

The Bethlehem Handbook

This handbook is for everyone in the Bethlehem cast. It should tell you what you need to know.

Thanks so much for your willingness to serve in this fun, creative and engaging way.

- compiled by Jono, Sam, Lucy and Marge Mills

Research from *The Bible Guide Book*, *The Lion Handbook to the Bible*, *The Lion Encyclopaedia of the Bible & BBC Primary History*.

The Aim of Bethlehem

The aim of Bethlehem is to point our community to the significance of the birth of Christ, in an engaging, interactive and creative way. This year we hope to particularly focus on the coming of Jesus into the world as part of God's purposeful plan, revealed in the old Testament prophets.

Bethlehem is a fantastic non-threatening event to invite non-believing family and friends and is a significant 'bridge' between the church and the local community. As one of the few church events involving people from all four services, it is also an opportunity for developing Christian community centred on gospel mission.

Primarily, however, Bethlehem fulfils part of our Mission Statement: to show Christ to the world.

Preparation

Each cast member must:

1. Read this *Bethlehem Handbook*.
2. Attend one of the two **Bethlehem Cast Meetings**
3. Work out and provide your own costume - see tips below.
4. Go through your house and find every possible prop you have, and bring them to the church
5. Invite people to Bethlehem! Because you're in the cast, this should be easy. Ask them to come along to Bethlehem, tell them what your role will be and pray that they will come.
6. Turn up on the day/s on time, and pack up afterwards.

Props that can be useful to transform a church site into 1stC Bethlehem

These can be mostly borrowed or donated from church members (ensure they are named)

Animals and enclosures (sheep, goats, calf, chooks, horses, camels etc)

clay or brass pots,

bulrush or pampas grass, potted palms

large wooden platters,

woven rugs,

coir mats

backdrop curtains

old besom brooms

cane handwoven baskets,

wooden bucket

Bales of wool

Bales of hay

Simple weaving loom & spinning

clay

costumes

hessian

old sheets
canvas, tarps
lots of flat bread
dates, figs, olives,
sultanas, cheese
hummus, herbs (hanging from stalks as well as in small clay pots)

Your Costume

With a few exceptions (such as Roman Soldiers), everyone in the Bethlehem cast provides their own costume. Here are a few pointers on what is appropriate:

Dress:

- Long flowing robes were worn by men and women to keep cool. The material and texture was decided by wealth and the peasant wore a loincloth and/or tunic and cloak. Men wore a calf-length shirt or tunic made of wool or linen (usually red, yellow, black or striped), a long piece of material folded at the centre and sewn up the sides, with holes for the arms and a slit at the folded end for the head to go through. Women wore similar tunics, but must be ankle length and, if wealthy, more colourful. Wealthy men wore light brightly-striped coats over their tunics when outside.

Head-dress:

- To protect the head from the sun, turbans or headdresses were worn (for men and women). These were made from cotton, linen, or silk and were folded in half, triangle shape. The folded side was placed on the head to shade the eyes, while the flowing ends protect the back of the neck. Cotton squares were white or dark blue, while other fabrics are often striped in bright colours.

