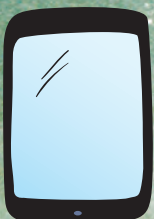


# GUARDIANS OF ANCORA

## TREASURE SEEKERS

INCLUDES  
PHOTOCOPIABLE  
RESOURCES AND  
FREE EXTRAS  
ONLINE



CAN BE USED  
WITH THE  
GUARDIANS  
OF ANCORA  
APP

A SCRIPTURE UNION HOLIDAY CLUB PROGRAMME  
GREAT NEW IDEAS, INSPIRED BY EXPERIENCE

GUARDIANS OF  
**ANCORA**  
TREASURE  
SEEKERS

**THE QUESTS**

TREASURE SEEKING DAY BY DAY

## SERVICE I

# RUMOURS OF A SAVIOUR

### KEY PASSAGES

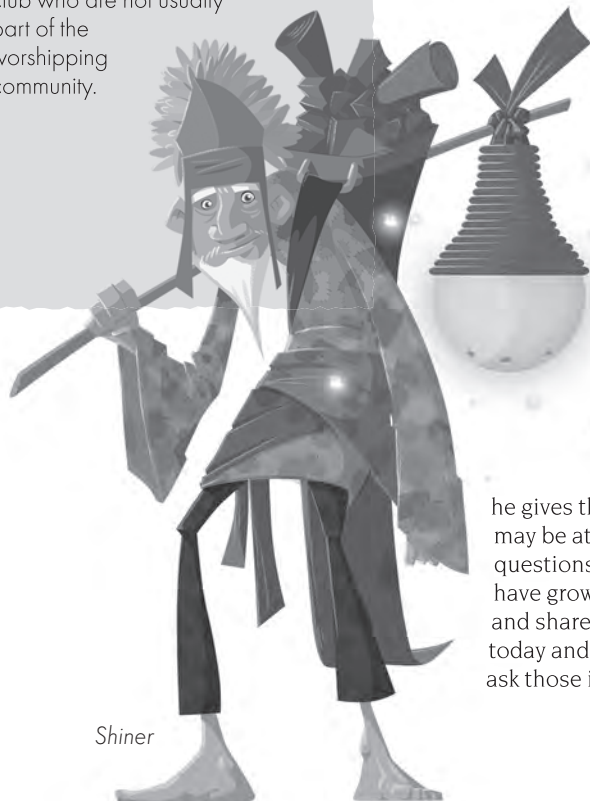
Isaiah 9:2-7; Micah 5:2-5a

### KEY STORYLINES

- ⊕ The Shiner's firebugs direct the service leader and congregation to a new story-treasure - a large present!
- ⊕ God promises his people that he will send a Messiah - a forever King - who will save them.

### KEY AIMS

- ⊕ To set the scene for the holiday club, explaining God's plan to restore his relationship with humanity - he will send a Saviour!
- ⊕ To launch the holiday club, so that church members can commit to pray for the coming week.
- ⊕ To welcome any children and their associated adults coming to the club who are not usually part of the worshipping community.



Shiner

## BACKGROUND

### CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

#### NO CHURCH BACKGROUND

Children and families from outside your church community might be meeting God for the first time at this service. They might have preconceptions about God and what following him means, and they are likely to be unfamiliar with the idea that God wants to save his people, including them! That God loves us enough to send his Son to save us may be a strange concept, so emphasise God's love for us. In a world that places conditions on so many things, including love and acceptance, this unconditional love is counter-cultural and arresting!

#### CHURCH CHILDREN

Children from your or another church community will be familiar with how things are done and with stories of Jesus. Challenge these children to consider that these stories are for them. God has a plan to save them, and he loves them so much that

he gives them his Son. Some may be at the stage of asking questions about the faith they have grown up with, experienced and shared. Create space, both today and at the holiday club, to ask those important questions.

#### FROM OTHER FAITHS

If you do have children and their families from other faiths coming to this first service, make sure they receive a genuine but not overwhelming welcome. It may be their first visit to a church, so have someone on hand to explain what is happening throughout the service and to reassure them that it's OK just to watch and listen rather than join in the singing or prayers. At the end, introduce them to other children and families with whom they could form friendships. If they are coming to a church service they will expect it to be a Christian act of worship, so there is no need to 'water down' the message.

#### WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Parents will value your non-judgemental acceptance of their child. Ask parents or carers how best to welcome their child, since they need to be confident that their child will be included, encouraged and kept safe. As you begin to make friends with the child, assume that they are able to understand you. Just because a child cannot speak, move or see does not mean that they do not understand. Each child will want to be treated the same as any other child of the same age.

## PREPARATION

### WHAT YOU NEED CHECKLIST:

- Paper and pens or pencils
- Drama script from page 88, a desk or table piled high with papers, a note (a scroll rolled up and sealed)
- Numbered envelopes, each with a firebug clue inside (one set per group)
- A large box wrapped like a present, with the two Bible readings (Isaiah 9:2-7 and Micah 5:2-5a, both CEV) inside written on scrolls, hidden somewhere in your meeting place
- Words from the Bible passages written on large pieces of card – Ruler, Wonderful Adviser, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace, Honest, Just, Shepherd – have some blank pieces of card in case anyone suggests anything else
- Actions for the first part of the **GUARDIANS OF ANCORA: TREASURE SEEKERS** *Learn and remember* verse: 'God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son...' and a PowerPoint slide with this part of the verse on
- Quiet, reflective music for *Guild prayers*

### SUGGESTED SONGS

- ⊕ 'Light for everyone' *Light for Everyone* CD (Scripture Union)
- ⊕ 'O come, O come, Emmanuel' *Mission Praise* 493

## THE SERVICE

### WELCOME

You may have many children and families in your congregation today who are not used to being in church. Make sure that the leader of the service introduces themselves and lets people know where the toilets are. Reassure families from outside the church that this service, and church, is for them and that they are welcome. You might wish to have a time when you serve tea, coffee and cakes before the service, to welcome people and make that first trip into church a little easier.

