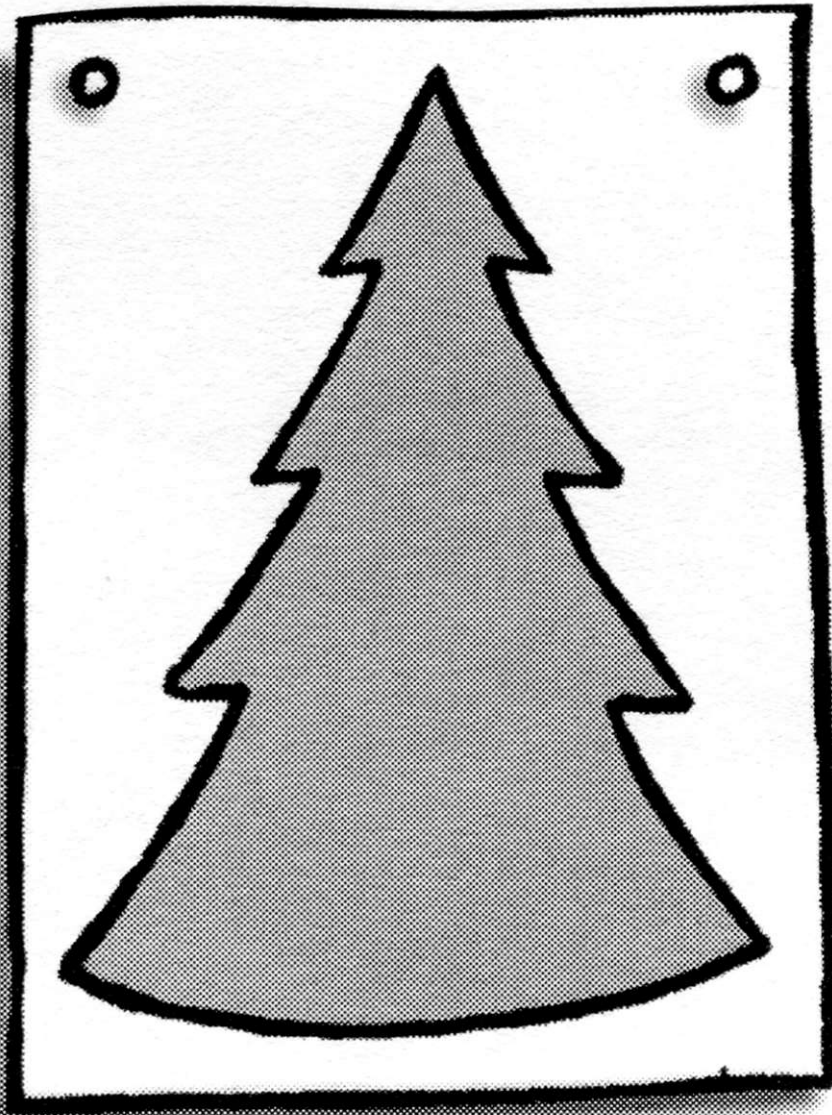


# THE CHRISTMAS TREE'S TALE

## Part 2

Activity cut outs at end of part one.



# 11 ST FRANCIS' TALE

Luke 2:14

Here is one Christmas story about a man called St Francis. He had the idea to sing special songs at Christmas.

Long ago early Christians wanted to sing special songs to celebrate Christmas. They wanted to praise God and thank him for Jesus. The songs written at that time are in Latin.

The people grumbled, "We do don't understand what this song means

"This is wrong" said a man called Francis, "What is the point of singing songs if you don't understand the words".

Francis encouraged a group of actors to help him prepare for a Christmas service. "Write some music and we'll sing the Christmas story" he said. "Then everyone will hear the words and remember what happened when Jesus was born."

The people crowded into the church at Graecia in Italy. They sang the special Christmas songs. When the service was over, the people went home through the streets singing the songs.

