

Crib Service: Bethlehem and beyond

These are the words we used for the Christmas Eve Crib Service:
“Bethlehem and beyond” You are welcome to use them or adapt them.

Welcome

Lighting of the Advent wreath

Carol: O little town of Bethlehem

Leader: Tonight is Christmas Eve. It is time to make our way to Bethlehem, a little town in the hill country. The town is busy with people who have travelled here so that the Roman Emperor can count them.

As night falls, the last two travellers come slowly up the road. They are Joseph and Mary from Nazareth. It has taken six days to travel to Bethlehem.

Wearily they walk through Bethlehem, asking for shelter and a place to sleep. But there is no room in the inn. Eventually they find a place with the animals.

All the world is asleep. Everything is quiet. But in the stable with the animals everything has changed. A baby has been born! Mary wraps him in swaddling clothes and lays him in the manger.

We will now bring Mary, Joseph, the donkey and the baby Jesus to be placed in the crib.

***(Mary, Joseph and the donkey are placed in the stable
Baby Jesus is placed in the manger)***

We will now sing the carol “Little Donkey”

Carol: Little Donkey

Leader: In the dark hills outside Bethlehem, shepherds watch their sheep. Suddenly the world is filled with light. It is brighter than the day.

The shepherds are terrified. They hide their faces from the light and fall to the ground in fear. But then they hear a voice saying:

Angel: Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by all people. Today in the city of David, a Saviour is born. He is Christ the Lord.

Leader: Then more angels appear, the whole heavenly host, praising God and singing:

Angel: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to all people.

Leader: The shepherds run down the hills to Bethlehem. They find the stable and pause. What will they find inside? And then they go in, to kneel in awe and wonder before the baby Jesus.

We will now bring the shepherds, the sheep and the angel to place in the crib.

(Shepherds, sheep and angel are placed in the stable)

We will now sing the carol "Away in a manger"

Carol: Away in a manger

Leader: From far way in the East come the kings, the wise ones, the magi. They are following the star, that has led them to Bethlehem. What will they find at their journey's end?

They expect to find a king, but instead they find a child. Is this the end of their journey or a beginning?

The wise ones kneel in worship and offer their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

We will now bring the wise men to be put in the crib.

(Wise men are placed in the stable)

We will now sing the carol "The Virgin Mary had a baby boy"

Carol: The Virgin Mary had a baby boy

Leader: (Please sit) So here we are in Bethlehem. The baby Jesus lies cosily in his manger, the shepherds and wise men kneel before him in worship.

It would be easy to see this as the end of the story. But this is only the beginning.

The baby grew up to be a man, and he died on the cross. But even that is not the end for on the third day Jesus rose from the dead. He is now in every time and every place.

Where will you find Jesus this Christmas night?

We pray that you will find him here in this church. But you will also find him walking the roads of this world, comforting the sad, healing the sick, walking beside the lonely. Tonight we are going to take him out into the world.

To symbolise this (Rosie) is going to carry the baby Jesus, who was born in the manger. ***(The procession forms up)***

(Richard) is going to carry the cross to remind us that Jesus died and rose again to save the world.

(Jacob) is going to carry the dove, the symbol of the Holy Spirit to remind us that God is always with us.

(Thomas) and (Louisa) are going to carry the children from the crib, symbols of ourselves as we follow Jesus.

And (Robin) is going to carry the light that reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world.

We are going to ask you to stay seated to sing the first three verses of the carol "See him lying in a bed of straw."

(The procession makes its way down the nave and out the door. It then makes its way round to a different door. An adult accompanies the procession.)

Carol: See him lying in a bed of straw (1st three verses)

(A knock at the door)

1st Voice (speaking from the nave of the church): Behold I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into them.

Leader: Let us open the door. Let us let Jesus in – into our church, our homes and our lives this Christmas.

Let us stand to sing the final verse of the carol: See him lying in a bed of straw

(The procession re-enters and makes its way to stand around the crib)

Carol: Final verse of see him lying in a bed of straw

Prayers

Leader: So now we all come to Bethlehem. We come as people have come all through the ages to follow the Christ child. Come forward now. Bring your stars to place around the manger and remember that first Christmas night when the story began.

(The children bring themselves and their stars (given out as they arrive) to the crib)

We will now sing the carol “O come all ye faithful”

Carol: O come all ye faithful

Blessing and dismissal

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