



**BIBLE
SOCIETY**

The Instant Nativity



The Instant Nativity

INTRODUCTION

The Instant Nativity is a quick way to turn the Christmas story into a whole Christmas service. It's based on the material in the popular little book *The Really Good News Of Christmas – For Me!* You can have some people dress up as characters, but there's no need for a full production. What you do need is a bit of a fun spirit – this has a real sense of pantomime. It's designed to be an easy, fun, interactive way to get everyone at a family Christmas service involved in the story of the first Christmas.

The story of the birth of Jesus is one of the best-known stories in the Bible. We are thrilled at how this fresh telling of the story makes Christmas come alive to people of all ages. Better still, it shows how the birth of Jesus is really, really good news for everybody.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

In this guide you will find a narrator's script for retelling the Nativity story. All you need is one narrator to tell the story, although you could split up the sections between different readers.

The script is written in the format of a suggested service outline. We recognise that as well as telling the Nativity story, you will probably want to add other elements to your Christmas service, such as carols and prayers. We've made some suggestions, but they are all optional and can be mixed and matched around the Nativity retelling.

Throughout the script, there are various opportunities for making the Nativity interactive. These are all highlighted and explained. They are completely optional, but we would suggest you make the most of them so that everyone has the opportunity to engage (and have lots of fun!).



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

We have produced several other resources that you may find useful for your Christmas service(s):

Visuals

To accompany your Instant Nativity, we have produced a PowerPoint presentation with images for you to use alongside the Nativity retelling. With hand-illustrated images from the *The Really Good News Of Christmas – For Me!* story booklet, these backgrounds will add an extra visual dimension to your service as well as providing words for everyone to read together. If you have projection facilities, we suggest using this presentation. The PowerPoint file is available for download at: biblesociety.org.au/goodchristmas



‘Gift a First Bible’ Bible video

We hope you and your church enjoy *The Really Good News of Christmas - For Me!* The little book is provided to you free from Bible Society. We want to see all people engaged with the Bible in a language they can understand, in a format they can use, and at a price they can afford. So we’re thrilled at how Australians are getting a fresh chance to hear the great story of Christmas.

Just like the good news of Jesus shows God’s generous heart, we’d love to see your church family showing its generosity. Especially to the two billion people who still don’t have the whole Bible in their heart language. It can cost as little as \$11 to give someone the Bible in their language. To support and fund a fresh translation costs a whole lot more - for instance, it takes about \$4,800 to translate the book of Philippians alone. But we know it’s worth it. Because when someone hears about God’s love in the same language they heard their mother say “I love you”, we know a real connection takes place.

Like a brilliant video to show your church family? Ready to share your generosity? Visit biblesociety.org.au/gift



The little book

The Instant Nativity is based on *The Really Good News Of Christmas – For Me!* This little book is ideal for retelling the Christmas story with children at home. You may wish to read through one for reference, or even give copies away at your Christmas service(s) to visitors. They are available to order from our website.

A video animation of the booklet is also available online and as a download – you can find this and links to all our other Christmas resources by visiting: biblesociety.org.au/goodchristmas

COUNTING DOWN

Before your service, there are just a few things that are worth doing to make sure you're ready and the Nativity will be the best it can be:

Advertise

It's great fun if children come to the Nativity dressed up as one of the characters from the story. There's an opportunity in the script for those who are dressed up to parade with their costumes. Make sure you advertise this widely, so families know to come dressed up – and will be prepared for shepherds and wise men to be walking through your church doors! Let people know that they should come as any of the characters from the Nativity story, but you're definitely looking for Shepherds, Wise Men, Angels, and a couple of Marys and Josephs.

Plan who does what

You will need a Narrator; somebody who is a confident, clear reader and can bring out expression in the story. Make sure they read through the script beforehand so they're aware of where everything goes and how the flow of the service will run.



You'll also need to decide whether you want to split up the sections between different readers. There are some refrains throughout the script for everybody to join in with. The words are on the accompanying PowerPoint presentation for you to show on a screen. But if you don't have a screen, the narrator could just read them.