That is how the Christmas carol came into being and why carols are sung in the streets.

## **GET READY**

*What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb*

*If I were a rich man, I would do my part. Yet what can I give him Give my heart.*

## **GO**

Cut out the Christmas music and add it to your tree

## 12 A DANISH TALE

Psalm, 150:3-6

Singing carols are fun; the tunes are easy to follow and are repeated lots of times. Nor are they too good to dance to as well.

This is a story of what happens in Denmark each Christmas Eve.

Everyone was busy in the Johansen family. It was Christmas Eve and there was so much to do to get ready for the Christmas meal that evening.

Dad watched as everyone got on with their jobs. "Come on!" he whispered to his eldest daughter Trina. "Everyone is busy. They won't notice that we've gone. Let's decorate the tree."

Trina and her dad tiptoed into the sitting room clutching a box full of red and white ribbons and decorations. As quietly, as they could, they tried the ribbons onto the branches; until the tree was a blaze with colour then they left the room and closed the door.

Later that evening after they had been to church, the family sat down to eat their special meal.

"Let me get some more from the kitchen," Dad tiptoed to the sitting room instead, to light the candles on the tree.

The double doors between the sitting room and the dining room swung open! The children gasped and clapped their hands. The tree had changed and was sparkling with light.

Slowly the family gathered round the tree holding hands and singing. "Thank you, God, for Christmas!" they sang.

### **GET READY**

*Father God, thank you that we can praise you in all sorts of different ways. Amen*

### **GO**

Christmas is a time for celebrating and dancing. Find the family dancing, cut it out and colour them in, then put it on your tree

## 13 ST LUCY'S TALE

JOHN 4 1:4-5

Light is an important Christmas symbol. When Jesus was born, the Bible says it was like a light coming into the world. Today in Sweden many people remember St. Lucy in a special way. It is very dark day because it is the shortest day of the year. The youngest girl in the family dresses up in white. She wakes everyone up with a special breakfast and they all sing a special song. There are candles everywhere shedding lots of light.

There are many stories about St Lucy. She lived in Sicily and came from a wealthy family lots of men wanted to marry her. But Lucy loved God very much, she turned down offers of marriage and gave her money to the poor. One story says that she had beautiful eyes and one man was so entranced by them he could not think of anything else. The story goes that Lucy tore out her eyes and gave them to him. - Suddenly her eyesight was restored. Whether this is true or not Lucy is remembered because she loved God very much and helped other people.

### **GET READY**

*Thank you for stories of people like St Lucy. Thank you, if we love you, you can bring light to the people around us Amen*

### **GO**

Find the picture of the candles then colour them in bright colours to light up your tree.

## 14 THE MANGER'S TALE

Luke 2:7

Most new babies have special places to sleep, but Jesus had to sleeping a manger, the place where the animals' food was kept. The hay would have been soft and warm. The manger itself would have been made either wood or more likely to be carved out of rock walls of the cave like stable.

We do not know how long Mary and Joseph stayed in Bethlehem because of the census. But sometime during their stay there, Mary gave birth. Perhaps Mary missed her family and friends back home in Nazareth? Could she have felt alone and afraid?

She gave birth to the Special baby Jesus Then she tore up strips of cloth and wrapped Jesus tightly in them so that he felt warm and safe. Then she laid Jesus in the manger.

### **GET READY**

A manger seems a strange place to put such a special baby.

*Thank you Lord, God, for the unusual and unexpected ways in which you work. Amen*

### **GO**

There is a picture of an empty manger for you to find, when you colour it in you may like to draw a picture of Jesus lying in it too.

# 15 THE CHRISTMAS CRIB'S TALE

John 1:10

Have you ever seen a Christmas crib? There are figures for all the people and animals that were there when Jesus was born. Sometimes people put out the crib but they do not put Jesus in the manger until the night before Christmas.

However, it's a good way to remember Jesus's birth- That is exactly what St Francis wanted when he arranged the first Christmas crib.

