

A PAGEANT OF LOVE

by Arthur L. Zapel



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A Pageant of Love

A Christmas/breakfast program with
parts for young children

by ARTHUR L. ZAPPEL

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CAST OF PERFORMERS

Pastor, Reader 1, Reader 2

Eleven Children: 5 boys and 6 girls (*optional*)

1. Boy 1 with symbol of light
2. Girl 1 with stump of Jesse
3. Girl 2 with Holy Spirit symbol
4. Boy 2 with scroll
5. Girl 3 with Star of David
6. Boy 3 with heavenly host symbol
7. Girl 4 with monogram
8. Girl 5 with gold
9. Boy 4 with frankincense
10. Girl 6 with myrrh
11. Boy 5 with dove

PRODUCTION NOTES

This program is an informal Christmas breakfast presentation for children and their parents for use on any Sunday morning during the Christmas season. It may also be used as part of a worship service, if preferred.

The presentation is easily staged indoors in an assembly hall or in the chancel of your church. Only a few brief lines need be memorized by the children. The parent-readers may do their brief narrations from the script. The children carrying the pageant symbols should all enter from the same side, walking briefly to "Center Stage" on cue with the narrative. After their biblical quotation lines are spoken they should retire in a line behind the readers.

The readers may be placed on opposite sides of the line of children if two microphones are available. Their speeches alternate from side to side.

Reader One is the narrative storyteller who leads into the lines from Scripture spoken by each of the children carrying a symbol.

Reader Two responds to each of the symbolic moments in the story of Christ's birth by reading the words of a well-known hymn. If a piano or organ is available, you may want to softly play the melody of the hymn under his spoken words. Another option would be to have Reader Two replaced by a singer in all or some of the responses. We did not indicate this as our first recommended choice only because the singing of each of these hymns may slow the flow of the action.

Also, we feel that having the verses of these hymns read aloud may serve to acquaint the listeners with the poetic beauty of the words by themselves.

The symbols may be constructed as indicated in the drawings. Other symbols may be substituted if you prefer. Costumes are optional for the children. This script was written with minimum requirements for easy staging.

PASTOR: Joy to the world, Christmas is here! Our savior was born this day. Through his life and sacrifice our sins are forgiven. "Love came down at Christmas, Love all lovely, Love divine; Love was born at Christmas; Star and angels gave the sign." It is a day of celebration — a day to remember.

Using symbols of the Christmas story, many of our church children are here this morning to present for you their *Pageant of Love* — a visual witness, with passages of Scripture that will retell the beautiful story of the birth of Christ.

READER 1: Over seven hundred years before the day Christ was born, an angry prophet named Isaiah reprimanded his people, the people of Judah, for their sinful ways and their idol worship of false gods. But he also brought good news in prophecy, the news of a future king. (*BOY 1 enters wearing a robe and holding high the symbol of light.*) The lost people of this land had been walking in darkness but now the bright light of prophecy was shining down on them.

BOY 1: (*Holding his symbol of light high above his head he moves to a position Center Stage and speaks his lines.*)

"A child will be born to us!

A son will be given to us!

And he will be our ruler.

He will be called 'Wonderful Counselor'

'Mighty God,' 'Eternal Father,'

'Prince of Peace.' "

(*BOY 1 steps back to be the first of a line between the READERS.*)

READER 2: "O God, our help in ages past,

Our hope for years to come,

Our shelter from the stormy blast,

And our eternal home!

1 **O God, our help in ages past,**
 2 **Our hope for years to come,**
 3 **Be thou our guide while life shall last,**
 4 **And our eternal home!"**

5 **READER 1:** A child would be born to rule over all, but who
 6 would this child be? What would be his origin? The
 7 prophet Isaiah said, "There shall come forth a shoot from
 8 the stump of Jesse." By this he meant the royal line of
 9 David. From this stump a new branch will grow, fed from
 10 the roots of David's descendants. (*GIRL 1 holding the symbol*
 11 *of the stump of the Jesse tree steps forward in preparation for*
 12 *her lines.*) The new branch will be the new king to whom
 13 the spirit of the Lord will give wisdom and knowledge
 14 to rule his people . . . He will judge the poor fairly and
 15 defend the rights of the helpless.

16 **GIRL 1:** (*Holding her symbol high, she walks to Center Stage and*
 17 *speaks her lines.*) "Wolves and sheep will live together in
 18 peace, and leopards will lie down with young goats."
 19 (Isaiah 11:6) (*GIRL 1 steps back to the second in the line beside*
 20 *BOY 1.*)

21 **READER 2:** "Oh worship the King, all glorious above
 22 Oh gratefully sing his power and his love;
 23 Our shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days
 24 Pavillioned in splendor and girded with praise.

