear in the *BibleLands Bethlehem Carol Sheet*, explores their meaning, and then gives ideas for using them in services and settings for all ages.

Part One is just the text of the carols

Part Two has about six pages for each carol, exploring its history and meaning

Part Three links the carols to specific *BibleLands* projects

Part Four gives ideas for engaging children in a 'creative carol service', including a special section for children under five.

There are some good ideas in this book, especially some of those exploring drama. This book is a tool to use, a contribution to constructing exciting worship not an off the shelf blueprint. Worth a look.

The Road to Christmas Day

Jan Godfrey and Marcin Piwowarski

barnabas ISBN 978 1 84101 609 2

A hard backed A4, this richly illustrated book has thirteen double page spreads, each starting 'Along the road ...' starting with the Annunciation and finishing with the wise men leaving Bethlehem and returning home. As well as the 'Along the road' theme, each stage in the story also contains the phrase '... looked and listened, ... listened and looked.' Mary, Elizabeth, the Shepherds, and the Wise men, all looked and listened and learnt something about God. This book could be given to a child who was an independent reader, or could be used to read to someone who's reading was less advanced, using the 'look and listen' motive to encourage the child to describe the pictures and engage with the Christmas narrative. A very nice looking book.

The Christmas Baby

Sally Ann Wright & Honor Ayres

barnabas ISBN 978 1 84101 593 4

This really nice little book is ideal for younger children. Inside the front cover is a 24 page Advent Calendar, and in the back cover a 'pop up' crib scene, with the Holy Family, shepherds and assorted beasts. The ten internal pages start with 'Mary and the Angel' and end with 'Wise men worship the child Jesus'. Still only three wise men in the picture, though 'Jesus' looks like he could be crawling age. Nicely detailed pictures to play 'what can you see, what do you think is happening?' games. The only, very slight, quibble for me was the choice of type face, I would have preferred something slightly bolder so that it stood out better against the illustrations, but this is a small thing when considering such a good book.



Make & Do Christmas Cards & Crib

Jan Godfrey & Chris Saunderson

barnabas ISBN 978 84101 594 1

Seeing this is a blast from the past! Each Christmas when I was a child I got a book which contained press out figures & buildings, which, once liberated from the book could be slotted together to make a scene of some sort. They sometimes lasted till Boxing Day before bits went missing or got bent beyond standing up.

This A4 book contains an eight page illustrated version of the Christmas story, 12 press out Christmas cards, and a press out Christmas Crib. As the cards are for giving away, this would ideally be an Advent present rather than a Christmas one.

The cards are colour printed with areas left to be coloured in by the child, though I am not convinced by the pictures of crayons within the cards' design, to emphasise which bits need completing. The Crib is fully coloured, with no space for children to be creative, and printing across the fold down the middle of the book means that construction is not as simple as it should be.

The art work is very good, but I feel that too much has been presented as complete for something described as 'Make & Do'.

Make & Do Christmas Puppets

Lane Martin-Scott & Gillian Chapman

barnabas ISBN 978 1 84101 595 8

This book really does give you lots to Make & Do. The book contains full instructions on how to make puppets (wooden kitchen spoon variety) of all the main characters in the nativity, including sheep, cattle, the donkey and the star. This is all explained in good, clear, step by step illustrations, both artist's impressions and photographs. Added to this you get photocopiable scripts for ten short plays (or ten acts for one long play!), each of which would last less than five minutes.

This book could form the basis of a craft based holiday club, a school project, a weekly club/Sunday school, or something to do at home in the school holidays. A really good bit of kit, which could only be improved by plans for making a theatre and background scenery!

Bible Codecrackers Christmas Puzzle Book

Elizabeth Leese

Scripture Union ISBN 978 1 84427 352 2

This small A5 booklet does just what it says in the cover. Part of a series of Bible Codecrackers puzzle books covering Easter, Jesus, Peter & Paul, and Moses, this book covers the actual nativity story, plus setting the scene and some background teaching, such as the importance of the names given to Jesus. Each section starts with a Bible passage (not printed, so the user will need a Bible), then moves into a short introduction, followed by assorted quizzes and puzzles which flesh out the story. A nice little book of the pick up, put down, pick up again variety and worth a look.