



# Posada

# Welcome

A warm welcome to you this festive season.

We are excited that you are here, joining us for our Advent resource this year, which is the Posada (Las Posadas)! We love Las Posadas as it is a wonderful, inclusive and intergenerational Spanish tradition, and a lovely way to celebrate to Advent.

Not sure what a Posada is? Or how to use it? Or where to get one? Don't worry, you'll find everything you need in this pack.

You'll find an explanation of the history and tradition of Las Posadas; how it is used within the UK; ideas and suggestions for how to use the Posada in various settings (from church to your local community), see the URC Posada pack and much more!

There are many ideas and suggestions, of which we could not fit them all within these pages, so we created a Padlet. A Padlet is a digital version of a pinboard/noticeboard where ideas, post it notes, videos, etc are posted to share. You can access this Padlet by following this link - [bit.ly/URCposada](https://bit.ly/URCposada) or scanning the QR code. (Don't forget to check out our other Christmas Padlet, for inspiration and resources - [bit.ly/Christmasplanning](https://bit.ly/Christmasplanning)).

You can also follow us on Facebook - @urcsynod1 and @childrensministryURCScotland

You can also contact us, via email

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We hope that you have a blessed and joyful Christmas.





# POSADAS

## What is a Posada?

Las Posadas is a Christmas Spanish tradition that is celebrated in many Latin American countries over 9 days (16th to the 24th) in December. The word Posada means "inn" or "dwelling" and the tradition re-enacts the journey of Mary and Joseph looking for a room. In Mexico, the festival is usually a large procession, with children or adults dressed as Mary and Joseph. When they come to a house, the procession usually forms two groups, one pretending to be the inn keeper of the house, and the other group singing as Mary and Joseph, asking to be allowed in (there is a traditional song which can be found on the Padlet). They are turned away from the first two houses, but on the third, Mary and Joseph are, of course, allowed in and there is food, piñatas, and celebration.



Image source puertovallarta.net



In the UK, our Posadas are very different. We do not have the large processions, traditional songs, sparklers, etc, (though you absolutely could!). In the UK, our Posadas are smaller, quieter but just as meaningful. We have small figures of Mary and Joseph, which are taken to a family for the evening. At the door, sometimes carols are sung, perhaps a prayer is said, and the family take in Mary and Joseph for the night, placing the figures somewhere prominent in their homes. The next night, the host family go out and pass Mary and Joseph onto the next family. This continues until Christmas Eve, when the small figures return to the church, ready for the arrival and celebration of the Christ child in the morning.

## Why do a Posada?

Advent is a time of preparation! Preparing ourselves for the coming of a very special person. Preparing for the celebration of the arrival of that person. A time for us to get ready, get excited, wait with anticipation and a Posada is a wonderful way of helping us prepare for the coming of the Christ child!

The Posada is a lovely, visual, tactile, inclusive, intergenerational way for us to prepare. All ages and abilities can receive the figures of Mary and Joseph. Everyone can engage with these figures, what they represent, reflect on what is coming. Everyone can celebrate and praise God in their own way, be it through song, prayer, dance, art, however they connect to God. It draws people together in the anticipation and excitement of the arrival of a very special baby.



# Las Posadas in Church

This page will explore what Las Posadas could look like in your church. The great thing about the Posada is how versatile it is and how it can be used in so many settings. It can be a quiet acknowledgement of the figures and what they represent to a celebration party (or procession!). Each church and community will bring it's own uniqueness to it, and that is what will make your Posada special.



## To begin...

Arrange dates! The traditional dates for Las Posadas are the 16th - 24th December. Keeping with these dates can help build up the excitement and expectation for Christmas, but do the dates that work for your church.

## In the building

So lets start with ways to use your Posada within the church building. If you want to keep it simple, have Mary and Joseph travel around the sanctuary during Advent. Each week, they could visit different windows, tables, pews, stations, finally finishing their journey at the front of the church, to celebrate the arrival of Jesus.

