

# Nativity trail

Invite your community to join in a festive and symbolic journey around your town or church grounds

This fun and festive trail can be hosted in various ways:

- Over a week, with QR code posters (see attached) in shop windows. Participants fill in their activity sheet in their own time and return it on (perhaps at a Sunday service) to collect their prize.
- In one afternoon/evening, with volunteers dressed up as the six nativity characters.
- As a hybrid event in one afternoon/evening, using volunteers and some stations with QR code posters.

## Preparation

- Set a start and end time, so your volunteers are clear on timings, and everyone can collect their prizes before the event ends. If you have lots of participants, you may want to have a host stagger the groups start times, so you don't get crowds at the same person or poster all at one time.
- Advertise your event using the poster provided (see attached) and via social media. Perhaps contact local schools. You may want people to sign up online so you have an idea of numbers.
- Print and display the six posters around your area, perhaps laminated and hung on trees or fences around your churchyard, or in local shop windows around town (clear permissions for all places you put them up). Alternatively, plan to station volunteers in nativity fancy dress at these locations for a set time period.
- Create a map/list of all six locations so participants know where to find them, as well as your starting/finishing point (your church). You will need a copy of this map for each group, plus an A3 map displayed at your starting point.
- Print activity sheets (download these from [rootsforchurches.com/nativity-trail](https://www.rootsforchurches.com/nativity-trail)) for all participants.
- At your finishing point, provide prizes (Christmas sweets) and warm drinks to those who complete the trail and invite them to other Christmas events at your church.
- Something to be aware of is that due to the soft start and finish times of this event, the people who are welcoming families are the main introduction to your church and the event, so consider who would be the best people for families to make a connection with at this moment – is it your minister, children or youth leaders, or your Sunday welcome team?



## This resource includes

- Six Nativity trail posters (including QR codes for audio editions of the Christmas story).
- Character script and costume suggestions for each station, if you want to have volunteers verbally share the story instead of using the QR codes.
- An activity sheet for participants.
- An event poster and invitation postcards for you to customise with your church details, time and date.

## Running the Nativity trail

- Position your 'welcome team' within the entrance of your church so they are the first people that families meet and it's clear and obvious where to start from. Positioning a table near the entrance will provide space to have the maps and activity sheets on, ready to give out, and help make the check-in area more obvious.

If you have large numbers attending, recruit multiple volunteers in this 'welcome' role so you can have several families at once being welcomed and given instructions.

- At the table, the welcome team member will greet the family. (You may want to sign everyone in if they signed up online ahead of time, confirm photo permissions, and take their email if they would like to hear about other events at your church). As part of this welcome, if you have costumed volunteers at each point – explain what to do when they meet each nativity character.
- Give each participant or family group a map and an activity sheet, the latter highlights six aspects of the Christmas story, matching the six stops on your Nativity trail, one per nativity character. Encourage participants to walk around in families or mixed aged groups to find the six posters/characters in order.

Participants listen to a portion of the Christmas story via the QR code (or live from dressed-up volunteer). Each stop provides participants with a missing letter to fill in on their activity sheet.

**The letters spell out 'WITH US', explaining that Christmas celebrates Jesus our Emmanuel, God with us. But don't tell them this or it will spoil the trail!**

- Once the family/group feels confident with where they are going and what to do, they can head out on the Nativity trail. The trail can be done at whatever pace they like, it is neither timed nor a race, and they are welcome to stop along the route. But do let them know when the trail ends, so that they can make sure to come and collect their prize and a warm drink in good time.

- The welcome team also has a role when families have completed the trail and activity sheet. Have family groups return to the start point to receive a little prize – candy canes/chocolate coins and refreshments. Let the family know about Christmas events and services in your church, and other worship/regular activities, ensuring that they know they are welcome at any time.  
**Note:** There may be some crossover of groups starting and finishing in the same time period.

