

**December 17, 2006
UUFTC, Sonora
Winter holidays narrative**

**Christmas is a holiday that celebrate with many beautiful songs, called “carols.”
When we join together to sing them, carols help us to understand why we celebrate
Christmas.**

Who can tell me what we are celebrating at Christmas time?

Is it presents and shopping?

Is it Christmas trees and lights and decorations?

**No – we celebrate the birthday of someone named Jesus who was born 2,000 years
ago.**

And why do we celebrate Jesus’ birthday?

**Well, listen to the story and the carols we sing, and maybe you will begin to
understand why we still celebrate the birth of this baby.**

**There was a young couple named Mary and Joseph who lived in a small village. Their
families were poor, hardworking people. Mary – who was probably about 16 or so –
was going to have a baby.**

**They were scared about having a baby, but both of them had been told -- in a dream or
vision, or something like that, that this would be a very special baby, and that he would
be called Jesus.**

**Now Mary and Joseph had to travel to a little town called Bethlehem, because the
Roman rulers had ordered it.**

**So, they made the long, hard journey to Bethlehem. Mary rode on a donkey, and
Joseph walked, and it took them many days.**

**By the time they reached Bethlehem, Mary was ready to have her baby. They couldn’t
find a room, though, so they settled down in a stable, surrounded by the animals, for
Mary to have her baby.**

And now, we are going to sing the first verse, of “O Little Town of Bethlehem” No. 246.

**Well, the baby Jesus was born in the stable, and Mary wrapped him up in pieces of
cloth.**

**And Joseph and Mary laid the baby down to sleep in a manger – a manger is a wooden
box that is used to hold food for animals – so they put him in this manger that was
filled with straw.**

**Meanwhile, out in the fields, there were shepherds who were watching their flocks of
sheep.**

**In the middle of the night, they had a vision in which an angel appeared to them – all
shining with light – and told them about the birth of the baby Jesus in a stable in
Bethlehem.**

**And the angel told them that this baby Jesus would bring a message of peace for all
the people of the world.**

And now we will sing the first verse of “The First Noel” No. 237.

**Now in another version of the story, there was a magic star on the night that Jesus
was born in Bethlehem.**

And there were three wise men – some people call them kings -- who had been following the star from a faraway country.

They believed that this baby was the fulfillment of an ancient prophecy that there would be a Messiah, or anointed one, who would come to lead the people into a time of peace.

They wanted to see the child for themselves, and they brought him gifts.

But King Herod, who ruled in Jerusalem over the Jewish people, also knew about this prophecy. And he was afraid that this new messiah would take his place as ruler of the Jewish people.

So he tried to get the wise men to tell him where the child was.

But the wise men figured that Herod was likely to have the child killed, so they went back to their country by another road, and they didn't tell Herod where the child was.

And now, we will join in singing the 1st verse of "We Three Kings" No. 259.

So why is Jesus important? Why do we still celebrate his birthday some 2,000 years later?

Jesus was important to the world, even though he didn't become a king and rule his people, as King Herod feared.

No, quite the opposite, Jesus was a gentle, caring man, who brought a message of love and compassion to the world.

He healed people who were sick.

He taught that we are all brothers and sisters; that we should love our enemies, not hate them and fight them.

He taught that we should not be greedy, that we should take some of what we have to help poor people, people who have less than we do.

And he taught that we should welcome all people, even people who are sick and poor, and especially people who are different from us.

Well, people haven't always followed that message in the 2,000 years since Jesus was born, but it is a beautiful message, a powerful message, a message that we should try to live by. And that's why we celebrate Jesus' birthday at Christmas.

And now we will join in singing "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" No. 244.

And now we are going to sing a carol about Jesus, and the animals in the stable in which he was born. It's no. 243 in our hymnals.