

INSTANT
NATIVITY

Amazing Days

The story of the very first Christmas



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Amazing Days – Instant Nativity

A few simple suggestions:

At the front, you will need a Narrator with a lectern/pulpit/music stand on one side. And the person playing the angel/Herod on the other side, also with a lectern/pulpit/music stand. They have the most lines and this arrangement will allow them to read those lines. Having said that, they need to be read well, looking up at the audience as much as possible, with the enthusiasm necessary to bring those lines to life!

It will also be helpful to have a leader for each group of participants – Mary, Joseph, Shepherds, Angels, and Star Watchers. They will lead the actions of their respective groups. And, again, it will be helpful if they have fun with it. As in 'Come on Marys, the angel is scary. Let's all tremble!' That sort of thing. There is no rehearsal, so everything has to happen spontaneously. And the best way to pull that off is to use it and have fun with it.

As for the longer lines that those characters are meant to say, the leader can either say it themselves, or have the rest of the people playing that character repeat it after them. It doesn't really matter, as long as the line gets out there. And, again, that it is done enthusiastically and joyfully.

As for songs, we've made suggestions that fit the theme of each section, but if you want to use something else, feel free to do that!

There is also an accompanying PowerPoint for you to use, each slide corresponds with artwork taken from *Amazing Days - The story of the very first Christmas*. You could order copies for the children in your church and community to hand out after performing the Instant Nativity. And there is a great video animation of *Amazing Days* available as a free download.

Check out the full range of Christmas resources available for you and your church at **biblesociety.org.nz**

Now here's the script



Narrator

(slide 1)

Welcome to *'Amazing Days! The Story of the Very First Christmas'*.

My name is _____ and I will be narrating our story today. And, more or less, directing our little nativity pageant.

On the other side is my friend _____, who will mostly be playing an angel and, eventually, a very grumpy king. Many of you have come dressed as characters from the Christmas story. Thank you for that. From time to time, we will be asking you to come to the front and help us tell the story.

You simply have to follow the lead of our helpers, here. Move when they move! Repeat what they say. Do what they do!

So let's give a great big **'Blessed are you among women!'** for _____, who will be leading our Marys.

And let's give a great big, **'No need to worry!'** for _____, who will be leading our Josephs.

And let's give a great big, **'MOO! BAAA! HEEHAW'** for _____, who will be leading our animals.

And let's give a great big, **'Surprise! Don't be afraid!'** for _____, who will be leading our angels.

And let's give a great big, **'Don't be afraid? Are you nuts?'** for _____, who will be leading our shepherds.

And, finally, let's give a great big, **'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star!'** for _____, who will be the star leading our star-watchers.'

Oh, and there will be two words that appear regularly in the story. One of them is **'AMAZING'** – a word we will all shout out together, arms in the air, when we see a big **'AMAZING'** sign on the screen (or someone will hold up a sign that says **AMAZING!**).

The other word is **'AWFUL!'** – which we will also shout out together, big frowns on our faces, when we see the sign that says **'AWFUL!'**.

Narrator

Slide 2

Let's have a little practice.



Excellent!

Now let's sing **'O Come All Ye Faithful!'** And as we do, would all the Marys come to the front and stand before our angel.

Amazing Days! The Story of the Very First Christmas

Some days are amazing.

We don't know how Mary's day began.

But we know that she was a young woman.

We know she was engaged to be married to a builder called Joseph.

And we know she lived in a village called Nazareth, 80 to 90 miles north of Jerusalem.

It was an ordinary life, really.

Until the day that an angel stopped by for a visit.



Narrator

Slide 3

Angel

Greetings! You are about to receive a great favour from God!

Narrator

Amazed, then dazed, then confused, Mary wondered what the angel meant.

(All the Marys scratch their heads)

Why was he here? And what might this favour be?

She looked worried. Fearful, in fact. And the angel noticed.

Angel

Slide 4

No need to be afraid. This favour is good news! God has promised for ages to bring someone special into this world. Someone great. Someone to rule on King David's throne, over God's people for ever, just as God's prophet Isaiah said. That someone is God's own son. And he has chosen you to be the mother of that child – a child you will call Jesus!



