

The following story for Christmas is in four parts. It can either be used as four Christmas assemblies (optional prayers are included) or in lessons to fit in with the Herts Scheme of Work for RE for this term. Aspects of the Autumn term RE mentioned in 'A Christmas Delivery' include:-

Reception	Celebrating the birth of Jesus & 'Away in a Manger'
Year 1	Advent, Christingles & light
Year 2	Gifts of the Wise Men & God's gift of Jesus
Year 3	Angels, news & the meaning of names
Year 4	No room at the inn
Year 5	Advent, Christingles & Jesus as a 'light' for the world
Year 6	Secular v sacred preparations for Christmas

NB: 'A Christmas Delivery' also ties in with work on 'Belonging' (Yr 4 Autumn term/Yr 1 Spring term).
[#] indicates where teachers *may* wish to stop for explanation, discussion or reflection.

A Christmas Delivery

by Caroline Gould

Assembly 1 - *James thinks about all the preparation for a new baby.*

You will need: *Some clean white neatly folded baby clothes, disposable nappies, or baby toiletries.*

"What sweets will Mum be given when the new baby arrives?" James asked his older brother Sam.

"What do you mean 'sweets'?" replied Sam not looking up from his homework.

"The sweets I heard Mum and Dad talking about - the delivery sweets they've got at the hospital"

Sam laughed "It's not a sweet that you eat it's a *suite* of rooms - a set of special rooms at the hospital. The rooms are extra clean and have got everything in them that the midwives and doctors need when babies are born. Mum will go there when the baby is nearly ready to arrive. It should come the week before Christmas." James thought he understood though he had no idea what a 'midwife' was.[#]

James lay on his bed and stared at the ceiling. He had been sent to bed early for being naughty.[#] He thought back to the warm summer holidays when Mum and Dad had first told him he was going to have a new baby brother or sister. They had thought he would be pleased about their '*wonderful surprise*' but at first he had just felt fed-up - his trips to the park after school had stopped because Dad said Mum needed to rest in the afternoons. Then, *even worse*, Mum said the new baby would need his bedroom and that he would have to share a room with Sam.

Sharing a room with Sam had *actually* turned out to be quite fun. The boys often used to whisper jokes to each other in the dark and once or twice they had held midnight feasts under their duvets.

James suddenly remembered he hadn't cleaned his teeth. He crept across the landing. His old bedroom door was open just a little bit. He put his head through the gap.

The room didn't smell like his room anymore. His and Sam's old cot stood in the corner. Mum had cleaned all the wooden bars and bought a new mattress - James could smell its plastic wrapping.

James could also smell the new mauvey-blue paint on the walls. Mum said it was called 'Lavender Mist'. It didn't smell anything like the lavender bush in their garden.

There were four white shelves fixed onto the wall where James' bed used to be. On the shelves he could see piles of softly folded material ([#] **show and discuss the baby items you have brought with you**). There was a row of plastic bottles and tubs. He could see a box of baby wipes and he could smell the bars of baby soap. Underneath the cot were three enormous boxes of disposable nappies.

In the corner was a special light that played a tune and glowed softly in the dark.

James thought about the story he had had in his RE lesson at school. His teacher had told his class that two thousand years ago a very special baby had been born in a stable because there were no rooms in any of the hotels. James thought about how dirty, draughty and smelly a stable must have been for a new baby. He thought about the clean new room ready for his baby and wondered if the special baby's parents had been worried about the dirt and the flies.[#]

James crept back to bed. He realised that he didn't feel fed-up about his old room any more. Instead he thought he felt a bit funny inside. At first he didn't know what the new funny feeling was. Suddenly he realised that for the first time he actually felt [#] **excited** about the new baby coming! Soon their new baby would arrive *and then*.....Christmas would be here.

Optional Prayer: Thank you God for our comfortable modern homes. Help us to think about the place where Jesus was born..... Amen.

Note: with older pupils you may feel it appropriate to think about the discomfort of the people in Bethlehem this Christmas.

Assembly 2 - James finds out that some names have special meanings.

You will need: An Advent calendar and a book of names and their meanings

Teacher's notes: The Bible describes a spiritual world mostly unseen by humans. Angels are described as spiritual beings with various roles. Gabriel is seen as an important messenger of God by both Muslims and Christians. You may wish to display the acrostic poem in the story.

Recap on yesterday's story. Show and discuss your Advent calendar.

Sam was still trying to finish his homework. He had to write an acrostic poem [#] using the word 'Advent'. He had written something down about the angel Gabriel.

James thought about his Manchester United Advent calendar in the kitchen.[#] Every day he was allowed to open another window and eat the little piece of chocolate inside. "Why are you writing about the angel Gabriel in a poem about Advent?" James asked.

"Because Advent is really a church word for the four weeks leading up to Christmas. It means 'coming' - Christmas is coming and **Christmas** is the time when Christians remember the birth of Jesus Christ."

James looked over his brother's shoulder. The page looked a bit messy but the poem was nearly finished.

