

**SERIOUS
PLAY**

3-5s














Leader's manual

SP9

Cradle to crown

Jesus' birth to ascension
from Luke's gospel

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Serious play

How it works

How the sessions are structured

Bible passage: All sessions are Bible-focused

Aim

This is the 'big idea' to be taught during this session. It is child-oriented.

Outcomes

These statements break down the aim into 'do-able' chunks. There are generally only three, so that the leader can keep them in mind and check up later whether or not they were achieved. They are broken up into:

- knowledge – information, concepts, beliefs
- understanding – more personal ways of grasping the concepts in the session
- life application – ways of making links between knowledge and children's lives, and reflecting on what kind of change might happen in response to God's word.

Memory verse

This verse will generally be based on the CEV Bible and will be taught during the session.

Notes

These notes for the leader give Bible context and background. There are hints regarding the theology of the passage, where it fits in salvation history and how it may properly be applied to both leader and child. There might also be comments about the management of the session content and special comments when needed about visual aids and activities.

Leader's prayer

This section links to the aim and outcomes, mentioning the way this session will actually call for a response from the child and make a difference in their lives.

Gear

A summary is given at the beginning of the session of all the equipment needed by the leader and when it will be used. Some items will be given as optional. The gear needed for the **Start up** and concluding **Activities** is given with the particular activity. Leaders should choose these in advance to ensure that they have all that is needed. It is advisable to try out any unfamiliar activity before the session to make sure it works.

Get ready

This section gives hints about important preparation to be done before the session starts.

Start up

During this time activities occur that introduce the theme, aim and ideas of the session. There may be a few activities to choose from. Each activity has a specified purpose.

Your choice of activities will often depend on the children in your group and the space available.

NOTE: Sometimes during **Bible focus** time there will be a special comment to the leader about an issue that may come up during the session.

Bible focus

Links



Links are made with the previous sessions.



Connections with life are raised and the children are encouraged to discuss 'real life' situations they face. We will raise the issue here and it will be drawn to a conclusion during **Bringing it together**.

Teaching time

This is the body of the session. It involves teaching and learning activities. For this youngest group the story time is usually presented first and activities done after to reinforce the main ideas raised by the story. The story time has as its central focus the explanation of the Bible text in an age-appropriate way so that the aim of the session is reached. The activities ensure that all the session outcomes are achieved.

What the leader actually says to the children is presented in bold text. Directions to the leader are in normal type.

In this part of the session the children are helped to understand the Bible. Concepts and activities are age-appropriate. The activities are designed to reinforce the Bible teaching by revising the main concepts and testing the children's recall.

Application is an important part of this section and it is done carefully, while being true to the passage and to the developmental needs of the children. At this youngest age group we are laying the foundations for further knowledge and understanding.

Regardless of the stage of their faith, they can be called on to respond and encouraged to know how God's word challenges them to love and trust Jesus as their Saviour and Lord.



This icon shows where in the session the Bible will be read to the children so they can listen to and interact with the word of God.



Music spot

Various songs, on readily available CDs, are suggested to link into the session and to provide a high-interest flow to the activities.

Think about it

Here the leader is encouraged to think through issues that occurred in the session and reflect on possible strategies for the future.

Bringing it together

This section is really important. The leader is encouraged to allow enough time for this as connections are discussed that impact the children's lives.

There may be open-ended questions that encourage children to respond in their own terms. We are aiming for honest responses from the children.

The Memory verse is often taught during this part of the session.

Prayer

This will normally follow **Bringing it together** and allows for the issues highlighted by the children to be prayed about. Leaders will model prayer and also teach children how to pray – both for themselves and for others, and for issues in the wider world.

Activities

After the more formal learning time the leader is encouraged to choose one or more of the activities included in each session as a way of reinforcing the main learning ideas and also allowing the children to interact with the adult leaders and their fellow group members.

