4.8 Advent to Christmas: A Time for Journeying in Hope

This unit explores the concept of journey. We learn about the journeys of people of the Old Testament and God’s faithful relationship with them. The unit also examines the New Testament journeys of Mary and Joseph and the Wise Men.

During Advent we focus on our preparation for the journey towards Christmas and the second coming of Christ in glory. We focus on ways we can respond to God-with-us on our journeys of faith and life.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Values & Attitudes**  *Students will demonstrate that they are:* | **Knowledge & Understandings**  *Students will demonstrate that they can:* | **Skills**  *Students will demonstrate that they can:* |
| L2.1 aware of the relevance of the Scriptures to the liturgical seasons | explain major events in the life of Jesus which are recorded in the Scriptures and celebrated in the liturgical life of the Church | interpret the significant events in the life of Jesus |
| L2.2 aware of ways in which they can respond to the presence of Jesus in their lives | describe ways people respond to the presence of Jesus | create rituals which celebrate their response to the presence of Jesus |

Syllabus Outcomes  
Self/Church – Stage 2

Classroom Outcomes

*Students will be able to:*

* recognise the liturgical season of Advent as a time to prepare for Christ’s coming
* explain the significance of particular Scriptures in the seasons of Advent and Christmas
* identify how they relate to Jesus during the season of Advent
* examine journeys of hope in the Old and New Testaments

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Scripture | Doctrine |
| Genesis 12:1-10 *Abraham & Sarah*  (story based on Ch 12-24)  Isaiah 7:14 The Lord will give you a sign  Isaiah 9:1-7 (esp 5-7) *A Child has been born*  Matt 2:1-12 *The Visit of the Wise Men*  Luke 2:1-7 *Journey of Mary & Joseph* | * Jesus is the Son of God * Jesus is God-with-us * Advent is a season of the liturgical year of the Church * During Advent the Church prepares for the coming of Jesus * Jesus is fully human and fully divine |

Spiritual Reflection for Teachers

Advent is a time we wait, watch and wonder.

* It is a time of reflection about the importance of what family and friends mean to us.
* It is a time to reflect on our own journey of faith and challenge ourselves about how we respond to the activity of God in our lives.
* It is a time, when we draw upon all our experiences and resources in an attempt to create a better world for all.
* Recall a recent time in your life of “waiting’, “watching” and “wondering”.

Advent is a time of advent-ure, a time of risk taking, daring enterprise.

* Advent encourages us to let our hopes and desires lead us beyond our normal, daily, routine existence.
* What are your hidden hopes and desires?
* What risks do you need to take to make these hopes/desires a reality?

In our lives we need to find a balance between work and rest – to create Sabbath time. Perhaps this Advent we can take some time to accept God’s invitation for me to stop looking outwards and start looking inwards and be loving and gentle with myself, finding “heart rest” in God being with us.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

**Excerpts from the Catechism of the Catholic Church are included below as information for teachers. They present the Church’s teachings contained in this unit.**

**59** In order to gather together scattered humanity God calls Abram from his country, his kindred and his father's house, and makes him Abraham, that is, "the father of a multitude of nations". "In you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed."

**464** The unique and altogether singular event of the Incarnation of the Son of God does not mean that Jesus Christ is part God and part man, nor does it imply that he is the result of a confused mixture of the divine and the human. He became truly man while remaining truly God. Jesus Christ is true God and true man. During the first centuries, the Church had to defend and clarify this truth of faith against the heresies that falsified it.

**522** The coming of God's Son to earth is an event of such immensity that God willed to prepare for it over centuries. He makes everything converge on Christ: all the rituals and sacrifices, figures and symbols of the "First Covenant". He announces him through the mouths of the prophets who succeeded one another in Israel. Moreover, he awakens in the hearts of the pagans a dim expectation of this coming.

**1171** In the liturgical year the various aspects of the one Paschal mystery unfold. This is also the case with the cycle of feasts surrounding the mystery of the Incarnation (Annunciation, Christmas, Epiphany). They commemorate the beginning of our salvation and communicate to us the first fruits of the Paschal mystery.

Scripture: Background Information

**Genesis 12:1-10 Abraham and Sarah Journey In Hope**

Abraham and Sarah are told to leave their country and their family for an unknown land. This is a significant decision for them. Blessings and promises accompany such a journey of faith. Abraham and Sarah are given the promise of land, descendants and fame. It requires great faith in God to believe in a new life in a foreign land. It is indeed symbolic for the many people who have changed homelands. The journey of Abraham and Sarah, their nephew Lot and all their flocks progresses through the land of Canaan from Shechem, to Bethel to the Negeb desert. This same route is repeated later by their grandson Jacob (Gen 33:18; 35:1,6,27;46:1) and also by the conquering Joshua (Josh 7:2; 8:9,30). Thus it would seem to be a sacred and symbolic route.

**Isaiah 9:1-7 A child has been born for us**

The prophet Isaiah in this first section of the Book of Isaiah is speaking in 8th century BC Jerusalem. He is referring to a child born into the royal Davidic family of his day with the hope that this child will be a great ruler.

The prophets are very much of their time. They reflect on the signs of their time and direct the people how best to live the covenant relationship with God. This passage is a statement about the exalted position of the Davidic dynasty and ruler from that family. The Davidic house had been promised eternal existence in the second book of Samuel – 2 Sam 7:8-16.

Isaiah is not consciously writing about Jesus. He is writing for the people of his own time. However, the early Church quickly identified Jesus in this and other Messianic texts. This is possible as the author, text and readers are inspired by the Holy Spirit. Hence, this prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus.

The passage is used during Advent and Christmas because it is a messianic prophecy and applies to Jesus. This passage speaks both of the prophet’s own historical age and of all ages.

**Isaiah 7:14-15 Isaiah tells of God’s sign of the promised Saviour**

This passage occurs in the context of Isaiah’s encounter with Ahaz, the embodiment of the Davidic dynasty, and the head of Jerusalem. Ahaz is called to manifest steadfast faith by looking only to Yahweh for help. In this encounter Ahaz may have been undecided about the path he should take, with the prophets urging one way and his advisers another. Into this, Isaiah offers a sign. The sign need not mean something miraculous, but will in the future confirm the truth of what the prophet has spoken. The child promised will guarantee the future of the House of David and for this reason can be called Emmanuel (“with us is God”). Emmanuel will have the maturity echoed in Old Testament thought, that he will know the right way through a sound discernment of rejecting evil and choosing good.

**Luke 2:1-7 Journey of Mary and Joseph (**See Unit Content 3, Background Information)

**Matthew 2:1-12 The Visit of the Wise Men**

The Visit of the Wise Men (referred to as magi in some translations) to the infant Jesus is a rich story in the *Haggadah* tradition, ie a biblical account woven with symbolism and theology. The Gospel writer has presented the story to point out to us who this Jesus is. For Matthew, Jesus is Emmanuel, God among us. He is the authentic king, the missionary to the Gentiles, who brings salvation and unity to the whole world. Jesus is the fulfilment of all our searching and longing.

Matthew presents the infant Jesus in the social and political climate created by Herod the Great. Herod dominated and controlled the land we know as Palestine from 37 BC to 4 BC while in league with the Roman emperor. The power and outward show of this earthly ruler is in direct contrast to the infant born in Bethlehem, the place of King David’s ancestry.

Matthew describes those who pay homage to the infant Jesus as wise men (magi). Later tradition changed our understanding of these to kings although this is not in the original writing. Tradition also leads to a specific number, three to coincide with three gifts. These wise men giving homage to the infant King teach us that we must look for those who lead us in the lowly places. The wise men give a glimpse of a theme, which will be further explored in Matthew’s Gospel, the theme of mission to the Gentiles.

