



The Christmas Journey by Moira Curry and Gill Morgan: **A guide for running your own Christmas Journey**

Creating a team

- The event will need a team of enthusiastic people who are able to work together to provide an exciting and thought-provoking experience for the visitors.
- Even if your church is small you could use this event to invite other churches to work together to expand the team.
- *Churches Together* or a similar local group would be a good platform to share the vision and recruit helpers.
- It may be useful to ask for time in Sunday services at other churches to explain the idea and encourage helpers.
- Notice sheets, church magazines and personal invitations can be effective.
- Assigning helpers to a specific job or jobs helps the team to have clarity of purpose and a feeling of value and responsibility.

What you'll need:

- *Leaders and coordinators:* to oversee the whole event, take responsibility for the smooth running of things and to delegate and troubleshoot where necessary.
- *Administration:* to send out invitations to schools, book follow-up and transport, produce prayer cards and T- shirts ordered.
- *Publicity:* to generate posters, adverts and publicity in schools and churches.
- *Layout and logistical planning:* a small team can discuss ideas and plan the sequence and smooth transition between rooms.
- *Costumes and props:* to circulate in church a list of costumes and props required for the scenes.
- *Scenery:* preparation and design.
- *Crafts:* to purchase materials and assemble items such as glue sticks, felt tipped pens, card so that they are ready for children to use.
- *Refreshments:* to provide refreshments for the visiting staff and also for the team.
- *Journey guides:* to lead the children around *The Christmas Journey*, linking each scene together and encouraging the group to participate in the story.
- *Journey guides' assistants:* to help with organising children, helping with costumes, props and so on and, very importantly, leaving each scene ready for the next group by replacing items.
- *Puppeteers:* to pre-recorded script on to CD and work the puppets.
- *Storyteller:* to learn the scripts and tell the story with empathy and skill.
- *Technical support:* to switch on lights, DVDs and CDs at appropriate times.
- *'Gatekeepers', meeters and greeters:* to make sure that no child leaves the building during school visits, to make each new school feel welcome and to deal with coats and exits.

Framework of the presentation

The Christmas Journey is designed so that the whole experience lasts for an hour, suitable for groups of up to 30 children, allowing for a maximum of four school sessions per day.

Suggested daily timetable

9.00 am	Team meet for prayer and preparation
9.30-10.30 am	School one
10.45-11.45 am	School two
12.45-1.45pm	School three
1.45-2.45pm	School four

Craft activity

Have a craft activity that takes no longer than eight or ten minute, such as a simple Christmas card using pre-cut shapes to glue on to the card and some opportunity for colouring or using stickers or glitter pens. Producing sticky labels on the computer with the school names and *The Christmas Journey* logo takes a little time, but gives a professional appearance.

The set

Buy or borrow good quality metal gazebos if this is to be an ongoing event as the plastic variety are more complicated to erect and less robust for attaching drapes. Depending on the space available, the gazebos can be placed in the corners of a hall leaving a central uncluttered area in which to tell the first part of the story. Each gazebo should be positioned slightly away from the walls to allow extra space for props and, in some cases, to make the storytelling room larger. For the final scene the children are led out of the last gazebo into a lounge area outside the main hall. This creates a feeling of travelling forward in time from a darkened area into the light of the present day. Link the gazebos together using dark fabric draped over poles or stapled to slats of wood. Take care that wood is secured safely to the gazebo in order to prevent accidents. Strong string can be used to fix the wood securely.

Lighting

Create a professional effect with simple lighting readily found in local furniture and DIY stores. Clip on spotlights, free standing up-lighters and strings of Christmas lights can all be used to good effect. Although the rooms should be as dark as possible, attention to health and safety is paramount and, for this reason, background lighting is advisable.

Budget

An important consideration is that most costs will be 'one off', so if you are planning this as an annual event, the overall cost will drop significantly in subsequent years. Setting up costs will of course vary depending on the materials you buy and what you already have, for example gazebos, fabrics, corrugated card, paint and timber.



The Christmas Journey by Moira Curry and Gill Morgan is available to buy through BRF and all Christian bookshops, priced £7.99. To buy your copy or find your nearest bookshop, call 01865 319700, or visit www.brf.org.uk.

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