

WE BELIEVE IN CHRISTMAS

by Janet Litherland



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We Believe In Christmas

by JANET LITHERLAND

CAST

KINDER CHOIR — Pre-school children, preferably 4 and 5 years of age.

PRIMARY CHOIR — First, second and third grade children.

JUNIOR CHOIR — Fourth, fifth and sixth grade children.

INTERPRETIVE MOVEMENT TRIO — Three girls, sixth grade or older, who are graceful and able to concentrate. They appear only at the end of the play, but their work is serious in nature and will be very effective if performed with care. Instructions for this group appear on the insert page.

MARY — A teenage girl.

JOSEPH — A young adult.

NARRATOR — Preferably an older youth or an adult. Narrator is unseen.

SPEAKERS — There are small speaking parts for some members of the three choirs — four Kinders, five Primaries and five Juniors. They are numbered within the script.

MINISTER — Minister of the church pronounces his own benediction at the close of the play. If an invocation is desired, it should be delivered before the play begins. If an offering must be taken, it should also be done before the play begins.

Instructions for Interpretive Movement

Objectives of interpretive movement are:

1. To create a spiritual mood
2. To express feelings
3. To explain ideas

This can be a beautiful worship experience if approached with the proper attitude. The interpreters' minds, faces, and eyes must assume absolute concentration. This is not a "performance" — it is worship.

Example: (*from page 11 of script*)

Please believe the Bible story

(Extend hands toward audience on "please," cross them over heart on "believe," and extend them to form a book on "Bible story")

That Christmas was meant to be

(Slowly close hands to a praying position, bringing them closer to the body, and raise head and eyes toward Heaven)

The interpreters' eyes should look toward the audience on the first two movements, they look at their "book" when it is formed, and they look up when in prayer position. Movements must be slow and gracefully connected.

Interpreters never sing or speak the material they are interpreting. Neither do they "mouth" the words.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

1. It's a Long Walk to Bethlehem Primary Choir
2. The Crowded City Kinder Choir
3. It Had to be a Stable Junior Choir
4. A Baby Is Born Junior Choir
5. Gifts Kinder Choir
6. Let's Be Shepherds Primary Choir
7. We Believe in Christmas Kinder, Primary
and Junior Choirs;
Interpretive Movement Trio

COSTUMES

KINDER CHOIR — Each member needs two identical solid-color towels. (Use different colors among the members.) One is wrapped around the waist, as a skirt; the other is draped around the body and pinned over one shoulder, toga style. A solid color shirt may be worn underneath if desired. Bare feet.

PRIMARY CHOIR — “Traveling clothes” made of pillowcases, all colors and designs. Cut holes for head and arms and slip the cases on. Tie at waist with a piece of rope. Wear sandals on the feet.

JUNIOR CHOIR — Choir robes, tied at the waist with bright colored sashes; mantles to match sashes are draped about the head and shoulders. Use different colors for the members, not all the same. Girls’ mantles are worn loose; boys’ mantles are tied down, “shepherd” fashion. Sandals.

