



## The Guide

We are so glad you are considering running Baby Jesus Rocks in your church. We hope the following notes and lists will make the job easier for you.

### Where it's from...

Baby Jesus Rocks started in 2015 for St Johns after a small group with a heart for Jesus and spreading the Good News got together to plan something to bless our village with at Christmas time. After much prayer we decided to run with an idea that had initially been seen on Chris Duffets 'Be the light' website ([chrisduffett.com](http://chrisduffett.com)), but to add to the core idea to try and really capture peoples interest in finding the true meaning of Christmas.

### The AIM of Baby Jesus Rocks...

To increase positive conversation about Jesus. To excite people about the true meaning of Christmas. To encourage young and old to take part in an outside family activity together. To Increase awareness of the church and who we worship in a positive way. To Increase the church's social media presence and encourage people to visit the church website; to have no shame in admitting we want people to follow the church online - in the hope that one day they will walk through a real church door and follow Jesus.

### Getting started

We have noted down all the things we think are helpful in making #babyJesusrocks great. It's by no means a one-way fits all, so you might find it works differently in your church, but these are the elements that helped make it a success for us.

### First Jobs (getting the people to help you)...

- Form a core organizational team, ideally of one or two to run the project.
- You will need a team of Baby Jesus painters
- You will need a team of Baby Jesus hiders, (if you plan on doing more than 100.) Best to grab members of your church to take some bags of rocks out on dog walks and walks to the park.
- A small team of social media savvy people to promote the campaign before and during and after.

### Resources...

- The Rocks
- White acrylic paint
- Brown acrylic paint
- Burnt umber acrylic paint
- Black SHARPIES
- Clear varnish

- Bags to store the rocks in
- Straw to place under each pebble
- Paper to print the hiding instructions on

If you are wondering what sort of rocks, we used Scottish cobbles as palm size, smooth pebbles are ideal. These are available from most garden centers and DIY stores, prices vary from £6.99 to £8.00 for a large bag. There is no way of knowing how many are in each bag, but to give you a guide we purchased 8 bags and made 720 baby Jesus rocks, allowing for a few rejects.

### **How to paint a Baby Jesus rock...**

Before starting to paint consider whether you want to Facebook live some of your painting to help promote the campaign. (See your social media savvy people to help with this!)

1. Wash the pebbles clean, discard any that are too big, smashed etc
2. Paint an oval shape in white as large as the pebble allows, darker stones may need two coats. Allow to dry. Mix brown and burnt umber acrylic together to get a flesh colour. Paint a small circle at one end of the oval. Allow to dry; we used a hair dryer to speed up the drying process.
3. Outline both shapes with Black Sharpie pen, ONLY USE SHARPIES... other pens run and bleed into the paint, we learnt this the hard way. Draw in two small crescents for sleeping eyes, a smile and a curl of hair onto Baby Jesus' face. Draw three to four lines across the white section to form the swaddling bands.
4. Write the Church Website onto the pebble clearly so that if anyone finds it and doesn't know what it is they can find out by following the web link on the stone. We will be adding the year to ours this year as we have been informed people have stored them with their Christmas decorations and plan to make a collection if we run it again.
5. Varnish the stone with clear varnish to protect it from the elements and bring out the beautiful colours of the pebbles. This is easiest done in two stages; lay out as many pebbles as you can that are ready to varnish, paint ONE side, allow to dry THOROUGHLY, flip all the pebbles, varnish the other side and allow to dry. The Varnish needs many hours to dry, if you attempt to do both sides in one go you risk the pebble sticking to the table and obscuring website details.



### **Storing the rocks...**

1. Once the Pebbles are dry we bagged them up into square bottom bags (Tesco online brown paper veg bags are perfect). In each bag we placed enough straw for a small handful for each baby Jesus to be laid upon when hidden. 10 Stones are quite heavy, so we did some bags of 10 and just a few bags of 20. We then stored the bags at the back of our church so the whole church could collect a bag on the way out if they wanted to help hide them. Although we had a core hider team many, many more people came forward to help hide them as they were greeted so warmly by the village and we all had so much fun hiding them and watching them being found.
2. Insert a flyer to the hiding team, with your guidelines for hiding the rocks, in each bag.
3. On the note include an intro to Baby Jesus Rocks and explain the aims... and add A MASSIVE THANK YOU to all that are helping to hide them.
4. Instruct people to pray over each Jesus Rock as they hide it, place him down on a handful of straw, take a photo if you can, provide a clue as to where people should look, send it to the internet savvy team for sharing on social media.

