

Three Christmas Program Ideas

IDEA 1

Make a list of scenes to tell the Christmas story, then load up your kids, costumes, and props and head to a local farm (with the owners permission and assistance of course). Take digital photos or slides, depending on your technology capabilities, of the kids acting out the story. It doesn't matter if Mary and Joseph, etc. are different in each picture. Take lots of pictures. Have a picnic of hotdogs and chips, take a hay ride- this is a great late Oct., early Nov. family event. Later you can sort through the pictures, set them to a reading of the story and carols, project them onto a screen, and you have your Christmas Eve service. Everyone gets to sit in the congregation, and you don't have to worry about forgotten lines, sick kids, bad weather, and arguments over who gets to be Mary.

IDEA 2

On the 4th Sunday of Advent, as part of the time with children during worship, gather the children and begin telling the traditional biblical Christmas story, beginning with the travelers going to Bethlehem to be registered. Take the children along as travelers on an imaginary journey around the sanctuary. Describe all the people you are traveling with, the scenery, going by the shepherds in the fields, then enter Bethlehem, knock on doors finding no room anywhere. Finally after going around the sanctuary and stopping in a front corner, go behind an imaginary inn into a cattle stall. During the imaginary journey around the sanctuary with the children, have two children, Mary and Joseph (in costume) with a real baby, move inconspicuously into place behind the manger in front of your Christmas tree. When you and children approach Mary, Joseph and Child, the children, especially the little ones, will be wide-eyed. It will be like they have all just participated in a pageant.

IDEA 3

Depict the Christmas story with a puppet show for the public or congregation. Create big rod-and-stick puppets (Gabriel is over 20' tall). Tell the story of the birth of Christ and include the shepherds, Herod, angels, innkeeper and wife, even animals - donkey, camel, sheep, cow, doves and can-can dancing sheep! It may sound like a strange way to tell the story, but stick to the traditional telling. Have the adult choir sing all the spoken parts of the characters (as in a Christmas cantata), and so it becomes a wonderful rendition of the Nativity story for all ages. The children love it; the adults love it. Proceeds may be donated to a local charitable cause or used as fund raiser for the church. It can be a beautiful experience if done well. It functions as a wonderful intergenerational project for people from 5 to 95. It will take time to create the cast of puppets -- all are hand made. Some puppets may have paper mache heads with cloth and foam bodies, some may be all fabric. You may present more than one performance if you like. Your cast will continue to grow year by year.