



### It was thrilling to welcome 97 people to the Open the Book (OtB) Celebration with Barbara Meardon and the national OtB team in September

After coffee and a warm welcome to the brand new Diocesan Education Centre Bishop Nicholas led our opening worship with prayers, a talk and the commissioning of all Open the Book volunteers whether present or not. Teams from Broad Chalke and Pewsey presented OtB stories and Julie Jefferies the National Trainer for Open the Book led an interactive workshop looking at best practice across the teams so that we could share what had worked well. The afternoon was full of ideas of how to build on the success of OtB in both school and parish.



## Advent and Christmas Ideas

**Reflective Storytelling:** Bible Storybags by Margaret Cooling has a lovely version of the journey to Bethlehem and beyond and Godly Play has much about Advent and Christmas that can be used in many settings to deepen understanding and draw out the awe and wonder of the story for both children and adults.

**Posada:** Information can be found at [www.churcharmy.org.uk/posada](http://www.churcharmy.org.uk/posada)

Posada is an old Mexican tradition where young people dressed as Mary and Joseph. They travelled from house to house asking for a room for the night and telling people about the arrival of Jesus in the lead up to Christmas. On Christmas Eve they would visit the local church to re-enact the nativity and place figures of Mary and Joseph in a crib. Extend this idea by knitting lots of little sheep, at each house, or shop that the Posada visits leave a sheep and invite everyone to come with their sheep to the Nativity Service/Christmas Family Service.

**Encourage the families in your parishes to develop and share Family Traditions** that help them understand and enjoy Christmas with Christ at the centre Encourage the children to act out the stories using small figures and thinking about the scripture verses.

**Creative Ideas for Advent & Christmas** by Jane Tibbs £8.99

[www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk](http://www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk) contains many ideas using readily available materials and have instant appeal. Many can be slotted in to any situation, used to illustrate the story of Christmas, or just done for pure enjoyment as part of the exciting 'getting ready' time. The activities are ideal for children aged 4-11, but will be enjoyed equally by people of all ages. There are 80 ideas in total, many of which could become part of traditional family, church and community celebrations each year.



# Resources

As you plan and work through Advent, Christmas and Epiphany with your families, children and young people here are some ideas you might like to consider using. We hope you find them helpful.

Have an **Advent Calendar** that is biblical at least in picture although many also have bible readings for each picture.

*Journey to Bethlehem Calendar* – Scripture Union

*Coming of the King Advent Calendar* or *Christmas Opened Up* or *The Real Christmas Tree*

[www.thegoodbook.co.uk](http://www.thegoodbook.co.uk)

Redemptorist Publications [www.rpbooks.co.uk](http://www.rpbooks.co.uk) and many examples at [www.eden.co.uk](http://www.eden.co.uk)

Have or make a Wooden advent calendar with drawers (bought from Waitrose!) or a material one with pockets or peg packets along a line...At the beginning of Advent put a different scripture reference into the drawers, taken from the readings for that day. Each child takes it in turn to open the little drawer, look up the scripture and read it out. They could also get a fair-trade chocolate which is another incentive to opening the calendar!

## **Chocolate advent calendars and decorations**

Traidcraft meaningful Christmas decorations, divine advent calendar, divine fair-trade coins

## **Advent Wreath with Prayers**

Make or buy an advent wreath with four candles (red or purple)

**Light a new candle each week and use special prayers and bible readings e.g.**

<http://www.loyolapress.com/advent-wreath-activity-center.htm>

<http://www.crivoice.org/cyadvent.html>

## **Advent Wreath around your town or Benefice**

Visit a different church each Sunday of Advent and move the wreath round, if near enough you could process from one to the other. Or move the light of Christ round on a similar way with shared prayers etc

## **Shoebox of good deeds for Jesus for Christmas**

Children make 'gift boxes' during Advent. They have a small shoebox each, which they decorate, and throughout the week they individually (and with help!) write down their 'good deeds' of the day and put these into their box. By the end of Advent, (the aim is!) they should have a box full of good deeds. They then 'present' these gift boxes to Jesus on His birthday on Christmas morning, as His gift. When the children present their gift boxes at the crib which we've set up in our hearth, sing 'happy birthday' to Jesus/put a candle in a mince pie! Have a time of prayer, as excited children give Jesus a present of all their good deeds. **Or** everyone in the family places a piece of straw into the manger in the crib, each time they make a sacrifice eg. Letting someone else play with their favourite toy, doing a random or hidden act of kindness etc. By Christmas time there should be a warm manger full of straw made out of loving sacrifices ready to greet the baby Jesus!

