

A Christmas Prayer Journey



Research tells us that we (children and adults) learn better when all our senses are engaged. This Christmas Prayer Journey is a wonderful all age interactive multi-sensory experience of the Christmas story.

Create your journey space to flow from indoors to outdoors, room to room or place the stations at intervals on a prayer labyrinth.

For introducing children to labyrinths see www.sundayschoollessons.com/ftlab.htm and www.lessons4living.com/labyrinth_map.htm.

You can also share St John's in the City experience at the end of this resource.



Included in this resource are:

1. Instructions for setting up the Christmas Prayer Journey

Below are the instructions for setting up your Christmas Prayer Journey with stations.

- ✓ The instructions to you are in **red**.
- ✓ The text that appears on the Christmas Prayer Journey Posters is in **black bold**.
- ✓ Instructions to the participant (child and adult) are in *black italics*.

2. Christmas Prayer Journey Posters

We have created posters for you to place at each station in A4 size. Enlarge these to A3 if you have space.

3. Present cards template for Station

4. Introducing the Prayer Labyrinth at St John's

Introduction to Prayer Journey

Place this poster (see "Posters for Christmas Prayer Journey" at the start of your journey)

Today you will be going on a journey of talking and listening to God...

**Are you ready to
look with your eyes,
listen with your ears,
touch with your hands,
smell with your nose?**

Stargazing

You will need a box covered in Christmas coloured paper with a star cut into it as a peephole and the bold words below pasted on the back wall of the box for all to read. Insert a small torch in the side to shine on the words.

Look through the star to start the Christmas journey. Read the questions on the card.

**Are you ready?
God sent a special Star for the
shepherds and wise men to follow so
they could find the baby Jesus.
Are you ready for the journey to find
Jesus?
If so, follow the stars...**

We sprinkled glitter stars (from \$2 shop) as a trail to guide people from station to station. We set them up around the garden and had the last one set up in our created "chapel" with a very mystical atmosphere and Christmas carols playing quietly in the background. Or for less mess you could place footprints to mark the journey and change above to "follow the footprints...."

Station 1: Baggage

You will need a suitcase of stones lying open on the floor and a bin to throw stones into.

**Before you go on a journey, you need to take luggage, or 'baggage'.
Baggage can be heavy! Sometimes the word 'baggage' is used to describe our worries or feelings of sadness or bad moods.**

Mary and Joseph had to go on a LONG journey from their home town in Nazareth to Bethlehem. They would have walked the whole way - Mary may have ridden on the back of a donkey.

It would have taken soooo long and been soooo hot, dusty, uncomfortable and tiring.

When they finally arrived exhausted, they were worried because there was nowhere for them to stay and their baby was about to be born.

Jesus ended up being born in a stable – the home for the animals. It was hard.

***What do you find hard?
What do you worry about?***

Pick a stone out of the suitcase, hold on to your stone and remember that God knows what it's like to have hard times. God promises to be with us through our hard times.

Throw your stone in the bin –ask God to take your 'baggage', your worries away.

Station 2: The journey of the Shepherds

You will need a hoop (hanging portable clothesline with hanging pegs from the \$2 shop disguised and decorated with tinsel and streamers is good), streamers hanging from pegs, pens, candy canes hanging from frame.

This was a journey of joy and excitement – the shepherds hurried to see the baby whose birth the angels had announced.

Christmas is a time of joy and excitement.

What are you excited about this Christmas?

On a streamer, write something that makes you excited at Christmas.

Peg the streamer onto the hoop to build up a mobile of exciting things!

Take a candy cane to remind you that Jesus is the real reason for the season.

Station 3: The journey of the wise men

You will need a glass jug of water, glasses

Water is important to us all. Think about all the times you've turned on a tap today and fresh, clean water has come out.

The wise men had a long, long way to go to find the baby Jesus, through scorched, dry desert lands. They must have felt hot, thirsty and maybe even too tired to go on. Without water people die. Water is a tool for survival.

Think about the children in countries where they don't have enough water and get sick from drinking bad water.

Drink a cup of water and as you do thank God for the refreshing, clean water we have.

Pray for the children who don't have clean water and all the other things we have like a beautiful and peaceful country to live in and presents at Christmas and birthdays.

Station 4: The gifts of the wise men

You will need chocolate coins, incense (frankincense), myrrh scented oil, paper present cards (template provided)

The journey of the wise men was one of worship – they travelled far and wide to find baby Jesus – they gave him their gifts and also gave him their lives.

Frankincense – watch the smoke of the incense travel upwards. Smell its perfume.

Myrrh – dab a little drop of the perfume onto the back of your hand.

Gold –take a chocolate gold coin to remind you what a precious gift Jesus is to us.

