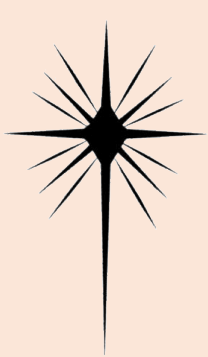
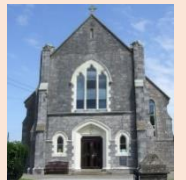


# Journey to the Crib



**Churches together in Ipplepen**  
**St. Andrew's and the Methodist Church**



# Welcome to Journey to the Crib

## A Christmas Story Trail

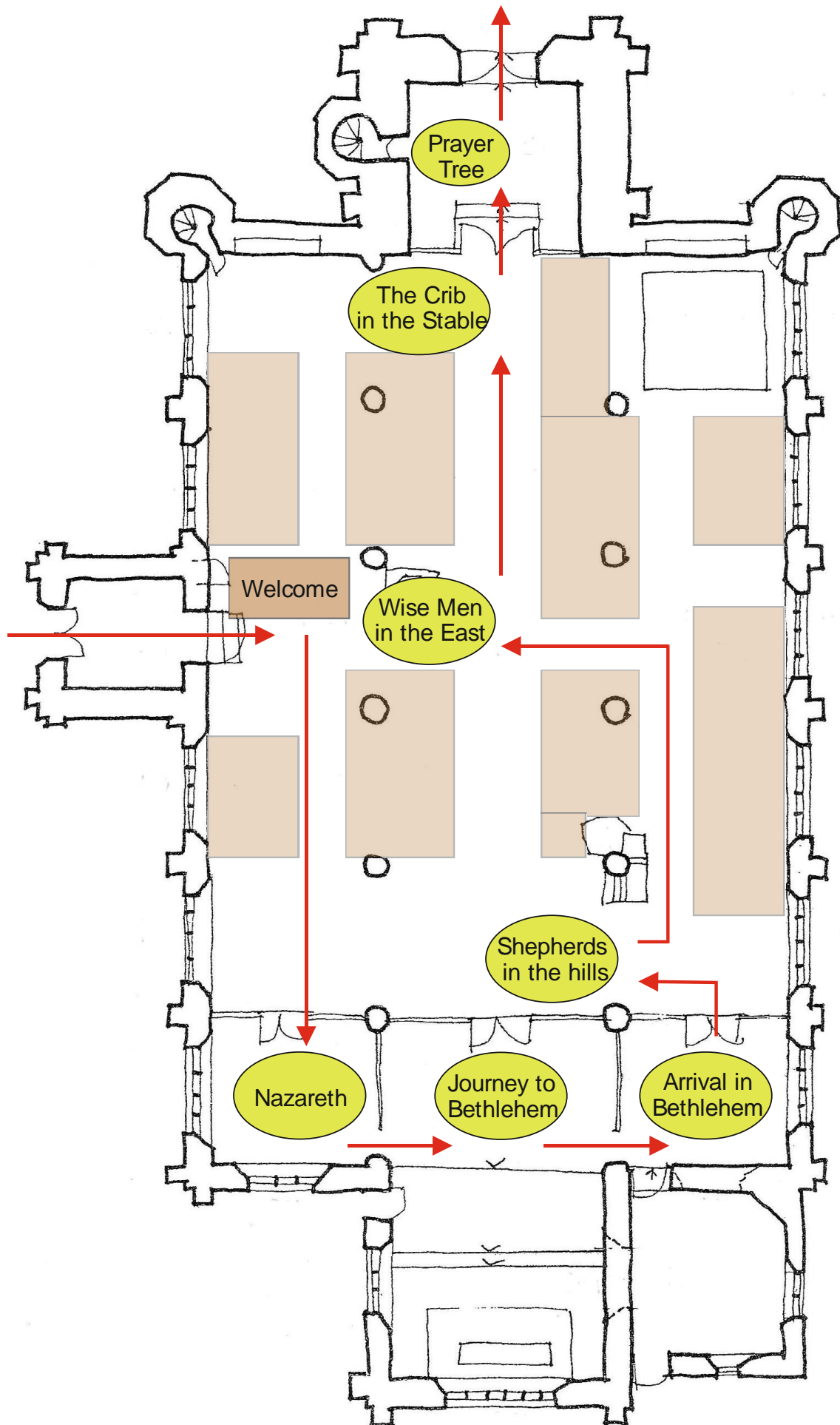
The **Churches together in Ipplepen** welcome you and your family to this trail as a way of experiencing the Christmas Story afresh.

