

# Adventures with GOD!

## JESUS CAME TO BE WITH US (B.1.WINTER.13)

Biblical Reference	Matthew 1:18-25
Key Verse	Matthew 1:23
Key Concept	Jesus, the son of God is with me today, but he lived 2000 years ago here on the earth as a real person.
Educational Objectives	At the end of the class today, the children will be able to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain what the name “Emmanuel” means</li> <li>2. Tell the story of Jesus’ birth</li> <li>3. Make a list of Christmas traditions that aren’t biblical</li> </ol>

### Life Application

Each year, as Christians we celebrate Jesus coming to earth. Just as with his death and resurrection, his birth is one of the most important events in all of history. Jesus came to make known the Father and the Father’s kingdom and to restore our relationship with our creator and with all of creation. It was Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross and resurrection that defeated sin and death. Jesus’ life was an example of transformation and holiness for those of us who follow him. this week the children can invite Jesus into their lives and understand more fully what it means that Jesus is “Emmanuel.”

### Possible Activities and Class Plan

Activity	Materials	Time
Decoration		5 minutes
My GROW Adventure	GROW Adventure w/God materials	5 minutes
Opening Prayer	Candle	1 minute
Bible Reading	Bible	5 minutes
Activity	Recipe, ingredients, pans, oven	20 minutes
Bible story	Illustrations	10 minutes
Craft	Paper plates, green poster board, crayons, scissor, glue	10 minutes
Story	Story and illustration	10minutes
My GROW Adventure	Review	5 minutes
Closing Prayer	Candle	1 minute

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## INSTRUCTIONS

**Decoration and classroom set-up:** For this Sunday, it would be good to decorate the classroom with pictures of Jesus' birth. The Christmas tree is a universal decoration, but it's also possible to use other decorations that are typical and traditional, which help us remember and tell the Christmas story. It's important to understand that as humans, symbols and traditions are import. We remember that God told the Israelites that they should celebrate the religious festivals each year with symbols and many other traditions. The focus of today will be the biblical traditions of Christmas and those that aren't biblical. It would be helpful for the children to be able to act out our draw, or use play doh to create scenes that they remember from Jesus' birth. If it's possible it would be good to have a special place in the classroom with a manger, that they can touch and remember and celebrate the marvelous gift of Jesus' birth.

**My GROW Adventure with God Weekly Review:** As children enter take time to have them reflect on their adventure with God booklets and either discuss or use art materials to express their journey during the past week. You may wish to add any art work, written poems, prayers or songs to a GROW wall in the room. You can find my GROW Adventure with God materials on the Covchurch.org website in the same place as the Adventures with God sessions.

**Opening Prayer:** Gather children around a candle. Light the candle and explain that we are entering into a special time with God. Encourage the children to hold their hands out in front of them palms up as a sign they are ready to receive what God has for them today.

**Prayer Example:** Lord God, thank you for making us, for loving us, for forgiving us, and guiding us. We know you are here with us right now. As we enter into your word, the Bible, help us draw close to you, to understand and to listen to what you have to say to us. Amen

(For safety sake, you may wish to extinguish the candle after the prayer)

**Bible Reading:** Explain that as we read the Bible we do that first to spend time with God. Children can remain with hands out stretched palms up to receive the word as it's being read. Alternatively they can be invited to draw what they hear. Read the Bible passage for the day two times and ask children to respond.

**Question examples:** What did you notice in this story? How does it make you feel? Was there anything you would ask God about that you didn't understand or was confusing? Is God saying anything to you though the story?

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**Activity:** There are so many different traditions that we have to celebrate Christmas. There are typical crafts, songs, foods, etc. Use this time to make something together, whether it be a particular type of cookie or whether it be a special kind of ornament. Included is a recipe that can be used, but it might need to be made ahead of time if you don't have access to an oven where you are.

**Bible Story:** In the following pages you will find a way to tell the Christmas story. It's important to note the important details of the story. Many times they hear bits and pieces and it can get confused with other holiday stories. Help them to understand the events as they are told in the Bible. You will also find a list of things that are biblical and others that aren't. Read them and have the children tell you which ones are biblical.

