

The Birth of Jesus (Based on Luke 2: 1-20)

Figures needed: Mary on Donkey, Mary sitting, Joseph, Baby Jesus, Donkey
Shepherds, Sheep, Angels

The little donkey stood patiently as Joseph helped Mary climb onto its back. They had a long way to go together.

[Place the Mary on Donkey figure and Joseph on the road in front of their home.]

Even though it was almost time for Jesus to be born, Mary and Joseph could not stay home. The powerful emperor, Caesar Augustus, had ordered everyone to return to the towns where their grandparents had lived. Then all the people could be counted, and the emperor would know how many citizens lived in his huge country. So Joseph led the donkey carrying Mary and walked all the way to the town of Bethlehem, where their families were from.

[Place the figures further down the road next to the Temple.]

When they reached the little town in the hills, they found it was very crowded with other travelers. It was so crowded that they could not find a place to stay! But Mary knew that soon the baby would be born. Where could they go?

[Move the figures down the road.]

They finally found a stable that was for animals. Mary looked around at the rough building. She had known that her baby would not be born at home, but she had not expected that he would be born in a barn!

[Remove the Mary on Donkey figure. At the stable, place the Donkey figure just outside the stable. Place the Mary sitting figure to the left of the manger, and place the Joseph figure on the other side of the manger.]

Joseph made up a bed for her with clean straw and laid their blanket on it. It was there that little Jesus was born.

[Place the Baby Jesus figure in the Mary figure's arms.]

He was tiny and beautiful, and his skin was so soft! Mary held him close and kissed him. Joseph stroked the baby's little hand.

The baby soon fell asleep.

"We must try to sleep, too," Joseph said. He looked around. "We could put the baby in the manger. He'll be safe there."

[Place the Baby Jesus figure in the manger.]

Little Jesus was laid in the manger filled with straw. Soon they all were settled down for the peaceful night.

SING: *Away in the Manger*

[On the hill opposite the stable, place the Shepherds figures just above the lower corner of the building. Place the sheep figures slightly behind them, by the rocks near the road.]

In the fields outside of Bethlehem on the night that Jesus was born, there were shepherds with their flocks of sheep. All was quiet. Then an angel appeared! The shepherds shook with fear.

[Place one angel figure in front of the Shepherds figures so that he is facing them.]

The angel said, "Don't be frightened! I bring you good news! This news will bring joy to all people! Today, in Bethlehem, a baby has been born who will be the Messiah! You will find him lying in a manger."

[Place a group of Angels above the one angel figure.]

As the shepherds were trying to understand this, the sky was suddenly filled with many angels who began singing, "Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth!"

And then the angels were gone.

[Remove the angel figures.]

The shepherds looked at one another and said, "Let's go see this special baby!" They hurried to Bethlehem, looking for a baby in a manger. When they found the right stable, one of the shepherds called out to Joseph and Mary, "Hello! We don't mean to bother you, but we were told to look for a baby in a manger."

[Place the Shepherds figures below and slightly to the left of the Mary figure, and place the Sheep figures to the left of the Shepherds figures.]

"Come in," Joseph said.

The men crowded in, gazing at Jesus. One shepherd explained, "We were watching our sheep, and suddenly an angel appeared to us!"

Mary and Joseph nodded. They knew about angels!

"The angel told us that this baby had been born for all people. He will be called the Savior, the Messiah," said the shepherd. "And then the sky was suddenly filled with many angels! They all sang with such joy, such happiness- well, we just had to come and find so special a child!"

[Take the Shepherds figures and the Sheep figures back to the hill.]

Later, as the shepherds left, Mary and Joseph could hear them in the distance telling others of the miraculous baby. Mary gently touched her baby. She thought of all the angels and people who already understood who he was. And she treasured their words and pondered them in her heart.



Mary (on the Donkey) and Joseph



Mary (sitting)



Baby Jesus



Joseph



Mary (standing)



Elizabeth



Simeon



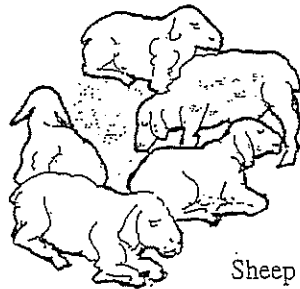
Anna



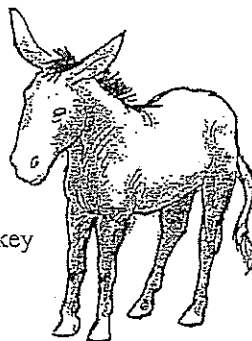
Gabriel (Angel)



Shepherds



Sheep



Donkey



Group of Angels