

INSTANT
NATIVITY

IT BEGINS IN BETHLEHEM

THE SCRIPT
The Virtual Version
Written by Bob Hartman



The basics

All you need for your nativity is this script, an enthusiastic narrator and a willing audience. (You'll also need to sort out how you want to stream this online so it works virtually. We recommend trying Facebook Live or Zoom, but there are lots of options out there.)

Your narrator simply follows through the script, telling the nativity story and encouraging audience participation. You also may want to customise it – we've included some ideas for carols and accompanying resources.

Make sure you give it a good read through beforehand and make it your own. Have fun!

Character information

It can be great to encourage your audience to be dressed up at home as characters from the nativity. It all adds to the fun! But don't worry, you won't need tons of people to read out the script – just the one narrator.

Your narrator may also want to dress up in a nativity-based or Christmas-themed outfit.

Accompanying resources

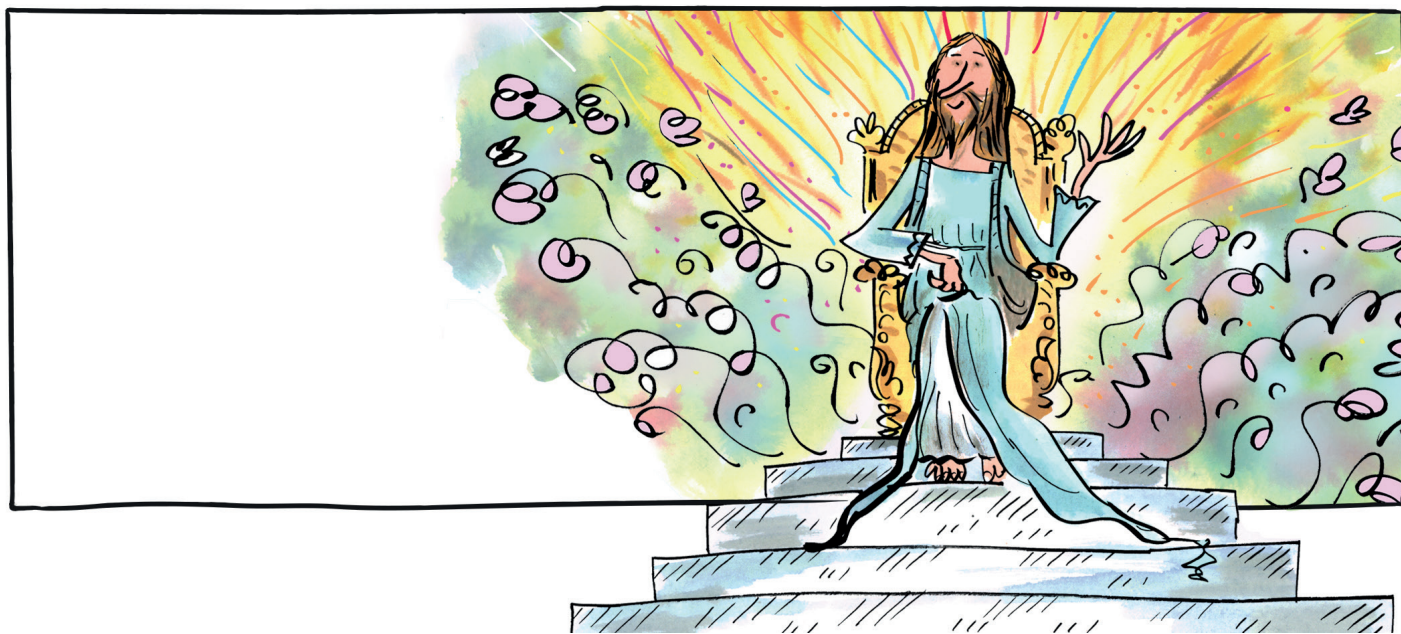
We have created a set of visuals you can use alongside your nativity. Download the PowerPoint from our website, available for both widescreen and square screens. You may or may not want to include these in your virtual nativity, depending on how tech-confident you're feeling.

This nativity is based on our children's story, *It Begins in Bethlehem – A Nativity Rhyme for Christmastime*. Why not give away copies as a gift? You can order them online at special discounted prices. We have also created a video animation of *It Begins in Bethlehem – A Nativity Rhyme for Christmastime* that you can download or stream and show in your virtual service.