The gifts the wise men bring are symbolic of Jesus’ kingship (gold), his divinity (incense) and his redeeming passion (myrrh). The star, so prominent in this story could indicate unusual astral activity around the time of Jesus’ birth. Matthew shows that the star serves God’s purpose, leading the wise men to find their quest.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The Church’s Teaching and Lived Tradition

**In Tradition - *To Know, Worship and Love*, Year 4, p148**

*In the days leading up to Christmas, the O Antiphons help us to pray for Christ to come into our lives.*

During the week before Christmas the Church has traditionally prayed the “O antiphons”- so called because they all begin with the interjection “O”. Their opening words are: “O Wisdom”, “O Adonai and leader of Israel”, “O stock of Jesse”, “O key of David and sceptre of Israel”, “O Rising Sun”, “O King”, “O Emmanuel”. The seven antiphons to the Magnificat are recited in the Evening Prayer of the Divine Office from December 17 to Christmas Eve. All of these in some way express “O come and save us”. These antiphons can be seen as a plea for Christ’s coming into the mayhem of modern life. The O antiphons were originally sung in Latin. David Haas, *Light and Peace* CD, has a translation of these antiphons.

Celebration: Prayer and Liturgy

**Celebration is a key part of Religious Education. The following suggestions provide opportunities throughout the unit for celebration in prayer and liturgy. Most of these suggestions are included as ‘teaching/learning’ activities in Unit Content sections.**

1. Tell the story, ‘Our Advent Prayer Place as you introduce and set up your prayer place for Advent. See Resource Sheet 2 for suggested script and materials.
2. Prepare with students a class prayer celebration for the commencement of Advent. Sing a hymn with the theme of preparation eg *God Has a Big Surprise* from ‘Celebrating our Unexpected God’by Jim Cosgrove. The celebration could include a blessing of the Advent Wreath and the lighting of the first candle (see *Daily Prayer Under the Southern Cross*), student Advent Calendars and prayers of petition.
3. Students write prayers of petition asking for God’s help in keeping their commitment. Provide time each week for students to reflect, perhaps through journaling on how their action plan is unfolding.
4. Prepare a simple reconciliation service (either sacramental or non-sacramental) related to our preparation for the coming of Christ.
5. Commence each week with a prayer celebration prepared by the students. Include: a gathering hymn with the theme of preparation, an opening prayer, the ritual lighting of the next candle, a Scripture reading (the Sunday readings could be used), prayers of intercession, a blessing (see KWL, Year 4, p148) and final hymn. Refer to *Sacred Celebrations for Advent and Christmas* for the appropriate yearby Rina Wintour.
6. Prepare a class celebration on the theme of journey.

* Make a banner that includes the constellation of the Southern Cross, which has been a significant navigational aid guiding voyagers and adventure seekers in the Southern Hemisphere. The four stars of the Southern Cross could be associated with the four weeks of Advent.
* Include: Matthew 2:1-12, a simplified version of the reflection from p66 of *Just ImagIne 2,* prayers of intercession, and an appropriate hymn, eg ‘Follow the Christmas Star’by Michael Mangan*, ‘*Walk on to Bethlehem’ or ‘Christmas Star’by John Burland.

1. Using Luke 2:1-7 lead the students through a Guided Meditation of Mary and Joseph’s journey to Bethlehem.
2. Contribute to a whole school Advent/Christmas liturgy, celebrating Jesus’ presence with us on our journey through life.

Assessment

**Interim Assessment Statement 2014**

The identification of Teaching/Learning strategies as ‘suggested assessment’ has been removed from the 3-6 RE curriculum. The type of assessment activity and the way evidence of learning is gathered will vary, depending on such factors as; the outcomes being assessed, the evidence being gathered, the teaching and learning activity, context and students’ learning needs (NSW Board of Studies, <http://syllabus.bos.nsw.edu.au/support-materials/k-6-assessment-strategies/>) .

Assessment in Religious Education is based on the same principles as in other key learning areas. Please refer to the CEO Sydney site supporting the implementation of the Australian Curriculum in the context of the NSW BOS Syllabus. At this site <https://sites.google.com/a/syd.catholic.edu.au/professional-learning-modules/home> professional learning modules are provided to support teachers as they engage with the NSW BOS Syllabuses for the Australian Curriculum.

**Module 4, Assessment and Planning** explores the principles of effective assessment ***for***, ***as*** and ***of*** learning and considers a range of strategies and methods for assessing student learning. Activities focus on moving beyond assessment as an index of learning, towards assessment that motivates, enhances learning and achieves deeper understanding to meet the diverse learning needs of all as students. Participants are encouraged to reflect on assessment as a driver for improvement in teaching and learning.

**Religious Education Curriculum and Assessment**

In Year 3-6 Religious Education Curriculum, both Syllabus Outcomes and Classroom Outcomes are key reference points for decisions about students’ progress and achievement. Classroom outcomes are more specific to the unit content. Unit Content statement and *Students will learn* statements in each unit should also be taken into account in planning and developing learning and assessment opportunities. Outcomes and Unit Content Statements are derived from Syllabus objectives.

Effective Religious Education involves teaching the Catholic faith (Scripture, doctrine, traditions, prayer and sacraments) and nurturing the faith of the child. There is no attempt to assess the child’s faith. Assessment is concerned with skills, knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith taught in the curriculum and supported in the religious life of the school.

Resources

***To Know Worship and Love* – Year 4, Chapters 1 and 18, (2003), James Goold House Publications, Melbourne, Victoria**

**Books and Kits**

Boal T, (1993), *The Bible Skit Book*, Gospel Light, USA

Bowker J, (1998), *The Complete Bible Handbook*: *An Illustrated Companion*, Dorling Kindersley, London

Catholic Education Office, (1998), *Breathing Life into the R.E. Classroom*, Bathurst

Catholic Education Office,(2003), *Creative Arts K-6 Dance and Drama, Moments and Movements In Life*, Sydney

Dowley T, (1999), *The Student Bible Atlas*, Candle Books, Britain

Kelly L, White A., Hari A. & Singer C, (1998), *The Childhood of Jesus*, Matthew James Publishing, Essex

McCallen A, (1983), *Listen!*, Collins, London

McMahon Jeep E & Smith M, (2003), *Daily Prayer Under the Southern Cross 2004*, SGS Publications, Victoria

Perego G, (1999), *Interdisciplinary Atlas of the Bible*, St Paul’s Publications, Strathfield

Poelker K, (1984), *Images of Christmas for Children,* OCP Publications, Portland

Ryan M, (2002), *Teaching* *the Bible: A Manual of Teaching Activities, Commentary and Blackline Masters*, Social Science Press, Australia

Short J & Bird B, (1995), *The First Christmas,* Longman Cheshire, Melbourne

Threlfo W, (2001), *Walking with Mary*, Marist Resources, Mittagong, NSW

White D, O’Brien K, & Todd S, (2003), *Into the Deep*, K D Publications, Marayong

Wild M & Vivas J, (1991), *Let the Celebrations Begin*, Omnibus Books, Norwood, South Australia

Wintour R, (2001, 2002, 2003), *Sacred Celebrations for Advent and Christmas* *(Year A, Year B, Year C)* Mountjoy Enterprises, Brisbane

Wintour R, (2002), *Just Ine 2*, Mountjoy Enterprises, Brisbane

Wintour R, (2003), *Christmas Celebrations*, Mountjoy Enterprises, Brisbane

**Music**

Burland J, (2003), *Christmas Star*, Ovation Music

Cosgrove J, (1997), *A Christmas Pageant,* J Cosgrove, Springwood, Qld

Cosgrove J, (2001), *Celebrating Our Unexpected God*

Cosgrove J, (1997), *Seeds of Sonshine,* J Cosgrove, Springwood, Qld

Haas D, *Light and Peace*

Mangan M, (1995), *Follow the Star*, Litmus Publications, Albany Creek

**Websites**

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03158a.htm> is a link from the New Advent site to information on the Christian Calendar

[http://www.textweek.com/art/.htm](http://www.textweek.com/art/magi.htm) is a link for teachers to explore artwork related to the .