The Christmas Story is about a number of journeys made by different people as they came to see the baby Jesus lying in the manger. We are asking you to come on that journey with the main characters, starting in Nazareth where Mary first heard the news from the angel that she was going to give birth to a son. Then travelling with Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem where Jesus was born. We will also meet the shepherds and the Wise Men who also travelled to see this very special baby. The last stop on the journey is the stable ready and waiting for everyone to arrive to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

At each scene you will be able to read part of the story which will introduce the main characters and what they did. There are also a number of questions for you to think about. Children can also complete their own activity sheet before moving on.

Please take this booklet home with you.

# The Journey to the Crib



# Nazareth: The Angel Gabriel visits Mary

Over 2000 years ago in a town called Nazareth a very ordinary young girl named Mary lived. She was soon to be married to Joseph, a local carpenter. She usually spent her days helping around the house. She would spend her time doing very ordinary things like cleaning, mending and making clothes and making bread.



One day something very extraordinary happened as she went about her daily tasks. An angel named Gabriel was sent from God to tell her that she was going to have a very special baby boy. She was to call him Jesus and he would be called the Son of God.

When Mary saw the angel the bible tells us she was troubled and frightened. But Gabriel told her not to be afraid as God was with her. Although she had been asked to do something difficult she found the courage to put her trust in God and do what she was asked to do.

- Have you ever been asked to do something difficult?
- Did you feel too scared to do it even when you knew that it was something you wanted to do?
- Did you make excuses not to do it or did you find the courage to try? Sometimes we need to ask God to help us by giving us the courage and the confidence we need.



# What was Mary's house like?

In Jesus' time Nazareth probably had a population in the low hundreds. It was a very small village, and with just one public bath! It is now a large city with more than 200,000 people.

Mary would have lived in a small house possibly only one or two rooms with very basic facilities.

Remember that in those times they had no running water, inside toilet and no electricity. Cooking would have been over an open wood fire, with maybe a bread oven.



# Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem

Before Jesus was born, Caesar Augustus, the then ruler of the land, announced that everyone had to be counted and registered in the town of their birth. As Joseph was from Bethlehem this meant he and Mary would need to travel there.

Bethlehem is about 70 miles away from Nazareth. There were no cars, trains or buses at that time so the journey had to be done on foot or, if you were lucky, riding on a donkey. It would have been a difficult journey and there were likely to be many dangers on the way. They would need to go over hills, by rivers and through towns and villages. The journey would take many days.

- What is the furthest walk you have ever been on? Imagine doing that each day for a week.

When they heard the announcement, Mary and Joseph began to prepare for the journey. They began collecting the things they would need to take with them.

- When you go away from home for a few days what do you take with you?

