



ALL AGE SERVICE

Aim

A service for all ages, including those who wouldn't normally attend church. The service follows 3 Christmas characters (Mary, Joseph and the shepherds) and explores how the birth of Jesus offers ordinary people an extraordinary encounter with the God who welcomes them.

Audience

This All Age service plan is intended for those who are comfortable coming to a church setting for an event that includes Bible readings and singing.

A Christmas story walk-through based on the same material is also available, for those who wouldn't want to come to a church service.

This outline should be adapted to suit your setting and time limit. For a shorter service, cut out the shepherds and focus only on Mary & Joseph.

Before You Begin

- Who will you involve in the service – kids acting stuff out? families doing readings? people dressed up Mary, Joseph and a shepherd for the final section? Give them time to prepare.
- Will you ask children to come dressed as shepherds / angels and get them to help make a scene at the front for part of the service?
- Plan how you will welcome guests at the door, so that they feel comfortable and know what to expect.
- Consider how to make the environment welcoming and Christmassy, eg with fairy lights or a manger scene.
- How can you make a specific effort to ensure families with young children are welcome? Is there space for buggies, child-friendly refreshments, a welcome activity?
- Decide which version of the Bible to read from. We recommend the International Children's Bible (ICB) which can be found online at www.biblegateway.com.
- Consider your follow-up invitation. What is the next step you would like families to take? e.g. coming to further Christmas services, regular family services, weekly children's groups or a course exploring Christianity? Is there a book or leaflet for them to take home?

You Will Need

- 3 boxes labelled "Ordinary", "Extraordinary" and "Baby" filled with the props listed, to help tell the story
- 3 final pictures or dressed-up characters

Suggested running order

Welcome

- Be warm and confident and remember to smile! Tell them who you are and what they've come to.
- Explain the important things: where are the toilets? when / how can we leave? what if my child gets restless? when should we sit / stand?
- Reassure visitors that noise and child-related chaos is OK – "We're just so happy you're here."

SONG 1 – Start with a well-known carol to raise the roof! e.g. *O come all ye faithful*

PART 1 – Ordinary

It seems like there's nothing ordinary about Christmas. Everything is shiny and exciting. Ordinary trees get covered in lights, tinsel and baubles. Ordinary street lamps get decorated with extra pretty lights. Shop windows look fab. Even an ordinary pair of socks gets wrapped up in Christmas paper and made more interesting!

A Chance to chat: Tell the person next to you your favourite thing about Christmas.

Christmas turns the ordinary into the extraordinary.

Let's start with the ordinary. We're going to find out about 3 ordinary people who had a Christmas adventure.

Reading 1 – Luke 1:26-27 & Matthew 1:18-19

Open the box labelled "Ordinary". Use the props inside to introduce us to ordinary Mary & Joseph using props to tell us their story

Mary	Joseph	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Scarf◦ Olives◦ Bowl <p>(Place scarf over your head to act as Mary or dress up a volunteer)</p> <p>Mary was an ordinary girl from Nazareth, an ordinary small town in the north of Israel.</p> <p>Her area was known for growing olives (hold up olives). It wasn't fancy, they literally grew on trees!</p> <p>Mary did ordinary things, like make dinner (hold up bowl) and talk to friends.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Wooden spoon◦ Pillow <p>Mary was engaged to Joseph, an ordinary carpenter from Nazareth. He made things out of wood, like this spoon for Mary (hold up spoon).</p> <p>He planned to marry Mary, but she came to see him with news that she was having a baby (break or throw away the spoon).</p> <p>Joseph was sad, he knew it wasn't his baby. What should he do? He went to bed sad (hold up pillow).</p>	

Mary and Joseph were two ordinary young people. The Christmas story is for ordinary people like them – and us! God is interested in ordinary people. People who think they are no one special, people who think they could be too young, or too old, people whose plans get changed and aren't sure what to do. That sounds like me. I'm pretty sure it sounds like you too. Christmas is for ordinary people just like us.

Let's sing again. See if you can work out who the next ordinary people in the Christmas story are from the words of this song.

Song 2 - While Shepherds Watched

Reading 2 – Luke 2:8

Did you spot the next ordinary people in the story? Shepherds!

Use rest of the "Ordinary" box to tell the shepherd's story.

		Shepherds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Toy sheep / some wool ◦ Smelly sock ◦ Party invitation <p>Ordinary shepherds were looking after their ordinary sheep (<i>hold up sheep</i>).</p> <p>They were gathered around their fire at night – they were watching flocks not washings socks!</p> <p>They weren't rich, they didn't look smart. If they had socks, they were definitely smelly (<i>hold up sock</i>)! They were used to being forgotten about and left out. They didn't get invited to many parties (<i>hold up invitation</i>).</p>
--	--	---

Christmas is for ordinary people like Mary, Joseph, the left-out shepherds – and us!

A chance to chat: When did you last feel left out? How do you feel when you hear that God is interested in left-out people?

SONG 3 – Hark the herald angels sing

We've just sung about angels. Listen to what happened next that first Christmas, to find out who met the angels.