## How to scale up

- Add music** If you have willing musicians, they could be dressed as angels for location 3, and sing/play Christmas carols in front of your church or in a local café. Beware that you may need permission from the council if performing in a public place.
- Volunteers in nativity costumes** If you have willing volunteers, have some dress up as the nativity characters, sharing their part of the Christmas story. (Children or young people might enjoy this role too.) It's safer and more fun to send your volunteers out in pairs, so they don't feel conspicuous standing on the corner in fancy dress. The volunteer who is not in costume could have the poster, Christmas sweets to share at the end of the trail, and be available to talk to bystanders about the nativity trail (perhaps having more maps and activity sheets on hand if families want to join in, in which case they should be signposted to the start of the trail). Depending on the volunteer's confidence they can show the poster with the QR code and other challenges, or they can tell the story and give out the challenges and 'letter' verbally.



## Suggested costumes/props



**Mary:** 'All blue' clothing inc. jumper, hat, scarf. Prop: dustpan + brush.



**Joseph:** 'Outdoor work clothes' incl. tool belt. OR 'classic nativity getup' – dressing-gown and tea towel on head. Prop: large comical hammer.



**Angel:** 'As silver and sparkly as you can', angel wings and halo, Vaseline and glitter for face art.



**Shepherd:** 'As much colourful knitwear as possible' OR 'classic nativity getup' – dressing-gown and tea towel on head. Prop: large shepherd's staff.



**Star:** Large gold cape and star wand, 'All black' or 'All sparkly' under the cape.



**Magi/Wise men:** Regal looking clothes – long gown, jewellery, crown. Camel costume. Props: gift-wrapped box, jar with a lid, small bowl.

See the character scripts included within this pdf. These scripts are the same as the audio versions on the QR codes.

Dress warmly (if it's winter in your hemisphere) and please keep in mind your safeguarding, and health & safety policies.

- Sidekicks with giveaways** It's more fun to station volunteers in twos, as they will be waiting around for a while in the cold. Have a sidekick with each dressed-up character. They could have Christmas flyers (about your church services or ministries), candy canes, etc., to give out to passers-by who are interested in what you are doing.
- Have multiple characters** If you have lots of people wanting to take part, you could add characters – for example, three wise men or a choir of angels.
- Connect with your community** You could connect with your community on a wider level by partnering with some shops, spaces and cafes by asking if you can position a character in their location.



SCAN TO HEAR  
THE STORY



## PART 1



# Nativity trail

**Did you know:** Mary was so happy after the angel visited her that she wrote a song praising God for all that he had done and was going to do – you could say it was the first Christmas carol.

**Question & challenge:** What is your favourite Christmas song? Are you brave enough to sing it as you walk along?

**Geek out:** Can you name 10 of the top 20 Christmas carols?



Collect your activity sheet from:

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# Nativity trail

Scripts to be used if you have volunteers who have dressed up.

1 Character script for: **Mary**



My name is Mary and I lived in a little town called Nazareth. I was engaged to marry Joseph. One day, an angel appeared to me and said 'Mary, God is with you.'

I was very surprised to see an angel.

The angel said 'Don't be afraid. God loves you and is pleased with you. God has a special job for you. You're going to have a baby boy and he will be God's son.'

I believed everything the angel said. I loved God and trusted all that he had planned. I replied, 'I am the Lord's servant. May everything happen, just as you've said.'

The missing letter on your activity sheet is 'W'.

**Did you know:** Mary was so happy after the angel visited her that she wrote a song praising God for all that he had done and was going to do – you could say it was the first Christmas carol.