Marys

But I'm a virgin! How can I have a child?

Angel

God's own Holy Spirit will surround you, so the child will be holy – the Son of God!

Impossible? Hardly! Your cousin Elizabeth, the wife of Zechariah, was far too old to have a child. Guess what? She's six months pregnant! Because nothing is too hard for God!



Narrator

Mary looked at the angel. She believed that what he said was true. And she was determined to do this amazing thing.

And so she said

Mary

I will be God's servant. And I will do what he asks of me.

Narrator

Slide 5

And just as suddenly as he had appeared, the angel left.

(You could have the angel disappear at this point, but he would need to come back again during the next song, in time for the Josephs to arrive.)



Prayer Directions

You can either have the Mary leader read this, or do it line by line and have the congregation repeat each line back to you, or have everyone read it off the screen.

'Lord, help us be like Mary
who answered when you asked.
Help us learn to give and serve
no matter what the task.'

Narrator

Slide 6

Now let's sing '**In the Bleak Midwinter**'. And as we do, would the Josephs come to the front and stand next to the Marys.

(Marys sit down during song so focus is on Josephs.)

Some days are amazing.
And, sadly, some days are awful.

AWFUL!

Joseph was having one of those days.
He was engaged to be married to Mary. Remember?
And then he discovered that Mary was going to have a baby.

And he knew that the baby was not his.

(All Josephs sadly shake their heads.)

He was sad and disappointed and angry, all at the same time. He felt:

AWFUL!

He could have embarrassed Mary. Nazareth was not a very big place, and everyone would be whispering about her behind her back. But he was a good man, so he decided to end the engagement, quietly, to spare her.

But when he went to bed that night, the feelings would not leave him. Still, he felt:

AWFUL!

Narrator

(Continued)

Slide 7

Angel

And then an angel appeared to him in a dream.

(Josephs all lay heads on hands as if asleep.)

Don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. She has not betrayed you. The child she is carrying is from God's Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son. And you will call him Jesus. The name means 'saviour', and he will save his people from all the wrong things they have done.

God's prophet, Isaiah, told us this would happen, many years ago.

'A virgin will fall pregnant and give birth to a child. And that child will be Immanuel – God with us!'

Narrator

Slide 8

When Joseph woke up, he changed his plans. He did not break off the engagement. No, he took Mary as his wife.

(Mary and Joseph leaders hold hands – maybe a bouquet appears from somewhere! And confetti. Have fun with it!)

And what a day that was.

A day that went from

AWFUL!

to

AMAZING!

Prayer

You can either have the Joseph leader read this, or do it line by line and have the congregation repeat each line back to you, or have everyone read it off the screen.

'Lord, help us be like Joseph –

a man both kind and just.

Help us to listen when you speak

and teach us how to trust.'

Directions

In the following section, you can do one of two things. You can have the Mary and Joseph leaders read/say their lines. Or, better still, you can let the narrator read their lines and have the Mary and Joseph leaders lead their group in miming the actions in bold. That might be more fun!

Some days are awful.

AWFUL!

'Have you heard the news?' said Joseph to Mary.

(All Josephs point to their ears, or pretend to read newspapers!)

'I have,' Mary sighed. 'The Roman Emperor wants to count every person in every land he rules.'

(All Marys count on their fingers.)

'And he has ordered us all to go back to the towns from which we came, so that he can do it,' said Joseph. 'And seeing as my family comes from Bethlehem ...'

(All Josephs point in one direction.)

'We have to travel all the way down there,' Mary sighed again. 'And with me expecting the baby.'

(All Marys point at their bellies.)

'We won't rush the journey,' Joseph promised. 'I could walk it in four, maybe five days, if I hurried. But we'll take a week or more, if necessary.'

(All Josephs count to five on their fingers.)

'If only we could afford a donkey,' Mary sighed, one more time. 'But still, we'll make do. We have to.'

(All Marys put hands to their heads like donkey ears and wiggle them.)