Key to Symbol

✪ denotes higher order activity

Unit Content 1

The liturgical season of Advent is a time to prepare for the coming of Jesus into our world.

*Students will learn:*

* about the season of Advent as the beginning of the Church Year
* about the season of Advent as a time of preparation and journey towards Christmas
* to identify what they can do to prepare for the coming of Jesus

Unit Content: Background Information

The Church Year begins on the first Sunday of Advent. Advent comes from the Latin word *Adventus* meaning *coming*. It is a season of waiting and a time to prepare for the celebration of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) as we recall the first time that Christ came to us. It is also a time to reflect and prepare for Christ’s second coming (*parousia* – a Greek word meaning presence or arrival) at the end of time when he will return in glory.

Advent is a season of spiritual preparation for the coming of Christ, of solemn joy and anticipation. It is not a penitential season. The violet or purple vestments and decorations are intended to focus on preparation. These colours were reserved for use by royalty and so they are used in Advent to symbolise the coming of Christ our King. The third Sunday of Advent is known as Gaudete Sunday. Gaudete is the Latin word for rejoice. The vestments for this day may be the colour rose, symbolising the hope of the coming of Jesus. In Australia, Advent is at the beginning of our hot summer. Our liturgy needs to reflect our culture; this means that in Australia, we could incorporate the mauve of the jacaranda blooms and agapanthus.

Include symbols of Advent in prayer and liturgy, eg the Advent Wreath (which is an endless circle of God’s presence recalling all the years the people waited for the Messiah. The pink candle signifies the hope for the coming of Jesus. The candles remind us that we are preparing for Jesus, the Light of the World. Choose songs that speak of preparation and the hope of Advent.

The omission of the Gloria in the Advent liturgy is to inspire people to sing it more joyfully at Christmas. It is a time when we wait, as the world waited long ago for the coming of Jesus, who is the light of the world. During Advent we make a special effort to make our world a peaceful and loving place - to be signs that God’s presence is with us. Through making the world a more just and peaceful place we are preparing for the second coming and the fulfillment of the reign of God. Our reflection and prayer during this season should be hopeful – concentrating more on the future than on the past. Christians look to the future with hope and enthusiasm as we eagerly look forward to Christ’s return.

Each Advent season has a focus, which comes from the readings for the year. For example, throughout Advent in Year A God is revealed to us in often extraordinary and unexpected ways. We focus on the many and varied ways God acts in us, in our lives and in our world. In Year B we are called to reflect on the challenges we face when waiting with and for God. We wait in hope, to hear the Word of God and proclaim it. We witness and bring Jesus to others and to the world. The readings for Year C help us to reflect on what it means ‘to give flesh to’ the Word of God in our daily lives. We are called to assist in bringing about the reign of God in the world through our actions and our life.

Suggested Teaching/Learning Strategies

* Explore the theme of preparation using a picture book, eg *Let the Celebrations Begin*.
* Students reflect on times of preparation in their life. For what were you preparing? How did you prepare? Identify your hopes when preparing.
* Students complete the communicative activity ‘Getting Ready’. See Resource Sheet 1. Explore with the students their emotional and physical reactions during these times, eg Who has moved house this year? How did you feel? What preparations did you have to make?
* Students interview their parents or other adults regarding the preparations they make for a holiday or other journey. Use the information to create a database.
* Use the database to develop a concept map drawing on students’ experiences of preparing for a holiday or other journey. Reflect on the difference/ connection between journey and destination.
* Tell the story ‘Our Advent Prayer Place’ as you introduce and set up your prayer place for Advent. See Resource Sheet 2 for suggested script and materials.
* Review student knowledge of the liturgical year and explore their understanding of the sequence of the seasons in the cycle. Relate the cycle to a journey where the events of the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus unfold. What are the seasons of the Church year? What colours are associated with each? What do the seasons represent? Using a Liturgical Calendar, eg *Year of Grace* calendar, identify its beginning and the relationship to the calendar year. Students create their own Liturgical Calendar for the coming year. See Resource Sheet 3.
* Introduce the doctrinal statement: ‘During Advent the Church prepares for the coming of Jesus’. Refer to KWL, Year 4, p144 - top p145. Focus attention on Advent being a journey. The destination is the coming of Jesus at Christmas and also at the end of time.
* Brainstorm students’ experience of Advent traditions in the Church (eg Advent Wreath, Advent Calendar, practices of giving and helping) and local Church community. Why do we do these things? Explore the meaning behind each of these traditions and their role in assisting us to prepare for the celebration of Christmas. What symbols, colours and words do we associate with Advent? What meaning do they express? Read *Did You Know?* KWL, Year 4, p149.
* Invite the parish priest to talk to the students about the parish preparations during Advent. With the students identify how they can be part of the parish preparations.
* Prepare with students a class prayer celebration for the commencement of Advent. Sing a hymn with the theme of preparation eg *God Has a Big Surprise* from ‘Celebrating our Unexpected God’by Jim Cosgrove. The celebration could include a blessing of the Advent Wreath and the lighting of the first candle (see *Daily Prayer Under the Southern Cross*), student Advent Calendars and prayers of petition.
* Brainstorm and list simple but meaningful ways students can prepare for Christmas during this Advent. Students create an individual action plan (focusing on meaningful preparation) outlining what they will do to prepare for Christmas during Advent this year.
* Students write prayers of petition asking for God’s help in keeping their commitment. Provide time each week for students to reflect, perhaps through journaling on how their action plan is unfolding.
* Prepare a simple reconciliation service (either sacramental or non-sacramental) related to the class/school’s preparation for the coming of Christ.
* Learn the song *God Has a Big Surprise* from ‘Celebrating our Unexpected God’by Jim Cosgrove. Reflect on the words of the hymn. Ask the students to name expected and unexpected ways that God comes to us. Students identify people through whom God touches our lives – our families, our friends, our neighbours, our school and local community. In what ways is God revealed through them? What do they tell us about God?
* In pairs, students prepare and lead morning prayer using *Daily Prayer Under the Southern Cross*. This could be done daily or 2 to 3 times a week.

Unit Content 2

The Scriptures tell us of many people who made journeys in hope while not fully knowing what lay ahead.

*Students will learn:*

* about the covenant between God and the people of Israel
* about the journeys of people of the Old Testament
* about prophecy in the Old Testament and its relationship to Jesus, the promised Saviour
* to identify and reflect on the challenges of life

Unit Content: Background Information

The image of being on a journey is a recurring one in the Scriptures. From the time of the call of Abram we see the special relationship between Yahweh and the people of Israel. It is not just a physical journey but a spiritual one as well. Journey in the Hebrew Scriptures is significant as it points to conversion - of individuals or a people. Their journeys were in some way connected with conversion.

A covenant is a legally binding agreement, based on faithful loyalty between those involved. In the bible the covenant is a relationship between God and God’s people based on love, promise and the faithfulness of God. The Hebrew bible tells of a series of covenants between God and human beings, eg with Abram, with the people of Israel at Mount Sinai, with Noah and the whole of creation and with King David.