Be interactive

There are a few different opportunities in the script for making the Nativity interactive, and some of these will need explaining before you get into the story. Make sure you decide which bits you'll include and let the congregation know at the beginning of the service what they'll need to do.

Have some extra props prepared

You could provide some tinsel halos for angels and some paper crowns for kings, plus tea towels (and cord to keep them on people's heads) for shepherds. This means that everyone can take part, even if they forgot or didn't know about coming in costume.



The Instant Nativity

Slide 1 **WELCOME** – Narrator/Service leader

Welcome everybody to the service and explain that today you will be retelling the Christmas story, and that there will be a chance for everybody to be involved.

OPENING PRAYER

Dear God

Thank you for the fun and excitement of Christmas, and the chance to retell the wonderful story of Jesus' birth. We pray that you would be with us today and open our eyes in new ways to the Nativity story. Amen



Suggested carol – *O come all ye faithful*

Slide 2 **INTRODUCTION**

Explain that today you will be telling the Nativity story based on *The Really Good News of Christmas – For Me!* but you can't do it alone and will need help from everybody else.

Every time you say the following words, you need the congregation to join in by doing these actions and sounds:

Really Good: Thumbs up

Shepherds: Hands out and bent forward, say 'Baa'

Wise men: Stroke chin wisely and say 'hmmm'

Mary: Hands up and shout 'Mummy'

Joseph: Hands up and shout 'Daddy'

Angel: Wave hands above head and sing a holy 'ahhh'

Have a practice by saying each word one or two times so everybody has got it. You may want somebody to help you lead the actions from the front. When the words come up in your script, they will be highlighted so you will know to give a little pause (and maybe some encouragement) for the congregation to join with the action.

Also let everybody know that anybody who has dressed up as one of the characters in the Nativity story will get a chance to join in and show off their outfits later in the service, and you'll explain how to do that.

Finally, explain that there will be some words within the story for everybody to join in with and read together. These will be shown on the screen.

Now ask everybody to settle down, and you're ready to begin telling the story.

Slide 3 CREATION

Narrator: Our story starts a really, really long time ago. It was a time before
Toys
Trees
Birds
And animals (even before those big animals with the floppy ears and really big trunks).

Our story starts before humans like you and me...

Before **shepherds**

Before **wise men**

Our story begins so long ago, it was even before [*insert name of somebody who will make the audience laugh e.g. somebody famous, church leader's name*].

A time before everything

God made the world.

And it was **really good!**

Slide 4

But...the humans he made, just like you and like me,
Became nasty and mean, quite unfortunately.
In fact the humans didn't listen to God.
They'd hurt each other and wouldn't make amends
So God and his people were no longer friends.

But to be friends again, God had a plan.
And his plan was to send a REALLY good man.



Slide 5 THE ANGEL APPEARS TO MARY

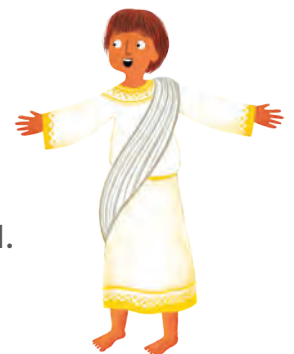
Narrator: Many years later, there was a young lady called **Mary**.
She had a visitor who didn't mean to be scary!

This one day, or maybe even night
an **angel** appeared suddenly and gave **Mary** quite a fright.
The **angel** said:

Slide 6

Everybody: I bring good news
It's **really good** – honest!
There'll be a baby born
Just as God promised

Narrator: So **Mary** was going to have a baby, just as God promised.
And the baby would be called, Jesus.



Suggested carol – *Once in Royal David's City*

Invite the angels to parade around the church during the carol.

Slide 7 **JOSEPH**

Narrator: There was a man called **Joseph** and he was going to marry **Mary**.
But **Joseph** noticed, she had a bit of a belly.

He saw her big belly bump, and wondered how the baby got there.
And so he scratched his head and twirled his hair.

