

Seward Congregational Church
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*The
Chimes*

February Church News



SEWARD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
SEWARD, ILLINOIS

From the desk of Pastor Joel

Jesus made seven "I Am" statements in the book of John. They are: 1) **I Am the bread of life**, 6:35, 41, 48, 51; 2) **I Am the light of the world**, 8:12; 3) **I Am the door of the sheep**, 10:7-9; 4) **I Am the Good Shepherd**, 10:11, 14; 5) **I Am the resurrection and the life**, 11:25; 6) **I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life**, 14:6; and, 7) **I Am the true vine**, 15:1-5.

I have been reading about those who call themselves "cultural Christians," and this intrigued me to try to understand that term and how it fits with these **I Am** statements of Jesus.

"Cultural Christians" are those who believe in the morals that are taught in the Word of God, yet do not accept that Jesus is the Son of God. They question that Jesus died on the cross. They believe certain things in the Bible and reject other things that do not fit in with their philosophy. Some believe that because they were born in the USA they are Christian. Some believe that by attending church they are Christian. Some believe that by being baptized they are Christian. God's Word says in John 6:29: *Jesus told them, "This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent."* The word *believe* means to *trust*. Most notable are renowned author Richard Dawkins and owner of Tesla Elon Musk. Dawkins, by his own admission, does not believe in God, yet loves the hymns of the church and enjoys going to worship services. When asked, Musk thinks that the morals taught in the Bible are good and good for society but does not claim to be a Christian who follows God.

If "cultural Christians" don't embrace everything about God's Word, I wonder who's correct in their thinking: those who embrace cultural Christianity or those who have made a commitment to follow Christ. Many say they believe in God yet do not live their life as if their belief in God has made a difference. Scripture says, in James 2:19,

You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror.

How do we reconcile the philosophy of "Cultural Christians" to the Word of God and the **I Am** statements of Jesus Himself. You decide.

Board of Trustees Meeting
December 18, 2024
Seward Congregational Church

The meeting was brought to order at 6:33 pm.

Present were Peggy Whitney, Char Remer, Matt Cowman, Brenda Van Hauen, Effie Hoppe, Maury Daubs, and Pastor Joel Hicke.

Pastor Joel opened with a word of prayer.

The minutes from the November meeting were read. Effie made a motion to accept; Matt seconded; they were approved.

Finance reports were given by Effie, Brenda, and Maury. We need to file a 990 form. Matt made a motion to accept; Char seconded; they were approved.

Pastor's report was discussed.

Old Business

The tree has been removed from the backyard of the parsonage.

Peggy talked to Sharon concerning the pool and insurance. She said that she would not put it back up. Maury talked with the insurance company. If the pool is not owned or operated by the church, the insurance would not cover liabilities.

Stove at the parsonage is not done yet.

New Business

The printer in the office needs to be repaired. Effie proposed that we get the older printer fixed as well. Maury made a motion for an assessment to get the older printer fixed, not to exceed \$500.00; Matt seconded; the motion was approved.

There was a discussion about the format for the finance reports for the Annual Meeting Booklet. Those statements need to be clear and concise for the members of the church as well as having the longer forms also. We need to renew our 501(c3) status.

The budget for 2025 was discussed.

The next meeting will be January 15, 2025.

Effie made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Matt seconded; the motion was approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:34 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Joel Hicke

January 26th, Diaconate meeting

After the annual meeting when the new slate of officers were voted in, the Diaconate members in attendance had a short meeting. This included Teresa Gobeli, Karleen Merchant, Delores Poppen and Bev Weerda. Outgoing chairman Jennifer Lloyd, asked for motion for chairman, secretary and treasurer. Karleen made motion to elect Teresa as chairman, Bev Weerda as treasurer and herself as secretary. Second by Bev. Motion passed.

A short discussion about the Ash Wednesday and the Lenten services was held. It was agreed that we will host a soup supper on March 12th at 5:30pm, before the Lenten service. It was approved to have Gary Brown, from Park Hills, do the Lenten service at Seward on April 2nd. Their church has a conflict that evening. Pastor Joel mentioned that First Presbyterian has invited us to join them for Ash Wednesday service. He will check to see if they are going to join in on the other Lenten services, at other churches, before we decide on that.

With no other business today, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Karleen Merchant
secretary

Announcements

BIBLE STUDY: Will Meet on February 5,12,19 & 26 at 7:00 p.m.

TRUSTEE'S: Will meet on February 19.

