



Well who would have thought last March we would still be running Messy Church@Home rather than in the church?
We certainly didn't!

However, Messy Christmas is here and it includes lots of activities for Advent so check them out.

Merryn and the team have sent out the awesome Advent calendars to the church families – if you would like those notes then please email us on info@manninghamuc.org and we will send them to you so you can join in the activities too. And each Sunday, there will be the usual intergenerational activity with Merryn and the crew. Amazingly, everything will link together!

Once again, most of the activities for this Messy Church use things that you'll have at home or in the garden or you'll be able to find alternatives. Check it out now though and write a list if you need to add things to the grocery shopping.

2020 has been a weird old year but everyone has worked hard to flatten the covid curve and keep each other safe. Well done to everyone – let's keep showing each other grace and forgiveness as we muddle through together.

All the best,
Fee, Sharon, Merryn and Rev Claire

The story of Christmas is told in both Matthew's and Luke's Gospels, right at the beginning. Matthew starts with a huge list of names giving Jesus a family tree to begin the story and Luke starts with the story of John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus and prophet.

Lost Sheep has 4 stories based on Matthew and Luke – follow the links here:

Bethlehem Town - [watch it here](#)

Jed and Roy - [watch it here](#)

Tonight in the Palace - [watch it here](#)

Three Wise Camels - [watch it here](#)

ADVENT

Advent is a time of waiting – we spend 4 weeks leading up to Christmas thinking about God and what it means for Jesus to be born in the world.

Usually we have an Advent wreath in church. The wreath is round because it has no beginning and no end, like God's love. There are 4 purple candles around the outside and 1 white one in the middle. We light one purple candle for each Sunday of Advent and then the white one on Christmas Day – the white one represents Jesus and the 4 purple ones represent joy, hope, love and peace.

Using the pictures here for inspiration, draw your own Advent wreath. Every Sunday during Advent, beginning on 29 November, colour in one of the candle flames until Christmas Day when you colour in the white candle flame.



You can also make a wreath in your kitchen with Messy Fee and Nat. We always knew pavlova tasted best at Christmas - [watch it here](#)



Merryn also shows us another type of wreath that we can make - [watch it here](#)



At Home

THE BIG COUNT - LUKE 2:1-5

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

Something to think about

Imagine being about to have a baby and having to travel so far from home just for a census! How would Mary and Joseph have felt before they set off and then whilst they were on the journey? Remember, they would have walked most of the way as there were no trains, cars, bicycles then, just donkeys to carry the luggage.

Activities

- Census

Mary and Joseph had to travel a long way just to be counted. In this country, we do the census online. Do your own census using your family.

How many people are there in total?

How many people are living in Australia and other countries?

How many are children?

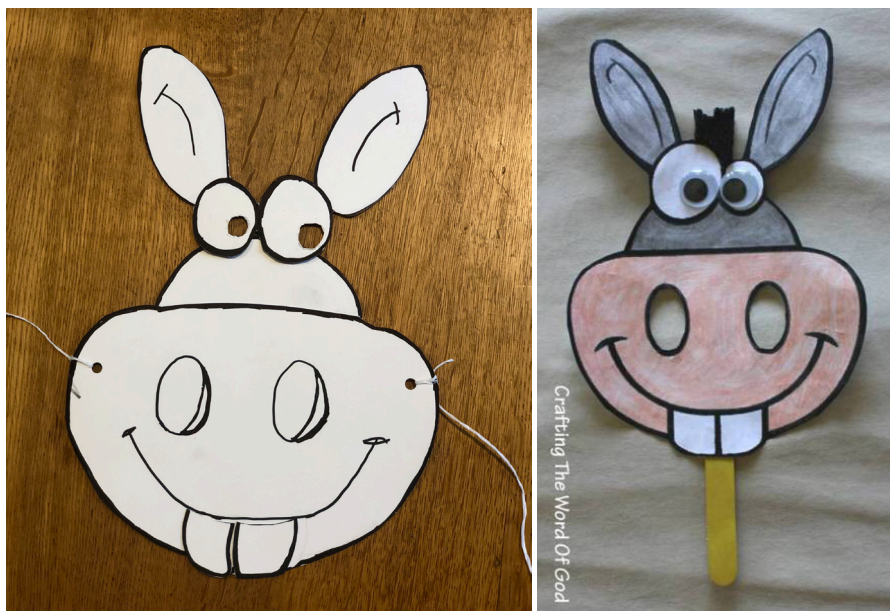
How many are adults?