Munchies

Many of the sessions contain ideas for **Munchies** – food and drink that relate to the session for the children to enjoy. It is a good idea to check with parents for any allergies that their children might have before serving food and drink.

News flash

Because learning to interact socially and caring for one another is very important to the children in this age group, a time for celebrating birthdays and hearing each other's news can be included in all or some of the sessions. Ideas for introducing this into your sessions have been included at the end of this manual on pages 85 and 86.

NOTE: The **Links** in each session help children to recall what they have already learnt. Leaders may wish to include a reflective session also.

Think ahead

This is a very brief indication of what the leader will need to plan ahead for next session. It may involve equipment, people, and so on.



Cradle to crown

Aspects of Jesus' life and ministry taken from Luke's gospel

Unit aim

To encourage the children to grow in faith as they learn about aspects of the life and ministry of Jesus, the Son of God.

Unit outcomes

By the end of this unit the children will:

- know that Jesus is the Son of God who came to earth as a man
- understand that Jesus is the vital climax of God's plan of salvation for his people
- understand that God's plan of salvation is for all who respond to Jesus in faith
- make links with their own lives by being encouraged to trust and love Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

Memory verses

Sessions 1–3

For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given. **Isaiah 9:6a (NIV)**

Sessions 4–6

Nothing is impossible for God! **Luke 1:37 (CEV)**

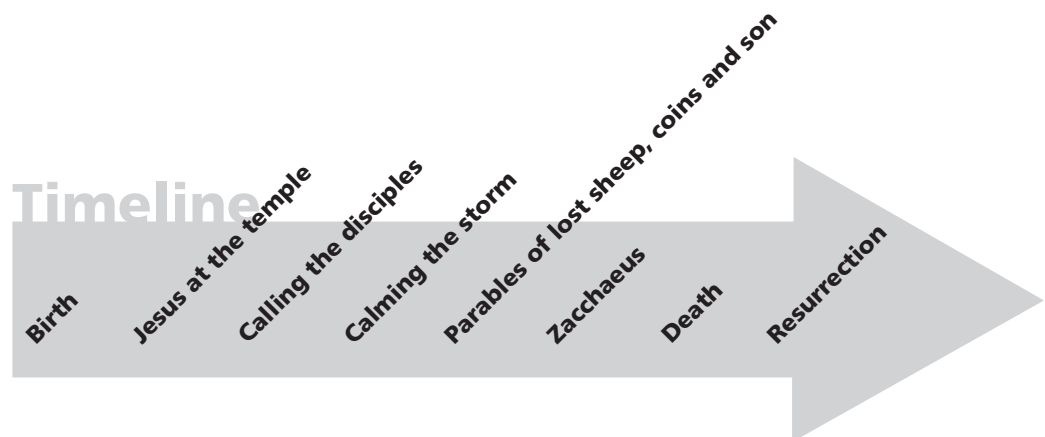
Sessions 7–9

The Son of Man came to look for and to save people who are lost. **Luke 19:10 (CEV)**

Easter Sessions 10,11

We know what love is because Jesus gave his life for us. **1 John 3:16 (CEV)**

Where this fits in Jesus' ministry



We encourage the children to understand that Jesus is the 'centre-piece' of God's plan and that we can also be part of the plan by having faith in Jesus ourselves.

Notes

Bible background

These ten sessions concentrate on the fulfillment of God's promises made first to Abraham (**Genesis 12:1–3**) and reaffirmed throughout the Old Testament. The focus is on Jesus, the Son of God as presented in Luke's gospel. With his birth the day of redemption dawned. His public ministry is seen to be the fulfillment of prophecy (**Luke 4:16–21**). His message is one of seeking and saving the lost (**Luke 19:10**). Those around him saw in what he said and did that he was 'the Messiah sent from God' (**Luke 9:20**). Jesus was Messiah for Israel and for foreigners (**Luke 2:25–38**).

