

Travelling Mary and Joseph



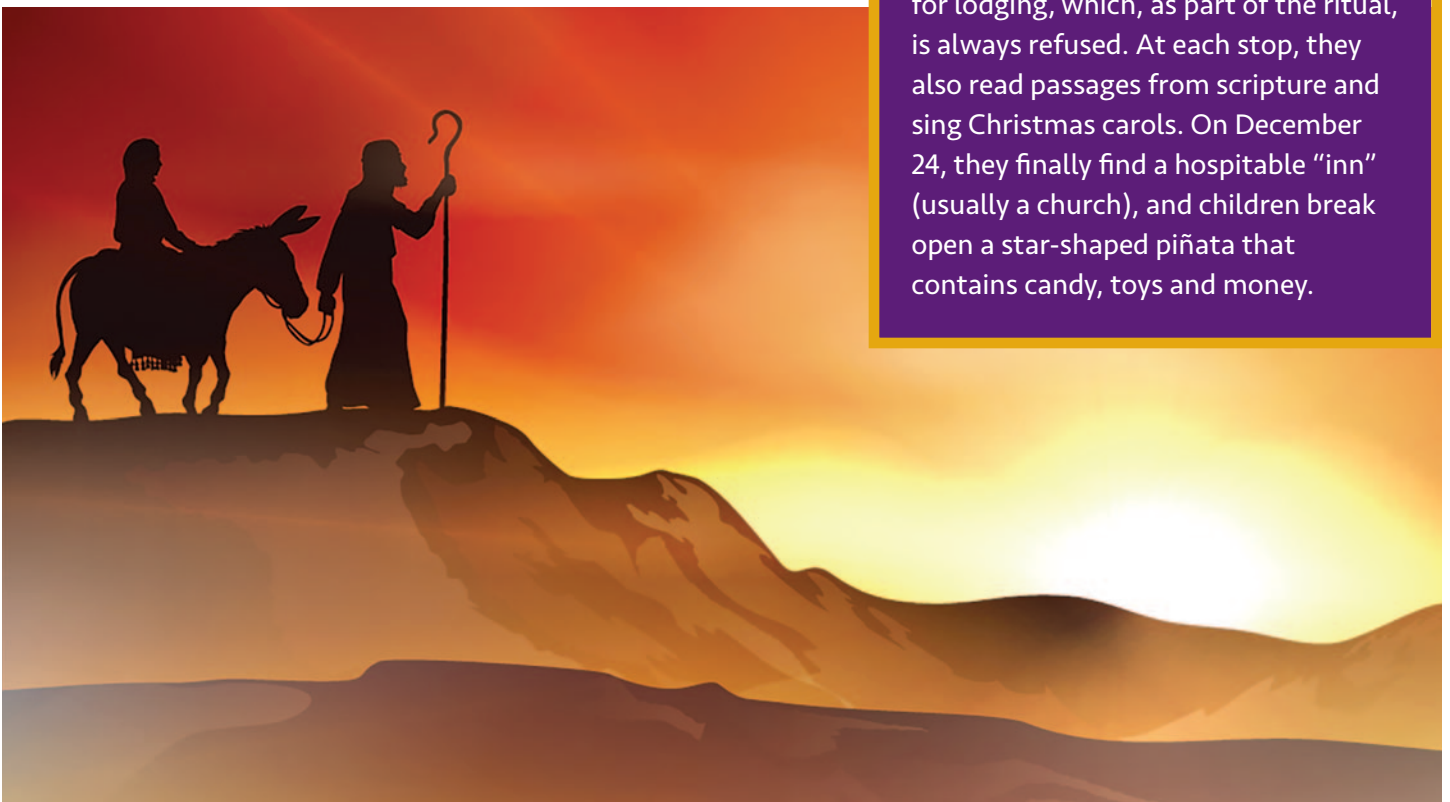
An Advent Activity for the Whole Congregation

For Advent 2020, households in the congregations of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Molesworth, Ont., and Melville Presbyterian Church in Brussels, Ont., welcomed Mary and Joseph into their homes. It was part of a tradition called "Las Posadas," normally celebrated in Latin America from December 16 to the 24. "Posada" means "refuge" or "inn" in Spanish, and the festival commemorates Mary and Joseph's difficult journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

This tradition has been adapted by churches across North America as part of Advent observations. The version of "Los Posadas" that the Rev. Charmila Ireland created for the congregations of St. Andrew's and Melville was a simplified celebration using figurines of Jesus and Mary that travelled between the homes of congregants. People really enjoyed "hosting" Mary and Joseph for a night during Advent, and it was a great way of remaining connected through the story of Christ's birth.

