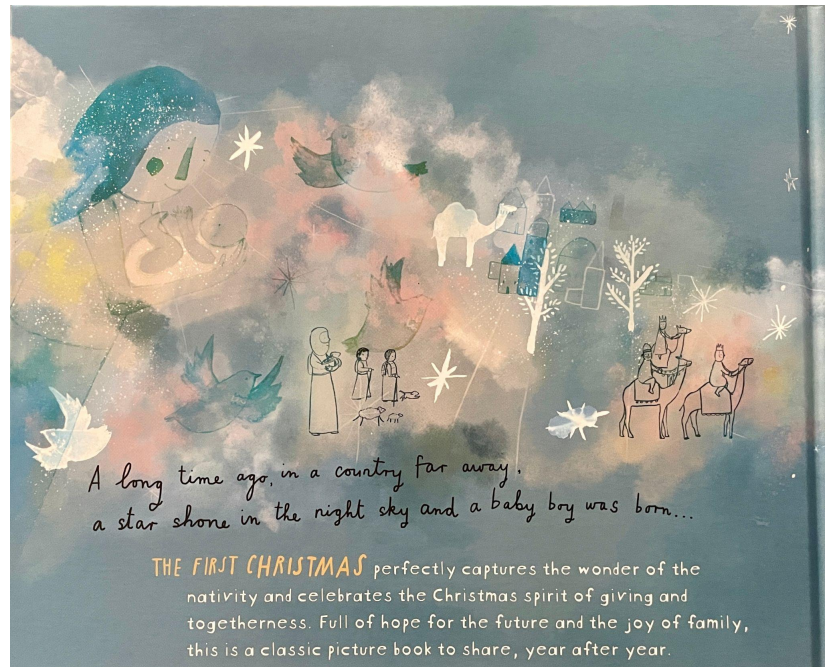


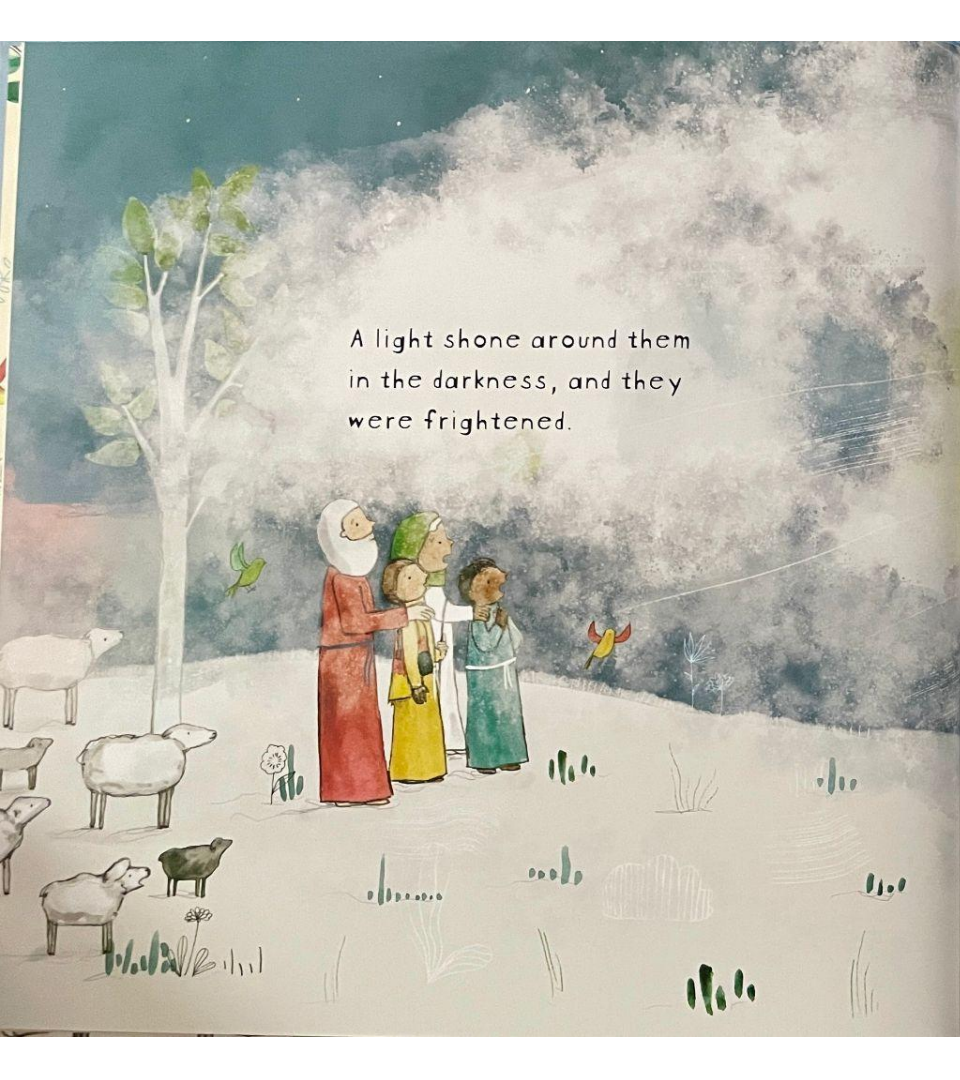
THE FIRST CHRISTMAS

illustrated by JESS RACKLYEFT

