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Early Childhood Birth Narrative Ritual for Advent



This simple retelling of the story that led to the birth of Jesus is intended to be separated into 28 short readings. Paste each day's reading onto a colorful paper angel. Our family decorated the angels with glitter halos and skirt decorations. Read and post one angel per day so that there is a whole choir of angels ready for Christmas eve. Reread the earlier parts of the story each time, and allow children to finish the sentences as they become familiar with the story. My grandchildren sang HWB 172 O come o come Emmanuel before each reading, hiding (shielding) the flame until the phrase "until the Son of God appear". Then they raised the candle and moved it in a circle of praise on "rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel" and brought it back down on "shall come to you, o Israel".

Hoping you have a blessed Advent,
Elsie Rempel, Director of Christian Education and Nurture, Mennonite Church Canada

1. God has lots of angels. One of his angels is named Gabriel.
2. The angel Gabriel had a very special job. God asked him to take a message to one of his children on earth.
3. God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee.
4. Gabriel came to a girl named Mary. Mary was planning to marry Joseph, who was part of the family of David.
5. The angel Gabriel went to her and said, "Hello! God is with you!"
6. Mary was afraid because she had never seen an angel before. She didn't know what the angel was saying to her.
7. But the angels said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God loves you. God is going to give you a baby boy, and you can call him Jesus. Jesus will grow up to be a great king, and his kingdom will never end."

8. Mary told the angel that this made her very happy, and the angel went away.
9. Then Mary went to visit her friend, Elizabeth.
10. God told Elizabeth that Mary was going to have baby Jesus. Mary was so happy that she sang a special song to God.
11. Mary stayed in Elizabeth's house for three whole months, and then she went back home.
12. Joseph was going to be Mary's husband, but he was worried about Mary having a baby, and so he decided that he wouldn't marry her after all.
13. One night, Joseph was having a dream. In his dream, a special angel came to talk to him.
14. The angel told him not to be worried or afraid. The angel told Joseph to call the baby Jesus.
15. When Joseph woke up, he remembered what the special angel had said. Mary and Joseph got married and were very happy.
16. One day, a man named Caesar Augustus made a rule that all the people had to be counted. So, all the people had to go back to the town where they were born.
17. Joseph and Mary lived in the town of Nazareth, but they had to walk all the way to the town of Bethlehem, because Joseph was born in Bethlehem.
18. It was a very long walk, so they decided to take a donkey with them, so Mary could sit on it and rest sometimes.
19. Mary and Joseph walked for a very, very, long time. (If Advent is shorter, these walking days can be shortened.)
20. Sometimes, the donkey got tired, so they had to rest for a while. Sometimes, Mary and Joseph got tired too. Then they rested for a while.
21. It took them a really long time to walk all the way to Bethlehem. At night, they had to sleep outside.
22. After a very long time, Mary and Joseph and the donkey finally got to Bethlehem.
23. They tried to find a place to stay at a hotel, but the hotel was all full, so they had to look somewhere else.
24. They asked for a room at another hotel, but that hotel was full too. So many people had to be counted in the town, that there was no room left for Mary and Joseph and the donkey anywhere.
25. Finally, a man at one of the hotels told Mary and Joseph that they could stay in the stable behind his hotel. It wasn't the same as staying in a hotel, but they were very happy to finally have a place to sleep.
26. So Mary and Joseph took the donkey to the stable. It was full of animals.
27. They made a little spot in the stable that they could stay in. They unpacked their bags, and tried to get comfortable. At least it was warm and dry in the stable. Mary and Joseph were hoping for a good sleep.
28. While Mary and Joseph were in the stable, their baby was born. They wrapped the baby in the soft cloths she had brought. Then they put him in a manger, filled with clean, warm hay. They were very happy, and they named him Jesus.

—used by permission, Beth Sawatsky (a young mother in the Grain of Wheat Fellowship, Winnipeg, Manitoba)

This Advent Ritual creatively retells the story leading up to the birth of Jesus.

It supplements the earlier At-Home Advent material for 2005, *God's Unstoppable Purpose*.

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