

A few problems when Christmas comes around...

- School gets busy with nativity plays, but learning in RE doesn't happen so much
- Children learn how to tie a tea towel on a head, but nothing about incarnation or even about the gospel stories
- Shops sell advent calendars for dogs but RE doesn't ask: 'can a dog celebrate advent?'
- A first class national opportunity to get deep and thoughtful about religion in British life is missed
- Where practice is weak, children do some story-based simple work in Year 1. Then the same in Y2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.
- So: damn the syrup, open the Gospel, critique the festivities, deepen the learning – here we go.

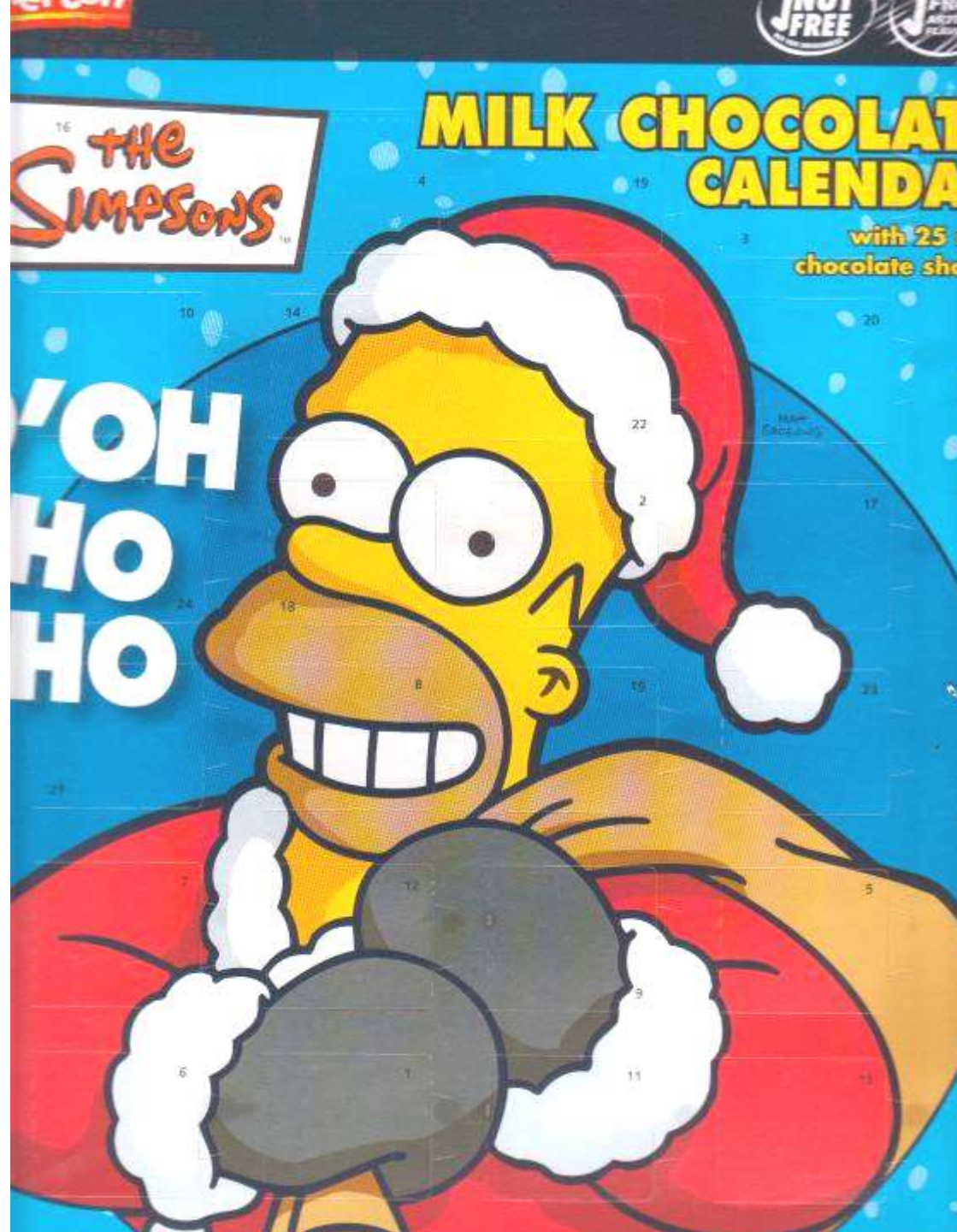
Advent: Preparing for God?