## **How to hide a #babyJesusrock**

**Don't bury him...** We want Jesus to be FOUND! Place him in a prominent place, or only slightly obscured. Place him on straw to make him even more noticeable – and cuter! There are no places too weird! We mapped out our village and ensured every street had a few baby Jesus rocks hidden along it during the two week campaign. We used the core team of hiders to do this and linked them to roads close to their homes to make it really easy for people. We also staggered the hunt so not all 720 pebbles went out on day one. We divided the numbers of rocks prepared by the number of days the campaign was running and so hid approximately 40 to 50 rocks each day. Each hider had one or two bags and would hide the rocks as they went about their normal business throughout the week rather than all in one go. This gave everyone the best chance of finding a rock and hopefully avoided the risk of all the pebbles being found by one person.



**Clues for social media...** We had some very clever and creative clues; biblical references, just funny and seasonal. Please see the St Johns Facebook page if you need ideas and inspiration for clues. (Scroll back to December 2015 using the time line) There are no copyright issues, please share and copy freely. [www.facebook.com/StJohnsHW/](https://www.facebook.com/StJohnsHW/)

Use the #HASHTAG this makes it exceptionally easy for people to search for information and clues about #BABYJESUSROCKS. We also used #CLUE #FOUND and #babyjesusrocksHW across all media platforms and encouraged those posting their pictures to us to use them too.

## **Plan your campaign...**

In Hartley Wintney we are very fortunate to have a Christmas market in the early part of December, where we, as a Church, run a pop up coffee and cake shop with activities for the children while their parents are shopping. We ran a hunt round all the village shops to find all the characters of the nativity, with one very important person missing. We gave out flyers telling people to keep an eye out for #babyJesusrocks starting from the next day and for the following two weeks. We also reminded people about the village Market on our social media pages and invited them to our stall. (There are no charges for anything on the St Johns stall)

## **Advertising...**

The more places you can advertise what you are doing the more successful your activity will be. We placed posters around the village in many shops and on all the village notice boards. The best form of advertisement is always word of mouth so we sent information to all the village primary schools, playgroups, and Guide/Scouting groups to ensure that all children and parents were well informed in advance!

## **Website...**

Put up a page on your website where anyone wanting to find out about #babyJesusrocks can go. All the details setting out what you want people to do with the rocks once they have been found needs to be on the page, including any details of linked services like Nativity/Christingle. The fact that the rock is theirs to keep is also very important. Add the instruction for the finder to post a picture of themselves and their Baby Jesus onto the church Facebook page, provide links to make it very easy for people to do this, and encourage their interaction with you as a church. Invite them to bring their Baby Jesus Rocks to a service or consider having a #babyJesus 'Rocks' concert with your church band rocking out some of the classic Carols!

## **Launch...**

On day one of the campaign advertise on all social media platforms with the Website page URL included in posts.

Post some of the hider's clues and photos of Baby Jesus hidden around your area - you will need one or two posts a day, maybe three, to keep people searching. There is a fine line between a fun village activity and SPAMMING! You will also have finders posting pictures to your pages, so you don't want to overdo it. You want people to 'like' the page, not be annoyed by it continually in their newsfeeds. We always posted prayerfully.

## **Hunt...**

Keep the excitement of the hunt for Baby Jesus up by posting every day on social media, make sure all the Sunday School kids are excited and they are asking their friends if they have found one yet!? As your hunting and hiding stage ends start inviting everyone who has found one to a church service/rock concert with the #babyJesusrocks theme on social media.

## **Celebration service...**

Invite everyone to bring their #babyJesusrocks with them to show at the service that you decide to dedicate to the campaign...encourage them along by promising a chocolate for each person who brings a pebble... Be creative, lively, and use the opportunity to advertise alpha, give out church 'getting-to-know-you' cards, invite people to your next event and encourage them to keep following you on social media; once they follow they will see posts from the church all year round. N.B. Keep back a bag of baby Jesus pebbles for anyone who comes to the service but failed to find one and wanted one. We were very glad we did this!

## **That's about it...**

We have tried to write everything down but we may have missed some items. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us at St John's to find out more or ask those important questions that you are left with. We hope and pray that you will be able to use this campaign to get people in your local area talking about finding Jesus this Christmas time!



#babyJesusrocks is a free to use Christmas initiative originally run in 2015 at St John's, Hartley Wintney