

A VERY BIRTHDAY CHRISTMAS

For the Team Leader

Questions to ask as you plan this are:

- ❖ Where will we do this? (Church, park, community hall.)
- ❖ Who are we hoping to attract to the meeting? (All community, all our church, wider community e.g. like a carols service.)
- ❖ How will we attract others to our meeting? (Advertising, promotion, invitations.)

When planning elements of the meeting, please ask yourselves:

- ❖ Can everybody do it?
- ❖ Can everybody sit through it? (Keep each part of the meeting 5-7 minutes long for those with shorter attention spans.)
- ❖ Can everybody understand it? (Is the language pitched so everyone has a good chance of understanding what is being said, demonstrated or sung or prayed?)
- ❖ Can everyone learn from it? (Are the teaching points presented for a variety of learning styles;

body, visual kinetic; and are they suited to a range of personality types and levels of introversion/extroversion.)

- ❖ Is everyone connecting with it? (Are there enough connections to current life and local community, daily issues that people can see the sense in this?)

PURPOSE:

Why are we doing this worship meeting?

What is the key phrase or understanding that you want a church attender to explore and go away with from this meeting?

To celebrate the gift of Jesus at Christmas.

Key Scripture

This very day in King David's town a saviour was born for you. He is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:11 (CEV)

For the leaders to CONSIDER & PREPARE

Read: Luke 2:10 - 16 (CEV)

The angel said, "Don't be afraid! I have good news for you, which



will make everyone happy. This very day in King David's hometown a Saviour was born for you. He is Christ the Lord. You will know who he is, because you will find him dressed in baby clothes and lying on a bed of hay."

Suddenly many other angels came down from heaven and joined in praising God. They said:

**"Praise God in heaven!
Peace on earth to everyone
who pleases God."**

After the angels had left and gone back to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see what the Lord has told us about." They hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and they saw the baby lying on a bed of hay.

Reflection for leaders:

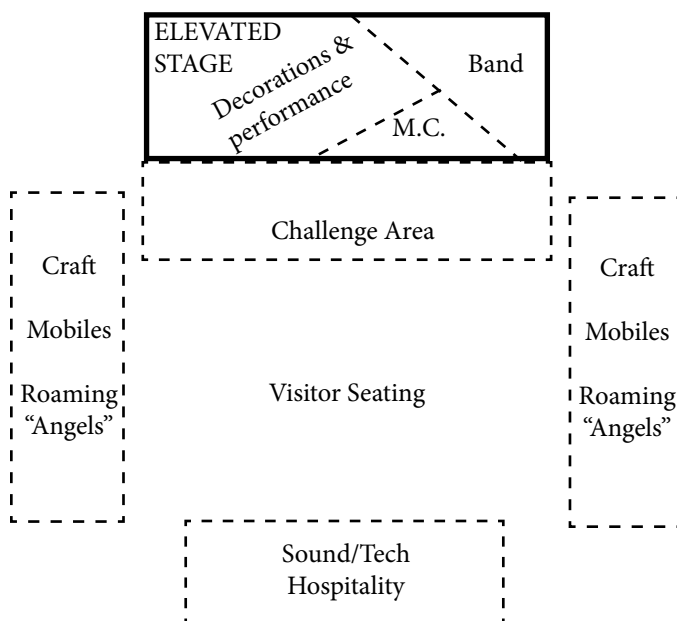
- ❖ What is the best form of celebration for you?
- ❖ How does the story of the angels announcing Jesus' birth affect your thoughts about celebration?
- ❖ When do you get to cut loose and announce the good news to people in a joyful way?
- ❖ What is your prayer for this event?

The Ministry Goal:

The idea of this meeting is to lift up the name and identity of Jesus. To celebrate his coming into the world as part of God's wonderful plans to show his love, and to save the world. This meeting outline is about focusing on the positive and Christian in Christmas without pouring scorn on the secular trappings of Christmas. They are mainly not mentioned. The aim is to give people a stronger reason to think about Jesus and be thankful for him at Christmas without alienating those who enjoy the many secular Christmas traditions. We want them to be receptive to the gospel, rather than offended by showing disrespect for other ways of celebrating.

This is a busy event, with a lot to engage eyes, ears, hands and hearts. Often the instructions ask the M.C., speaker or band to present something while other things are happening. This is to give everyone something to do, and it will reduce the amount of time spent during the program where everyone is waiting for something to finish or be ready. Rehearse with your team to be sure that they are ready to go, and understand that there might be 2 things happening at once.