So off they walked.

(Marys and Josephs walk in place.)

And, yes, some of those days were awful, too.

AWFUL!

Sore feet.

Sore backs.

Sore legs.

(Marys and Josephs point to respective body parts.)

But some days were amazing.

AMAZING!

Narrator

(continued)

Slide 11

Singing birds. *(Hands to ears.)*

Surprising views. *(Hands over eyes.)*

And so many new friends! *(Hands waving!)*

When they arrived at last in Bethlehem, Joseph went to see his relatives. He came from there, remember, so the town was full of them. So round the town Joseph and Mary went. But at each of the houses where Joseph's relatives lived, the answer was the same.

'We have no room! Sorry!'

As the sun fell behind the hills, this was turning into the most awful of awful days.

AWFUL!

And then the pair arrived at the house of Joseph's cousin.

'The room where guests normally stay is already full,' he explained. 'But the other room, where we keep the animals overnight, is still available. That room is yours for as long as you need it!'

Slide 12

So that's where Joseph and Mary stayed. And yes, their night time roommates included sheep and donkey and goat and the odd cow.

But they were warm. And they were safe. And when the time came, Mary gave birth to her baby there.

She called him Jesus.

She laid him in a manger, where the hay was kept.

She held him in her arms – God's special, precious son.

And it was ...

AMAZING!

Sing

Everyone: **'O Little Town of Bethlehem'**.

Directions

During the song, sit the Marys in front of the Josephs, who will be standing behind them. Then pass around a Baby Jesus or two – well, one at the very least! Then the Animal leader should lead the animals to the front. They will sit at the edges or, if they are little, in front of the Marys. This looks quite orderly on paper, but be prepared for chaos!

Prayer

Slide 13

And now, will you bow your heads with me as I read a hymn by George MacDonald which can also be our prayer.

'They all were looking for a king
To slay their foes and lift them high;
Thou cam'st a little baby thing
That made a woman cry.

O Son of Man, to right my lot
Nought but thy presence can avail;
But on the road thy wheels are not,
Nor on the sea thy sail.

My fancied ways, why should'st thou heed?
Thou com'st down thine own secret stair;
Com'st down to answer all my need,
Yea, every bygone prayer.'

Sing

'Silent Night' or 'Away in a Manger'

Directions

During the last verse of the song, the leaders should direct everyone back to their seats. Then, the Mary and Joseph leaders return to the front (off to one side, if possible, to make room for shepherds, angels, wise men, etc. but still be visible to the audience). Mary sits, holding the baby, with Joseph standing behind her. You can include the animal leader if you like!

Narrator

Now, shepherds gather, and angels, too. It's almost time for you to make your entrance.

(Shepherd leader leads the shepherds – and any sheep – to the front during this first bit of narration.)

Narrator

(Continued)

Slide 14

It was night-time in the hills outside Bethlehem. And shepherds were watching their flocks.

There were the odd expected sounds:

The bleating of sheep. *(Tell the whole crowd, 'Everybody Baa!')*

The rustling of leaves. *(Tell the whole crowd, 'Everybody make a rustling sound')*

And, every now and then, a bit of a roar from a lion off in the distance.
(Tell the whole crowd, 'Everybody howl!')

And then there came an unexpected sound.

A heavenly 'Hello!' *(Angel leader waves!)* from a brightly shining heavenly visitor.

The shepherds trembled at that sight and at that sound.

(Shepherds all tremble.)

But the angel just kept talking.

Angel

'No need to be afraid! I come to you with good news. News that will bring joy to everyone.

You know the Special One that God has promised to send you? The Messiah – the one who will put everything right?

Well, he was born today!

And guess where? Right here. In Bethlehem, the city of King David!

And here is how you will know that what I say is true. If you go into Bethlehem, you will find a newborn baby lying in a manger!



Narrator

Slide 15

And as soon as he had finished, did the bleating and the rustling and the howling return?

Not for a minute.

For they were drowned out by a new heavenly sound – the voices of a massive crowd of angels.

