



On your marks

Christmas was God's big surprise. Even though there had been tantalising clues all throughout the Old Testament, no one really expected the miracle of 'God-with-us' in the form of a helpless baby. The Christmas story is about God's surprising gift to us: a gift that not only transforms the way we think about ourselves and our future, but also one that gives us a surprising insight into the very nature of the love of God for us.

Get set

For this short time of worship, you will need:

- A series of eight boxes, each box slightly smaller than the other, so they all fit into each other. (IKEA sells coloured boxes like this although box sets like this should be available from most stationery shops.)
- A very tiny toy baby - for example, from a doll's house - which needs to be placed inside the final box.

The ever-smaller boxes illustrate the amazing surprise of the incarnation, as the God of heaven becomes small enough to become a tiny baby.

Go!

Teach and rehearse the following special 'big surprise' chant, inviting your group to repeat each line after you (the leader), accompanied by rhythmical clapping:

We're on a special journey

To find God's big surprise

A baby born on earth for us

God has become our size!

As each box is revealed and set down as a focus, the leader should use the suggested wording below, followed by the response from the whole group, which gives thanks for the miracle of Christmas.

Start with the chant a few times.

Set down Box 1.

Leader: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth; ... by his own mighty word, he holds the universe together. (Genesis 1:1; Hebrews 1:3, CEV)



All: Our God is an amazing God

Set down Box 2.

Leader: God is the one who rules the whole earth... He spreads out the heavens like a curtain or an open tent. (Isaiah 40:22)

All: Our God is an amazing God

Set down Box 3.

Leader: No one can compare with the Lord our God. His throne is high above, and he looks down to see the heavens and the earth. (Psalm 113:5 - 6)

All: Our God is an amazing God

Set down Box 4.

Leader: God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son... (John 3:16)

All: Our God is an amazing God

Set down Box 5.

Leader: Christ was truly God. But he did not try to remain equal with God. Instead he gave up everything... (Philippians 2:6 - 7)

All: Our God is a surprising God

Set down Box 6.

Leader: ...he became like one of us. (Philippians 2:7)

All: Our God is a surprising God

Set down Box 7.

Leader: The Word became a human being and lived here with us... (John 1:14)

All: Our God is a surprising God

Set down Box 8 and take out the tiny toy baby from inside.

Leader: Mary ...gave birth to her firstborn son. She dressed him in baby clothes and laid him on a bed of hay, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:7)



All: Our God is a surprising God

Allow a short pause before starting up the 'big surprise' chant again, which should get louder and louder.