Here's a site-map of what your set up may look like to make this event work.



- ❖ The idea of the Mobile is to give everyone something to do and take home.
- ❖ The idea of the prayer stars is to give everyone an opportunity to pray in a non-confronting way.
- ❖ The idea of the sheep shearing and manger building is to engage the men, older boys and problem solvers in the audience who aren't engaged by craft, and don't like to be given all the answers.

Notes about promoting the event:

- ❖ Things are going to get messy (Manger Making, Sheep Shearing, Mobile Making) at this meeting, depending on how people dress for these occasions, you may want to encourage people to not come in their best church clothes.
- ❖ Encourage people to come in Christmas Dress-Up instead.
- ❖ Invite people to bring Christmas gifts for charity – wrapped and labelled for a specific child age group and gender, or some other type of Christmas 'gift' (tinned food, gift vouchers) to help a local charitable effort. To include those who don't bring a gift, you could put an envelope in the Angel packs for people to make a donation to a Christmas Charity.

This could be brought out at the same time as the gifts.

Teams to prepare the event; each group has specific tasks.

Craft Angels: Prepare the artwork and mountings for the mobiles; dress as angels and distribute the parts of the mobile that the groups need next; set up a crafting area or give out activity packs to the groups, pairs, families or teams that form.

You will need:

- ❖ groundsheet, tarpaulins or dropsheets
- ❖ work tables
- ❖ sheets of copying *See Appendix A*
- ❖ laminators for the decorated pictures
- ❖ mobile structure (*coathanger, fishing line or curling ribbon etc*)

Prepare activity packs for groups/teams/pairs/families who attend containing:

- ❖ Pack of pencils
- ❖ Stick of Glue
- ❖ Glitter (*if you can stand the clean-up*)
- ❖ Other shiny things to stick onto the pieces of the mobile
- ❖ A couple of 'Prayer/Thank you Stars' per pack (*work on the maximum group size per activity pack*)
- ❖ Clothes pegs for the Thank you Stars – to attach them to the Christmas tree or wherever you want to put them

Stage team: M.C. and Band and 3 actors for the Birthday speeches:

To provide all the onstage directions, message and musical messages for the event.

Learn all scripts decide costumes and delegate tasks for sound, decoration [*Are you going to have a Christmas Tree for the Thank you stars, or will you hang up people's thank you prayers some other way?*], preparation of staging area, video screen and projector if needed. You will need to have one groundsheet, dropsheet or tarpaulin to put one of the completed mangers on.

Band prepares and rehearses community singing and performance item, "We all Bow Down". Optional performance or video "Born is the King".

M.C. and character speeches.

Line up some good actors from the Corps well before the time and give them the scripts ... encourage

them to play with the role and bring lots of fun and life to it.

Note: the Wise-men will need to be with the 'audience – come up with their gifts to present to baby Jesus, and then give their 'birthday speech'. A group of wise-men can give the speech together, or be a posse for one speaking wise-man.

Challenge Team:

Ensures that the Challenge area is set up in front of the raised 'staging area'; instructing participants; resetting for the next challenge and cleaning up; and relocating one of the finished mangers to the main stage.

Challenge instructions:

- ❖ Groundsheet, dropsheet or tarpaulin
- ❖ Balloons
- ❖ Pop sticks
- ❖ Cream (*hair styling mousse is much cheaper and sticks to the balloons much better than whip cream or shaving cream*)
- ❖ Smocks or garbage bag temporary smocks.
- ❖ Sets of softwood for mangers. Precut. [*you could also do a lightweight no-hammer version with Pool Noodles, slits in them to fit them together, cut up into the right lengths already etc.*]
- ❖ Hammers
- ❖ Nails
- ❖ [*Optional*] Paint, Butchers paper to line the painted manger.

Hospitality team:

Help set up the audience space (*seating, dress-up box and any catering hospitality required*); organize refreshments, church welcome packs and any other items that will welcome people to the event and ultimately to the Corps.

Welcome the audience / attendees.

Hand out activity packs made up by the Angel team.

Prepare and serve any refreshments (could be cups of water, could be coffee and Christmas Cake) as easy or as complicated as you want. Depending on what this team decides, this list will vary.

Christmas Dress-Up box – A large container with a variety of 'Christmas-ish' dress-ups. e.g. The 'onesie' is very popular, there are probably 'onesies' in many of God's noble farmyard creatures, Halo of tinsel, wings, sheep wool, Shepherd/wise-man gear (*robes*

and towel headdresses), camel or donkey outfit. Even signs to wear or facemasks would be fine. Whatever you think people would like to dress up in. If you are inviting community (*non-church people*) you may want to include reindeer bells, Santa hats, even battery operated candles etc.