In Genesis we read of the call of Abram and God’s promise, or covenant with him. It is here that we also discover the story of Joseph and his rise to power in a foreign land. From chapter 12 onwards in the book of Exodus we read of the journey of Moses and the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the promised land. The journey of the people of Israel to the promised land and their acceptance as God’s people continues in the book of Numbers. The people of Israel found the journey challenging and needed prophets to help them.

In Genesis 17 we learn of the change of name from Abram to Abraham as a sign of God’s covenant with him. When Abram and Sarai were both very old God promised them a son, who was called Isaac, saying that Abram would be “the father of many nations”. God changed his name to Abraham, which means “father of many” and Sarai’s to Sarah. Abraham became the father of the Jews.

Prophets existed in Israel from at least the tenth century BC. The prophets of Israel brought the people messages from God and as the people’s representatives to God, they had a duty to intercede for them. Prophets were originally called ‘those who see’. They laid out the consequences of behaviour and their purpose was to bring the people of their day back to faithfulness to God and the covenant.

The prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz, lived in Jerusalem at the end of the eighth and the beginning of the seventh centuries BC. Isaiah seems to have been from a priestly family with access to the king. He knew the ruling classes of his society and condemned the corruption evident there. Isaiah became a prophet in a spectacular way. He had a vision of God’s glory filling the temple with God sitting on the throne. In writing of the king as God’s Messiah, Isaiah speaks of Immanuel “God is with us” (Isa 7:14) which is later applied to Jesus (Matt 1:23). Isaiah writes of his hope that the line of kings of the house of David would represent the people before God and be the means through which the people would be blessed by God.

Suggested Teaching/Learning Strategies

* + Explore the theme of journey using a picture book, eg *Moving On* by Penny Matthews, *Marty Moves to the Country* by Kate Walker.
  + Share stories of experiences of going on a journey. Did you know what to expect? How did you feel? What did you experience when you reached your destination?
  + Discuss the idea that often when we go on a journey we do not know what lies ahead of us. Explore the concept of ‘The Great Unknown’.
  + Look at a map in a Bible atlas, eg Map 3 in *The Student Bible Atlas,* showing Abram’s journey from Haran to Canaan. What is the distance between the two places? What is the terrain like? What challenges might be encountered on such a journey?
  + Tell the story of Abraham and Sarah (based on Genesis 12 -24) using 3D materials and script. See Resource Sheet 4.
  + Engage students in wondering. Suggested wondering statements are:
  + I wonder what your favourite part of this story is.
  + I wonder how Abraham and Sarah knew that God was still with them in each place they went.
  + I wonder what it would be like to have to leave your home and travel to a new land.
  + I wonder how Abraham and Sarah felt when God promised that they would be the parents of many children.
  + Students develop an understanding of the difficulty of the journey for Abraham and his family through a circle walk. Refer to *Creative Arts K-6 Dance and Drama, Moments and Movements in Life* for information on this strategy*.*
  + Invite a guest speaker: a refugee or a person who has been on a pilgrimage or a long difficult journey, to speak to the students about their experience. List the significant aspects of their journey. What were they journeying to and what were they hoping to find? What/who gave them encouragement? OR read the story Jonathan’s Journey p183 *Walking with Mary.* What do we learn about Jonathan from this story? What was his response?
  + Students work individually or in groups to recall stories of other Old Testament people who went on journeys e.g. Abraham and Sarah, Moses, Joseph and family, Jonah. Big Books from K-2 could be borrowed and provided for students use - Kinder - *Old Testament Stories* (Abraham and Sarah), Jonah; Year 1 - *Joseph the Dreamer*; Year 2 - *Moses* (God of Freedom). Children’s Bibles could also be provided. Groups or individuals retell stories to class. After each story class discussion focussing on:

Why did the person / people embark on the journey?

What were the consequences of the journey?

Who or what helped them on the journey?

* + Students reflect on their life journey to this point. Where is God in my journey? Who/what gives me encouragement or support in my journey? Who are my companions on my life journey?
  + Students recount one of their own situations in a reflective journal.
  + Identify and reflect on the challenges in their life journey. What is God asking them to do in these situations? What are the challenges involved in each situation? What makes the situation challenging for them? How is God present? How do they respond to the activity of God in their life?
  + Tell the story of ‘Isaiah the Prophet’ using suggested 2D and 3D materials and script. See Resource Sheet 5.
  + Engage students in wondering. Suggested wondering statements are :

I wonder what Isaiah meant when he said:

“… come let us walk in the light of the Lord!” or

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light”

I wonder what ‘the light’ might have been.

I wonder which title for the child you like the best: ‘Wonderful Counsellor’, ‘Mighty God’, ‘Everlasting Father’ or ‘Prince of Peace’.

* + Invite students to look up the words ‘prophet’ and ‘prophecy’ in a dictionary or thesaurus. Establish a common understanding of both words. Look at the contents page of the bible and determine who the prophets were. Talk with the students about their understanding of the role of prophets.
  + Students learn the song ‘Where are the prophets’ on *Seeds of Sonshine* by Jim Cosgrove.
  + Read the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14-15. What was God’s promise to the people?
  + Explain the context of Isaiah 9:1-7 from the Scripture: Background Information and Background Information for Unit Content 2. Read the bible text and identify the titles given to a child born into the royal Davidic family of his day. Explain that the early Christian community after Jesus’ death used these and other texts in reference to Jesus. Take one of the titles and write about it in relation to Jesus.
  + Class discussion: What do we learn about these people from their story? Why do we recall these journeys of faith and hope during Advent? How can these stories help our Advent preparation?

Unit Content 3

In the season of Advent we remember Mary and Joseph who journeyed in hope, not fully knowing what lay ahead.

*Students will learn:*

* about the faith of Mary and Joseph as they journeyed to Bethlehem
* about the significance of the Wise Men
* about the Incarnation of Jesus

Unit Content: Background Information

At the time of Mary and Joseph, Palestine was under Roman occupation. The emperor Caesar Augustus ordered a nationwide census to be taken to enable him to keep control of the collection of taxes. This required that every man would have to be registered in the birthplace of his ancestor. Since Joseph was a descendant of King David he would have to go to Bethlehem, King David’s birthplace.

Mary was a young and pregnant woman at the time. Mary and Joseph did not know how long they would be away, which meant that they would have to take many of their belongings with them. Journeying by donkey and on foot to a town far away could be dangerous. On their arrival they were met with closed doors and the imminent birth of Mary’s child. Joseph must have felt concerned and frustrated at being unable to secure private and warm accommodation for Mary, in which to give birth. God was there with them and though they did not understand completely, this was all part of God’s plan.

The wise men or Magi in Matthew’s Gospel are not kings but priestly students of the stars of the Zoroastrian religion. They were men accustomed to interpreting the significance of the movements of heavenly bodies and the meaning of dreams. They could have come from Persia, Arabia or Mesopotamia. They were not Jews, but represent pagan religions, or as Jews called such people, the Gentiles. They emphasise the manifestation of Jesus to all nations as the Son of God. The feast celebrates the universality of the Church, that Christ came for all people. Oriental tradition records twelve in number and gives them names unknown in the West. In early Christian art they are depicted in symmetry, in even numbers, two, four or six. By the Middle Ages the idea of three gifts had fixed their number at three. By the same time their Latin names had been decided upon as Gaspar, Melchior and Balthasar.

On Christmas Day we remember the **Incarnation** of Jesus – a key mystery of Christianity- the mystery of the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ. Incarnation comes from the Latin, ‘*incarnatio’* meaning ‘becoming flesh’. Jesus never ceased to be the divine Son of God, but he took on a full and complete human nature. As Christians when we say *Incarnation* (the Word made flesh) we not only mean that Jesus is God, but also that all humans have become co-heirs with Christ. Through the Incarnation, Jesus came to share in our human life so that we could share in the divine life of the Trinity. The Incarnation is important for us today because it is the manifestation of God’s love for us, brought to fullness in Jesus Christ and kept alive through the Holy Spirit in the Church. Christmas is the great celebration of the Incarnation, making real the promise that God is with us and continues to be active in the world.

