

## **THE GLORY OF THE LORD**

To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,  
To guide our feet into the way of peace.  
(Luke 1:79)

The Lord came on earth to give light in a time of spiritual darkness. This is beautifully pictured in the Christmas story of the shepherds when the glory of the Lord shone around them as the angel announced the Lord's birth.

This shining glory is spiritual light, and it was desperately needed in the world. The shepherds may have had a fire burning to keep them warm, but its light was negligible compared to the light that enveloped them when the angel appeared. As we burn candles at Christmas time and decorate with lights, we can think of that special light that shone on the first Christmas.

### **READ: "The Glory of the Lord" by the Rev. Lawson M. Smith**

A family talk about how the Lord's coming makes it possible for everyone to learn about Him and be led to heaven. When we read the Word, this heavenly light—the glory of the Lord—shines in our minds.

### **READ: "Christmas Candles" by Rev. Lorentz Soneson**

A family article on how beautiful candles at Christmastime can remind us of the "glory of the Lord" that shone around the angel who appeared to the Shepherds on the first Christmas.

### **PROJECT: Picturing the Glory of the Lord (ages 4-10)**

Use yellow watercolor paint on wet watercolor paper to paint the angel who appeared to the shepherds with great light in the dark of night. (Younger children could just paint the great light.)

### **ACTIVITY: The Light of the World (John 8:12)**

Start out sitting in darkness and light candles one by one as you read (or recite or repeat) a quote from the Word. The room will grow brighter and brighter with the sharing of each quote.

### **PROJECT: Making and Using Candles (all ages)**

Here are several ways to make or decorate candles. Suggestions for incorporating candlelight into your Christmas celebration include saying evening prayers by candlelight throughout December and lighting the whole house by candlelight on Christmas Eve.

### **PROJECT: Cookie Cutter Candles**

Put a wick in the middle of layers of beeswax cut into special shapes with cookie cutters.

### **SING: Break Forth O Beauteous Heavenly Light**

### **PROJECT: Enlighten My Darkness**

This project layers dark paper on yellow or white paper with a flap that opens to reveal the light. You can picture the shepherds on the dark paper and an angel behind the flap. Or, for a simpler project, just picture the Lord's Word in the opening.

**PROJECT: Come and Walk in the Light of the Lord**

Three variations of a project to illustrate the importance of looking to the Lord in His Word as we walk the path of life.

**ACTIVITY: By Way of Illustration**

The Lord gives us His Divine truth as a light in our darkness, and it is He who gives us the power to live by it. This can be illustrated by the way energy is received from the sun and then put to use. Glow-in-the-dark stars provide a simple illustration for children for they must be exposed to light before they can give off light in the darkness. See what happens if you keep them in a dark closet for several days, with no external source of light.

## **THE SHEPHERDS**

*Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields,  
keeping watch over their flock by night.  
(Luke 2:8)*

Why did the angels bring the good tidings of the Lord's birth to the shepherds in the field? The shepherds were doing their job, protecting the sheep and finding them food and water. This symbolizes protecting what is good, and the shepherds picture true innocence or a willingness to be led by the Lord. The shepherds were ready and willing to receive the good news and follow the angel's directions to find the Baby Lord.

**READ: "The Shepherd in Us" by Rev. Karl R. Alden**

This article describes how the Lord can be born into our own lives, even in the midst of our personal darkness, to light our minds and warm our hearts with His presence. We need only keep faithful watch, as the shepherds did on that long-ago night in Judea.

**READ: The Story of the Shepherds in Luke 2**

**SING: The First Noel**

**ACTIVITY: Dramatize the Story of the Lord's Birth**

Participants dramatize the story as someone reads aloud Luke 2.

**ACTIVITY: Being Good Sheep (for ages 3-8)**

Let children add cotton ball (or other) sheep to your nativity scene as you "catch" them being useful and kind in the weeks before Christmas.