Check these out and all our other Christmas resources for you and your church at biblesociety.org.uk/christmas

Give the story

Free resources like this nativity, as well as our mission to help bring the Bible to people all around the world, are funded by our generous supporters. To find out more about holding a collection at your church for Bible Society, please visit biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved





Narrator

(Slide 1)

Welcome to *It Begins in Bethlehem: a Nativity Rhyme for Christmastime!*

My name is _____ and I will be leading us through the nativity story today.

There'll be lots of opportunity to join in at home, so listen carefully!

(Slide 2)

Our story begins with A Woman Called Mary.

I'll read the verses, but there is a chorus we would like all of you to help us with.

Here are the actions that go with the words. Join in if you can from home!

'God knocks down the proud'

(Make a punching motion – mind your neighbour!).

'And lifts up the meek'

(Hold hands in front of you, palms up, and make a lifting motion).

'And does mighty things'

(Make a muscle motion)

'For those who are weak'

(Slump shoulders, arms at side)

'And blesses the ones'

(Hold hand out in blessing motion)

'Whose service he seeks'

(Hand above eyes, searching motion)

'So sing out his praise'

(Hands at side of mouth)

'He's amazing'

(Raise arms in air in celebration)

'Now let's do it one more time, to make sure we've all got it!'

(repeat actions above)

Narrator

(Slide 3)

A woman called Mary
Was doing her chores,
When an angel arrived,
But not through the doors.
He simply appeared
And she dropped to the floor.
'Hello, Mary', he said.
'GOD IS WITH YOU.'

'God is with me?' She wondered.
'But what does that mean?
What is this all about?
Is it some kind of dream?'
The angel just smiled.
'Don't be scared. Please don't scream.
God is happy with you
AND WILL BLESS YOU!'

(Slide 4)

Chorus (congregation) join in with actions)

God knocks down the proud,
And lifts up the meek,
And does mighty things
For those who are weak.
And blesses the ones
Whose service he seeks.
So sing out his praise,
HE'S AMAZING!

'You'll soon have a baby,'
The angel went on.
'A quite special baby
Called Jesus, God's Son.
The heir of King David,
He'll sit on his throne.
And his kingdom
WILL LAST FOR EVER.'

(Slide 5)

But how?' Mary asked.
'I don't understand.
I'm engaged to be wed
But he's not yet my man.'
'Trust God,' said the angel.
'He's got it all planned.
His Spirit will
COME UPON YOU.'

Chorus (congregation) join in with actions)

God knocks down the proud,
And lifts up the meek,
And does mighty things
For those who are weak.
And blesses the ones
Whose service he seeks.
So sing out his praise,
HE'S AMAZING!



(Optional) 'So let's do what Mary said. Let's sing out God's praise, he's amazing!'

(Optional) Everyone sings: *O come all ye faithful*

Mary

leader reads
prayer

Narrator

(Slide 6)

Lord, help us be like Mary
Who answered when you asked.
Help us learn to give and serve
No matter what the task.'

Joseph comes next in our story. He is engaged to Mary but has just found out that she is having a baby – a baby that is not his! There's a chorus for his poem, too. And once again, we'd like all of you to join in! Here are your actions:

'Joseph don't worry'
(Brush hand across forehead, as if relieved)

'Joseph don't weep'
(Run finger down cheek from eye)

'Lay down your head and go back to sleep'
(Lay head on folded hands)

'Mary's been faithful, her love's strong and deep'
(Fist or hand on heart)

'And her baby is God's own son'
(Rockabye baby motion)

Narrator

All night, Joseph tossed. All night, Joseph turned.
He just couldn't sleep. He'd only just learned
That Mary was pregnant. What's more, she'd confirmed
That the baby she bore was not his.

Chorus (congregation) join in with actions)
JOSEPH don't worry, JOSEPH don't weep.
Lay down your head, and go back to sleep.
Mary's been faithful. Her love's strong and deep,
And her baby is God's own Son.

(Slide 7)

She'd told him this tale: an angelic visit,
A son to be born by God's Holy Spirit.
The more she went on, the less he believed it.
He wanted to break their engagement

But just as sleep came, that angel appeared.
'Don't worry,' he said, 'there's nothing to fear.
I know that you're troubled, so you need to hear
That Mary is telling the truth.

'The baby she bears is God's holy son.
Call his name JESUS, for he is the one
God promised to send to save everyone.
Immanuel. God is with us.

(Slide 8)

'He's the answer to all that the prophets have said.
So keep your engagement. Be glad and be wed.'
And when Joseph woke up, that's just what he did.
He took Mary to be his wife.