Don't let cost hamper your celebration. Be thrifty and recycle to make and use of what will work to make this a fun and inclusive Christmas celebration.

SONGS

Choose any songs that celebrate the gift of Jesus. If you are planning on making this a community event with lots of people outside your Corps Community, we recommend that you make them well known Christmas songs so everyone can join in.

Suggested Songs are:

The Australian Carol of the Birds

O Holy Night

The North Wind

Oh Little Town of Bethlehem

Angels from the Realms of Glory

Away in a Manger

Silent Night

While Shepherds watched their flocks

Joy to the World

Hark the Herald

Band Presentation "We all bow down"... (Lenny LeBlanc)

Show video or perform and sing... Hillsong "Born is the King" <http://youtube/Qf6OoAZbAQg>

OPTIONAL BIBLE STORY VIDEOS:

Christmas Videos on Max7. See link below. You can download all three stories in one file

<http://www.max7.org/resource/christmasstory>

Or each story separately

<http://www.max7.org/resource/JesusBirth>

<http://www.max7.org/resource/Shepherds>

<http://www.max7.org/resource/WiseMen>

The MEETING

1. **M.C.:** Welcome and remind people that there is a dress-up box at the door. Tell people that they can come and grab something 'Christmassey' to wear or to give someone else to wear.

Say: We're here to celebrate Christmas. It's such a great time of year! [*Feel free to add your own brief personal remark about why you love Christmas.*] Christmas is a wonderful time to remember just how much God loves us and the lengths he will go to, to show us that! It's a time to gather together, to dress in funny hats, decorate our homes and lives for a celebration, eat wonderful meals and give gifts to those we love, and some of you may have brought gifts today for those you don't know – hang on to them, we will tell you what to do with them later in the meeting – and if you haven't brought a gift and you would like to give one, there is a Christmas gift envelope in your pack (*mention what it's going to*) so you can give a money gift – At Christmas we celebrate the gift of a child who was born for us, for the whole world, to be a sign and a source of God's love for the world.

2. 5-7 minutes ... Invite people to introduce themselves to each other and tell those around them what the best present is that they've ever been given. Or tell about a favourite birthday party (*whole thing or 'moment'*).

Song: *Sing a Christmas is Coming* type of song.

The Australian Christmas 'Carol of the birds'

O Holy Night

The North Wind

3. **Making a Mobile** (*teams or pairs*): Pair up a kid with an adult (*or bigger kid*) to make a mobile, you'll have to watch out for our angels, you need to find them to give you the next part of the creation. It would be best to do this in pairs a more people get to take home a mobile, but in large Corps it may make more sense to form teams. Don't split up visiting families, but do create teams that can represent a greater age/experience/gender span, and so people can socialize and enjoy the time together and make the most of each other's strengths.

Dividing people: pair up with someone you'd be comfortable working with whom you don't know.

Dividing into bigger groups for events with fewer resources or a goal to get the families playing together.

Mobile: parts drawn on cardboard to decorate and hang up. Baby wrapped in swaddling, Big Chorus of Angels praising God, Shepherds/sheep, Wise-men/Star, Animals from the shed, Mary & Joseph, Angel (*who spoke to Mary*), trees, gifts. See *Appendix B*

THE MAIN THING

4. **Announcement of the birth:** use video or read Matthew 1:18 - 25

M.C.: Do you like getting together with family and friends at Christmas and other special times? In the times when Jesus was born families would gather for special festivals at different times of the year. During the time when Mary had Jesus, she travelled from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be with Joseph during the Census, when the Emperor Augustus wanted to call all the people in his Empire.

Angel speech telling about Mary's news: The lord asked me to tell a woman by the name of Mary that she was to have a son and to call him Jesus. So I sped down from heaven to deliver God's message. How exciting! The son of God was to be born into the world! Mary was confused, so I reminded her that nothing was too hard for God. I left her assured to tell the lord all was good. And 9 months later when I saw the child during my next visit, it was the cutest bundle of joy.

Song: *Oh little town of Bethlehem*

Angels from the realms of glory (Gloria)

Mobile: One angel and the first part of the mobile's structure (*fishing line, string wool or ribbon, wooden frame or wire frame*).

Passage with video: the angel speaks to Mary.

5. **Handyperson Challenge/Race:** If you have enough people and resources, you can make this a race between 3 manger builders, or 3 teams.