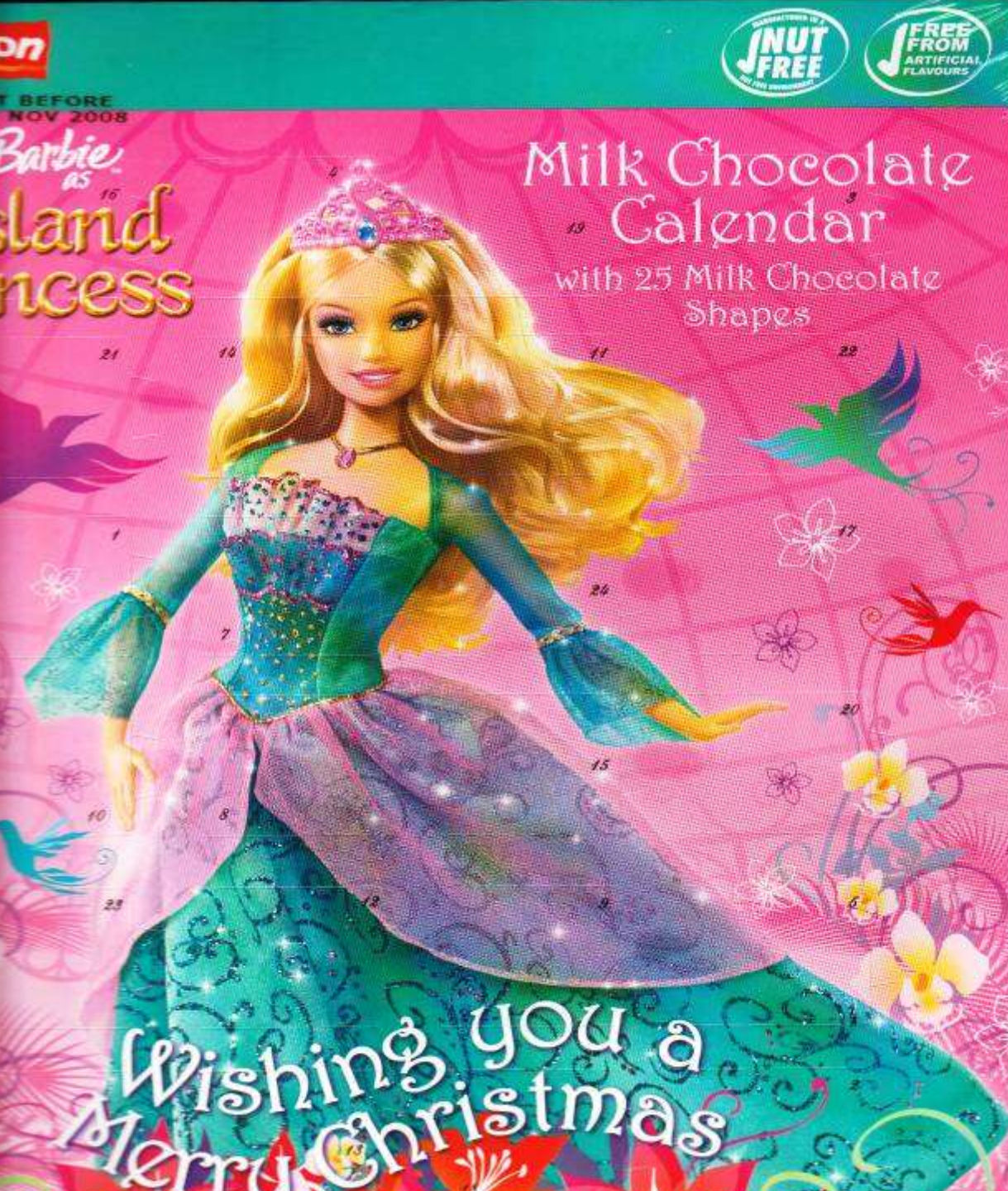
The Christian season of Advent is, traditionally, made up of 24 days of fasting, prayer and self discipline, to get the believer ready for the coming of God in Jesus, celebrated at Christmas. How is the season changing?



Christmas – what is it all about? Imagine an alien who wanted to know what is being celebrated at this festival. What view could be formed from looking at this one?

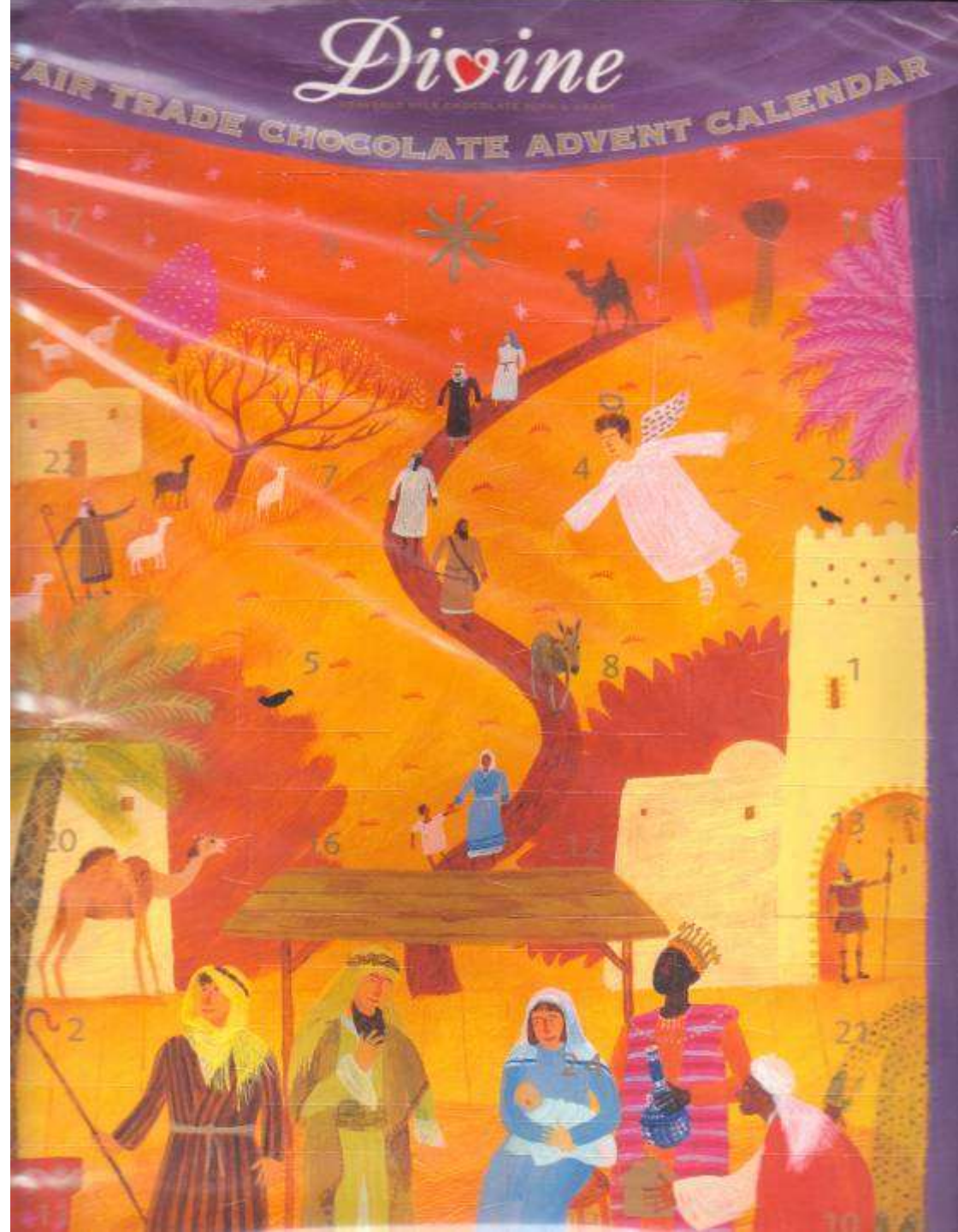
“Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, Bart, Marge and Homer get dressed up in red....”