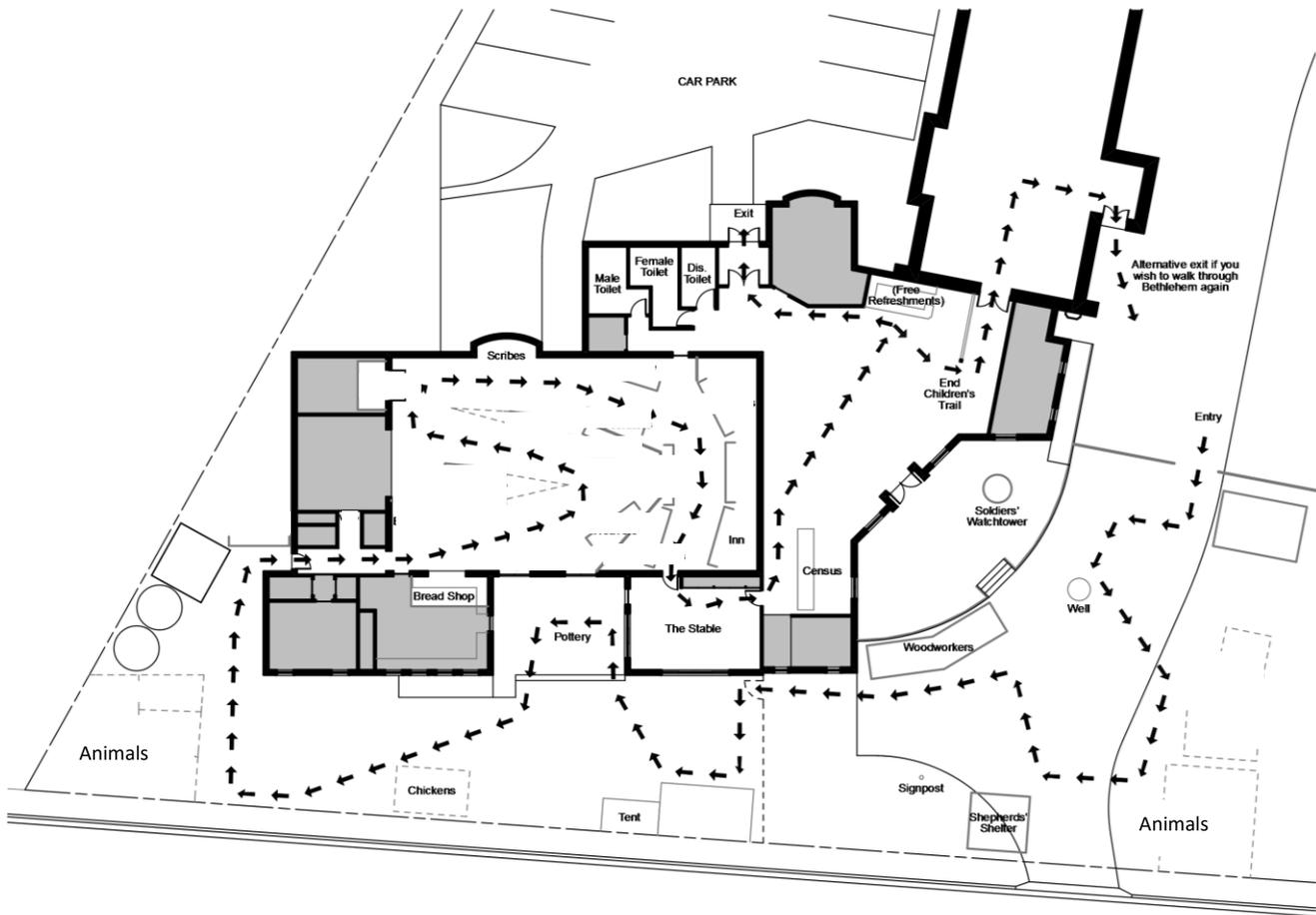
Footwear:

- The poor man's footwear were cowhide thongs. Sandals were made from wood, leather or even woven grass. Bare feet are also okay.

Background to Bethlehem

The year is around 6 BC. Like most of the known world, Israel is occupied by the Roman Empire. Caesar Augustus orders a census and each man needs to travel to the place of his ancestors to register. Bethlehem, situated on the Judean hills five miles south of Jerusalem, was once the home of King David. The census brings many people to the town and the inn is full. A man descended from David finds shelter for his expectant wife in a stable. She soon gives birth to a son, the most important figure in history. Although Augustus is Emperor, Judea's local ruler is King Herod, fanatically loyal to Rome and showing no mercy to the Jewish people. He later orders the mass execution of all baby boys in an attempt to kill the infant Jesus. (Matthew 2). Despite occupation, Jewish authorities also have some say in local matters. Local quarrels are settled at the 'gate' by the village elders.