## Groups

Have the Posada visit the different groups who use the church building (it is up to you whether you just take Mary and Joseph, or the whole family, as many non-churched people may recognise the family better). This is a great opportunity to visit the groups, get to know people and share the miracle of Christmas. Take a notebook with you and camera, this allows you to take pictures of the Posada on it's travels and the notebook allows people to write prayers or Christmas messages for others. Don't just keep to the children's groups such as Brownies, Boys Brigade, Parent and Toddler etc, visit the lunch club, the Dementia Cafe, the Slimming Club (yes, visit them, dieting is hard at Christmas and it's nice to have a bit of cheer and reminder of what Christmas is truly about) and so on.

# Las Posadas in Church

## **Congregation, Sunday School, Youth Club, Bible Study, and all Church Groups**

This is a great opportunity to connect all your Church based groups. Have the Posada visit different families from the congregation, Sunday School, Youth group etc. Not sure where to start with this? Ask households to sign up to have the Posada visit their home for a night. When everyone is signed up, plan a route for the Posada, that makes it easy for families to deliver to one another. Ask all families to agree a good time for the Posada to come to their home (arriving in the middle of dinner is not ideal) and create a small map and timetable for families.

**Delivery!** There are so many ways that your church can deliver the Posada to the next host family, here are some ideas.

- You can simply knock at the door and hand the figures over, wishing the host family a Merry Christmas.
- Knock at the door, sing a favourite hymn or Christmas carol, say a prayer and deliver the Posada family.
- The new host family could invite the previous hosts in and have a small celebration (some cakes, songs, etc).

With your Posada, you could also include a notebook, asking hosts to write prayers or say what they have most enjoyed about the Posada. This can then be shared on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day during a service.

**Have a party!** Follow the tradition and have a party! Have cakes, games, piñatas, and more. Just make sure to explain the meaning of Las Posadas and the traditions, otherwise it may seem strange and out of place to some people.

## **We don't have children! Our congregation is elderly and don't go out after dark.**

You can still do the Posada! Adults love to have it to reflect and prepare for Christmas. Here are some suggestions on how you could use it -

- If your hosts are happy to go out, they could deliver the Posada during the day.
- Have an assigned elder/s who will take the Posada from one host to the next (as above, they could sing favourite carols, say a prayer, etc).
- Give the Posada to someone for a week, asking them to return it and pass it on to someone else at the next Sunday service. You may need more than one Posada, otherwise, only four families will get to host during Advent.

If you can, encourage everyone who has the Posada to take a photo with the figures. You can then collect these photos and create a Posada montage, which you can show during the Christmas Eve or Christmas Day service (or a service just after).



# Las Posadas in The Community

Don't keep Las Posadas in your church, take it out into the community! Below you'll find some suggestions on how you can do this, but these suggestions are only the start. What is in your community? Who is in your community? How can you take the Posada to them?

## Schools

Schools can be tricky for some churches to connect with, but you may find the Posada could be a bridge. It is a different way to explain the Christmas Story (part of RME) and can be engaging and fun for the children. Approach the headteacher in advance, preferably with your Posada, and explain to them what it is, how to use it and that you are willing to provide the Posada for them.

- Have the Posada travel from class to class for a day. Each class can learn about the Nativity and do an activity, such as create a Christmas ornament or card (make it clear here that the activity does not have to have any Christian content unless the teacher/child/school are happy with this).
- Suggest that the teachers take class photos with the Posada, documenting it's travels. These photos could then be used as a montage during the Christmas school assembly/service/play.
- Place the Posada in the staff room. Send it in with some cakes for the staff to show that they are appreciated. Place some hanging ornaments (templates can be found later in this pack) in a basket for them to take. Again, understanding the ethos of the school, you could have prayers on the back of the ornaments or just a simple blessing (with no religious language). If you're unsure, always err on the side of caution and send in a non-religious blessing.