At its heart is the cross, first predicted in **Luke 9:22** and the focus of Jesus' actions from **Luke 13:33** onwards. His resurrection and ascension reveal God's glory in the finished work of salvation (**Luke 24:50–53**). His followers are commanded to preach this good news to all nations (**Luke 24:47**).

The sessions present Jesus as God living among us. They explore what he did and said before turning to the events that reveal that he is both king and Saviour.

The 3–5s will trace how God's plan for his people was revealed through the life, death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus. They will also learn that his plan is for everyone – people from every nation are all welcome in God's family.

The 3–5s will be encouraged to trust and love Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, and to follow him throughout their lives. These sessions will build respect for the Bible as God's word to us. Children will be encouraged to speak to God in prayer and to think of themselves as God's people in God's place under God's rule.

Faith development

Children grow and develop physically, emotionally, cognitively and spiritually at different rates and in different ways. This unit aims to encourage growth in their knowledge of Jesus and the Son of God, for each child at his or her own pace. No matter the stage of their faith development, they can be challenged to respond to God in Christ and to live in the way he wants for us.

Faith has been described as having four aspects: believing, imagining, trusting and doing. (See *Children Finding Faith* by Francis Bridger, SU, England, 2000, available from CEP). Believing involves having faith in the truth of the gospel and a reliance on the promises of God in Christ. Imagining involves creatively exploring our beliefs. Trusting

involves the relational side of faith. Doing is the way we act as an outworking of our faith. Children, like adults, benefit from learning approaches that involve exploring faith from each of these four aspects. These sessions have been written with this in mind.

Special features

Visual aids

The leader's pack includes:

- 12 full-colour leader's posters
- 12 smaller versions of the leader's posters for the children to take home
- a variety of black and white visual aids, photocopiable masters and activities for each session.

Leader's posters

There are twelve posters in the Leader's pack. These posters will be used to set the scene or to help the children to engage with the biblical material. Sometimes the poster will be used to help tell the story, to remind the group of previous learning, to help explain difficult concepts or as a focus for small group activities. The **Get ready** section in each session gives instructions for preparing the posters where appropriate.

If you have the space, display the posters you have covered in previous sessions each week so that the children can be reminded of what they have already learnt.

Take home – Children's posters

Each group member will take home a smaller version of the Leader's poster. You will need to purchase enough Children's posters for every child in your group (available from your *Under construction* supplier). We suggest that you purchase a few extra sets of posters for any new children who join your group. Only give out the poster that relates to each session.

The children will be encouraged to use their poster in some way during the session, in order to make it more meaningful to them. Try to encourage the children to display all their posters at home, and the parents to talk with the children about them.

Activities

Children all learn in a variety of ways. *Serious play* is for 3–5 year olds who enjoy and learn through play, are either non-readers or beginning readers, and are active in the years before formal schooling. Because of this, the story-time component of **Bible focus** is kept short and to the point and the main concepts of the Bible passages are then reinforced in the activities.

At this stage the children are beginning to learn how to relate to God through his word, the Bible, and also through prayer. It is important that the leaders model this behaviour and encourage the children to follow their example.

A Memory verse activity is included in each session and presented in an interactive way so that the children will begin to build their store of personal Bible verses.

Extra photocopiable pages have also been included with most sessions to provide additional craft activities to reinforce key learning concepts or the Memory verse. The opportunity should be taken when helping the children with these activities to talk to them and learn more about each individual.

When choosing the activities you will include in each session, the number of children in your group, their individual skills and the space you have available will be important considerations. Try to encourage a wide range of activities so that the different learning skills of the children will all be catered for.



Music spot

The *Earth movers* CD has been especially developed by CEP for use with the 3–5 year old age group. On the CD are songs about God and his promises, movement music for dance, music to cue the children to come back to the leader and get ready to listen, music to ‘get up and boogie’ to, and music for popular games, such as Pass the parcel and Musical chairs.