Welcome everyone to the service and the start of **GUARDIANS OF ANCORA: TREASURE SEEKERS**. Explain to everyone that they're at the start of an exciting time at your holiday club.

### SETTING THE SCENE

Introduce the children to Ancora and their role as Guardians. Introduce the presenters of the club, Swift and the Shiner. Interview them and ask them what they are looking forward to about the club. Swift should give a sensible answer about finding story-treasures and exploring great new parts of the Saga. The Shiner should give a silly answer, such as he's looking forward to his favourite dish of baked beans, banana bread and broccoli! The presenters should give a brief summary of what's happening at the club and be enthusiastic about welcoming the children to Ancora.

### INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

Ask the congregation to think about what they are looking forward to. Give everyone a sheet of paper and a pen. Break into family groups, making sure you include those who are not there with their family, and ask everyone to write down something they are looking forward to. It could be a holiday, a visit to a theme park, a new job or lunch out with a friend. Each group should gather the papers together and then try to guess who is looking forward to what.

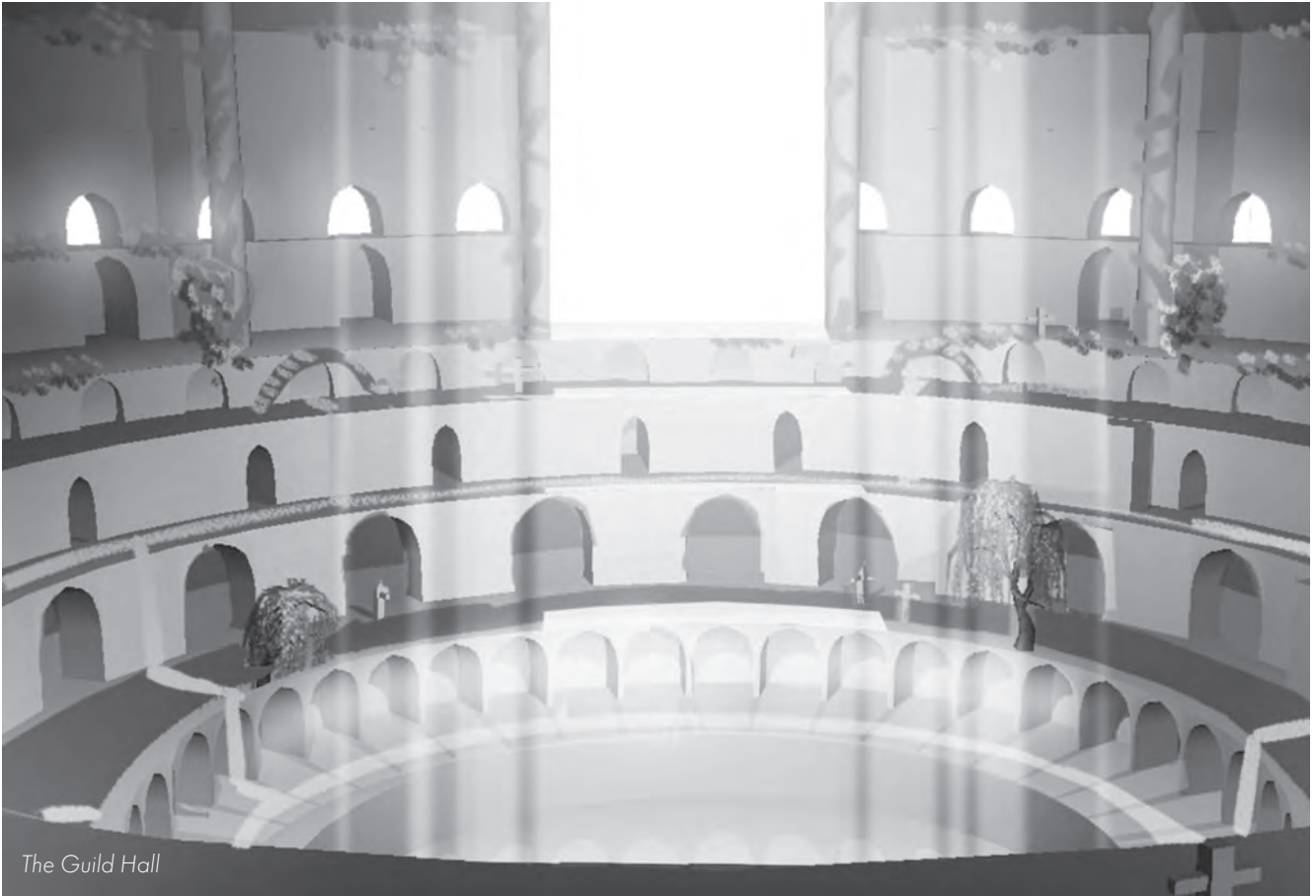
Bring everyone back together and ask for a few volunteers to share what they are looking forward to with the whole church. After they have done so, thank your contributors. Comment that we look forward to good things, or even sometimes to the end of bad things. It's sometimes hard when we don't have anything to look forward to.

Explain that, more than 2,000 years ago, a group of people were looking forward to something very, very special. These people were God's people. They had had some great times with God! But, they had stopped being friends with God, and had turned their back on him and gone their own way. So now they were suffering. Other nations all around them had attacked them, burned their cities and taken lots of people off to other countries far away from their homes.

But God had given them a promise. He had not forgotten them. He wasn't going to leave them in their suffering. He was going to do something about it – he had a plan! And God's people were looking forward to that promise coming true.



