



Microchurch Christmas Liturgy

Leaders' Guide

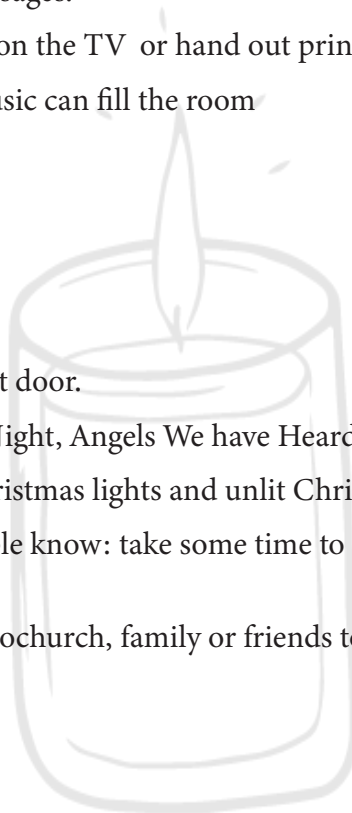
Christmas is a time of year when most people are open to connecting and gathering in your home. You can seize this opportunity to share the hope of Jesus with non-believers and encourage believers alike.

Preparation

- Make an invitation plan: who are you inviting and who will help. Can those who come bring others?
- Make a plan on who brings birthday cake, food, cookies, drinks, etc...
- Environment: warm and welcoming, christmas-y, smells nice, seating that's centrally placed
- Designate kids and friendly folks to welcome guests at the door / driveway / porch
- Decide lighting plan: bright, dim, dark, candles lit?
- Large White Candle (Christ Candle) and candles for guests (optional)
- Assigned readers to different passages.
- Media: either display Scripture on the TV or hand out printed passages or Bibles to follow along
- Music Source: make sure the music can fill the room

Arrival

- Welcome and give unlit candle at door.
- Entrance music playlist: Silent Night, Angels We have Heard on High, First Noel, Away in a Manger
- Lighting is darker except for Christmas lights and unlit Christ candle.
- Display a sign or simply let people know: take some time to greet each other and reflect on the significance of this season.
- Gather with people in your microchurch, family or friends to pray and seek God together.



Intro

Welcome! Thanks for coming tonight to remember the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, known to many of us as the Messiah.

Framing: Stories

You know, stories are the way we remember, “do you remember when?” (Share something personal to you that some people in the room would know or would feel closer to you if they knew.)

Sharing stories is the way we relate to each other. “I know (someone else in the room)’s story...not just facts about them.” It’s the way we celebrate. So tonight, we tell the story of Jesus and we relate to his story through the stories of those who first encountered Jesus.

Here is how the evening will go: we will read the scripture of someone who encounters Jesus in their story, then move onto the next story. Later, we will have a moment to reflect and respond to our need for Jesus to come into our stories tonight. And we will end with a birthday celebration!

Let’s begin tonight with remembering through song. If you would join me, let’s stand and sing together:

Song: “O Come, All Ye Faithful” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUz3QjH_WJs

Thank you, go ahead and grab a comfy seat.

Next, we are going to read a passage, a story of someone encountering Jesus, and at the end I’ll say: “**and the people cry out**” and you all will respond “**Come Lord Jesus.**”

Let’s practice:

The people cry out... Come Lord Jesus!

The Story of MARY

Invite the first reader to read aloud the passage below:

Luke 1:26-35

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, **27** to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. **28** The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. **30** But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. **31** You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. **32** He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, **33** and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

34 “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

35 The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. **36** Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. **37** For no word from God will ever fail.”

38 “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

Respond

Some of us tonight are Mary... alone, vulnerable, and surprised when God shows up in our lives.

And we need to hear the message, “Do not be afraid Mary, the Lord is with you.”

And will you be like Mary and respond, “I am the Lord’s servant.”

The people cry out... Come Lord Jesus!



The Story of JOSEPH

Invite the second reader to read aloud the passage below:

Matthew 1:18-25

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. **19** Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21** She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: **23** “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”(which means “God with us”).

24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. **25** But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Respond

Some of us here tonight are Joseph... faithful, kind and owning a call to be brave despite confusion.