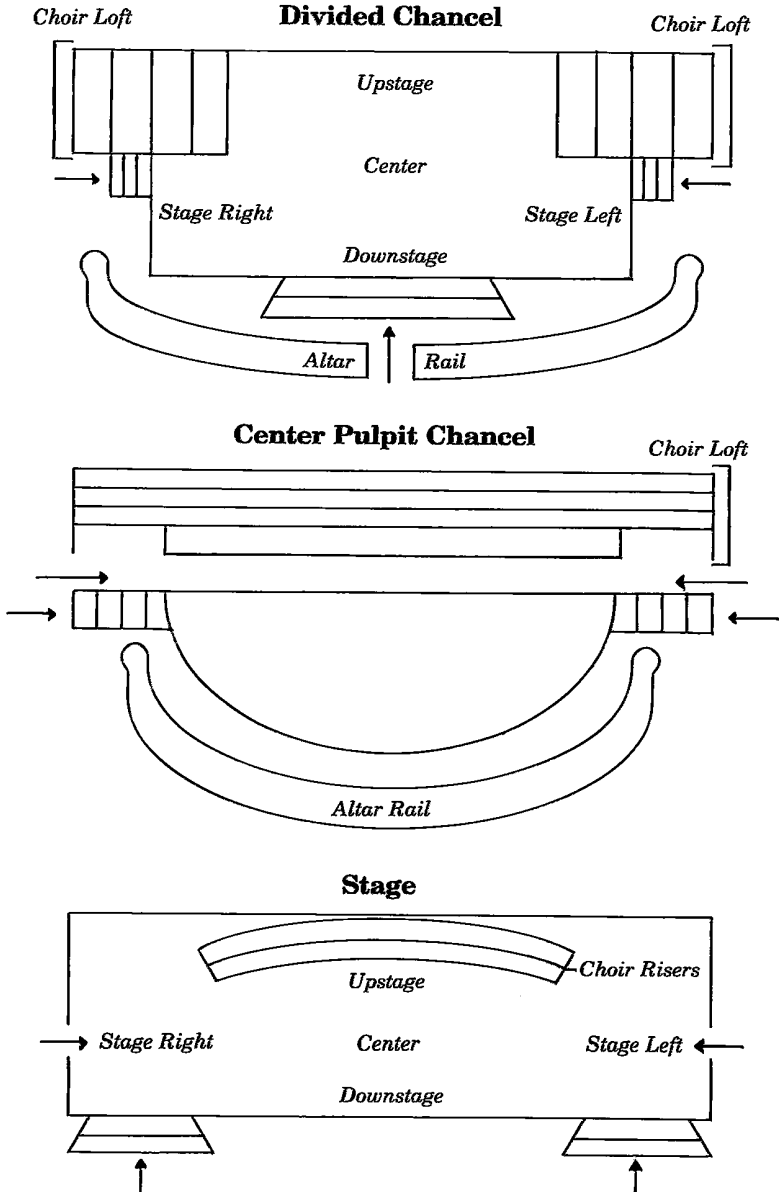
INTERPRETIVE MOVEMENT TRIO — Identical choir robes with stoles or collars. (Not biblical costume.) Stocking feet.

MARY — An ankle-length robe, a sash at the waist, and a mantle draped about the head and shoulders. Preferably in shades of blue. Sandals.

JOSEPH — An ankle-length tunic, tied at the waist with cord or rope. A striped mantle fastened to one shoulder and tucked into the tie in front. No head dress. Sandals.

Staging

Directions contained in the script are adaptable to a number of situations, large and small, including the following:

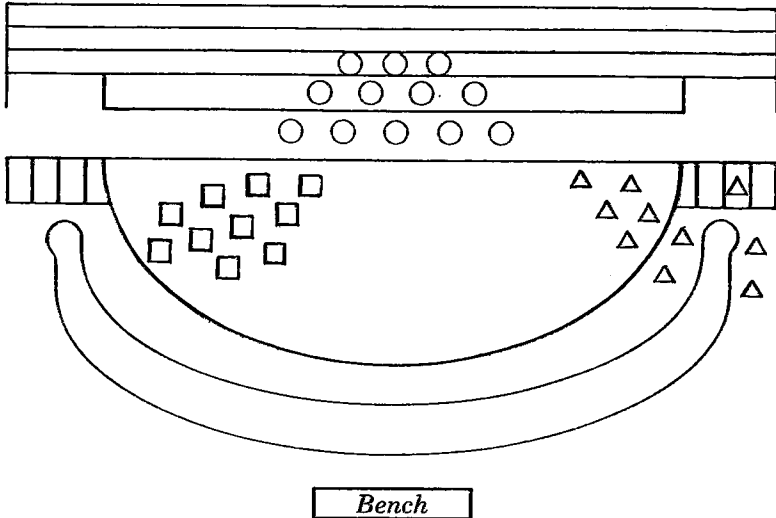


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SCENE 1

KEY: □ Kinder Choir Members
 △ Primary Choir Members
 ○ Junior Choir Members

Playing area contains no scenery.



Set Props: A bench, Center, on floor level.

Hand Props: Back packs, bed rolls, or cloth bags for some of the Kinder and Primary choir members.

One loaf of bread, one pail of imaginary milk, and one large wedge of cheese contained in three of the Kinder packs. (One gift per pack.) These gifts are not used until Scene 2.

Pencil flashlights, disguised as candles for other members of the Kinder and Primary choirs.

Two packs of belongings (luggage) for Joseph.

AT RISE: Playing area is empty, except for bench, Down Center on floor level. Voice of NARRATOR is heard, preferably through a public address system. NARRATOR remains unseen throughout the play.