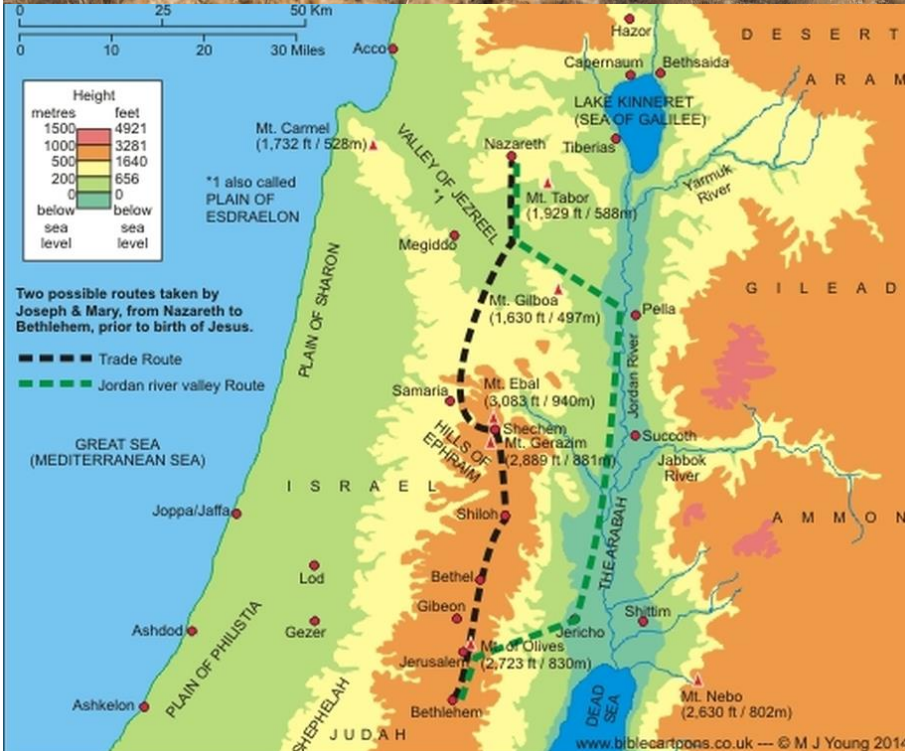
Mary and Joseph would probably have packed very little as they would have had to carry everything. Maybe they could only take some food, water and some blankets for the nights.

- Can you imagine what it may have felt like for Mary and Joseph as they set off to Bethlehem?
- Do you think they may have been feeling a little scared or excited? Maybe even a bit of both?

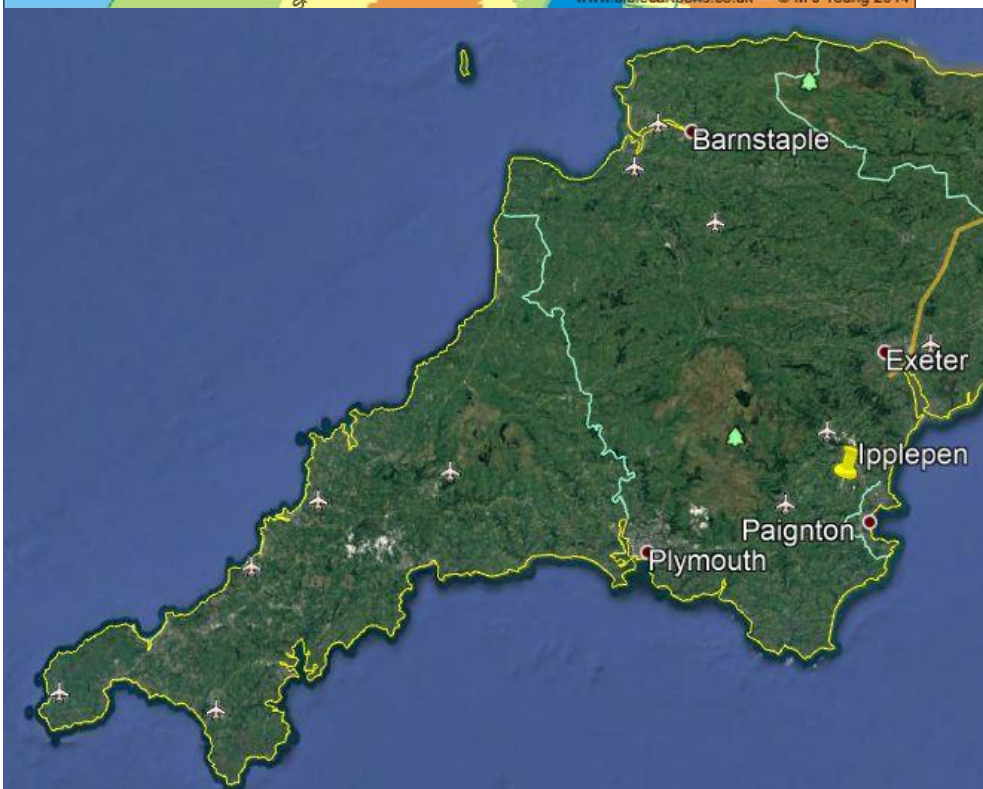
Maybe they were worried, as Mary's baby was due to be born soon, about what would happen if he was born while they were still travelling?