Las Posadas in Mexico

In Mexico, each evening of the festival, children dress as characters from the nativity and walk through the streets of town. They carry candles and images of Mary and Joseph riding a donkey. They are followed by adults and musicians. They stop at houses and ask for lodging, which, as part of the ritual, is always refused. At each stop, they also read passages from scripture and sing Christmas carols. On December 24, they finally find a hospitable "inn" (usually a church), and children break open a star-shaped piñata that contains candy, toys and money.




Here are the steps to follow to celebrate “Los Posadas” in your own congregation this year:

- 1** Assemble a “Posada” kit. The kit should contain a Mary figurine, a Joseph figurine, the printed instructions (found below) and a blank sheet for people to write their names on.
 - a.** Depending on the size of the congregation, you may want to assemble two or three posada kits so that every household that wants to host Mary and Joseph during Advent will be able to do so.
 - b.** Choose durable Mary and Joseph figurines.
- 2** A few weeks before Advent, introduce the activity to the congregation. Gather the names and addresses of congregation members that want to take part. Create an itinerary for Mary and Joseph to follow as they journey from house to house.
- 3** On the first Sunday of Advent, reintroduce the activity to the congregation. If you have a children’s story time, it is the perfect time to explain that Mary and Joseph will be journeying to different homes until Christmas when they will be returned to the church.
- 4** Send Mary and Joseph with one family. Provide clear instructions that they are meant to host Mary and Joseph for one night and then pass on the posada kit the next day to a new person or family from your congregation. Provide the name and address of the household each family is meant to pass the posada kit onto.

Also provide these important reminders:

- a.** There are instructions in the kit that explain what to do with Mary and Joseph during their stay at your house.
 - b.** Be sure to take a photo of Mary and Joseph’s stay at your house. Send it to the posada coordinator. The pictures will be used in worship the next Sunday.
- 5** The person or family that has Mary and Joseph on Christmas Eve will bring them to church, where they will be placed in the nativity scene along with baby Jesus.





The Posada (The Inn)

Do You Have Room for Mary and Joseph?

You have been chosen to welcome and care for Mary and Joseph for the night! They travelled around 150km to get from Nazareth to Bethlehem—all with no car or easy, safe roads. It was a long and arduous journey, made more so by Mary's pregnancy. Surely they stayed in shelters along the way. Tonight, you get to provide a place for Mary and Joseph to sleep, while you reflect on their difficult journey and the coming of Jesus into the world.

A Note about Disinfecting


It is a good idea for each household to disinfect the posada kit before passing it on. Choose durable figurines of Mary and Joseph for your posada kits so they can easily be disinfected.

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Read Luke 2:1-7

"In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the entire inhabited earth should be taxed. This taxation was first made when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone went to his own city to be taxed. So Joseph also departed from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to the City of David which is called Bethlehem, in Judea, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be taxed with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So while they were there, the day came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in strips of cloth, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."





2 Say a prayer – the included one, or one of your own that lifts up those who are homeless, journeying, pregnant or those in need of a place to belong.
Jesus, born in a stable, bring hope to people experiencing homelessness.
Jesus, child of Mary and Joseph, bring hope to all families.
Jesus, light of the world, bring hope to all corners of the globe.
Jesus, bearer of peace, bring hope to those suffering from conflict and war.
Jesus, who fled to another country, bring hope to all refugees.
Jesus, who was hungry in the desert, bring hope to the poor and starving.
Jesus, Son of God, Messiah, bring us hope this Christmas. Amen.

3 Sing “Away In A Manger”

4 Find Mary and Joseph a comfortable, creative or interesting place to spend the night in your home.

5 Take a picture of their resting place and send it to [insert coordinators name] by email [insert coordinator’s email] or text [insert cell phone number].

6 In the morning, **deliver** the posada kit to the next household. Drop it off at their home with a smile. Maybe take the opportunity for a short and appropriately distanced visit.

7 Write your name on the paper inside the box so we know where Mary and Joseph have already been.

*Thank you for
making a place in your
home and life for Jesus.
Merry Christmas!*

*Thank you to the Rev. Charmila Ireland
for creating and sharing this resource.*



The
Presbyterian
Church
in Canada