



Family Activities

Welcome to the #FollowThe Star: Twelve Days of Christmas Wonder family activities

Everyone can join in the daily #FollowTheStar journey thanks to the family craft activities accompanying the daily themes.

These have been provided by The Revd Mina Munns – author of this year’s Twelve Days of Christmas Wonder reflections – who runs the Flame Creative Children’s Ministry website.

Each day’s activity starts with a list of what you will need – and we’ve gathered the full list below to help you get ready to do these at home, at church or at school.

You will need:

- Air-drying clay, candles (Day 1)
- Plastic water bottles with tops, strong glue, glitter, water, baby oil or vegetable oil, food colouring (Day 2)
- Permanent marker pens in various colours, Clear plastic lids from large yoghurt pots or food containers (Day 3)
- Paper, ready mix paint, water, baby oil/vegetable oil, containers for paint (Day 4)
- Paint, paper, natural objects e.g. flowers, leaves, pine cones, sticks, stones (Day 5)
- Paper, paint, scissors, pens (Day 6)
- Old, stained copper 1p or 2p coins, vinegar, salt, plastic box with lid (Day 7)
- Ready-mix paint, paper, wax crayons (Day 8)
- Marbles plus either cardboard boxes, card, scissors and sellotape or Lego base board/pieces (Day 9)
- Play dough – make your own with plain flour, salt, vegetable oil, food colouring, and downloadable template for Play dough mat (Day 10):
www.churchofengland.org/media/18978
- Ingredients for the Gingerbread star ‘baubles’ (Day 11):
75g butter; 3 tbsp golden syrup; 75g light soft brown sugar; 175g plain flour; 1/4 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda; 2 teaspoons ground ginger; 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon; 1 x packet coloured boiled sweets; Optional: Thin ribbon, to tie, gift bags or boxes
- Skittles sweets (Day 12)

Family activity: Journey spirals

You will need: air-drying clay, candles

- Roll the clay into a long, thick sausage shape and slightly flatten out the top.
- Make a spiral with the clay.
- Take your candle and, starting at the centre of the spiral, make 12 indentations deep enough to let the candle stand up securely.
- Leave the spiral to dry.
- For the next 12 days move the candle one place along the spiral and light it, ending at the centre on Epiphany. Each time you light the candle pray the prayer of the day.

Family activity: Wonder Bottles

You will need: plastic water bottles with tops, strong glue, glitter, water, baby oil or vegetable oil, food colouring

- Option 1: Fill a bottle with water and stir in 2 tablespoons of glitter. Put on the bottle top and secure with glue.
- Option 2: Half fill a bottle with water and mix in some food colouring. Fill the rest of the bottle with oil. Secure the bottle top with glue.
- Shake your bottle so that the water and glitter or water and oil mix. Then watch as they separate and settle. This can be quite mesmerizing! What else do you find amazing to look at? What makes you wonder?

Family activity: Sun Catchers

You will need: Permanent marker pens in various colours, Clear plastic lids from large yoghurt pots or food containers. Alternatively, cut up a sheet of acetate or run a laminating pouch through a laminator and cut it up.

- Use the permanent markers to colour a design or pattern onto the plastic lid. This might be a design about Jesus, about light or about hope.
- Fix the lid to a window with blue tack and watch as the sunlight shines through the colours.
- Talk about light and how it helps us.
- Think of people who are in tough situations and ask God to help them find light in the darkness.

Day 4



Family activity: Teardrop paintings

You will need: Strips of paper (10cm by 3cm is a good size), ready mix paint, water, baby oil (or vegetable oil, but this will give yellow drops!), containers for the paint.

- Water down some paint so that it is very thin and drip some drops of oil on top of it. If you like, you can stir the droplets so that they become smaller and more dispersed.
- Ask children to think of sad situations in the world or people they know who are sad. Take a piece of paper and lay it on top of the liquid. The paper will soak up the paint and oil, with the oil droplets making a 'tear drop' effect amongst the colour.
- Leave the paper to dry and pray that God will wipe away the tears of those you are praying for.



Day 5



Family activity: Painting with nature

You will need: Paint, paper, natural objects e.g. flowers, leaves, pine cones, sticks, stones, shells.

- Feel the textures of the natural objects and talk about the patterns you can see. Discuss how intricate nature can be and how much thought must have gone into creation. Which natural object do you think is the most beautiful? Why?
- Use the natural items to paint a picture with, using them to put the paint on the paper. Look at the different shapes and patterns you can make with them.
- Again, talk about what looks or feels beautiful and say thank you.

Family activity: Fingerprint stars

You will need: paper, paint, scissors, pens.

- Cut a large star shape out of paper.
- Talk about how each person is unique and has special things about them to help make the world a brighter place.
- Get each person so write somewhere on the star what their shining qualities are.
- Decorate the rest of the star with your unique fingerprints to remind everyone how wonderfully different God has made each one of us and that we all have the chance to shine in different ways.

Family activity: New Start coins

You will need: Old, stained 1p and 2p coins, vinegar, salt, a plastic box with a lid.