**Craft:** If there is time you can do one of the crafts found in the following pages of the lesson.

## **Today's GROW Adventure with God Review:**

**G: God's Word:** What is the story? (give children an opportunity to express their understanding of the story).

**R: Relationships:** Is there anything in today's bible story that shows us how we should or shouldn't share God's love with others? (Remind children that sometimes God uses the stories of the bible to show us how we shouldn't act toward God or others and give them a chance to consider how we might show God's love instead).

**O: Outward Action:** Is there anything in the bible story that shows us how we should help or serve God or others? (Explore concrete ways the children could live this out in the coming week).

**W: Worship:** Is there anything in the bible story that shows us how we should accept God's love for us and others? Ask: How do you feel about God? How would you like to respond to God? What would you like to say to God?

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**Closing Prayer:** Gather children around the candle again. As you light the candle explain that the flame is something that is present in the light and the darkness. In the same way, it reminds us that God is always with us. Is there anything anyone wishes to say to God? After children have responded, close the prayer time.

**Prayer Example:** Lord God, we thank you that you are always with us, and always love us. It's good to be with you. Thank you for what we have learned today. Thank you for being with us and for teaching us through the Bible. Help us to remember what you have taught us today and to live it out when we leave. Amen

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**SKIT**

## **The Temperamental Angel**

This could be used for parents or in worship or just in class.

Discussion: Why do you think we sometimes say Jesus is the greatest gift of all?

What kind of gift was shared in the story? How could you share this gift and the gift of Jesus with others?

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## BIBLE STORY

### What was the first Christmas really like?

True or False?

On December 25, in the year 0, a young woman was pregnant and she and her husband arrived to a city called Bethlehem looking for a place to spend the night. There were no rooms available, but the owner of the inn said they could stay in the stable. The child, Jesus, was born that night and they put him in a manger made of wood that was full of hay.

Then, some shepherds came with some white sheep to see the new born king (they were sent by angels). Later, the same night, wise men came following a bright star. They came riding on camels and gave the baby gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. The donkey and the cow were in the stable observing everything.

Well, what do you think? Is this story true or false?

The truth is that part of the story is true and part is false. The child Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem. Shepherd and wise men did come to worship him. But it didn't exactly happen how we sometimes hear the story. The true story is found in the Bible. We are going to see what happened over 2000 years ago in Bethlehem when the son of God came to earth.

### The Roman Empire

The people of Israel were discontent in the years previous to Jesus' birth. But they really didn't have it that bad off. In reality, their conquerors, the romans, had brought peace to the world and had made and taken care of new roads and more or less let the Israelites do what they wanted. But, still, Israel was occupied by foreigners and the Jews were not happy. Many of them were wondering when the promised Messiah would come. They understood that the Messiah was going to defeat the Romans. That is why they were very surprised with the way Jesus was.

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## The Decree and the Census

Mary and Joseph didn't just take a four day trip to Bethlehem to enjoy a vacation. The Roman emperor, Cesar Augustus, had decreed that everyone had to go to the place where their families were from to be registered for the census. Joseph and Mary had to go like everyone else. Joseph's family was from Bethlehem so he had to take Mary there.

When they arrived in Bethlehem, Joseph went where he needed to go to be registered. He had to make a list of everyone in his house. It was very possible that Joseph and Mary were very young. The children of this time didn't receive formal education and they got married very young. The men got married more or less when they were teens. Another possibility is that Joseph was older than Mary. It's possible he was a widow and Mary was his second wife. We don't know exactly as those details are not in the Bible. But we know that Mary was young. The Census helped the Romans to know exactly how many Jews lived in Israel. That way they knew how much money to collect for taxes. With the money they collected they made more roads and added more soldiers to their army.

## Silent Night

It's most likely that Bethlehem wasn't as silent as we've heard it was. The night that Jesus was born there were many people arriving from all over. There were animals making noises and people talking. There was probably quite a bit of noise.

The town of Bethlehem was dedicated to the war God of the Canaanites. But today all of us think about Bethlehem as a holy place. The name Bethlehem means "House of bread." It's interesting to think about Jesus calling himself the "Bread of life."