**Or** make an **advent paper chain** of prayers or good deeds that gets bigger as you get to Christmas with everyone having numbered sheets to fill in. or you can extend this idea by making the links with the Advent days in purple, Christmas days in white or gold or yellow, Epiphany in green. You could make your chain in all the different parts of church (toddler praise, school activity club, messy church, Sunday church) then link them all together each being aware for the other groups that are making the chain.

[http://www.activityvillage.co.uk/advent\\_paper\\_chain.htm](http://www.activityvillage.co.uk/advent_paper_chain.htm)

**Christmas Bible Comic** £1.99 For under 11's A comic-strip retelling of the Christmas story. High-quality illustration and text together with quizzes, puzzles, facts and information to help them engage with the story more fully. [www.scriptureunion.org.uk](http://www.scriptureunion.org.uk)

# Web links

**Encourage households to pray together & take action at home each day during Advent. Advent in 2 minutes**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=S02KOlw7dIA#!](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=S02KOlw7dIA#!)

## Online Calendars

[www.paperlesschristmas.org](http://www.paperlesschristmas.org)

<http://www.whywearewaiting.com/> by Bishop Stephen Cottrell (Ready, Steady, Slow) based on the book *Do Nothing...Christmas is Coming* by Stephen Cottrell

## Jesse Tree

Explanation, bible readings etc at [www.crivoice.org/jesse](http://www.crivoice.org/jesse)

Jesse tree symbols [www.domestic-church.com/CONTENT.../FRIDGE1.HTM](http://www.domestic-church.com/CONTENT.../FRIDGE1.HTM) or

<http://www.shalfleet.net/advent/makeajessetree.htm>

Book: The Jesse tree by Geraldine McCaughrean

## Online Poem for Young People and Adults: *The Real Nativity?*

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHsk0kf\\_PeQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHsk0kf_PeQ)

## Friends and Heroes; The Shepherds animation and song

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=McaM1YMXOyE&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=McaM1YMXOyE&feature=player_embedded)

## Expect the Unexpected telling the story to children through questions and answers

<http://www.sgmlifewords.com/christmas/booklets/preview-expect-the-unexpected/>

## *The Nativity Story* A beautiful online presentation

<http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/about-bible-society/what-we-do/our-work/christmas-resources/>

**Going for Growth**, the Church of England website for work with children/families/young people has a huge number of links to ideas for Advent, Christmas & Epiphany (it is on a Sunday in 2013)

[http://www.going4growth.org.uk/index.php/growth\\_through\\_the\\_year/advent/](http://www.going4growth.org.uk/index.php/growth_through_the_year/advent/)

[http://www.going4growth.org.uk/index.php/growth\\_through\\_the\\_year/christmas/](http://www.going4growth.org.uk/index.php/growth_through_the_year/christmas/)

[http://www.going4growth.org.uk/index.php/growth\\_through\\_the\\_year/epiphany/](http://www.going4growth.org.uk/index.php/growth_through_the_year/epiphany/)

Lots of ideas for **Christmas Crafts** here:

<http://pinterest.com/mrsmonroe12/sunday-school-happy-birthday-jesus-/>

To get your craft materials try scrapstores or Baker Ross. A new scrapstore has opened in Bournemouth in addition to the one at Puddletown <http://www.dorsetscrapstore.org.uk/>

The Wiltshire scrapstore is at Lacock <http://www.wiltisplay.org.uk/>

These are brilliant facilities offering lots of materials for craft, workshops etc. that also support the environment by reducing waste.

Baker Ross have some great Christmas craft materials again this year

<http://www.bakerross.co.uk/category-Christmas-XMS.htm> with a discount for Messy Church groups.