Christmas Day is emphasised in the Latin Church, while Epiphany (6th January), the manifestation of Christ the light for all people, is emphasised in some of the Eastern Churches. The symbol of light in the Christmas liturgy speaks of incarnation and salvation - Christ, the light of all people.

Suggested Teaching/Learning Strategies

**Luke 2:1-7**

* Locate on a map the country of Israel/Palestine and discuss the terrain of the land, the climatic conditions and the distance between Nazareth and Bethlehem. Tell the students about the political situation of the time (refer to the background information).
* Read Luke 2:1-7 (story told in 3.8 and K-2). Students may be able to retell this story using nativity set.

Engage students in wondering. eg

I wonder what Mary and Joseph might have taken with them on their journey.

I wonder how Mary and Joseph felt as they travelled to Bethlehem.

I wonder how it would feel to be in Bethlehem at census time.

* Using Luke 2:1-7 lead the students through a Guided Meditation of Mary and Joseph’s journey to Bethlehem. See Resource Sheet 6, or dramatise ‘The Emperor’s Command’ *Christmas Celebrations* by Rina Wintour. What Scripture details are omitted in the play text?
* Explore the feelings of Mary and Joseph using the drama strategy of ‘concept sequence’. Refer to *Creative Arts K-6 Dance and Drama, Moments and Movements In Life*.
* Hot seat: Students imagine themselves to be Mary or Joseph and are interviewed by the class with questions related to the journey and their feelings about what lay ahead.
* ✪ - Explore the birth of Jesus through artistic works in books and on the Internet. Discuss the ways in which different artists portray and interpret this event. Students select one image and write about what it says to them about the birth of Jesus.

**Matthew 2: 1-12**

* Tell the story, ‘The Visit of the Wise Men’ using suggested 3D materials and script. See Resource Sheet 7. This story is also in KWL, Year 4, p146-147.
* Engage students in wondering. Suggested wondering statements are :

I wonder how the wise men felt as they set out on their journey.

I wonder why Herod was frightened.

I wonder what Mary and Joseph thought when they saw the wise men.

I wonder what they might have said to each other after the wise men departed.

I wonder why the wise men gave Jesus gifts fit for a king.

I wonder why the wise men were warned in a dream not to return to Herod.

* Explain the background of the Wise Men (see Background Information). Discuss their significance for Christianity. The visitors from the east believed the star to be a sign that would lead them to the Christ-child. What signs do we look for to help us find Jesus today? Make a list of signs which point us towards Jesus today.
* Use the strategy ‘Scriptural Detours’, p119 Into the Deep to consider the effect of the choices of the wise men.
* Look up images of the wise men in art. Notice the details in the pictures that are not part of Matthew’s account. What role does the artist give to the wise men in the story of Jesus?
* Students dramatise the story of the wise men, eg using the script *Herod* on pages 74 to 77 of *The Bible Skit Book*. Students compare this account with Matthew 2:1-12.
* Research the significance of gold, frankincense and myrrh in the ancient world and in relation to Jesus. Break the class into 3 groups - gold, frankincense and myrrh. In pairs students read a section of Resource Sheet 8. Search for ideas or concepts in their section that surprise them. The ‘roundtable’ process is followed with each student recording one surprise on a chart/ concept map before passing it on to the next person. This process is continued until the number of surprises is exhausted. Refer to ‘Surprise Roundtable’, p36, *Into the Deep*. Why were these gifts chosen by the wise men?
* Sing the Christmas carol *We Three Kings*. What facts does the carol include?
* Introduce the doctrine: Jesus is the Son of Godand Jesus is fully human and fully divine. Emphasise to the students that this is a great mystery of our faith. Review student understanding of the Trinity. What statement do we make in the sign of the cross? Refer to KWL, Year 4, p5-11. Read the story of St Augustine on p10.
* Choose a Scripture text explored in this unit. Identify where and when the action takes place, who is involved and what happens. Are any problems encountered? What does the text tell us about God? Why is this text important for us today? Explain the relevance of the text to Advent and Christmas.
* Learn a hymn, eg ‘Follow the Christmas Star’by Michael Mangan, ‘Three Wise Men’by Jim Cosgroveor ‘Follow the Star Road to Bethlehem’by Kathy Poelker. Students interpret the hymn. Refer to *Creative Arts K-6 Dance and Drama, Moments and Movements In Life,* eg ‘On Us Breathe’.
* ✪ Examine ways in which the Eastern Catholic and Orthodox churches celebrate Christmas and the Epiphany (visit of the wise men).
* Prepare a class celebration on the theme of journey.
* Make a banner that includes the constellation of the Southern Cross, which has been a significant navigational aid guiding voyagers and adventure seekers in the Southern Hemisphere. The four stars of the Southern Cross could be associated with the four weeks of Advent.
* Include: Matthew 2:1-12, a simplified version of the reflection from p 66 of *Just Imagine 2,* prayers of intercession, and an appropriate hymn ‘Follow the Christmas Star’ *by Michael Mangan, ‘*Walk on to Bethlehem’ or *‘*Christmas Star’by John Burland.

Unit Content 4

At Christmas the Church celebrates Jesus – Emmanuel – ‘God with us’ on our journey through life.

*Students will learn:*

* about the meaning of Christmas traditions
* to identify signs of Jesus’ presence with us on our journey through life

Unit Content: Background Information

Christmas Time is a season of the Liturgical Year that continues for about three weeks from December 25. It concludes with the feast of the Baptism of the Lord on the Sunday after Epiphany. It is a period of many special feasts e.g. the feast of the Holy Family (the Sunday after Christmas Day), the solemnity of Mary the Mother of God (January 1) and Epiphany (Sunday closest to January 6). Epiphany (from the Greek *epiphaneia* meaning *appearance*) celebrates the glory of God shown to the wise men through Jesus our Saviour.

During Christmas we hear the good news of the promised birth of the Saviour – the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah, who lived in Jerusalem at the end of the eighth and the beginning of the seventh centuries BC. The prophets believed that they were called by God to speak out against the evil and injustice of their time. Isaiah promises the fulfilment of the promises to David of a kingdom of messianic peace. He speaks of Immanuel (Isa 7:14) “God is with us” which is later applied to Jesus (Matthew 1:23). The Judeo-Christian tradition affirms the involvement of God in the affairs of the world. As Christians we believe God is incarnate in Jesus, ‘Emmanuel’, through the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is present in and through the Church and its Sacraments, especially the Eucharist. He is present too in those who work for the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth.

The people of the Hebrew Scriptures journeyed in hope waiting for the first coming of the Messiah – the fulfilment of God’s promise to them. During our life journey we are called to prepare, to make ready for Christ’s second coming, keeping in mind the words of the prophet Micah: 8 “…and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God”.

Suggested Teaching/Learning Strategies

* Introduce the doctrine to the students: Jesus is God-with-us. Identify how Jesus showed us that he was God-with-us. When can we see the hand of God at work? Relate to the idea that evidence of this reality will be found where love, joy, peace and justice flourish. How can we be signs in the world that God is with us? Students role play times they can be ‘God in our world’. Students could collect magazine and newspaper articles which relate to the theme ‘God-is-with-us today’.
* Pose the idea that God is present to us in people and events that are part of our daily life experiences. Invite each student to privately reflect on this idea, then record three to five responses to share in a group. Groups collate ideas for a class mind map.