It was nearly Christmas and very cold when St Francis went to visit some of his friends.

He thought, "How can I show people what the first Christmas was like how can I make it real". So he asked a friend John to help him.

Between them, they made some secret plans. They found a cave in the hillside and John found a manger filled it with hay.

On Christmas Eve, Francis asked the people to walk up the hill side towards the cave with everyone carrying a candle.

"I wonder why Francis wants us to come here" the people thought. Suddenly they knew why, through the entrance of the cave, they saw some people. It was Mary, Joseph, and some shepherds, kneeling in front of the manger.

"This is just to show you what it was like when Jesus was born", said Francis

"Now we understand!" said the people

## **GET READY**

*I praise and thank you, Father God, that your special Son, Jesus, began life in such an ordinary way. Amen*

## **GO**

Many different countries around the world have crib scenes. Among the cut outs, there is a picture of a crib scene from Peru. Cut it out and colour it with bright colours. Place it on your tree

## 16 THE CHRISTMAS CARD'S TALE

Luke 2: 17-18

The shepherd couldn't keep quiet about all the things they had heard and seen on that first Christmas night. They wanted to tell everyone. Nowadays, one of the ways we tell everyone is by sending cards either by post or email. Over one hundred years ago, people didn't send card at Christmas. They sent them at New Year although they often had a picture on them of the baby Jesus. Then people changed their habits, and sent cards wishing their relations a "Happy Christmas"

The shepherds had never known anything like it! One night they had had a message from an angel and had seen hundreds of angels singing praises to God in the night sky. Then they had run to Bethlehem and had found baby Jesus, God's saviour lying in a manger.

"An Angel came to us on the hill side!" they said to Mary and Joseph, as they knelt before the little baby. "He told us that he had been born and that he is Gods saviour for the whole world!"

Eventually the shepherds left the stable. "Praise God!" we have seen and heard some amazing things tonight" they said.

### **GET READY**

*Thank you for Christmas cards. Please help everyone who gets one to remember the exciting news about Jesus. Amen*

### **GO**

There is a Christmas card for your tree, cut it out and add to it to your tree.

# 17 THE CHRISTMAS TABLE'S TALE

Luke 2:19

Throughout the world wherever people celebrate Christmas, they eat special food. Eating delicious food which we only prepare at this time of year is all part of the enjoyment of Christmas. In England, during the Middle Ages, rich people prepared huge feasts, which would often include a boar's head that was carried to the table to start off the banquet.

Many years ago, mince pies were made of meat, and were called mutton pies. Apart from the meat they included many of the same ingredients that our pies are made from today.

However, the shape of the pies has changed. The pies today are round. Long ago, they were either oval or a cradle shaped. Some people think that they were made this way as a reminder of baby Jesus. People used to be very quiet whilst taking their first bite so they could think about baby Jesus as they did so.

## **GET READY**

*Thank you that you have given us the gift of memory. Please help me to take time to be quiet every now and then to remember Jesus.*

## **GO**

It is not only mince pies that we enjoy at Christmas... There is a variety of food that we enjoy. Cake, carrots, turkey, cranberry sauce, and Christmas pudding. Cut them out, colour them and put them on your tree.



# 18 THE CHRISTMAS STAR'S TALE

Matthew 2:2

Have you got a Christmas star that you put on top of your tree? Or do you hang stars from other places as you get ready for Christmas? Stars are part of our Christmas decorations. But one real star has an important place in the story of the first Christmas

Many hundreds of miles from Bethlehem, in a far eastern land some wise men were gazing at the stars that peppered the night sky.

“Look” said one. “A new star has appeared”

“What do you mean” said another.

“Something amazing has happened.” Said a third.

The wise men hurried to find out. They examined ancient scrolls and documents, until at last they found out what they were looking for in some ancient Jewish writings “A great new King has just been born”, they cried, we must try and find him.”