Swift



The Guild Hall

**JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF ANCORA**

Introduce the club drama, *Journey to the Centre of Ancora*. Explain that, during the club, you'll be catching up with the adventures of Kal, the Keeper of the Keys and their assistants.

Today, Kal visits his twin sister, the Keeper of the Keys, and she gets a mysterious message.

**BIBLE READING**

Explain that when children enter the world of Ancora, they become Guardians, seeking out story-treasures and exploring stories of the Saga. When they find stories, the Guardians take them to the Theatre of the Saga and tell them in front of the Spire of Light. The Spire glows brightly and powers the whole city of Ancora.

The Shiner comes back on stage, carrying his bug lantern. He says that the bugs have been getting very excited in the past few minutes, which means that there is a story-treasure somewhere in the building! He listens to his lantern and says that the bugs have left some clues to what the story-treasure is.

Ask people to go back into the groups from earlier and give out sets of the clues to each group. The clues to the treasure are:

- I My first is in PAPER but not in READING.
- II My second is in PARTY but not in BALLOON.
- III My third is in EAR but not in HAIR.
- IV My fourth is in STRING but not in TWINE.
- V My fifth is in BAKE but not in BAKING.
- VI My sixth is in NETBALL but not in BASKETBALL.
- VII My last is in TEA but not in COFFEE.

The groups should discover that the story-treasure is PRESENT. Once everyone has solved the puzzle, ask whether any of the children can see a present somewhere in your meeting space.

Once the present has been found and brought to the front, open it up to see what's inside. Pull out the two Bible readings and ask for a couple of volunteers to read each one. (You could prime people before the service to do this.)

**BIBLE EXPLORATION**

This time of Bible exploration looks at the promise of the coming of the Messiah and what that meant to God's people. The children who come to the club will explore stories of Jesus' birth, some of his teaching and his death and resurrection, and discover that sending the Messiah, a special Saviour, was God's plan to save his people. Today forms the introduction to that.

Ask the congregation to think about why they are looking forward to the events they discussed in their groups earlier. What is it about these things that fill us with hope, joy or excitement? Share a time when you were looking forward to something, and how you felt when it finally came to pass. What difference to your life did that event or thing make?

Go over once again the story of God's people waiting for something, a promise that was going to change their lives and free them from all the terrible things that they were going through.

Say that Isaiah was talking to God's people in the eighth century BC. He was telling them what God wanted to say to them. God's people had troubles and were being attacked on all sides. But Isaiah told them this message from God.

Read out Isaiah 9:2–5 again. Ask the congregation to try and imagine how the people felt. They were living in darkness. They were treated badly and forced to be slaves.

Yet God was going to rescue them. And he would send someone to rescue them permanently. For all time. Read Isaiah 9:6,7 and comment that, although Isaiah seems to be talking about something that has already happened, he's telling people what is to come. A child is born, someone who will be the ruler of God's people.

Read out the two verses again and ask people to shout out some of the names for the ruler that Isaiah mentions. As people mention the words, ask for volunteers to come and hold the appropriate word at the front. If anyone suggests anything reasonable that you haven't got on your cards, write the word on one of your blank cards.

Read out Micah 5:2–5a and ask the congregation to do the same thing – call out the names of this ruler promised by God. Add in the words to your display at the front as people call them out, again writing other good suggestions on blank cards.

Look together at the words and ask the congregation what they think of such a ruler. If you knew this kind of a ruler was coming, how would you feel?

Comment that Micah gives us a clue for who this ruler is. Read verse 2 once more. Who do people know who was born in Bethlehem? Jesus! During the club, the children – our Guardians – will be learning about Jesus and God's promise of a Saviour. This is the Saviour that God's people were waiting for. God's plan was to send a Saviour to his people, someone who would be King for ever.

## LEARN AND REMEMBER VERSE

**'God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die.'**  
John 3:16

Explain that, at **TREASURE SEEKERS**, the Guardians will be learning a verse from the Bible, and you're going to start thinking about it now. Show the PowerPoint slide and ask the church if they have heard this before. Say that you're going to show everyone some actions so that they can start to remember the verse.

You might wish to do this yourself, but it might be good to get some of the Elder Guardians and Assistant Elders up to do it for you. This will help the children and their families get to know some of the people who will be their guides in Ancora at **TREASURE SEEKERS**.

Perform all the actions you have come up with and get the congregation to copy them, while they say the words of the first part of John 3:16 from the screen. Once you have gone through the verse and actions a few times, remove the words from the screen and challenge everyone to say the words and do the actions without reading!

Say that God had a plan to save his people. Some of God's people didn't like God and they turned their backs on him. They followed other gods and did what they wanted, without any thought of others. But God still wanted to save them. His plan was to save all his people. Ask the congregation why they think God might want to save everyone, not just the people who followed him. John 3:16 tells us the answer: he loved the world, and that meant everyone.

And that's still true today. God loves everyone, whether they follow him or not. His plan to save his people is for us! Jesus, God's special Saviour, God's Son, is our Saviour too.

## GUILD PRAYER

### PRAYER FOR US

Explain that every day at **TREASURE SEEKERS** the children will get the chance to talk with God in their groups – their Companies – and all together as the Guild of Ancora. You're going to pray together today. Give out sheets of paper and make sure everyone has a pen or pencil. Ask the congregation to write or draw something they'd like to say to God as their response to what they have discovered today about God's plan and Jesus the Saviour. It might be to say 'Thank you' or to ask God a question. Encourage everyone to be honest – this is between them and God. Play some quiet, reflective music as people think about what to write or draw. Then, when everyone has written or drawn their prayer, invite them to come to the front and put them in the present (the day's story-treasure).

Finish with a prayer thanking God for his plan to save his people and asking him to help us discover more about what that means for us and our community.

