

Gather

Imagine you are sitting out on a hillside looking after sheep right now. What might you be doing and how would you be feeling? Pretend to be settling down to sleep. What quiet noises can you hear as the hillside and all those on it settle down for the night?

Respond

Think about how God chose to share the news about the birth of Jesus with the shepherds first. These were people who, in those days were looked down upon.

Who do we look down upon in our society?

Who is not considered important?

Who gets left out?

Suggest to the pupils that if they want to they can write or draw a thought or prayer about people who are left out, looked down upon or forgotten about on a piece of paper (these can be placed near the nativity scene if you have one, or create a space that looks like the shepherds camp with a fireplace, some blankets, a crook, and a toy sheep – great props for your story telling!)



Engage – Luke 2:8-20

Being a shepherd two thousand years ago was not a particularly glamorous job. Most of the time you were simply sitting around watching goats and sheep and making sure there was enough for them to eat. Bears and lions trying to attack your flock was about as exciting as it got; being on night duty was the worst of all; boring, nothing happening at all.

Then, all of a sudden, an angel appears. Don't ask me what this angel looked like, whether it sported wings or was all in white, but it certainly shook up those sheep minders. The Bible does tell us thought that the angel had brought them a message from God; a message about a baby; but not just any baby. The Messiah – the one God had promised would come years ago.

Luke goes on to say that the angel strongly recommended that they went to see for themselves, check out the truth of their message, especially about the baby sleeping in an animal's feeding trough. Then just to round off the evening a whole choir of angels appeared, just as suddenly and began to praise God, "*Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased*" they chorused.

When the shepherds had been and seen Jesus lying in the manger, they were so excited that God had kept his promise, that they ran through the streets of Bethlehem telling everyone all the wonderful things they had seen and heard.

Send

The shepherds were shocked, afraid, delighted, excited – all in one evening! Who do we turn to when we have feelings or encounter situations that we have never experienced before and might make us feel overwhelmed?