Narrator

Chorus (congregation) join in with actions)

JOSEPH don't worry, JOSEPH don't weep.
Lay down your head, and go back to sleep.
Mary's been faithful. Her love's strong and deep,
And her baby is God's own son.'

Joseph leader reads prayer

Lord, help us be like Joseph
A man both kind and just
Help us listen when you speak
Teach us how to trust.'

Narrator

Then Mary and Joseph, her husband, went down
To be counted by Caesar in Bethlehem town.
There were no empty rooms for the couple to stay
So they stopped in a place where the animals lay
And there, in the hay, she gave birth to God's son
And cuddled and cradled her small special one.

(Optional) Everyone sings: *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

Narrator (Slide 9)

And now it's time for the shepherds and their angel visitors!

The chorus goes like this:
Sing praise to God and give him glory
Celebrate his wondrous story
Of love and joy and peace to men
For it begins in Bethlehem.

We'd love you all to join in with these words at home.

Shepherds lying on a hill.
The night was silent, all was still.
They watched their flock of grazing sheep,
And tried hard not to fall asleep.

When, BRIGHT and white, an angel came
To light the night, a fiery flame.
The shepherds trembled where they lay.
The angel said, 'Don't be afraid.'

Narrator

(Slide 10)

Chorus – congregation say together
Sing praise to God and give him glory.
Celebrate his wondrous story
Of love and joy and peace to men,
For it begins in BETHLEHEM.



'The news is good, the news I bring.
Good news to make you leap and sing.
Good news for people everywhere.
Good news of joy for all to share.

'Good news, for God has kept his word,
And sent his saviour, Christ the Lord.
The one he promised he would send
Is born this day in BETHLEHEM.

'And this will be a sign for you.
This is how you'll know it's true.
You'll find a baby wrapped in cloth,
Sleeping in a cattle trough.'

(Slide 11)

The angel, then, was joined by more,
Six and twelve and twenty-four,
And then too many more to number,
A heaven-choir, LOUD AS THUNDER.

And so the angels left that place,
Just like they'd come, without a trace,
Except for all they sang and said,
Which echoed in the shepherds' heads.

'Let's go to Bethlehem and see,'
The shepherds all, as one, agreed.
They found the baby where he lay,
Asleep upon a bed of hay.

(Slide 12)

They told them what the angels said.
Then Mary smiled and raised her head.
A secret hid there, in her eyes,
For she was not one bit surprised.

So back they went to sheep and hill,
No longer silent, hardly still,
But singing loud like angels bright
Of all that they had seen that night.

Chorus – congregation say together:
Sing praise to God and give him glory.
Celebrate his wondrous story
Of love and joy and peace to men,
For it begins in Bethlehem



(Optional) Sing: *While Shepherds Watched* or *Hark the Herald'*

Angel
leader reads
prayer

Thank you, Lord, for angel songs
That shout aloud the Saviour's birth
Show us how to live in ways
That sing again of peace on Earth'

Narrator

(Slide 13)

Because now, it's time for time to pass. The star-watchers are following their star. But it takes them time to get to Bethlehem. So they don't arrive the night the shepherds do. No, it's probably something like a year or more later when they knock on King Herod's door.

Narrator

Can you join in with the chorus. Here are the actions:

'One hump'

(Hold up one finger)

'Two humps'

(Hold up two fingers)

'Lumpety-lump'

(Bounce up and down in your seat)

'The star-watchers went
with a bump and thump'

(Bounce up and down again)

'One hump'

(Hold up one finger)

'Two humps'

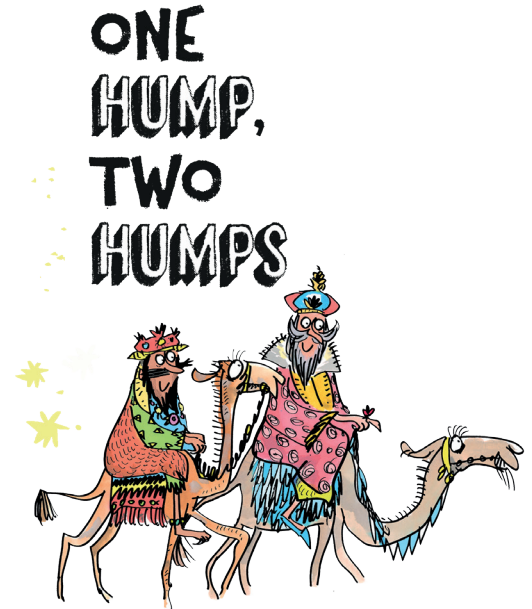
(Hold up two fingers)

'Lumpety-lump'

(Bounce up and down in your seat)

'The star-watchers followed the star'

(Look up in the air and point – or point at a star if one is near you.)