## Residential Homes/Sheltered Housing

Sometimes, people in residential homes or sheltered housing can feel disconnected from their church and the Advent/Christmas activities. By taking in a Posada, not only are you showing them that they are remembered, loved and valued, and still connected to their church, but you are helping them to engage with Advent in a meaningful way.

Much like the schools, the Posada can travel from room to room in a residential home. To make sure the residents feel really connected and cared for, assign a few elders to go in and deliver the Posada from room to room, taking time to sing and pray with the new hosts. If appropriate, you could hold an 'end of travels' service (it would be great if this could be done on Christmas Eve, but just before works just as well). Gather the hosts together (and the Posada) and celebrate together the travels, the preparation and the forthcoming miracles.



# Las Posadas in The Community

## Residential Homes/Sheltered Housing cont...

In sheltered housing, residents may be able to deliver the Posada to the new host family themselves, but if not, assign an elder/s who can do this. Again, if suitable and appropriate, hold an 'End of Travels' service for those (and anyone else who wishes to join) who were hosts.

**NB** - before doing this, please check with staff in these establishments. Also, be aware of contagion. Where possible, disinfect the Posada between new hosts if needed. If having actual figures proves problematic, print the cover of this pack, laminate it, and use that as a Posada (easy to disinfect). The health and wellbeing of people must always come first and be in the forefront of our mind, especially during winter (Flu and Covid season).

## Disability Groups

Are there groups in your community for people with dementia? Groups for people (including children) with ASN? Groups for people with mobility issues? Visual or hearing impairments?

Often groups of disabled people\* are left out on the fringes of society, go out like Jesus did, and include them. The Posada (especially the URC Posada) is great for everyone, of every age, every ability. It is tactile, easy to hold, adaptable (you can add material to make it more sensory, paint it bright colours to give it a more visual impact, it's interactive and so on) and can communicate the Christmas message in a wonderful, accessible manner.



\*The social model of disability is a way of viewing the world, developed by disabled people. The model says that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference. Barriers can be physical, like buildings not having accessible toilets. Or they can be caused by people's attitudes to difference, like assuming disabled people can't do certain things. Find out more at [scope.org.uk/about-us/social-model-of-disability/](https://scope.org.uk/about-us/social-model-of-disability/)



# URC POSADA KIT

We love the Posada. We love its versatility, its effectiveness, how engaging it is for all ages, we could go on, but hopefully, you have now gotten an idea of how great it is.

We have created a Posada kit, to give you an idea of what to put in yours and how to use it. On the Padlet, you will find links to places where you can buy a Posada, but if you especially like ours, get in touch. So let's take a look at the kit we've created!

We have our three large wooden figures. They are easy to hold, safe for toddlers (shouldn't be a swallowing hazard but parental supervision is always needed) and should be large enough to be seen when at the front of the church. We have intentionally left ours blank, but you can varnish them; paint them; 'dress' them (different fabrics make them even more tactile and help those with visual impairments differentiate between the figures); carve faces onto them, anything that you can think of!

## URC Posada



Image - ©Neil Wilson



Next comes the bag and 'additions'. We decided on a bag as we felt that made it easier to carry the figures, but you could use a nice box (it could represent giving a gift), or perhaps a gift bag.

Additions - we recommend including a notebook for people to share their prayers, what they enjoyed about the Posada, or perhaps a Christmas blessing for the other host families; an LED tealight, so that people can light it and reflect (not pictured); and one of the hanging ornaments (using the templates provided).

You will find links for all the accessories that we have used on the Padlet - [bit.ly/URCposada](https://bit.ly/URCposada).





# URC POSADA KIT

## Template for ornament



Print out the template onto card. Cut around both circles, but don't cut all the way around, leave a folding edge. Glue circles together, laminate, add thread and you've created a tree ornament.



# URC POSADA KIT

Template for ornament



Loving God,  
As we celebrate the coming of  
Jesus into the world,  
May you bless our families,  
Our friends and neighbours,  
Our churches and communities,  
Today and for evermore.  
Amen



# URC POSADA KIT

## Template for ornament



This Christmas decoration could be used for the teachers in a school. Why not make some up, place them in a basket and deliver them to the staff room, along with some freshly baked treats.