(Angels come to the front.)

And they were shouting out their praises to God!

Angels

God is amazing, high above everything!

Today he brings peace to all who please him!

Narrator

So let's sing with them. **'Hark the Herald Angels Sing'** or **'Angels We Have Heard on High'**.

Then, just as suddenly as they had arrived, the angels left.

(Angels go back to seats.)

And the shepherds were left with those ordinary sounds again.

The bleating. *(All bleat.)*

And the rustling. *(All rustle.)*

And the howling. *(All roar.)*

Until one of the shepherds spoke up and said ...

Shepherd

Slide 16

Let's go to Bethlehem and see for ourselves what God has done!

Narrator

So off they went.

They didn't walk. No, they ran! And why not?

God's Promised One was somewhere in the town, waiting to be discovered – like so many little lambs the shepherds had run off to find, over the years.

Up one street they went. Then down another.

They searched left. They searched right.

And finally they found what they were looking for.

(Shepherds gather, kneeling, in front of Mary and Joseph.)

Mary and Joseph. And the baby, lying in a manger.

Breathless, and all at once, they spoke out everything they had seen and heard.

Shepherds

Slide 17

(Have the shepherds repeat each word after the shepherd leader.)

'Angels!'

'Promises!'

'Praises!'

'Peace!'

'Lions!'

'No, that was before!'



Narrator

And when Mary had heard it all, she held what they said like a treasure in her heart. For she remembered what had happened to her. And knew that it was true!

Then the shepherds returned to their fields.

And did those sounds return, as well?

The bleating? *(All bleat.)*

The rustling? *(All rustle.)*

The howling? *(All howl.)*

Slide 18

Not for a while they didn't. For the shepherds made their own sounds – songs of praise to God. For what he had done. For what they had seen.

Songs like angel songs!



Prayer

You can either have the Shepherd/Angel leader read this, or do it line by line and have the congregation repeat each line back to you, or have everyone read it off the screen.

'Thank you, Lord for angel songs

that shout aloud the Saviour's birth.

Show us how to live in ways

that sing again of peace on Earth.'

Narrator

Slide 19

It's time for our star watchers, now. And our stars. So as we sing this next song, the shepherds need to go back to their seats and if you're a star watcher or star we want you to come to the front.

(When they get there – put stars behind and star watchers at the front.)

Sing

Sing two verses of '**We Three Kings**'.

Narrator

They were star watchers.

They came from the east.

They had travelled a very long way.

And when they arrived in Jerusalem, they knocked on the door of King Herod's palace and introduced themselves.

(Star watcher leader says a line and the other star watchers repeat it after him.)

Narrator

(Continued)

'We are star watchers.

We come from the east.

We have traveled a long way.'

We are here to worship the newborn King of the Jews.

Slide 20

They told the king that a star had led them. And asked if he knew where the child was.



He didn't show it, but King Herod was worried. Worried and angry. Actually, quite worried and angry and upset. He had worked hard to be King of the Jews. He'd killed more than one person to sit on the throne. So he wasn't about to let some baby show up and take his place!

While the star watchers waited, Herod gathered together the priests and religious teachers.

Herod

'Somebody tell me where the Messiah – the king that God has promised to send us – is meant to be born. And make it quick!'

Narrator

Slide 21

The priests and religious teachers put their heads together and discussed the matter. And when they had agreed, one of them raised his hand and spoke.

'In Bethlehem of Judea, your majesty. Hundreds of years ago, this is what the prophet Micah said:

"You might be a little town, Bethlehem,

but from you a king will come

who will be a shepherd of my people!"'

Herod shared that information with the star watchers. Then he asked for some information of his own.

Herod

For how long, exactly, have you travelled. And how old do you reckon the child will be?

Star Watchers

Herod

Narrator

Slide 22

Two years old, at most.

That's very helpful – Now run along. And when you have found him, please come back and tell me where he is. I'd love to worship him, as well!

What he really wanted to do was kill the child and hang on to his throne. But he dared not tell the star watchers that.

AWFUL!