Often the music helps the children to remember the significant learning that has taken place in the session. You may make one copy only of the CD onto audio cassette for use in the context of your church. This CD is available separately from your *kids@church* supplier.

Each session recommends the song or songs from the *Earth movers* CD that are most appropriate for reinforcing the key concepts of the session or the unit as a whole.

Other children’s CDs you may find useful are:

- *Promises, promises*, CEP
- *10,9,8 ... God is great*, Colin Buchanan
- *Remember the Lord*, Colin Buchanan
- *Practise being godly*, Colin Buchanan
- *The King, the snake and the promise*, Emu Music.

These CDs are available from CEP.

Easter

Two supplementary Easter sessions are provided in this unit. They cover Jesus’ death and resurrection (Jesus died for us, **Luke 22–24:12**) and also the Emmaus road (Jesus is alive, **Luke 24:1–35**). You may choose to use one or both of these, depending on the number of sessions in any term.



Angels and shepherds

Luke 2:1–20

Aim

The children will appreciate that God sent his Son, Jesus, to be our Saviour and King.

Outcomes

By the end of this session the children will:

- know that an angel appeared to shepherds and told them that the promised Saviour had been born
- understand that Jesus was unlike any other baby – he is God’s Son
- recognise that the Bible is the source of the story and that these biblical events really happened
- appreciate that God loved them so much that he sent his Son, Jesus, into the world.

Memory verse

For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given. **Isaiah 9:6a (NIV)**

Notes

Read **Luke 2:1–20**.

Welcome to the first session of a new unit of learning. This session is designed to allow you to get to know the children, help them to know each other and to find out what they know about the events of Jesus’ birth.

You will need to get to know your group so that you can design future sessions to meet their needs. They will need to know you and to appreciate that they are safe and cared for while they do interesting activities that focus on God’s word to us, the Bible. Establish a few simple ground rules for the sessions.

In Bible times, people readily understood the word ‘Saviour’. The Jews had been waiting for a ‘Saviour’ King from the royal line of David for many years. However, when the promised Saviour came it was not with royal processions and fanfare, but in the form of a baby born in a stable.

Through this baby, named Jesus (meaning ‘the Lord saves’), God would save, deliver and rescue his people. Jesus’ life and ministry would be directed towards the redemptive act of dying on the cross. In this he bore the punishment for the sins of his people, fulfilling the function of a kinsman-redeemer

as foreshadowed in the Old Testament. Through his resurrection from the dead, Jesus defeated the powers of evil and ascended to reign as Christ the King. Through Jesus, people from every land would be able to know God, to be saved from their sin and be reconciled as friends of God.

When the shepherds heard the angel’s message regarding the Saviour’s birth, they responded with eagerness and joy. After going into Bethlehem to worship Jesus, they returned to their sheep singing songs of praise to God.

Leader’s prayer

Thank God for the wonderful opportunity of working with children. Pray that you can clearly present the truths about Jesus to them so that they can understand who he is and what he has done for them. Pray for the children who will be in your group that they will trust Jesus as their Saviour and Lord.

Gear

- Leader's poster 1** (Nativity), prepared as described in **Get ready**
- Shepherd costume for leader (see **Get ready**)
- A CEV Bible marked at **Luke 2:10–12**
- Blu-Tack and a Sparkly angel (see **Start up**)
- Silver star stickers
- Children's poster 1** for each child, silver star sticker, cottonwool balls, glue and felt pens
- Earth Movers* CD and CD player
- Gear for the chosen activities in **Start up** and **Activities** sections
- Food for **Munchies** (see page 12)

Get ready

Before the session, prepare **Leader's poster 1** for **Bible focus** by folding along the dotted lines to conceal the stable. Practise the story using the poster.

Dress up as a shepherd for **Bible focus**. Wear an old bathrobe and a tea towel attached to your head with string. You could use a long stick for a staff.