Visitors' Route



A possible route: Visitors will enter out the front of the buildings, on main road side where at least two Roman Soldiers will be stationed at all times. The Roman Soldiers will direct them to a two-minute introductory video running from the John Room. After the video, the Soldiers will hand visitors a map and distribute kids' trails.

Visitors then pass the well, where some local women are gathered, and then some shepherds, looking after their flocks, who tell them about the angels they saw. Visitors then observe the carpenters and the stonemasons at work, before passing through into the fenced area. On the veranda, children can make their own piece of pottery with the assistance of the potters.

Visitors then go round to the back of the property, where they see more animals and their herders and the coppersmiths at work. Then they enter the marketplace. There, visitors can taste food at the bread, fruit and middle eastern food, children can try beading and dress up in 1st century clothing. People will encounter villagers selling rugs, working on baskets, sewing, spinning, leatherworking, weaving and candle-making. In the chair cupboard will be a theaterette, a video with the Christmas story showing. Visitors also pass the Synagogue and see the scribe at work transcribing the Holy Scriptures.

Finally, they arrive at the Inn, where the innkeeper tells them there are no rooms left. They then walk through to the stable, where they see Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus.

Visitors then participate in the Census in the foyer, an opportunity for them to give us feedback on Bethlehem and their contact details if they'd like to be notified about similar events. They can then stay for a cup of tea and something to eat in the foyer. Children can also show their children's trail sheets to an appointed person to receive a small reward.

Historical Accuracy

To create an authentic experience, we'll be aiming to avoid anachronisms. Every cast member must:

- Take off watches/modern jewellery (wearing prescription glasses is acceptable!)
- Not wear sandals. Bare feet or sandals only
- Turn phones/iPads/tablets onto silent and keep them and cameras out of sight
- Not eat 'modern' food or drink (e.g. a packet of chips) or use modern utensils (e.g. a modern mug/glass) Please bring a pottery/wooden/silver cup to drink from. Water carriers will be filling up your cups regularly.
- Not go through the foyer or carpark during the Bethlehem session

Staying in Character

Although great effort will go into constructing our set, the experience rests on the 'characters' within Bethlehem. A very important aspect of achieving this is for **everyone to stay in character at all times**. Even if you're really just playing a first-century version of yourself, make sure you stay true to that.

A good way to get into character is to ask yourself: **if I were this character, what would I do?** During Bethlehem stay in character, even when talking to other cast members or when no-one is in earshot (see below for some suggestions on things to say). If you see someone you know, acknowledge them, but stay in character as much as you can.

What if I get hungry?

The food we're handing out in Bethlehem is not for cast members to have a meal - it's for visitors to have a little taste. You might want to **bring a snack to eat, and a cup of water near your store**. Please try and make these look as historically accurate as possible (no McDonalds!). Eating a sandwich, muesli bar not in its wrapper, or some fruit is fine.

You can take a short break (provided someone else is looking after your store) and wander round Bethlehem yourself.

What if I need the toilet?

The two toilet rooms near the Matthew Room will be closed to the public, and are for your use. If you are manning a store and need to use the facilities, make sure someone else in the cast can fill in for you. Try asking one of the following people who will be roaming around and happy to fill in:

A warning re safety

We want to provide a safe experience for visitors coming to Bethlehem. This means a few rules will apply:

- Children are under supervision and responsibility of their parents. However other adults can call them into line if need be. There is **no running** in Bethlehem (Kids, take note!)
- No carrying hot beverages around Bethlehem
- **Don't lean** on shop fronts - they are just facades, not buildings!
- Always ensure the path through Bethlehem is clear of hazards
- If a visitor is being unsafe, tell them off nicely!
- If there are bottlenecks, encourage visitors to join in an activity or engage them in conversation!

Arriving

Time: Ideally, all cast members should be on site by 3.30pm on both days for a quick briefing. If you won't be able to make it for this time, please let us know in advance.