- Donkey mask

Create your own Donkey mask by tracing the template below!

You may like to add googly eyes or just draw your own! Cut & colour, then fasten to a wooden stick or add string or elastic for wearing while you "donkey" around!

Imagine how Mary must have felt riding on a bumpy donkey while expecting a child!

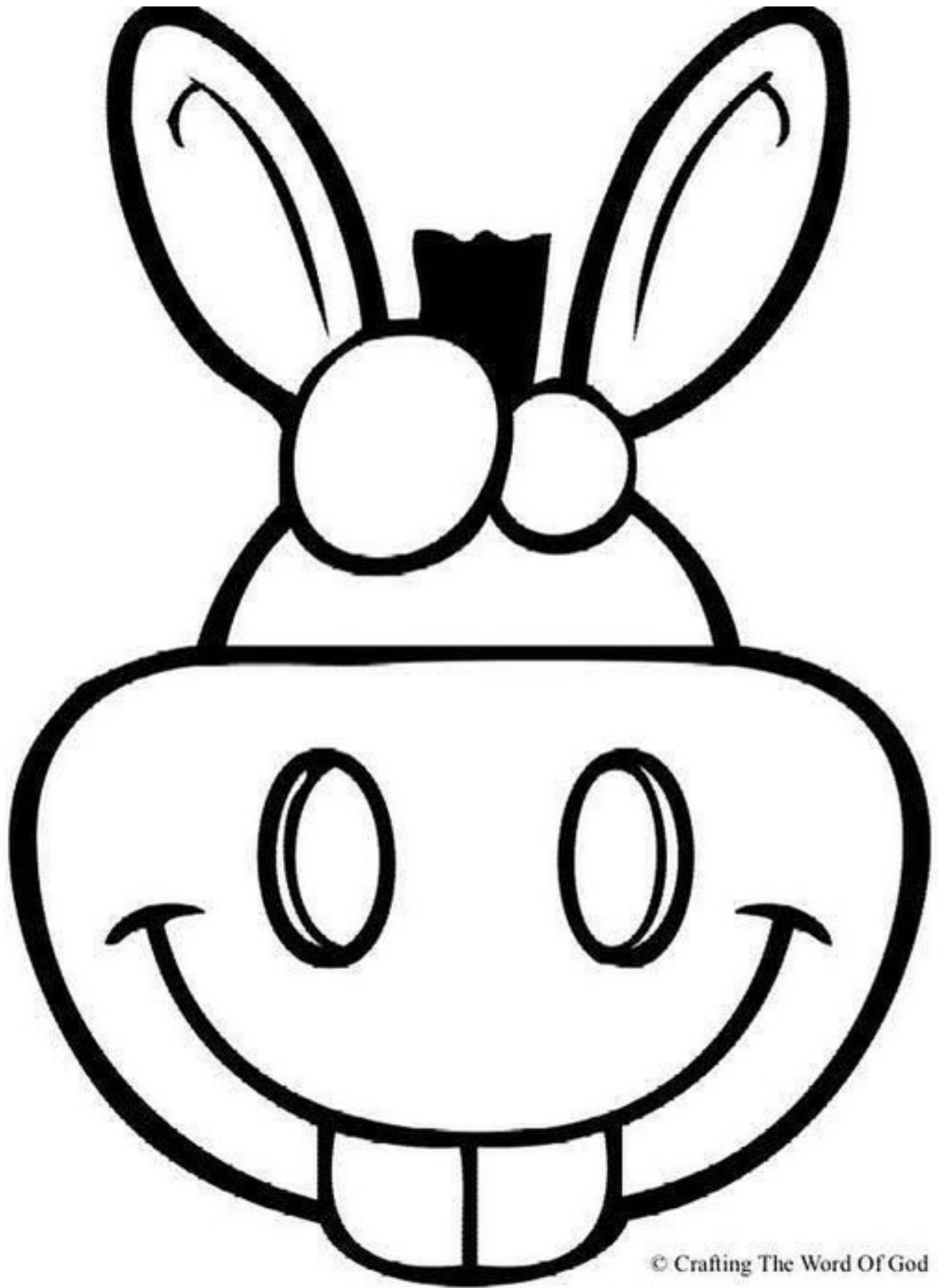


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- Going deeper – for older primary and above

The area we know as Palestine had been conquered and colonised by the Romans. The census was called so that the Romans could pay for their wars on the frontiers in order to colonise other nations. They were taking money from the local people whose land they have already stolen.