### PRAYER FOR TREASURE SEEKERS

Invite two or three people who are going to be involved in **TREASURE SEEKERS** to come to the front and explain their role. Try to get a mix of different roles – Elder Guardians, registration team, refreshment team, musicians etc. Show through your volunteers that there are lots of different skills involved in running a safe and successful holiday club.

Once you have heard from a few team members, invite everyone who is going to be taking part in **TREASURE SEEKERS** to stand up. Invite those still sitting to pray for the person nearest to them.

## BLESSING

Thank everyone for coming along to the service and make sure everyone knows when and where **TREASURE SEEKERS** is taking place. Sing the **GUARDIANS OF ANCORA** theme song to finish, and then say an appropriate blessing as people depart.

## AFTER THE SERVICE

### MEET AND GREET

After the service has finished, make sure as many characters from the club as possible are available for children and their families to meet and chat to. The characters should be in costume and chat to the children in character. This will help build familiarity and anticipation for the children before coming to the club, and provide reassurance for children who might be nervous about coming along.

### FOOD

Food is an important tool for making people feel welcome, so have some refreshments available after the service. Try to be a bit more lavish than you would normally be after a service. Provide an Ancora-themed menu, such as the Keeper's cakes and Swift's sandwiches. If you have the time and facilities, you could even provide a meal and invite everyone to stay.

During this time, prime people in your congregation to befriend families who are new to church, to help them feel a bit more at home in what can be an unfamiliar situation.

### GAMES

Include some games so that children can get into the **TREASURE SEEKERS** spirit! Choose some of the suggestions from pages 84 to 86, or just play some simple games.

## QUEST I

# MESSAGES FROM ANGELS

**KEY PASSAGES**

Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-25

**KEY STORYLINES**

- ⊕ The Shiner reveals that the firebugs will help find story-treasures. The firebugs reveal an angel that unlocks the first part of the Christmas story.
- ⊕ Mary receives a strange and terrifying visitor – an angel! The Angel Gabriel tells her she will have a baby, and that the baby will be God's Son.
- ⊕ Joseph has a strange and terrifying dream – featuring an angel! Following the angel's words, he marries Mary.

**KEY AIMS**

- ⊕ To welcome each child to the club, setting the tone for the next few days.
- ⊕ To explore the promise of God's forever King.
- ⊕ To understand that being part of God's plan is sometimes difficult.
- ⊕ To regard and treat these stories as wonderful treasure.



Mary

**GUARDIANS' BACKGROUND****NO CHURCH BACKGROUND**

This might be the first time that some children have taken part in a church-run activity, so make sure that Elder Guardians are aware and help the children through the start of the club. Many children are familiar with the Christmas story through school plays, Christmas songs and various other media. However, most of these sources handle the biblical story with a certain artistic licence! Many children from outside a church community will come with plenty of misconceptions about the events of the story, the characters who were there and even about who Jesus is and what he came to do.

Help children to focus on the story as it happens in the Bible. Share the awe and wonder with them, approaching it as if you were hearing it for the first time yourself. Be careful not to embellish the story with some of your own additions, as this will not be helpful – there is enough drama in the story already!

**CHURCH CHILDREN**

Church children themselves may well have picked up some strange additions to the Christmas story, so help them to find the real story as told in the Bible. But more than that, try to help church children make connections between this story and what has gone before in the Bible. Wondering around questions such as 'Why did God send Jesus?' and 'What did Jesus come to do?' can help to frame the idea of God's plan to save his people and Jesus as God's forever King. This will set them up to explore the stories in the holiday club and glimpse more of God's salvation.

**WITH OTHER FAITHS**

Muslim children may be familiar with this story of the announcement of Jesus' birth, as a similar story appears in the Qur'an. However, in Islam, Jesus (Isa) is a revered prophet, but not divine – he is not the Son of God. Jews will recognise the idea of the Messiah as promised in the Old Testament, whereas Hindus will be familiar with the idea of God taking different forms and aspects. You'll need to approach this story with care, bearing in mind the beliefs of the children in your club.

**WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS**

As this is the first day of the club proper, some children with additional needs may need extra time to settle and become familiar with the club. Give clear and repeated guidance, so that children can cope with the fast-paced nature of the programme. You could produce a visual diary for children to carry round with them, so that they know what is happening next. If any children have specific needs, make sure their Elder Guardians know so that they can make the necessary arrangements. In addition, you might need to reassure parents and carers that their children will be included and well looked after.

# ELDER GUARDIANS GATHER

## SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Split the team into two groups and invite each to read one of the two passages for this Quest: **Luke 1:26–38** and **Matthew 1:18–25**.

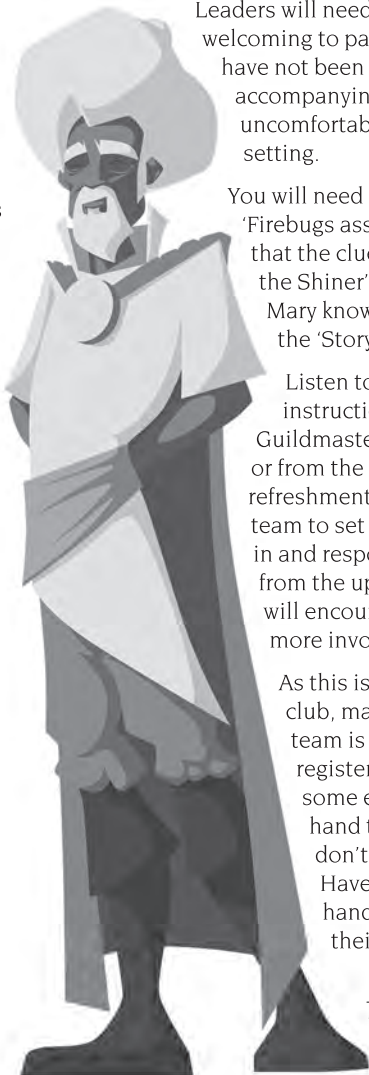
Encourage each group to think about how the human character in their passage would have felt before and after their encounter with an angel. Would they have felt the same as the character in their passage? Would their reaction have been any different?

