

HOLY HOLLY CHRISTMAS

by Gail Gaymer Martin



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Holy Holly Christmas

A Christmas program for children

by Gail Gaymer Martin

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Child 1

Child 2

Bow Child (Girl)*

Holly Child (Girl)*

Ribbon Child

Child 3

Oak King

Holly King

Ivy King (Girl)*

Other children may be included with or without carrying
decoration props and may join in the two carols.

*Three children were specified as female due to the dialogue.

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PRODUCTION NOTES

The Christmas program *Holy Holly Christmas* explains the history of holly as a tradition at Christmastime and how it symbolizes Jesus. The program involves some memorization, or lines may be hidden behind props the children carry. The Oak King, Holly King, and Ivy King carry a poster board cutout to represent each of their titles: ivy, an oak leaf, and holly. Their speaking lines may be glued on the back of the cutout. This program may be performed in the church chancel area or on a stage. Microphones should be used for a large audience. No stage setting is needed.

Costuming is minimal. The Oak King, Holly King, and Ivy King wear robes — white if possible — and either kingly crowns on their heads or wreaths made of the appropriate artificial flora: oak leaves, holly, or ivy.

A card table with three chairs is at Center Stage. A pair of scissors is on the table where the children will place the holly, ribbon, and bows, which they carry onstage.

The program is written with nine speaking parts. If a smaller cast is necessary, Child 1 and Child 2 may exit when Child 3 enters the stage and may slip on a robe and crown for the Oak King and Holly King characters. When these characters exit, Child 1 and Child 2 would then return to the stage. If a larger cast of characters is available, younger children may accompany the children with speaking lines and may carry more holly, ribbon, bows, or other decorations.

Two traditional Christmas carols are used in this program, including the first stanza of “Deck the Halls” and the complete carol “The Holly and the Ivy.” Additional children may be included as singers. A choir of children would work well for the singing of “The Holly and the Ivy.” Selected verses may be sung as solos, depending on the children’s age and talent. The tunes for both songs may be found in many music books of carols.

To add length to this program if needed, opening and closing carols may be sung and prayers may be spoken. A reader may also complete the Christmas story with verses from Luke 2:15-20.

The Christmas story reading from Luke 2:1-14 is taken from the Holy Bible, the New International Version (NIV).

Playing time, with carols, is approximately 20-25 minutes.

PROPS: One card table, three chairs, scissors, artificial holly sprigs, spool of red ribbon, medium-sized red Christmas bows, poster board colored cutout of an oak leaf, poster board colored cutout of a holly leaf, and a poster board colored cutout of an ivy leaf.

COSTUMES: Three robes, preferably white; three kings' crowns or wreaths adorned with one of these symbols: oak leaf, holly, or ivy. All other children may wear their street clothes.

ADVENT ACTIVITY

During Advent, the children have an opportunity to prepare for Christmas by making holly decorations or holly wreaths, which may be used as props in the Christmas program or hung in the Sunday school area or church as Christmas decorations. Small sprigs of holly tied with ribbon may be made to distribute to the audience or congregation at the conclusion of the program.

The Internet provides numerous patterns and instructions to make holly wreaths, and most include pictures demonstrating the steps. Instructions for a simple one follows. Each class could make one of these wreaths as an Advent project. While this pattern uses pine cones, sprigs of ivy could be used instead to follow the holly and ivy theme.

Pine Cone and Holly Wreath

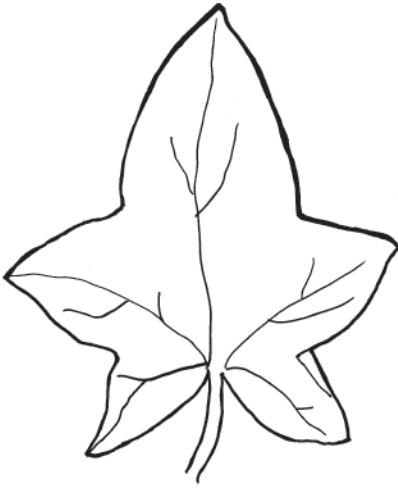
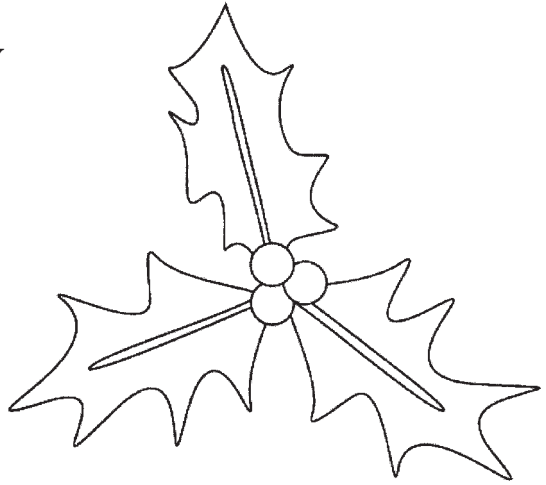
Materials: One green Styrofoam ring, 14 inches in diameter; thirty-six pine cones, artificial or real; ten sprays of artificial holly; three yards of 3 1/2" wide red ribbon; floral wire; floral picks; wire cutters.