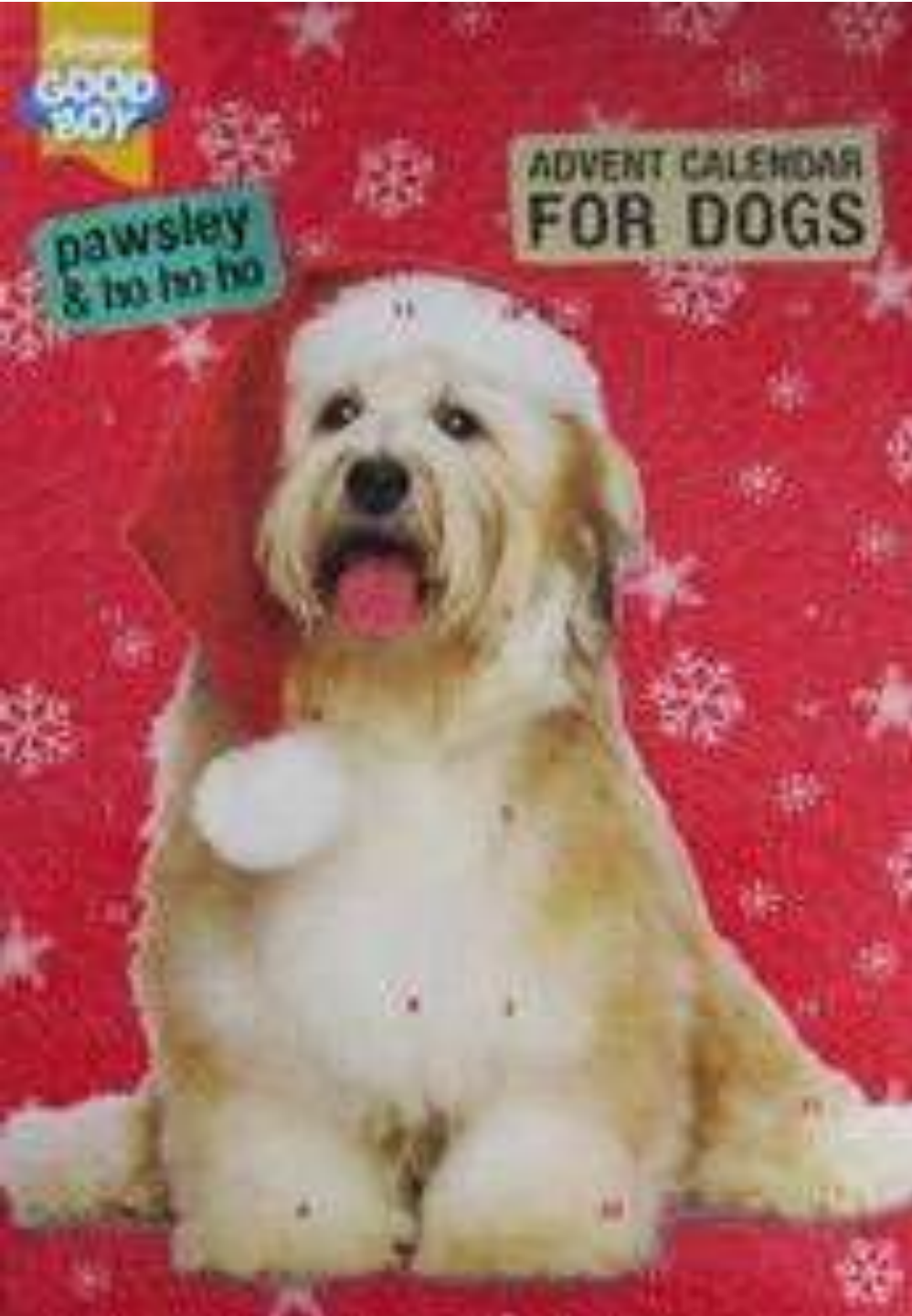




**“I’m a Barbie Girl,
In a Barbie World.
Made of Plastic.
Not that fantastic.”**

- Is a fairtrade picture of Jesus birth better?