So off they went, following the star. And it led them, at last, to a house in Bethlehem!

They knocked on the door and introduced themselves.

Star Watchers

We are star watchers.

We come from the east.

We have travelled a very long way!

We are here to worship the newborn King of the Jews!



Narrator

(Continued)

Slide 23

Mary was in the house. Joseph, too. And Jesus – who was a little toddler by now.

Mary and Joseph knew exactly what they meant, and welcomed them in. They gave little Jesus three presents. Not the kind of presents that toddlers usually get. Not toys, or anything like that. But gifts fit for a king:

(Star watchers give their gifts to Mary, as they are read out.)

Gold!

Frankincense – a kind of oily perfume which, in that time, was even more valuable than gold!

And myrrh – another kind of oily perfume.

The star watchers were very excited by what they had seen. And so they should have been, because God had promised that, through Abraham's family, he would do something beautiful for the whole world!

Slide 24

But that night, as they slept, they dreamed. And in the dream, God warned them of Herod's evil plan.

AWFUL!

So off they went, back home, avoiding the palace altogether and taking another route!

Back to their star watching jobs.

Back east.

Travelling a very long way.

AMAZING!

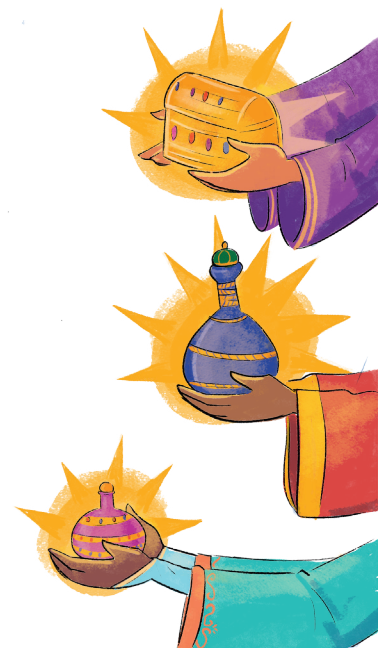
Prayer

Lord, help us be like star-watchers –
following your lead and
looking for your guidance
in every word and deed.

Sing

Sing two more verses of 'We Three Kings'.

(Star watchers return to their seats.)



We've had a lovely time celebrating the Christmas story. We do it every year. And we do it for a reason. For these events don't stand on their own. No, they are part of a much bigger set of events that link back to the beginning of everything and forward to forever.

Here is a poem to help you remember:

'So what is the point of angels and shepherds
And camels and stars?' you say.
'Is it just a nice story to tell to the children
To celebrate Christmas Day?'

It's not just a story. It's not just for kids.
It's the hinge on which history swings!
That Bethlehem baby grew into a man
Who challenged all powers and kings.

He taught us that love is better than hate,
That serving beats being 'in charge'.
He showed us the value of each human life:
The little as well as the large.

And then, on a cross, he died for that dream,
Died to take all our wrongs away.
And walked, three days later, right out of his tomb
To turn death's dark night to day.

And that is the good news the angels proclaimed:
The heart of all Jesus would do.
A new life for now. A new life forever.
That's his Christmas present to you!

So let's celebrate God's Amazing Story as we sing together:

Narrator

Sing either **'From the Squalor of a Borrowed Stable'** or **'The Servant King'**.

(At this point, you could pray, or offer an invitation, or suggest ways that the crowd could find out more about Jesus.)

Thank you so much for being with us today, and for helping us tell God's Amazing Christmas Story.

So let's give a great big **'Blessed are you among women!'** to all our Marys.

And let's give a great big, **'No need to worry!'** to all our Josephs.

And let's give a great big, **'MOO! BAAA! HEEHAW'** to all our animals.

And let's give a great big, **'Surprise! Don't be afraid!'** to all our angels.

And let's give a great big, **'Don't be afraid? Are you nuts?'** to all our shepherds.

And, finally, let's give a great big, **'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star!'** to all our stars and star-watchers.'

Slide 26

And let's finish by singing with those angels: **'Joy to the World!'**