Say: Joseph was a kind man and we also know he was a carpenter, we have a special Christmas Manger challenge now for any handy people who are here today and want to build a manger. Pool Noodles, slits in them Cut up etc.

You need ready cut (look up a good basic design) pieces of wood, hammer/s nails and not much else.

3-5 minutes on the clock. *Appendix A* for Instructions.

6. After we celebrate what the handy folks have done, invite a couple of people up to paint the manger/s. (*Kids/grownups*).

Use low fume/water based paints.

7. While the painting is happening, Angels distribute Mary and Joseph parts for the mobile.

8. After the painting is finished, invite a couple dressed as Mary and Joseph to come and put "baby Jesus" in one of the mangers.

Songs: *Away in a Manger*

Silent Night

9. **The Shepherds:** reading or video Luke 2: 8 - 18

Invite one person from each team to come up and prepare for the shearing the sheep game. While they are getting ready, a shepherd comes and gives a speech about visiting baby Jesus when he was born.

Shepherd/s: That night in the field was most overwhelming. We were watching our sheep ready to defend them if necessary when an angel lit up the sky and said do not be afraid. Some of my mates would have said we weren't scared but at the time they were cowering in fright. The angel then went on to say, "Your Saviour has been born tonight in Bethlehem" and with that a whole lot of angels came down and started singing "Glory to God and Peace on Earth" Wow, what a choir! We hurried off as fast as we could and when we saw that sweet little bundle of joy we were so happy that we gave him a small lamb.

10. **Shear the Sheep game:** Who can shear the sheep clean the fastest using shaving cream and a paddle-pop stick.

You will need: Pack of pop sticks, cream (*shaving cream, whipped cream or hair mousse – hair mousse is the cheapest and sticks well*), and balloons that are blown up and tied off. (*You'll need to decide if this is an activity for 5 people to do, or if you have supplies for half the people that come.*)

11. **Angels hand out Shepherds and sheep for mobiles.**

Songs: *While Shepherds watched their flocks*

Joy to the World

Hark the Herald

RESPONDING TO THE NEWS

12. **Wise-men:** Read or show video of Matthew 2:1 - 12

13. **Activity and Song:** Bring your gifts to baby Jesus in the manger. People dressed as wise-men bringing gold, frankincense and myrrh to Jesus. Angels hang out at the manger and give wise-men mobile parts out.

Song Performance: “*We all bow down*”... (Lenny LeBlanc) sing while people are bringing their gifts/envelopes to the manger scene. As you bring your gifts to the manger, you can stick your Prayer Stars up on the Stage (*or wherever is the best place*); use team members to lead off sticking up their stars to show how it's done and to help others.

14. **M.C.:** What are you thankful for this Christmas? You've been given some Post It stars in your picture pack ... use this to write what you are thankful for, and come and stick it up on the Christmas Tree [*or some other place that you have prepared for the thank you stars*].

15. **Wiseman gives a speech about meeting baby Jesus:** We had journeyed from the east and had stopped by King Herod's palace and told him we were following a star to where the true king of the Jews was born. He seemed interested in the Messiah and so asked us to tell him when we found the baby so he could visit the child. We had some gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh which we gave to that beautiful bundle of joy. He was only a little baby, but you don't follow a star to visit one every millennia, so we knelt down and paid him homage – to a King! That night while we slept we received a warning not to go back to Herod and left for home by another road.

16. **M.C.:** There is something about birthdays and gifts, and about Christmas and gifts that is very important? Freely giving to others is an expression of our love. Birthdays and Christmas are a great time to do this. God understands what we like and how we will feel when we receive the

good gifts we have from him; our lives, people who love us, our beautiful world, and his son – Jesus – the greatest demonstration of God's love for us. Happy Christmas, [*pray a brief blessing over everyone gathered and for those they will be with at Christmas*].

17. Show video or perform and sing... Hillsong “*Born is the King*” <http://youtube/Qf6OoAZbAQg>

Appendix A

How to build a Manger:

Do this in a way that will suit your resources and risk assessment – here is one option with softwood.

<http://www.graphicdesignhero.com/blog/2009/01/how-to-build-a-christmas-manger>

Appendix B

How to Make a Mobile:

Use materials that suit your resources and risk assessment.

See page 11 of “LUCY'S PAINTBOX” for lovely cutouts that are free online. <http://www.lucypaintbox.org.uk/PDF/Lucy-Paintbox-Nativity-Colour-And-Cut-Out.pdf>