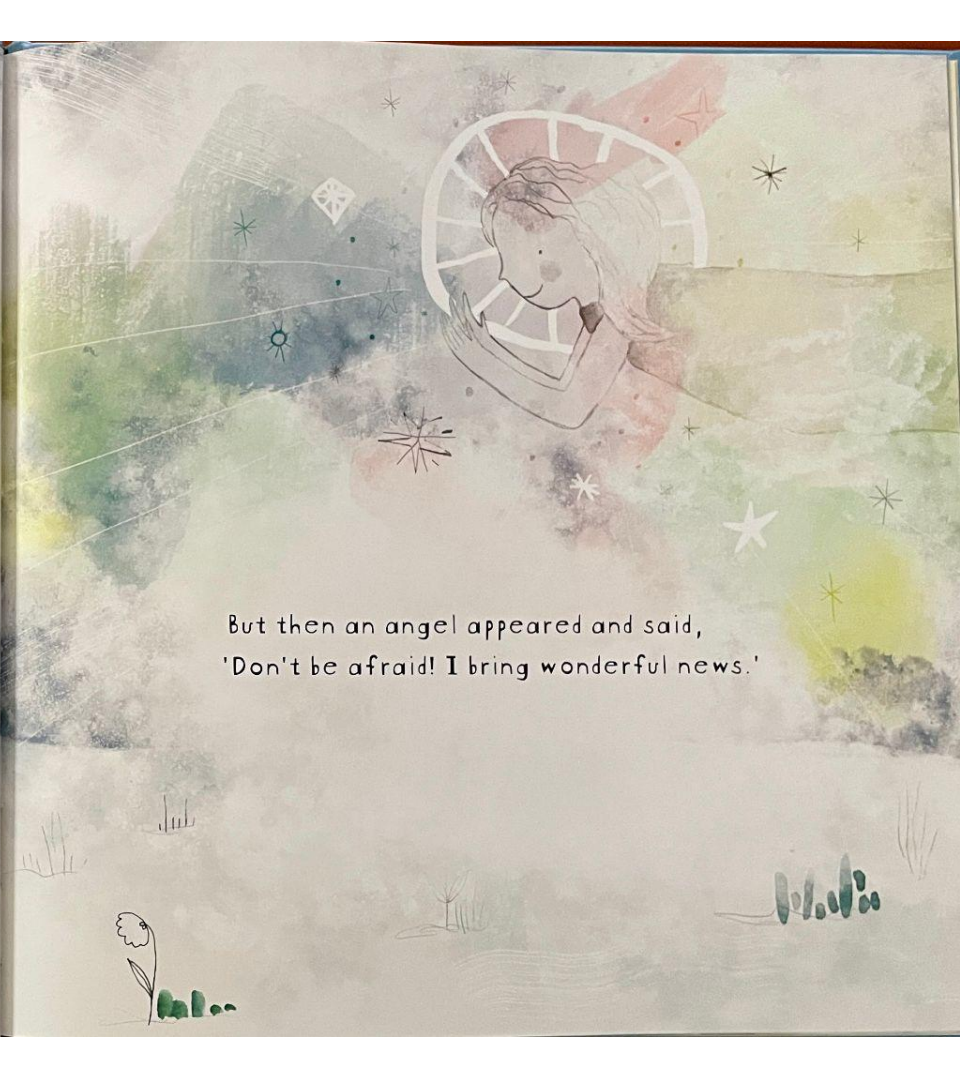


A long time ago, in a country far away,
shepherds were keeping their sheep
safe at night.

