



# GOD WITH US: A NATIVITY PLAY FROM TEARFUND

This is a traditional, Bible-based Nativity play script for children aged four and over. There are two variations, the first where the children learn and speak lines (or read them out), the second where the narrator describes the action for the children to follow.

To help you select the version that best suits your performers, follow these icons:



*Dialogue version*



*Narrated version*

The first variation will require much more rehearsal – and children who can learn lines (or read them from a script) – whereas the second could be performed after a quick run-through. We recommend that you have plenty of adults on hand to help 'manoeuvre' the children into position, either mums and dads or Sunday school helpers who know the children well.

## SETS, COSTUMES, PROPS

### Set

While you can have a set or a painted backdrop, this is not necessary for telling the story. Your church will probably already look festive, with lights and decorations. The key set or backdrop, if you have one, is the stable – which you could fashion out of cardboard. (But watch out for lighted candles nearby.)

### Costumes

You will need some costumes to show who the characters are, and it's part of the fun for the children to dress up. While it is possible to hire or buy costumes (one option is Fairtrade cotton costumes from [www.whileshepherdswatched.co.uk](http://www.whileshepherdswatched.co.uk)), it is also enjoyable to make simple costumes. You can get the children to join in with that a few Sundays before. The costumes don't need to be elaborate: many can be easily fashioned from white sheets and old clothes.

### Props

- Baby Jesus
- Manger
- Three gifts for the Wise Men

### Other props

- Crooks (optional) and cuddly toy lambs for the shepherds
- Lantern for the innkeeper (suggest not a lighted candle)

The main prop that is needed is a baby Jesus, which is usually a child's doll in a blanket. You will also need a manger (a wooden-looking trough) to lay the baby Jesus in – some magazine racks make convincing mangers.

## SONGS

Throughout the script there are references to Christmas carols, indicating where they can be sung – 'extra' children can join in the chorus. Please feel free to incorporate as many or as few of these as you like – or use other Christmas songs that fit the story.

## STAGE DIRECTIONS

Make sure the children are gathered off stage, get people to be quiet, and then the narrator begins. The performer playing the Narrator could learn the lines or read from a script.



## GOD WITH US – NATIVITY PLAY SCRIPT

*Narrator enters the stage*

**INTRODUCTION:** (THIS INTRODUCTION COULD BE 'PERFORMED' BY A MEETING LEADER OR BY THE PERSON PERFORMING AS THE NARRATOR)

We are about to enjoy a story that has been told and retold for two thousand years. The Nativity reveals something very special about God – that he was prepared to be with us and live among us. For a young boy called Daniel in Peru, the story has a real significance to his daily life. He says: 'On Christmas Day, I remember that Jesus was born into poverty – in a wooden house like mine. My family is poor, but the Christmas story gives me hope.' Daniel, aged 12, lives in poverty in a dusty, dangerous shanty town on the outskirts of Peru's capital, Lima.

When his father abandoned his family, his mum Maribel struggled to cope and provide for Daniel. Angry and alone, Daniel spent more and more time hanging around on the streets. With no support, Maribel feared she would lose Daniel for ever. But Daniel's local church refused to let that happen. They called on Tearfund partner Agape to help. Now Daniel has realised he needs to be with his family and strive for a better future. Daniel did not end up as a street child, and his family is happy and together. They now have a strong faith in Jesus and are all active members of their local church.

An outpouring of the local church, Agape is 'God with' Daniel and other struggling children in Peru. So let's see the story of how Jesus came to be with us, an event that is still transforming lives to this day.

**NARRATOR:** Imagine the stars in the sky, the countless constellations, the sprawling Solar System. And among it a little planet called Earth. God made all of those things, and all of the people and inhabitants of our planet. Just over two thousand years ago, when we most needed him, God came down to be with us, to save us and show us how life should be lived.

He could have chosen anywhere to be his home. He could have built a palace for himself that would have made the grandeur of the Roman Empire seem like nothing. But he didn't. God chose to send his Son to be born among the forgotten, the overlooked and the poorest. This is the story of how God came to be with us.

The story opens with a young woman in her home - Mary. **(ENTER MARY)** Unless you look a bit deeper, there is nothing particularly remarkable about Mary. She was from a town called Nazareth, and she was engaged to be married to Joseph. But, to God, she was very important. **(ENTER ANGEL)** So important that God sent an angel down from heaven with a message for her.



### *Dialogue version*

**ANGEL:** Hello to you – you are very special! God is with you.

**NARRATOR:** But Mary found it hard to understand why the angel had come to see her. She was just an ordinary woman. She worried what the angel meant by the greeting. Seeing she was scared, the angel said...

**ANGEL:** Don't be afraid, Mary. God is very pleased with you. You will give birth to a son. You will call him Jesus. He will be called the Son of the Most High.

**MARY:** I don't understand. I am not yet married – I am a virgin. How can I have a son?

**ANGEL:** The Holy Spirit will come. And his power will give you a baby. People will call him the Son of God.

**MARY:** I am a servant of God. I believe it will happen as you have said.

Please feel free to photocopy this script for the performers and organisers.