DIACONATE: The Diaconate will meet on February 5 at 11:30 a.m.

CHOIR: Will meet on February 6, 13, 20, 27

ADVENT CALENDARS: Friendly reminder: Please return the Christmas advent calendars to the church or if unable call the church to arrange it to be picked up. We plan to use them again for Christmas 2025. We hope all of you enjoyed the Advent calendar provided to each family. We have gotten great feedback about the bible verses and the family time to remember the season with bible verses to reflect on.

REMINDER: All contributions for the CHIMES newsletter are due to the Office by the 3rd Friday of every month.

MONTHLY SUMMARY

December

General Fund	Income	\$6,254.00
	Expense	\$ 9,492.22

Monthly Budget \$6,731.92

January -December

\$60,907.95
\$96,396.61

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES


Birthdays

3-Kaitlin Asche, Roger Hilton
8—Lois Ascher
9—Betty Kendell
15-Mary Jane Zipse, Bev Weerda
17-Carrie Vaught (Remer)
18-Joel Hicke
25- Stephanie Cannon

Anniversaries

13-Matt & Jessica Cowman
14-Jim & Karleen Merchant
15-Dennis & Sandy Freedlund
22- Richard & Judy Beuth

February 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 Sunday School 9:15 a.m. Worship Service 10:30 a.m. Fellowship following the service	3	4	5 Diaconate 11:30 a.m. Bible Study 7 p.m.	6 Choir 6:30 p.m.	7	8
9 Sunday School 9:15 a.m. Worship Service 10:30 a.m. Fellowship following the service	10	11	12 Bible Study 7 p.m.	13 Choir 6:30 p.m.	14	15
16 Sunday School 9:15 a.m. Worship Service 10:30 a.m. Fellowship following the service	17 	18	19 Bible Study 7 p.m.	20 Choir 6:30 p.m.	21	22
23 Sunday School 9:15 a.m. Worship Service (Communion) 10:30 a.m. Fellowship following the service	24	25	26 Bible Study 7 p.m.	27 Choir 6:30 p.m.	28	

Seward Congregational Youth Grow in Faith!

Here are some of the things going on within the church for our youth.

Christmas Program 2024

On December 15, 2024, the Seward Congregational Church proudly presented its annual Christmas program, *The Signs of Christmas*. The program was performed by 18 Sunday School students, with contributions from an adult speaker and the Women's Choir.

Each student had an important role in the performance, and their excitement was truly contagious. Under Karleen's direction, the students sang beautifully, even inviting the entire congregation to join in singing *Go Tell It on the Mountain*. Hearing the voices of the church united with the children was a truly moving experience.

The students shared the true Signs of Christmas with us all, reminding us of God's love and the gift of His Son. During this busy holiday season, taking a moment to watch these students perform was a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the reason for the season.

If you missed the program or would like to relive the joy, a video of *The Signs of Christmas* is available on our Facebook page, Seward Congregational Church. We hope you had a blessed Christmas and enjoyed the program as much as we did.

Coming up in February these are the lessons we will be covering:

1st week - Jesus Performs His First Miracle	John 2:1-11
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2nd week- Jesus, Teaches in a synagogue	Luke 4:14-21
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3rd week- Jesus is Rejected in His Hometown	Luke 4:22-30
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4th week- Moses and Elijah Appear with Jesus	Luke 9:28 -36
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If you know of any children in the area that may be interested in coming, please invite them and let one of the Sunday school teachers know.

RESOURCES OF FAITH

Apps that are free to download:

Today in the Word produced by the Moody Bible Institute

This site has a verse of the day
and a Devotion to Read

Our Daily Bread produced by Our Daily Bread Ministries

This site has a Daily Devotional and an Evening Devotional
which you can read or play the video

Daily scripture

Reflect & Pray

Insight

This site also had a link to the Bible you choose:

NIV New International Version

KJV King James Version

ESV English Standard Version

NLT New Living Translation

Fun Activities for All Ages

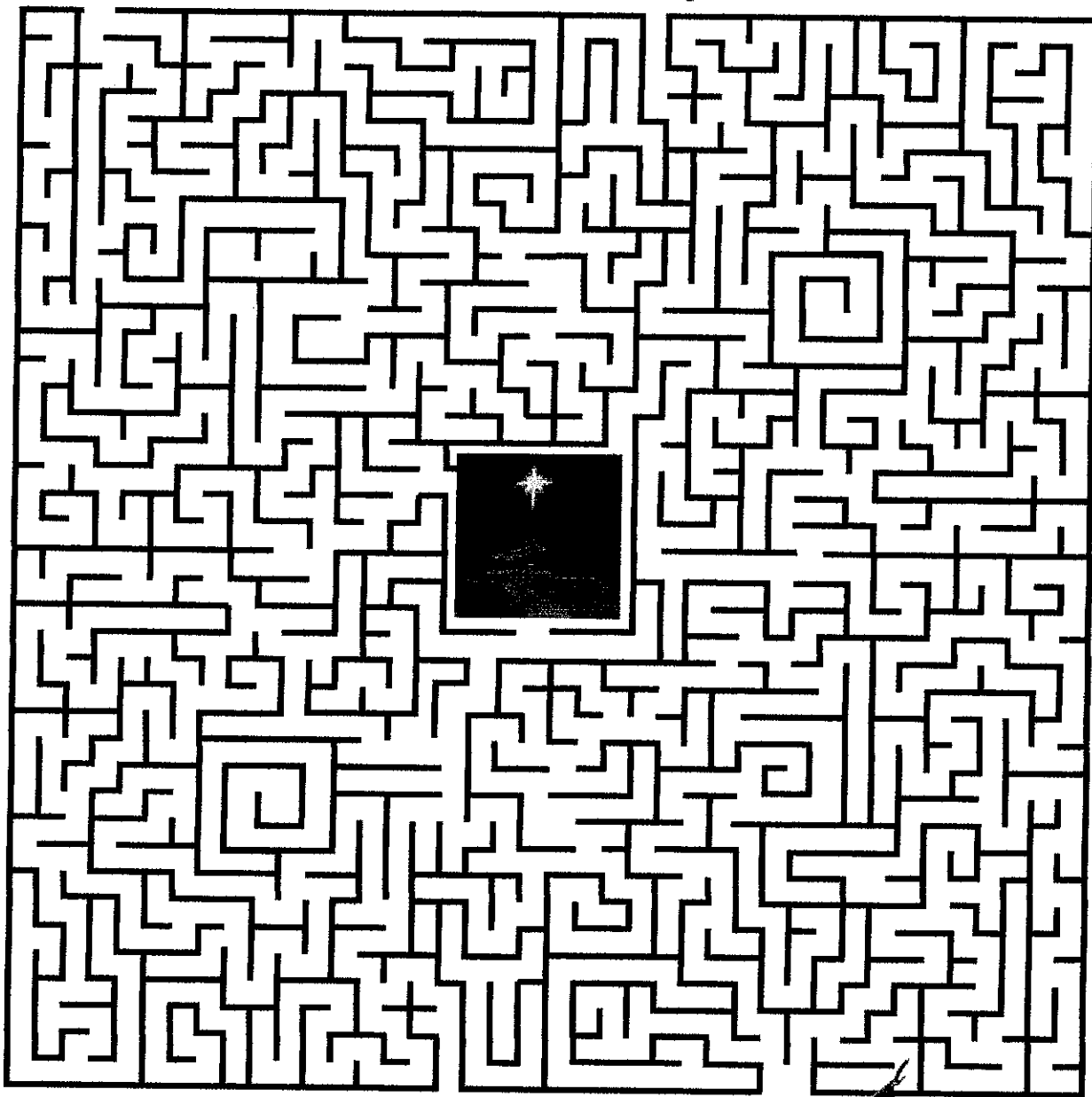
The Shepherd's Story

According to Luke 2:8-20

On the night of Jesus' birth there were humble shepherds watching their sheep in the fields nearby Bethlehem. A host of angels suddenly appeared to these shepherds and told them of the Messiah's birth. Excited, they went quickly to find the baby. They were anxious to see the King they had been expecting for years and years. And yes, Jesus would be the King they had waited for, but not the kind of king people were expecting. We should point out that while traditional nativity scenes typically include the Wisemen in the scene, it's much more likely that the Wisemen did not visit Jesus until He was closer to two years old. This Maze for The Shepard's story will help children imagine the stable scene as it truly was

Maze for The Shepherd's Story

Help each shepherd and sheep find their way to the manger.



Angels

An activity worksheet from ministry-to-children.com

Here is a story for you to read.



Mary



Gabriel



baby



was a young woman who loved God. The angel



visited



said to



,"You will have a



You will name the  Jesus."

All about Angels

Find these words in the puzzle.