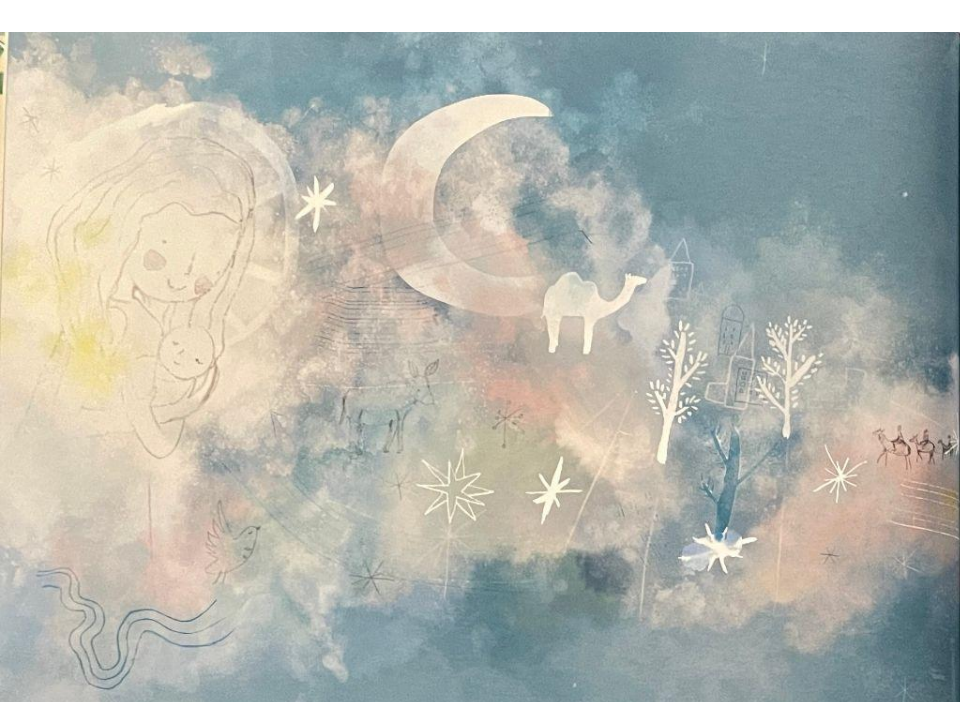


An illustration of the Holy Family—Joseph, Mary, and the infant Jesus—standing in a dark, stormy landscape. Joseph is on the left in a red robe and white head covering, holding Mary's hand. Mary is in the center in a yellow robe and green headscarf, holding the infant Jesus. A young boy, likely John the Baptist, stands to the right in a green robe. They are surrounded by sheep on the left and a small tree. The sky is dark and turbulent with swirling clouds. A faint light source is visible in the distance, creating a misty glow around the figures.