Like the wise men, think about what you can give to others and to Jesus this Christmas.

Write the gift you'd like to bring to Jesus on the present card and take it to place around the manger with baby Jesus.

Station 5: Your journey with Jesus

You will need a crib with baby Jesus/nativity scene characters, large Christ candle, tea lights in shape of cross with Christ candle as centre, matches, tray or cardboard for all to sit on. Set up in an intimate space with Christmas carols playing in the background. Have central candle lit so tea lights can be lit from it.

▪
Jesus came to be the light for the world – for us in our lives and for everyone around the world. The hard times will NEVER put Jesus' light out.

The big candle represents Jesus' light. We call it the Christ candle.

Look at the candle and think of a person you know who needs God's light to shine and comfort them.

Light a small candle from the Christ candle and quietly think about what Christmas means to you.

Kneel at the cross of candles and remember the joy, hope, light and peace that Jesus brings you. Think of how you can be a light for Jesus in your world.

**Welcome to our Christmas
Prayer Journey
Today you will be going on a
journey of
talking and listening to God...**



Are you ready to

look with your eyes,

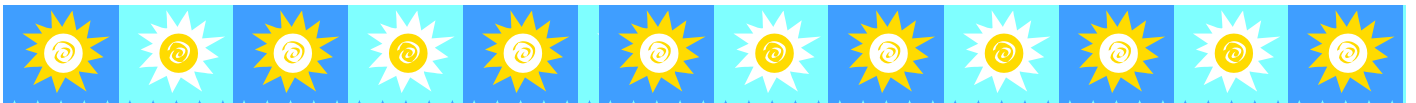


listen with your ears,



touch with your hands,

smell with your nose





Star Gazing

*Look through the star into the Christmas
box to start
the Christmas prayer journey*

Are you ready?

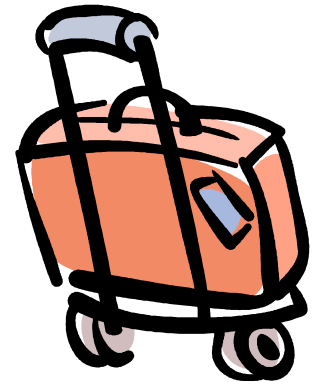
**God sent a special Star for the Shepherds
and wise men to follow so they could find
the baby Jesus.**

Are you ready for the journey to find Jesus?

If so, follow the stars.....



Station 1: Baggage



Before you go on a journey, you need to take luggage, or **'baggage'**. Baggage can be heavy! Sometimes the word **'baggage'** is used to describe our worries or feelings of sadness or bad moods.

Mary and Joseph had to go on a LONG journey from their home town in Nazareth to Bethlehem. They would have walked the whole way - Mary may have ridden on the back of a donkey.

It would have taken soooo long and been soooo hot, dusty, uncomfortable and tiring.

When they finally arrived exhausted, they were worried because there was nowhere for them to stay and their baby was about to be born.

Jesus ended up being born in a stable – the home for the animals. It was hard.

What do you find hard?

What do you worry about?

Pick a stone out of the suitcase, hold on to your stone and remember that God knows what it's like to have hard times. God promises to be with us through our hard times.

Throw your stone in the bin –ask God to take your 'baggage', your worries away.

Station 2: The journey of the shepherds



This was a journey of joy and excitement – the shepherds hurried to see the baby whose birth the angels had announced.

Christmas is a time of joy and excitement.

What are you excited about this Christmas?

On a streamer, write something that makes you excited at Christmas.

Peg the streamer onto the hoop to build up a mobile of exciting things!

Take a candy cane to remind you that Jesus is the real reason for the season.

Station 3: The journey of the wise men



Water is important to us all. Think about all the times you've turned on a tap today and fresh, clean water has come out.

The wise men had a long, long way to go to find the baby Jesus, through scorched, dry desert lands. They must have felt hot, thirsty and maybe even too tired to go on. Without water people die. Water is a tool for survival.

Think about the children in countries where they don't have enough water and get sick from drinking bad water.

Drink a cup of water and as you do thank God for the refreshing, clean water we have.

Pray for the children who don't have clean water and all the other things we have like a beautiful and peaceful country to live in and presents at Christmas and birthdays.

Station 4: The gifts of the wise men



The journey of the wise men was one of worship – they travelled far and wide to find baby Jesus – they gave him their gifts and also gave him their lives.

Frankincense – watch the smoke of the incense travel upwards. Smell its perfume.

Myrrh – dab a little drop of the perfume onto the back of your hand.

Gold –take a chocolate gold coin to remind you what a precious gift Jesus is to us.

Like the wise men, think about what you can give to others and to Jesus this Christmas.