Parking: We have limited parking spaces on site, so **please leave parking spaces for visitors, especially those with families or young children. Park your car near the Station instead.**

Costumes: Either come dressed in your costume, or get changed at church, in the toilets (only if you've arrived before visitors), or Males upstairs in mezzanine, Females in the Matthew Room.

Props & Scenery: Please don't change anything in the set when you turn up to play a part - it's probably there for a reason. If you really think you need to change something, please talk to us first.

Bethlehem Begins

The Walk-Through will begin on the dot of 4pm on both days. We will ring the church bell to signal it has begun (since no-one will be wearing watches!) **Please ensure you're dressed and in position at 4.**

Finishing Up

In our promotional material, we have advised people to leave at least half an hour to walk through, but some arrive very close to our closing time. Ending at 7pm means we close the front gates at 7pm. If people are still walking through Bethlehem at this stage, please wait for them to go past you before you start packing up your things. Jono will come through and tell you once there are no visitors.

On the Saturday, all of Bethlehem needs to be packed up. We'll probably pack-up from the start of the Walk- Through while people are still making their way to the stable. Everyone in the cast is expected to help pack-up, so be ready to be helpful as we get the site ready for church the next day.

Bethlehem Job Descriptions:

Below is a brief description of your role, as well as some suggestions for your character to say. Please refer to the Bible passages for more ideas.

Villagers

- **Your job:** Make visitors feel welcome, and show what life was like in 1st Century Bethlehem. Carry water from the well, buy goods from the stores, greet your friends around town & help lost visitors.
- **Say:** 'Welcome to Bethlehem, hometown of King David. If only one like him would come again!' 'There's a lot of visitors to Bethlehem— and not just for the census. Have you seen those rich foreigners around? They've followed a star to seek for the King of the Jews. But why would God tell them that our king was born? He hasn't told us!' 'You're not a Zealot, are you? You should be careful, the Romans are watching us very carefully.' 'What a humiliation this census is – the Emperor declaring that he owns us all! We need someone like Moses to come and save us from our oppressors...' *Also, anything from below!*

Water Carriers

- **Your job:** Carry water in pottery jugs from the kitchen to refill actors' mugs. See above for script.

Toy corner

- **Games children played:** Children often played in the marketplace, playing make-believe games, like acting out a wedding or a funeral. Jewish children didn't have dolls because their religion forbade it. Instead, they played games with stones or pebbles, such as skittles, hopscotch or juggling.
- **Say:** 'The village children gather here to play. Some of the boys have been busy at school today, and the rest have been hard at work at home. We try to pass on what we know about God to them, teaching them our history of how God has saved us. Who knows, their generation may be the one that sees the Day of the Lord come!' (Proverbs 22:6, Luke 2:40, 51-52, 7:31-32)

Roman Legionaries

- **Your job:** Patrol Bethlehem, reminding people to do the census and pay their taxes. You also need to make sure people watch the introductory video and hand out maps and activity trails for kids, as well as counting how many visitors come into Bethlehem (for our records). The Romans were the occupying force and had conquered most of the known world. The villagers would naturally be scared of them. In the Roman Army, soldiers were not allowed facial hair and had to stay in the army at least twenty-five years. They carried a sword and a long spear and could march thirty kilometres a day wearing army. These were hardened men.
 - **NOTE: You're not centurions. Centurions were commanders in charge of about 100 men. You're Roman Legionaries.**
- Your costume is mostly supplied - please wear leather sandals and a red T-Shirt on underneath. Also, make sure you're wearing shorts that can't be seen sticking out under your skirt.
- **Say:** 'We're here with the authority of Caesar Augustus, the Son of God*. He's commanded us to make sure the census is taken. It's important that he knows who all of his people are.' (Luke 1:1-4)
Son of God was one of the titles for the Emperor
'Caesar Augustus's divine proclamation that everyone must go to their home town has meant a lot of people have come to Bethlehem. And what the emperor says, goes! He must be obeyed by all people!' (Luke 1:1-4, Luke 7:1-10)
'We Romans worship many gods, but these Jewish people only worship one – that's really weird! They believe he's the God in charge of everything too, which is funny, because if he was how come we Romans are in charge?' (Deuteronomy 6:14)
'Herod has asked us to keep an eye on this town, because this is where a lot of people believe their king will be born... the king who will get rid of Rome! I'd like to see that, nothing could crush the Roman empire' (Matthew 2:1-12, Daniel 2:7-45)
- **How other people should act towards the soldiers:** Happy to criticize them when they're out of earshot, but terrified when they're around. NO kids are to give cheek to soldiers!