Gather some feedback from both passages. Ask each group to summarise their Bible verses as well as their conversations around the events of the passage. Talk about how willing both Mary and Joseph were to play their part in God's plan. It's not clear if they could have said 'no', but saying 'no' didn't seem to cross their minds.

Think about how you are all coming together to tell God's story to the children at your club.

You're going to have to do some tricky things that you might not feel quite ready for. Yet we can take some comfort from Mary's reaction to the angel: 'I am the Lord's servant! Let it happen as you have said.'

Pray together for each other, asking people to share anything that they are uncertain about. Pray particularly for those worries and concerns, but lift up the whole team in prayer as you start this amazing adventure together!



*The Guildmaster*

## PRACTICAL PREPARATION

Talk through your programme together. Remind everyone about the key learning aims and who is doing what, ensuring that everyone knows their part in the day and has everything they need. Pay particular attention to younger team members or those who have not been involved before and may be feeling a bit uncertain. Encourage them over the course of the session. This may be the role of the overall leader or could be assigned to another member of the team, or member of the church whose sole role is to encourage the team. Create an atmosphere where people feel able to ask about anything they are not 100 per cent clear about.

Set up the different areas of the club and make sure that everything is in place in plenty of time, so that you are ready as the first children come from the registration area. You will probably need extra help as it is the first day. Leaders will need to be especially welcoming to parents and children who have not been before or any adults accompanying children who look uncomfortable being in a church setting.

You will need to hide the angel for 'Firebugs assemble' and ensure that the clue cards are set behind the Shiner's Lantern. Ensure that Mary knows what she's doing in the 'Story of the Saga'.

Listen to any last-minute instructions from the Guildmaster, Swift or the Shiner, or from the drama, music or refreshment teams. Remind the team to set an example by joining in and responding to prompts from the upfront presenters: this will encourage the children to get more involved.

As this is the first day of the club, make sure the registration team is ready to greet and register the children. Have some extra volunteers on hand today, so that parents don't have to wait long. Have a welcome team on hand to take the children to their Companies.

## WHAT YOU NEED CHECKLIST

- Registration:** registration forms, badges, labels, pens, team lists, paper firebugs, extra volunteers
- Company duties:** paper/card and art materials
- News from the market:** today's news, theme tune and entrance effects
- Firebugs assemble:** clue cards (see the **GUARDIANS OF ANCORA: TREASURE SEEKERS** multimedia downloads area) an angel (a large-ish Christmas tree decoration or similar) hidden somewhere in the room
- Music:** The Firebugs band or backing tracks
- Story of the Saga:** angel from 'Firebugs assemble', story script, actor to play Mary, costume for Mary (including pregnancy bump!)
- Guardian's Guild challenge:** words for the first part of John 3:16 on PowerPoint, actions worked out for the words
- Provisions:** drinks and snacks
- Treasure map:** Bibles, *Treasure Chest*, *Treasure Store*, paper, pens, pencils, felt-tip pens or crayons
- Company prayer:** angel shapes (individual or chain), pens, pencils
- Construction:** materials for your chosen option(s)
- Games:** equipment for your chosen game option(s)
- The Shiner's Lantern:** children's contributions chosen from those submitted
- Drama:** script from pages 89 and 90, costumes and props
- Swift's training review:** quiz questions and challenges
- Guild prayer:** actions worked out for the action prayer



# THE FIRST QUEST

## COMPANY DUTIES

⌚ 10 MINUTES

Welcome all the Guardians to your group. You need to be familiar with the names of the children in your group, so use those names as much as possible during this opening time. Introduce yourself and your Assistant Elder(s) and introduce the children to others whom they don't know.

Challenge the children to decorate your Company area. Provide some art materials and ask them to come up with a Company name and a shield. Encourage them to work together and include details of all the Guardians in the Company on the shield. They could include things that reflect Guardians' interests, such as a football, ballet shoes, a badge from Cubs or a reading book. It could also include the Company name. If you like you can show them some existing coats of arms and explain the different elements.

If some children aren't too involved with the shield, ask them to make a sign with the Company name on it.

Just before the start of *Guardians assemble*, go over people's names again. This will help you remember the names of the Guardians in your Company as well as helping the children remember each other's names. If the children haven't finished the shield or sign, tell them that there will be plenty of time to work on them later in the morning. Otherwise, stick up the sign and shield in your Company area.

As you make your way to the main meeting area, make sure all your Guardians are with you and are starting to know their way around.

## GUARDIANS ASSEMBLE

⌚ 45 MINUTES ALL TOGETHER

Once all the children are settled, Swift and the Shiner introduce themselves, and then introduce Antiqua, Fabula and Macsen. The upfront presenters set an enthusiastic and adventurous tone to the programme and welcome the children to **GUARDIANS OF ANCORA: TREASURE SEEKERS**, and to the Guild in the city of Ancora.

Swift is practical, dynamic and in control. She tells the children that they are Guardians in Ancora and emphasises what an honour it is to be part of the Guild of Ancora. She explains that

Ancora is a city that loves stories. The Saga is the group of stories that all Ancorans love to hear and which lights up the Spire at the heart of the city. Each story of the Saga is represented by a story-treasure (some sort of object or artefact).

Many of these story-treasures are missing and the people of Ancora are determined to get them back so they can, once again, tell the stories that have been lost. The existing Guardians have recovered some of these, but new Guardians are needed to help find more!

The Shiner is the opposite of Swift. He is disorganised, whimsical and prone to distractions. He attempts to share some of the guidelines of living in Ancora, but Swift needs to interpret what he says.