## The manger

Sleeping in a stable wasn't as terrible as it sounds, but it wasn't comfortable either. Many times when people would travel they would stay in stables as they would visit different towns. The stable in Bethlehem was maybe a cave. Today in Bethlehem the caves are used as houses for some people. A leader of the early church (Justin Martyr) wrote a book in which he talks about Jesus being born in a cave.

It's possible that animals lived in the stables. But generally they would sleep in one part and the people in another. The manger was probably made of stone and not wood, maybe there was a hole in the floor of the stable.

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Did Jesus Cry?

Jesus cried like any new born baby. Mary, as all mothers of her time, probably wrapped her baby in cloth, a long strip of cloth. The people in this ear believed that they had to wrap babies tightly to help them grow straight and develop correctly.

A strange star

Even though there are lots of Christmas carols that talk about the wise men, it's possible that the star did not guide them to the west. The wise men saw the star in the east, but they didn't follow it from their country. The truth is when they arrived in Jerusalem they had to ask where Jesus had been born. Only when they came out of their meeting with Herod did they see the star again guiding them to Bethlehem to the place where Jesus was with his parents.

Even though people try to find a natural explanation for the star, there still isn't a way to explain where it came from and where it went to after the wise men saw it.

Shepherds and wise men

A group arrived the night that Jesus was born, another group arrived later. Do you know who arrived later? Well the Bible tells us that some angels appeared to shepherds the night that Jesus was born and told them to go to the stable.

The second group that visited were not kings. The word the Bible uses is the word, "Magi" which means "wise men." They came from possibly three places: Arabia, Babylonia, or Persia.

Traditionally we have heard that there were three wise men. But the Bible doesn't specify this. We don't know that there were three and we don't know their names. What we do know is that they brought three gifts to Jesus. It could have been that they came in a big caravan to Bethlehem. They did ride camels.

The gifts they offered to the baby Jesus were very precious and costly. The first gift, incense, was a costly perfume. The myrrh had a sweet smell and ironically it was what was offered to Jesus on the cross when he was thirsty. The gold has always been of great value and it was a precious gift.

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The wise men had been following the star for two years. This could mean the star appeared two years prior to the birth of Jesus or the wise men may have arrived to meet Jesus when he was between the ages of 1 or 2 years old. When the evil king Herod heard about the birth of Jesus he commanded that all of the male children under the age of 2 years old be killed in Bethlehem. Matthew says that the wise men arrived to the “house” where Jesus’ family lived.

## King Herod

Herod was one of the most powerful kings of Israel and one of the cruelest. The Romans put him in power even though he wasn’t 100% Roman. The Jews did not like him, though they accepted two of his sons. His mother was a princess from a royal family that had reigned in Israel before Herod. Herod became jealous of his sons and had them killed. If he was capable of killing his own sons, how much more was he capable of killing someone else who could take the throne away from him?

## Snow?

Jesus wasn’t born on December 25 in the year 0. Really the date of his birth isn’t that important. What is important is that he was born. The people that have studied about Jesus believe that he was born in the spring of the year 4 A.C. They think this because of what was written about Herod before his death, the date of the Roman census and the activity of the shepherds.

## The wonders of his love

So, knowing the true story of Jesus’ birth doesn’t affect our celebration, right? Christmas is incredible, not because of the traditions and celebrations, but because of the love of God that we celebrate. God became a human to restore the world and rescue us from the effects of our sin. God lived with the people. “Emmanuel” God with us. Today God lives with us in Spirit and God’s love and care accompany us all the days of our lives.

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## STORY

### The temperamental angel

“Do you know what?” When my family was at the table, eating dinner I told them, “I’m going to be an angel in the Christmas presentation at the church.”

“You? Maggie? An Angel? Ha Ha!” yelled my brother.

“Be quiet Carlos, “ I said

“Ha, ha...who’s heard of an angel with red hair and freckles?!”

I felt something building in me...anger, fury, “Carlos, stop making fun of me.”

“And you have the worst temperament of anyone in the whole city,” said Carlos, “Look you’re ready to explode right now.”

“Yes Carlos, we can see that,” said my father with his calm but firm voice, “Please stop teasing your sister.” He looked at me and smiled, “You will be a beautiful angel.”

