

Scene 6: The new beginning

Bible

Based on John 3:16-21

Aim

To allow the children to reflect upon the things that they have seen and to see Christmas as the beginning of Jesus' life and teaching about God; to understand that the events of the first Christmas fit into the bigger picture of Christian belief about who Jesus was and why he was born.

Setting the scene

This is the part of the journey where the Christmas story is put into context for the children and they are asked to wonder about its relevance to their own lives and the life of the world around them. They hear about Jesus growing up, significant event in his life and the final week before his death. They are told about the cross and the resurrection. They are asked to wonder what all of this is about and told that they can take the story with them back into their own lives. Using the same method of storytelling as in the first scene, but in a different way, the story is designed to give a feeling of continuity and resolution to the journey.

Character

Storyteller (ideally the same person as in the first scene)

Scenery

A plain mat, a small Christmas tree, some wrapped presents, Christmas decorations, Christmas stockings, Christmas cards, some easy chairs, a small television set, an electric fire with a surround (or a card model or painting of a fireplace), some framed pictures, some house plants, and an advent calendar.

Storytelling props

Black felt and set of coloured felt squares corresponding to those used in the first scene:

A wooden tray large enough to hold the following items:

Wooden manger and baby (from a nativity set)

A small wooden dove shape; some seeds sealed within two pieces of clear tape and three small fabric leaves; a tealight candle and a small box of matches; some wooden bird shapes, a small wooden boat shape; a small wooden cross, small wooden figure of Jesus (with hands stretched out); some small wooden people figures. Six small boxes (one to keep each group of the above items in until needed).

A sample of the book to be given later to each child (see www.sgmlifewords.com.uk for ideas.)

Lighting

Table lamps or up-lighter to give bright lighting.

The Journey

The scene is set in a modern day living room where the storyteller is already in place and waiting to greet the children. They have met him in the first scene where he told them the story of creation and asked them to find out about God's great rescue plan for the world and that he would see them later. The children are led out from the sumptuous, but mysteriously lit, palace into the bright cosy atmosphere of the modern living room, set with easy chairs, a small television set, framed pictures, house plants and so on. The room is decorated as if for Christmas, with a Christmas tree, decorations, and Christmas cards. The mat is placed in front of the fireplace. The storyteller welcomes the children and asks them to sit around the mat. The adults can sit in the easy chairs and everyone is encouraged to relax and enjoy the festive scene. The storyteller then asks the children if they have enjoyed the journey and after some preliminary chat, leads into the final part of the story. During the telling of the story it is best to encourage the children to reflect quietly, rather than to talk. The storyteller begins with the black cloth from the first story already rolled out.

Script: The new beginning

The children will be familiar with the materials and the storytelling method from the story of creation. The same pattern is used in order to demonstrate the continuity of the story and God's plan to repair our broken world.

Have the black felt for the story rolled out ready. Have the seven felt squares in a pile as before, and the other items in their smaller boxes. Remember that the squares are placed on the black felt starting at your right, so they unfold left to right for the children.

Storyteller: Did you enjoy the journey?

Allow time for a few answers.

I wonder in what ways you think God's beautiful present has been spoilt... I wonder if you have any ideas from what you have seen about what God was going to do to repair his broken world...

Lift up the wooden manger and baby.

In the beginning—in the second beginning—was...

...there was a baby. God had chose Mary to become the mother of his only Son.

Place down the first creation square and put the manger on this.

This baby was the light for the world. He was the light that all light comes from. Mary and her husband Joseph looked after the baby... the baby grew and became a child... and then an

adult. When Jesus was about 30 years old he went to the River Jordan where his cousin John was baptizing people.

(Place the second square (water) next to the first square.)

John baptized Jesus. Jesus went down into water...

(Push your hand down into the square and then lift it up again slowly.)

...and John lifted him back into the light. Some people nearby said they saw a dove come down from heaven close to Jesus.

(Remove the dove from its box and slowly place it on the blue square.)

Others heard a voice, which said, 'You are my own dear Son, and I am pleased with you.'

(Hold a hand in blessing above the blue square.)

Now Jesus began his work. But what was his work? His work was to put God's gift back together again: to repair what had been spoilt.

He began by telling stories.

(Place the green creation square next to the second square.)

These stories were like seeds sown, not in the soil, but in people's hearts.

(Place the seeds along the bottom of the green square—nearest the children.)

The seeds grew and helped people to learn more about God's love; more about what God is like; and more about God's great rescue plan to repair his world.

(For each of these three things mentioned, place a small leaf above the seeds on the green square.)

What else did Jesus do? He challenged the darkness...

(Place the fourth creation square next to the third, but with one hand 'pushing' against the night part of this day/night square.)

... and came close to people, especially those whom nobody else came close to. Watch. Look.

(Place a tealight candle on to the night section of the square and light it carefully.)

When people came close to Jesus they changed. They could see things they couldn't see before. They could do things they couldn't do before. They were made well.

What else did Jesus do?

(Place the sea and sky creation square next to the fourth square.)

He told everyone how much God cares for them. He cares for every bird that flies... every sparrow that falls...

(Place some small birds on to the sky part of the square.)

And if God cares for the birds of the air, then he cares for people even more. Once he showed his friends how much he cared. They were out in a boat on the lake and a great storm came. They were tossed about on the water and thought they would drown.

(Hold a small wooden boat over the water part of the square and move it as if on a stormy sea.)

But Jesus stood up and ordered the wind and the waves to be quiet...

(Place the boat down and hold a hand in blessing above the square.)

The more people got to know Jesus—the more they came close to him—the more they knew deep peace on the inside.

Finally, Jesus knew that the only way to put repair what had been broken was to go to Jerusalem for one last time...

(Place down the sixth creation square next to the fifth square.)

...and let himself be stretched out wide...

(Pause then stretch out wide both your arms, left and right.)

...and die on a cross.

(Drop your head, pause, and then place a small wooden cross on the square.)

It was the only way to bring God close to people and people close to each other.

(Trace your finger along the vertical and then the horizontal beams of the cross as you say this.)

But three days later...

(Place the seventh and final square next to the sixth square.)

...people saw Jesus alive again.

(Place a wooden resurrection figure of Jesus on the square.)

Now anybody who wants to come close to God can do so. Anybody can be part of God's new beginning—part of his new gift—and be full of light, because Jesus, the light for the world, has made it possible.

(During these last words slowly place some small wooden people figures around the Jesus figure.)

God did all this because his beautiful world got spoilt... God did all this to clear up the mess that people had made of his gift.

And what God did...

(Lift up the manger and baby.)

...began with the baby Jesus at Christmas.

The storyteller then shows the children the special little book that they can take home and links some of its pictures to the journey. This will remind them of the things they have seen. They might like to show it to their parents or carers and tell them about the journey.

He then explains to the children that they can take the story with them in a special way. A candle snuffer is held over the burning tealight candle in order to gather smoke. This is then gently wafted towards the children and the storyteller invites the children to carry the story with them as they leave.

The leader then asks the group to leave the living room singing *Where are you going, children?*