- Words fail me.

Written recounts are good for bringing out the meanings and feelings of the story of course. For what age group?

The Fish Christmas

One day a long time ago
in Nazareth Mary was
sitting in the chair in the front
room. Then suddenly an angel
appeared and said "you are
going to have a baby you
must call it Jesus" then
the angel flew away. In the
morning they were told they
had to go back to their
home town.



1. If God sent a message to the world, it would be...

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2. One funny thing about religion is...

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Paper the walls with your wisdom

Assembly for December 1st

1. One thing I love about Christmas is...
2. One thing I hate about Christmas...
3. Christmas should be cancelled because...
4. Christmas is bad for turkeys and bad for...
5. If God came to earth today, he'd say...
6. By the end of December, I hope...
7. Santa Claus: what I think is...
8. Christmas is magic because...
9. If Christmas was banned then...
10. Christmas and Eid Al Fitr are similar because...
11. I prefer New Year to Christmas because...
12. What I'd like to ask God is...
13. I think Jesus was God on earth because...
14. Jesus could not have been God on earth because...
15. If I gave the baby Jesus a present, I'd give...
16. The real meaning of Christmas is...

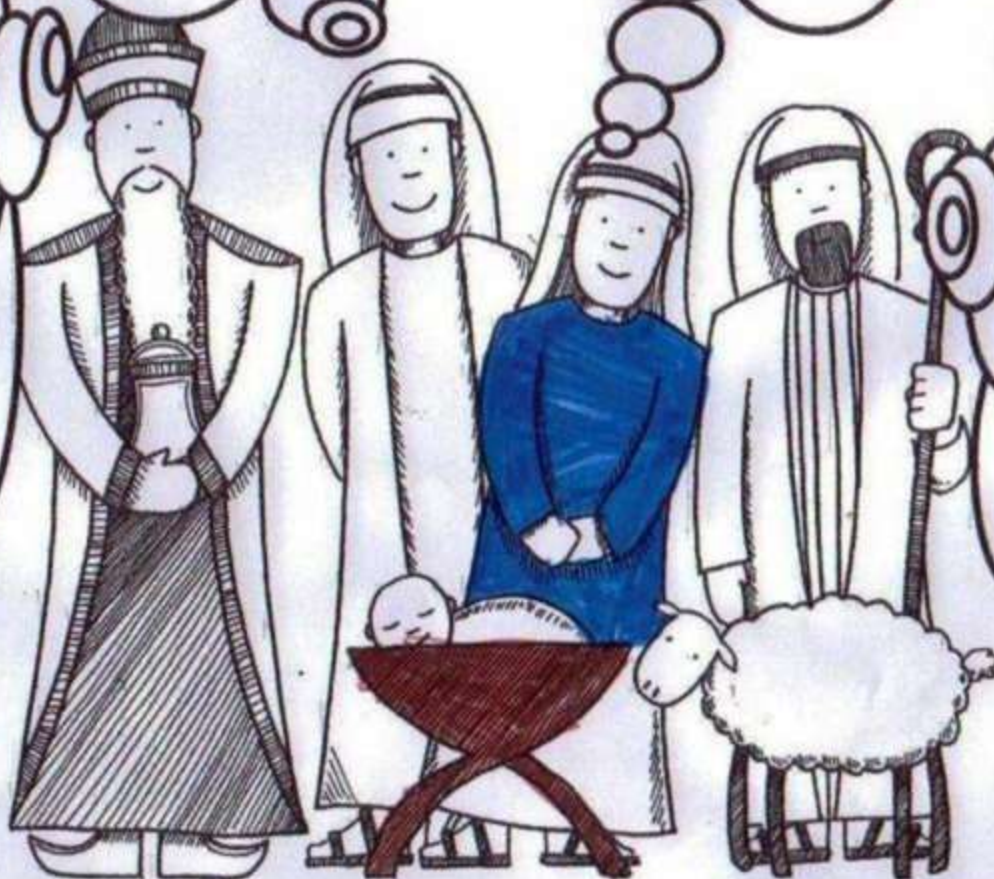
What
are they
thinking?

I, am glad that
now mary has
had a baby I, am
So **HAPPY!!!**

We have been
on such a long
journey I, am so
tired and weary,
So, So weary.

I can not
wait until
I give the
presents too
the new born
baby, the
mear, fram-
censens, and
god!!!.

I can not
believe it, it
the first
time that we
us the shep-
eards inv-
ited to see
a baby
born!!!





He came down to Earth from
Heaven, who is God and Lord
of all

The Angel said 'Peace on Earth
and goodwill to all people with
who God is pleased'

The true
light was
coming into
the world.



The stars in the
Bright Sky
looked down
where he lay,
the little Lord
Jesus asleep
on the hay.

