



Introduction

This is part of a series of ideas for four sessions that you can use with Foundation in preparation for Christmas.

Preparation

You will need a copy of [My First Bible](#) or similar retelling, to read to the children.

Setting up a focus table

- A coloured cloth: this could be purple or you could have a colour associated with Christmas, for example green.
- A clear bowl, water and four floating candles for the reflection; if this table is left out, use an unbreakable bowl.
- A nativity set. It is better if this is unbreakable so that the children can be free to touch the figures. For this part of the story, you will need the figures of Mary, Joseph, the donkey, Jesus and the manger, shepherds and a sheep.
- Pictures with different styles of artwork that depict different stages of the Christmas story. Old Christmas cards can be very helpful.

Development

1. The story

Getting ready

Prepare a storybag (a simple drawstring bag). In it, put some soft toy sheep and the angel figure used in Session 1. If you have more than one angel figure, include those others as well. Also place in the bag the figures of the shepherds from the nativity set. Begin by bringing out the bag.

I wonder what our story will be today. Is there something in here that will give us some clues?

Bring out the sheep and the angels one at a time, talking about each one. As you bring out the items and talk about them, build up a playful sense of mystery.

So - some sheep, some angels. I wonder how these are part of our story.

Telling the story

Begin by telling the children that this story comes from the Bible. See [My First Bible](#), pages 144-147: 'Angels visit the shepherds' and 'The Shepherds visit Jesus'.

Talking together about the story

I wonder...

... what you like about the story.

... how the shepherds felt when they saw Jesus.
... how they knew he was a special baby.

When you have told the story, place the items on the table with the other figures from the nativity scene. The scene is now complete until after Christmas when the Wise Men can be added at Epiphany (6th January).

2. Songs and rhymes

'The song of the angels' in [Nursery Rhyme Nativities](#), page 33, to the tune 'Morning has broken'.
'The song of the shepherds' in [Nursery Rhyme Nativities](#), page 34, to the tune 'Here we go round the mulberry bush'.
'The song of the angels' in [Nursery Rhyme Nativities](#), page 46, to the tune 'Michael row the boat ashore'.
'The song of the shepherds' in [Nursery Rhyme Nativities](#), page 47, to the tune 'Kum ba yah'.

3. A time for reflection

Many churches light a series of candles during Advent. This is an adaptation of that tradition that you could use in your group.

Set up the bowl with the water and the four floating candles. Encourage the children to be still and quiet as you get ready. When everyone is ready, light one of the candles.

A possible prayer: *Dear God, thank you for giving us such a special baby, Jesus. May we be full of joy this Christmas, just like the shepherds. Amen*

Leave a moment of quiet before blowing out the candles and moving on to the next part of the session.

(Safety note: Be particularly careful when using lighted candles when young children are present. Never leave children unattended near candles that are lit or have recently been lit.)

4. A craft activity

Making a chain of shepherds

For each child, you will need:

- A chain of shepherds made from card (see note below)
- Four rectangular pieces of rough fabric, for example hessian, for clothes for each shepherd
- Two to four simple card outlines of sheep
- You will also need glue sticks, crayons and cotton wool

(To make the chain of shepherds, use A3 thin card or stiff paper. Each sheet will make two chains.)



Cut in half, so you have two pieces of 43 cm x 15 cm. Fold each piece, concertina style, so there are four layers. On the top layer, draw a simple person shape with arms outstretched to the folds. Cut around the person shape being careful to leave the card joined at the end of each arm. Open out the card, and you should have a chain of people.)

Instructions

1. Stick the fabric on to each shepherd.
2. Draw hair and features on the faces with crayons. Talk about how happy the shepherds were when they saw Jesus.
3. Stick cotton wool on to the sheep. Use a crayon to make an eye for the sheep.
4. Stick the sheep at the feet of the shepherds.