I felt that the anger that had been building started to weaken. My dad always knew how to calm me down with his warm smile and soft voice.

“Who is going to direct the program?” asked my mom.

I finished chewing before I answered, “Mrs. Mendoza.”

“Mrs. Mendoza? But she’s so shy,” said my father.

What a surprise, I thought only children were shy. I never thought about an adult being shy.

The first rehearsal was the next day after school. I went to the church with my friend, Martha. She is my best friend, but sometimes she makes me mad. While we were walking to church she was explaining proudly why she had been given the role of Mary. I was just a little jealous of her, but I wanted to talk about something else.

“Who will play the role of Joseph?”

“Michael Sanchez,” she answered trying to make me even more upset. “He is so nice and he will be with me the whole time. He won’t even know that you are there.”

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When we arrived at the church, we found everyone else in the sanctuary. Mrs. Mendoza was there and she was very nervously explaining what we were going to do.

“Richard and Javier will be the shepherds. You should stand here. The manger will be here in the center and Mary will be seated next to it with Joseph standing next to her. The angel will be on the risers behind the manger. Please go and try on your costumes and then come and take your positions on the stage.”

The risers were very high and it was hard to climb up in my angel costume. But I finally got up there and saw Richard hit his brother. And so the fight began.

Mrs. Mendoza didn't say or do anything. She just stood there. Others had to step in and separate the brothers. Martha didn't do anything to help.

“So nice,” I said as I walked by her later.

She looked at me and stuck out her tongue. Mrs. Mendoza looked like she would cry. Someone blew a big bubble with their gum and Javier yelled “Hello!” at the top of his lungs.

Martha began to sneeze. I wanted to laugh.

Again someone blew a bubble with their gum and it popped so loud I lost control and began to laugh. Others began to laugh too. The boy took care of the popped bubble and began to laugh too. Poor Martha was laughing and sneezing at the same time.

In this moment, Mrs. Mendoza began to cry. “I can't do this. I can't.” With tears she left the stage. Suddenly everyone was quiet. I began to feel angry. I lifted up the skirt of my costume and got down off the risers. I went to the place that Mrs. Mendoza had left and I looked at everyone angrily.

“Listen. We are acting crazy.” I said.

“Who made you boss?” Richard asked.

I looked at them with my hands on my hips and said, “No one. You can be boss if you want.”

He looked at me but said nothing.

I realized that my anger was rising.

“Does someone else want to have my place?”

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Silence.

“Ok, then it’s mine.”

“Who will make sure you behave?” Martha asked.

My face was burning and I knew I was bright red. I tried to control myself, but couldn’t. Without saying I word I ran out of there. The cold air outside cooled me down a bit.

What a difficult situation! We had been unkind and disrespectful to Mrs. Mendoza and she left because of us. We had to find her and apologize. If I was going to take responsibility I needed to control myself.

“God, help me please to remain calm.”

I went back into the church and found everyone else as I’d left them. Stunned and silent.

“Hello,” I said in a calm quiet voice. “If we are celebrating the birthday of the Prince of peace we shouldn’t be fighting like this.”

“You are right,” said Martha.

Everyone was in agreement, “Do you think Mrs. Mendoza is still in the church?”

“I’ll go find her,” Javier said.

“Maggie, your wings are twisted,” said Martha, “let me help you fix them.”

“Thank you,” I answered with a smile.

The door opened and Javier came in, “I found her in the Pastor’s office.”

Mrs. Mendoza came in and we all began to clap. She looked at us with a timid smile.

Four weeks later my family came to the church to see the program. “I’ve never seen such a lovely Christmas program,” said my mom.

“I can’t believe the Garcia brothers were so calm and collected,” said my dad.

“Well, but Maggie was the best,” said my brother Carlos. “You did great.”

I couldn’t believe my ears.

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“Do you know that you just gave me a compliment?” I asked.

“I know,” said Carlos. “It’s your Christmas gift.”

“Thank you Carlos,” was all I could say.

