



POSADA

As Christmas approaches, we begin to decorate our homes to make them warm and welcoming for all who cross the threshold. Many people find they have an influx of visitors at this time of year, with friends and family gathering together for the celebrations. Many of us also find ourselves grateful for the hospitality of others in the festive season, whether that's through the invitation to attend parties or sharing in community activities and celebrations. But how carefully do we notice the guests we welcome in? We talk with children about Santa coming to visit - and maybe even a friendly elf - but what about the Holy Family?



This Advent, in partnership with Christian Aid, the Diocese is inviting Christians across East Kent to reflect on what 'home' means to them - and what it might mean to lose or be far from that place of security. One way your church or community can get involved in this initiative is by sharing in the tradition of 'Posada'. Posada is a Spanish word meaning 'inn'. It's also the name of an old Mexican tradition, where children would dress as Mary and Joseph and go from door-to-door in their village to re-enact the journey to Bethlehem. Nowadays small figures of Mary and Joseph are used instead; each evening during Advent they are hosted in a different home, before arriving back at Church in time for Christmas.

Mary and Joseph were displaced people, searching for a place of safety in which their child could be born. For them this was not a matter of choice - the occupying government of their homeland required them to make their dangerous journey so that they could be registered and taxed. Mary was pregnant, and Joseph was not yet her husband, so their situation was already far from ideal, given the culture of their day. Churches and groups can enter into their story by organising their own Posada - and it's so easy to do.

Things you will need:

- ★ Figures of Mary and Joseph (and maybe even a donkey). These could be knitted, felt, ceramic... whatever you choose. You probably already have something suitable, but you could even make your own - check out canterburydiocese.org/advent for inspiration.
- ★ Host instruction sheets and Posada resources - download free from the website
- ★ A sign-up sheet
- ★ An Advent candle and holder
- ★ A bag or box to transport them from house-to-house

How to run your posada

Invite people to sign-up to host Mary and Joseph for one night during Advent. If your congregation or group is small, Mary and Joseph could stay somewhere for more than one night, but maybe you could use this as an opportunity to involve people outside of your congregation? It's best not to ask people to put contact details on the sheet itself if it's on a public noticeboard; an organiser may need to check that everyone knows who they are passing the figures on to and how to contact them.

On Advent Sunday, take a few moments during your main worship service to mark the start of the journey. Use the Commissioning Prayer below and officially hand over the posada to the first hosts.

In the evening, hosts can light the advent candle and offer a prayer from the Posada prayers and reflections section of this resource. Encourage them to give Mary and Joseph pride of place in the home - maybe they'd like to share a photo on social media using the #AdventPosada hashtag.

Entering into the story of the journey to Bethlehem also gives hosts a chance to reflect on the dangerous journeys taken by displaced people today. The Posada prayers and reflections section includes some snapshots of the lives of people who have had to leave their homes and hosts can use the resource sheets to draw their own image of what 'home' means to them - a great activity for all ages to share.

Each day as Mary and Joseph move on to a new house, there are special prayers that can be used when 'handover' happens; this can also be a good opportunity to get to know those in your church a little better.

Choose a suitable service to welcome Mary and Joseph back to church. This could be on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day... but do whatever works best for you and your community. A crib service could be a really good occasion to involve those of all ages. Use the welcoming prayer below when you receive the figures and invite hosts to talk about the experience.

Commissioning prayer

A prayer to use at the beginning of your Posada

Gracious God,

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of your son, we remember the dangerous journey taken by Mary and Joseph. As these figures are welcomed into homes around our community, may they be a blessing to those who receive them. May the faithfulness of Mary and Joseph inspire us afresh this Advent to welcome Christ into our hearts. We ask your protection for refugees and all those who make dangerous journeys today.

In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord,

Amen.

Welcoming prayer

A prayer to welcome Mary and Joseph back to church in time for Christmas

Mighty God,

We remember that when Mary and Joseph arrived at Bethlehem there was no place for them at the inn, and that Jesus was born among the animals. As we welcome these figures back to Church, teach us to be compassionate and welcoming towards vulnerable members of our community. This Christmas we pray for the safety and security of refugees, displaced people, and all those without a home.

Through Christ our Lord who came and made His dwelling among us,

Amen.

Posada prayers and reflections

Passing from one home to the next

As the Posada crib is passed from one host to the next

The sending host says:

We pass the Holy family to you now to welcome and care for until tomorrow. As they stay in your home may you be reminded of the difficult journey Mary and Joseph took from Nazareth to Bethlehem and the hardships they faced along the way.

