



Using the Travelling Crib In a midweek under 5's group

Traditionally the Travelling Crib (or 'Posada') is a creative way of marking the 24 days of Advent. Figures from the nativity story travel from home to home (staying one night in each) around a town or a village, arriving back in church for Christmas Eve in preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day. The journey is a special way of remembering the journey that Mary and Joseph made on their way to Bethlehem. Sometimes the shepherds and wise men are also included who also made long journey's to see the Christ child.

Many midweek groups stop meeting numbers of days before Christmas Eve and many of the families linked with these groups will not be in church over the holiday period. But, the concept of the Travelling Crib can easily be adapted to meet the practical needs of these groups.

It is a wonderful opportunity to:

- Teach the Christmas story to young children
- Strengthen friendships as families visit each other's homes
- Bring parents and children together as they share this special time
- Put back something of the real meaning of Christmas

You will need to:

- Advertise the idea in advance
- Prepare the crib box
- Organise the rota
- Decide how you will mark the start and finish of the journey

Other suggestions:

Provide a diary/camera and invite people to make an entry or take a photo to record the journey of the crib. (Don't forget to let people know how the photos will be used, so they can decide whether to just capture the crib or the whole family!)

Advertise the Travelling Crib

If you are an existing group this should not be difficult but take time to explain clearly what it involves. Some may be apprehensive about having people into their homes. Others might decide to become joint hosts, joining together in one home for the occasion. You may wish to explain it in writing (see sample letter) and provide a tear off response form for people to respond privately.

Prepare the Crib

You will need:

A box large enough to accommodate all the figures, candle, book and prayer/song cards. A shoebox is usually ideal.

Attractive paper to cover the box

Nativity figures

A candle, which could be an advent candle and candle holder

A Christmas storybook

A prayer and/or song card

A cloth onto which you can place all the items for presentation

Organise the rota

Traditionally the crib stays in a home for one night and is taken by prior arrangement to the next host the following day. This can be totally flexible depending on the numbers of families you have and the time scale available. Decide on your starting and finishing dates (these don't have to incorporate 24 days) and either allocate a date to each family or ask them to sign against a date that is convenient for them and remind them that this information will be shared amongst the group. Give each family a copy of the rota, which should contain the names, addresses and telephone numbers of everyone involved, plus the organisers name and contact details in case a problem arises. See sample offered.

Decide how you will start and finish the journey

Starting the journey:

Introduce the children to the crib characters and read the story from the book. Teach the song for lighting the candle and say the prayer rhyme together.

Finishing the journey:

If possible finish the journey by bringing the crib into church and tell the children that it will stay there until Christmas Day when all the people will come to celebrate Jesus birthday.

A song to sing when you light the candle:

(Tune: Twinkle Twinkle)

*Candle, candle standing tall
Jesus love is for us all
See it standing oh so fine
Now we're going to make it shine
(Light the candle)
Candle, candle burning bright
Jesus is the world's true light*

A prayer to use when your candle has been lit:

*Dear God
Please bless our home and family on this special night as
we remember the journey to Bethlehem where
Jesus was born*

Amen