What relevance does this part of the story hold for us today in Australia?

What do we own? What does ownership even mean in terms of God's creation?



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THE BIRTH OF JESUS - LUKE 2:6-7

Jesus is born

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

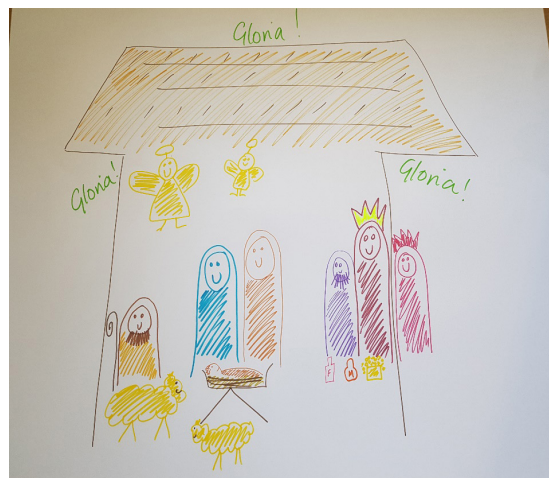
Something to think about

Although we do not know, we think perhaps Jesus was born in a barn attached to the inn. How messy would have been in that barn? Imagine being in the barn. What would you see? What would you hear? What would you smell?

Activities

- Drawing

Can you draw the barn with everyone in it? You can name the smells if you like. Send your drawings to communications@manninghamuc.org for sharing with the wider community



- Wrap your baby

Babies need to feel secure. One way is to wrap them up in baby blankets just as Jesus was swaddled by Mary. Find a baby or stuffed toy and some cloths, for example tea towels if you can't find baby blankets. See how well you can wrap your baby Jesus and lay him at the foot of your Christmas tree.

- Messy Science-Christmas Chemistry

This month create some very unique ornaments for your tree with some unexpected household products. Plus a fun clean Christmas clean up experiment using energy to help out your parents!! [watch it here](#)



At Home

- Poverty Game

Joseph was not rich but at least he had a trade so he could work to support his family – he was a carpenter. Others were not so fortunate and would have lived in poverty. World Vision has created this Poverty Game. Read the factsheet first and cut out the cards.

- Each of these cards contains information you will need to make it through the week
- It tells you about your family, your budget, what you need to do each day, what everything costs
- Identify the issues and explore some creative ways to overcome them – remember this is an exercise to think through the problems, not necessarily to fix them. Some problems are not easily fixed

POVERTY GAME FACT SHEET



What is poverty?

Poverty is the severe lack of certain possessions which significantly reduces the quality of a person's life. People living in poverty struggle to meet basic needs, including having limited access to food, clothing, healthcare, education, shelter and safety. People affected by poverty may also lack social, economic, political or material income and resources.

Poverty is a complex web of circumstances that hinders the very survival of people around the world. The World Bank's definition of people living in poverty is those living on less than US\$1.90 a day, but poverty isn't just a low income – it is a lack of access to services and essential goods.

At World Vision, we are tirelessly working towards achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This is a set of global goals for the world to achieve by 2030, including to:

- Eradicate extreme poverty for all people, everywhere.
- Ensure that all girls and boys get to go to school.
- Increase wealth for the world's poorest countries and communities.
- End preventable deaths of newborns and children under five years of age.
- Double the global rate of energy efficiency improvements and increase renewable energy.
- End all forms of violence against children.

"We are committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and building a safer and more sustainable world for children everywhere." – Claire Rogers, CEO, World Vision Australia

The consequences of poverty are far-reaching and long-lasting, including child deaths, lack of access to education and food insecurity, all of which can be caused by poverty and in turn can perpetuate it.



