

Messy Church for Christmas and Advent

Overall Theme

Jesus came to Earth to save the whole world, not just human beings. When the Word became flesh, God shared the reality of living in a physical body not just with human beings but with all creatures.

Suggested reading

John 1 : 9-15

Travelling Together

Equipment: Hoof and footprint stamps cut out from foam (or a potato!); paint; a long piece of paper with houses and a star drawn at one end to represent Bethlehem.

Activity: Make human and donkey/camel/horse/ox prints travelling along the road between Nazareth and Bethlehem.

Purpose: Talk about all of the people and animals who live Mary, Joseph and the donkey were travelling together towards Bethlehem. Think about how all of God's creatures share the same planet and are journey together towards his Kingdom.

Mini Manger

Equipment: Cleaned out butter/margarine tubs, brown paper cut into strips, glue, straw.

Activity: Make a manger by sticking strips of brown paper onto the outside of the tub and stuffing the inside with straw.

Purpose: Think about what a manger was used for normally and why Mary might have chosen it as a good place to lay her baby. Talk about how God shared having a physical body not just with human beings but with animals as well. Both human beings and animals need food and warmth, and can also feel comfortable or uncomfortable.

Fleecy Sheep

Equipment: Cardboard cut into sheep shapes, cotton-wool, glue.

Activity: Glue the cotton-wool onto the sheep shapes to give them fleecy coats.

Purpose: Think about how the animals kept the baby Jesus warm that first night. Imagine how much difference their body heat would have made to the temperature in the stable, Jesus would probably have been covered over with a woollen blanket or shawl. Without help from other animals human beings would not be able to survive.

Fruit/Veg Safari

Equipment: Cardboard paper plates, fruit or suitable vegetables (e.g. carrot sticks, cucumber etc) cut into pieces. (If you're feeling less healthy, this activity would work just as well with sweets and biscuits.)

Activity: Encourage everybody to make different animals out of the fruit/veg provided.

Purpose: Reflect on the huge diversity of animals in the world, and how Jesus came to save them all.

Creation Paper Chains

Equipment: Strips of colour paper, suitably sized pictures of animals and human beings.

Activity: Make a paper chain in the usual way, but glue a picture of a different individual (animal or human) to each link.

Purpose: Think about how all life on Earth is linked together, we all depend upon one another and we are all created, loved and saved by the same God.

Sniff and Sort

Equipment: Map of the world, pictures of animals and food items with a strong taste or smell associated with Christmas.

Activity: Sniff and/or taste the items and try to think where in the world they come from. Try and find the right area on the map and also a picture of an animal which might live there. N.B. this activity will obviously have to be carefully facilitated/supervised, partly because it won't really work without feedback and partly because it would be a very bad idea for someone to try to eat the nutmeg cloves! Exactly which foods and which animals you pick depends upon what you have to hand, but these are some suggestions: cinnamon-Sri Lanka-Sri Lankan elephant; chocolate-South America; sloth-nutmeg-Indonesia-Komodo dragon; oranges-Spain-Iberian Lynx.

Purpose: To reflect on how diverse creation is, but also how interconnected we all are. A tiny baby came to save a very big world of which we are just a part; they are lots of other people and animals in it!

Jungle Streamers

Equipment: Thin strips of yellow, orange and green paper, black felt tips or crayons and a handy supply of pens or pencils (working or otherwise) to run up the paper and make it curl.

Activity: Add tiger stripes to the orange paper, cheetah spots to the yellow and diamond snake pattern to the green. Then roll a pen up the paper repeatedly until it curls into a streamer shape. The streamers make nice tree decorations or finishing touches to wrapped Christmas presents.

Purpose: Reminder that Jesus didn't just save the familiar animals in the stable and companion animals like dogs and cats, but all life on Earth.

Whole World Wreath

Equipment: Lots of blue cardboard or paper circles, green or yellow paper triangles, white paper rectangles and gold/yellow candle flame shaped-pieces of paper and glue.

Activity: Stick the blue circles together into a wreath shape and then put on some green or yellow triangles on to represent land in the Earth's ocean. At the bottom

instead of a bow, place a white rectangle and candle flame shape as a reminder of Jesus light of the world.

Purpose: Think about Jesus coming as the light of the world to redeem the whole Earth and everything which lives on it.