- Take some old, stained 1p and 2p coins.
- Put them in a plastic box with 2 tablespoons of vinegar and 2 teaspoons of salt. Put the lid on the box and shake for 30–60 seconds.
- Open the box, pour the salt and vinegar mixture away and rinse the coins in water.
- They should now look sparkly and new!
- Talk about new starts you want to make this year and pray today's prayer: Father God, lead us towards the new things you want in our lives. Help us to keep going when the way gets hard. Amen.

Family activity: God-with-us paintings

You will need: sheets of A5 paper, watered-down ready-mix paint, paintbrushes, wax crayons or oil pastels.

- Screw the piece of paper up into a ball.
- Open the paper out and look at all of the creases.
- Rub a crayon or oil pastel over the creases and they will pick up the colour. Think about times when life has seemed a bit like this creased up piece of paper; when things have gone wrong, or when times have been hard or painful.
- Let children choose a paint colour that most represents God to them and use it to paint over the top of the creases until all of the white paper has been covered. Even though you can still see the creases, the “God” colour is right there alongside them and next to them, surrounding them.
- Pray today’s prayer: Thank you, God, that wherever we go and whatever we face you are with us. Keep us safe on our journey through life. Amen.

Family activity: Marble Mazes

You will need: Marbles plus either cardboard boxes, paper and card, scissors, sellotape or a Lego baseboard and Lego bricks.

- Find a large cardboard box and open it up. Use folded paper and card to make the 'walls' of a maze and sellotape them to the bottom of the box. Make sure there are some dead ends as well as a way through!
- Alternatively, use Lego pieces and a Lego baseboard to build a maze for your marble.
- Put a marble at the start of your maze and move the box so that the marble moves along the walls and through the gaps.
- Think about times when life can feel a bit confusing and you're not sure where you're going. How does it feel to be guided or led, just as you are guiding the marble through the maze?

Family activity: Light of the world play dough mat

You will need: Play dough, and you'll need to download the play dough mat and print it out. www.churchofengland.org/media/18978

- If you want to be able to use the mat multiple times, it's a good idea to laminate it. This makes it much easier to clean the play dough off as well!
- Fill the candle and flame shapes with play dough. Think about people who are sad, lonely and ill. Ask Jesus to bring light and hope to them.
- Pray today's prayer: Loving God, show us what is hidden, chase away our fears and give us courage when we are afraid. Amen.

Family activity: Gift biscuits

Preparation time: 15 minutes plus 10-15 minutes chilling time

Cooking time: 10-12 minutes

Makes: 20 biscuits

Ingredients:

- 75g butter
- 3 tbsp golden syrup
- 75g light soft brown sugar
- 175g plain flour
- 1/4 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 x packet coloured boiled sweets
- **Optional: Thin ribbon, to tie, gift bags or boxes**

Method:

1. Add the butter, golden syrup and light brown sugar to a pan. Stir over a low heat until sugar has dissolved and the mixture has melted.
2. Add flour, bicarbonate of soda, ginger and cinnamon to a mixing bowl then stir together. Make a well in the centre and pour in the sugar and butter mixture.
3. Stir together to form a dough (it might be easiest to use your hands), then wrap in clingfilm and let chill for 15-20 minutes to firm up slightly. Preheat the oven to 180° C.
4. Lay the dough between two sheets of baking parchment or clingfilm. Roll it out to roughly the thickness of a £1 coin. Use a 7cm round cookie cutter or a large star shaped cutter to cut out circles, the punch out the centres using a star-shaped cutter. Arrange on a baking tray lined with baking parchment.
5. Divide the boiled sweets into colours and then crush. You can do this in a mini food processor, but I used a sealed bag with a rolling pin. Separate into individual containers.
6. Fill the gaps you have punched out of each biscuit with the crushed boiled sweets. They don't need to fill every gap as they will melt into the space in the oven!
7. Bake for 10-12 minutes, or until the sweets have melted and the gingerbread looks golden brown. They won't be firm but will harden when left to cool. (Optional: use a skewer to make a small hole in the top of each cookie while they are still warm so you can thread a piece of ribbon through each biscuit once cool so that they can be hung on a Christmas tree.)
8. When cool, pack the biscuits into gift bags or boxes and give them away.

Talk about how it feels to give gifts to others and think about personal gifts you have. Say thank you to God for them.

Family activity: Skittles Prayers

You will need: 2 big plates, a bag of Skittles sweets, hot water (not scalding, but hot enough to let the colour run).

- Place the Skittles around the edge of one of the plates in any pattern you like.
- Carefully pour the water to cover the surface of the plate without disturbing the sweets.
- Wait and the Skittles will gradually release their colour.
- Just as the colour is being released, we have discovered all sorts of things about God. Think of all the things you have been doing over the past 12 days.
- Talk about what else you would like to discover. What questions do you still have?
- Pour some water over the surface of the second plate and think of something you still want to know about God. Place a skittle in the water and, as the colour is released, ask God to help you carry on with your journey of discovery.