Shepherds / Goatherds, those looking after animals

- **Your job:** Keep an eye on your flocks, show them to visitors and talk about the angels visiting and your visit to the new baby! Shepherds risked their lives for the flock and provided food and water for them. They were at the lowest end of society.
- **What you need:** A **staff**, a **heavy rod** (used for beating off prowling wolves and jackals). Shepherds would also tuck a **sling** into their belts to protect the sheep.'
- **Say:** 'This is my flock - I'm paid to look after them, and keep them from harm'
'It's kind for you to come and visit us, we're not very important people. Most people don't have time for shepherds, even though long ago King David was a shepherd too, right here in Bethlehem! I've heard the prophets say another shepherd will come and be like him again. A shepherd to come and guide his people, and care for them like we care for our sheep. That's what our country needs... that's what I need' (Ezekiel 34, 1 Samuel 16)
'You're not going to believe this. Last night, we were sitting here, minding our sheep like we normally do, when suddenly there was a bright light in the sky, and an angel! He told us that God's promised king was born in Bethlehem. We went and saw him then, right away - a little baby born in a stable, you should have a look. This is good news of great joy for all people! This news is for everyone, and God has made that plain by telling us, the people everyone avoids!' (Luke 2:8-20)

Women at the well

- **Your job:** Welcome people, and show them how the well works. Carrying water home was a job for women, and was done every morning and evening. Water was precious, and offering it to a guest was the first sign of hospitality.
- **Say:** 'This is our town's main water supply. Everyone comes here for water- it's a good place to catch up with people too... Would you like some water? It's always so refreshing, but it never quite fills you up. We're always here the next day, always having to come back to the well for more. It feels a bit like life really, having to do the same things again and again. If only there was something, some lasting water, that could satisfy us, and keep us full forever' (John 4:1-26, Isaiah 58:11)

Stone Masons

- **Your job:** Quarry out limestone - most of the bedrock of Palestine and shape it into wheels, millstones and building stones.
- **Say:** 'We're cutting down these rocks which came out the local quarry. It can be hard work, but it's worth it. I'm making a cornerstone now, the piece which will hold the whole building together. Actually, last Sabbath they were talking about it in the synagogue. 'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. I'm not sure what that means, but the builders who rejected that stone originally must have looked pretty silly. Imagine that, walking past something so important and ignoring it! (Psalm 118:19-24, Acts 4:5-12)

Carpenters

- **Your job:** Demonstrate the techniques of a carpenter at that time. Carpenters made yokes for oxen, wheels for potters, farmers and charioteers, shelves for homes, chests and cradles for babies.
- **Say:** 'Business is booming with the census bringing all these people to town! Luckily, I think we've found another worker. He's a distant relative of mine, come all the way down from Nazareth. He's a good worker, and he's glad of the money – he's just become a dad!' (Mark 6:1-6)
'I like working with wood, it's a useful and helpful thing to do. This wood comes from one of our own Bethlehem trees. It's just a stump now, a little bit like our nation! We used to be a big strong country, led by our King and God together. But we've been ruled by foreign powers for so long. There is a promise though, that a shoot will come from the stump again, and that we'll have a new King David, and a new country. God will keep his promises, and we'll be like a strong tree again' (Isaiah 10:12-11:10)

