

DISCIPLES WOMEN
GENERAL PROGRAM

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Christmas Program ~ Who will show us the way?

Purpose:

The goal of this Christmas program is to help women see the importance of those who help us find Jesus, both Biblical characters and the people in our own lives.

Worship Center:

If your church has a Children Worship & Wonder (CW&W) center, get permission to borrow the materials needed from that center. If you don't have a CW&W center, the characters from any nativity scene can be used, with the exception of the prophet, which can be represented by a shepherd. Cover the table with a purple cloth. Place an empty stable or barn on the table. As each character is introduced, place a representation of that character near the stable.



Also place on the table, a white Christ candle.

Options for a large room setting: If your setting is a large room and participants would have a difficult time seeing the small figures, you may want to use real people, in costumes, which will create a living nativity scene. Another option would be to project the characters using a projector and screen.

Information about Children Worship & Wonder can be found at www.discipleshomemissions.org/FamilyandChildren/CWW

Introduction (to be shared with the group):

[Light the Christ candle as you begin speaking to signify Christ's presence with you.]

Since 1995 the Disciples of Christ have been blessed through the ministry of Children Worship & Wonder. It is a powerful way of worshiping with children. The stories are simple, yet powerful. The setting is peaceful and allows God's presence to be experienced in very real ways. Often, adult leaders, known as storytellers, hear something new as they are sharing a story they've told or heard countless times before. God speaks to the adults

and children alike through the voice of a small child or the words of an ageless story. Here is an example of those warm, thought-provoking words:

“This is the season of Advent, the time we get ready to celebrate the mystery of Christmas, the time we are *all* on the way to Bethlehem.”

That is the wording of the Children Worship & Wonder advent liturgy which comes from Young Children and Worship, by Sonja Stewart and Jerome Berryman. It describes Christmas as a mystery, something we can't fully explain, but that is nevertheless real and powerful. What a powerful idea that we are all on our way to Bethlehem, the place where that mystery became a part of our own story.

Next in the liturgy is a simple question, “But who will show us the way?”

During each of the four weeks of advent, the Children Worship & Wonder stories elaborate on who will show us the way to Bethlehem and the mystery of Christmas. Using the Biblical stories from Isaiah, Matthew and Luke, we are shown the way first by the prophets, then Mary and Joseph, then the shepherds, and finally the Magi. During this Christmas program, we'll look for and remember others who have shown us the way to Bethlehem, thus helping us prepare our hearts, minds, and souls for the powerful mystery we call Christmas: the amazing miracle of Emmanuel; the life-changing gift of Love which came to us in a tiny baby, born in a barn, wrapped in bands of cloth, and placed in a bed made from the feed trough of the animals.

Bible Study: Who will show us the way?

The Prophets shows us the way.

[Place a prophet outside the stable. Read Isaiah 9:2]

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined.” The prophets in Scripture were those special people who listened closely to God and were therefore able to speak for God. Isaiah foretold the coming of the Messiah as one whose light would shine brightly. Jesus later announced, “I am the light of the world.” (John 8:12) Jesus was that Messiah which Isaiah

prophesied was coming. Jesus brought the light of God's love into the world and into our lives.

Mary and Joseph show us the way.

[Place Mary and Joseph inside the stable. Place the empty manger between them with no Jesus. Read Luke 2: 1-7]

Mary and Joseph are such fascinating players in this story. Apparently living simple lives until the visit of the angel, their lives were turned upside down, yet they responded with faithfulness. You can read all of Luke 1 and 2 for the more complete story. Their story, as told in Luke, seems simple enough: there was a census in which they must register. They went to the town of Joseph's lineage, Bethlehem. There, Mary had the baby. Simple enough, right? But imagine the details which remain unsaid: traveling 80 miles on foot and donkey over the course of four or five days while being nine months pregnant, camping outside or staying in strangers' homes, arriving in a crowded Bethlehem with no place to stay, giving birth to your first born child in a barn. Imagine the strength of character and faith which Mary and Joseph must have had to make that trip! It is their faithfulness and courage which help us find our way to Bethlehem.

The shepherds show us the way.

[Place the shepherds in the stable. Read Luke 2: 8-20]

"...there were shepherds living in the fields keeping watch over their flock by night..." Again we meet simple people, going about the activities of their lives; minding their own business. These were not the kings, priests, teachers, or prophets. These were lowly shepherds who received the exciting, amazing news that the Savior, the Messiah, the Lord had come! It is incredible that the news came first to the lowly working folks. And it is their faithful response of action which inspires us on our way to Bethlehem, "they went with haste and found Mary, and Joseph, and the child..."

The Magi show us the way.

[Place the wise men just outside the stable, on the opposite side from the prophet. Read Matthew 2: 1-12]

In contrast to the lowly shepherds, the Gospel of Matthew introduces the Magi or Wise men. These were highly learned men, gentiles from “the East.” They were seeking answers to what they had seen in the stars. They sought until they found, and then they worshiped, bringing gifts fit for a king. Their example of conviction, pursuit, and worship are powerful examples to us as we are on our way to Bethlehem.

So the Biblical characters of the prophets, the holy family, the shepherds and the Magi all show us the way to Jesus. But who else shows us the way? Consider the people in your life who have shown you the way to Jesus. Who are those people? Have you had a prophet speak into your life? Have your parents or other people of nurture shown you the way to Jesus? Were there simple, unassuming people like the shepherds, or wise, powerful people like the Magi, who have shown you the way to Bethlehem? How did they show you Jesus?

[Encourage participants to share stories of the people in their lives who have shown them the way to Jesus. After a time of sharing, enter into a time of worship.]

Worship:

Let us pray:

God of grace and mercy and love, we come to you as women (or people) of faith who are seeking your will and presence in our lives. We thank you for the amazing mystery of Christmas and the incredible gift of Jesus. We thank you for all the ways You work and for the people who help us find our way to the miracle of Christmas. Continue to guide us and bless us as we seek You. In the name of Jesus the Christ we pray, Amen.

Sing: *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*

Meditation:

We are all on our way to Bethlehem. We are walking with the prophets, Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, the Magi, and many others. We all want to meet Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us. [*Present the baby Jesus and place him in the manger. If you are using real people, have an angel arrive carrying the baby.*] Jesus came into the world, a gift of Love, so that all the world might be saved. (John 3:17) Jesus is here; ready to guide us into lives of courage, faithfulness, devotion, and love. Praise be to God who gives us the mystery of Christmas, the miracle of Jesus.

Offering:

In this season of gifts and gift-giving, we remember the greatest gift ever given: Jesus. We come to God today with thankful hearts and bring our gifts of time, energy, talents, and money. Let us bring now our offerings.

Offering Prayer:

We ask your blessing on this our offerings, O God. Use these gifts so that all the world might know your love. Through Jesus our Lord, Amen.

Benediction:

God, be merciful unto us and bless us, and cause your face to shine upon us; that your way may be known upon the earth, your saving health among all nations, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

