

A CHRISTMAS JOURNEY

(A CHRISTMAS DIORAMA)

By Valerie Pavey



A diorama is a visual presentation using either images or models to tell a story. A Christmas diorama is a physical distancing way to tell the Christmas story using visual images or models. This diorama shows five images using five households (or small groups) that help to share the news of God's gift to us. Each household or small group sets the scene through decorations and costumes, then poses as still figures in the scene while participants focus on related Bible verses.

The diorama images could be set up at five different homes using either their garage, lawn or driveway, or at the corps/church parking lot spreading out the five stations. You can choose to give participants a guide booklet that they can read at each station or have a host at each station share the script as provided.

Advertise Your Event: Create a flyer for distribution to your church neighbourhood and families visiting for Christmas Assistance (see samples on pages 7 and 8). Post your flyer on your social media pages and website. The flyer should include an invite to the event, with a phone number or email address to register and book an arrival time. It's important that you schedule only one or two families at a time to begin their way through the diorama stations. Each participant will need up to 10 minutes at each individual station. This event is an opportunity to share the Christmas story, while encouraging physical distancing. At the last station have a printed invitation for a Christmas Eve or Sunday service for participants to take with them.

Setting up the Stations: Work with each volunteer family to design the layout and look of their diorama station, help them come up with ideas on appropriate clothing and scenery for their station. Choose to use either the Bible Time **OR** the Modern-Day Twist, ensuring the same "look" for each station. Lighting will be needed at each station. Have a host share the script at each scene or provide printed scripts for visitors to read. Also be sure to create and light up a lawn sign at each location to make it easy to identify.

To help create ambiance and give a sensory experience have music quietly playing in the background. Choose just a couple of songs for each station and have them play on repeat. Each station will need a playback device and a speaker. Potential songs:

Station 1	O Come All Ye Faithful, Once in Royal David's City
Station 2	Mary Did You Know, O Come O Come Emmanuel
Station 3	Away in a Manger, Hark the Herald Angels Sing
Station 4	Angels We Have Heard on High, Go Tell It On the Mountain
Station 5	We Three Kings of Orient Are, Star of the East

As guests arrive at each station, the host will give them a few moments to take in the diorama scene before them. The models will be still during each visit to their station. After a couple of moments, the host will share the prepared script for their station. When finished they will invite visitors to move to the next station. Have a map and addresses prepared to give each guest or group if you are setting the dioramas up at people's homes. As much as we would love to stay and visit with each other, remember this is a physically distanced worship experience and there will be other families coming along in short intervals.

Optional Station Gifts: As an added touch consider giving out a small gift at the end of the evening or at each station. Simple gifts could include:

- * A take-and-make ornament that they can take home and make together. (Give needed pieces at each station. Try to choose ideas that will not require extra items to make, like a glue gun.)

A Beaded Ornament: Give each guest a Styrofoam ball, beaded straight pins, coloured beads (like pony beads), sequins and a piece of ribbon. Include instructions: "Decorate your ornament by sticking the pins through a bead and a sequin into the ball. Fold the ribbon in half and stick a pin through the cut ends into the ball. Hang on your tree."

An Icicle Ornament: (Ahead of time cut silver pipe cleaners in half). Give each family or guest a silver pipe cleaner, a collection of clear starburst beads, tri-beads and faceted beads, and instructions. i.e. "At one end of your pipe cleaner create a small loop by folding end over about 1 to 1½" and twisting the cut end around the long piece. Feed the beads onto the pipe cleaner using largest to smallest beads. When you put as many beads on as you can tip the end of the pipe cleaner up to keep the beads from falling off. Hang on your tree."

A Snowflake Ornament: (Ahead of time cut pipe cleaners in half, take three pipe cleaners and place all three together and twist in the middle to join them; cut a piece of 6 inch length of silver string; count out 18 6mm-faceted clear beads, 18 clear tri-beads and 8 clear starburst beads per craft kit). At each station or at just one give out the twisted together pipe cleaners, string, beads and instructions. i.e. "Bend the 6 ends of the pipe cleaner out and away from each other in a star pattern (*). String the beads onto each arm in the following pattern: 1 faceted bead, 1 tri-bead, 1 faceted bead, 1 tri-bead, 1 paddle wheel bead, 1 tri-bead and then 1 facet bead. If you have a glue gun or craft glue, glue the last two paddle wheel beads to either side of the middle of your snowflake to cover the twisted pipe cleaners. Tie your string into a loop and twist one end of your pipe cleaner around the loop. Hand the beaded snowflake on your tree."



- * A nativity ornament at the last station with a tag that will invite them to your church. This is a great opportunity to have craft-loving church members make something to remind others of Christmas. (See ideas on Valerie Pavey's Pinterest page: "Christmas Diorama Craft Ideas")
- * Pre-made ornaments or treats that represent the different stations.
- * A candy cane for each visitor with a gift tag that invites them to your church i.e. "The Shepherd hurried to tell others of Jesus' birth; we invite you to join us on Sundays at <time> to hear more about Jesus God's Son" (be sure to put church address on back of tag).
- * An activity for them to do together as a family, i.e. have someone from the church make up Christmas trivia or true and false cards for families to test each other's knowledge; Christmas Scavenger Hunt; Christmas Charades cards or a Christmas Word Search.