NARRATOR: Once upon a time in a far off land called Rome there lived a stern and fearless ruler named Caesar Augustus. Now Caesar's rule covered a lot of territory and a great many people and, quite frankly, things were beginning to get a little out of hand. You see, the tax money didn't seem to match the head count. Caesar suspected the tax collectors were keeping some for themselves, but he couldn't prove it because he really didn't know how many people lived in all of Rome. So, worried over taxes, Caesar decreed that all of his subjects return to the cities of their births for a proper census. (*Music begins for "It's a Long Walk to Bethlehem."* NARRATOR continues speaking over the introduction.) If you look straight ahead, you will see Bethlehem; and if you sharpen your ears, you will hear folks in the distance, making their way toward that city to be counted. (*PRIMARY CHOIR enters from the back of auditorium. They walk down center aisle, two by two, taking two steps forward in each measure of music, singing, "It's a Long Walk to Bethlehem," and gesturing to the audience as they go.*)

SONG: "It's a Long Walk to Bethlehem"

PRIMARY CHOIR:

(*Chorus*) It's a long walk to Bethlehem,
it's a long walk for me, for you.
It's a long walk to Bethlehem.
We'll be glad when our journey is through!

(*Verse 1*) Mary and Joseph are far behind us,
just because the donkey is, oh, so slow.
None of us wanted to make this journey,
but Caesar Augustus said we had to go!

- 1 *(Repeat Chorus)*
- 2 *(Verse 2)* **Taxes and taxes Caesar worries over taxes,**
- 3 **now he can't begin to count the folk in Rome.**
- 4 **So we must go and be counted for our taxes,**
- 5 **but if we had a choice we'd turn and head for home!**
- 6 *(PRIMARY CHOIR turns to face opposite direction, but freezes*
- 7 *as NARRATOR speaks.)*
- 8 **NARRATOR:** *(Spoken)*
- 9 **Hear ye people of Nazareth!**
- 10 **By order of Caesar Augustus, Emperor of Rome,**
- 11 **all subjects shall return to their cities of birth**
- 12 **for a census. Hear ye, and *do* ye!**
- 13 *(PRIMARY CHOIR signs in rhythm, turns, and resumes walk*
- 14 *toward playing area.)*
- 15 *(Repeat Chorus)*
- 16 *(At the close of song, PRIMARY CHOIR members arrange*
- 17 *themselves loosely on left side of playing area, some standing,*
- 18 *some sitting. Three JUNIOR CHOIR members enter choir loft*
- 19 *from Upper Right as NARRATOR resumes speech.)*
- 20 **NARRATOR:** **Bethlehem was not a large city and, naturally,**
- 21 **the arrival of so many people caused quite a stir. Some**
- 22 **of the visitors stayed in private homes, some registered**
- 23 **at the inn, and some chose to sleep under the stars.**
- 24 **JUNIOR 1:** *(Calling excitedly to PRIMARY 1)* **Nathan, is it really**
- 25 **you? We haven't seen you in years!**
- 26 **PRIMARY 1:** **Hello there! It's me all right, and I need a place**
- 27 **to stay.**
- 28 **JUNIOR 1:** **Then you must come home with us. We have**
- 29 **plenty of room for you and two others as well.**
- 30 **PRIMARY 1:** **Thank you! I'll be there.**
- 31 **PRIMARY 2:** **Me also.**
- 32 **PRIMARY 3:** **And me!**
- 33 **PRIMARY 4:** **I'm going to register at the inn myself.**
- 34 **PRIMARY 5:** **Me too. I expect there'll be a lot of excitement**
- 35 **there tonight.**