Mary laid him in a manger because
there was no room for them at the inn

Sing to the Lord for
he has done
wonderful things

The Madonna: one of the world's most popular topics for a painting

- Mary, the Mother of Jesus (often called 'The Madonna') has been painted hundreds of thousands of times. Why is that?
- Christianity is the world's largest religion, with about 2 billion members, around one third of the whole population of the world
- Christmas is the most popular festival in Christianity – lots of people who are not Christians celebrate it too.
- If you were an artist and you wanted to create a new painting of the Madonna, how would you do it? Discuss your idea with a talking partner, and if you have time make a quick first sketch.



Can you and your partner make up some good questions to ask about this picture, beginning with these words?

What...

Where...

When...

How...

Who...

Why...

Which...

What if...

Whyever...

Can you imagine...



“If you change the gender of the person who holds the Christ Child, does it change everything? Or nothing?”

This is about the role of fathers, and the care and love they give to children.”

“I think that in ordinary life God is just beside you, shining sunbeams on you.”

Apart from Jesus’ death, there are more pictures of Mary and the baby Jesus than any other image in the world.

Antonia Rolls paints stories of Jesus in modern settings, she says...

“The picture makes you think: ‘what’s wrong?’ But what’s right with it is that the father is a very tender person. It might make you look at men in a different way. It doesn’t diminish the Virgin Mary though.”

Christians have been painting pictures of the ‘Madonna and child’ for 1900 years!

Antonia Rolls, an artist who lives in Bognor Regis, made this ‘Male Madonna’ painting. Tell your partner what you think of the painting.

What is this image all about?

Step 1: Raise questions.

Write questions around the edge of your sheet, beginning with at least 6 different 'what, where, when, etc' words.

Step 2: Discuss possible answers.

On your new sheet, discuss possible answers to the questions that the previous group have written.

Step 3: Become better informed.

Read information about the artist and the picture.

Step 4: Refine your answers.

With your new knowledge, create 'deep' answers to the questions. Hand your sheet back to its group- what do they think of your answers?

If Jesus was born in your town today...

- Would he be born, not in a stable but in a bus shelter by Tesco?
- Would a pub landlord let them sleep in the garage?
- Would he be welcomed not by shepherds, but by dustbin collectors?
- Would wise women come from the East? (France, or Belgium)?
- Would they bring gifts? What gifts?



David, 7, "I think if Jesus came to Earth today he would be a lollipop person, because he helps everyone and is always helping us to be happy."



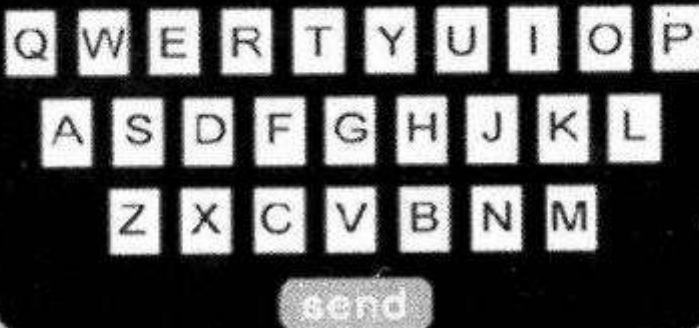
Jess Dobson age 12

My work is about god in real life. Where is God? Perhaps he is walking down your street today. This picture is about showing or making people realise he will be there, but he might not stand out. My point is that if god suddenly walked down your street you would notice. The thing I like best about my work is the way that its different, it's bright and simple.