25
 26 **Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail**
 27 **In Thee do we trust, nor find Thee to fail**
 28 **Thy mercies how tender, how firm to the end**
 29 **Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer and Friend."**

30 **READER 1:** The prophecy was told and remembered, but how
 31 would it come to be? It happened like this: There was a
 32 town in Galilee named Nazareth. Living there was a
 33 young woman whose name was Mary. She was promised
 34 in marriage to a man named Joseph who was a
 35 descendant of the royal line of David. One evening, God

1 sent the angel Gabriel to speak to Mary. "Oh favored
 2 one," he said, "the Lord is with you. He has greatly blessed
 3 you. God's power will rest upon you, and you will give
 4 birth to a son. You shall call him Jesus. He will be great
 5 and he will be called the son of the Most High God." Mary
 6 was overwhelmed. "How can this be?" she said. "I am a
 7 virgin. I do not yet have a husband!" (*GIRL 2 carrying the*
 8 *symbol of the Holy Spirit steps forward in preparation for her*
 9 *lines.*) Gabriel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come to
 10 you. For this reason, your holy child will be called the
 11 'Son of God.' "

12 **GIRL 2:** (*Holding her symbol high, she speaks.*) "I am the Lord's
 13 servant. May it happen to me as you have said." (Luke
 14 1:38) (*GIRL 2 steps back to join the others in a line behind the*
 15 *READERS.*)

16 **READER 2:** "Light of the world, thy beauty
 17 Steals into every heart
 18 And glorifies with duty
 19 Life's poorest, humblest part;
 20 Thou robest in thy splendor
 21 The simple ways of men
 22 And helpest them to render
 23 Light back to thee again.

24
 25 Light of the world illumine
 26 This darkened earth of thine
 27 Till everything that's human
 28 Be filled with the divine;
 29 Till every tongue and nation,
 30 From sin's dominion free,
 31 Rise in the new creation
 32 Which springs from love and thee."

33 **READER 1:** Soon after the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary,
 34 she left Nazareth to go to a country place where dwelt
 35 Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, who was Mary's

1 cousin. Elizabeth herself had been visited with a miracle
 2 of the Holy Spirit. The angel Gabriel had appeared to
 3 Zechariah in the temple and told him that a son would
 4 be born to his wife, Elizabeth, and that he would be
 5 named John. He would be a great man and would prepare
 6 the way for the kingdom of the Lord Jesus who would
 7 follow. (*BOY 2 steps forward carrying a scroll in preparation*
 8 *for the speaking of his lines.*) It was at that same time that
 9 Emperor Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken
 10 throughout the Roman Empire. The official order from
 11 Quirinius who was then governor of Syria read:

12 **BOY 2:** (*Holding up a scroll and reading from it*) "Everyone must
 13 be registered, each to his own home town." (Luke 2:2-3)
 14 (*BOY 2 steps back to join the line of the others behind the*
 15 *READERS.*)

16 **READER 2:** "Walk in the light! So shalt thou know
 17 That fellowship of love
 18 His spirit only can bestow
 19 Who reigns in light above.

20 **READER 1:** Because Bethlehem was the birthplace of King
 21 David and Joseph was from the lineage of David, it was
 22 required that Joseph and Mary be enrolled in that city. It
 23 was a difficult journey for Mary, for she was large with
 24 child. (*GIRL 3, with the symbol of the Star of David, steps*
 25 *forward in preparation for speaking her lines.*) But Joseph and
 26 Mary quietly and patiently traveled the one hundred
 27 miles from Nazareth to the city of David, symbolized by
 28 the Star of David, so that the prophecy of Isaiah would
 29 be fulfilled.

30 **GIRL 3:** (*Holding her symbol, Star of David, she speaks her lines.*)
 31 "While they were there . . . she gave birth to her first-born
 32 son, wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger."
 33 (Luke 2:6-7) (*GIRL 3 steps back to join the others behind the*
 34 *READERS.*)

35 **READER 1:** There was no room for them in the inn and so the

1 **baby was born in a stable.**

2 **READER 2: “Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,**
 3 **The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.**
 4 **The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,**
 5 **The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.**

6
 7 **The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,**
 8 **But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.**
 9 **I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky**
 10 **And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.”**