**The Shiner:** We have some guidelines to help us live in Ancora! The first is: the bells! The bells! If you hear the bells, don't panic as well! Keep calm and follow your Elders out, do not scream and do not shout!

Swift explains what to do if the fire or smoke alarms go off.

**The Shiner:** Next! If you get caught, then don't despair, just thrust your hand into the air. Ask if you can be excused and you won't get the cross-legged blues!

Swift explains where the toilets are and whether you need to ask before you go.

**The Shiner:** When we need to stop and look, we should do things by the book. I'll do this! (*He does some elaborate actions bordering on interpretive dance.*)

Swift tells the Guardians the slogan or action to show that everyone should stop and listen.

Swift then runs the Guardians through some quick warm-up activities as a start to their Guardian training. This warm-up should be simple and energetic, and be safe to do.

Swift tells the Shiner that a special visitor is coming to the club and they have to get ready. She starts to tidy the stage. The Shiner tries to help, but only causes more mess. The two presenters should work out a sequence where the Shiner undoes whatever Swift has just done! In the end, she notices what he's doing and tells him to stop! He then pesters her about who the visitor is.



## NEWS FROM THE MARKET

Antiqua arrives on stage with some kind of sensational entrance: smoke machine, dramatic theme tune or even theatrical pyrotechnics – whatever you can do that is affordable and safe. When she appears, she introduces herself:

**Antiqua is here!**

**In the market, she has been listening, Stories and rumours, heard she has. Guardians! We begin!**

*If possible, her theme tune should continue under this introduction. She pulls out a sheaf of notes from her robes and reads from them in a mysterious, mystical way.*

## RUMOURS ABOUT OF NEW GUARDIANS!

Travellers have told me of new Guardians in the city! They have seen them travelling to the Guild – tall ones, short ones, younger ones, older ones and – (*She points at one of the Elders and shrieks.*) Well, when I heard the story, I didn't believe it. But it's true! There's even a Guardian with the biggest nose I've ever seen!

## MACSEN IS NEW STORYTELLER IN THE THEATRE OF THE SAGA

A new storyteller has arrived at the Theatre! He is called... Macsen! My friend Fabula thinks he'll do a very good job. You might meet him later!

## FIREBUGS SHOW THE WAY

Many travellers have reported that their firebugs have started to show them how to find lost story-treasures. One visitor to my market stall said his firebugs were so excited that they broke his lantern! Look out for firebugs and what they have to tell you.

Now go must Antiqua, return to her market stall. (*She switches from her mystical way of speaking to a kind of market trader accent.*) **Before I go, I've got some beautiful new bug lanterns in – only 20 firebugs each! Bargain!** (*She returns to her mystical voice.*) **Farewell!** (*Her theme tune returns as she exits.*)



## FIREBUGS ASSEMBLE

The Shiner isn't surprised that firebugs are being so helpful, and Swift comments that if the firebugs can direct them to new story-treasures, then the Guardians might be able to find some more stories of the Saga. The Shiner listens to his bug lantern (as if the firebugs are talking

to him) and says that they have come up with a game to help the Companies find out what the story-treasure is that they're looking for. He goes to the Shiner's Lantern and retrieves a box with a set of clue cards for each Company. Assistant Elders should come and get the resources for their Company.

Swift makes sure that everyone has got a set of cards and then tells the Assistant Elders to read out the first clue – can anyone guess what it is? Give all the Companies a chance to answer. If a Company thinks they know what the story-treasure is, they should send a Guardian up to ask the Shiner. He then tells them if the firebugs say if they're right or wrong. Keep going through all the clues until everyone gets the right answer – an angel!

The Shiner congratulates the Companies and Swift rewards the first team to have guessed the treasure with some firebugs.

The Shiner comments that the firebugs have shown everyone that the new story-treasure is an angel. He challenges the children to look around the room and see an angel. Once the children have spotted it, it's brought to the front and set before the Spire of Light. Swift hopes that Macsen will be able to open up the story of an angel.



### GUARDIANS SINGING

Introduce The Firebugs band (if you're using them) and invite them to teach the **GUARDIANS OF ANCORA** holiday club theme song and any actions, if you've come up with some. Sing it a couple of times so that the Guardians begin to get the hang of it, rather than singing other songs again at this point. Say that you'll sing it again later.



### STORY OF THE SAGA

Macsen appears on stage and introduces himself. Macsen is a new storyteller and he has been trained by the best storyteller in Ancora – Fabula herself. He is part of the team that makes sure stories of the Saga (the Bible) are told every day. The power of storytelling fuels the light of the Spire and shines throughout Ancora. Macsen explains that many of the story-treasures have gone missing and need to be found.

Swift tells Macsen that lots of new Guardians have signed up and that means they'll be able to help find new stories! The Shiner should pass him the angel and say that the firebugs have shown everyone that this is today's story-treasure! What story will it open up?

### Storytelling options

Each day, there are three options suggested for telling the Bible story: you can use the same approach each time, mix and match how you tell the story or combine two or more options. Choose which will be the most helpful for your team, the children and the style of your club:

- I Macsen can retell the story using the script from page 75. Today, you'll need an actor to play a pregnant Mary.
- II Macsen tells the story from Luke 1:26–38 and Matthew 1:18–25, using his own words and personal storytelling style.
- III Macsen should introduce today's video storytelling episode, available to download from the **GUARDIANS OF ANCORA: TREASURE SEEKERS** multimedia downloads area. (If you are telling the story and using the video, tell the story first, then show the video so the children already have the outline of the events before seeing the episode.)