And we need to reaffirm our calling to Jesus and hear the words, “do not be afraid.”

And will you respond by doing what God has asked you to do.

The people cry out... Come Lord Jesus!



The Story of the SHEPHERDS

Invite the third reader to read aloud the passage below:

Luke 2:8-20

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. **9** An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. **10** But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. **11** Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. **12** This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. **17** When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, **18** and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. **19** But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. **20** The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Respond

Some of us are the shepherds... going about our business, unnamed, small and unimportant. The world just passes us by, but God comes to us to announce the world has changed, to proclaim our lives have changed.

And we need to hear, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

And will you be like the shepherds and spread the word about this child?

The people cry out... Come Lord Jesus!



The Story of the MAGI

Invite the fourth reader to read aloud the passage below:

Matthew 2:2-12

1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem **2** and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. **4** When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. **5** “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

6 “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. **8** He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. **10** When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. **11** On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. **12** And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Respond

Some of us tonight are the magi...not Jewish, not really supposed to be in this story, yet seeking after God, looking for truth and longing for God to show himself so we travel and explore and search for the Messiah.

And we need to hear Jesus’ own promise, “if you seek me, you will find me.”

And will you be like the magi, by worshiping Jesus?

The people cry out... Come Lord Jesus!



The Story of the MOTHERS OF BETHLEHEM

Invite the fifth reader to read aloud the passage below:

Matthew 2:16-18

16 When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. **17** Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

18 “A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.”

Respond

Some of us tonight are the weeping mothers of Bethlehem...lives full of tears, experiencing loss, tragedy and feeling powerless, wondering if God sees and even cares.

And we need to know the Jesus who weeps alongside us.

And will you be like these mothers by weeping freely at the feet of Jesus, for he sees your pain.

The people cry out... Come Lord Jesus!



The Birth of Jesus

Invite the last reader to read aloud the passage below:

Luke 2:1-7

1 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. **2** (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) **3** And everyone went to their own town to register.

4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. **5** He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. **6** While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, **7** and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Respond & Light the Christ Candle

Jesus is born. Into silence, into darkness. into tragedy. He is born into obscurity, in the margins of society and becomes a refugee.

In the middle of not hearing God's voice, Jesus is born. Into doubt, Jesus is born. Born into poverty, into uncertainty, into bitterness, hatred and hopelessness. The world is dark, lonely, broken...and into this world, our world...Jesus is born.

Jesus is born. His story intersects all of our stories. Jesus is born and dwells with us. He is born into our world and in doing so he becomes our Messiah.

How will you respond to his story? He brings light into darkness, but how will you respond?

What darkness in your life do you need his light to be born into? How do you need Jesus to come into your life?

So we want to play a song, sing a song (and really engage it!)...but it's more like a prayer:

“Jesus come into my life, be born into my story.”

As we reflect, sing. When you're ready to respond to Jesus and ask him to come again, come light your candle using the Christ candle as a symbol of you wanting Jesus to be born into your life, your story.

Song: *O Holy Night* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySmOYnwwfm4>

I invite you to stand, kneel, or lean forward in prayer:

Pray right now, “Jesus come into the darkness of my life.” Feel free to specifically name that place of your life that you need the light of Jesus.

Blow out your candle once you’ve prayed that prayer.

(Keep soft music going in background)

Pair Up (*optional*)

Briefly share with your partner- How do you need Jesus to come into your life?

Story of testimony (*optional*)

(someone from microchurch) wanted to briefly share their story of Jesus coming into their life.

Hope

Jesus is born into a broken world, not just to relate to us but also to make all things new.

We celebrate the birth of Jesus, because through his death and resurrection he has defeated death, remade life eternal. He promises to return to remove disease, and cancer and to wipe tears from every eye.

We celebrate because we are no longer destined to be zombies (the living dead) but instead to be made truly alive. For the first time in all of human history we have hope!

In life and in death we hope in Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

And so we conclude our Eve of Christmas service with a birthday party!

Song: *Joy to the World (live)* <https://youtu.be/6Jgx8NxENLg>

Sing the Birthday Song

Bring out the birthday cake with lit candle. Have kids gather around to blow out the candle once we sing the birthday song.

Party!

Enjoy cake, games, fellowship, etc..