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Your father earns \$12 per week	Takes you 30 mins to walk to nearest clean water source	Takes you 1 hour to walk to school
Food bill for week = \$6 and this is only basic flour, rice and veg	Rent for week = \$6	How can your family make more money?
You have 3 siblings younger than you	To see a doctor costs \$15 plus travel if you need more than the local doctor	You have a lot of space around your house – can you use it?
School costs are \$30 per child per year	It takes your mother all day to cook food	You are 13 years old
You live in a community with other families	Medicines are very expensive – people generally can't afford them	People don't tend to wear shoes – too expensive
No-one has new clothes	The church is based in your local community	One of your siblings suffered from malaria last year and still hasn't recovered



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- Going Deeper for older primary age

Luke 2:6-7 Jesus is born

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

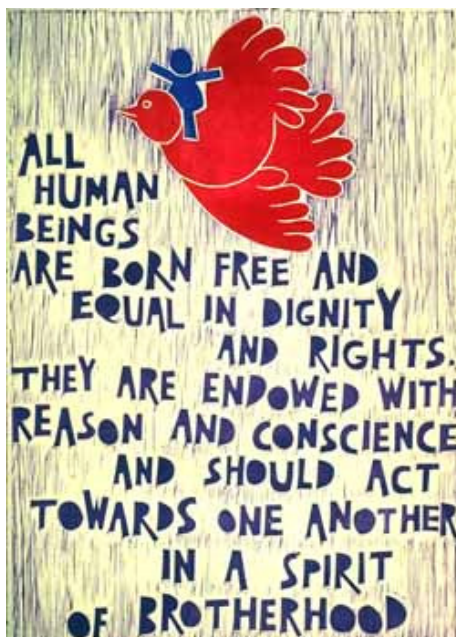
- What's your 'place'?
- What does it mean to have 'no place'?
- Who has 'no place'?
- The following information is from the Australian Commission for Human Rights:

Human rights recognise the inherent value of each person, regardless of background, where we live, what we look like, what we think or what we believe.

They are based on principles of dignity, equality and mutual respect, which are shared across cultures, religions and philosophies. They are about being treated fairly, treating others fairly and having the ability to make genuine choices in our daily lives.

Respect for human rights is the cornerstone of strong communities in which everyone can make a contribution and feel included.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations on 10 December 1948, sets out the basic rights and freedoms that apply to all people. Drafted in the aftermath of World War Two, it has become a foundation document that has inspired many legally-binding international human rights laws.



This image is from the Australian Commission for Human Rights

- What challenges you about this image?
- Where is the hope in this image?



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THE ANGELS AND THE SHEPHERDS - LUKE 2:8-20

ANGELS APPEAR TO SHEPHERDS

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,
'Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favours!'

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Something to think about

So there were the shepherds, dozing off whilst keeping one eye on their sheep. There's no way they were expecting angels to appear! How do you think they felt? What would they have thought?

Activities

- Sheep Craft Activity

Using a single piece of an Egg carton, some cotton balls, black paper & a foam or paper ball create your own sheep just like the shepherds were watching over when they heard the Angels voices. Make 2 or 3 and create your own flock!



- Christmas chains

Using strips of scrap paper, can you make a paper chain for your Christmas tree decorations? Write down or draw the names of all the people in the Christmas story on the strips of paper and then stick or staple them together into a chain.



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- Angels



Paper Strip Angel Craft

Materials for Paper Angel

Scissors
Glue stick
Pencil
Ruler
Wool or string



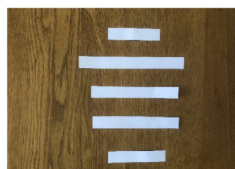
White paper or card cut into strips:

For the wings: Two strips of paper 2cm x 15cm

For the head: One strip 2cm x 10cm

For the top of the body: One strip 2cm x 18cm

For the bottom of the body: One strip 2cm x 9cm



Directions:

1. Place glue onto one edge of your 10cm long strip and glue it into a circle to make the Head. Set it aside.



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2. Make an angel wing by placing some glue on one edge of a 15cm strip and gluing the other end down on top of it to form a teardrop shape as shown below. Do this for the second wing. Set them aside.



3. To make the angel's body place glue onto both ends of the 18cm strip and glue them down onto each end of the 9cm inch strip, forming a bell shape as shown below.



4. Glue Head to body

5. Glue each wing to the side of the angel.
You can have the wing face out,
down, or up!



Tips and Ideas

When gluing your paper together, you might need to press and hold the paper securely for a few seconds to let it dry and stick together. Children can also embellish their angels with textas, sequins, or other craft items.



