



# Advent and Christmas

## All-age resources

### All-age talk: A cosy Christmas

You're welcome to edit and adapt this talk as appropriate for your context.



#### You'll need:

- **Cosy and comforting items** connected to Christmas. For example: a fluffy blanket, Christmas slippers, a Christmas jumper, a Christmas mug for hot chocolate, a warm scarf, a Christmas soft toy.
- **A bag of straw.** Your local pet shop or a farm shop should stock this.
- **A large cardboard box** (optional).
- **A Christmas card** showing a picturesque nativity scene (optional). It needs to look as cosy as possible!

**Invite the children and young people present to gather round. Keep your items hidden in a bag or behind a table.**

One of the things I love most about this time of year is that I can get cosy and comfy, all snuggled up at home. I like going for a wintery walk in my warm coat and scarf and then curling up on the sofa to watch some Christmas telly. I've heard Christmas being called 'cosy season' – have you seen or heard that? What helps you to feel cosy and comforted at this time of year?

**Take suggestions from the children. Bring your items out to show them. Perhaps discuss a person who makes them feel cosy and comfortable too.**

Imagine you had an important visitor coming for Christmas – someone really special. I expect you would do everything you could to make sure they could have a cosy Christmas with you.

How about we make a cosy place to rest for a special Christmas visitor? We could use a fluffy blanket and cushion but what about this instead?

**Show the children and young people the cardboard box (if using this) and then tip some straw into it. Invite them to feel the straw and describe how it feels. Alternatively, they can just reach into the bag of straw.**

Would you like to sleep on straw? What if some animals had been chewing on it? How about then? That's why the story of Jesus being born is so strange. The baby Jesus is God. God arrives as a human being to be with us and to show us love and care. Here is the most special visit the world has ever seen! And what happens when Jesus arrives? If you look at some Christmas cards, you might think that the stable looks pretty cosy in its own way.

**Show the children the Christmas card with a nativity scene if using this.**





But let's think about what it would have been like for Mary and Joseph. They didn't want to be travelling. Mary was expecting a baby and it would have been a very long and uncomfortable journey to Bethlehem for her. She would have arrived tired and in pain. And then Mary and Joseph find there is nowhere for them to sleep. The place is full. The innkeeper is full of good intentions. He wants to help them. But what he offers them is a drafty and probably very smelly stable. This is where the animals would sleep. Have you smelt a place where farm animals live?!

Then Mary has to give birth. As many of the grown-ups here will know, it's a really tough and exhausting thing to do. Does this newborn baby get a soft and warm crib with clean blankets? No! Instead, the baby Jesus sleeps in the animals' feeding trough, a box filled with straw.

What does the story of Jesus' birth in the stable show us? It shows us that the world Jesus was born into wasn't prepared for him. And in lots of ways the world today still isn't prepared. In Jesus' time, and today, we can see that many people focus on their own interests and struggle to look beyond what's good for them. Many people want to be rich, powerful and important. When Jesus was born, the focus was on the power of

the Roman Empire, the riches of kings like Herod, and the importance of those with religious and political authority. No one was prepared for God to arrive not as an emperor, soldier or politician, but as a tiny baby. Do you think our world would be ready for that today?

The story of the nativity also shows us God knows what it's like to be pushed to the margins. In the bustling town of Bethlehem, there was just no room for Jesus. He ended up pushed to the side, tucked away in the stable.

As Jesus grew up, he spent a lot of his time with people who were pushed to the margins in different ways. These were people that society said weren't good enough or who were dismissed as powerless. Jesus spent time with people who were living in poverty and those who weren't considered respectable and faced exclusion.

As we remember the story of Jesus being born and as we get excited for our cosy Christmas, it's important to remember that the first Christmas was anything but cosy. And as we remember that, let's turn our attention to those around us who are facing challenges and difficulties. This could be people we know for whom Christmas is a hard or sad time,



**Chance with her baby, Siborge, and son, Pacifique, outside their temporary shelter in Katashola Camp, in the Democratic Republic of Congo.**

**Find out more about the challenges Chance and her children face in our Advent and Christmas Prayer Pack, and accompanying slides.**



perhaps because they are remembering someone they love who has died. Or those who are spending Christmas on their own and not by choice. **Let's also think of our global neighbours, many of whom face extraordinary challenges with great courage, day after day.**

This Christmas, Christian Aid is helping us to remember our global neighbours by sharing the stories of families in the Democratic Republic of Congo, also known as the DRC. The DRC is a very large country in Africa, with a huge area of rainforest and lots of natural resources. Sadly, it's also a country that's seen a lot of conflict in its history. Many families in the DRC live in poverty, surviving on less than £1.50 a day. Families have had to leave their homes because it's too dangerous to stay. Being away from home, babies and children in the DRC – like the baby Jesus – can find that they don't have anywhere safe and cosy to sleep.

You can use images from our Christmas slide deck to show the challenges faced by children in the DRC.

Christian Aid spoke to one mum named Chance, who has eight children. The family fled to a camp for displaced people after their home became unsafe because of fighting. In the camp, Chance and her family don't have many of the basic things they need – such as clean clothes, pots to cook in and soap. Chance told Christian Aid: **'See how we live here, we have nothing like blankets and mattresses. This is the case for everyone in this camp.'**

This Christmas, together we can make a difference by supporting mums like Chance and her children. Christian Aid's partners in the DRC are supporting families to buy what they need to bring some comfort.

So, as we prepare for cosy season, let's think of Jesus' birth and consider what God asks us to do for people without comfort, cosiness or even safety. What can we do to change our world this Christmas and in the future?

## No Crib for a Bed

### A children's prayer

Jesus, you were a baby without a safe place to sleep.

We pray for children around the world who don't have a safe home today.

Please look after them and their families.

Show us how we can change our world to make it peaceful and fair.

Help us to be kind and share what we have with others.

**Amen.**

## More ideas:

- **Use Anne Booth and Sam Usher's retelling of the nativity story and flight into Egypt** in the children's book *Refuge* (2016), to explore the Christmas story in a new way.
- **Talk to your children's group about what they think every child needs to feel safe and cared for.** Write a list of their ideas and share it with your congregation alongside stories from the DRC. With older children, look together at [Unicef's children's version of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). Select one or two rights and discuss how the children experience these rights in their own lives and why these rights are important for all children.
- **Invite children to create and decorate their own symbol of peace.** They could choose a dove, an olive branch, a heart, or another object that symbolises peace for them.
- **Create a prayer with children, for children in war zones around the world.** What do they want for children affected by war? What should we ask God for help with? Share the prayer with your congregation.
- **Download and photocopy our Christmas 'Peace to the World' dove.** You can colour it in, cut it out and stick it on your window.