# What was the journey like?



The Jordan valley route was longer but easier and would have had more villages to stop at on the way. It was about 95 miles – the same distance as Ipplepen to Land's End.



*Images are to the same scale*



# Arriving in Bethlehem

When Mary and Joseph finally arrived in Bethlehem it was very busy. It was noisy and there were crowds everywhere. Both Mary and Joseph were very tired from their long journey.



- After a long journey how do you feel and what is the first thing you like to do?

There was no welcoming drink or food for them. They still needed to find somewhere to stay. At every place they tried they got the same answers. “We are full. There is no room at the inn.”

- Have you ever experienced not being wanted or where there is no place for you?
- How did this make you feel?

Mary and Joseph, now feeling very tired and anxious because they knew the baby would be born that night, tried the very last place. Here they were greeted with the same answer “No room”. But this time the innkeeper, although he had no room for them inside his inn, offered them shelter in his stable.

- Can you think of a time when someone has helped you?



# What was Bethlehem like?



Bethlehem was a small village of a few hundred people. Even now its population is only about 25,000.



An artist's impression of Bethlehem at the time of Jesus, an old photograph of a village, and how the stable might have looked

# The hills outside Bethlehem

On the hills surrounding Bethlehem, shepherds were in the fields with their sheep. They were used to spending their nights watching over them, always ready to fight off any wild animals that came too close. But on that night something made them leave their fields in a hurry. Something for which they were prepared to leave the sheep to fend for themselves.



The shepherds had an amazing story to tell. When they were sitting around the campfire an angel appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were told not to be afraid because the angel had brought good news for them and for everyone. In Bethlehem the saviour of the world had been born and they were to find him wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

When the message had been delivered a great number of angels suddenly appeared in sky. They were all singing “Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth.” The angels then went back to heaven and the shepherds decided that they must go and see for themselves.

- Would you have gone with them or would you stay watching the sheep?

The angels gave a message of joy and peace for the whole world.

- What would it mean if everyone was at peace this Christmas?