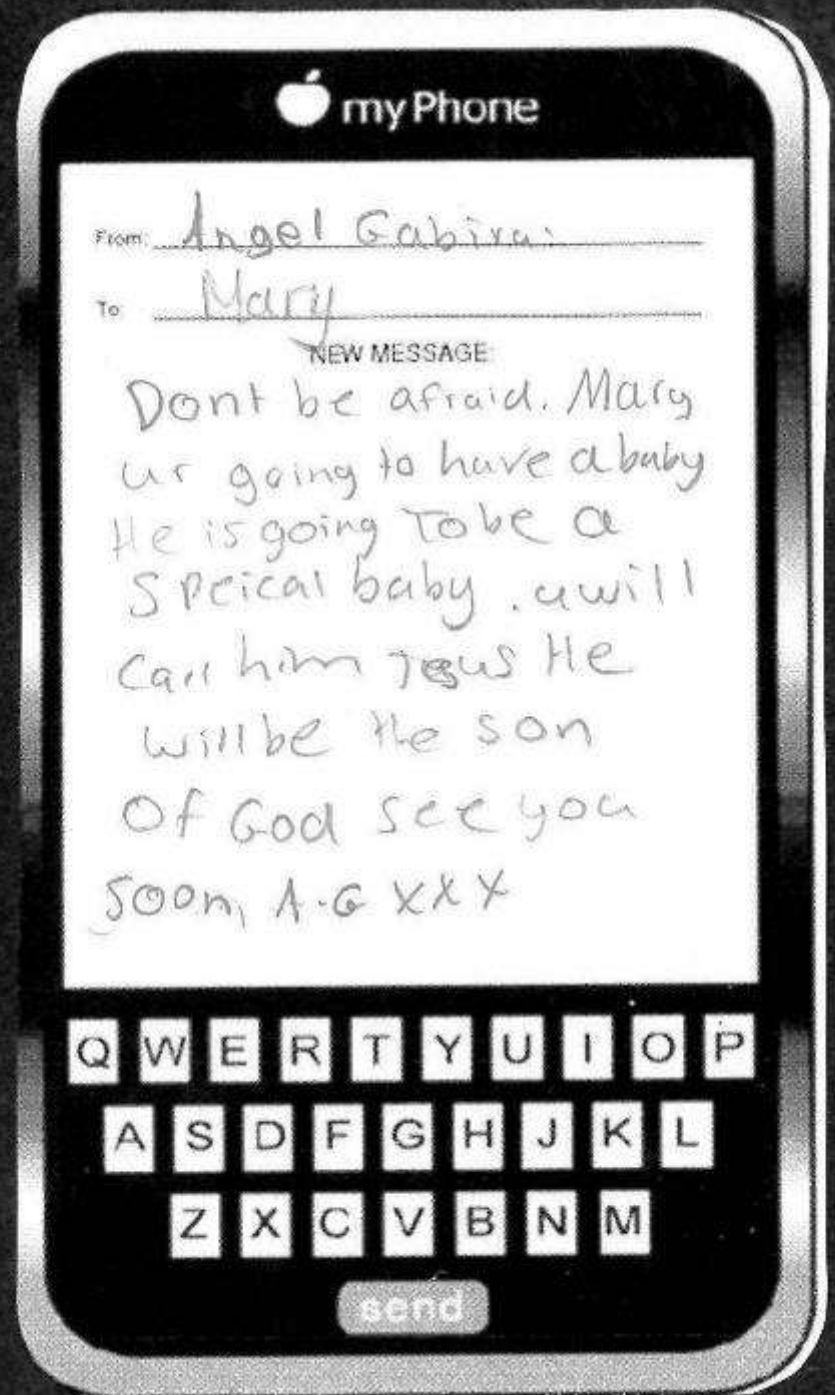


Angel Messages

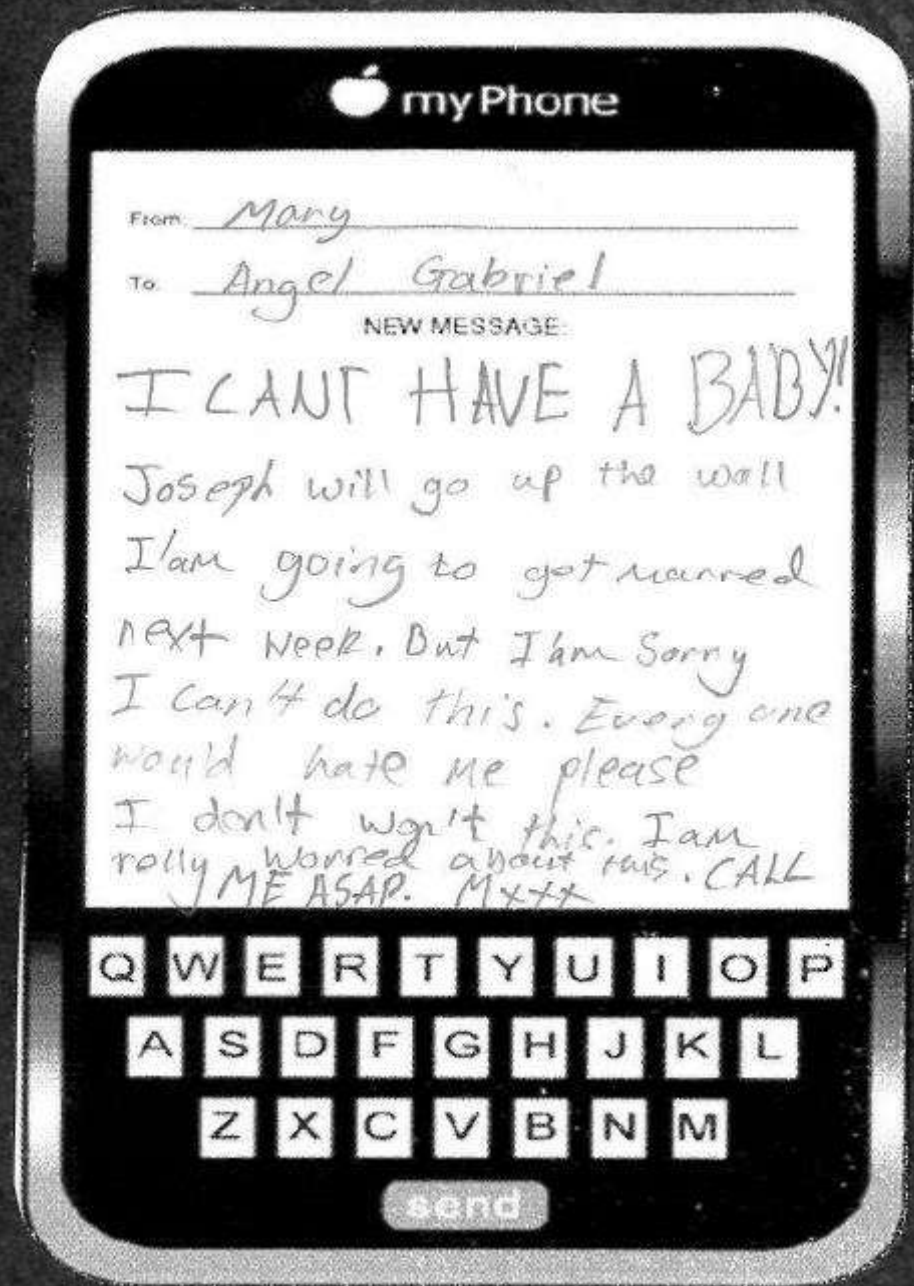
Read the text messages on the following slides. Can you work out what is happening using just these texts?