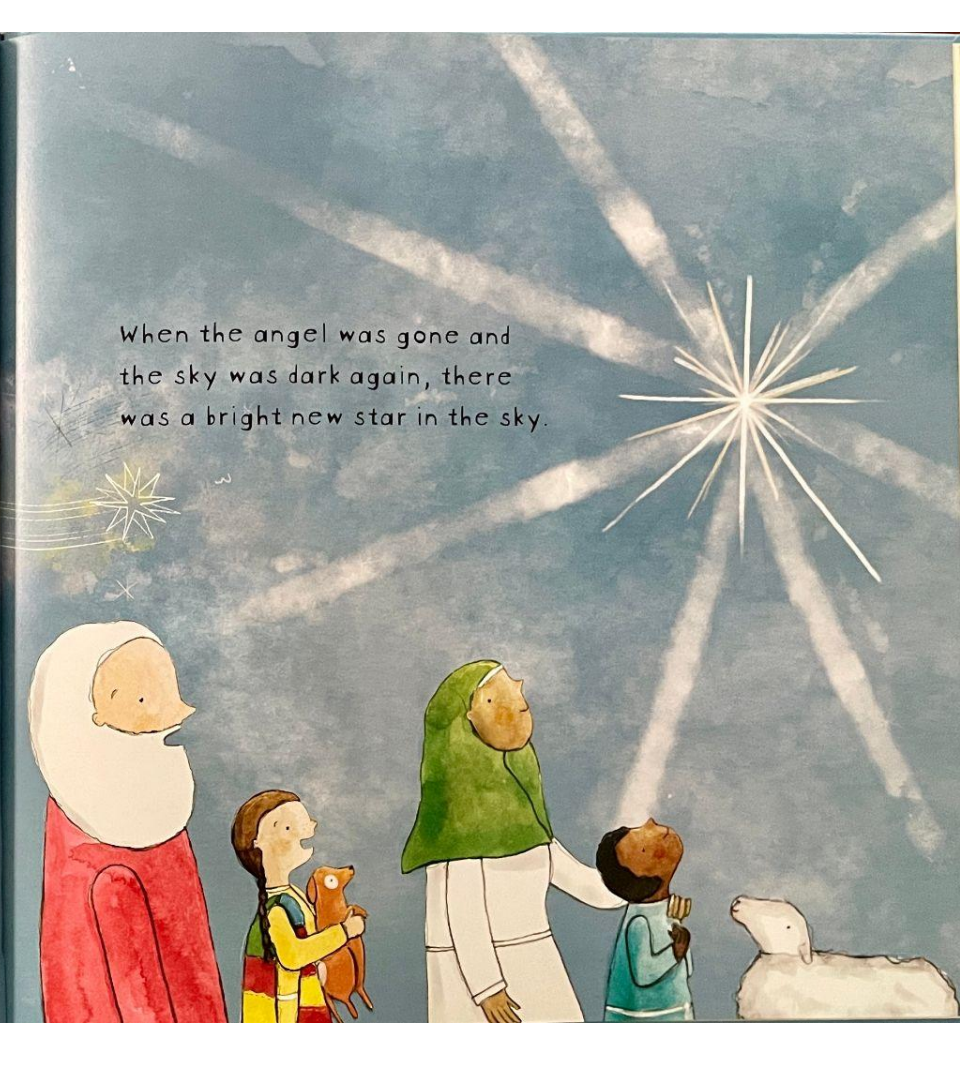
A light shone around them
in the darkness, and they
were frightened.

An illustration of an angel appearing in a bright, starry sky. The angel is depicted with long, flowing hair and a halo, emerging from a circular frame that resembles a wheel or a sun. The background is a mix of green, yellow, and blue, with various star shapes and a large, faint star. The overall atmosphere is one of divine light and revelation.