- 1 **JUNIOR 2:** Well then, you had better hurry along. I hear the
 2 inn is filling up quickly.
- 3 **JUNIOR 3:** Yes, my brother just came from there and he said
 4 there are only a few rooms left.
- 5 **PRIMARY 5:** We're on our way. (*PRIMARY 4 and PRIMARY*
 6 *5 exit Down Left. KINDER CHOIR enters Down Right and*
 7 *members arrange themselves on Stage Right as dialog continues.*)
- 8 **JUNIOR 1:** I've never seen Bethlehem so busy.
- 9 **JUNIOR 2:** Or so crowded. And look, here come even more
 10 folks! Can you believe it? (*KINDER CHOIR waves to*
 11 *JUNIORS and shakes hands with some of the PRIMARIES,*
 12 *pantomiming conversation as NARRATOR speaks. A few more*
 13 *JUNIOR CHOIR members enter choir loft at this time. KINDER*
 14 *CHOIR remains standing.*)
- 15 **NARRATOR:** Yes, Bethlehem was beginning to get a little
 16 crowded. There were people everywhere and more yet
 17 to come. Some folks were concerned about a couple they
 18 had passed on the road from Nazareth, one Mary and
 19 Joseph, who had to travel very slowly because Mary was
 20 expecting a baby. And, as always, there were some who
 21 didn't care at all.
- 22 **JUNIOR 4:** First come, first served I say.
- 23 **PRIMARY 2:** I agree.
- 24 **JUNIOR 5:** But if Mary is expecting a baby, she'll need a
 25 special place to stay.
- 26 **JUNIOR 4:** Then they should have started days ago to be
 27 sure of a room. (*Some PRIMARY heads nod.*)
- 28 **JUNIOR 5:** I wish we had room, but our relatives are using
 29 every inch of floor space.
- 30 **PRIMARY 3:** My family is sleeping on the hillside, but that
 31 would never do for Mary and Joseph. (*Music begins for*
 32 *"The Crowded City." PRIMARIES 4 and 5 enter Down Left and*
 33 *return to their places at this time. Remaining JUNIORS enter*
 34 *Upper Right and Upper Left, taking their places in choir loft.*
 35 *KINDER CHOIR sings "The Crowded City."*)

1 **SONG:** "The Crowded City"

2 **KINDER CHOIR:**

3 *(Chorus)* **Such a crowded city,**
 4 **such a crowded place.**
 5 **People all around,**
 6 **but no familiar face.**

7
 8 *(Verse 1)* **Do you believe in miracles?**
 9 **Will God's hand take the lead?**
 10 **For Mary is on her way here,**
 11 **and it's a miracle she'll need.**

12 *(Repeat Chorus)*

13 *(Verse 2)* **There's very little room here,**
 14 **and Joseph must be strong.**
 15 **For Mary will have her baby**
 16 **somewhere amidst this busy throng.**

17 *(Repeat Chorus twice)*

18 *(At the close of song, KINDER CHOIR sits on stage. MARY and*
 19 *JOSEPH enter slowly down center aisle as NARRATOR speaks.)*

20 **NARRATOR:** Well, here come Mary and Joseph, and it looks
 21 to me as if their chances of finding a place to stay are
 22 very slim. It seems they've had to abandon the donkey,
 23 for Joseph is carrying their luggage. My, they do look
 24 exhausted. This must be quite an ordeal for Mary — she's
 25 only a teenager, you know — and a long journey, added
 26 to the expected birth would prove a trial for anyone.

27 **MARY:** Joseph, I am so tired. May we rest for just a few
 28 moments?

29 **JOSEPH:** We are almost there, Mary. Look up. See — it's
 30 Bethlehem. Just a few more steps and you can rest on
 31 that bench. *(MARY and JOSEPH react to the following speech*
 32 *by the NARRATOR, pantomiming each action as it is described.)*

33 **NARRATOR:** They made their way to the bench, where
 34 Joseph put down his packs and helped Mary to be
 35 comfortably seated. Joseph then explained to Mary that

1 she must wait while he looked for a room. He went toward
 2 the first group of people that he saw, (*JOSEPH crosses*
 3 *Down Right and up into playing area Right, addressing*
 4 *KINDER CHOIR*) explaining his plight, but all he received
 5 were shaking heads. He then approached another group
 6 with his problem, (*JOSEPH crosses Center, to JUNIOR*
 7 *CHOIR*) but again the answer was, "No room." Dejected,
 8 Joseph moved on. Suddenly he spotted some friends from
 9 Nazareth. (*JOSEPH joins PRIMARY CHOIR, shaking hands*
 10 *and greeting his friends.*) Unfortunately, they couldn't help
 11 either, but two of them directed him to the inn where
 12 they had registered earlier. (*PRIMARIES 4 and 5 exit Down*
 13 *Left with JOSEPH. KINDER CHOIR and remaining*
 14 *PRIMARIES begin to disperse, Down Left and Down Right,*
 15 *Offstage onto floor level. They may be seated in little chairs or*
 16 *on the floor. MARY remains on the bench as NARRATOR*
 17 *continues speaking.*) With nightfall on its way, the visitors
 18 to Bethlehem said good evening to one another and went
 19 to their prearranged accommodations. (*Lights begin to*
 20 *dim and children light their candles as they are settled.*) Candles
 21 soon burned in the windows and on the hillsides, and
 22 pretty little Bethlehem was settled for the night . . . or,
 23 was it? (*MARY rises, looking lost and forgotten.*) No, there's
 24 Mary, alone on the bench, and Joseph has not yet
 25 returned. I wonder if he found a room at the inn? . . . I
 26 wonder. (*MARY sits again, placing her head in her hands.*)