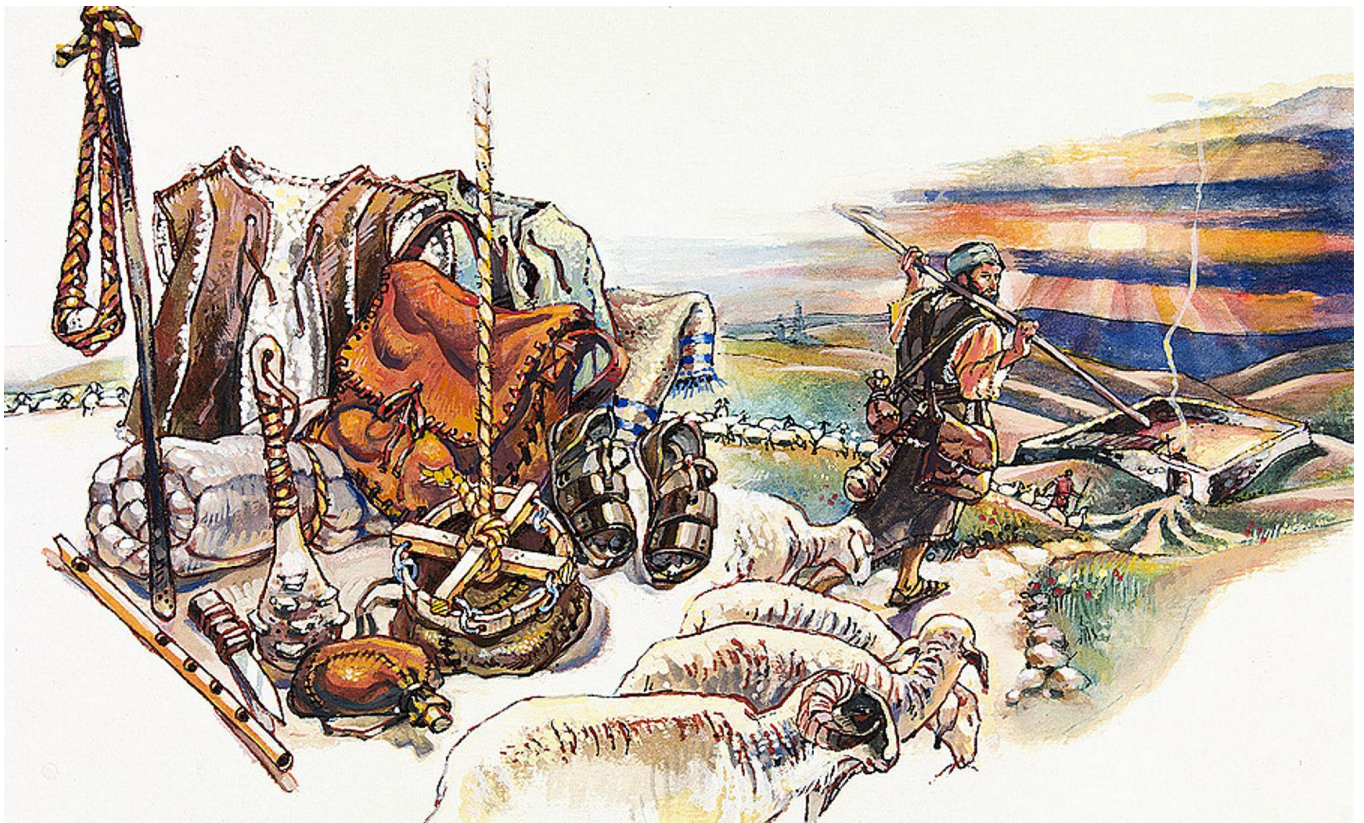


# What was a shepherd's life like?



A modern day shepherd and his flock in the hills

The picture below shows the items which the shepherd might carry with him: leather bag containing food; a rod with slate blades for protection; a knife; a staff; a personal water container; a collapsible leather bucket for drawing water from deep wells; a sling to use to control the sheep wild animals; and a reed pipe for entertainment





# In the East: The Wise Men

A long way from Bethlehem some wise men were waiting for the birth of a king who had been promised in their ancient books. They believed that the stars would tell them where and when he would be born.



One night they saw a bright, new star and knew this meant the new king had been born and they decided to follow it to where he had been born.