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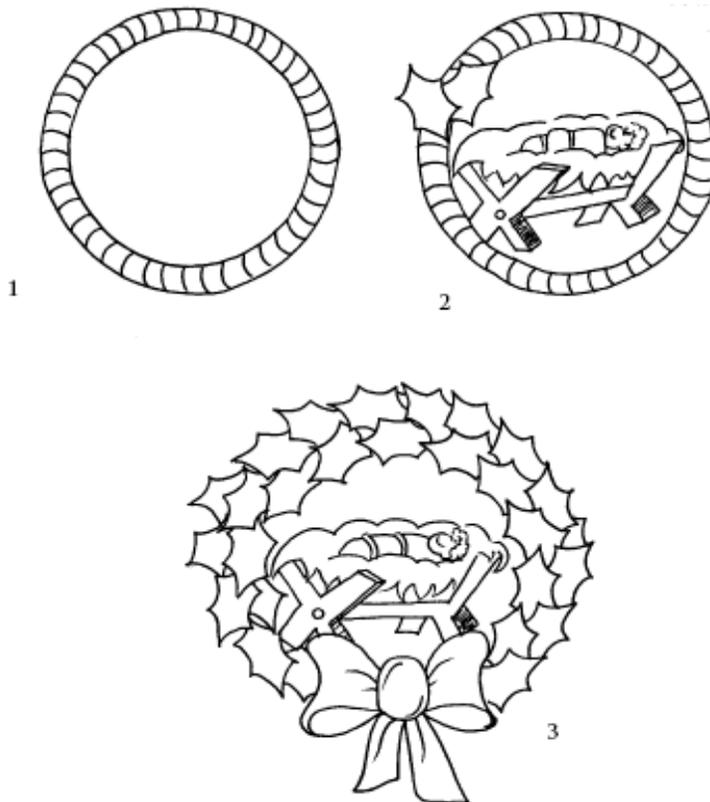
## CRAFT

### A Christmas wreath

Materials: 2 paper plates, crayons, glue, green poster board/paper, scissors.

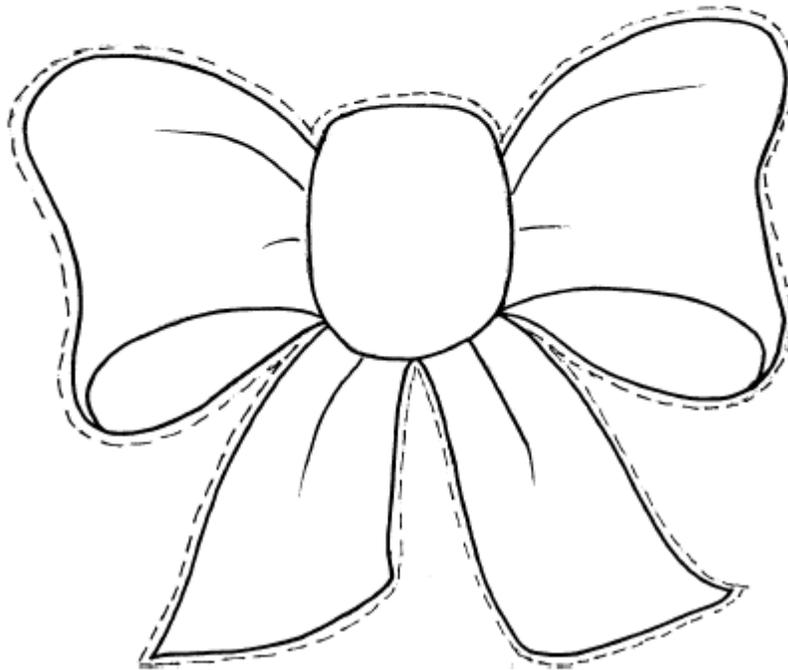
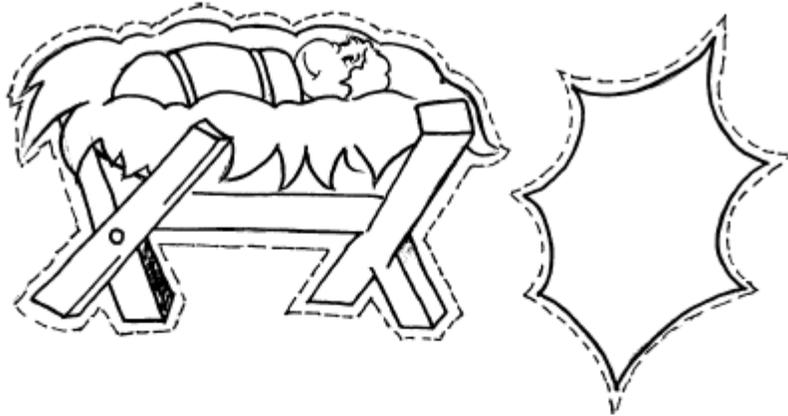
Instructions:

1. Cut out the center of one of the plates leaving a 2 inch border. Turn the plate over. The bottom portion will become the bottom of the wreath.
2. Copy and cut out the pattern found on the following page. Trace it on green paper and cut out 20 leaves for each wreath.
3. Glue the leaves on the plate, around the border.
4. Copy and cut out the pattern of the bow that's found. Color the bow and glue it on the wreath as shown.
5. Copy and cut out the picture of the manger. Glue it in the center of the other plate.
6. Glue the two plates together with the picture of the manger showing through the plate with the green leaves and bow.



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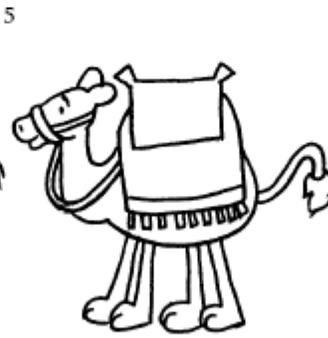
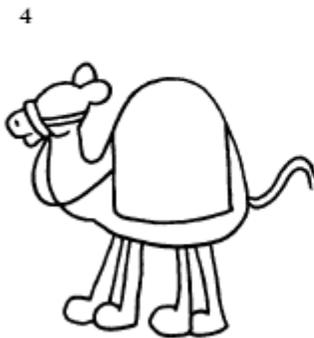
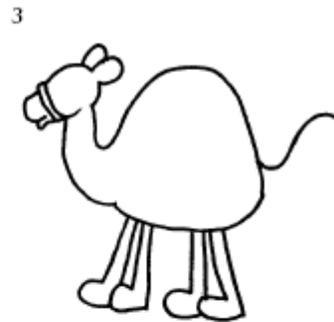
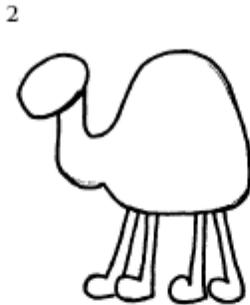
## PATTERNS



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## CRAFT

Draw a camel. The wise men used camels to travel on to see Jesus. Follow the patterns below to draw your own camel.



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## ACTIVITY

### Christmas cookies

Ingredients: 1 cup butter, 1 cup brown sugar, 1/3 cup honey, ½ cup water, ½ tsp. salt, ½ tsp. baking soda, 3 cups of flour, candy to decorate, a big bowl, a wooden spoon, aluminum foil, wax paper, cookie sheet, plastic bags, tooth pick, cookie cutters, thread.

#### Preparation:

1. In a big bowl, mix together the butter, sugar and honey. Add the water and stir it until it's completely mixed together.
2. Combine the salt, baking soda and flour in another bowl.
3. Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients a little at a time.
4. Mix it with your hands. When it is mixed and smooth, put it in the refrigerator for 10 minutes.
5. Heat the oven to 375 degrees (F)
6. Divide the dough into sections and roll out.
7. Cover a cookie sheet with aluminum foil.
8. Use cookie cutters in various shapes (like the shapes shown on the next page) to cut out the cookies.
9. Transfer them to the cookie sheet. Make sure to make a little hole at the top of each cookie (using a tooth pick), where you will be able to put thread through and hang on the tree as an ornament.
10. Bake the cookies for 5-8 minutes. Take out the cookie sheet and decorate the cookies with the different colored sprinkles and candies.
11. Put it back in the oven for another few minutes, until golden brown.
12. Take them out and let them cool.
13. When they are cool, take them off of the aluminum foil. Put a thread through the hole and tie so that you have a loop that could be hung on the Christmas tree, or go ahead and eat them.

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## PATTERNS FOR COOKIES

