



On your marks

The Old Testament prophet that we most associate with the season of Advent must surely be Isaiah, whose story in the first part of his book points Christians forward beyond his day to the birth of Jesus at Christmas. The following retelling of Isaiah 7 to 9 can be used as a piece that your group could contribute in an all-age service or as an outline for a participative storytelling session with children.

Get set

No special props are required for this idea. Read through the following retelling of the story of Isaiah and his family, inviting everyone to suggest appropriate sound effects and reactions to the events and feelings described in each section – key words for this are in bold. In this way, work out your own ‘sound and drama script’ for the story, using the children’s ideas.

You can find a retelling of this story in The Barnabas Children’s Bible (stories 194 and 195).

Go!

Story version of Isaiah 7 - 9

Isaiah was a priest many hundreds of years before the first **Christmas**,

But through the things that happened to him, God was preparing the world for what **Christmas** really means.

One day in the temple Isaiah heard **angels singing**.

He was **terrified** and felt he didn’t deserve to be there at all.

God wanted him to be a **messenger**.

However, God warned him that he would be saying some things that very few would understand. God promised him that, despite all that would happen, there would be the **hope** of a new start one day.

He even called **his first child** a name which means something like ‘hope one day’.

King Ahaz of Judah was **in a terrible panic**.

The nearby countries of Syria and Israel wanted to force him to join them in a war against the super-power of the day called Assyria. If he didn’t do that, **they threatened** to get rid of him.

Along with the whole country, the king was **paralysed with fear**.



Isaiah knew what God wanted him to say.

'Trust in God' was Isaiah's message.

'If you don't, then the future's bleak.'

Despite this message, King Ahaz **couldn't make up his mind**.

But God sent a sign anyway, in the shape of **a baby** called Emmanuel, which means **'God with us'**.

It was God's way of saying that only by trusting in God being with them would there be any **hope** of a tomorrow.

This is still true today and Emmanuel or **'God with us'** was the name given by the angel to Jesus at **Christmas**.

Isaiah warned that before this child reached the age of seven, **the super-powers** would get rid of them all.

Isaiah's **second child** was given the longest name ever!

In English, it means something like 'Quick grab what you can; loot the lot'.

It was Isaiah's dramatic way of **warning** everyone that things were going to be really bad. The enemy would get them all in the end.

Indeed, within months of this birth, Syria and Israel were **swept away** and not many years later Judah followed.

But Isaiah kept telling them that if only they could **trust in Emmanuel** (**'God with us'**), things could have been different.

He went on to say that one day **another child** would be born.

This child would be born **in the north** of the country.

This child would bring **light** into the darkness.

This child would bring **joy**.

This child would **change everything**.

This child would be given **incredible names** such as:

Wonderful; Councillor; Mighty God; Everlasting Father; Prince of Peace.



No one at the time understood what Isaiah was talking about.

Maybe even **Isaiah wasn't that sure** what it all meant.

But it was **a clue**.

It was God's **signpost to Christmas**.

This was going to be God's great plan to send **Jesus**, whose name means 'rescuer'.

This time it wouldn't just be Judah that was rescued for a short time, but **the whole world forever!**