The Five Diorama Stations

1. The Announcements

<p>Bible Times</p> <p>A family, dressed in Bible times clothing, working together on a project. A spotlight is shining on an older looking man representing Isaiah, possibly holding a scroll, as he stands before them. He appears to be making an announcement foretelling of the birth of Jesus.</p> <p>Spotlight shines on Isaiah as the host recites/reads first portion of script. Turn off the light and replace Isaiah with the Roman Soldier. When the light turns on again there is a Roman Soldier standing there. The Roman soldier appears to be reading a decree from a scroll. Light dims as host finishes reciting their script.</p>	<p>Modern Day Twist</p> <p>Have a family sitting watching a TV or computer screen with a video of a man proclaiming the upcoming birth of the Messiah, darken the screen, then switch the image to that of a government looking official making an official announcement from a podium announcing the census. Family remains still with their attention fixed on the screen.</p> <p>(A large screen with a projection could be used here as long as the family's attention is fixed on it.)</p>
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Host Script: [Give visitors a few moments to observe the scene before them and then share.]

The birth of Jesus, the arrival of the Messiah, was always part of God's plan for mankind to unite us with Him. His birth was foretold by Isaiah the prophet (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7), and His plans were set into action when Herod's government sent out a decree (Luke 2:1-2).

And Isaiah told the people: "Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel.

"For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this."

[Pause and turn off the spotlight. Turn the light on again and drawing attention to the Roman soldier.]

Host Script: The Roman soldiers traveled through Israel with a decree: "In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)"

[Encourage visitors to move to Station 2. If needed, provide address of next location.]

2. The Calling of Jesus' Parents

Bible Times	Modern Day Twist
<p>Try to create two spaces out of one by hanging a heavy blanket down the middle of your space. On one side have Joseph dressed in biblical costume asleep on a mat with a blanket. On the other side of the sheet have Mary, dressed in Bible times costume, sitting with a wooden bowl of flour and a wooden pestle, like she is grinding the flour. She is looking up at the light in surprise.</p> <p>Shine a bright light first on Mary. Then darken that side of the space and shine the bright light on Joseph.</p>	<p>Try to create two spaces by hanging a heavy blanket down the middle of your space. Dressed in today's clothing Mary could be sitting at a table or on a sofa with her schoolwork spread around her and cell phone in hand. She is looking at the bright light in surprise.</p> <p>Shine a bright light on Mary. Then darken the space, and then shine a bright light on Joseph who is curled up asleep in a bed or a chair with his feet up on a stool.</p>

Host Script: [Shine spotlight on Mary's side of the station. Give visitors a few moments to observe the scene before them and then share.]

Mary was a young woman engaged to a local carpenter named Joseph. God sent His angel Gabriel to each of them to announce that He had chosen them both for a special role. (Luke 1:26-38 and Matthew 1:18-24)

...God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

[Pause and turn off the light. Turn light on Joseph's side of the station, drawing attention to Joseph.]

Host Script: This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

[Encourage visitors to move to Station 3. If needed, provide address of next location.]

3. The Stable

Bible Times	Modern Day Twist
Have a man and woman dressed in Bible times clothing, sitting looking into a wooden box filled with straw with a baby (doll) wrapped in cloths, sleeping. Decorate the space to appear as a cave-like stable.	Have a man and woman dressed for travel, with backpacks, camping chairs and a camping stove nearby. Have a baby (doll) wrapped in warm blankets and sleeping in a rubber maid storage tub. They should appear to be in a garage.

Host Script: [Give visitors a few moments to observe the scene before them and then share.]

Joseph took Mary as his wife and travelled to his hometown to fulfill the census decree. He did his best to provide for her when they arrived, but things didn't turn out as we would have expected. (Luke 2:4-7.)

So, Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

[Encourage visitors to move to Station 4. If needed, provide address of next location.]

4. Shepherds in the Fields

Bible Times	Modern Day Twist
Have a family dressed in biblical shepherd type robes, sitting around a campfire (fire pit), consider using a groundsheet covered with hay for them to sit on, have a bright light shining on them. Shepherds are holding their arms up to block the blinding light.	Have a family sitting around a fire pit on camping chairs, dressed warmly, one member could be holding a guitar, a bright light is shining on them. The family is startled and blocking the bright light with their arms.

Host Script: [Give visitors a few moments to observe the scene before them and then share.]

The first witnesses and visitors to the birth of Jesus were the shepherds. They took the news and spread it to everyone. (Luke 2:8-20)

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So, they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

[Encourage visitors to move to Station 5. If needed, provide address of next location.]

5. Magi from the East

Bible Times	Modern Day Twist
Have a family dressed in biblical royal robes, crowns, carrying scrolls, fancy decorated gift boxes. Have them standing around a fire pit looking at their scrolls.	Have a family sitting or standing around a fire pit with backpacks or luggage, gifts with baby shower type wrapping paper. They are looking at their road map.

Host Script: [Give visitors a few moments to observe the scene before them and then share.]

A group of Magi who had been studying the prophecies and the stars, travelled a great distance to bring special gifts to welcome this long-foretold king. (Matthew 2:1-11)

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

"But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel."

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

[Thank visitors for participating in our Christmas Diorama. Invite them to a Christmas Eve or Sunday Service/church and give them a printed invitation to take home with them.]

Sample Invitations:

You're invited on

A CHRISTMAS JOURNEY



JOIN AS WE TRAVEL TO DIFFERENT HOMES TO EXPERIENCE THE SCENES OF CHRISTMAS.

*Saturday, December 19 from 7-9pm.
Register for your arrival time by emailing RHCC_info@salvationarmy.ca*



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