Angel Gabriel came with some unexpected news for Mary

Do not be afraid," the angel said

Very soon you will have a special baby

Emmanuel will be one of the names you will give him"

Names sometimes have special meanings

T

Sam was stuck on the last line that had to start with the letter T.[#]

James was confused "Why have you put that she had to call him Emmanuel - I thought she called the baby Cheeses?" Sam laughed out loud "You mean Jesus - she did - her special baby had more than one name. Emmanuel means 'God with us' and Jesus means 'God saves'".

"Well in that case you could put 'The name Emmanuel means God is with us' for your last line of your poem.....and stop laughing at me." James thumped his older brother on the arm.

Mum's face appeared around their bedroom door. "What's going on in here?" she asked "Haven't you finished your homework yet Sam?"

"He has now - I just finished it for him." said James proudly as he bounced triumphantly back into bed.

Mum looked at the page. "That's good.....that's very good. Are you going to write it out again neatly? Well done." She turned to James. "You were supposed to be in bed early."

James waited for her to come and straighten his duvet. "When our new baby arrives do you get told what to call it or can you choose?"

Mum smiled "We choose - just like we chose yours and Sam's. We've got a book of names and their meanings downstairs."

"What do our names mean?" asked Sam.

"I think James comes from another name - Jacob, and Samuel means..... 'he is of God'.

"Will you choose a name with a special meaning for our new baby?" asked Sam.

"We think we might have Stephen for a boy - that means 'crown', and Molly for a girl - I can't remember what that means.... we'll have to look it up tomorrow! Now bed.....both of you."[# **Show the name book and if appropriate, look up some of the children's names. Molly is actually diminutive of Mary, which from Hebrew means 'longed for one'.**]

Optional Prayer: Dear God, we can learn so many new things from books. Thank you for the books we own and the books we can borrow. Thank you that we can learn how to read at this school. Please help us as we learn new things today. Amen.

Assembly 3 - James finds out what a Christingle is.

You will need: An orange with a small candle or a picture of a Christingle.

Teacher's notes: Christingle services are held in some churches during Advent. The orange symbolises the world. It has a red ribbon around it to symbolise the blood of Jesus, four cocktail sticks stuck in it with either fruit and nuts or sweets stuck on them - these symbolise the four seasons and the fruits of the Earth. The candle stuck in the top of the orange represents Jesus as a guiding light sent to a dark world.

Recap on the story so far. Show what you have brought with you. Ask if anyone knows what a Christingle is and discuss its meaning.

One Saturday, a few weeks before Christmas, Sam and James woke up to find Granny in the kitchen waiting to give them what she called "a proper breakfast".

"Where's Mum?" asked James.

"She's upstairs getting ready to go to the hospital."

At that moment Dad flew through the kitchen only stopping to open and shut a few cupboard doors. He seemed to be looking for something important.

Mum appeared at the kitchen door. She had rather an odd look on her face and was complaining of a bad back. She said she needed to see her midwife. James still didn't know what a midwife was but he *still* didn't like to ask. [#]

Granny told Mum to sit down at the kitchen table while she made her a cup of tea.

Dad was still looking for things. He was now holding a carrier bag and James watched him pack some small cartons of drink, a bottle of water, biscuits, some fruit and two packets of crisps. It looked like he was getting ready for a picnic. "Will you be gone long?" he asked. "As long as it takes" Dad replied. Mum smiled. "I think the baby will be born later on today. Be good for Granny, boys. Auntie Jane will be over later to take you to her church."

James tried to take in all this new information.

The new baby was about to arrive - that was good news.

Granny was going to look after them - that was good and bad news. Granny told great stories and always wanted to play old-fashioned games with them like snakes and ladders or ludo, but.....she usually cooked strange meals - with far too many vegetables! [#]

Auntie Jane was taking them to church later - that was mostly bad news. Although James liked Auntie Jane he couldn't help remembering the last time he'd been to a church. It had been for his cousin's wedding. He had had to wear a ridiculous blue outfit that was too tight and itchy around the neck. Worse still, he had been made to hold one of the bridesmaid's hands to walk up the middle of the church, sit very still through the whole service and then.....hold her hand again on the way out! Later on Mum had told him off for getting ice-cream down the front of his jacket. It had been a *most* uncomfortable day.

James sighed. "Cheer up young man" said Granny "Your new baby brother or sister will soon be here - isn't that exciting? Let's have some breakfast and then I'll race you down to the park" James instantly forgot about his bad day at the wedding - he knew he would beat Granny easily.

Mum and Dad finished collecting up all the things they needed. James couldn't understand why it took them so long to get ready when they had known for months that the baby was coming. Everyone hugged each other and then they were off.

The park with Granny was fun [#] and afterwards she cooked them one of her best meals - roast chicken. They were just clearing the table when the doorbell rang. It was Auntie Jane. James usually looked forward to his Auntie's visits but today he felt apprehensive [#] about where they were going.

"You'll love it," she said giving him a squeeze. "This afternoon they are having a special Christingle service for children. [#] You'll all be given an orange with a candle and some sweets stuck in it. You can wear your jeans."

That didn't sound so bad after all.

And it wasn't.