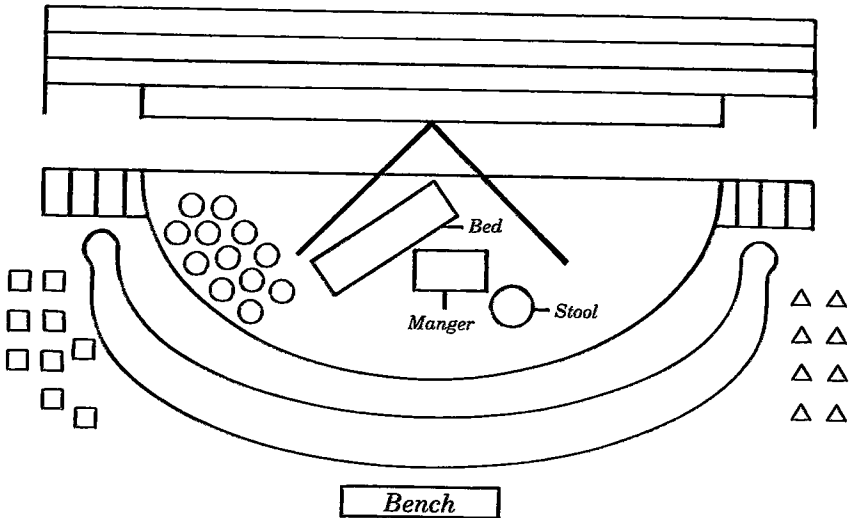
27 (*End Scene I*)

28
 29 (*Blackout for five seconds. Lights up dim as JUNIOR CHOIR*
 30 *members assemble the scenery for Scene 2. MARY remains on*
 31 *the bench. Music plays softly, "The Crowded City," during the*
 32 *scene change.*)
 33
 34
 35

SCENE 2

- KEY:**
- Kinder Choir Members
 - △ Primary Choir Members
 - Junior Choir Members

Scenery may be simple or elaborate, determined by the ability of the Junior Choir to assemble it quickly in dim light.



SET PROPS:

A stable structure, Center, containing a low, straw-covered bed for Mary, a manger for the Baby, and a stool for Joseph. The manger holds a doll to represent Baby Jesus.

A star is hung on the wall behind the choir loft, or a slide picture of a star is available to be projected on the wall at the time indicated in the script.

Bench remains Downstage Center on floor level.

HAND PROPS:

A pencil flashlight candle for Junior #2.

Gifts — bread, milk and cheese, contained in the packs carried by three Kinder Choir members in Scene 1.

1 **AT RISE:** After scenery is assembled, JUNIOR CHOIR is arranged
 2 in playing area, Right, to await arrival of MARY and JOSEPH.
 3 Lights up.

4

5 **JOSEPH:** (*Enters Down Left and crosses to bench, Center*) Mary,
 6 I've found a place. It isn't very fancy, but I think it will
 7 do nicely. The inn is full, you see, and so are all the private
 8 homes in Bethlehem; but the innkeeper has offered us a
 9 clean, dry stable behind the inn. He has already sent
 10 some women for candles and blankets. Come, Mary.
 11 (*Takes MARY's arm and she rises.*) At least it will be private,
 12 and not nearly as noisy as that busy inn! (*They cross Left*
 13 *and enter playing area from Left.*)

14 **MARY:** I'm grateful for it, Joseph. Something tells me the
 15 baby will arrive tonight, and any shelter will be welcome
 16 — any at all. (*Music begins, "It Had to Be a Stable," and*
 17 *JUNIOR CHOIR sings. JOSEPH helps MARY to lie down on*
 18 *the crude bed, Upper Center. Then, using the manger for an*
 19 *altar, JOSEPH kneels in prayer. He rises on last phrase of song.*
 20 *Two JUNIOR CHOIR members approach him when song is*
 21 *finished.*)

22 **SONG:** "It Had to Be a Stable"

23 **JUNIOR CHOIR:**

24 (*Chorus*) It had to be a stable;
 25 it had to be a stall;
 26 a manger for the birth of Jesus,
 27 accessible, accessible, accessible to all.