Slide 8 But one night, when **Joseph** was sleeping, an **angel** came to visit.
The **angel** said:
Mary will give birth through the spirit.

Slide 9 **Everybody:** I bring good news
It's **really good** – honest
There'll be a baby born
Just as God promised

Slide 10 **Narrator:** So **Mary** and **Joseph** – both of them!
Set off together on a journey, all the way to Bethlehem.

Suggested carol – O Little Town of Bethlehem

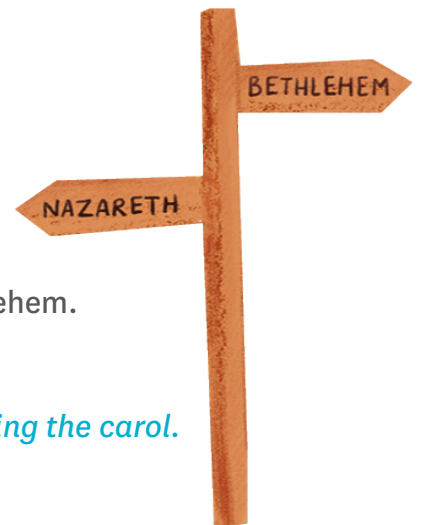
Invite the Marys and Josephs to parade around the church during the carol.

NO ROOM AT THE INN

Narrator: When they arrived in Bethlehem
Mary was ready to give birth to the baby who would be King
But guess what? There was no room for them at the inn!

Slide 11 **Everybody:** Don't be afraid
Don't get uptight
Relax, take a breather
You'll be all right!

Slide 12 **Narrator:** So a place was found by haystack and corn,
And in this space, the baby was born.
They stayed in the spot where animals fed,
And the baby had straw instead of a bed.



Slide 13

They were just minding their own business,
Maybe cleaning their shoes
Maybe trying to scrape off the smelly sheep poos!
[React to a bad smell]
But all of a sudden, something really weird happened.
Out of nowhere, an **angel** appeared!

Slide 14

Everybody: Don't be afraid
That's what I say
Say hi to the baby
In a manger full of hay.



Slide 15

Narrator: Then as the **angel** said that, something even weirder happened! Suddenly, loads of **angels** appeared! And I mean LOADS!

Slide 16

Everybody: We bring good news, they said
It's **really good** – honest!
There'll be a baby born
Just as God promised



Slide 17

Narrator: So the **shepherds**, having listened to what the **angels** said, hurried off to Bethlehem to find the baby Jesus. And they found him there, lying in a manger.

Suggested carol – *See him lying on a bed of straw*
Invite the shepherds to parade around the church during the carol.



Slide 18

WISE MEN

Narrator: There were also some **wise men** in the story. They had been travelling a very long way. But they didn't use Google maps, or a sat nav – they followed a star!

They went to the king, King Herod, and asked where baby Jesus was as they had seen his star.
So King Herod sent the **wise men** to Bethlehem, which wasn't all that far.

Slide 19

So the **wise men** found Jesus,
They could have called him 'Sir!'
They brought him some special gifts
Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh.

And the **wise men** bowed down and worshipped him.

Suggested carol – We three kings

Invite the Wise Men to parade around the church during the carol.

Slide 20 ESCAPING FROM HEROD

Narrator: The **wise men** remembered that King Herod wanted them to report back to him.
But Herod wasn't very nice, and so they were warned in a dream not to go back to him!

Slide 21 Everybody: Don't be afraid
Hear what I say!
Just don't visit Herod
Go home another way.

Slide 22 Narrator: Herod searched high
And Herod searched low,
but where was Jesus? He just didn't know.

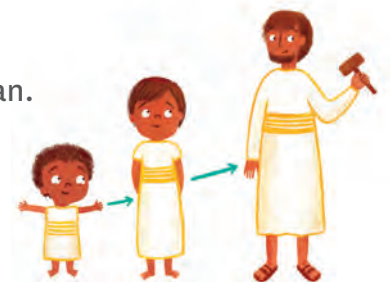
Slide 23 An angel appeared to Joseph to warn him about Herod, and to hide the family in a different country.