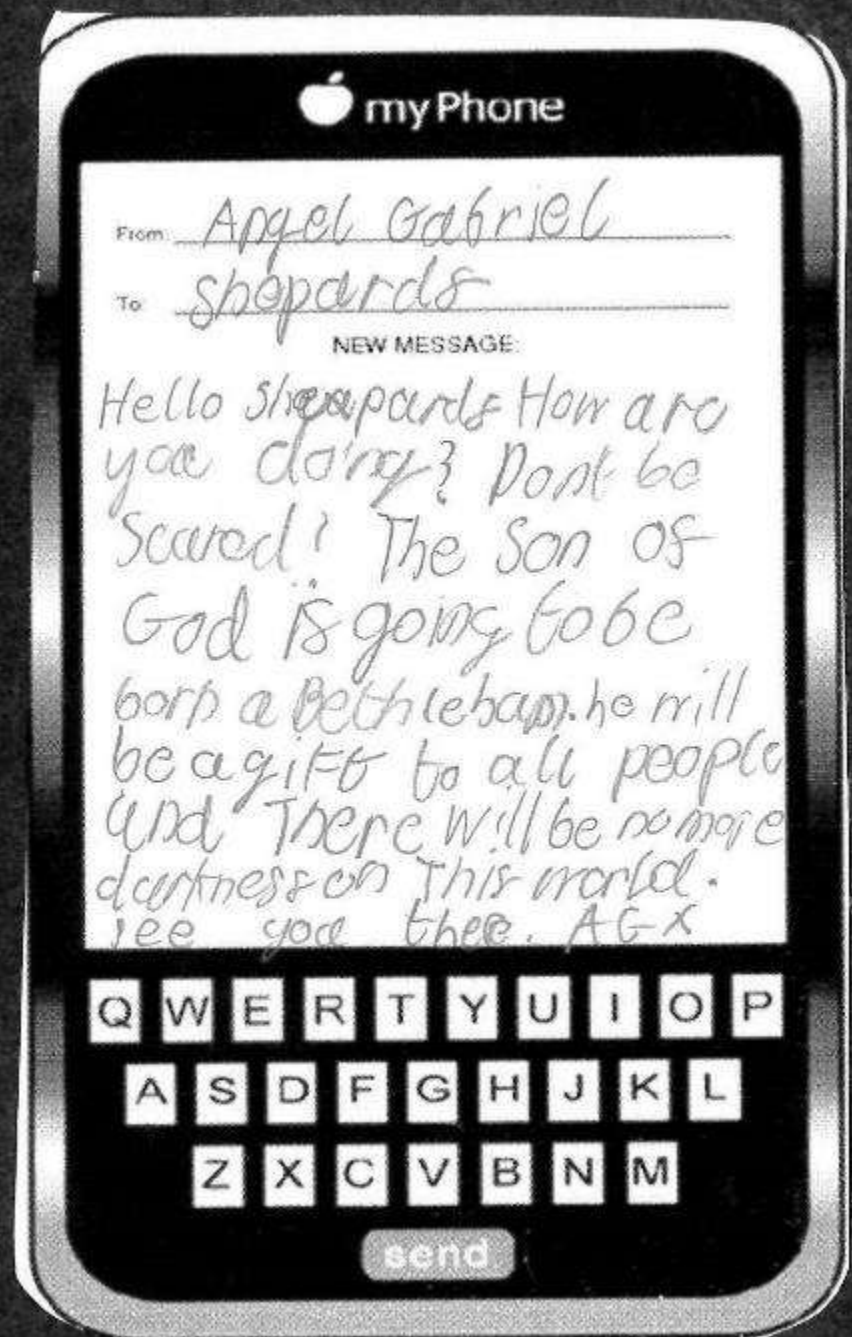
From the angel Gabriel to Mary:
“Don’t be afraid Mary. Ur going to
have a baby. He is going to be a
special baby. U will call him
Jesus. He will be the Son of God.
See you soon, A-G x x x ”
By Tyler, 10



From Mary to the Angel Gabriel, “I CAN’T HAVE A BABY! Joseph will go up the wall. I’m going to get married next week. But I’m sorry I can’t do this. Everyone would hate me. Please I don’t want this. I am really worried about this. CALL ME ASAP. M x x x ”