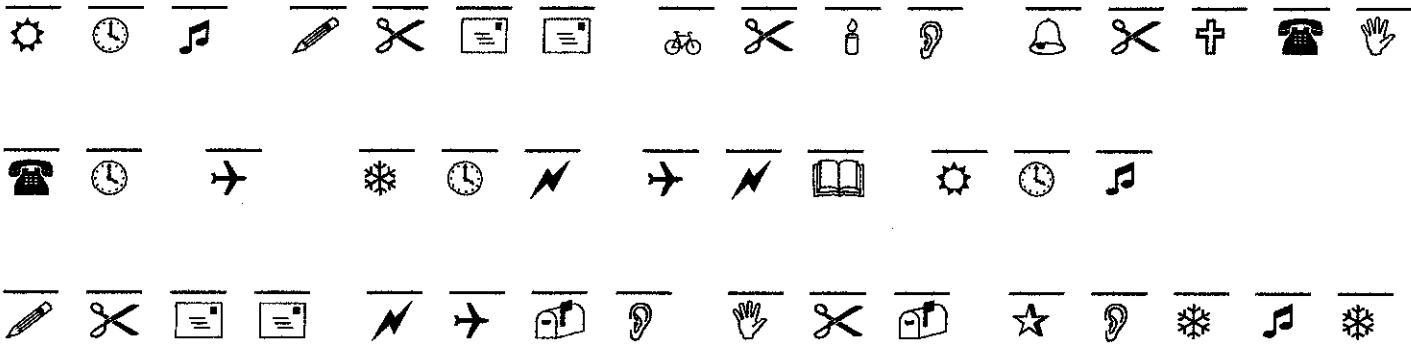
Angels come from **HEAVEN** to bring a **MESSAGE** from **GOD**.

CHERUBIM, **SERAPHIM**, and **ARCHANGELS** are kinds of angels.

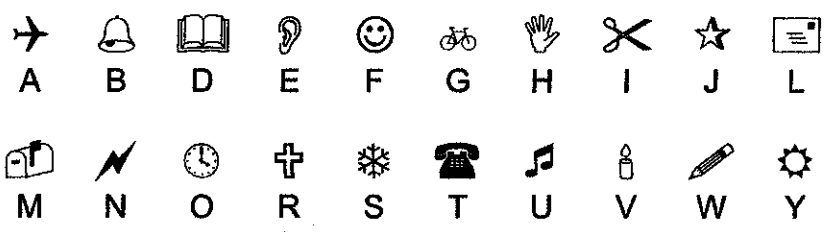
GABRIEL and **MICHAEL** are two angels who are mentioned in the Bible.

A R C H A N G E L S
A K H O B Z I P A E
U H E A V E N T X R
J M R E G O D Y H A
O C U Q G I R F S P
G A B R I E L L W H
V M I C H A E L N I
D E M E S S A G E M

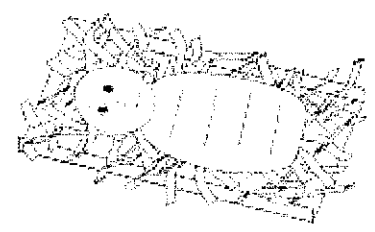
What did Gabriel say to Mary? Use the code to find out.



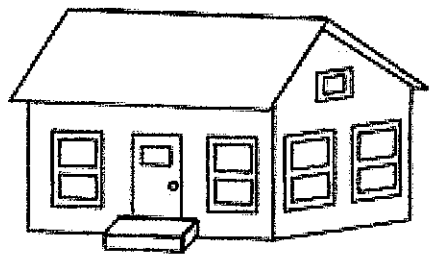
Luke 1:31



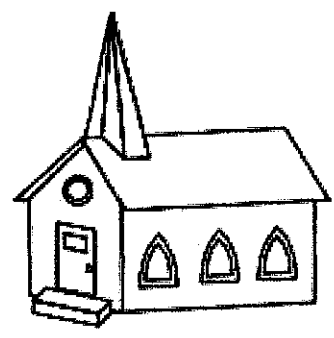
A B D E F G H I J L
M N O R S T U V W Y



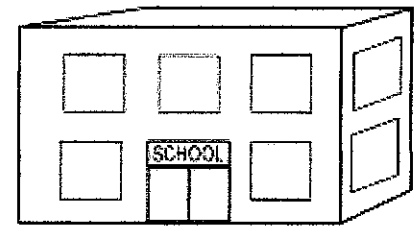
Gabriel came to Mary to bring a message from God. Circle each place where you can share God's message.



home



church



school

I will share God's message with _____.

