**FIRST STEPS TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Session 1 of 4

# Annunciation

### MEETING AIM

To hear the story of Gabriel’s announcement to Mary. To reflect on how God is with us on ordinary days, and days with surprises.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-21

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in-person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

These Christmas outlines are standalone, but they all contains features in common – lighting another candle every Sunday in an Advent ring, using a wooden object to tell the Bible story, making a Christmas tree decoration, singing a song adding extras verses. There is a recurring theme that the Christmas story is full of surprises.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Welcome each child by name. Talk about the ordinary things children and adults do on a weekday morning: getting dressed, eating breakfast, packing school bag. What about the ordinary things they do in the evening? Brushing teeth, having a shower or a bath, putting on pyjamas?

### PLAY – 10 mins

Ask children to act out a morning activity for others to guess what it is. Then act out the ordinary things we do in the evening. Are there any activities they do in the morning and the evening?

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:**a long-handled wooden brush; a model wooden bed, wooden bricks to build a bed or a photo of a wooden bed; a dustpan

Gather the children together and tell them this story.

Mary was a young girl who lived with her family 2000 years ago. She was engaged to be married to a man called Joseph, but they weren’t married yet. Mary did a lot to help in the house. It was a hot and dusty country and they didn’t have vacuum cleaners. She swept the floor at least once a day with a wooden brush. *Invite a few children to have a go at brushing the floor.*

*Stand and lean on the brush.* One morning she was brushing the floor when she heard a rustle behind. *Turn round encourage everyone to gasp.* To her surprise she saw a shimmering light surrounding a tall sort of person. *Gasp again and drop the brush with a clatter.* It was an angel.

*Pick up the brush and stand to attention as though you are the angel.* “Don’t be afraid,” the angel said. (They usually say that to anyone the first time they meet them.) “God is very pleased with you. You are going to have a baby. He’s going to be called Jesus. God is his father. He will change the world for ever.”

“It’s impossible,” Mary said, trembling. “I’m not married.” *Invite children to tremble in fear.*

“God can do the impossible!” the angel said.

Mary stopped trembling and stayed very still, as though deep in thought. *Invite children to be still.* At last she took a deep breath. “OK,” she said, “if that’s what God wants. I’ll do what pleases him.”

*Take a deep breath...*and the angel disappeared.

*Sit down to tell the next part of the story.*

It was evening. Joseph, Mary’s fiance, was tired. He was a carpenter and worked with wood. His hands had got splinters in them and he’d banged a finger with a hammer. Ouch! *Ask the children if they have ever had a splinter.*

He climbed into his wooden bed. He had made it himself. *Show the photo or build a bed out of bricks.* That night he fell asleep very quickly and slept very deeply. He was snoring. *Invite children to snore, and they could lie down to imagine they are Joseph.* Joseph found that he was having a dream. He dreamt that an angel had come to him. The angel had a message for Joseph.

The angel said: “You know Mary is going to have a baby. God is the baby’s father and God has chosen you to be the boy’s foster father. Marry Mary and then you are to bring him up as your own son. You are to give him the name, Jesus.”

Joseph woke up. He knew what he’d got to do. So, he married Mary. He was going to look after her, and the baby when he was born.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Ask the children these questions, ensuring everyone has the chance to contribute:

* When we get up in the morning we can never be sure what surprising things might happen, before we go to school or nursery, or when we get there. Can anyone think of a surprise that’s happened to them?
* Sometimes surprising things happen in the evening. Any suggestions?
* God often gives people surprises. In the Bible Jesus healed people or calmed a storm or…do you have any suggestions? Chat about howGod might surprise us today. We do know for certain he is with us all the time. Just as the angel said not to be afraid, God says to us we don’t need to be worried or anxious.

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

**You will need:** card 15cm x 10cm; tissue paper cut into 15cm x 10cm pieces; glue; glitter or tinsel; felt-tip pens; hole punch; thread or wool

In advance, cut a long isosceles triangular hole out of the centre of the card, with a circle above the top for an ‘angelic head’. Punch a hole above the ‘head’ in the ‘frame’ of the card.

Cover the triangular hole in the card on one side with tissue paper. Decorate the frame on the other side using felt-tip pens, glitter, small pieces of tinsel. Insert wool or thread to hang the angel on a tree.

As you work, chat about the story and what the children think God is doing here.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** angels from ‘Creative time’; song words and advent ring instructions

Before the session, download the song words from NexGenPro. Also, prepare an Advent wreath using the instructions available online. Sing the first two verses of the song, with each child holding their angel.

Surprise the children by lighting the first candle of the Advent ring. Explain why there is a ‘halo’ around the base and remind them that Christians often light a candle when they pray as a sign that God is with us and hears our prayers. Jesus is the light of the world. Pray together:

“Thank you, God, that sometimes you surprise us, just as the angel surprised Mary and Joseph. Thank you that you are with us in the ordinary times and the surprising times too. Amen.”

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