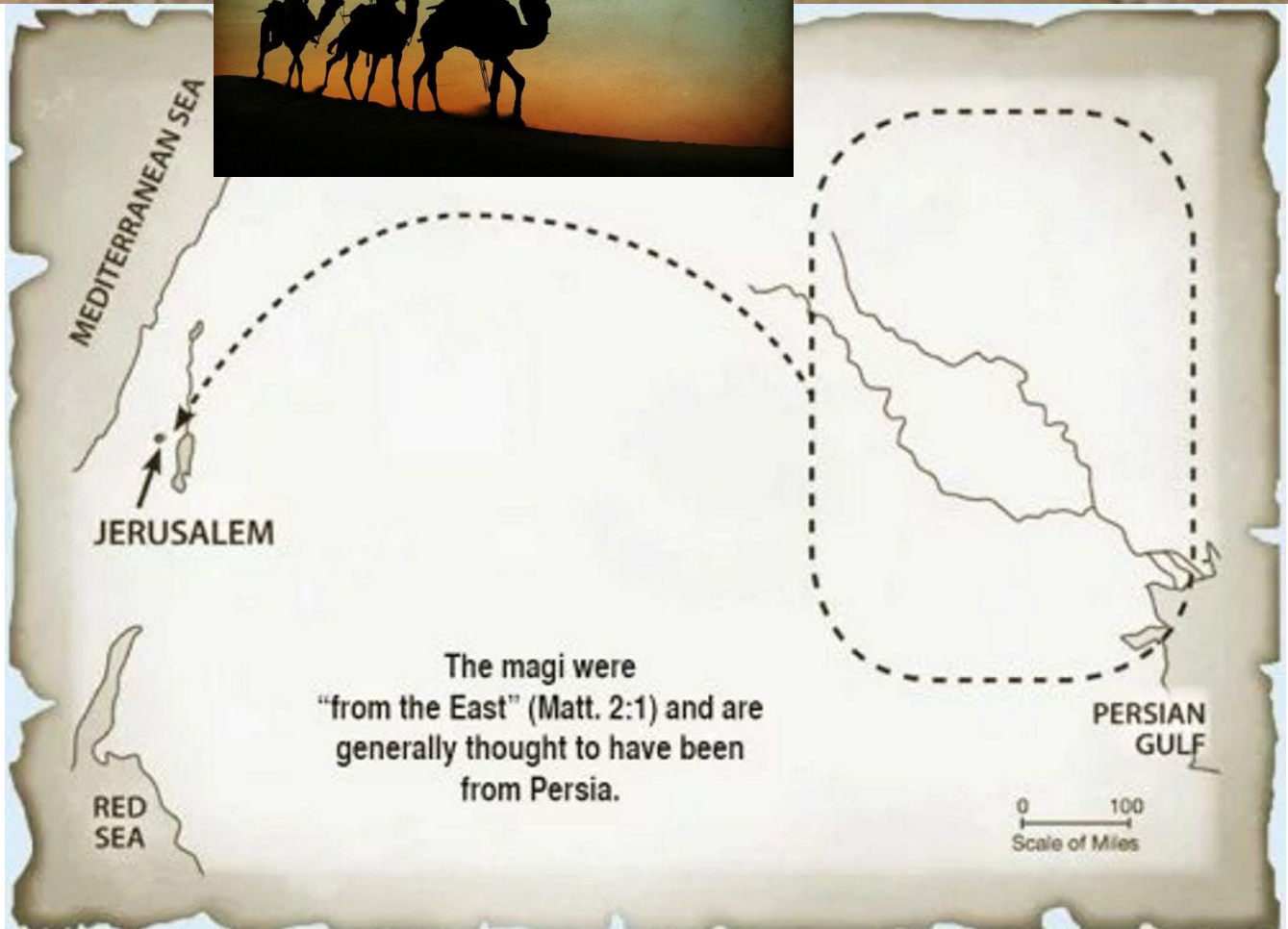
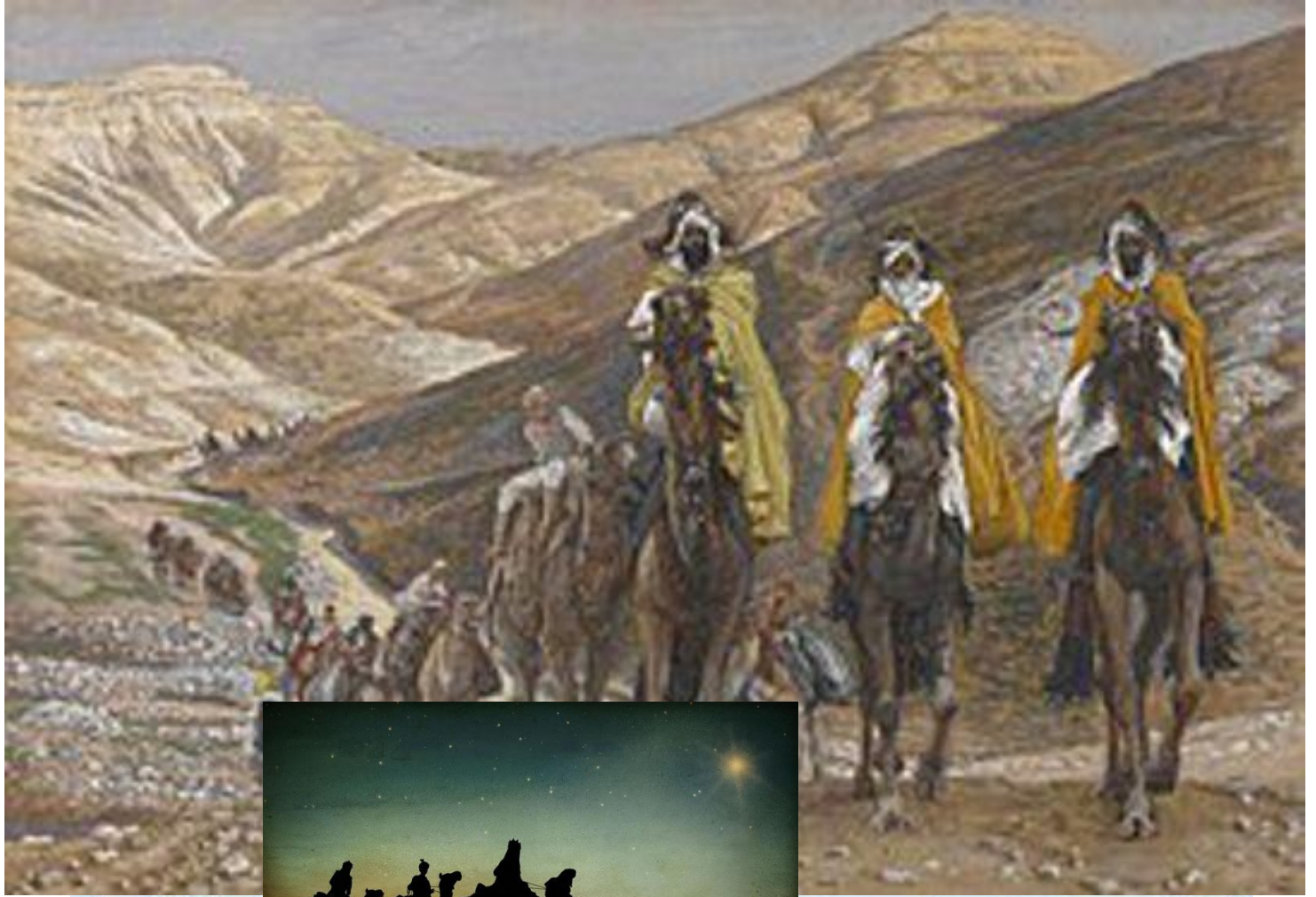
- Where do you think the Wise Men thought they would find this new King?