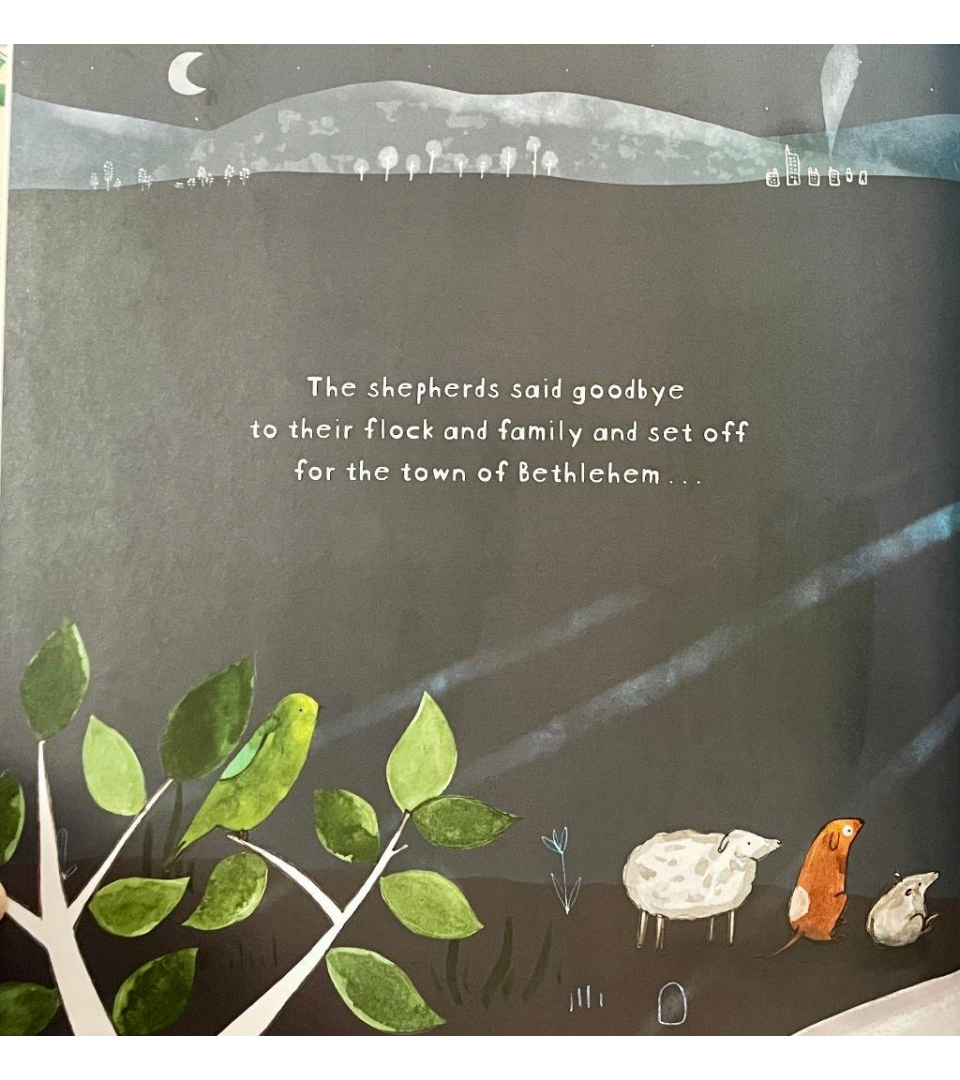
But then an angel appeared and said,
'Don't be afraid! I bring wonderful news.'



The angel told them that a very special baby had been born in Bethlehem. A baby who would bring peace on earth and goodwill to everyone.




When the angel was gone and the sky was dark again, there was a bright new star in the sky.



The shepherds said goodbye
to their flock and family and set off
for the town of Bethlehem...



A woman in a blue dress stands in a dark blue field at night. In the background, there are wooden posts and a small house. A tree with green leaves is on the right side of the page.

There, inside a stable, they found
a young couple, Mary and Joseph,
leaning over a manger.

Lying in the hay, wrapped up snugly,
was a baby boy.



Could a baby who was so important
have been born in such a poor place?



'There was no room for us
at the inn,' said Mary.

'His name is Jesus.'