11 **READER 1: As the baby Jesus slept in his manger bed, there**
 12 **were some shepherds nearby watching after their flocks.**
 13 **An angel of the Lord appeared to them. They were**
 14 **frightened but the angel calmed them saying, “I am here**
 15 **with good news that will bring joy to all people. This day**
 16 **in David’s city your Savior was born — Christ the Lord!**
 17 **And this will be a sign to you — the baby is wrapped in**
 18 **cloth and is lying in a manger.”** *(BOY 3 with the symbol of*
 19 *the Heavenly Host steps forward in preparation for speaking his*
 20 *lines.)* **Suddenly a great army of heaven’s angels appeared**
 21 **singing praises to God.**

22 **BOY 3: *(Stepping forward with his Heavenly Host symbol)* “Glory**
 23 **to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those**
 24 **with whom he is pleased”** *(Luke 2:14) (BOY 3 retires to a*
 25 *position behind the READERS in a line with the other children.)*

26 **READER 2: “Angels we have heard on high**
 27 **Sweetly singing o’er the plains.**
 28 **And the mountains in reply**
 29 **Echoing their joyous strains.**
 30 **Come to Bethlehem and see**
 31 **Him whose birth the angels sing.**
 32 **Come adore on bended knee**
 33 **Christ, the Lord, the newborn King.”**

34 **READER 1: A week or so after the birth of the Holy Baby,**
 35

Mary and Joseph took their infant son to the Temple in Jerusalem for the ceremony of purification as commanded by the Law of Moses. Every first-born male was to be dedicated to the Lord and named. (*GIRL 4 steps forward holding the symbol of the name, Jesus.*) There was at that time, living in Jerusalem, an old man named Simeon who had been waiting all of his prolonged life for Israel to be saved. He had been assured by the Holy Spirit that God was with him, and that he would not die until he had seen the promised Messiah. It was this same Simeon who was at the Temple to greet Joseph and Mary when they came to fulfill the requirements of the Law. Taking the child in his arms, Simeon knew instantly that this baby was the promised one. He looked upward, and with tear-filled eyes, he said:

GIRL 4: (*Holding symbol high, she speaks his lines.*) "Now, Lord, you have kept your promise . . . with my own eyes I have seen your salvation." (Luke 2:29-30)

READER 2: And then, having said this, he named the baby Jesus, the very name the angels had given him before he was born. It was Jeshua, the Hebrew form of the Greek word, Jesus, which means "God is Savior," "God Saves," and "God is With Us." Or, as Isaiah had said, "The Prince of Peace," "Wonderful Counselor."

READER 1: "Jesus shall reign wher-e'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run,
His Kingdom spread from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

Let every creature rise and bring
His grateful honors to our king;
Angels descend with songs again,
And earth repeat the loud amen!"

READER 2: In a land east of Jerusalem, there lived three men who were called the Magi — this name given to

define them as scholarly philosophers, scientists, and astrologers. They had seen a new star. It was different than any they had ever seen before. Or, was it a comet, or a planet, or two or more stars in a unique conjunction? Whatever it was, they knew that it signaled an event of world portent. They studied their scrolls until they came upon an old prophecy by Balaam saying that a star shall rise out of Jacob and a scepter shall spring up from Israel. This star must mean that a King was about to be born. Would it be a king for those of Israel only, or a King of Kings for all people? They must find the answer. They followed the path of the star until they came to Jerusalem. There, they asked, "Where is the child born to be king?" King Herod heard of this and commanded that the Magi be brought before him. He was very upset. But he kept his feelings hidden from the wise men of Persia. Instead, wearing a mask of friendship, he told them in secret to go to Bethlehem. It was there that a prophet had said a leader would come to lead the people, Israel. "Go there and find the child, and when you do, come back and tell me so that I, too, may worship him," Herod said. Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar left the king's palace and followed the star to a place in Bethlehem that gave them great surprise. It was a stable! A king born in a stable! They knew then that this was to be the "King of Kings" — a savior for all people, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, young and old. *(Two GIRLS and one BOY step forward carrying three symbols representing the gifts of the wise men.)* The three wise men donned their best robes, entered the stable, and knelt before the manger in worship. Then each of them presented a gift to the Holy Child.