Before they set off they had to decide what gifts they wanted to take. Firstly they decided to take some gold, a very valuable gift, because they knew the baby was a king. The next gift was frankincense, an expensive, sweet smelling incense, to show that Jesus was to be worshipped as God's son. Lastly they took the gift of myrrh, a sweet smelling ointment, used to anoint people when they had died. The Wise Men knew that Jesus' life on earth would end when he was still quite young.

- What would you take as a gift for Jesus?

They then mounted their camels and started their long journey. All the way they followed that bright new star.

# Where did the Wise Men come from?



# Bethlehem: The Stable

Mary and Joseph had found somewhere to stay. It may have been a stable with all the animals which would be quite noisy and small. But it was somewhere safe to rest. They settled down for the night and waited. This was where Jesus, the Son of God, was going to be born.

- Where were you born?
- Do you think a stable is the best or even the right place for such a special baby to be born?

Later after Jesus was born Mary wrapped him in cloths and place him in a manger. After his birth there were many visitors to that stable. First came the shepherds rushing down from the hills, excitedly wanting to see if what the angel had told them was true.

Next to arrive were the Wise Men, they had followed the star for a long time before it stopped above the stable where Mary, Joseph and Jesus were. They may have been surprised where they had been lead to but the Wise Men were overjoyed that the promise of this new king had come true. They bowed down before Jesus giving him their gifts and then returned home.

Each visitor brought their gifts for this child. Each was seeking to find out why this child was special. Jesus himself is sometimes called **“God’s gift to the world”**.

- What do you think people mean by this phrase?

The birth of this child changed the world for ever. Jesus is still changing people’s lives today. People all over the world celebrate this day and remember the events of that night.





Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh!

Frankincense and Myrrh are the dried sap from trees and are used as incense, in oils and as medicines





## On with your journey!

We have come to the end of our trail. We hope you have enjoyed it and it has set the scene for your Christmas.

## Prayer Tree

As you leave the building please take time to write or draw a prayer on the small cards provided and hang them on the tree.

## Cash donation for HITS



There is an opportunity to make a cash donation to HITS to support them at this time.



St. Andrew's and the Methodist Church wish you a very happy Christmas.