✪ - OR use photographs or a PowerPoint presentation of people who are helpful and generous, loving and kind and who laugh and enjoy life, to assist the students to reflect on the people who remind them of God in some way. Students complete a Y chart with the heading *All around us we see, hear and feel signs that God is near.* Students could also create their own PowerPoint presentation about those people who reflect the presence and activity of God-with-us in the world today.

* Students learn an Advent song, eg ‘O Emmanuel’ by Michael Mangan. In groups, students create a movement to the hymn. Refer to *CEO Creative Arts K-6 Dance and Drama, Moments and Movements In Life- Ceremony and Ritual* for ideas.
* Create a piece of artwork displaying the theme of ‘God is with us’.
* Students read the exposition KWL, Year 4, p145. Brainstorm the expectations the people of the time held related to the coming of the Messiah (refer to Resource Sheet 9). What was the reality? What were the signs of the coming of the Messiah? How am I a sign that God is with us?
* Read the O Antiphons, ‘In Tradition’, KWL, Year 4, p147-148. Create a symbol for each to be added to the sacred space and used in prayer.
* Learn ‘Song of Light’by Michael Mangan. What does it mean to be “called out of the dark into your wonderful light”? Reflect on Isaiah 9:1-7. How can “we be a light to all the world”? Students interpret the song through symbolic artwork or reflective journaling.
* Students evaluate their preparation for Advent by referring to their personal Advent Calendar.
* Brainstorm and list ways the Church celebrates Christmas. How does the local church community celebrate Christmas? How does the school community celebrate Christmas? What is the meaning of each tradition?
* Contribute to a whole school Advent/Christmas liturgy celebrating Jesus’ presence with us on our journey through life.

**Resource Sheet 1**

# GETTING READY

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Find someone who has travelled on a plane. | Find a classmate who can tell you of a class journey this year. | Find someone to tell you what preparations they will be making before returning to school next year. |
| Name of person |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  | Who packs your bag when you go on a journey? | Find someone who has moved house this year. | Find someone who can tell you why Mary and Joseph journeyed to Bethlehem. |
| Name of person |  |  |  |
|  | Find someone who has travelled interstate. | Find someone to tell you what preparations their family is making for Christmas this year. | Find someone who has travelled on horseback. |
| Name of person |  |  |  |
|  | Find someone who has travelled to another country.  What is the name of the country? | Find someone whose family, parents or family members have migrated to Australia. From which country did they come? | Find someone who can name a song about a journey. What is it called? |
| Name of person |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**Resource Sheet 2**

**4.8 Our Advent Prayer Place**

**YOU WILL NEED:**

\* a small table

\* a box or basket, containing a ***purple*** cloth, Bible, bookstand, candle and road, next to your chair

*Invite children to sit reverently in a circle in the part of the classroom where you intend to set up a prayer place. Begin by saying…*

**As Advent begins we’re going to change our prayer place. This is a place where we can be quiet with God. We can listen to God and pray.**

**During the season of Advent we’ll have some different objects and symbols to help us when we pray.**

*Cover the table with the* ***purple*** *cloth.*

**At this time of the Church’s year we place a *purple* cloth on the table.**

**Purple is the colour for getting ready. Advent is a time for getting ready. Advent marks the beginning of the Church Year.**

**During Advent we are getting ready for the celebration of Christmas.**

*Hold the Bible up for all children to see. Be conscious of handling the Bible in a reverent manner.*

**The Bible is our special book. At this time in the Church’s year we tell the stories of people who were getting ready for the birth of Jesus.**

*Demonstrate how to carry, lift and hold the Bible in a reverent manner.*

*Place the Bible on a stand on the table.*

*Take out the candle and show to children.*

**The candle reminds us that Jesus is always with us. We will light the candle when we are talking and praying to God or when we are listening to the stories from the Bible.**

*Place the candle on the table.*

*Take out the road and show to children.*

**Advent is a time when we journey towards Christmas. This Advent we’ll look at other people, from long, long ago who prepared the way for the coming of God-with-us.**

*Place the road in the space.*

**Other symbols may be added appropriate to the season and unit.**

**This is our prayer place for Advent.**

*Point to the symbols and objects as you name them.*

**It has a *purple* cloth, a Bible, a candle, and a road to symbolize the journey towards Christmas.**

**Resource Sheet 3**



Complete the Liturgical Calendar for the Church year with the names:

* Church seasons: Advent, Christmas Time, Ordinary Time, Lent, Easter Time

*Lightly shade with the appropriate liturgical colour*

* Christmas Day, Epiphany, Ash Wednesday, Holy Thursday, Easter Triduum, Easter Sunday, Pentecost Sunday (the end of the Easter Season)

**Resource Sheet 4**

**Abraham And sarah**

**Based on Genesis 12 - 24**

**You will need:**

* sand box (sand in large tray or box)
* 4 wooden figures (Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah)
* small stones or pebbles for building altars
* wooden blocks to represent places stopped at along the way and Hebron

*Students are seated in a semi-circle ready to listen to the story. When the students are settled, go to the shelf and carry the materials as you would the Bible. Place these beside you.*

*Begin by placing the sand box in front of you slowly run your fingers through the sand as you say:*

**This is the desert box.**

**Lots of important stories about the people of God happened in the desert.**

**Our story today is from the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament. The Old testament has many stories about the People of God.**

*Hold up the wooden figures of Abram and Sarai.*

**There once was a great family that loved God very much.**

*Place Abram in the desert box close to the edge next to a block representing their home. Place Sarai next to Abram.*

**Abram and Sarai belonged to this family. God loved Abram and Sarai very much.**

*Move Abram and Sarai a little bit away from their home*

**One day, God asked Abram and Sarai to leave their country and to move to a new land far way called Hebron.**

*Place hand over their heads as in a blessing as you say:*

**God promised to always be with them.**

*Move your hand across the desert.*

**They were sad to leave their home. They wondered if God would really keep them safe and be with them everywhere they went.**

*Move the figures across the desert to a new place marked by a block. Build an altar with small stones.*

**Abram and Sarai trusted God and they set out on their journey in hope. They stopped at many places along the way.**

*Repeat the action of building an altar for several more stops.*

**In each place they found that God was with them and they built a special place called an altar and gave thanks to God.**

*Point to all the places.*

**As they moved on to each new place they wondered if God would be there too.**

*Move them to their final destination at Hebron. Build an altar.*

**Finally they reached their new home in Hebron. God had shown Abram and Sarai the way. Again they built an altar and gave thanks to God.**

*Gesture a blessing over Abram and Sarai.*

**God had been with them all the time in every place just as God had promised.**

*Move Abram a short distance from Hebron.*

**In their new land God said to Abram, ‘You and Sarai will become the parents of a great family. You will have more children than the stars in the sky and the grains of sand on the beach’. Abram laughed because he and Sarai were very old.**

*Move Abram back with Sarai. Gesture a blessing over them.*

**But God’s promise was fulfilled.**

*Place the Isaac figure in the desert box next to Abraham and Sarah.*

**God changed their names to Abraham and Sarah and they became the parents of a son named Isaac. They were very happy.**

*Move Isaac a short distance away and place Rebekah in the desert box next to him.*

**Isaac grew up and married Rebekah. They had children, and their children had children, and those children had children.**

**Abraham and Sarah’s family continued to grow and grow and became as many as the stars in the sky and the grains of sand on the beach.**

*Sit quietly for a moment and begin to wonder together.*

I wonder what your favourite part of this story is.

I wonder what it would be like to have to leave your home and travel to a new land.

I wonder how Abraham and Sarah knew that God was still with them in each place they went.

I wonder how Abraham and Sarah felt when God promised that they would be the parents of many children.