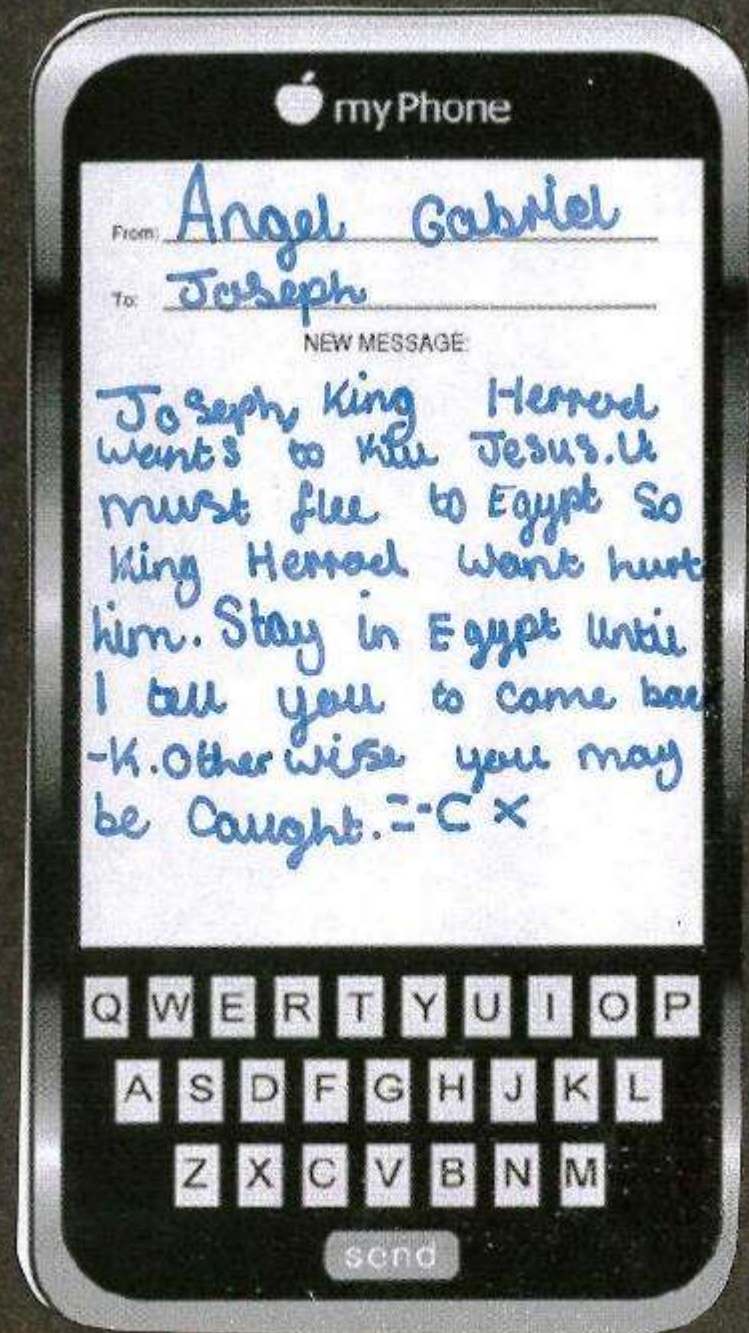


From the Angel Gabriel to the shepherds, "hello shepherds, how are you doing? Don't be scared! The Son of God is going to be born in Bethlehem. He will be a gift to all people and there will be no more darkness on this world. See you there. AG x" (by Razik, 10)

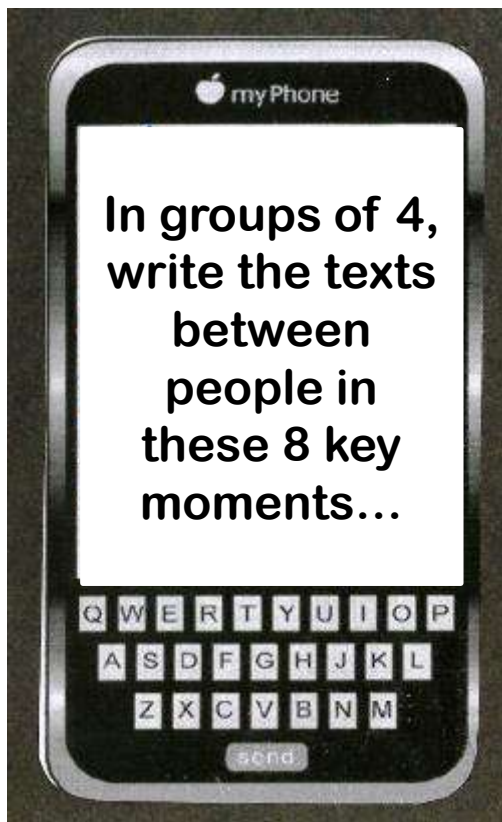


Razik

From the Angel Gabriel to Joseph,
“Joseph, King Herod wants to kill
Jesus. U must flee to Egypt so
King Herod won’t hurt him. Stay
in Egypt until I tell you to come
back –K. Otherwise you may be
caught. ☹ x” (by Travean, 10)



Travean



<p>1. The Angel comes to visit Mary and tell her she is going to have a baby. Mary accepts the message.</p>	<p>2. Joseph dreams of the angel, who tells him to go ahead and marry Mary, and call the baby 'Jesus'</p>
<p>3. The baby is born in a cattle shed because all Bethlehem is full. The angels watch.</p>	<p>4. The Angel appears to some shepherds and asks them to go and welcome the new baby, who is God come down to earth.</p>
<p>5. The angel is joined by the choir of angels, who sing 'Peace on Earth' to the shepherds.</p>	<p>6. The angel warns the Magi who have visited the baby with gifts to go home a secret way, avoiding evil king Herod.</p>
<p>7. The Angel appears to Joseph and tells him to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt to be safe from evil king Herod.</p>	<p>8. At the end of the story, the angel reports back to 'Heavenly High Command' How did it all go?</p>

In great RE, we might aim for Christmas to be:

- **A thoroughly enjoyable celebration of a festival that (nearly) the whole community loves**
- **A first class opportunity for teaching excellent RE which is challenging and makes profound connections**
- **A way to explore the generalities of festivals (– story / song / food / memory / belief / values / community / popularity)**
- **A chance to think about Christianity, especially beliefs and practice in the community, from incarnation to food banks to security walls**
- **A way to engage with spiritual art**
- **A creative time in the curriculum (drama, art, music linked to RE)**