Prepare a sparkly angel using the photocopiable on page 13, decorating with glitter.

Start up

Do the first activity and then one or more of the others as time permits.

Sparkly angels

Purpose: *To introduce the fact that angels appeared to the shepherds the night Jesus was born.*

Gear

- A photocopy of the Angel outline (page 13) for each child
- Coloured pens and pencils
- Glue-sticks
- Glitter

Give each child a copy of the Angel outline (see page 13). Ask the children to draw faces on the angels and use glitter to make them 'sparkly'. Talk to them about angels being God's special messengers who on very rare occasions tell people some especially good news. (You will need your own angel for **Bible focus**.) Ask the children about any special visitors they have had come to their house over the holidays.

A king's palace

Purpose: *To consider the lifestyles of kings and queens.*

Gear

- Magazines or old books with pictures of palaces
- Scissors
- Glue-sticks
- A large sheet of paper or cardboard

Find pictures of royal palaces in magazines or old books that can be cut up. Help the children make a poster collage, talking with them about what it would be like to live in a king's or queen's palace. Ask them to consider in what ways the pictures of a king's palace differ from their own homes.

Shepherd-dress

Purpose: *To introduce the theme of shepherds and to create costumes that the children can wear during Bible focus.*

Gear

- Old bathrobes, tea towels, string, long sticks and cardboard rolls

Have a dress-up corner with old bathrobes, tea towels and string for children to dress up as shepherds. Provide some long sticks or cardboard rolls for crooks. The children can stay dressed for **Bible focus**. Talk with them about the sort of work that shepherds do.

Bible focus

Links



Put on a shepherd's costume and gather the children together. If the children are dressed as shepherds include them in what you are about to say.

Do you know what I am dressed as? (A shepherd.)

If you have already talked about what shepherds do in **Start up**, skip the next question.

What do shepherds do? (Accept suggestions.)

Show **Leader's poster 1**, ensuring that it is folded so that the stable is not visible.

These shepherds lived a long time ago in Bible times.

Show your Bible.

The shepherds had to sit all night and watch the sheep to guard them against wild animals. The shepherds had no TV, no books, not even a

light. It was very dark except for the fire they lit to keep them warm. Sometimes they had no one to talk to.

Do you think it was a very exciting job?
(Accept responses.)

Teaching time


An angel from God appeared to these particular shepherds. All around the angel it was shining and bright. Shining and bright in the middle of the night!

Stick your sparkly angel on the poster using Blu-Tack.

The shepherds were frightened. They shook and they quivered. They had never ever seen anything like this before. In the middle of the night they suddenly shivered.

Move the **Leader's poster** to make a quivering effect. Invite the children to practise being frightened.

Listen to what the angel said to them.

 Read **Luke 2:10–12** from a CEV Bible.

Unfold the poster and point to Jesus in the manger.

Does this look like a place where a king's son would be born?


Accept responses and, if you made the collage poster of palaces, talk about the differences between where these kings lived and where Jesus was born.

Then the sky was filled with angels – not five, six or seven, but hundreds of shiny angels praising God in heaven.

If the children have made angels, invite them to stand and hold up their angels.

This is what they said: 'Praise God in heaven! This is really good news – God can now make friends with people.'

The shepherds looked at each other. This is what they said:

 Read **Luke 2:15b** from 'Let's go to Bethlehem ...' to the end of the verse.

Ask the children to stand, run on the spot and sit down again.

They were so excited! Off they ran, very fast, leaving their sheep behind. They wanted to see for themselves this Saviour-King that God had promised. In a stable they found Jesus asleep, but his mother Mary didn't mind.

Who else can you see in the stable?
(Accept responses.)

The shepherds were amazed. They were filled with joy. God had sent his Saviour, this new baby boy called Jesus. He is God's own dear Son.

Fold the poster to its original position.

Back with the sheep the shepherds said, 'Let's get this straight. God sent his Son, Jesus to bring peace so that we can be God's friends. Our God is so great!'