*Carefully pack story materials into storage box and put on shelf. Ensure that children are watching so they know how to pack the materials away and where to find them.*

**Resource Sheet 5**

isaiah The Prophet

Isaiah 9: 2; 6-7; Isaiah 7: 14

**You will need:**

* 2D materials: Old Testament Timeline, map of Israel, crown, 3 or 4 chariots (on RE Online Unit 4.8 - Related Files. Enlarge timeline and map to A3, then print off and laminate all of above mentioned images.
* 3D Figures: Isaiah, pregnant woman
* Bible or scroll

*Note: This story may be told in one session, or if you think it would suit your students better you could break it into part. You could also use the timeline throughout Year 4 to locate the period of each of the stories.*

*Students are seated in a semi-circle ready to listen to the story. When the children are settled, get the materials and carry them respectfully to the storytelling place as you would the Bible. Place these beside you and say:*

*Lay down the timeline.*

**This is the timeline of the Old Testament. It shows some of the periods of history.**

*Point to ‘Time of Patriarchs’ on the timeline.*

**The Patriarchs were the great fathers of the tribes of Israel. The patriarchs were Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.**

*Point to the time ‘People of God live in Egypt’.*

**During this period, the people of God lived in Egypt for many years. Pharaoh, the King, made the people his slaves. Life was very hard as a slave. God called Moses to lead the people out of Egypt.**

*Hold up map.*

**The people of God gradually moved into the land of Israel.**

*Point to different parts of the country as you say*

**The different tribes made their home in various parts of the country.**

*Point to ‘Time of the Kings’*

**Over time the tribes united as one nation under the leadership of a king. The first king anointed was Saul followed by David. The period of kings lasted about 400 years.**

*Run your finger from beginning to end of timeline as you say*

**Throughout this long history of the Old Testament there were prophets...people who listened to God, and were chosen by God to speak to the people for God.**

**People did not always like what the prophets had to say. Sometimes** **they had to call people back to live God’s law of love. At** **other times they brought messages of comfort and hope to the people**.

*Hold up figure of Isaiah***One of those prophets, named Isaiah, was called by God to speak to the people of Israel.**

*Place map of Israel below the timeline. Place Isaiah on Jerusalem*

**Isaiah came from the great city of Jerusalem in Israel.**

**Isaiah loved Jerusalem and the Temple, but he especially loved God.**

*Place Isaiah in the ‘Time of the Kings’ section of the timeline. Hold up the crown*

**Isaiah lived in a time when kings had been ruling the land of Israel for about three hundred years. All these kings were descended from the most loved king, David.***Place crown on the Period of the Kings section of the timeline*

*Hold the bible or the scroll.*

**One time Isaiah angrily condemned the people for not looking after the poor, the orphans and the widows.**

*Open the bible or the scroll*

**He said, “What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor.”**

**Another time he begged the people to listen to God, to stop doing evil and learn to do good. He encouraged them saying, “… come let us walk in the light of the Lord!”**

**But the people did not listen.**

*Place chariots over the map of Israel*

**The land of Israel was invaded by powerful enemies. The people of God again became slaves to the invaders.**

*Remove the crown from the timeline*

**Now the people did not have their own king to protect and provide for them. They longed for a new king who would save them … The people waited in hope.**

*Hold up figure of pregnant woman*

**Through Isaiah, God did give the people of Israel a sign of hope. Isaiah said, “Look the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel, meaning God is with us.”**

*Place figure of pregnant woman below the timeline towards the end of the ‘Time of the Kings’.*

*Place your crossed hands in front of your face.*

**Isaiah warned that before this young woman’s child was born the people of Israel would suffer greatly under the enemy rulers.**

*Open your hands*

**The people of Israel remembered God’s promise and they waited in hope.**

*Open the bible or scroll, as though reading from it.*   
**Isaiah also promised that their suffering would not last forever. He said, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined.” The people of Israel remembered God’s promise and they waited in hope.**

*Move pregnant woman a little way along timeline towards ‘Time of Jesus’.*

*Continue to read from the scroll*

**Another time Isaiah spoke of a child born for us, a son given to us.**

**His name would be Wonderful Counsellor,**

**Mighty God, Everlasting Father**

**Prince of Peace.**

**When he comes there will be endless peace, justice and righteousness**.

*Move pregnant woman a little further along timeline towards ‘Time of Jesus’.*

*Hold the rolled up scroll. Look up at the students, and say,***The people of Israel remembered God’s promises and they continued to wait in hope.***Move pregnant woman a little further along timeline towards ‘Time of Jesus’.*

*Pause for a while before wondering with the students.*

I wonder which title for the child you like the best: ‘Wonderful Counsellor’, ‘Mighty God’, ‘Everlasting ‘Father’ or ‘Prince of Peace’.

I wonder what Isaiah meant when he said:

“… come let us walk in the light of the Lord!” or

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light”

I wonder what ‘the light’ might have been.

**Resource Sheet 6**

Guided Meditation

The Journey to Bethlehem

INTRODUCTION

Mary and Joseph were living in the town of Nazareth. They must have been very excited about the coming birth of their baby. Think of some of the special preparations they would have made.

* What preparations would Mary have made?
* What preparations would Joseph have made?

However, something happened to upset their plans. The Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus, ordered that a census be taken of the entire Roman Empire. Everyone had to go to their hometown to register their name, so that they could be counted. Mary and Joseph had to travel a great distance on foot to their hometown of Bethlehem. It was not a good time for Mary to travel, for she was about to give birth. But they were obliged to obey the emperor’s order.

MEDITATION

We are going to be with Mary and Joseph as they prepare to leave their home in Nazareth… Close your eyes… Take a deep breath… and relax…You are with Mary and Joseph in their home… They are gathering the things they will need for their journey… It will take four days to reach Bethlehem… Mary has some food and water… Joseph is placing some blankets on the donkey’s back… there is another parcel on the table… You pick it up and take it to Joseph… It contains things for the baby… What can you see? Joseph takes this last parcel and packs it on the donkey… They are ready and set off on their long journey… And you walk with them.

Mary and Joseph leave Nazareth and travel on the dusty winding road leading towards the Jordan River… They travel alongside the river… The road is busy as other families are travelling to other towns… sometimes roman soldiers march by… As night falls you stop in a small town… There is nowhere to stay so Joseph makes camp.

The second and third day are much the same… Sometimes the country was like a desert… Sometimes there were trees and grass… The nights were crisp and cold and clear… The road leaves the Jordan River. You begin to climb to the city of Jericho.

It is now the fourth day of a long, hard, dusty trip… Your feet are sore… and you are tired… Sleeping on the ground wasn’t very restful… The sun feels extra hot today… Look around and see the dry rocky land… There are other people walking with you… People travel in groups because it is dangerous to travel alone… some people are grumbling about the trip… about the heat…

You place your hand on the donkey… Feel the hot damp skin… Joseph turns to you… His face is wet with perspiration... and his eyes are tired and filled with concern… “Hold on to Mary,” he tells you. “The

road is rough ahead”… Mary has been silent as you make the climb to Jerusalem… Jerusalem is a large noisy city … but you don’t stop … you must continue on to Bethlehem.

The donkey plods on… The road is twisting and curving through the hills… You notice Mary and Joseph’s clothes are covered in dust … They are both tired… But Mary has a calmness about her… Feel the peace about her… Mary touches your shoulder… and smiles at you… “It will be all right,” she tells you. “God is with us”… You look at the sky and see the sun setting… And Bethlehem is just ahead… They have arrived safely… Spend some time now with Mary and Joseph… Speak to them… Share your thoughts about the journey…. (a few minutes silence)

Say good bye to Mary and Joseph… Turn and begin to walk down the road away from them… Open your eyes and come back into this room.