## Inviting the Community to Church

### **Experience Christmas** [www.gloucester.anglican.org/downloads/430.pdf](http://www.gloucester.anglican.org/downloads/430.pdf)

Aimed at Upper junior (Y5 & Y6) but suitable for families and parish

Six Scenes: The Preparation/ Announcement/ Promises/ Journey/ Message/ The Gift

### **The Christmas Journey** [www.christmasjourney.org.uk](http://www.christmasjourney.org.uk)

Invite Older KS1 (Y2) (also suitable for families and parish)

Six Scenes: In the beginning/ Mary's kitchen/ A hillside near Bethlehem/ The stable/

The wise men's palace/ The new beginning

### **Christmas Tree Festival**

Invite all the groups in your town/community/benefice to bring and decorate a Christmas Tree

Tell the Christmas Tree Tale by Martin Payne

<http://www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk/the-christmas-trees-tale/>

### **Nativity Set Festival**

Display as many different sets from around the world, invite people to bring their sets, tell the stories of the different sets or have reflections for each.

## Creative Youth Ministry Ideas

- Give them proper roles within services that they want to do e.g. music, reading etc and that they practice and prepare for.
- Invite local secondary schools to use church for carol service/concerts etc. if appropriate or perhaps to display Christmas themed artwork and get your congregation to support these events.
- If fundraising at particular events e.g. Children's Society Christingle, young people could find out more about charity and provide presentation or info leaflets for those attending (particularly appropriate with CS focus on young runaways etc.
- Get them Involved in writing and producing plays (maybe even performing)
- At your youth group you could use **Relive Christmas DVD** by Relive Resources 6 short films telling the story from the point of view of the characters in the Nativity story. The films and the hot seat questions are suitable for young people but would also work with children or in an intergenerational setting
- Give out copies of **Journey out of Darkness** *new for 2012* Comic for 10-14 year olds <http://www.sqmlifewords.com/christmas/>

## Diocesan Children and Young People Strategy Update

Work in the initial 6 deaneries of Blackmore Vale, Calne, Chalke, Devizes, Poole and Purbeck to support people in their local situations to develop and support them in the work that they are doing with children and young people is continuing well. A few brief highlights include the launch of the Blog for children and young people's leaders in Purbeck deanery to help them to network and support one another. Poole have carried out a detailed audit of the children and young people's work happening in the deanery and are planning a morning of workshops for leaders in on 9<sup>th</sup> February. Blackmore Vale deanery have launched a young people's church group open to young people from across the northern part of the deanery and Devizes deanery are also setting up activities for young people from across the deanery to come together. In Calne the churches have been working with the Children's Society to host a Good Childhood Conversation in Royal Wotton Bassett. We are now beginning to launch the process with another 6 deaneries.

For more information of the Diocesan Children and Young People's Strategy please do get in touch

## Training Courses Spring 2013

### **Supporting Bereaved Children and Young People**

24<sup>th</sup> January: St Nicholas Church, Corfe Mullen

26<sup>th</sup> February: Diocesan Education Centre, Wilton

09:30 -12:30 Cost: £5

### **Open the Book- Beginners**

5<sup>th</sup> February: Diocesan Education Centre, Wilton

09:30 – 12:30 Cost: £5

### **Participation: Listening to and Involving Children and Young People**

2<sup>nd</sup> March: Diocesan Education Centre, Wilton

22<sup>nd</sup> March: St Nicholas Church, Corfe Mullen

09:30 -12:30 Cost: £5 Under 18's £3 (must be accompanied by an adult)

For further information have a look at the full course brochure at

<http://www.salisbury.anglican.org/resources-library/learning/schools/121019%20CPD%20brochure.pdf>

Or to book a place contact [dbeadmin@salisbury.anglican.org](mailto:dbeadmin@salisbury.anglican.org) Tel: 01722 746942

Lizzie Whitbread (adviser for work with young people) and Barbara Meardon (adviser for work with children and families) are always happy to talk with you about the work that you are doing with children, young people and families and to support you in this so please do not hesitate to get in touch.

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