28

29 (*Verse 1*) The inn was filled with raucous laughter
 30 drinking and dancing and clattering dice.
 31 Even if there'd been a room for Mary,
 32 the atmosphere would not have been nice
 33 for giving birth.
 34 The stable room was large and quiet,
 35 a sanctuary, a place of peace;

1 fresh, clean straw and burning candles,
2 the privacy a welcome release
3 for giving birth.

4 *(Repeat Chorus)*

5 **JUNIOR 1:** Excuse me, sir. Do you have everything you need?

6 **JOSEPH:** Oh, yes. Thank you . . . I believe so.

7 **JUNIOR 2:** Well, if the baby comes, just call out. Some of us
8 will be nearby. Oh — and take this extra candle. You may
9 need it. *(Hands JOSEPH a pencil flashlight candle.)*

10 **JOSEPH:** Thank you. *(JUNIOR CHOIR exits slowly, Right, as*
11 *NARRATOR speaks. JUNIOR CHOIR members return to their*
12 *previous positions in the choir loft. JOSEPH sits on stool. MARY*
13 *is asleep. Lights dim during NARRATOR's speech.)*

14 **NARRATOR:** Perhaps now Bethlehem is settled for the
15 night. Mary looks quite comfortable . . . Joseph doesn't,
16 but then — what expectant father ever did? He is anxious,
17 as he should be . . . Let us think for a moment about that
18 stable. Was it really so bad? In those days the stables
19 around the inn were rented to shepherds during the
20 rainy season; but at this particular time of year sheep
21 were kept on the hillside, leaving the stables empty and
22 dry. The innkeeper, naturally, was anxious to rent every
23 available space and therefore some stables he rented for
24 animals, some for tired travelers. If the innkeeper had
25 only known that this young woman would bear the
26 Messiah, he probably would have been flattered and
27 would have shuffled his guests to make room somehow.
28 That seems to be a human weakness. But, since he didn't
29 know, and since a private room was not available, the
30 innkeeper directed Mary and Joseph to one of his stables,
31 making them as comfortable as possible . . . And didn't it
32 turn out to be a blessing after all? The stable was
33 accessible to people from all walks of life, and it still is
34 today. *(Lights out except for the candles, including JOSEPH's*
35 *candle. Spotlight is pinpointed on the star which hangs on the*

1 *wall behind the choir loft, or a star is projected on the wall with*
 2 *a slide camera at this time. Music plays softly the last six*
 3 *measures of "It Had to Be a Stable." As music finishes, lights up*
 4 *slowly. JOSEPH puts out his candle and moves his stool Up*
 5 *Center, near MARY's head. MARY raises herself on one arm.*
 6 *Both are smiling and looking into the manger. Music begins for*
 7 *"A Baby Is Born" and JUNIOR CHOIR sings.)*

8 **SONG:** "A Baby Is Born"

9 **JUNIOR CHOIR:**

10 *(Verse 1)* **Angels singing tidings bringing,**
 11 **Angels singing out the news.**

12
 13 *(Verse 2)* **For you a Savior. Give God the glory.**
 14 **Peace on earth good will to men.**

15 *(Repeat Verses 1 and 2)*

16 *(Chorus)* **You'll find the babe in Bethlehem**
 17 **wrapped in swaddling clothes in a manger.**

18 *(Repeat Verses 1 and 2)*

19 *(Chorus)* **A baby is born, born, born.**

20 **KINDER 1:** *(Rises and speaks to his choir members.)* **Did you hear**
 21 **what they said? The Savior is born!**