Potters helping children

- **Your job:** Demonstrate potting and assist kids in making a piece of pottery to take home. Potters made utensils for the home, such as bowls, lamps and jars.
- **Say:** 'Pottery can be hard work. Sometimes you have to throw away the pots that don't work. I used to think we were like those broken pots that God had thrown away, but now with all the exciting things happening in town, I'm beginning to wonder...' (Jeremiah 18:1-12)
'I like making and decorating these pots. I remember hearing in the synagogue the Teacher saying that we were like pots made by God's own hand! Imagine that! God is as involved in our lives as I'm involved in forming this pot together! The God of everything is involved and in control of our lives' (Isaiah 64:8, Romans 9:19-24)

Coppersmiths and Blacksmiths

- **Your job:** Demonstrate techniques used by smiths to create tools used by the army and for home.
- **Say:** 'I'm melting the metal so I can shape it with our tools. You need to use heat – and hammers! – to get anything done. It gets all the dross away, and helps us mould things the right way. That's a bit like life, sometimes you go through hard stuff to be moulded and refined. It's a bit like our country

too – we've been through a lot, but hopefully that means we're now ready for God's promises to be fulfilled' (Zechariah 13)

Bread Store / Bakers

- **Your job:** Offer visitors a taste of your freshly baked bread, making sure they don't take too much! Bakers ground grain on millstone by hand and baked leavened and unleavened bread. Small pieces of bread were used to scoop up food.
- **Say:** 'This unleavened bread has been made from wheat grains that we have ground ourselves....' 'Bread sustains us each day, and keeps us alive. We couldn't live without it! But it's not quite enough. People always come back to buy more, because they always get hungry again. If only there was something to keep us satisfied! Something to keep us always full and contented'. (Matthew 6:11, John 6:35)
'When God brought our forefathers out of Egypt, he feed them with bread from heaven. God had saved his people, and he fed them. I wish the same thing could happen again!' (Exodus 16, Mark 6:30-44)

Middle Eastern Food Store

- **Your job:** Offer visitors to Bethlehem a taste of what you are selling. They take a small piece of flat bread, and put some hummus and some herbs on it. Make sure people don't take too much.
- **Say:** 'Give some variety to your foods with my mint and dill! You're lucky we still have some left with so many visitors in town. It's nearly as busy as the Passover – that's one of our holidays, you know, when we remember God saving us out of slavery. I'm sold out then, because we have a special meal to remember it. God was kind to our ancestors, freeing them from their oppressors. Every time I celebrate the Passover, I ask him to save us again – from the Romans, as well as all the other troubles in life...' (Exodus 12)

Fruit & Vegetable Store

- **Your job:** Offer visitors to Bethlehem a taste of the fruit you are 'selling', making sure they don't take too much! Vegetables like beans, lentils, peas and cucumbers were on sale, as well as fruit like oranges, lemons, pomegranates, apricots, figs, grapes and olives. As meat wasn't a regular part of people's diets, fruits and vegetables were very important.
- **Say:** 'Fruit for sale – best grapes from the Jordan! Figs from Lebanon! Come and buy. They are delicious, particularly at this time of year. It always makes me think of the stories of Adam and Eve. Of course, everyone remembers them eating the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, but I'm more interested in the fruit they should have eaten – fruit from the tree of life! Imagine how good that would taste! And eating it, and being able to live forever in harmony with God – why, for that I'd give up my shop, even though I love it so much!' (Genesis 2-3, Revelation 22:1-5)

Material seller, Rug Seller

- **Your job:** 'Sell' your wares to the people in Bethlehem
- **Say:** 'This carpet would look great in your tent, and would make a good souvenir of your time in Bethlehem. I can tell you've travelled a long way for the census. 10 denarii? Yes, there's a lot of people coming to Bethlehem, my business is booming! But my house is also full of distant relatives who have come to stay. God has blessed us with a big house, for I've heard one young couple are living in a stable.' (Luke 2)

(Kids') Clothes Store

- **Your job:** Encouraging kids to 'try on' some clothing, showing them what you have available. Parents may then take their photo on their phones/cameras.

