

**Help mothers
use their
God-given gifts
to escape
poverty**



**'I started tailoring four
years ago. My children
and I are happy now'**

Ranjita Sikar, India

**christian
aid**

Christmas assembly: God-given gifts

This adaptable Christmas assembly can be used with pupils in school or church. Its purpose is to help pupils reflect on the wonder of the Christmas story and the true meaning of Christmas.

Feel free to adapt it to suit the needs of your school. If you are going to use the sketch suggestions, rehearsal will be required. There are also follow-up activities which are available to download from caid.org.uk/christmas-resources

Assembly presentation

Ask the children to think about what Christmas means to them: family time, a Christmas tree, Christmas dinner, gifts? Many of the children will suggest gifts or presents.

Ask the children if they know why we have presents at Christmas. They represent the gifts the three wise men brought for Jesus and God's gift to us in Jesus.

[Presenter] I'm sure that everyone here who celebrates Christmas is very excited about what might be waiting for them under the tree on Christmas morning – I know I am! But of course, Christmas is about more than the presents. It's an important time for Christians to reflect on the birth of Jesus. Jesus was born to a young woman called Mary. So, today, we're going to think more about Mary and about different types of gifts.

You probably know the Christmas story pretty well... Around 2,000 years ago, a woman called Mary was visited by an angel. How would you feel if you were visited by an angel? Surprised? Mary was very surprised because the angel told her she was going to have a baby, a special baby who would be the son of God! And if Mary was surprised, her fiancé Joseph was even more shocked! However, the baby started growing in Mary's tummy and Joseph started to get used to the idea.

After a few months, Caesar Augustus, who was in charge of all the land, ordered everyone to go

back to their home town and fill out some boring paperwork. Joseph was from a town called Bethlehem. So they set off on the journey to Bethlehem and there Mary gave birth to a baby boy called Jesus.

[Mary and Joseph make the journey from the back of the hall to the stage.]

[Presenter] Hold on there Mary! Let's pause for a moment to imagine what the journey would actually have been like. The route to Bethlehem would have probably covered about 80 miles. It would have taken Mary and Joseph around four days to get there. Mary was heavily pregnant. Her belly would have felt really heavy, her legs would have been a bit slow. She would have been tired, hungry and maybe even a bit grumpy. And she might have been wondering about what was going to happen. After all, she had been visited by an angel who had told her she was going to give birth to the son of God! And she didn't travel by car, she probably travelled on a donkey or even walked! How her back must have ached.

[Mary and Joseph continue their journey to the stage, slowly.]

[Presenter] When Mary got to Bethlehem, there was no doctor or hospital. And because lots of people were returning to the town to fill in their paperwork, all the hotels were full. There wasn't anywhere for them to stay. In the end, Mary gave birth to baby Jesus in a stable and laid him down to sleep in a manger. (A manger is a trough for feeding animals.)

[Mary produces a baby doll from behind her back and gives it a cuddle.]

[There is a loud knocking and the three wise men enter.]

Wise men: 'We followed a star which rose in the east. We've been searching for a baby boy and come bearing gifts.'

[Presenter] The wise men brought gifts to the baby – gold, frankincense and myrrh. These are quite strange presents to bring a baby, but they

each have their own special meaning for later in the story of Jesus. But someone else gave an important gift to Jesus.

[Mary, Joseph and the baby settle down on the stage, with the wise men gathered behind them. Mary should be in the centre.]

[Presenter] Jesus is the central figure in the Christmas story, and his birth is the first chapter in a story of a man who would change the world. But another important person in his story is Mary, his mum. Jesus was called the son of God. But he was also the son of a woman whose strength and resilience helped him to become a changemaker. Mary used her God-given gifts of determination and strength, alongside her faith and trust, to guide her growing boy.

At Christmas, we reflect on the messages that Jesus brought to the world. He inspired his followers to love their neighbours and care for those who were overlooked or excluded. Jesus devoted his life to helping the sick, poor and needy. He wasn't interested in having lots of money or nice things. He was passionate about speaking out against things that were unfair, even when that made things very difficult for him. In every person he met, Jesus saw their God-given gifts. He saw God in everyone, especially in those who had nothing.

This message has real importance for us all today. At Christmas, people talk a bit more about love, joy and hope. But we live in a troubled world where people can be selfish and mean; where things are still very unfair; where lots of people are still in need, while others have more money and more nice things than they need. But Christians believe that every single person has gifts given by God that they can use to change the world.

All over the world, mothers are using their God-given gifts to protect their children and give them a better future. Sometimes they just need a little bit of extra help.

Ranjita lives in India. Since she was nine years old, she has been made to work in dirty, smelly conditions with very little pay. She is now 30 years old and wants her children to have a better life than she had. She wants to find opportunities for them to become amazing people. Christian Aid's partner in India, ARUN, brings women together and helps them turn their lives around. The group helped Ranjita find out about her rights, apply for a government grant, and start a new life for herself. She bought a sewing machine and started mending clothes four years ago. Since then, Ranjita's life and her children's lives have changed for the better. Ranjita can now afford to rent a room for her family to live in away from the slums where they used to live. Her youngest child Soniya can now go to school. She is the first of Ranjita's children to be able to.

Mums – like Jesus' mother Mary and Soniya's mum Ranjita – have many God-given gifts. They are strong, brave and resourceful. They are determined to make life better for themselves and their families. Sometimes they just need a little help to use their gifts. This Christmas we want to think about mums at home and across the world. And we want to celebrate the way they use their gifts to help us in our lives.

Reflection:

'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.' (Luke 2:7)

Mothers make incredible sacrifices for their children. Let's think for a minute in the quiet about all the things the grown-ups in your life do for you. Remember those who, even though their own life is hard, are determined to make the best life for their children.

Help support our wonderful work!

Could your school hold a collection for our Christmas Appeal this year? From a collection at a school concert to a fundraising non-school uniform day, the funds you raise could go a long way:

£19 could provide a woman in India with skills training, like tailoring, to help her set up a business.

£25 could provide a woman in Afghanistan with materials for weaving one silk carpet to sell.

£54 could buy a beehive for a family in Kenya, helping them raise a stable income and bring vulnerable orphans some security.

To give a donation, please visit caid.org.uk/christmas-appeal