**READ: "Shepherds in the Same Country" by Rev. Karl R. Alden**

This article for parents talks about watching over our children as faithful shepherds in the dark and difficult times as well as the joyous ones. in Judea. As the shepherds were rewarded, so will we be.

**PROJECT: Shepherd Stained Glass (ages 8-12)**

Use the pattern to make a window showing a shepherd looking upward.

**PROJECT: Shepherd Boy Ornament** (*ages 8-12*)

Use pipe-cleaners, a wooden bead (for the head), polyfill, and fabric to make this shepherd boy.

**PROJECT: Sheep Ornament** (*ages 3-6*)

Glue cotton ball “ to a paper lamb prepared in advance.

**PROJECT: Standing Sheep for Christmas Representation** (*ages 5-9*)

Use the pattern to cut out a paper sheep, then add some fluffy cotton to the sides.

**PROJECT: Making Sheep for a Nativity Display** (*ages 10-up*)

Use pipe-cleaners and sheep’s wool, cotton batting, or cotton balls to make the sheep.

## GOOD TIDINGS

“I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people” (Luke 2:10).

To declare or proclaim the good tidings means to announce the Lord’s coming. There is a society of angels in heaven known as “Gabriel” that delights in sharing the good tidings of the Lord’s coming. So the angel said to Zacharias, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings” (Luke 1:19). How can we cherish these glad tidings and share them with others?

**READ: “The Lord Is Born”** by Rev. Philip B. Schnarr

A simple retelling of the Luke story of the birth of the Lord and the visit of the shepherds with color illustrations for young children.

**ACTIVITY: Sharing the Good Tidings**

It can be most delightful for adults to be able to share in a child’s wonder at the Christmas story. Here are several ways to share this special sphere with adults who may not have little ones nearby.

**PROJECT: Picture the Angels Appearing to the Shepherds** (*ages 7-10*)

Explains how you can depict this story with oil pastels on dark paper.

**ANGEL PROJECTS:**

**Easy Angel Snowflake** – to fold and cut (*ages 8-14*)

**Intricate Angel Snowflake** - to fold and cut (*ages 9-14*)

**Heavenly Host of Angels Mobile** (*ages 8-12*)

**Host of Angels Decorative Hanging (Stencil)** (*ages 5-12*)

**Paper Chain of Angels** (*ages 8-14*)

**SING: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing**

**PROJECT: Pop-up Christmas Card** (*ages 9-14*)

A lovely project to color and assemble. Designed by Eudora Sellner Walsh.

**PROJECT: Cookies in the Shape of Angels, Sheep, and More**

Use your favorite sugar cookie recipe and cookie cutters (or templates) in the shape of an angel, sheep, a shepherd, or a star. Then decorate the cookies with sugar, white icing, or a glaze made with egg yolk and food-coloring.

**POSTER: An Angel of the Lord and the Shepherds** by Robert Glenn

**COLORING PAGE: Shepherds Watching Their Flocks**

**PROJECT: Christmas Triptych** (*ages 9-12*)

When finished, the triptych pictures sheep on either side of the baby Lord in the manger.

**COLORING PAGE: Good Tidings of Great Joy** by Robert Glenn

**THIS WILL BE THE SIGN TO YOU**

**“You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger” (Luke 2: )**

When the Lord was born, Mary wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger. The angel told the shepherds that this would be a sign to help them know when they had found the infant Lord. Why was the Lord wrapped in swaddling cloths? It was a tradition in those days to wrap babies in swaddling cloths to keep them warm. These are like the first truths children learn about the Lord, His heavenly kingdom, and how to obey His Word. These truths make us feel warm and secure under the Lord’s tender care and love.

**READ: “A Sign to the Shepherds”** by Rev. Ragnar Boyesen

An in-depth sermon exploring the internal meaning of the Lord’s birth on earth and the circumstances surrounding it.

**READ: “Swaddling Clothes”** by Rev. Patrick Rose

A family talk describing what swaddling clothes are and how they were used in Biblical times to keep babies safe and warm.