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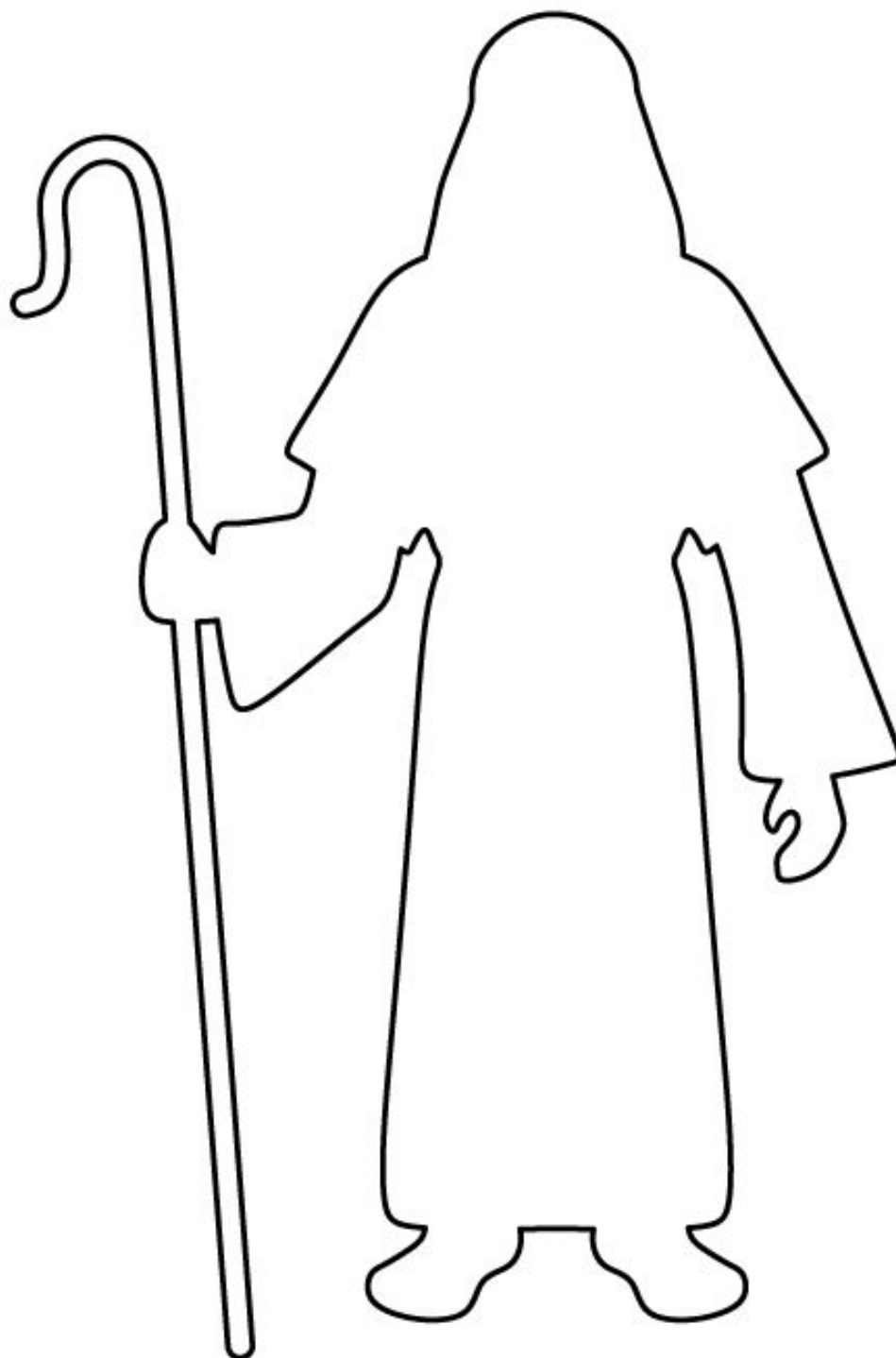


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- Find the shepherds

Draw some shepherds or use the template here. You decide on their names and write them on their backs and hide them around your house. Challenge your family to find them all.



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WISE MEN FOLLOW THE STAR - MATTHEW 2:1-2, 10-11

WISE MEN

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.'

When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

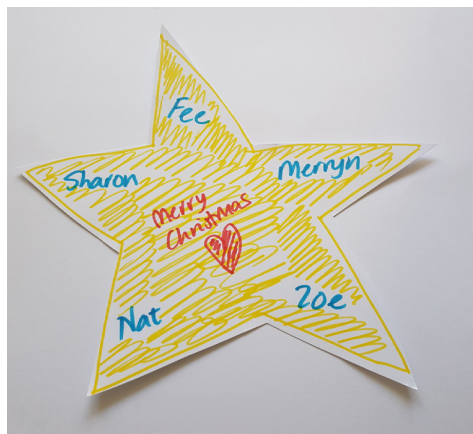
Something to think about

The Jewish people had been waiting a long time for their king to be born. The prophets said that a king or Messiah would come and show the people again how to live in peace.