# URC POSADA KIT

## Template for ornament

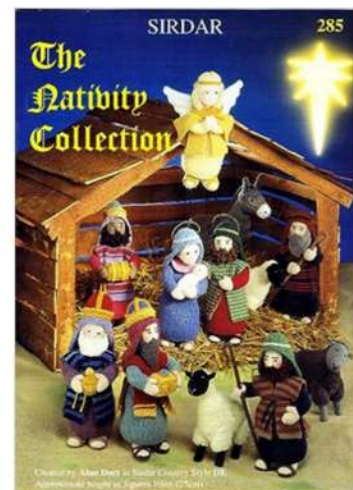


This Christmas decoration could be used for the classroom.  
As you can see from these templates, you could mix and match the images  
and messages if appropriate.

# Knitters Corner!

## Knitted Posada

Every church has some great knitters, so why not use their talents this year and ask them to knit a Posada? Here is a Posada that Hannah knitted using the Nativity knitting pattern from Sirdar.



## Help those with dementia

It has been noted that people with dementia often have restless hands and they like to have something to occupy their hands, as well as to help keep them warm. Due to this, the twiddle wrap was invented. It provides tactile, visual and sensory stimulation, while keeping their hands warm.

The wraps contain various material such as ribbons, zips, beads, buttons, etc, which are attached to the inside and the outside of the wrap. This helps to keep hands busy and warm. You can find out more information, and download patterns, from the Padlet.

Hannah created a Nativity Twiddle Wrap. You will find the pattern on the next page. This Christmas, why not ask your knitters to make some wraps for those with dementia, starting with the Nativity Wrap?





# Nativity Hand Wrap

Hand wraps are ideal for people with dementia or Alzheimer's as the textured embellishments can help keep their hands and minds active. Many patterns are available on line and you can be as creative as you wish with textures adding beads, zips, ribbons differing wool etc.

## Knit a Nativity Hand Wrap - MEASUREMENTS & SIZES 28cm wide

### Materials

Double Knit yarn any shade you wish: This is also a good way to use up oddments of wool.

Knitting needles 3.75mm or 4mm needles No 5 or 6 needles. Ribbon, beads, felt, etc

### Pattern

Cast on 60 sts.

Rows 1-3: beg with a p row work in st st

Row 4: (k2tog, yfwd) to last two sts, k2

Rows 5-77 begin with a p row work in st st. Work in two-row stripe sequence of yarn if you wish or simply plain colour, or you could decide to add as many colours as you wish, remember you are creating a night sky.

Rows 78-82: cont in st st

Row 83: (p2tog, yrn) to last two sts, p2.

Rows 84-86: cont in st st

Cast off

You may choose to do edge ruff in different colours if you wish.

### Figures

To add figures- I devised a simple pattern of cast on 15 stiches in colour for Mary and Joseph.

**St.st - Joseph** for height required I did 12 rows then began to decrease one stitch at each end for five rows. With five remaining stiches cast off.

# Nativity Hand Wrap

## Knit a Nativity Hand Wrap cont...

Work **Mary** the same I chose to garter stitch all my rows.

### Manger:

Cast on number of stitches to enable wide top to manger – this depends upon the thickness of wool you choose to use.

Knit 4 rows then st.st decreasing one st at each end until a triangle shape is formed. Alternatively a simple rectangle shape would look good too.

Remember, the manger need to be deep enough to hide the baby Jesus.

**Baby Jesus** was formed with felt and a wooden bead stuck securely together- all small pieces must be securely attached to prevent choking. I used knitted wool ribbons but you could use ribbon or cord to enable Jesus to pop in and out of the manger. Don't forget to hide extra surprises inside the wrap so that folks have something to keep fingers busy while keeping hands warm too.

Happy Knitting!