Jesus was an amazing gift from God for us all. We pray that you may know the blessing Jesus brings to the world today and always.

The receiving host says:

We welcome Mary and Joseph into our home. May we learn from them and receive God's blessings of wisdom and peace.

Reflections

I wonder if you have ever turned up at someone's house and they weren't expecting you? Did you get the date or day wrong? Or have you had people turn up at your house on the wrong day or unexpectedly? How did the people involved feel?

I wonder what you did? Did you turn them away and say go away we can't see you now? How might they have felt? Or did you welcome them in and quickly find some food and make them feel you were expecting them?

Luke 2: 1-7

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the

time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her first-born, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Watch this short Christmas appeal advert:
<https://youtu.be/MOByXwK-g94>

Consider how different the stable where Jesus was born may have been from homes today? for Mary and Joseph to have their baby.

I wonder how Mary must have felt at this time? She was a long way from home, she was young and probably a bit frightened, she then had to give birth to her first baby in a stable. I wonder how Mary and Joseph felt when they went knocking on doors to find somewhere to stay and no one welcomed them in?

I wonder how they felt when finally someone did? Is it important to make people feel welcome?

Snapshot: Calais

Many migrants from Syria and Eritrea end up in Calais as they want to come and live in Britain. Unfortunately getting into Britain is not that easy, which is why families make the very difficult decision to sneak into lorries to get across the channel. Many of these migrants have not chosen this life - they had no choice but to flee the danger and war of their home country.

Phil and Ben spent a day with refugees in Calais, this is what they saw:

'Along barbed wire high walls and fences, young arrivals sit in groups at the edges of the motorway and under bridges, others walk around in circles. Since refugees can't put up tents, they live in the woods 24/7 regardless of the cold, rain, and wind.'

Snapshot: Nigeria

Ayuba Azagwu was one of the first to flee his village, so he managed to find a property in Maiduguri, northern Nigeria. He's opened up his home to those who've fled violence. Although his house only has nine rooms, he has already sheltered around 100 people. Many are from his home village, fleeing the destruction wrought by jihadist militant organization Boko Haram and they arrived in Maiduguri with nothing.

Ayuba is losing rent money, but he feels obliged to help: he says, "They have no one else to help but me." He's not sure if he'll ever get back to his farm and his old life.

Snapshot: Ashford & Syria

Maysa has four children. She left Syria six years ago and moved to Lebanon, where she stayed with her family for four and half years. Then she moved to Ashford through the UNHCR (the United Nations Refugee Agency) in the hope that her children would be able to continue their studies in school. She's hoping one day to return to Syria, where her parents and sisters still live.

She said: "The future for me is seeing my family happy, my kids happy - and I am happy here, but I'm hoping one day in the future to go back to Syria.

"Home, my home, is my kingdom - my private life, my family. No one knows what's in there, except me and my family. It's my little kingdom. It's like I don't want anybody to know if I'm upset outside my kingdom. I want everybody to know that I'm happy and we live a happy life. "

Consider:

- ★ What does 'home' mean to you?
- ★ What might life be like for people who have nowhere to call home?
- ★ How might they be feeling?
- ★ How does hearing stories like these make you feel?

Prayers to use with the Posada

Almighty and merciful God
whose Son became a refugee
and had no place to call his own;
Look with mercy on those who today
are fleeing from danger,
loveless and hungry.
Bless those who work to bring them relief;
inspire generosity and compassion in all our
hearts;
and guide the nations of the world towards that
day
when all will rejoice in your Kingdom of justice
and peace.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen

Jesus, born in a stable
Bring hope to the homeless
Jesus, child of Mary and Joseph
Bring hope to all families
Jesus, light of the world
Bring hope to the dark places of this world
Jesus, bearer of peace
Bring hope to those suffering from conflict and
war
Jesus, who fled to another country
Bring hope to all refugees
Jesus, who was hungry in the desert
Bring hope to the poor and starving
Jesus, Son of God, Messiah
Bring us hope this Christmas.
Amen.

Dear Father God,
Thank you for the kindness of the stranger who
helped Mary and Joseph.
Help us Lord to be kind and welcoming to every-
one.
Help us to love people like you do.
Amen.

Father God,
We thank you for all that we have, our families,
our homes, the food we eat, clothes we wear and
toys we have to play with.

We ask you now that you will protect all those
who do not have homes, for those living in Cal-
ais, for those who are scared, cold and hungry.
Please provide all they need to keep them safe
and well. Thank you for all those who are already
helping them, but we ask for peace to come to
our world, so all can have a place to call home.

Amen.