

On your marks

Looking for a new, fun way to tell the Christmas story? Wanting to do an easy to prepare presentation that can involve as few or as many children and adults as possible? Here is an idea involving sounds and simple visuals, which could form part of your Christmas worship this year. It is based around a simple poem and needs little or no rehearsal. Its aim is to underline the point that the experience of Christmas itself comes and goes but the experience of knowing Jesus is something that can last forever.

Get set

You will need a set of ten cue cards describing the sound effects and words, which each group/individual will be saying/performing to accompany the poem. In addition the groups or individuals will need something visual to hold or wear that will complement the sound effects. These could include a Santa hat and bells... coconut shells or the like for donkey hoof noises... a simple bell, as heard on a bus... wrapping paper to scrunch... straw to rustle... cutlery to chink together.

Go!

1 Introduce the series of sound effects (on the cue cards) and accompanying visuals one at a time and in no particular order. The 10 sound effects and words are:

- the rustling of straw... animal noises... the exclamation 'Ah! It's a Boy!' followed by the humming of the first lines of 'Away in a manger'.
- an enthusiastic shouting of 'January sale starts today... everything must go!'
- the clinking of cutlery... eating and drinking noises... snoring
- the singing of 'Jingle bells, Jingle Bells'... followed by a hearty 'Ho, ho, ho'
- the shuffling of people carrying heavy shopping... out of breath sounds... the ding of a bell on a bus followed by the call of 'no more room on the bus'
- the sound of a donkey's hooves... and donkey noises!
- sheep noises... rapid running on the spot... followed by shouts of 'Good news, Good news'
- the slow shuffling of feet... the knocking on a door... the call of 'no more room at the Inn'
- the rustling of wrapping paper... sounds of 'ooo!' and 'ah!'... and delighted cries of 'Just what I've always wanted!'
- an enthusiastic rendition of 'Glory to God in the highest and peace to His people on earth'

2 These sound effects should be written on the cue cards and given to different groups within the congregation. The leader should then practice the sounds and actions randomly, without the words of the poem to come. This could prove fun as each group won't know what each other's sound effect is going to be and there may well be some interesting interpretations!

3 Each cue card should also have a number on it (see below), which gives the correct order for all these different elements to accompany the poem. Check that each group knows their number and



that they are ready to come in at the proper time when you indicate. You could simply do this by displaying the number you want from the front.

4 Now the following simple poem should be read by a good reader, the leader or maybe another group. Allow an appropriate pause each time for a truly theatrical performance of the appropriate sound effect!

5 Here is the full poem, connected to the sound effects, for the final presentation:

Christmas is coming

1. *'Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells... Ho ho ho'*

Jesus is coming

2. *Clip-clop, clip-clop, clip-clop, and donkey noises*

Christmas is coming

3. *the shuffling of tired feet... carrying heavy bags... a bell sounds... 'No more room on the bus'*

Jesus is coming

4. *the shuffling of slow-moving feet... knocking at a door... 'No room in the Inn'*

Christmas is here

5. *wrapping paper sounds... delighted cries and thank-yous... and then, 'Just what I always wanted'*

Jesus is here

6. *rustling of straw... animal noises... 'It's a boy!... the humming of 'Away in a manger'*

Christmas is here

7. *sounds of eating and drinking... clinking of cutlery... and then snoring!*

Jesus is here

8. *sheep noises... people running... cries of 'Good news, Good news!'*

Christmas is going

9. *a shout of 'January sales start tomorrow... everything must go!'*

But Jesus is still here!

10. *an enthusiastic rendering of 'Glory to God in a highest (hands raised high) and peace to His people on earth (the group points to everyone in the congregation)'*