After the story has finished, Swift and the Shiner reappear and wonder with Macsen about the story. Try to cover themes such as what Jesus came to do, how God has some kind of plan to help his people and how brave Mary and Joseph were. Finish with how scary the angel seemed to be, and compare this with the story-treasure. Say that the angel was a special visitor. The Shiner should start pestering Swift about the identity of their own special visitor!

Say goodbye to Macsen until the next session. The Shiner introduces the Guild's special story-treasure shelf. He explains that this is where story-treasures are stored until they can be taken to the Keeper of the Keys in the Hall of Memory – where all the treasures of the Saga are kept for everyone to enjoy. He puts the angel on the shelf. It should stay there until the end of the club.



### GUARDIANS' GUILD CHALLENGE

**'God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die.'**  
John 3:16

Each day, you're going to invite some children to the front to take part in the Guardian's Guild challenge. These challenges will help the children learn the **TREASURE SEEKERS** Learn and remember verse: John 3:16.

If you did Service I, and you made up some actions for the first part of the verse ('God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son'), then use those again. If not, make up some actions and teach them to the children. Put the words for this first part of the verse on the screen, teach the actions and say the words together.

Once you are confident that the children are familiar with the actions, invite ten volunteers (or an appropriate number for your club – if you have 20 children in total, invite three or four forward) to come to the front. Challenge them to lead the rest of the club in the actions, saying the words at the same time.

Thank the volunteers for doing so well and then remove the words from the screen. Say the words and do the actions once more without having the words displayed!



### GUARDIANS' GOLD

Remind the children about the themes of the story – God's plan, Jesus the forever King and the bravery of Mary and Joseph. Outline again what the angel said about Jesus – God's Son, born to save people from the rubbish that gets in the way of them being friends with God; think through how Mary and Joseph had to do difficult things, but still stuck to what God wanted them to do.

Before the session, prime an Elder Guardian to think about a story from their own life that might illustrate the themes from the story. What does Jesus mean to them? How do they feel about Jesus saving them from the bad stuff in their lives? Or they could think about a time when they had to do something difficult, but they did it because it was what God wanted them to do. What 'treasure' in the story can they describe to the Guardians?



### GUARDIANS GO!

Finish this session with a song (the **GUARDIANS OF ANCORA** song would be a good choice), and with the Shiner reminding the children that the club is getting a special visitor – he hopes that they aren't as scary as the angel!



**UNLOCK THE TREASURE**

⌚ 45 MINUTES IN SMALL GROUPS

**PROVISIONS**

Elder Guardians should make sure all the Guardians have made it back to the right Company. As this is the first session, spend a few moments welcoming the children to their Company and making sure they are all comfortable. Hand round the refreshments and chat about what the children have heard so far. Ask what they think about what Mary had to say.

**TREASURE MAP: BIBLE DISCOVERY****With older children (8 to 11s)**

Give the children time to fill in the opening pages of *Treasure Chest* (this can be finished off at the end of the day's club, if necessary).

Ask the children to imagine it's Christmas time. What do they look forward to about Christmas? Chat for a while and then turn to page 7 and encourage the children to write or draw some of the things you've discussed. As the children work, chat about some of the other things they like about Christmas. You might also wish to describe your own Christmas traditions.

Read the first Bible passage together, from page 8 (Luke 1:26–38). There are different ways you could do this: you or an Assistant Elder could read it out, you could ask a volunteer to read the whole passage or part of it, you could even use an audio Bible and play the correct passage while the children follow in their books. Whatever you choose, make sure everyone is comfortable and no one feels pressurised to read out loud when they don't want to.

Once you have finished, encourage the children to think about how Mary might have felt after she had been visited by the angel, and then draw an appropriate expression in the picture on page 9. When everyone has finished, compare the expressions and then go back to the passage and underline everything that's surprising.

Do the same with Joseph's story on pages 10 and 11 (Matthew 1:18–25). However, there are two pictures of Joseph, one for before the dream and one for afterwards. Judge how long to spend on 'before' – you don't want to get bogged down talking about adultery or sex education!

Spend a few moments wondering what is happening here. What is God doing? Why did he send the angel? What is Jesus going to do when he grows up? You don't need to come to any conclusions just yet, these themes will recur throughout **TREASURE SEEKERS**. Accept all the children's answers – even if they come out with a response that doesn't seem right, it's part of their working out and processing of the story!

Go back to the two passages for today and ask the children to pick out what the angel says about Jesus. Gather these together by writing them around the picture on page 12. Encourage the children to say what this tells them about who he is and what he will do.

Finally, review what you've explored today by using the My Treasure questions on page 13. These will appear each day and the children will soon get used to reflecting on their thoughts in this way.

**With younger children (5 to 8s)**

Give the children time to fill in the opening pages of *Treasure Store* (this can be finished off at the end of the day's club, if necessary).

Set the children working on the puzzle on page 5, to reveal who the special visitor was who came to both Mary and Joseph. As you work, chat about any special visitors you have had recently. Once the children have revealed the angel, read the two Bible passages on pages 6 and 7 (Luke 1:26–33 and Matthew 2:18–21). At this stage, it's probably best for one of the Elders or Assistant Elders to read out the passage. Encourage the children to listen or to follow in *Treasure Store*. Help them find the answers to the questions.

Ask the children what Mary and Joseph might have been thinking as they talked with the angel and thought about their dream. If you have children in your group who don't have a church background, you might get a wide variety of answers here! That is fine, as these children may be encountering this story for the first time and won't have a large frame of reference for things such as angel visitations.

Spend some time reflecting on the descriptions of Jesus that Mary and Joseph were given. Go through the names on page 8 and chat about what they mean. Ask the children to choose the one they like the best and then explain why they chose it. Make sure you thank each Guardian for their contribution.



Finish off with a time of quiet where children can tell God whatever they want to. You might have some children who fidget or who feel the need to chat or whisper – judge how long to give this according to how involved your children are. If they've never done anything like this before, they may not immediately engage.