[www.tearfund.org/christmas](http://www.tearfund.org/christmas)

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**Narrated version**

**NARRATOR:** The angel told Mary that she is very special and God is with her. But Mary found it hard to understand why the angel had come to see her. She was just an ordinary woman. She worried what the angel meant by the greeting. Seeing she was scared, the angel told her not to be afraid – God is very pleased with her. And she will give birth to a son. She is to call him Jesus, and he will be called the Son of the Most High. But Mary didn't understand how this could be. She was not yet married – a virgin. How could she have a son? The angel explained how the Holy Spirit will come. And his power will give her a baby, and people will call him the Son of God.

**(ANGEL EXITS)**

**NARRATOR:** The angel departed – leaving Mary excited about the news of the baby, and she told Joseph – the man she was about to marry – all about it.

**ENTER JOSEPH, WHO HOLDS MARY'S HAND. ENTER CAESAR [OPTIONAL], WHO UNROLLS A SCROLL.**

But the Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus, who ruled over the land, sent an order saying he wanted to count every single person in the country. So everyone – including Mary and Joseph – had to go back to their home town to be registered. Joseph came from a faraway town called Bethlehem. Because Mary was engaged to be his wife, she came with him to Bethlehem. **(EXIT CAESAR [OPTIONAL])** To save her aching legs, Mary rode on a donkey.

**ENTER DONKEY. MARY, JOSEPH AND THE DONKEY PRETEND TO MAKE A LONG JOURNEY.**

During the journey, Mary was very nearly ready to give birth to her baby. Although tired and weary, Mary and Joseph travelled for many miles. They went from Nazareth in Galilee to Judea and then to Bethlehem.

**[Song: Little Donkey]**

**NARRATOR:** When they arrived in Bethlehem, they knocked on every door in the town, looking for a place to stay – but everywhere was full of people. **(JOSEPH AND MARY PRETEND TO KNOCK ON DOORS)** Each time they were given the same answer. Lots of people had come down to be counted, so the whole town was full – there were so many families to accommodate. Mary and Joseph nearly gave up, but then they tried the very last guest house. **(INNKEEPER ENTERS)**

**Dialogue version**

**JOSEPH:** Please, please help! My wife is about to have a baby. Do you have a room?

**INNKEEPER:** I'm so sorry. All my rooms are full with guests from across the country. All I can offer is my stable out the back, where we keep all the animals.

**JOSEPH:** Thank you so much, we'll take it.

**MARY:** Thank you. At last we have somewhere!

**👤 Narrated version**

**NARRATOR:** Joseph desperately asked for help. But the owner of the last guest house replied that he was very sorry but all his rooms were full with other guests. All he could offer was his stable out the back, where they kept all the animals. They thanked the owner for his generosity. At last they had somewhere for the baby to be born.

**NARRATOR:** So Mary and Joseph went to stay in the stable.

**ENTER VARIOUS ANIMALS – OXEN, CHICKENS, DONKEYS, SHEEP [OPTIONAL] – WHO GATHER AROUND MARY AND JOSEPH BEHIND THE MANGER.**

**NARRATOR:** It was a very difficult place to bring a new life into the world. Dirty, smelly and unhygienic.

But Mary and Joseph made the best of it.

**(MARY IS HANDED JESUS, OR HE IS 'REVEALED' FROM BEHIND THE MANGER)**

When the baby came, they wrapped little Jesus in the clothes they had. They didn't have anything to put him in. So they placed the Son of God in a manger – a trough that is used to feed animals.

**(MARY PLACES JESUS IN THE MANGER)**

I'm not sure this is what Mary was expecting. The angel said Jesus would be called Son of the Most High. But as she looked at the sleeping baby in the manger, she knew that he was a precious gift.

**[Song: Away in a Manger]**

**ENTER SHEPHERDS [AROUND TWO TO FIVE OF THEM], PLUS SOME CHILDREN DRESSED AS SHEEP [OPTIONAL].**

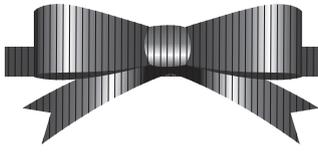
**NARRATOR:** Meanwhile, in some fields nearby, a group of shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks. It was night-time, and they were surprised – to say the least – to see an angel of the Lord appear in front of them. **(ANGEL ENTERS [MAY BE PLAYED BY A DIFFERENT CHILD FROM THE FIRST PERFORMER])**

The glory of God shone all around the shepherds – and they were terrified!

**(SHEPHERDS BACK AWAY FROM THE ANGEL, SCARED)**

You see, these shepherds were just ordinary people going about their daily lives. They weren't considered very important. Nobody took much notice of them. So they were surprised when the angel spoke to them.

**ANGEL:** Do not be afraid. I bring you news of great joy. Good news for people across the world. Today in Bethlehem a Saviour has been born. You will find a baby lying in a manger.

**Dialogue version**

- NARRATOR:** Well, if this wasn't enough for the humble shepherds to take in, the angel was soon joined by a huge group of angels, called the heavenly host.  
**(MORE ANGELS JOIN THE FIRST [OPTIONAL – COULD BE CHILDREN FROM THE CHORUS OF SINGERS])**  
They said:
- HOST:** Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth.