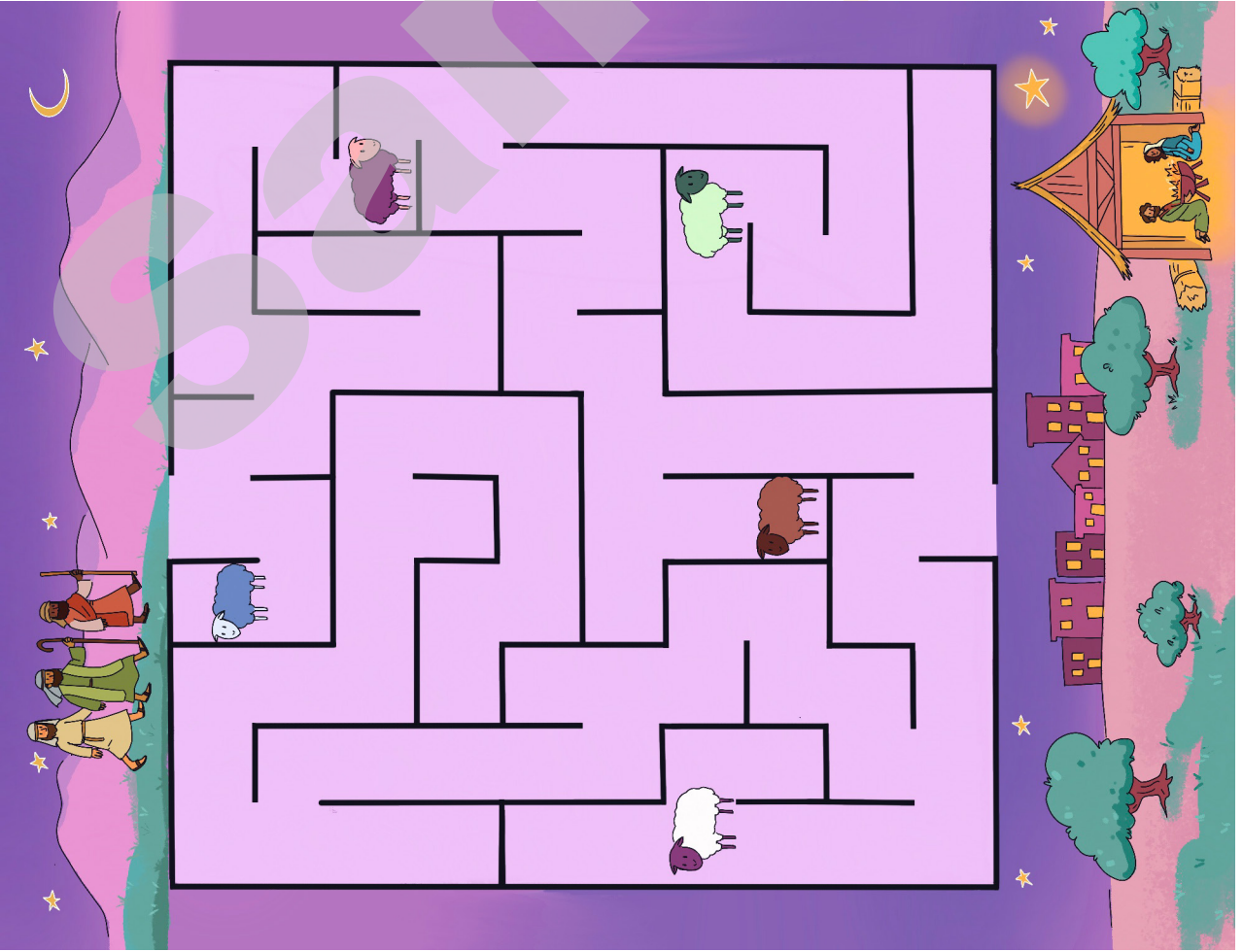
**Question & challenge:** What is your favourite Christmas song? Are you brave enough to sing it as you walk along?

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# Nativity trail

**4** Lead the shepherds to the stable to find Jesus, making sure they collect all their sheep on the way.



**4**

**5**

Colour by number to show this unique star.



**3**

Draw the expressions on the shepherds and angels. How do you think they felt?



fold here -----