Write the gift you'd like to bring to Jesus on the box and take it to place around the manger with baby Jesus.

Station 5: Your journey with Jesus

Jesus came to be the light for the world – for us in our lives and for everyone around the world.



The hard times will NEVER put Jesus' light out.

The big candle is called the Christ candle and represents Jesus' who came to the world to show us how to live and love others the way God wants us to. That is why He is called the "light".

Look at the candle and think of a person you know who needs God's light to shine and love to comfort him/her.

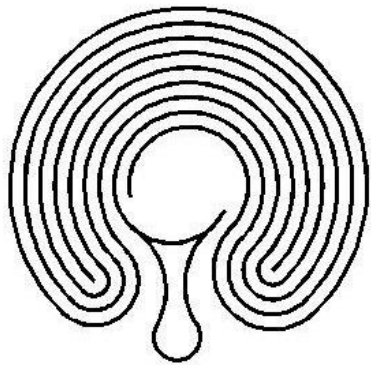
Light a small candle from the Christ candle and quietly think about what Christmas means to you.

Kneel at the cross of candles and remember the joy, hope, light and peace that Jesus brings you.

Think of how you can be a "light" for Jesus in the world.



Examples of different labyrinth patterns...



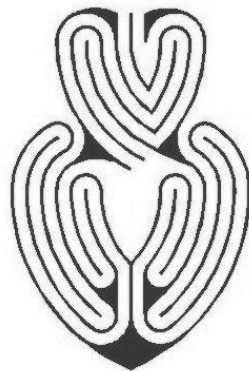
Baltic Wheel



Petite Chartres



Classical: Seven Circuit
with wide lines



Twin Hearts pattern for
marriage ceremonies

*"Nothing can be loved at speed.
God lead us to the slow path;
to the joyous insights of the pilgrim;
another way of knowing: another way of being.
Michael Leunig*

Introducing the Prayer Labyrinth at St John's...

*... prayer in motion,
instead of prayer in absolute
stillness...*



*5 circuit labyrinth pattern based on inner left centre
of Chartres labyrinth*

What is a Prayer Labyrinth?

A pattern marked on the ground or floor that is walked as an aid to reflection and meditation. It is unicursal - the way in, is the way out - it is not a maze. While not specifically Christian in origin or in contemporary use, it has ancient roots as a tool for developing Christian spirituality. As a prayer tool, the labyrinth helps us to slow down and focus on God.

A brief history:

In the Middle Ages it was customary for Christians to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. At the time of the Crusades, in the twelfth century, these pilgrimages became dangerous and expensive so seven European cathedrals were designated to become 'Jerusalem' for pilgrims. Entering a cathedral's labyrinth marked the end of a difficult journey and served as a symbolic entry into the 'celestial city'. The famous labyrinth at Chartres Cathedral in France is the best known surviving example.

Invitation and Guidelines for the walk:

It's best if there are not too many people walking at once so check if it's full and if so, have some lunch and join the children for board games as you wait. When you're ready...

- Please remove your shoes (socks are fine)
- Pause, clear your mind, see if you can slow your breathing
- to a relaxed pace.
- Please maintain silence.
- Allow yourself to go at your pace, don't worry about how fast or slow others on the labyrinth are walking you may pass people, or let others pass you.
- Look down, focus on the path.
- The path is two ways, those going in will meet those going out.

There are 3 stages of the walk:

Walking in: A time to let go of the details of our life or what blocks us. Quieting our mind and entering into silence. Making space for God to meet us.

The Centre: A time to be open, expectant, receptive to God. Stay in the centre as long as you like. Make it a place of rest or meditation or prayer.

Walking out: A time to gain direction or comfort or new direction from God. We move out into our lives to rejoin the journey. We join with the community of others who are following Christ's path.

Other suggestions for your walk:

- There are 'stations' along the way which offer suggestions for reflection or prayer if you wish to use them
- You may find it helpful to walk the labyrinth with a word or phrase which you repeat over and over e.g. "loving God", "help me Lord", "Spirit come"...
- You may want to ask a question - there may be something on your mind that is a burden to you, or you may be needing to make a decision about something. You could walk the labyrinth focusing on this question. Sometimes this stillness, focus and awareness of God will help us towards the answer.

For more information or advice on ministering to children:

CONTACT:



Jill Kayser

Kids Friendly Coach

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

Tel: 09-5850959, 027-2103784

Email: jill@kidsfriendlyjill.org.nz

Mail: C/O 100 St Heliers Bay Road, Auckland 1071



Cheryl Harray

Kids Friendly Advisor

Synod of Otago and Southland PCANZ

Tel: 03 4763932, 027-4896153

Email: cheryl@kidsfriendly.org.nz