22 **KINDER 2:** *(Rises)* **The Savior? Where?**

23 **KINDER 1:** **Right here in Bethlehem!**

24 **KINDER 3:** *(Rises)* **Let's go and see!**

25 **KINDER 4:** *(Rises)* **What shall we take him?**

26 **KINDER 1:** **Whatever you have. The gift doesn't matter, but**
 27 **believing in him does.** *(All KINDER CHOIR members rise*
 28 *and enter the playing area, Right. They arrange themselves as*
 29 *nearly as possible to form used in Scene 1. Three KINDERS*
 30 *carry gifts — one a loaf of bread, one a pail of imaginary milk,*
 31 *and one a large wedge of cheese. Music begins and KINDER*
 32 *CHOIR sings, "Gifts" to the audience. After the song, the three*
 33 *gifts are presented to JOSEPH, who places them on the floor in*
 34 *front of the manger, as NARRATOR speaks.)*

35 **SONG:** "Gifts"

1 *(Verse)* **There were gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh,**
 2 **brought by the wise men three.**
 3 **There were also gifts of bread and milk and cheese,**
 4 **brought by folks like you and me.**
 5 **The size of the gift doesn't matter.**
 6 **The love within your heart matters a lot.**
 7 **It's what you think and what you feel,**
 8 **much more than what you've got.**

9 *(Repeat verse)*

10 **NARRATOR:** Many people visited the stable that night and
 11 in the days to come. There were shepherds who heard
 12 the angels' song, there were wise men from far away who
 13 saw the star and followed its light. People from the inn
 14 stopped to visit, and scurrying children peeped in to
 15 catch a glimpse of baby Jesus. It was a very special
 16 time . . . It was an exciting time! *(Music begins for "Let's Be*
 17 *Shepherds."* During the introduction, **PRIMARY CHOIR**
 18 *assembles in playing area as they did in Scene 1. They are divided*
 19 *into two singing groups, "A" and "B", and sing as indicated in*
 20 *the music.)*

21 **SONG:** "Let's Be Shepherds"

22 **PRIMARY CHOIR:**

23 *(Verse 1)* **There were sheep asleep on the hillside.**
 24 **It was dark with no stars in sight.**
 25 **The shepherds were guarding the hillside,**
 26 **when suddenly they saw a great light.**
 27 **It was an angel, saying "Christ is born!"**

29 **CHOIR A:** **Did they question it?**

30 **CHOIR B:** **No, no, no!**

31 **CHOIR A:** **Did they doubt it?**

32 **CHOIR B:** **No, no, no!**

33 **CHOIR A:** **Did they say, "We will not go?"**

34 **CHOIR B:** **No, no, no!**

35

1 **PRIMARY CHOIR:**

2 (Verse 2) It's important to be like shepherds.
 3 It's important to tell of our Lord.
 4 The Christmas story has changed our lives.
 5 It's a story that can't be ignored.
 6 The birth of Jesus, Jesus Christ, the Lord!

7
 8 **CHOIR B:** Shepherds were a peculiar bunch.
 9 They didn't even stop for lunch.

10 **CHOIRS A & B:**
 11 They decided to follow their hunch and go, go, go!

12
 13 **PRIMARY CHOIR:** (Repeat Verse 2)

14 (CODA) Let's be shepherds everyone.
 15 Tell the world God sent his son.
 16 Christmas love has just begun.
 17 Spread the news:
 18 It's Christmas! Be shepherds! It's Christmas!

19 (During the following lines, as NARRATOR speaks, PRIMARY
 20 CHOIR enters the choir loft from Left, and KINDER CHOIR
 21 enters it from Right. MARY, JOSEPH and baby exit down center
 22 aisle.)

23 **NARRATOR:** Unfortunately, not everyone believed the
 24 shepherds' story. "We've heard about Messiahs before,"
 25 they said. "A baby was born? So what?" "A King born in a
 26 stable! Ridiculous!" That's what some people said. And even
 27 today there are folks who think those same thoughts . . . a
 28 few moments ago it was easy to believe. But what about
 29 now? Look ahead of you. The stable is empty. Mary and
 30 Joseph and the baby have gone. The star has no special
 31 shine; and all the visitors to Bethlehem have returned
 32 home. Is it easy to believe now? Do you believe in Christmas?
 33 (Music begins to "We Believe in Christmas." Choirs are assembled
 34 in choir loft, and INTERPRETIVE MOVEMENT TRIO enters the
 35 stage from Down Right. Choirs begin to sing and INTERPRETIVE



CHRISTIAN PUBLISHERS

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by Janet Litherland.

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