Wise Men

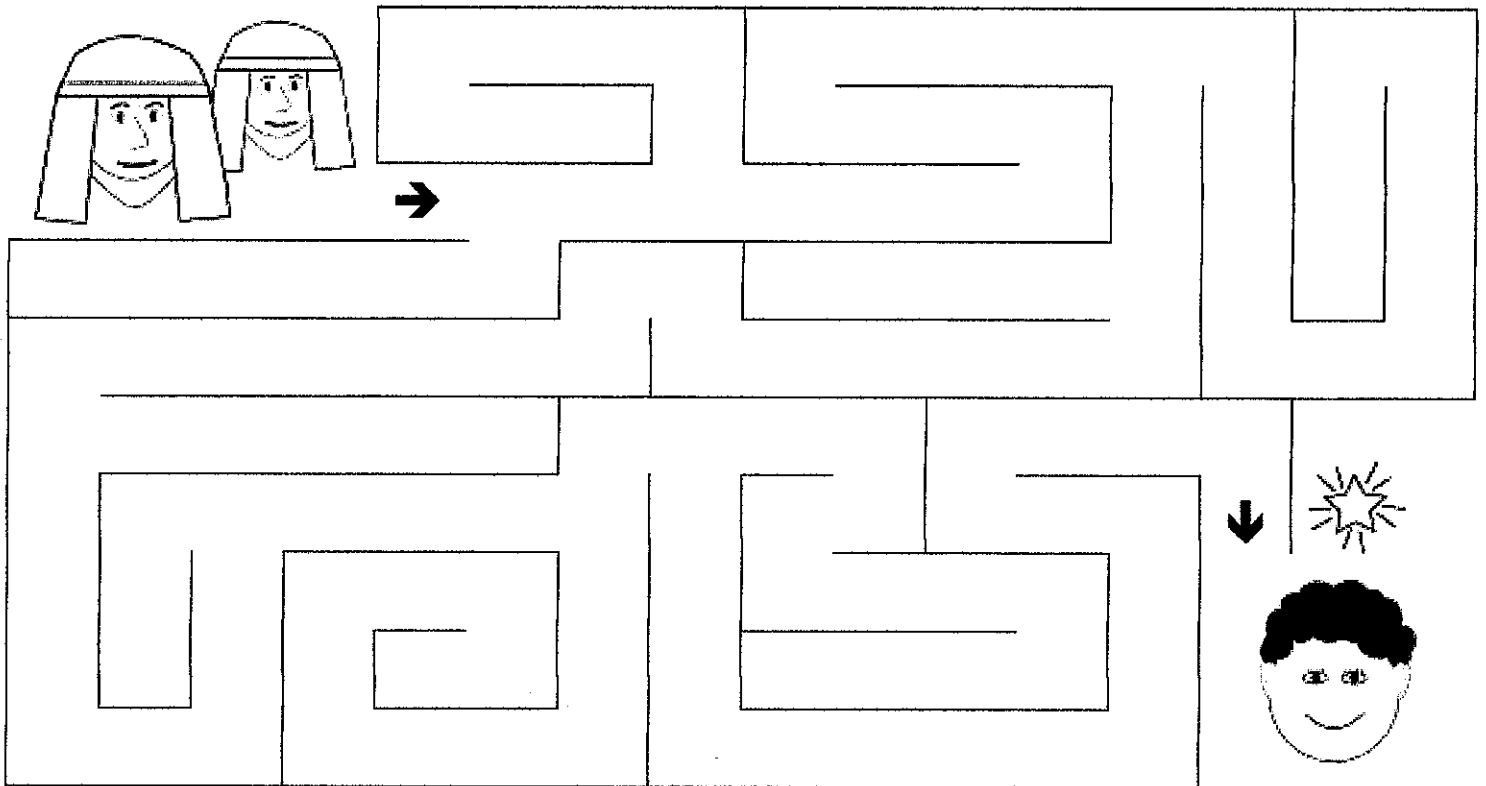
A Christmas activity worksheet from ministry-to-children.com

What Does the Bible Say about the Wise Men?

Mark each statement yes (true) or no (false). Then check your answers on the back of the page.

The wise men followed a star to find Jesus.	yes	no
There were three wise men.	yes	no
The wise men brought three gifts to Jesus.	yes	no
The wise men saw Baby Jesus in the manger.	yes	no
The wise men worshipped Jesus.	yes	no

Help the wise men find their way to Jesus.