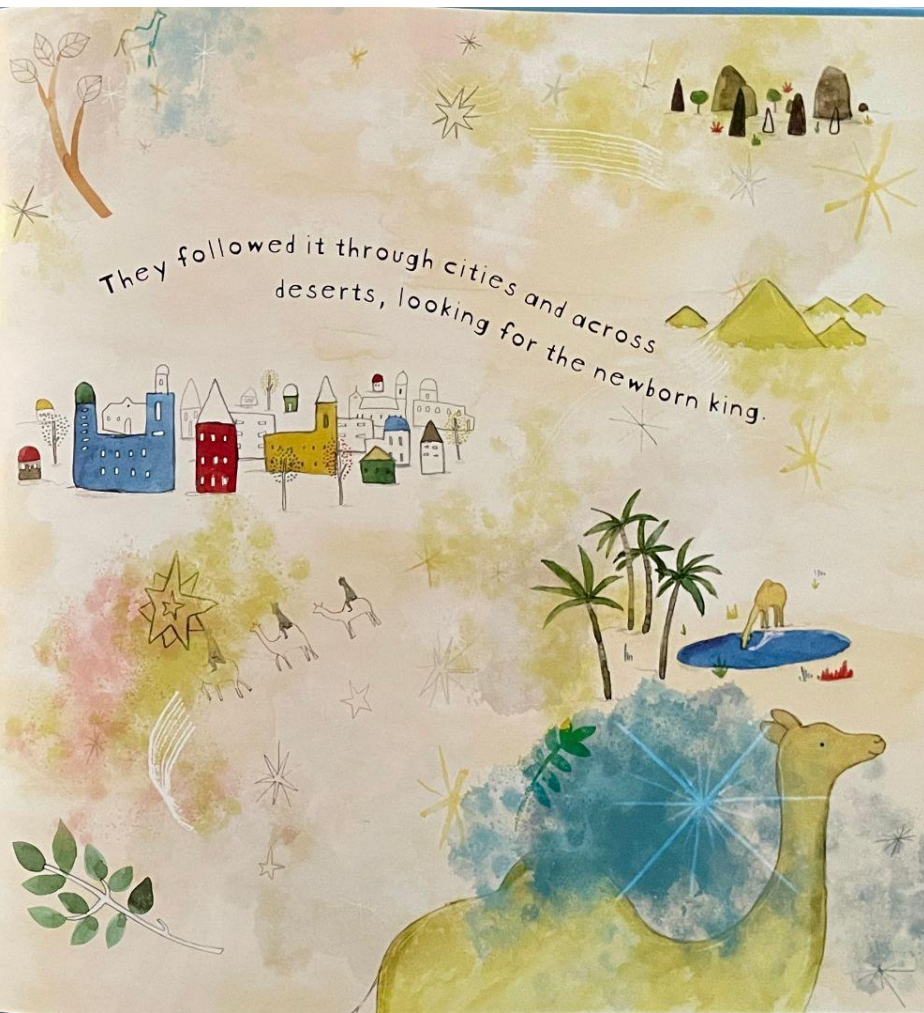


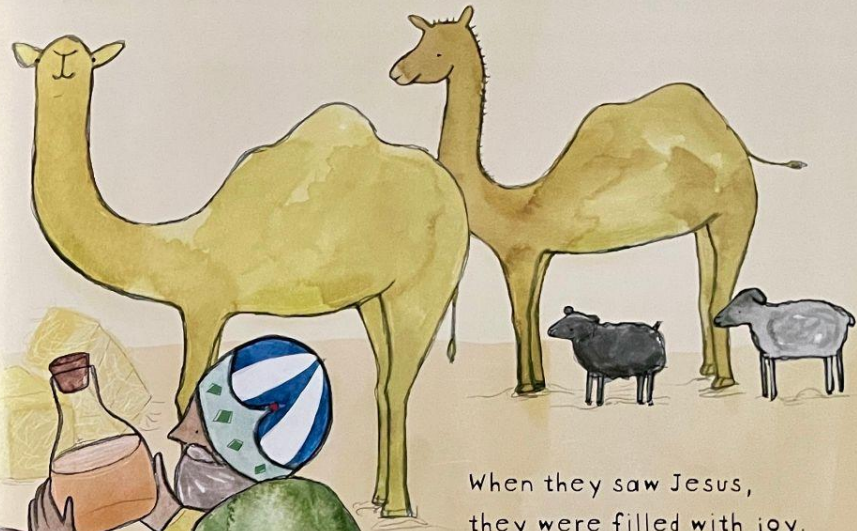
While Jesus had been sleeping,
news of his birth had spread.

Three kings from the east had seen
the new star glowing in the sky.



They followed it through cities and across
deserts, looking for the newborn king.





When they saw Jesus,
they were filled with joy.
They fell to their knees and
gave him treasures – gifts
of gold and frankincense
and myrrh.



Then the three kings started their long journey home,



knowing that a king had been born
who would change the world.

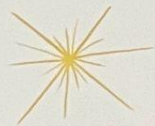


The shepherds said goodbye
to Mary, Joseph and the baby.

They went home to their flock
and family, proud to have been
chosen to spread the word.