Instructions: 1. Wire pine cones by weaving wire into the third row from the bottom of pine cone scales. Hold both ends and twist the wire into a spear to penetrate the Styrofoam. Embed these into the ring in even spaces.

2. Take four holly sprays and cut each one in half, leaving two inches of stem on each end. These eight sections form the holly wrapped around the ring, and each section is embedded into the sides of the Styrofoam ring.

3. Cut the six remaining holly sprays into smaller sections that includes a leaf cluster. Make sure to cut close to the leaf cluster below to leave a stem that is at least 1-1/2 inches for each small leaf section. If any stem isn't long enough, use wire to create a longer stem. Embed these holly pieces around the Styrofoam ring completely, covering all exposed areas.

4. Make a large bow with the ribbon and wire it into place at the top center of the wreath.

*IVY**HOLLY**OAK*

1 *(CHILD 1 enters and walks to Center Stage carrying a Bible and*
 2 *looking upward, as if studying the ceiling.)*

3 **CHILD 1:** *(Shrugs.)* **Until someone comes, I can practice my**
 4 **reading.** *(He crosses to the podium and opens the Bible.)* **Let's**
 5 **see.** *(He flips the pages.)* **Luke 2.** *(He reads.)* **In those days**
 6 **Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be**
 7 **taken of the entire Roman world. This was the first**
 8 **census that took place while Quirinius was governor of**
 9 **Syria. And everyone went to his own town to register. So**
 10 **Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in**
 11 **Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David,**
 12 **because he belonged to the house and line of David. He**
 13 **went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be**
 14 **married to him and was expecting a child. While they**
 15 **were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and**
 16 **she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him**
 17 **in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was**
 18 **no room for them in the inn.** *(CHILD 2 enters, takes a couple*
 19 *of steps, and pauses while CHILD 1 continues to read.)* **And**
 20 **there were shepherds —** *(He sees CHILD 2.)* **What are you**
 21 **doing?**

22 **CHILD 2:** **Nothing. I'm here to decorate for the Sunday school**
 23 **Christmas program.**

24 **CHILD 1:** **Me too, but no one's here yet so I'm practicing my**
 25 **reading.**

26 **CHILD 2:** **Don't let me stop you.**

27 **CHILD 1:** *(Shrugs.)* **OK.** *(Looks down at the Bible and reads.)* **And**
 28 **there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby,**
 29 **keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the**
 30 **Lord appeared to them —** *(As he is reading "An Angel of the*
 31 *Lord appeared," three CHILDREN enter singing "Deck the*
 32 *Halls." HOLLY CHILD carries an arm full of holly. BOW*
 33 *CHILD carries medium-size red bows. RIBBON CHILD carries*
 34 *a spool of red ribbon.)*

35 **THREE CHILDREN:** *(Singing)* **Deck the halls with boughs of**
 36 **holly,**
 37 **Fa la la la la, la la la la.**
 38 **'Tis the season to be jolly.**

- 1 **Fa la la la la, la la la la.** *(They giggle when they notice the other*
 2 *two CHILDREN.)*
- 3 **BOW CHILD:** *(Looks at CHILD 1 and CHILD 2.)* **Are you here to**
 4 **deck the halls?**
- 5 **CHILD 1:** Huh?
- 6 **CHILD 2:** She means decorate.
- 7 **CHILD 1:** Oh. *(He shakes his head, leaves the Bible on the podium,*
 8 *and crosses to them.)* **What's all the "fa la la la la" stuff**
 9 **about?**
- 10 **HOLLY CHILD:** We're decorating with holly. Get it? **Deck the**
 11 **halls with boughs of holly.** *(She wags the armload at him.*
 12 *CHILD 3 enters and listens to the conversation.)*
- 13 **CHILD 1:** I don't understand what holly has to do with Jesus.
- 14 **RIBBON CHILD:** Holly's a tradition. Haven't you heard of the
 15 **song "The Holly and the Ivy"?** *(RIBBON CHILD recites the*
 16 *first verse lyrics.)*
 17 **The holly and the ivy,**
 18 **When they are both full grown,**
 19 **Of all the trees that are in the wood**
 20 **The holly bears the crown.**
- 21 **CHILD 2:** I've heard the song, but it doesn't make much sense
 22 **to me either. Why does holly wear a crown? And I still**
 23 **don't get what it has to do with Jesus' birthday.**
- 24 **RIBBON CHILD:** *(Shrugs.)* I don't know about that, but —
- 25 **CHILD 3:** The holly's crown comes from an old myth about
 26 **the Holly King.** *(As he speaks, CHILDREN turn to look at*
 27 *him.)* **And she's right. Holly is a very old religious**
 28 **tradition, even before Christians celebrated Christmas.**
 29 **Have you ever heard the story about the Holly King?**
- 30 **HOLLY CHILD:** Holly King? Never heard of him. *(She walks to*
 31 *the table and sets the armload of holly on it.)*
- 32 **RIBBON CHILD:** Why do you know that? *(Places ribbon on the*
 33 *table and sits.)*
- 34 **CHILD 3:** We learned about it in school.
- 35 **BOW CHILD:** Tell us the story. *(Places bows on the table and sits.*
 36 *HOLLY CHILD takes the final seat. CHILD 1 and CHILD 2 step*
 37 *aside and listen.)*
- 38 **CHILD 3:** *(Stands near them at the table.)* **Many years ago before**