## **GET READY**

*Father God the stars you have made are so wonderful!*

*Thank you for using your very special star to tell the wise men about Jesus. Amen.*

## **GO**

Find the star, it may be too small so you could always make a larger one. How bright can you make your star and where would you put it on your tree.

# 19 THE WISE MEN'S TALE

Matthew 2: 9-10

Travelling in the time of Jesus was not easy. The wise men have a very long journey which could be difficult and dangerous. They were determined to follow the star and find the new King.

As soon as they had made their decision, the wise men loaded their camels and left their homes. They travelled for days, through many different lands until at last they reached Jerusalem. They went straight to the palace

"We are looking for a new King who has been born," they said, "do you know where he is?"

King Herod heard of the wise men's request and became worried. He did not want a new King. "Find out everything you can about the birth of this King" he ordered his consultants. "Long ago the prophets said that God's saviour king would be born in Bethlehem. " They said

Herod thought quickly, "Go to Jerusalem and find the baby", he said to the wise men. "Then tell me where he is. I would to worship him too".

The wise men left the palace. As they did so, the star appeared in the sky and led them to the stable where Jesus was.

## **GET READY**

*It is so easy to give up when things get hard. Thank you, Lord God, that the wise men kept on looking until they found you. Amen*

## **GO**

The Bible does not tell you how many wise men made the journey to find Jesus, tradition put the number at three. Find the pictures of the wise men, cut them out colour them and place them on your tree.

## 20 THE CHRISTMAS GIFT'S TALE

Matthew 2:11

We do think a lot about presents at Christmas time. So did the three wise men as they searched to find Jesus. They had brought expensive presents, fit for a king, with them so that they were ready to worship him when they found him.

The star shone brightly over the little house. The wise man climbed down from their camels and went inside. It was very different from the palace in Jerusalem. As soon as they stepped in, they saw Mary holding the Baby Jesus.

The wise men knew immediately they saw Jesus that he was the one they were looking for. They knelt down and worshipped him. They gave him their presents of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Presents fit for a king. Then they left and used a different route home.

### **GET READY**

*Thank you presents for the joy they give and the love they show. Amen*

### **GO**

There are three different presents to hang on the tree. The brick is the gold, the bottle would contain sticky oil like myrrh, and the pot would contain the perfume of frankincense. Find the picture shapes. Cut them out and decorate before hanging them on your tree.

## 21 THE SPIDER'S TALE

Matthew 2:13

Herod had lied to the wise men. He was King; he did not want to worship Jesus he wanted to kill him.

An angel told the wise men not to go back to Jerusalem. The angel also warned Joseph to escape with his family to Egypt. Unfortunately the bible does not tell us how they got there or what happened to them whilst they were there. All we know is that God kept Jesus safe.

There is an old legend, a story, explaining how Jesus and his family kept safe.

“Wake up” said Joseph to Mary, “we must leave quickly”. Mary was startled. “Where are we going?” she asked, holding on tightly to Jesus. “An angel told me to go to Egypt” Joseph replied. “Egypt” gasped Mary. It was a long way and Mary felt afraid. “God will look after us”, replied Joseph confidently.

Mary and Joseph travelled on and on. They dare not stop. Soon they were so tired that they knew they had to rest. Suddenly Joseph spotted a cave in the hillside. “We will stay in here” he said.

Now a spider lived near the entrance of the cave, she watched the little family and knew that Jesus very special.

Down in the valley, soldiers were searching everywhere. “Have you seen a young boy” they asked. Then they began to climb the hill towards the cave.

Quickly the spider scuttled to the entrance of the cave. She spun a mighty web that covered the opening.

The soldiers searched through the night and, as the sun came up, they stood looking at the entrance of the cave. When the sun shone on the web, which was covered in dew, all they could see was brilliant white, like the whiteness of the rock.

“There is no one up here!” said the soldiers, and went away.

“God has kept us safe” said Mary and Joseph inside the cave.

