

The Sound story

- *Play sounds first, then ask people to guess what the story is...*

Heading: Mary and the Angel

- *Sound: Hark the Herald*

- About two thousand years ago, in the town of Nazareth, there lived a young woman named **Mary**:
 - her people had been conquered by the Romans, and longed to be free
 - and, as God's people, they knew that God promised to send a Saviour
 - one day an angel appeared to Mary and told her she had been chosen to have a special baby
 - the baby would be God's son and she must call him Jesus; **the name means "God saves"**

Heading: Journey to Bethlehem

- *Sound: Donkey Clip clopping Donkey Braying*

- Soon after the angel's visit, Mary and Joseph were married:
 - Mary was due to have her baby, but because of an order from the governing authorities they had to make the long journey to Bethlehem - **it was where Joseph's family came from**
- So Mary had to ride on a donkey for more than 70 miles, several days journey (**4 days to a week**) over the hills of Gallilee

Heading: No room at the Inn

- *Sound: Footsteps Door slamming*

- At last Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem:
 - it was crowded with other people who also needed to register to pay their taxes
 - Mary was very tired and needed a place to stay...
 - but there was no room for them
 - doors were slammed in their faces
 - eventually, one innkeeper had a stable where he kept his animals that they were able to use

Heading: Jesus is born

- *Sound: Baby crying*

- And so it was that a few hours later, Mary gave birth to her son in that stable:
 - she wrapped Jesus in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger full of hay
 - **he didn't look like a Saviour - just an ordinary baby, born in the**

backstreets of Bethlehem, a backwater town in a far-off corner of the Roman Empire...

Heading: Shepherds hear the news

- *Sound: Sheep and Joy to the World*
 - At the same time, on a hillside overlooking Bethlehem, some shepherds were watching over their sheep
 - now being a shepherd was one of the jobs no-one wanted to do - in fact, everyone looked down on shepherds
 - but, as these shepherds looked after their sheep, a bright light appeared in the sky
 - they were very afraid - no wonder!
 - it was an angel sent by God
 - the angel told them not to be afraid, because he had some good news
 - The Son of God had been born, the one who would be the Saviour, and they should go and visit him!
-

Heading: Shepherds give gifts

- *Sound: presents unwrapping*
- The shepherds headed off to go and see the baby:
 - when they arrived at the stable, they were filled with joy at seeing Jesus lying in the manger
 - they knelt down and worshipped Him....
 - they told Mary and Joseph how the angel had appeared in the sky and told them that Jesus was to be the Saviour of the world
- **It didn't seem much at the time, but God had arrived in town and the good news was spreading!**

Heading: A new star appears

- *Sound: Celestial Disturbance*
- Far away in the East, Wise Men saw a new star shining high in the sky:
 - these men studied the stars and God showed them that this was a very special star
 - they studied their scrolls where it said that whenever a bright new star appeared it meant that a great ruler had been born

Heading: Following the Star

- *Sound: Hooves*
- The Wise Men decided to find this new ruler:
 - first they went to Jerusalem, the capital city, to see King Herod, **as they**

thought the baby would be in the palace

- so they asked to see the child that would be King of the Jews
- Herod, the king, was troubled
- anyone else who might become king meant that he wouldn't be - and didn't like that!
- so Herod came up with a plan - he told the wise men to return to Jerusalem when they had found the baby so that he could worship the child himself

Heading: The Wise men give gifts

- *Sound: Presents unwrapping*
- But God guided the Wise Men, by the star, to Bethlehem where Jesus was
 - here they too knelt down and worshipped Jesus
 - they gave him gifts of gold - for a king
 - frankincense - for a priest, for someone who helped people worship God
 - and myrrh - for funerals, for someone who would have to die to accomplish his work
 - that night God warned the wise men in a dream - an angel told them that King Herod wanted to kill Jesus and that they shouldn't go back to his palace
 - the Wise men never went back to Herod

Heading: Christmas today

- *Sound : Church Bells*
- This story from over 2000 years ago is why we celebrate Christmas today:
 - why?
 - because we need rescued...
 - and Jesus is the one who rescues us...
 - Christmas is a reminder of his coming, and the chance to celebrate again God's love and care for us
- How do our celebrations match up?
 - indulgence? or generosity?
 - selfishness? or self-giving?
 - have we, unwittingly, and in our right desire to celebrate Jesus' coming, turned our remembering of Jesus' self-giving into a festival of self-indulgence?

Prayer

- Of repentance and desire to give this Christmas...