Reading 3 – Luke 1:26-35, Matthew 1:20-21, Luke 2:8-12

Part 2 - Extraordinary

There's nothing ordinary about Christmas: we wear silly jumpers, sausages wear bacon, an ordinary roast dinner gets super-sized and people give presents. There's effort put in and huge generosity to make it extraordinary.

Christmas has always been extraordinary. In our song and reading, we heard about angels talking to Mary, Joseph and the shepherds. There's nothing ordinary about meeting an angel! There's nothing ordinary about God becoming a miracle baby. You might find it all hard to believe but when God steps into our world to love and save ordinary people like you and me, it's bound to cause a bit of a stir!

Open the "Extraordinary" box and use the props to tell the next part of the story (see next page for content).

Mary	Joseph	Shepherds
------	--------	-----------

Mary

- Trumpet / flag
- Baby-gro / nappy

We've had an announcement of a new king recently with the news being announced in every major city with flags and trumpets and cannons being fired (*hold up trumpet or flag*).

Imagine if there were announcements like that just for you, in your back room! That would be **extraordinary**!

God's **extraordinary** angel appeared to Mary and announced the arrival of God's forever king. What an amazing messenger, sent especially for her! The angel said this king would arrive as a baby (*hold up baby-gro or nappy*) by the power of God and she would give birth to him.

That's **extraordinary**!

Joseph

- Blue balloon, containing a piece of paper with the words 'Jesus' and 'Saviour' on it

As Joseph slept – something **extraordinary** happened. An angel spoke to him and told him all about the baby Mary was going to have (*hold up the blue balloon*).

It was the most **extraordinary** gender reveal party! The angel said it was a boy, but that's not all... The angel also revealed his name and his job too.

Imagine if that happened today! "You're having a baby boy – he's called Simon, he'll be an electrician! Let's see what the angel said (*pop the balloon and hold up the paper*). His name is Jesus. He will save people from sin.

Shepherds

- Newspaper
- Checklist with 3 bullet points (*as words or pictures*) – baby, feeding box, strips of cloth

As the shepherds sat on the hills, something **extraordinary** happened. God's angels arrived with great news (*hold up newspaper*). It was **extraordinary** because the news was really, really good! Good news for everyone in the whole world.

The great news was that a promised king had been born, who would bring joy to all people. The angels gave the shepherds a checklist so that they would know when they found this king (*point to items on the checklist*). He would be a newborn baby, lying in an animal's feeding box, wrapped in strips of cloth. That's pretty **extraordinary**!

SONG 4 – Away in a manger

You could invite any dressed-up children to come and stand at the front during this song

Reading 4 – Luke 2:15-20

Open the "Baby" box and use the contents to complete the story (see next page for content).

Mary

- Doll wrapped in cloth strips
- Label saying 'Ordinary'
- Label saying 'Extraordinary'

Mary had not done the things you need to do to get pregnant and have a baby and yet she had a baby anyway. This baby was God's son. That's **extraordinary** (*stick 'Extraordinary' label onto the box*)!

He looked so **ordinary** – 10 fingers, 10 toes, crying, feeding and pooping (*stick the 'Ordinary' label onto the box*). This baby was **ordinary** and **extraordinary** at the same time!

Joseph

- Building blocks with 'Jesus' written on them

Joseph struggled to find a place for him and Mary to stay and have their baby. They looked so **ordinary**, no-one could have imagined they were bringing God's king into the world. Joseph put this **extraordinary baby** in a very **ordinary** feeding box.

He called him Jesus, which means saviour (*hold up blocks*). How **extraordinary** that God would step into our world to save us!

Shepherds

- Checklist (*from the previous box*)

The shepherds came and found an **ordinary** feeding box containing a baby wrapped in **ordinary** strips of cloth, just like the angels said (*hold up checklist*). That's **extraordinary**! God's promised king came to bring joy to us all.

The shepherds, who were used to being left out, were the first to meet him. They thought this was really good news!

Part 3 - What about You?

Each of the ordinary characters in the story responded differently to this ordinary AND extraordinary baby.

Hold up a picture or use a dressed-up person to represent each character as you consider their response.

Mary wanted to ponder. She thought about what had happened, she wondered what it meant, she treasured it in her heart and kept thinking about how brilliant it was. Perhaps this Christmas you could take time to do the same.

Joseph named the baby "Jesus"; he did what the angel said. He believed this baby was the Saviour, the son of God. What do you believe about Jesus? Do you know enough about him to call him Saviour? Would you like to know more?

The shepherds were so delighted with the good news that they couldn't keep it to themselves; they told everyone. They couldn't shut up about it! That's what happens when you think something is good news. Does the good news of Jesus thrill you so much that you want to talk about him? What stops you? Why didn't it stop the shepherds?

A chance to chat: Which response is most like yours? Are you thinking about everything, like Mary? Calling Jesus "Saviour", like Joseph? Talking excitedly, like the shepherds?

Give your follow up invite – what do you want them to do next.

(Optional final song – if you think your guests would enjoy more singing)

Close with prayer and wish everyone a very happy Christmas



faithinkids

faithinkids.org