The star shone in the night sky.

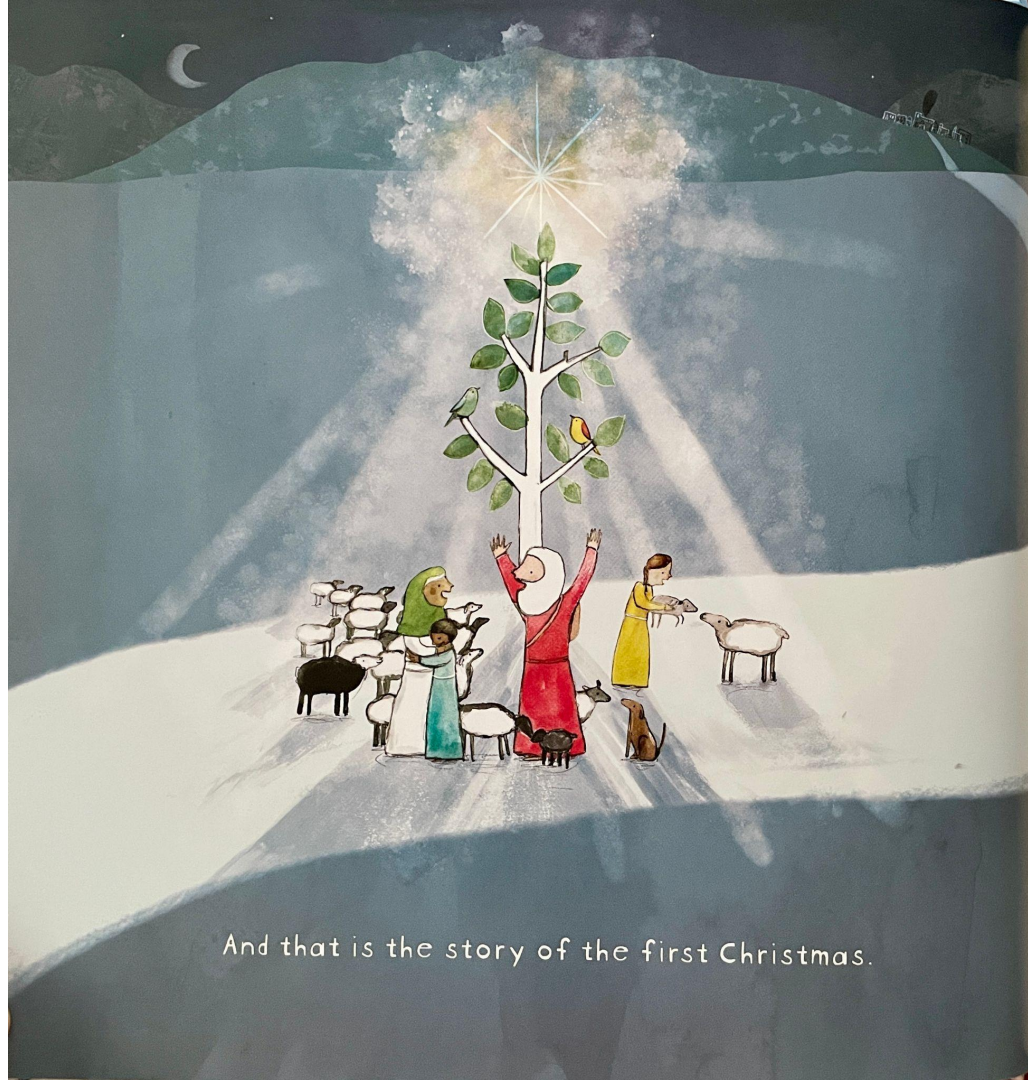


Mary and Joseph watched over
their little one.



And Jesus, who was tired from
all his visitors, fell asleep.





And that is the story of the first Christmas.

More than two thousand years later, people all over the world still come together and give gifts to celebrate the birth of Jesus. How we celebrate and the stories we tell at Christmas vary in different communities and cultures around the world, but the 'nativity' - Jesus's birth in a humble stable and the joyous visitors travelling to meet him - is a much-loved part of Christmas traditions everywhere.