**Narrated version**

- NARRATOR:** The angel told them not to be afraid, that there's news of great joy. Good news for people across the world. 'Today in Bethlehem a Saviour has been born,' explained the angel. 'You will find a baby lying in a manger.' Well, as if this wasn't enough for the humble shepherds to take in, the angel was soon joined by a huge group of angels, called the heavenly host.  
**(MORE ANGELS JOIN THE FIRST [OPTIONAL])** They said: 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth.'

**[Song: Hark the Herald Angels Sing]**

- NARRATOR:** The angels left and went up to heaven. The shepherds wondered what they should do next:

**Dialogue version**

- SHEPHERD 1:** What shall we do?
- SHEPHERD 2:** Let's go to Bethlehem.
- SHEEP:** Baa!
- SHEPHERD 3:** Yes, then we can see what has happened.
- SHEPHERD 4:** I want to see what the Lord has told us.
- SHEEP:** Baa! Baa!

**Narrated version**

- NARRATOR:** They decided that the best thing was to go to Bethlehem, as the angel said. They wanted to see what had happened – what the Lord had told them.

**THE SHEPHERDS LEAVE, THE SHEEP FOLLOW [OPTIONAL].**

- NARRATOR:** So they hurried off to seek Mary and Joseph. And the baby – which they knew they would find lying in a manger. They found the stable where the young couple were – and the shepherds went in to see the baby in the manger.

**SHEPHERDS [AND SHEEP] JOIN WITH MARY AND JOSEPH.**

**[Song: Silent Night]**



**NARRATOR:** When they had seen him, the shepherds told everyone they met about the child. People were amazed to hear the story. Are you amazed too? The Son of the Most High, born in a stable? Someone who would be called the Son of God – placed in a dirty manger, with only poor shepherds to greet him? The angels said it was good news for people across the world.

And there's something about this birth that is good news – particularly for the poorest people on earth. Because when they see their Saviour has come to dwell with them, not distant, but humbling himself – it offers hope. Hope to everyone in the world that they are accepted and can come to him, whether rich or poor, important or forgotten.

Mary, who had seen it all happen, kept these things close to her heart. The shepherds went back to their flocks. **(SHEPHERDS AND SHEEP EXIT)** But something had changed for the shepherds. They still had work and family – nothing in their lives appeared to have changed. Except them. They glorified and praised God for the things they had heard and seen. They wanted to express the joy they had found and change the world around them. And what better way to celebrate the birth of Jesus? These humble shepherds had their lives transformed through an encounter with Jesus. So please welcome him into your hearts too this Christmas.

**[Song: O Come All Ye Faithful]**

**[OPTIONAL SECTION IF YOU INCLUDE THREE WISE MEN]**

**NARRATOR:** Some time later more people came to visit. But they didn't come straight to the stable. These three important people – sometimes called Kings, sometimes Wise Men – were Magi. **(ENTER THREE WISE MEN)** That's the same word we use when we say 'magic'. And these were very clever people, who knew all the secrets of the stars. But they'd made a mistake. They knew from examining the heavens that an important event was taking place. A bright star rose in the sky **(ENTER STAR [OPTIONAL])** – and they followed it to worship the person whose birth it foretold. They knew that the star heralded the King of the Jews. And where would a king be born? Yes, they went straight to the palace! But they didn't find him there. Then they saw the bright star ahead of them again and followed it until it stopped.

**[Song: We Three Kings]**

**WISE MEN FOLLOW THE STAR [OPTIONAL] TO THE STABLE.**

**NARRATOR:** The Wise Men saw the child and they worshipped him. **(WISE MEN BOW DOWN)** Each of them brought a special gift to give to the baby Jesus.

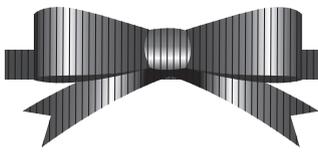


**Dialogue version**

**WISE MAN 1:** Because you are the King of Kings, I bring you gold.

**WISE MAN 2:** Because you are the Son of God, I bring you frankincense.

**WISE MAN 3:** Because you are the Saviour of the world, I bring you myrrh.

**Narrated version**

**NARRATOR:** Recognising Jesus as King of Kings, the first Wise Man brought him gold. Frankincense was the gift from the second, because he knew Jesus was the Son of God. And the third Wise Man brought myrrh, because he believed that Jesus was the Saviour of the world.

**NARRATOR:** Each of them gave Jesus a precious gift, and that's why we give gifts at Christmas – particularly to poor and needy people. They went home even wiser men, realising that precious things are worth far more than money – and are not always found in the richest places. They realised that they should offer their wealth to Jesus, the Son of God – born into poverty – who is a friend of poor and needy people.

**[All cast return for the final song: Joy to the World]**



Please let us know if you plan to perform, or if you have performed, this Nativity Play – we'd love to hear your stories and see photos. Contact us at [churches@tearfund.org](mailto:churches@tearfund.org) or 0845 521 0021.

Please feel free to photocopy this script for the performers and organisers.

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