Narrator

The star-watchers watched the stars go by,
Looking for secrets in the sky.
And then they saw a special star,
Away in the west. Away off far.

'A king's been born! That's what it means.

Judea way, or so it seems.'

The climbed aboard their camel-y beasts

And set off west from their homes back east.

Chorus (congregation) join in with actions)

One HUMP, two HUMPS, lumpety-lump,

The star-watchers went with BUMP and a THUMP.

One HUMP, two HUMPS, lumpety-lump,

The star-watchers followed the star.

Narrator

(Slide 14)

At last their journey came to an end.

They parked their camels in Jerusalem.

Then they went to Herod, king of the nation,

To ask him for some information.

'Oh king,' they asked. They were quite polite.

'Somewhere, round here, on this starry night,

A brand new baby king abides.

Can you tell us where this child resides?'



Narrator

A worried look crossed Herod's face.
He had no plans to be replaced.
So he asked his priests if they could tell
Where this brand new baby king might dwell.

Narrator

(Slide 15)

The priests all answered straight away.
'BETHLEHEM is what the prophets say.'
Then Herod thought an evil thing.
'I think I need to meet this king.

'Star-watchers, friends,' King Herod smiled.
'In Bethlehem you'll find the child.
Would you tell me where you find him, please?
The exact address would put my mind at ease.'

Herod, of course, told them a lie.
He'd already planned for the child to die.
When he found the boy, that's what he'd do.
So the star-watchers left, without a clue.

(Slide 16)

The shining star led them to the place.
A simple house, not some fancy space.
And when they saw the little boy,
They gave him a pile of special 'toys'.

Presents, rather, fit for a king.
A bunch of shiny golden things.
A spice called myrrh, a sort of perfume.
While smelly frankincense filled the room.

Then, in the night, they had a dream
That showed them Herod's evil scheme.
So they never said where the boy's house lay
But went straight home by another way.

Chorus (congregation join in with actions)
One HUMP, two HUMPS, lumpety-lump,
The star-watchers went with a BUMP and a THUMP.
One HUMP, two HUMPS, lumpety-lump,
The star-watchers followed the star.

(Optional) Sing: "We Three Kings"

Narrator
(Slide 17)

Lord, help us be like star-watchers
Following your lead
Looking for your guidance
In every word and deed.

We've had a lovely time celebrating the Christmas story. We do it every year. We do it for a reason. And that's why there is one last poem.

'So what is the point of angels and shepherds
And camels and stars?' you say.
'Is it just a nice story to tell to the children
To celebrate Christmas Day?'

It's not just a story. It's not just for kids.
It's the hinge on which history swings!
That Bethlehem baby grew into a man
Who challenged all powers and kings.

(Slide 18)

He taught us that love is better than hate,
That serving beats being in charge.
He showed us the value of each human life:
The little as well as the large.

And then, on a cross, he died for us,
Died to take all our wrongs away.
And walked, three days later, right out of his tomb
To turn death's dark night to day.

And that is the good news the angels proclaimed:
The heart of all Jesus would do.
A new life for now. A new life forever.
That's his Christmas present to you!

(Optional) Sing: *From the Squalor of a Borrowed Stable* or *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly*

(At this point, you could pray, or offer an invitation, or suggest ways that the audience could find out more about Jesus.)

Thank you so much for joining in with our nativity today, and for helping us tell God's good news story.

(Optional) And let's finish by singing with those angels, *Joy to the world!*





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Here at home, where the Bible is readily available but rarely read, we're introducing a new generation to the life-changing stories it contains and helping people engage with it better so that the Bible will continue to shape our communities.

We were founded over 200 years ago by a passionate group of people who believed God's word should be shared across the world, and we've been sustained by the commitment of thousands of supporters – people like you – who've joined our mission to bring the Bible to life.

Everything we do is driven by one conviction: that when people engage with the Bible lives can change, for good. So if the Bible has made a difference to your life, please join with us through prayer and support to bring the Bible to life around the world.

Find more resources to help you share the big story this Christmas at biblesociety.org.uk/christmas