



## 13. The not-so-secret messages

**Age range:** Primary

**Theme:** We gather as a community for collective worship that is **inspiring, invitational and inclusive**, reflecting the fact that we are a part of a diverse school family and the wider church community. This term, we are focussing on creativity, and the content of an exhibition being hosted in Surrey this term: **Threads Through the Cross**, the work of textile artist Jacqui Parkinson. **Throughout these final few weeks of term, we will be drawing on traditions associated with Advent, but picking up on the key thought about Hope that we introduced in the final Threads Through the Cross panel, last week. Today we focus on the messages of hope that had been written long before the birth of Jesus.**



### How does this link to your school's Christian vision & values?

We will be thinking about the word **Hope** over the coming weeks, as we link with the Cathedral art theme for 2025, but also draw on what this word might mean for us in our school, our communities, and our world. Today, we hear how Mary found hope in the news of the angel and think about our own hopes; for ourselves, for our communities and our world.

### Resources:

- The PowerPoint slides are numbered with a point in the script so you can find your way, and the parts in **bold** show you where to click on to activate the next slide or animation. There are slides to go with today's script, but you could quite easily use some of this collective worship without the PowerPoint if you preferred.
- **You will need to prepare the secret message resources for the engaging opening activity, printed from p.4: the 3<sup>rd</sup> message needs to be created separately in invisible ink. You can find spy pens in lots of stationary shops, but you could also create your own: <https://www.wikihow.com/Make-an-Invisible-Ink-Message>**
- **Reflective prayer activity:** use our image Advent Calendar, which will contain reflective materials throughout this season.

### Gathering:

**Slide 1: Use this special greeting for the Advent season, as you light your Advent candle.**



**Leader: As we light our Advent candle...**

**All: May today's thoughts bring us hope, like light in the darkness.**

### Engaging:

- **Slide 2:** Last week, we heard how the disciples went from feeling hope-less to being hope-ful – filled with hope. Our special times together during Advent will be returning to this theme of hope, through different parts of the Nativity account that we have already used this term.
- **Slide 3:** Today we return to the part of the Nativity where the Angel visits Mary, because it contains some secret messages for us to find!
- **Slide 4:** As we heard back at the start of the term, Christians sometimes call this part of the Nativity 'The Annunciation'. This event is quite unusual, to say the least – I don't suppose that your family had a visit by an angel to tell them that they were going to have you! This is one of the important clues that tells us who Christians believe Jesus is.
- **Slide 5:** The message that the angel gave to Mary gives us some more clues, and I've got some secret messages here for us to 'crack' that will tell us three of the rather extraordinary things that the Angel said – so I need three pairs of children\* who will work together to decode what our messages say. The first part is in Mirror Writing; then there's one in code where you use numbers to stand for letters, and the last clue is in Invisible Ink! [*\*with younger pupils, you may want to partner them with an adult for expediency's sake! The next slide shows the answers*]



### Slide 6: Decoding

**Message 1 Mirror writing:** He will be part of King David's family.

**Message 2 Code:** He will be King forever.

**Message 3 Invisible ink:** He will be God's Son.

So, the angel said that Jesus, Mary's baby, would be part of King David's family, that he would be king forever and (even more extraordinary) that he would be God's Son.

I wonder how your family might've felt even before you arrived, to be told something about you that would happen in the future – maybe that you'd grow up to be a great doctor or a scientist or an artist... that's quite a thought!!



But what's even more extraordinary about all this is that the birth of Jesus was actually written about by a man named Isaiah, about 700 years before the angel even visited Mary! So, maybe what the angel told Mary was actually not-so-secret after all!

- **Slide 7:** Here's what the Prophet Isaiah wrote:

**'For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given....  
...He will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace...  
He will reign on David's throne  
from that time on and forever.'  
(Isaiah 9:6-7)**

You can find this in the Old Testament part of the Bible, which Christians believe also contains many other messages about the life of Jesus. I wonder if you can spot those secret messages in this piece of writing as well?! *[click, and you'll see!]*

- **Slide 8:** When Mary heard the words of the angel, here's what she said:

**'My soul praises the Lord; my heart is happy because God is my Saviour.  
I am not important, but God has shown his care for me...  
The Lord made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his family forever!'  
(Luke 1: 46-48, 55)**

Mary said that the angel's message was full of hope for the whole of God's people, whom she called 'Abraham and his family'. Her heart was full of praise, because she recognised that the promises that God had spoken long ago were now coming true. Just imagine for a moment how this felt..... Something that had been promised so long ago that it felt like it might never happen, but now, here it was – and she was a part of the plan!

Mary's words show us that the message of hope wasn't just for God's people, it was for her as an individual too: God had shown his care to her, entrusting her with the job of being Jesus' mother. We can tell from her words how this made her feel, and the hope that this gave to her heart, knowing that God cared for her.

### **Slide 9: Responding and words for worship**

The words that Jacqui sewed into this panel remind us that the baby that we think about at Christmas time would one day be great, and the secret messages we looked at earlier said that he would be **King forever, and God's Son**. His name – Jesus – means 'Rescuer'. For Christians like Jacqui, Jesus is hope because he came to rescue the world.



Hope is such an important quality in our lives...we need it when times are hard and we need it when times are good. We've thought today about the messages of hope in this part of the Nativity account; hope for God's people, hope for Mary, and hope for Christians like Jacqui too. Let's spend a few moments in quiet now and think about our hopes....

As we approach Christmas....  
**....I wonder what you hope for, for yourself and for those people you love?....**  
**....I wonder what you hope for our world?....**  
....maybe something so far off that it feels like it might never happen.....

**....I wonder what hope there might be in the Nativity story as we share it again this Advent?....**

**Slide 10:** As we are quiet and still, I am going to use a prayer for Advent about hope. If you want to pray too, then there are some words to join in with which will start each new line..... **In this Advent season...**

**Prayer: God of all hope,**



**Slide 11: In this Advent season,** be the hope in our hearts.  
**Slide 12: In this Advent season,** be the hope in our homes.  
**Slide 13: In this Advent season,** be the hope in our school.  
**Slide 14: In this Advent season,** be the hope in our community.  
**Slide 15: Amen.**

**Sending: Slide 16**

Use these words throughout Advent (the number of candles will change each week!)



**Leader:** As we leave this place & time...

**All:** May the hope of Advent shine brightly in our school today.

**To listen to / sing:**

To listen to: [Magnificat](#) or '[For unto us a child is born](#)' from Handel's 'Messiah', which contains the passage from Isaiah that we used in this script.

To sing: [Mary had a baby](#) (BBC) [The Virgin Mary had a baby boy](#) (BBC), [The Angels Knew](#) (NBD) or school choice

**Slide 17: Reflection spaces – online Advent calendar**

Use the link to connect you to reflective materials for school days during Advent.



## Message 1: Mirror writing

King David's family.  
He will be part of

## Message 2: Numbers for letters

Use the code-breaker to help you to decipher the secret message

8-5

23-9-12-12

2-5

11-9-14-7

6-15-18-5-22-5-18.

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## Message 3: write in invisible ink

He will be God's Son.