- **Say:** 'Isn't this garment lovely? It's made from the finest linen we have. See the four tassels we have on that cloak – that's to remind us that God saved our ancestors out of Egypt long ago. We wear them so that every day we can remember what God has done for us' (Deuteronomy 22:12)

Basket Maker

- **Your job:** To demonstrate techniques and 'sell' your wares.
- **Say** 'Weaving the cane is best done when it is damp. Some of these reeds were collected from the riverbed, which always makes me think of the story of Baby Moses. God chose him to rescue our people from slavery, and kept him safe from the bad King. If only God would do something similar today – I'm sick of these Romans pestering me to pay tax and do the census! (Exodus 2:1-10)

Leatherworkers

- **Your job:** To demonstrate techniques and 'sell' your wares
- **Say** 'If you wet the leather before you stamp designs on it, the designs stay better' 'Sorry, we can't take any more business for the moment. Those well-dressed foreigners have made a large order – new bridles and reins for all their camels. They've obviously come a long way, and told me they're looking for the King of the Jews. It's been a long time since we had any king in Bethlehem, but they think they've found him – in the stable of all places! (Matthew 2)

Jewellery / Beading Store

- **Your job:** Demonstrate techniques and highlight the role jewellery played in ancient Palestine.
- **Say:** 'We make beautiful jewellery even King Herod's wives would wear! And he's had many wives! He's not really a very good king, though I don't like to say so too loudly. He doesn't follow God, and is only out for himself. He's just like the old Pharaoh who kept our ancestors in slavery back in Egypt. If only God would send us another saviour like Moses, then we could be free!' (Matthew 2)

Spinners & Weavers

- **Your job:** Demonstrate techniques used
- **Say:** 'We get the wool from the shepherd out in the fields – they should have delivered some more today, but something has changed them. Do you know, they left all their sheep out in the fields to race around Bethlehem at night, and all for some baby! A baby they say is born to be King and Master of all. Kings aren't born in stables, and don't wear rags. They'd wear the finest material, like this one... would you like to buy?' (Luke 2)

Seamstresses

- **Your job:** Demonstrate techniques used and engage in conversation.
- **Say:** 'I'm mending some clothes because we're a poor community and we need to reuse all we have. But we need to be careful – you can't mix old material with new, because it breaks! Some people in town are talking about putting David's kingdom back together, but I don't think it can be just patched up. Our ancestors disobeyed God, time and time again, and I think we do too. Even if we did go back to how it was with David, they'd still be the same problem – the problem of our hearts. That can't be patched up, it needs to be made anew!' (Mark 2:18-22, Ezekiel 36:24-30)

Moneylender

- **Your job:** Lend money to the poor to highlight the social injustices around the time of Jesus's birth. There were 3 different types of currency used at the time; the official Roman Currency (the Denarius), and then Greek currency, and the local Jewish currency (the shekel).

- **Say:** “The scribes say I shouldn’t be charging people interest, but I have to make a profit somehow, don’t I? The Law says every seven years debts should be cancelled, but that’s just not practical! (Deuteronomy 15)
‘I don’t like collecting debts, but it’s something I need to do. Who ever heard of debts being forgiven or forgotten! Such a thing is absurd, for there must always be a cost to pay. It can’t just be erased... can it?’ (Colossians 2:13-15)

Candle maker

- **Your job:** Making candles and displaying your wares to visitors
- **Say:** ‘Candles! Great for keeping your house lit at night, and keeping away the darkness. You’ll need them, because when the sun is down, you can’t see. It’s difficult to walk at night without running into things! At the Synagogue last Sabbath I heard that the Prophet Isaiah said a great light would come into the world to save people from the darkness. When that happens, we’ll be set free from our oppressors so we can live in freedom! Hopefully it happens in my lifetime’ (Isaiah 9:1-7, John 8:12)