**COMPANY PRAYER**

Give out simple outlines of angels, cut out from white paper, together with pens or pencils. (You could use an 'angel chain', where the angels are all joined together). Ask the children to think about what they've explored today. What do they want to say to or about God?

Encourage them to write or draw that on their angel shape. Stick the angels (or angel chain) to the wall next to your Company and look at them together. Have a time when you encourage the children to pray about what they can see on the angel shapes. You might have some children who have never prayed before, so explain briefly that anyone can pray and they can do it however they like. Praying is just like having a conversation with God. Round off with a simple prayer thanking God for sending Jesus.

**CONSTRUCTION**

Choose a construction activity from the Treasure Trove (pages 81 to 83). There are craft ideas based on the **GUARDIANS OF ANCHORA** theme and on the Bible story for the session. Today's Bible constructions are 'Angel' and 'Angel dress-up' on page 81.

For extra craft ideas, see *Ultimate Craft* (SU 978 1 84427 364 5).

**GAMES**

Choose some suitable games to help train the Guardians! A range of games is available on pages 84 to 86.

For more games, see *Ultimate Games* (SU 978 1 84427 365 2).

## GUARDIANS' GATHERING

🕒 25 MINUTES ALL TOGETHER



### THE SHINER'S LANTERN

Play the **GUARDIANS OF ANCORA** song as the Shiner welcomes everyone back. He tells the Guardians about the Shiner's Lantern – a place where they can leave their messages, questions, pictures, jokes – whatever they want to share with the other Guardians! Explain that the firebugs in the lantern will pass all the messages on to the Shiner. If anything has already been put in the lantern, share that now.



### COMPANY SHOWCASE

Choose a Company and invite the Elder Guardians and two or three of the children to come to the front to show everyone something they have been doing in their *Company duties*. It might be an item they have made to decorate their space, an emblem or flag they have devised or a motto to say. Admire what they have shown and thank them for being enthusiastic Guardians. If you have lots of Companies, you might need to feature more than one here.



### JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF ANCORA

Introduce the drama, set in the city of Ancora. For children who weren't at Service I (or if you didn't do this service), give a recap of that very first episode, although the drama will still work without seeing the service episode.

Today, both the Keeper of the Keys and her brother Kal get a very strange visitation from a very mysterious visitor. What does it all mean?



### SWIFT'S TRAINING REVIEW

Devise a quiz to help the children remember and process what has happened in the club during this session. Have factual questions, together with physical and mental challenges that relate to today, for example who can recite the *Learn and remember* verse? Can anyone remember the warm up from the start of the morning? Create teams by joining Companies together or simply splitting the children down the middle of the room!



### GUILD PRAYER

Before the session come up with some actions to accompany this prayer:

Thank you God for sending Jesus.  
Thank you for helping Mary and Joseph to be part of your plan.  
Help us to be brave, like Mary and Joseph, and follow your plans for us.  
Amen.

You could use sign language or other actions. Teach the actions to the children and then say the prayer a few times, with the children doing the actions each time.



### REVIVE

The Firebugs should lead the children in a couple of lively songs. Use some that church children will know, so that they can carry and help teach the words and music to the rest of the group.



### GUARDIANS GO!

The Shiner realises that **TREASURE SEEKERS** has almost finished for the day, but they haven't had their surprise visitor. Swift announces the arrival of the Guildmaster, and briefly interviews him. They thank everyone for coming and give a sneak preview of what's going to happen at the next session! The Shiner says it's always an honour to see the Guildmaster!

You might wish to invite some Guardians up to the front to find out what they have discovered and enjoyed about the club today.

Sing the **GUARDIANS OF ANCORA** song to finish *Guardians' gathering* and then send the children back to their Companies.

## ANCORA FAREWELL

🕒 10 MINUTES IN SMALL GROUPS

Chat with the children about what you explored earlier in the session in 'Treasure map: Bible discovery'. As the children wait to be collected, they can complete any unfinished pages from their *Treasure Chest* or *Treasure Store*. Or, they might choose to work on an ongoing construction project.

## RECALIBRATION CLEAR UP AND DEBRIEF

🕒 30 MINUTES

Once the children have gone, tidy up and do any necessary preparation for the following day. As many team members as possible should meet to review how the first day has gone, and identify anything that might need to be adjusted or any children who might have been unhappy. Report back on what happened in the Companies and then spend time praying together.

Remember to acknowledge and affirm team members' contributions to the session. If possible, share a meal together.



### USING THE GUARDIANS OF ANCORA APP WITH THE QUEST

If you have access to a tablet and are able to download the **GUARDIANS OF ANCORA** app, there are several ways you could use this to enhance today's Quest:

- ⊕ If you are able to connect your tablet to a projector, you could play through the relevant parts of 'Messages from angels' as a way of introducing the story to your Guardians.
- ⊕ If you have enough tablets to have one per Company, you could encourage children to take it in turns to play through 'Messages from angels' at appropriate points in your programme. You might need to set a time limit to make sure everyone gets a turn.
- ⊕ If you have enough tablets for one Company to have one each, you could incorporate time during 'Construction' or 'Games' for Companies to rotate and play through 'Messages from angels' in a dedicated zone, under supervision. You could suggest the following:
  - ⊕ Find your way to Mary's house to see what is happening there.
  - ⊕ Then travel to Joseph's to discover what he dreamt about.

If you don't have access to a tablet and aren't able to download the **GUARDIANS OF ANCORA** app yourself, don't worry, there are still plenty of exciting ways to engage with **GUARDIANS OF ANCORA**. Start by visiting [www.guardiansofancora.com](http://www.guardiansofancora.com) to find out more.

Remember to encourage the children who attend your club to download the app for themselves, if they have access to a tablet at home.