Bringing it together

What do you think the shepherds might have said to God for sending baby Jesus?
(Accept responses.)

Give the children a star sticker each to stick on the poster.

Thank you, God, thank you!' the shepherds said that cold night. They sang praises to God while the stars shone brightly.

Prayer

Let's talk with God in prayer and thank him that he sent his Son, Jesus.

Pray the following prayer, asking the children to repeat 'Thank you, God' at the end of each sentence.

**Dear God,
You promised that you would send a Saviour.
You sent Jesus to be our friend.
Thank you for doing this for us.
Amen.**

Let's remember that we can become God's friends by trusting his Son, Jesus.



Music spot

God keeps his promises, track 4 of the *Earth movers* CD.

Take Home – Poster play

Gear

- A **Children's poster 1** for each child
- A stick-on star for each child
- Cottonwool balls
- Glue-sticks
- Felt pens

Give each child **Children's poster 1**. Help them fold their posters along the fold lines. Ask the children to stick a star in the sky and glue the cottonwool balls on the hills to make sheep. They can also draw legs on the sheep.



When they have finished, encourage the children to retell the story from **Bible focus** to each other using the posters.

Invite the children to take the posters home in their *Serious play* backpacks and retell the story to their families.

Activities

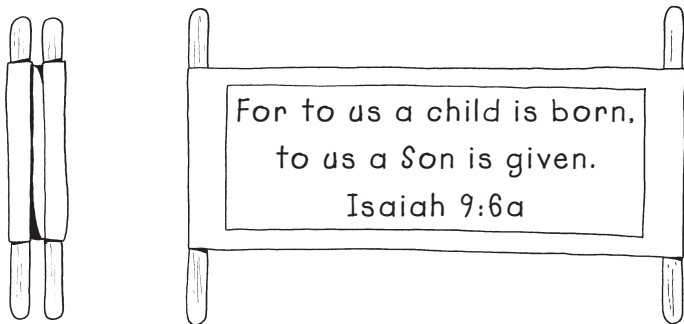
Choose from the following activities to conclude the session. Play music while the children are working.

Memory verse scrolls

Gear

- Memory verse strip for each child
- Two ice-cream sticks and a scroll with the Memory verse on it for each child
- Coloured pens and pencils
- Glue-sticks

For each child make a Memory verse strip approximately 8cm x 15cm with the memory verse on it. Show the children how to glue an ice-cream stick at each end and roll the two sticks to the centre to make a scroll. The children should colour-in and decorate the scrolls. Invite the children to take the scrolls home in their *Serious play* backpacks and practise saying the memory verse with their families.



Think about it

Did the children:

- understand that Jesus is God's only Son;
- appreciate that God loves them;
- enjoy the learning activities in this session?

Sing 'God is so good'

Gear

- Percussion instruments

Teach the children the song **God is so good**. If you don't know the tune, perform a percussion version of the words of the first line, experimenting with different beats and rhythms. Give each child a musical instrument to play, or use pots, spoons, bottles filled with rice, and so on. Before you start, remind the children that people often praise God by playing musical instruments and singing.

God is so good
God is so good
God is so good
He's so good to me.

