

Mission Together

Christmas Crib Liturgy & Blessing



Guidance for teachers/leaders

To maintain the idea of Advent as a time of waiting, we suggest this crib blessing takes place near the end of term and if possible in the school hall or prayer place, so that pupils 'journey' to the crib.

If singing is not permitted in your school, please play instrumental versions of the suggested carols. If possible, have the Advent wreath close by and include the lighting of candles within the liturgy.

There are no specific scripture readings, however character descriptions are based on the Gospels and include scriptural quotes.

Below is the liturgy outline.

For this liturgy you will need:

- A Christmas Crib set
- Advent wreath
- Optional: Cutout figure for each pupil, see Appendix 1.
- Pens/pencils – if using optional activity.

Setting the scene

Please refer to our guide *How to Pray with Children* <https://missiontogether.org.uk/prayer-resources/>

Entrance carol: *Come to the manger*

Sign of the cross

Lighting of the Advent wreath

Introduction

We suggest a teacher or chaplain reads out this introduction. See page 2

Opening Prayer

Read by pupil. See page 2.

Crib figures arrival

We suggest five pupils bring forward the crib figures and five read the accompanying descriptions. See pages. 2-4

Carol: *Away in a Manger*

Optional activity: Come to the crib

We suggest this activity is undertaken **prior to your Crib Liturgy** so that pupils' pictures are ready to present during the liturgy. See Appendix 1 for instructions.

Bidding Prayers: read by pupils. See page.5

Closing Blessing: read by leader, headteacher or Parish Priest. See page.5

Closing carol: *Little Drummer Boy* or *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

Mission Together is the children's branch of Missio, the Pope's charity for world mission.

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Introduction

Read by teacher/leader

Every year at this time something wonderful happens in churches, schools and homes around the world. Christmas cribs that have been stored away since January are unpacked and put on display.

Friends and followers of Jesus gather around the cribs, to pray, to reflect, and to get ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Today we gather around our school crib to do the same.

Have you noticed anything unusual about our crib? Apart from the animals in the stall, it is empty! Who is missing? *Shepherds, wise men, angels, Mary, Joseph, the baby Jesus.*

The Advent wreath we lit at the start of our prayer time, reminds us that we are still waiting for the arrival of Jesus at Christmas, so today we will have to wait a little while until all the characters arrive in our crib. They'll get there one by one and as they do we will find out why God invited them to at the first Christmas.

Let's begin with our opening prayer.

Opening Prayer

Reader: God and Father of our worldwide family,
today we gather around our school crib.
Help us to learn more about the birth of your son, Jesus,
so that we can prepare our hearts for Christmas day
and be ready to celebrate with joy and hope,
the love you have for all your children. **Amen.**

Arrival of crib figures: Joseph

We suggest instrumental carols are played quietly as pupils present and introduce the crib figures.

Leader: Now let's welcome our figures to the crib. Let's begin with Joseph.

Pupil carries Joseph to the crib

Reader: Joseph lived in Nazareth and was a faithful man.
He was engaged to Mary, a life together they'd planned.
Then one night in a dream to him, an angel did appear,
with news of Mary's baby, the saviour who was near!
God had chosen Joseph to care for Mary and her son,
They were to call him 'Jesus'.
Now a new life had begun. Based on Mt 1:18-25



Arrival of crib figures: Mary

Leader: Now let us welcome Mary to our crib.

Pupil carries Mary to the crib

Reader: Mary was a humble girl who prayed to God each day,
So when the angel appeared to her, she didn't run away.
The angel said 'Rejoice Mary, for God has chosen you,
to give birth to our Lord Jesus, and give hope to our world too.
Mary answered, 'Be it done to me, just as you have said.'
And life changed the very moment Mary bravely bowed her head. Based on Luke 1:26-38

Arrival of crib figures: the angel Gabriel

Leader: Let us welcome the angel Gabriel to our crib.

Pupil carries the angel Gabriel to the crib

Reader: God sent his angel messengers that first Christmas day.
To tell the shepherds Christ was born, and sleeping in some hay.
And as the shepherds ran to see, they heard the angels sing,
'Glory to God and peace to those who joyfully welcome our king.' Based on Luke 2:14

Arrival of crib figures: Shepherds

Leader: Let us welcome the shepherds to our crib.

