



YEAR

4

UNIT D

# CHRISTMAS

## ABOUT THE UNIT

In this unit of work the children will study the role of angels in the story of Christmas. They will learn about Christians being messengers of Christ's Good News in the world today and how the Church celebrates the Feast of Christmas.

## WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

This unit builds on previous work in Year 3 when the story of the angels and the shepherds was the focus for Christmas.

## PRIOR LEARNING

It would be helpful if the children have:

- some experience of Christian customs associated with Christmas.

## SKILLS

Reading, discussion, empathetic writing, research, interpreting symbolism, sequencing skills, thinking skills, speaking and listening, role-play.

## VOCABULARY

Angel, messengers, Zechariah, John the Baptist, angel Gabriel, crib, symbols, Jesse tree.

## ASSESSMENT

At the end of this unit:

	A.T.1	A.T.2
<b>Most children will</b> know about the announcements made by angels in the stories associated with the birth of John the Baptist and the birth of Jesus. They will understand that angels are heralds of important messages and will be able to consider ways in which Christians today are heralds of the message of Christ. They will know and be able to explain some of the Church's customs for celebrating the birth of Christ.	3a 3b 3c	3b 3c
<b>Less able children will</b> identify some parts of the stories associated with the message of the angels. They will recognise that they played an important role in announcing the coming of Christ.	2b 2c	2b 2c
<b>More able children will</b> know that the messages of the angels in the stories studied changed the lives of those who heard them. They will be able to recognise links between the message of the birth of John the Baptist and the message of the birth of Jesus. The children will understand some reasons why it is important for Christians to be messengers of Christ today. They will be able to explain the impact that some Christians have had upon the world because of the message of Christ they have lived and proclaimed.	3a 3b 4b	3b 3c 4a

## PROGRAMME OF STUDY

**R2** Hear, read and explore the Gospel accounts of key events in the life of Jesus: Nativity.

**Ch2** How the local church is “good news” for people and how everyone can have a part in this.

**C4** The Church’s celebrations of significant events in the life of Jesus, e.g. Christmas Mass and customs.

**C6** Signs and symbols and their significance in liturgy.

## TEACHING STRATEGIES

- Children to sequence the events of the Christmas story. Include the annunciation, the visitation, the birth of John the Baptist, the annunciation to Joseph, the journey to Bethlehem, the angels and the shepherds, the visit of the wise men and the flight into Egypt.
- Find out when the Church celebrates the feasts of the annunciation, visitation and birth of John the Baptist.
- Children to make lists of all the characters in the Christmas story and what they did. Describe some of their characteristics and justify views from the text of the story.
- In the story of Christmas it is the angels that play a very important part bringing news and warning the different characters.
- Look at the activity of the angels in:
  - The annunciation to Zechariah
  - The annunciation to Mary
  - The dream of Joseph
  - The shepherds in the field
  - The warning given to Joseph to go to Egypt.
- Create a table with the message of the angel and how the different people responded to the message.
- What was the most important part of the message of the angels?
- Revisit the story of the annunciation to Mary.
- Revise titles given to Jesus by Gabriel and recall their meeting.
- What title did the angel give to Mary?
- What do you think “full of grace” mean? What else was contained in the message of Gabriel?
- Children to imagine that they were Mary or one of the other characters who was greeted by an angel in the Christmas story. What response might you have made to the news the angel was bringing you?
- Children to imagine they are the angel Gabriel. Write a short presentation about themselves and the work they have been given to do.
- What have we learnt about the role of angels in God’s plan?
- Christians are often described as messengers of God’s Good news. Can you think of ways in which people could be messengers of this news at home, in school and in the world at large?
- Children to research some information about important Christians who have been messengers (e.g. Mother Theresa, Pope John Paul II, Francis of Assisi). What did they say and what did they do with their lives that made them messengers of the good news of Jesus?
- Write a newspaper style report about one of the events of the Christmas story. Consider appropriate headlines, which give a sense of what the story is about.
- Like the Angels, Christians are messengers today: Design a poster with your Christmas message. Think of the different audiences this message might be directed towards (e.g. people who have never heard of Jesus before, younger children, etc.)
- Find out about some of the activities in your local parish that will help to proclaim the message of Christmas this year. Include Midnight and Christmas Masses, blessing of crib, carol services, etc.
- Research some of the different signs and symbols used in the Christmas liturgy, e.g. crib, Jesse or Christmas tree, Christmas lights, stars, angels, etc.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

**R2** That God his Father prepared the People of Israel for the coming of Jesus; that Jesus was born a Jew and lived in faithful observance of the Jewish tradition.

**Ch2** That everyone has a place in the Church and opportunities to live and share its life.

- Know and recall in detail the story of Christmas.
- Recognise, discuss and write about the important role played by angels in the different parts of the Christmas story.
- Be able to consider how Christians might be messengers of the good news of Jesus today.

**C4** A developing awareness of the customs and traditions of major liturgical feasts and seasons.

**C6** Of the significance and power of signs and symbols for Christians around the world.

## FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

In recalling the story, find different places on the map and trace some of the journeys.

Nazareth, Judea, Bethlehem, the countries in the east that the wise men may have come from, the journey of the Holy Family to Egypt and the journey from Egypt to Nazareth.

Share some of these messages with elderly and sick parishioners.

## RELATED SCRIPTURE

*Lk. 1-2: 21* – The story of the Birth of John the Baptist and the Birth of Jesus

*Mt. 1: 18-25* – The Dream of Joseph

## OTHER LINKS

School-Parish Links: Finding out about and taking part in Christmas celebrations in the parish.

## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

- Pray for those who bring the Good News of the message of Christ to others today.
- Pray that we can be messengers of the Good News by our words and actions.
- Take part in the ceremony to bless the manger scene.

## EVALUATION

**What went well?**

**Which areas of planning need to be developed/adapted next time?**

**What needs to be revisited/developed in a later unit?**