References

Reehorst J, (1986), *Guided Meditations for Children,* W Brown, Iowa

Reehorst J, (1992), *Guided Meditations Volume 3,* W Brown, Iowa

Short J & Bird B, (1995), *The First Christmas,* Longman, Melbourne

**Resource Sheet 7**

**the Visit of the wise men**

**(Matthew 2: 1-12)**

**You will NEED:**

* 3D figures: infant Jesus, Mary and Joseph
* King Herod,
* 2 priests and a scribe
* 3 wise men with gifts,
* house (represented by the stable from the Nativity Set),
* star
* beige underlay
* long brown felt strip for road,
* Bible

*Students are seated in a semi-circle ready to listen to the story. When the students are settled, go to the shelf and carry the materials as you would the Bible. Place these beside you. Hold up the Bible as you say:*

**This story comes from Matthew’s Gospel in the New Testament of the Bible.**

*Roll out the beige felt then the felt road.* **This is the story of another journey.**

*Place the house at one end of the road. Place Jesus in the house and say:*

**Jesus was born in a town called Bethlehem.**

*Place Mary and Joseph in the house with Jesus.*

**His parents’ names were Mary and Joseph*.***

*Move the three wise men along the road towards the house.*

**After Jesus was born in Bethlehem, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?**

*Hold up a star above the house and say*

**We saw his star and we have come to pay him homage.”**

*Place Herod near the side of the road.*

**When King Herod heard that the wise men had found a new king in Bethlehem, he was frightened.**

*Turn Herod away from the wise men to face the priests and scribe.*

**He called the chief priests and scribes of the people and asked them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophets”.**

*Move Herod closer to the wise men.*

**Herod secretly called for the wise men and said to them “Go and search for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.”**

*Hold the star and move the wise men along the road to stand near the house.*

**The wise men continued their journey, following the star until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.**

*Move the wise men as if they are entering the house. Tilt their bodies forward in a bowing action.*

**On entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother and they knelt down and paid him homage.**

*Move the wise men to give their gifts to Jesus one at a time.*

**Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.**

*Move them to journey back home, by a different route that does not pass King Herod. Use a hand gesture to point to King Herod, saying:*

**Having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, the wise men left for their own country by another road.**

*Engage with ‘I wonder statements…’*

I wonder how the wise men felt as they set out on their journey.

I wonder why Herod was frightened.

I wonder what Mary and Joseph thought when they saw the wise men.

I wonder what they might have said to each other after the wise men departed.

I wonder why the wise men gave Jesus gifts fit for a king.

I wonder why they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod.

*Carefully pack story materials into storage box and put on shelf. Ensure that children are watching so they know how to pack the materials away and where to find them.*

**Resource Sheet 8**

***Precious gifts - Gold, frankincense and myrrh***

At the time of the birth of Jesus frankincense, myrrh and gold were rare and precious. Myrrh was much more expensive and precious than gold and frankincense. All three gifts were representative of Jesus’ birth, life and death.

Today, frankincense and myrrh can be purchased quite cheaply.

**GOLD**

In the ancient world gold was rarer than it is today and it was prized for many reasons. It was associated with the sun and the heavens, making it a natural symbol of the divine and the material chosen for making ritual objects. It was fine enough for making objects for the gods. From ancient times to the present, gold has been the property of royalty, used for the crowns and scepters of kings.

Gold does not tarnish or corrode. Ancient people made it an essential part of burial practices. Golden objects were often placed in the tombs of important people as symbols of their status or for their use in an afterlife. Gold was also thought to have healing powers.

Gold, as a form of tribute and the property of royalty, indicated that Jesus was a king. Gold was a traditional gift for kings. It indicated that Jesus was divine.

**FRANKINCENSE**

Frankincense is a fragrant gum resin that come from trees. A single tree can produce about 25 kilos of resin a year. Frankincense trees are found only in a few desert regions in southern Arabia and northeastern Africa, in what are now Oman, North and Southern Yemen and Somalia. The resin was in great demand throughout the ancient world.

Methods for harvesting the resin have not changed in thousands of years. In the summer, cuts are made in the trunks of frankincense trees, causing a milky-white fluid to seep out. After a week or so, the fluid hardens into pale gold globules, which are scraped off.

The resins were sent by ship or by camel caravan to Palestine, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, Africa and India. Camel routes were entrusted to a single tribe and caravans might include as many as 2500 camels.

In the first century there were 3000 families who were allowed to harvest frankincense. The harvesters were considered sacred. During the harvest they were not to undertake activities that were thought to be unclean (e.g. attending funerals).

When the frankincense was packed for shipment the workers were closely guarded and were searched before they were allowed to go home. Frankincense was used mainly as an element of incense, which was required in daily rituals. Incense was placed on smoldering charcoal so that it burned slowly and released an exotic fragrance. The aroma was thought to be pleasing to the god. Incense smoke became a means of communication between human and divine worlds.

Egyptians used it in burial practices believing that the soul rose from the body in the smoke. The Greeks and Romans believed the same. In Israel, a special blend of incense was reserved for God. Frankincense was one of its primary ingredients and only priests had the privilege of offering it in the temple. It was also used in cosmetics and medicines. The Egyptians chewed it for bad breath and sore gums; the Greeks and Romans blended it into ointments to heal wounds; the Chinese smoked it for respiratory problems.

Frankincense was associated with emperors and pharaohs. It played an important role in religious rituals and offerings and showed that Jesus was God.

**MYRRH**

Myrrh is a fragrant gum resin that come from trees. A single tree can produce about 25 kilos of resin a year. Myrrh trees are found only in a few desert regions in southern Arabia and northeastern Africa, in what are now Oman, North and Southern Yemen and Somalia. The resin was in great demand throughout the ancient world.

Methods for harvesting the resin have not changed in thousands of years. The bark of the myrrh tree usually splits by itself, so the dried resin need only be collected.

The resin was sent by ship or by camel caravan to Palestine, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, Africa and India. Camel routes were entrusted to a single tribe and caravans might include as many as 2500 camels.

Dried drops of myrrh are known as tears and the resin has long been associated with sorrow. Its name comes from an Arabic word meaning *bitter*, but though bitter to taste it has a rich sweet scent. It was a luxury item associated with nobility and lavish lifestyles. It was a component of incense but was more widely used in perfumes, cosmetics and medicines. Myrrh was highly coveted as a fragrance by the Greeks and Romans. The Bible also mentions myrrh as a perfume for royal clothing and bedding as well as for the body. It was a luxury item treasured by royalty.

Myrrh was used to heal wounds and internally for fevers, digestive problems and poisoning. In Mesopotamia it was used as an ingredient in mouthwash. Today it can still be found as an ingredient in products for tooth and gum care.

Many cultures also used myrrh on the bodies of the dead. It covered up the smells of decaying flesh, helped to preserve the corpse and was believed to purify the body for the afterlife. The Egyptians used myrrh in mummification and the Jews used it in burials.

At the Crucifixion Jesus was offered myrrh in a mixture with wine but he refused it. After the Crucifixion a mixture of myrrh and aloes was brought to prepare Jesus’ body for entombment. It indicated that Jesus was divine.

**Resource Sheet 9**

***The Coming of the Messiah***

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| --- | --- |
| ***Expectation*** | ***Reality*** |
| Born in a palace |  |
| Great celebrations after his birth |  |
| Visited by important people |  |
| Receive precious gifts |  |
| Clothed in beautiful garments |  |
| Many attendants for his mother |  |
| Medical people in attendance for his birth |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

What were the signs of the coming of the Messiah?

How am I a sign that “God is with us”?

1. KWL, Teaching Companion 3b, p171 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)