### **GET READY**

*Thank you for keeping Jesus safe, Father God, when his parents took him to Egypt. Thank you for looking after me. Amen*

### **GO**

You might like to draw spiders web to put on the tree. Or put strands of tiny silvery tinsel on the picture to remind you of the sparkly spider's web in the story

## 22 THE MISTLETOE'S TALE

1 John 4:7

One of the ways we show people is how much we love them is by giving them a kiss (we might be unable to do that at the moment). At Christmas time, we often kiss people under some sprigs of a plant called mistletoe.

The reason we do comes from an old Scandinavian legend. (A legend is not a true story!)

Odin, lord of the gods, and his wife Frigg had a son. His name was Balder, the sun god, he was good, strong, and very handsome.

All the other gods admired Balder. They could see how great he was and they promised never to hurt him. They also cast Special spells to keep Balder safe.so that nothing could kill him.

Now Loki was the god of evil and he hated Balder. He listened to the other gods casting their spells. He knew that if he was to succeed in killing Balder he would have to think of a very clever plan. Suddenly he had an idea.

Carefully Loki made a sharp arrow out of branch of mistletoe. He knew that the other gods had not included mistletoe in their spells! "Come and try this for me," he said to the blind god. Hoder, and he placed Hoder's hands around the arrow and flung it high into the air.

The arrow stuck Balder and killed him. The other gods were greater than Loki, they brought Balder back to life. The mistletoe plant promised never to hurt anyone again and became a symbol of love.

### **GET READY**

*Thank you for my family and my friends. Thank you for one another. Thank you for the people I love and the people who love me. Amen*

### **GO**

Find the mistletoe picture, colour the stem is a soft green and its berries pure white.

Then place on your tree

## 23 THE HOLLY'S TALE

Luke 2:11

Although we think about Jesus' birth at Christmas time, it's important to remember that the reason Jesus came to earth as a little baby was to show us how to become God's friend's. Jesus was the saviour sent by God and in the end he died so that we could be forgiven for all the things we have done wrong, which has made God unhappy. One of our Christmas decorations remind us of this.

Many countries in the world use holly to celebrate Christmas. The Danes call holly "Kristdorn" and other Scandinavian countries know the holly as "Christ-thorn". In England, the word holly probably comes from the word Holy which means something special that has been set apart for God.

The reason the holly tree is special is that it reminds us that it reminds us how Jesus died. The strong spikey leaves are sharp, like thorns. Jesus was made to wear a crown of thorns, just before he was nailed to the cross and left to die

The bright red cherries are crimson, like blood. Jesus died so that we might enjoy God's forgiveness.

### **GET READY**

*Lord Jesus, thank you for coming to earth as a little baby. Thank you that you were willing to die so that we might be God's friend. Amen*

### **GO**

Lots of people today make holly wreaths to hang on their front doors. Can you find a wreath among the pictures? Cut it out, colour it and place on your tree.

## 24 THE PROPHET'S TALE

John 3:19

Everything is almost ready and Christmas is almost here! There are a few last things to get ready, and one last thing to be added to your tree. LIGHT

Long before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah was given some special messages to give to God's people. Some of the messages were warnings- telling people to stop doing things and to live in a way that would please God. Some of Isaiah's messages looked forward to the future.

"People were living as though they are surrounded by darkness" he wrote "One day they will see a great light and a brilliant light will shine on them. A Child will be born who is like a light. He will show the way to God. "

When Jesus was born, it was as if a light had come into the world. Jesus promised to stay with everyone who loves him, and to help guide them. God promises that when he gave his light, Jesus, to the world, nothing would ever be able to put it out.

### **GET READY**

*Praise you; Father God, for sending Jesus to be the light for the whole world.*

*Amen*

### **GO**

Surround your tree with light and remember as you look at your tree and think about the story held in its branches, That Jesus is the light of the world, not just Christmas but forever.