Activities

- Star

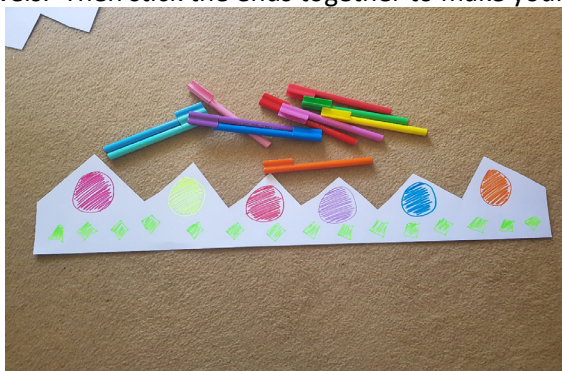
Draw some stars like this one onto some thick paper or cardboard. Make enough for your whole family. Colour them in, write everyone's names on a star and then hang them on your Christmas tree. Here's one Rev Claire made for the Messy Church@Home crew:



- Wise men crowns

You will need some colouring pens, some cardboard and a stapler or sticky tape.

Cut out a crown shape, making sure the length of cardboard will go around your head. Decorate it so it looks like it is covered in jewels. Then stick the ends together to make your crown.



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- Wordsearch

Try this quick wordsearch about the story of the wise men. Time yourself and then get someone else to have a go.

The words appear in this part of Matthew's Gospel – Herod, Mary, Myrrh, Gold, Homage, Jesus, Star, East.

J	H	S	J	H	E
E	G	E	D	C	A
S	M	A	R	Y	S
U	Y	R	Y	O	T
S	R	G	O	L	D
Y	R	A	T	S	T
G	H	J	M	H	I
H	O	M	A	G	E



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REFUGEES - MATTHEW 2:13-15

REFUGEES IN EGYPT

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.'

Something to think about

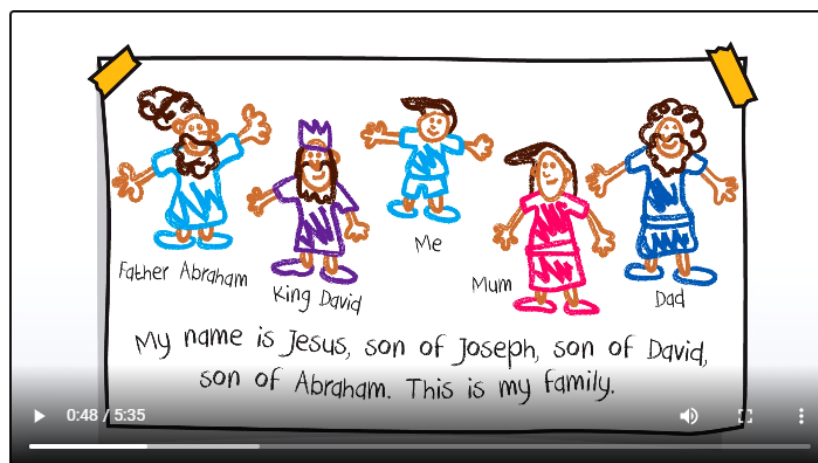
Jesus' family had to get out of their homeland because Herod wanted to hurt Jesus. They fled to Egypt where they could live safely. People still flee their homelands because they are no longer safe, usually because there is a war but also because of drought and famine. Not all countries welcome refugees when they are trying to escape somewhere safe.

It is important to understand that there is no such thing as an illegal asylum seeker – it is not against the law to seek a safe place to live under international law.

Activities

- Jesus was a refugee

There is a Lost Sheep book about Jesus and his family becoming refugees. We read it during Refugee week and you can [listen to it here](#)



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- MUC Connections – Supporting refugees and people seeking asylum

7:30 pm – 9:00 pm Last Wednesday of every month

This is a group of people at our church who encourage one another to connect with, support and advocate for refugees and people seeking asylum.