The inside of Auntie Jane's church looked beautiful. There was a huge Christmas tree in one corner and lots of twinkling candles on the window ledges. It was very crowded and warm in the church. The man at the front told the story of when Jesus was born. The man smiled a lot. He said God had sent Jesus to the world to save everyone. He talked about Jesus being like a guiding light to show people the right way to go. Everyone sang 'Away in a Manger' and some other songs about Jesus that James had never heard before. James wasn't sure why, but he had a feeling deep down inside - a warm cosy feeling.

It was very cold and dark when they came out of the church. James held Auntie Jane's hand with one hand and in the other he carefully carried his Christingle. "I liked your church," he said. "I like my church" said Auntie Jane.

"Can we bring our new baby to church one day?" James asked.

"I'm sure we can" smiled Auntie Jane. "Shall we go and buy your new baby a present - do you think the shops are still open?"

Optional Prayer: Thank you God for our families - for Mums and Dads, for brothers and sisters, for grandparents, aunts and uncles. Thank you for all the people who help to take care of us. Please remind us to show them how special they are. Amen.

Assembly 4 - James gives his new baby a present.

You will need: A wrapped present.

Teacher's notes: The gifts the wise men brought are symbolic to Christians. Gold - a precious metal to represent the kingship of Jesus; Frankincense - an expensive perfume from a tree that grows in the desert, to represent his holiness as Frankincense was burnt in the temple during the worship of God; and Myrrh which was used as a pain killer and to embalm the dead - a reminder that Jesus would suffer and die for a reason. Frankincense and Myrrh can still be bought as aromatherapy oils.

Recap on the story so far. Discuss with the children what might be inside your present.

Mum and Dad arrived home with James' new baby brother early on Sunday morning. Granny was very busy around the house. She kept singing and making cups of tea. Sam and James looked at their new baby. He was very pink and small. His eyes were shut tight and his face was all wrinkly. [#] Mum put him in a special baby basket in the front room. The blanket he was wrapped in was very clean and white and smelt like the clothes that have just come out of the tumble drier.

James showed Mum the present he had bought with Auntie Jane. [#] It was a small, soft Winnie the Pooh. "Stephen will love that," said Mum and she put the little yellow bear in the corner of the baby's basket. James looked at his tiny soft baby brother. He was very special. James wondered if the baby would look at the present when he opened his eyes. [#]

Soon after lunch the door bell rang and it was the lady next door with some flowers for Mum, a card in a blue envelope and a present for baby Stephen. [#] Just as she was leaving, Mum's friends from work arrived and soon after that the lady across the road called in. They all brought cards and presents for the new baby - a teddy, a rattle, a blanket, some tiny socks. James thought about the assembly they had had last week at school. It had been about the gifts that had been brought to Jesus when he was a baby. [#] "What strange presents the wise men brought for a new baby" James thought, "Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh - how odd." [#] He remembered that his teacher had told the juniors why the wise men had brought such presents but James couldn't think of the reason now.

The house was very noisy but the baby slept on. All the grown-ups looked at the baby and went "Aah". Some of them thought he looked like Mum and some said he had Dad's nose. Granny looked a bit flustered. She said Mum needed to rest. One by one the visitors left.

At teatime Granny told James and Sam that there would be more visitors tomorrow. James thought about the shepherds who had turned up to visit Jesus when he was born. He wondered what Mary must have thought. He wondered what his Mum would say if the local farmer turned up with a few animals to visit baby Stephen.

"Everyone loves new babies," Granny said, "I love big boys too..." and out of her handbag she pulled two giant bars of white chocolate. "When you've eaten all your vegetables!" she said.

The new baby didn't wake up very much that day. In fact James didn't hear him cry until it was nearly time for bed. James was surprised at how such a small baby could make such a big noise. Mum fed him and Dad and Sam changed his nappy. Dad fetched his coat "Won't be long" he said to Granny, "Just off to wet the baby's head."

James remembered the lessons he'd had at school about baptism "Is Dad going to the church?" he asked Mum. "Not tonight dear" said Mum, "We'll do that soon - tonight he's going to tell all his friends our good news."

James went to bed feeling so happy that night. It had been good news and more good news. A new baby brother and Christmas was very nearly here. Granny had even said she thought it might snow. [#] His Christingle from the church was on a saucer next to his bed. Dad had carefully explained to James why he wasn't allowed to have the candle lit in his bedroom. [#] As he lay in his bed he thought about the prayers the man at the church had said.

James had never thought about talking to God on his own before. He curled up under his covers. "Thank you God" he whispered into the darkness "Thank you for my new baby brother and thank you for Christmas." Soon James was fast asleep dreaming of [#] angels and shepherds and snowflakes and babies and singing and presents.....

Optional Prayer: Thank you God for all the exciting things around us at this special time of year. Help us to remember the real meaning of CHRISTmas which for so many people is the best news of all. Thank you for all the good things you give us - for laughter, for friends, for parties and presents. Thank you that we are able to enjoy so much fun. Amen.

Note: with older pupils, you may feel it appropriate to remember some people who won't be able to enjoy this Christmas.

For further ideas for RE lessons and assembly outlines visit our website

www.watfordschooltrust.org