What Does the Bible Say about the Wise Men?

The wise men followed a star to find Jesus. Yes. They said, "We saw his star when it came up in the east." Matthew 2:2

There were three wise men. No. The Bible says "some men" came. Matthew 2:2

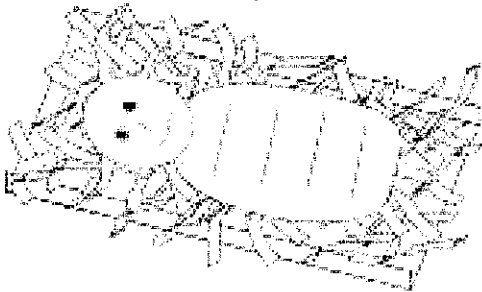
The wise men brought three gifts to Jesus. Yes. They brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Matthew 2:11

The wise men saw Baby Jesus in the manger. No. The wise men came a long way, and it took a long time. Jesus was probably 1 or 2 years old when the wise men came.

The wise men worshipped Jesus. Yes. They knelt down and worshipped him. Matthew 2:11

Gifts at Christmas

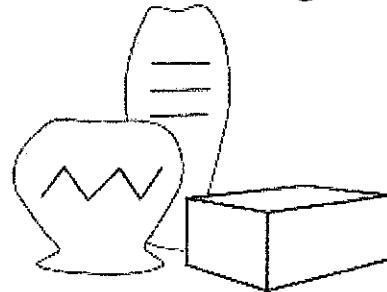
God gave



Jesus

Draw a gift someone
has given you.

The wise men gave



gold, frankincense, and myrrh

Draw a gift you can
give someone else.

Shepherds

A Christmas activity worksheet from ministry-to-children.com

The Angels Visit the Shepherds



“This very day your Savior was born – Christ the Lord!”

Luke 2:11



“Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened.”

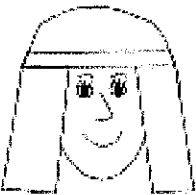
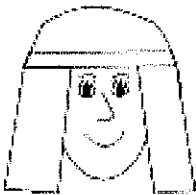


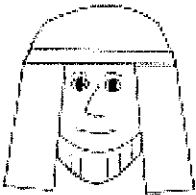
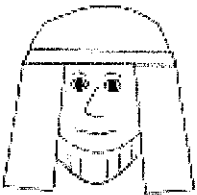


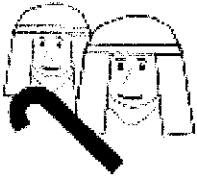
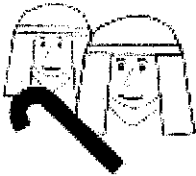


Luke 2:15

They hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and saw the baby lying in the manger.

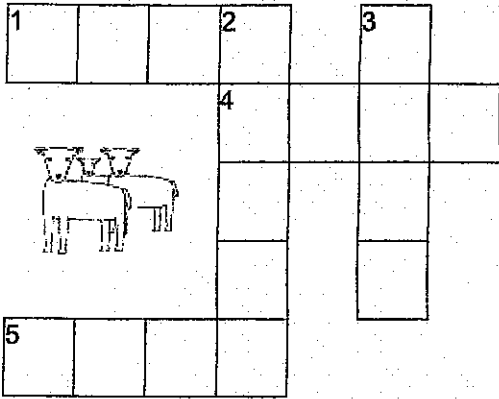
Luke 2:16

Here is a game to help you remember the story of the shepherds.

- Color the cards and cut them apart.
- Put the cards face down on the table in rows.
- Turn over two at a time and try to find the matching cards.

 Mary	 Mary	 Baby Jesus	 Baby Jesus	 Joseph	 Joseph
 Angels	 Angels	 Shepherds	 Shepherds	 Sheep	 Sheep

Shepherds in the Bible



Across

1. Psalm 23 says "The _____ is my shepherd."
4. _____ the prophet was a shepherd.
5. Jesus said, "I am the _____ shepherd."

Down

2. King _____ was a shepherd before he was king.
3. Shepherds were the first visitors when Jesus was _____.

Word List

- AMOS
- BORN
- DAVID
- GOOD
- LORD

The shepherds went back, singing praises to God for all they had heard and seen.
 Luke 2:20

How do **you** praise God?

_____ G I N S _____

_____ P Y A R _____

_____ Y O B E _____

_____ L E L T _____