GIRL 5: *(Holding up a plaque with a symbol of gold, she speaks one word.)* "Gold,"

BOY 4: *(Holding up a plaque with a symbol of frankincense, he*

1 *speaks one word*) **"Frankincense,"**

2 **GIRL 6:** (*Holding up a plaque with a symbol of myrrh, she concludes*
3 *with two words.*) **"and myrrh."** (*All three retire to the line of*
4 *the other children behind the READERS.*)

5 **READER 1:** **"Then entered in those wisemen three,**
6 **Full reverently upon the knee,**
7 **And offered there, in his presence,**
8 **Their gold and myrrh and frankincense.**
9 **Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel,**
10 **Born is the King of Israel."**

11 **READER 2:** **"After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared**
12 **in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, 'Get up, take the**
13 **child and his mother and go back to the land of Israel.'"**
14 **This Joseph did. He returned to Nazareth and resumed**
15 **his trade as a carpenter, raising Jesus as one of his own**
16 **sons until he reached manhood. It was then that Jesus**
17 **left Galilee to go to his cousin, John, asking to be baptized**
18 **in the Jordan River. John, the Baptizer, protested, "I**
19 **ought to be baptized by you and yet you have come to**
20 **me!" "Let it be so," Jesus replied. So John agreed and it**
21 **was done. As soon as Jesus came out of the water, heaven**
22 **was opened to him . . .** (*BOY 5 steps forward carrying a symbol*
23 *in preparation for his lines*) **and he saw the Spirit of God**
24 **coming down like a dove and lighting on his shoulder.**
25 **Then a voice said from heaven:**

26 **BOY 5:** (*Holding high his symbol of the dove*) **"This is my own**
27 **dear Son, with whom I am pleased."** (Luke 3:22)

28 **READER 2:** **Now thank we all our God**
29 **With heart and hands and voices,**
30 **Whose wondrous things hath done,**
31 **In whom his world rejoices;**
32 **Who from our mothers' arms**
33 **Hath blessed us on our way**
34 **With countless gifts of love,**
35 **And still is ours today.**

**READER 1: Let us all celebrate how love was born at
Christmas by singing "Joy to the World."**

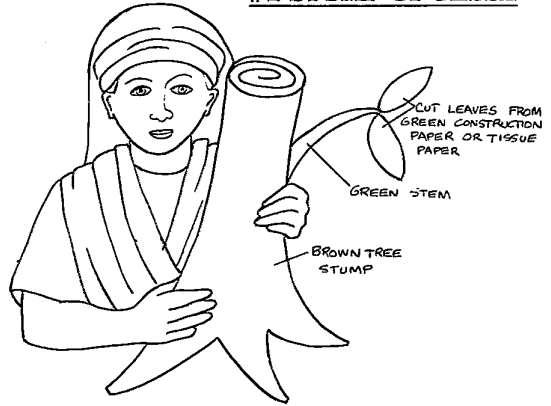
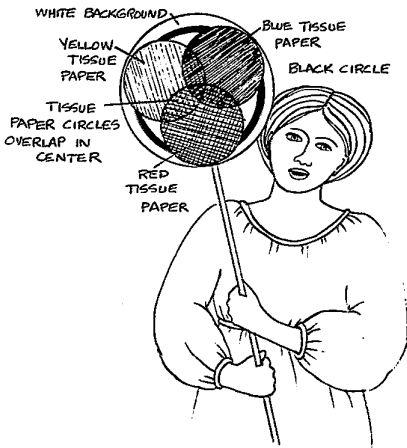
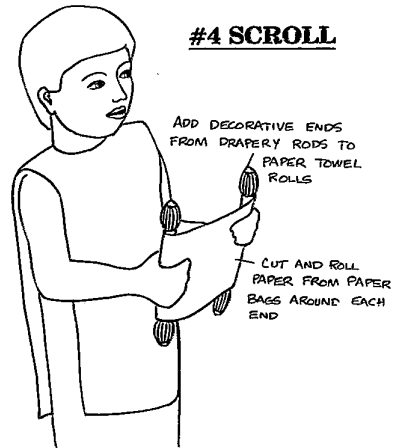
EVERYBODY SINGS: "Joy to the World"

*NOTE: The numerals running vertically down the left margin
of each page of dialog are for the convenience of the director.
With these, he/she may easily direct attention to a specific passage.*

SYMBOL CONSTRUCTION

Most of the symbols carried by the children can be made with corrugated cardboard and dowel rods. Fome-Cor, a lightweight durable material found in art supply stores, may also be used. Cutting should be done with an X-acto knife for best detail. Tempera paints and markers can be used to add colors and details. Other materials needed are: glue, colored construction and tissue paper, silver glitter, tooling foil, metallic gold paint and masking tape or a hot glue gun to attach the cardboard symbols to the dowels.

The illustrations offer a suggestion for how to construct each symbol. Size is not an important consideration, except for visibility. Colors, shapes and designs may be changed to suit individual needs and availability of supplies. The colors should be bright rather than realistic. They are symbols, not representative props.

#1 LIGHT**#2 STUMP OF JESSE****#3 HOLY SPIRIT****#4 SCROLL**



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