

You will need:

- ★ the image of Ranjita to display
- ★ images or film clips from current television talent shows (optional)
- ★ score cards (optional).

Presenter:

- [Introduction] You can always tell when it's the countdown to Christmas, not by the cards arriving in the post or the decorations up everywhere, not even by all the Christmas adverts on the television, but by the fact that almost every main television channel seems to be showing a talent show of some form or another on a Saturday evening.
- [Talk about some of the current shows that are on and, if appropriate, show film clips from recent episodes. You could show a performance from one of the shows and then ask the congregation to give the contestant a score. Or you could have a vote as to which talent show the congregation prefers.]
- Whether you prefer the shows with dancing, singing or other talents, one thing they have in common is that they are looking for people who have (often hidden) star qualities. Our favourite contestants are often the ones who seem very unlikely stars – maybe because they are quiet, young, shy or from the unlikeliest of backgrounds, who then go on to show amazing abilities.
- The Christmas story is actually full of people with hidden star qualities – people from unlikely backgrounds who God chose to be involved with the birth of his son. People who, when the spotlight was shone on them, trusted in God and played their part. One of these people was Mary and she did even sing a song! (See Luke 1.)
- Mary was a young woman living in Nazareth, engaged to be married to Joseph. She was favoured by God. God knew that this young woman had resilience and strength, and that she would do all she could to love and protect Jesus as he grew up. Mary must have had the star factor for God to choose her to be Jesus' mum and her bravery, perseverance and devotion enabled God's message of hope, love and peace to enter the world.
- All around the world today there are mums who have similar God-given gifts of strength and determination to Mary. Mums who have to fight hard when things are against them to look after their children.
- [Show the image of Ranjita.]
- Like Ranjita, who lives in India. Ranjita's family were very poor. Since she was nine years old, she has been forced to work in dirty, smelly conditions with very little pay. Ranjita is now grown up and wants her children to have a better life than she had. She wants to find opportunities for them to become amazing people. Christian Aid's partner in India, ARUN, brings women together and helps them turn their lives



around. The group helped Ranjita find out about her rights, apply for a government grant, and start a new life for herself. Using her God-given gifts of strength and determination, she bought a sewing machine and started mending clothes four years ago. Since then, Ranjita's life and her children's lives have changed for the better. Ranjita can now afford to rent a room for her family to live in away from the slums where they used to be. Her youngest child Soniya can now go to school. She is the first of Ranjita's children to be able to go to school.

- Mums – like Jesus' mother Mary and Soniya's mum Ranjita – have many God-given gifts. They are strong, brave and resourceful. They are determined to make life better for themselves and their families. Sometimes they just need a little help to use their gifts. This Christmas we want to think about mums here and across the world. And we want to celebrate the way they use their gifts to help us in our lives.
- [Explain what you are doing in church to support Christian Aid's Christmas Appeal.]
- [Close with a prayer thanking God for Mary, Ranjita and the other adults we know who have the star factor.]

Ideas for group activities

- ★ Cut out star shapes and hide the pieces around the room for the group to find and put together.
- ★ Ask the group what they think it means to have the star factor. Read an age-appropriate version of Luke 1 and write a list of the ways Mary showed the star factor in this passage. Look at Mary's song and write a modern-day version together. Talk about what star qualities God might want us to have.
- ★ Give each person in the group a star with their name on. Pass the stars around the group and ask them to write what

'star' qualities they think that person has. When everyone has finished writing, give each person their star to keep as encouragement or hang them as Christmas decorations.

- ★ Pray for each other, asking God to help us to be brave and trusting as Mary was.
- ★ Order or print our gift box decoration (available from caid.ie/christmas). You can decorate it and fill it with a treat or a note for mums or other adults who work hard to look after those in the group.
- ★ Hold a talent show and



invite parents.

- ★ Sew like Ranjita. Search online for some simple project ideas or child-friendly sewing or embroidery kits. Why not make enough for a Christmas craft stall and raise funds for Christian Aid's Christmas Appeal?



**This is
Ranjita**