Pupil carries shepherds to the crib

Reader: Shepherds weren't much liked back then; the people thought them rough
But in God's eyes the shepherds were his children that he loved
He sent his angels down to them, and though they were afraid,
They rejoiced when God chose them to see the saviour he had made.
So off they ran and found Jesus, not surrounded by luxury or fuss.
'Look' said the shepherds all smiling,
'at what they Lord has done for us!' Based on Luke 2:1-20



Arrival of crib figures: Wise Men

As the Church doesn't celebrate the wise men's arrival at the crib until the feast of the Epiphany, 6 January, we suggest they are not placed inside the crib, but alongside. Moving the wise men into the crib after the school holiday helps children to learn that Christmas lasts beyond 25 December.

Leader: Let us welcome the wise men to our crib.

Pupil carries wise men to the crib

Reader: The wise men lived in Asia, very far from Bethlehem.
The star they followed to that town surprised and delighted them.
It was leading to a saviour, God had promised through the years,
A saviour who'd reveal to us the things we need not fear.
When people seem quite different, think of the three wise men
Who some would turn away from as they didn't look like them.
But God loves all our differences, and to help us understand,
He led the wise men to the crib, to hold Jesus' little hand. Based on Mt 2:1-11

Leader: You may have noticed that there's still somebody missing. Who might this be? It's Jesus!
In churches around the world, baby Jesus isn't placed in the crib until late on Christmas eve.
But as we won't be here then, we are going to put Jesus in the crib now.

Carol: Away in a Manger

Pupil carries the baby Jesus to the crib

Leader: Today we've heard how God called Mary, Joseph, shepherds, wise men and angels to the crib, to share the joy of Jesus' birth. God calls us to the crib too, so that we can be close to Jesus and – like the shepherds and wise men – leave the crib eager to tell others that God came into our world as a baby, to show us how to love and care for one another.

Optional activity: Come to the crib

Leader: Now it is time for you to come to the crib! Before we came together to pray, you all drew a picture of yourself. One by one, I'll ask you to bring your picture forward and place it near the crib. As you do, ask God to help you do what you can to love and care for others.



Bidding Prayers

Reader: Dear Jesus, you came into our world to teach us how to love. Bless our homes and help them to be places where we learn to do the same.
We pray to the Lord. **R/** Lord, hear us.

Reader: Dear Jesus, you came into our world to teach us how to live together. Bless our schools, help them to be places where we learn to do the same.
We pray to the Lord. **R/** Lord, hear us.

Reader: Dear Jesus, you came into our world to teach us how to pray. Bless our priest and our parish, so that they might help us all to grow in faith.
We pray to the Lord. **R/** Lord, hear us.

Reader: Dear Jesus, you came into our world to teach us how to care for God's worldwide family. Bless all your children around the world, help us to see one another as brothers and sisters.
We pray to the Lord. **R/** Lord, hear us.

Reader: Let us say together the **Mission Together Prayer**.

Christmas Crib Blessing

Leader: Heavenly Father, bless our school crib,
May Jesus remind us how to love
May Mary remind us how to be brave
May Joseph remind us how to be faithful
May the angels remind us how to praise you
May the shepherds remind us how to be joyful
May the wise men remind us how to welcome others
And may we remind everybody that we belong to God's family.
We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Mission Together Prayer

May all children
In the world
Share love
Share friendship and live
In the peace
Of God's love
Now and forever. **Amen.**

Closing carol: *Little Drummer Boy* or *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

Appendix 1: Come to the crib



God invites us all to come to the crib and draw close to Jesus. Provide each pupil with a copy of a figurine (alternatively, they can draw their own). The children can create an image of themselves. They can decorate the figure as they wish and add items that reveal their personality and interests. **We suggest these figures are created before the Crib Liturgy, so that the pupils can present them as a prayer.**

After the liturgy, you may wish to attach the figures to a display board alongside/behind your school crib. This is reminiscent of an Italian tradition, *Presepe*, where not just Mary, Joseph, etc are seen at the crib, but also members of the local community!