**READ: “Signs of the Lord’s Birth”** by Rt. Rev. George de Charms

The Lord was born in secret to protect Him from those who wanted to harm Him. The only people who knew about the event were those who were given signs so they would know where to look. We, too, can be given signs of where to find the Lord if we keep watch for them.

**ACTIVITY: Using a Nativity Scene to Focus on the Lord’s Birth**

Suggests several ways to make this a special part of your family celebration of Christmas, such as making this the first Christmas decoration set up each year or waiting until Christmas Eve to set up the representation as you read aloud the story from the Word. When there are younger children in a household, it is wonderful to have a sturdy nativity representation that they can manipulate (with reverence) such as the Christmas flannel board set, a set of wooden figures, *etc.*

**READ:** *A Child Is Born to Us* illustrated by Marguerite L. Acton [link to bookstore?]  
The story of the Lord's birth with lovely color illustrations, available from the New Church Bookstore.

**ACTIVITY: Wrapped in Swaddling Cloths**

Illustrate the way people wrapped babies in swaddling cloths at the time of the Lord's birth by helping a child wrap up a baby doll or wrapping a cotton ball with tiny swaddling cloths to represent the baby Lord in a nativity scene.

**PROJECT: "For Unto You Is Born this Day" Nativity Stained Glass Window**

Make a "stained glass window" of the baby Lord with Mary and Joseph.

**SING: Away in a Manger**

**SUNDAY SCHOOL PROJECT: Baby Lord in the Manger Ornament**

Make a lovely ornament using half of a walnut shell as a manger for the baby Lord.

**POSTER: Mary, Joseph, and the Babe in a Manger** by Robert Glenn

**PROJECT: Make Your Own Representation** (*for ages 6 and up*)

Use a modeling compound such as Sculpey to make figures for a representation of the nativity. You may want to start out by making Mary, Joseph, a manger and the baby Lord and make additional figures another year. Or you can make this a family project with each person making one or more of the figures.

**PROJECT: Nativity Diorama with Shepherds** (*ages 8-14*)

Color the baby Lord, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds. Then cut out the pieces and assemble.

## **GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST**

*To give glory to the God of heaven is to acknowledge and worship the Lord.  
(see *Apocalypse Explained* 678:2,3)*

The angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds and told them the wonderful news of the Lord's birth, then was joined by a whole host of angels praising God and saying "Glory to God in the highest!" (Luke 2:14). Activities like the ones below can help us focus our attention on the Lord and worshipping Him.

**READ: "Glory to God in the Highest"** by the Rev. Walter E. Orthwein

This sermon discusses why we must give glory to God in the highest if there is to be peace on earth.

**COLORING PAGE: Glory to God** by Edith Elphick

**SING: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing**

**COLORING PAGE: Glory to God in the Highest** by Robert Glenn

## **CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS**

To come and see the glory of the Lord, means to be enlightened in Divine Truth,  
and thus to experience heavenly joy....  
*(Apocalypse Explained 427:3)*

How can we celebrate Christmas in a way that gives glory to God and allows us to sense the peace He wishes to give us? It may be helpful if parents think about creating some new family traditions.

**READ: “The Purpose of Christmas”** by Rev. Mark Carlson

This article examines a passage from the Heavenly Doctrine which tells us how God Himself was born into this world and then looks at the implications of this for us—that He does know what our life is like.

**ACTIVITY: Ideas for Celebrating Christmas** *(for all ages)*

## **ON EARTH PEACE...**

To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,  
To guide our feet into the way of peace.  
*(Luke 1:79)*

Focusing on the true spirit of Christmas can help lift our minds from the busy external preparations for Christmas to help us sense the peace that the Lord wants to bring us.

**READ: The Peace of Christmas** by the Rev. B. David Holm

The Lord came on earth to restore peace in the heavens and the *potential* for peace with people on earth. This peace is a spiritual state associated with trusting in the Lord and living a life of charity.

**ACTIVITY: Peace on Earth**

Use the **Peace on Earth Quotations** as readings for family worship, perhaps letting each member of the family read a quote.