Chuzzan (Keeper of the Synagogue)

- **Your job:** Read from the scriptures, drawing visitors’ attention towards messianic prophecies. The Chuzzan was the schoolmaster and leader of prayer in the hours of Sabbath worship. Jewish people worshipped in the local synagogue and only men took an active part in the synagogue service.
- **Say:** ‘Welcome to our synagogue - this is where boys come to learn during the week, and where we worship our Lord on each Sabbath day. We also study our scriptures here – we believe God himself has spoken to us and that his Word is good. He has revealed himself to our ancestors by the prophets, in many different ways. But the last few hundred years he has been silent. I have spent all my life asking God to speak again... (Psalm 119, Hebrews 1, Luke 1-3).

Scribe

- **Your job:** Transcribe the scriptures and tell people what you're doing. Scribes were respected and treated with honour. They acted as legal advisers and could answer questions by quoting from the Old Testament. (Copy Hebrew letters from samples onto papyrus/ leather, using ink.)
- **Say:** ‘The scriptures I'm transcribing here speak of the promised King, who will come one day to Bethlehem. Let me read it to you ‘...Bethlehem, you are small among the clans of Judah; One will come from you to be ruler over Israel for Me. His origin is from antiquity, from eternity’ (Micah 5:2)
‘I'm writing in Hebrew, the language of our people since ancient times. I’m copying down one of our Prophets, and I have to be very careful. We believe these are the words of God – the creator of everything speaking to us. Isn’t that amazing!’

Innkeeper

- **Your job:** Remind visitors there's no room in the inn, drawing attention to the couple in your stable
- **Say:** ‘No room here, it's packed. I even have a family sleeping in my stable!’ “ Some say this baby is the one sent by God; our Saviour. Certainly his name means that...I wonder.” “This baby has had some odd visitors; smelly old shepherds came and said that angels told them to visit this special baby -sounds odd to me!’ etc

Census Takers

- **Your job:** To conduct the ‘census’, that is, get visitors to Bethlehem to fill out feedback forms!

- **Say:** 'I hope you've enjoyed your visit to Bethlehem! Thank you so much for coming!' 'Caesar Augustus himself has decreed that you need to fill out the census' Tell your friends and family to come too".

Joseph, Mary and Jesus

- **Your job:** Show people your baby, and tell visitors that he is the promised King God has sent. Joseph was a carpenter from Nazareth, and Mary was probably a teenager. Travelling all the way from Nazareth especially for the census, they had to stay in the stable. Mary has had the baby, and last night you had visitors - shepherds who said that angels had told them to come and see the saviour.
- **Say:** 'His name is Jesus, which means 'saviour'. He's also called 'Emmanuel, which means 'God with us. What wonderful names – I wonder how God will use this little one in the future!' 'We're staying here in the stable because of the census- we've travelled from Nazareth and there was no room in the Inn.' 'An angel appeared to us and told us that this baby would be the messiah, God's promised saviour.' 'We had shepherds come and visit last night - angels had told them about our baby!' (Luke 2)

The Wise Men (Magi)

- **Your job:** Tell of your journey from Persia, following the star to find the stable, and carrying your gifts. The Wise Men probably didn't meet Mary, Joseph and Jesus till well after Jesus was born, (Matthew 2:11) but their presence in the story reminds us that Jesus is the King and Saviour of all nations.
- **Say:** 'We've been following the star in the sky which will guide us to where the new king has been born. We carry gifts of Gold, Frankincense & Myrrh. Gold because this baby is a king, Frankincense because he is divine, and Myrrh, because his life will be full of great sorrow' 'Thank you so much for welcoming us. We know we're not meant to be God's people, but we've seen the star of his promised King and had to come and worship him. We've come from the East, far, far away, and I know our practices are forbidden in this country's religious writings. But their God has chosen to reveal to us this great truth. He must be very kind! This message mustn't just be for his people, but for everyone!' (Matthew 2)

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