Activities include:

- speakers
- petitions
- organising food and toy drives
- making up toiletry packs to give to newly arrived refugees
- activities to raise awareness
- fundraising for organisations that support people seeking asylum

New members are always welcome. They also offer free English classes every week on a Friday morning for people who have just arrived in Australia or who are trying to improve their language skills. All of these activities have been difficult during covid, but you can still make donations to help people by contacting info@manninghamuc.org

- Facts and fiction game

Ask someone else to read the fact on each card in turn so you can't see the answers

Read the answer – did you get it right?

<p>Fact 1: Is it a crime to arrive in Australia by boat without a visa and ask for protection? Answer: No. Everyone has the right to seek asylum from persecution in other countries. Under Australian law, it is not a crime to arrive without a visa and seek protection</p>	<p>Fact 2: There is a queue for asylum seekers and refugees seeking a safe haven. Answer: No. The United Nations resettlement system doesn't operate by using a queue but prioritises cases based on need</p>	<p>Fact: 3: 86% of the world's refugees are hosted by the richest countries in the world like US and Australia. Answer: No. The majority of asylum seekers and refugees live in their neighbouring countries, and 86% live in developing countries</p>
<p>Fact: 4: Australia receives 20% of the total asylum seeker claims each year. Answer: No. Australia receives just 1% of the total new asylum seeker claims submitted around the world in a year.</p>	<p>Fact 5: 2/3rds of the world's refugees come from just 5 countries. Answer: Yes. At the end of 2017 there were 25.4 million refugees worldwide. More than two-thirds came from: Syrian Arab Republic (6.3 million) Afghanistan (2.6 m) South Sudan (2.4 m) Myanmar (1.2 m) Somalia (986,400)</p>	<p>Fact 6: refugees must PROVE they are in danger in their own countries. Answer: Yes. Under international law, whether in Australia or another country, a person undergoes a rigorous process to prove they have a well-founded fear of persecution before they are granted refugee status.</p>



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PRAYER TIME AT HOME

Bring your Advent wreath drawing

Depending on which day of Advent this is, colour in the number of candle flames.

Usually, we would begin by lighting a candle as a reminder that the light of God is always with us and can never be put out.

Now acknowledge the First Peoples of the land on which you are gathering on together.
Why do we acknowledge the First Peoples?

An acknowledgement of country is a way to show respect for the First Peoples. The First Peoples of the Uniting Church have asked that we acknowledge country whenever we meet for worship or in meetings.

Today, we are remembering the story of Christmas and how a little baby was born far away from home in a stable because there was nowhere else to stay. The baby is Jesus who grew up showing us how to live with God's love and God's grace. Jesus was sent to us by God so that we could see how to live gently in creation and with one another, how to reject violence, how to embrace everyone no matter who they are or where they've come from.

Prayer

The impossible is about to happen in a stable.
The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;

**Those who lived in a land of deep darkness,
on them has the light shined!**

This is the evening when creation stood still and held its breath,
for God was doing the most unbelievable, dangerous thing.

**This is the evening when God embraced humanity
from the inside, as one of us, from birth to death.**

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,
full of grace and truth.**

Amen!

(by Bruce Prewer)

Each person present share what they have learnt about the story whilst doing the activities and reading the stories.

The story

Choose one of the Lost Sheep books or read the story from the beginning of Matthew or Luke's Gospels.

Prayer

God of love,

You sent us Jesus to show us how to live with your love and grace.

We think of all people who do not know they are loved,
People who are lonely or afraid.

Help us to find ways to show them your love.

And, as we get excited for Christmas,

Let's remember that this can also be a challenging time – help us to be more aware of those around us and what they need to get by.

Let's say together the prayer that Jesus gave us:

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now
and for ever.

Amen.

Blessing

This Christmas

I wish for you

light (*action = hands opening and closing like flashes*)

to crumple up the darkness

This Christmas

I wish for you

love (*action = hands over heart or heart shape with fingers*)

to pull us closer to one another



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This Christmas
I wish for you
peace (*action = peace sign with fingers*)
the same the angels sang

This Christmas
I wish for you
starlight (*action = point upwards*)
to follow on your way home

This Christmas
I wish for you
promise (*action = cross heart with fingers*)
to keep hope alive for you

This Christmas
I wish for you
God (*action = hands together in prayer*)
newly born and in the flesh

This Christmas
I wish for you (*action = point towards everyone*)
Jesus Christ (*action = arms in embrace*)
born this night
light of the world
Amen
(by Roddy Hamilton with added actions)



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