Slide 24 Everybody: Don't be afraid
Don't get uptight
Relax, take a breather
You'll be alright!

Narrator: So they escaped to a different country, until Herod was gone.
And then they were no longer afraid.
They travelled back home, and that's where they stayed.

Slide 25 JESUS FULFILS GOD'S PROMISE

Narrator: So Jesus grew up, from a baby, to a boy, to a man.
Jesus grew up to be a carpenter man.
And he did amazing things



Slide 26 He healed the sick, he told great stories.
Was amazing all the time
He also walked on water and even turned water into wine!

Slide 27 And do you remember that time, long, long ago, when humans like me and you became mean and not very nice?
When we were nasty to each other and we wouldn't make amends?
And when God and humans could no longer be friends?

But then God had a plan to make us friends again?
Well Jesus the baby and Jesus the man;
Was the exact same Jesus and God's rescue plan.

Jesus lived, then he died, for you and for me,
He did it to make our wrong, history.
To take the blame for all the mean things we've ever done.
But something amazing happened, because he's the most powerful one.

He came back to life! And it's worth a big high five
Because the **really good** news is Jesus came alive!

Slide 28 **Everybody:** So don't get scared, or jumpy
And don't be afraid
'I will be with you always' – says Jesus
'Not for a bit, but always.'

Slide 29 **Narrator:** And that's why Christmas is the **really good** news, honest!
When Jesus came, just as God promised.

Slide 30 The end.



EXTRA BITS – Narrator/Service leader

At this point there are several options for what you might do next. The Nativity story has ended, and you may choose to not do anything else and just end your service. Or you might do any or all of these other options:

- A short talk/sermon on the meaning of Christmas
- Say some prayers
- Remind people that the story of God showing his love for us in Jesus is a story we all know because we have the Bible in our heart language. 2 billion people don't have the Really Good News in their heart language. And explain that the Instant Nativity was produced by Bible Society and funded from generous donations by churchgoers across Australia.
- If you would like to download 'The Really Good News of Christmas - For Me!' animated video just visit biblesociety.org.au/goodchristmas

Suggested carol – *Come and join the celebration*

CONCLUSION – Narrator/Service leader

You have come to the end of the service now. You may want to thank everybody for coming and say this final prayer:

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God

Thank you that Christmas is 'really good' news. Thank you that you sent your son to show your love for us, so that we could be friends with you.

We pray that you will be with people in need this Christmas, especially for those who are still waiting for the Bible in their heart language - like refugees and Indigenous Australians. We pray that you'd comfort everybody, and help everyone to know your love and enjoy this Christmas.

Thank you that we are able to celebrate Christmas with presents and fun.

Amen.

END



Thank you for taking part in the Instant Nativity, we hope you enjoyed your service. We have even more resources for you and your church at: play.bible.com.au

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE REALLY GOOD NEWS

At Bible Society Australia, we strive to lighten people's hearts with the knowledge of God's love for us as found in the Bible. The message of the Bible is summed up in that most famous of Bible verses, John 3:16: *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life"*.

Taking this teaching to heart enables us to 'live light'. Our future is bright, our sins are forgiven, and we are deeply loved and wanted by God. We are not content simply to hand out Bibles. We want to help people engage with the Bible and answer their questions about it. We want to connect them with the Bible and answer their questions about it. We want to connect them with churches where they can learn about Jesus Christ as part of a community. We want to inspire people with the inspired word of God.

The Bible Society has been around for a long time - as long as any other Australian institution you care to name. But our goals remain in front of us: to ensure that everyone has access to the Bible in a language they can understand, in a format they can use, and at a price they can afford. We pursue this goal not just for Australians, but around the world as part of the United Bible Societies movement.

Across the globe, we support Bible translation work, literacy, publishing, advocacy and more, because we know that the Bible addresses all of life and makes a contribution to human flourishing and the good of society. So, if the Bible has made a difference to your life, please join with us through prayer and support to bring the Bible to life around the world.

biblesociety.org.au