1 Jesus was born, the Druids lived and worshiped nature
 2 rather than God. Two trees were sacred to these people:
 3 the oak and the holly. According to myths, each tree
 4 wanted to reign as king of nature. (*As CHILD 3 finishes the*
 5 *last line, OAK KING enters and walks to Center Stage.*)

6 OAK KING: I am the Oak King, the true king of nature.
 7 (*HOLLY KING enters and approaches as he speaks.*)

8 HOLLY KING: No, I'm the real king. I am the Holly King.
 9 (*HOLLY CHILD, BOW CHILD, and RIBBON CHILD appear to*
 10 *listen to the story as they begin to cut ribbon and tie it around a*
 11 *sprig of holly, then attach a small bow. They make two or three*
 12 *of these while listening.*)

13 OAK KING: How can you be a king? You are nothing! In the
 14 spring, my limbs are covered with buds that blossom into
 15 bright green leaves and mighty acorns in the
 16 summertime. In autumn, my leaves turn the color of
 17 flames like a glorious fire. I am the king.

18 HOLLY KING: But I grow delicate white blossoms against my
 19 shining green leaves, strong leaves with thorny edges to
 20 fight the enemy, and as your leaves wither and fall to the
 21 ground, my blossoms burst into red berries that are
 22 more beautiful than your bare limbs, and my leaves stay
 23 green forever. While you die, I am worshiped by the
 24 Druids. I am the true king of nature.

25 OAK KING: How can you be king? You're small and
 26 unimportant.

27 HOLLY KING: But I am beautiful through all the seasons of
 28 the year. I am cherished by the Druids. I am king.

29 OAK KING: There's no talking to you. (*He turns and exits.*)

30 HOLLY KING: (*Moves Center Stage and looks at the CHILDREN.*)
 31 You see? (*He motions in the direction of the OAK KING's exit.*)
 32 I am king!

33 CHILD 3: The legend says the Druids decided to have two
 34 kings of nature. The Oak King ruled during the
 35 midsummer, and the Holly King ruled in midwinter. (*As*
 36 *CHILD 3 talks, the IVY KING enters and listens.*)

37 IVY KING: Wait a minute. What about me?

38 HOLLY KING: Who are you?

1 **IVY KING:** Don't you recognize me? Since medieval days, you
 2 and I have been used to decorate homes and castles
 3 during Christmas. We're wound into wreaths and put in
 4 clusters to hang on the windows and walls. I'm the Ivy
 5 King.

6 **HOLLY KING:** You can't be a king. You're delicate and soft.
 7 Look at me. I have thorny leaves, and I'm evergreen. *(He*
 8 *flexes his muscle.)* I'm strong. You can't even stand alone.
 9 Sometimes you twine yourself around me in the forest,
 10 and I have to hold you up. *(He motions her away.)* Anyway,
 11 you're a girl. Girls can't be kings.

12 **IVY KING:** Then I can be the Ivy Queen.

13 **HOLLY KING:** *(Shakes his head.)* Fine. Be a queen. *(He moves*
 14 *closer and shakes his finger at IVY KING.)* But I wear the
 15 crown. *(HOLLY KING struts Off-Stage, and IVY KING*
 16 *follows.)*

17 **CHILD 2:** *(Moves closer to CHILD 3.)* That was an interesting
 18 myth, but I still don't understand what any of it has to do
 19 with Jesus' birthday.

20 **CHILD 1:** *(Follows CHILD 2.)* Maybe there's nothing to
 21 understand. Maybe holly is just an old-fashioned
 22 decoration.

23 **HOLLY CHILD:** *(Rises and holds up a decorated sprig of holly.)*
 24 You're right. Holly and ivy have been Christmas
 25 decorations for years, but I think there's more to it.
 26 *(HOLLY CHILD extends the holly sprig.)* Really look at this
 27 sprig of holly. What do you see? I think I understand
 28 what it has to do with Jesus. *(EVERYONE faces her with a*
 29 *surprised look.)*

30 **CHILD 3:** What do you think it is?

31 **HOLLY CHILD:** Look at the holly, and then remember why
 32 Jesus was born.

33 **CHILD 1:** He was born to die for us on the cross.

34 **HOLLY CHILD:** Right. *(She holds the sprig closer to CHILD 1.)*
 35 Look at the berries.

36 **CHILD 1:** *(He stares at the berries.)* They're red like blood. *(He*
 37 *looks up.)* Like the blood Jesus shed for us. *(CHILD 2 moves*
 38 *closer and studies the sprig of holly.)*



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