Munchies

Gear

- A birthday cake
- Paper plates

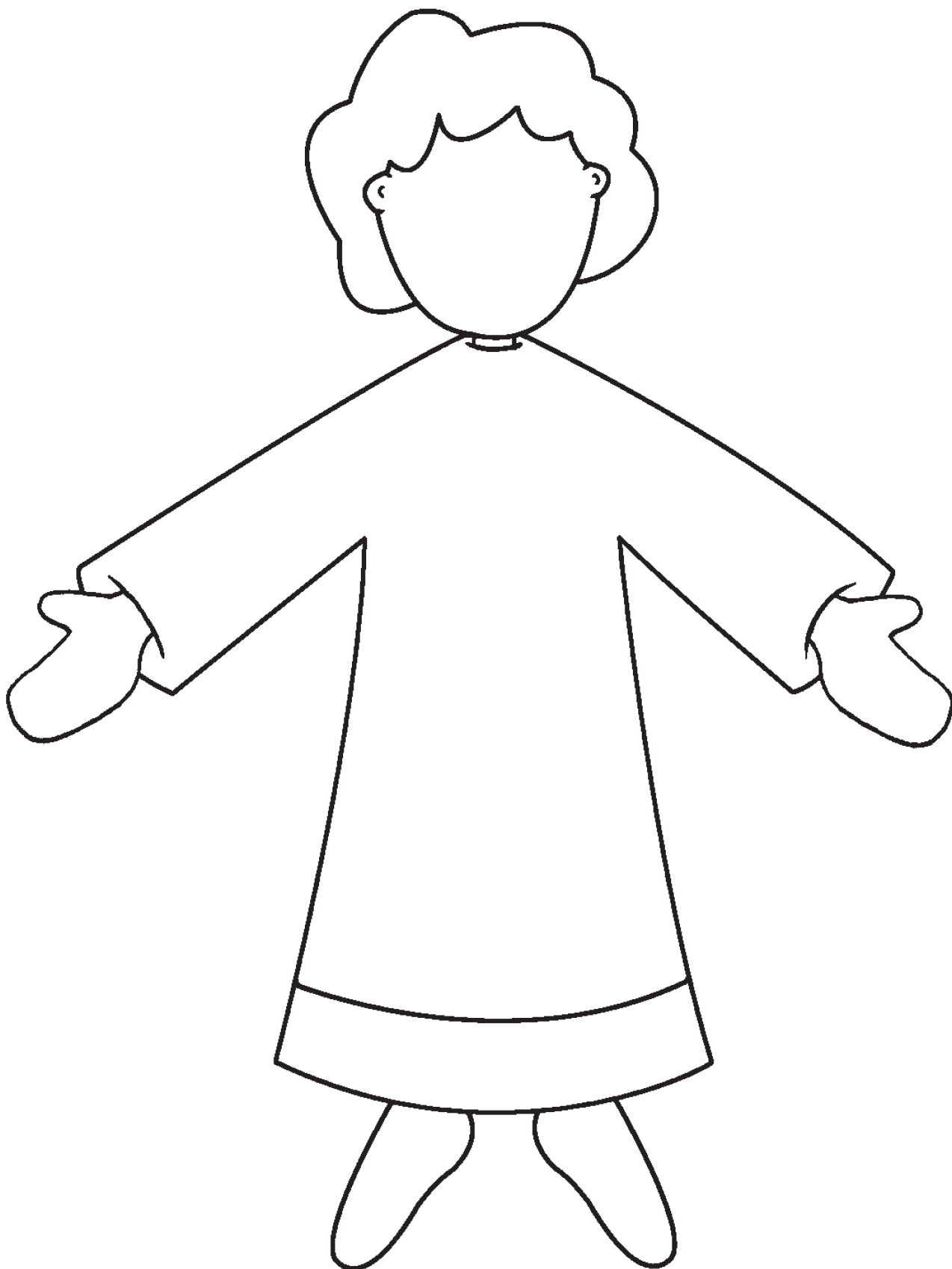
Bring in a birthday cake for the children to share as they thank God for Jesus. Before handing out the cake, ask the children to join together in saying 'Thank you, God, for Jesus'. If any of the children had a birthday recently invite all the children to sing 'Happy birthday'.

Think ahead

You will need: **Leader's posters 1 and 2** (Simeon and Anna), the **Children's poster 2**, two wooden spoon puppets and some playdough or real cookies.

You will need two helpers who will dress up as Simeon and Anna and visit the class. It would add to the session if they could learn their dialogue beforehand.

Refer to **Gear** for **Session 2** (page 16).



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