

THE MOST WONDERFUL BIRTHDAY OF ALL

by Janet Meili and Arthur Zapel
Music by Bill Andrews



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The Most Wonderful Birthday of All

by JANET MEILI and ARTHUR ZAPEL
Music by BILL ANDREWS

PRODUCTION NOTES

The joy of this Liturgical Christmas Pageant is the opportunity it provides for many to participate — both children and adults!

It may be staged without any props or without costumes, but we feel everyone will enjoy it more if some few colorful staging items are used.

If you have enough choir robes available, we would suggest they be used for the various groups of children. If there are not enough for everyone, some of the groups should be dressed alike, i.e. white shirts and white blouses for the boys and girls.

The drama pageant may be staged in the center of the chancel area on the altar rise, if available. A simple wooden manger should be the centerpiece. A doll inside representing the Baby Jesus need not be seen until Mary lifts the child for placing the cushion of hay or straw at the play's end. The play's action occurs at the side of the manger.

Simple robes will suffice for Mary, Joseph and the Shepherds. Shepherds. The "Wise Men" (King, Astrologer and Magician) should be costumed as lavishly as your circumstances permit — the same with their servants. It is this contrast with the poor humble shepherds and the stable boy's country clothing that helps give the play its message. The townspeople may be garbed also in simple robes or cloaks appropriate to the period.

The actions of the "actors" are pantomimed to the narrative. The crying of the Baby Jesus should not be overdone. A quiet, childlike sobbing may be heard briefly before each verse of the song, "Baby Jesus, Why Do You Cry?"

The music provided for this song was arranged for a single voice with guitar accompaniment. The tempo should be

Production Notes (contd)

slow enough so that the singer's words are clearly heard, for they are important in the context of the story. If a guitar is not available, the song may be sung acappella.

The gifts of the Three Wisemen can be improvised. They are more symbols than actual properties, though the burning incense could be a nice touch, if practical.

It is the story that's important in this presentation. The audience is not expecting a Broadway extravaganza, so sincerity is more important than showmanship.

ORDER OF SERVICE

1. Call to worship and welcome
2. Processional
3. Responsive prayer
4. Children's Recitation: "We've Got a Secret"
5. Carol: *(Congregation sings)* "Joy to the World"
6. Children's Recitation: "Do You Hear that Bell?"
7. Children's Choir: "Glad Christmas Bells"
8. Children's Recitation: "On This Christmas Day"
9. Carol: *(Solo or duet)* "O Holy Night"
10. Children's Recitation: "The Many Names of Jesus"
11. Instrumental Interlude: *(Organ or instrumental solo performance)*
12. Drama Pageant: "Why Do You Cry, Baby Jesus?"
13. Offertory and Carol: "O Come All Ye Faithful"
14. Recitation: "The Letters of Christmas"
15. Children's Gift Ceremony
16. Processional: "O Little Town of Bethlehem"
17. Pastor: A prayer for "The Most Wonderful Birthday of All"
18. Closing Carol: "Silent Night"
19. Benediction: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

1 PASTOR OR

2 LEADER: Welcome to our children's liturgy for
3 Christmas. Today we celebrate the most
4 wonderful birthday of all — the birth of
5 our Lord, Jesus Christ.

6 PROCESSIONAL: *(Children of many age levels up to 12*
7 *years enter the Sanctuary and move down*
8 *the Center aisle and seat themselves in the*
9 *first row of pews)*

10 Responsive Prayer

11 LEADER: Children bring unrestrained joy and
12 excitement to the days of Christmas.

13 ALL: Thank you God for children.

14 LEADER: Their eyes and hearts remind us that this
15 is the birthday for celebration every
16 day of our lives.

17 ALL: Thank you God for children.

18 LEADER: Their simple faith renews and reaffirms our
19 faith in Jesus Christ, our savior.

20 ALL: Thank you God for children.

21 LEADER: Their discovery is our rediscovery.

22 ALL: Thank you God for children.

23 LEADER: Children were important to Jesus. They
24 are important to us. They restore our joy
25 and wonder. Let us be as children today
26 and worship with fresh enthusiasm and
27 joy without restraint.

28 RECITATION: "We've Got a Secret"

29 *(Children of groups 1, 2 and 3 into*
30 *position. Three groups of three children*
31 *each rise from their seats and walk to the*
32 *Center of presentation area. Each group*
33 *recites in unison as indicated.)*

34 GROUP 1: *(Standing Stage Left)*

35 We've got a secret

1 A secret we won't tell
 2 It's a special someone's birthday
 3 Someone you know quite well.
 4 **GROUP 2:** *(Standing Stage Right)*
 5 But if you keep this secret
 6 And no one knows but you
 7 There won't be any Christmas
 8 And then what will we do?
 9 **GROUP 3:** *(Standing Centerstage)*
 10 You'd better tell your secret
 11 All together, loud and clear.
 12 **GROUPS 1 & 2:** *(Together)*
 13 Today is Jesus' birthday
 14 Shout the news both far and near.
 15 **CONGREGATION:** *(Sings) Suggested Carol: "Joy to the*
 16 *World"*
 17 **RECITATION:** "Do You Hear That Bell?"
 18 *(Six children proceed to Center during*
 19 *preceding carol)*
 20 **CHILD 1:** Do you hear that bell? *(Ding-Dong)*
 21 *(Church bells, hand bells, or organ chimes*
 22 *work well to provide "Ding-Dong" sound.)*
 23 **CHILD 2:** It's our church bell ringing. *(Ding-Dong)*
 24 **CHILD 3:** It's ringing for joy. *(Ding-Dong)*
 25 **CHILD 4:** It's ringing for peace. *(Ding-Dong)*
 26 **CHILD 5:** It's ringing for love. *(Ding-Dong)*
 27 **CHILD 6:** It's ringing for Christmas. *(Ding-Dong)*
 28 **CHILD 1:** Listen to that church bell. *(Ding-Dong)*
 29 **CHILD 2:** Listen to it call you. *(Ding-Dong)*
 30 **CHILD 3:** It calls you to church. *(Ding-Dong)*
 31 **CHILD 4:** It calls you to love. *(Ding-Dong)*
 32 **CHILD 5:** It calls you to share. *(Ding-Dong)*
 33 **CHILD 6:** It calls you to Christmas. *(Ding-Dong)*
 34
 35

1 **CHILDREN'S**

2 **CHOIR:** Suggested carol: "Glad Christmas Bells" by
3 Anonymous. See page 14.
4

5 **GROUPS 1 & 2:** *(Move to Center)*

6 **GROUP 1:** *(Chants, repeating spoken chorus refrain.)*

7 On this Christmas Day . . . On this
8 Christmas Day . . . On this Christmas
9 Day . . . *(Continue under)*

10 **GROUP 2:** *(Over chanting)* Welcome to Jesus, the
11 Son of the Father

12 **GROUP 1:** *(Refrain)* On this Christmas Day . . . On
13 this Christmas Day . . . *(Continue under)*

14 **GROUP 2:** *(Over chanting)* Welcome to the Lord who
15 came down to earth

16 **GROUP 1:** *(Refrain)* On this Christmas Day . . . On
17 this Christmas Day . . . On this Christmas
18 Day . . .

19 **GROUP 2:** *(Over Chanting)* Welcome the Savior, God's
20 gift to mankind

21 **GROUP 1:** *(Refrain)* On this Christmas Day . . . On
22 this Christmas Day . . . On this Christmas
23 day . . .

24 **GROUP 2:** *(Over chanting)* Welcome to the Christ
25 Child, rejoice at his birth.

26 **GROUP 1:** *(Refrain)* On this Christmas Day. Christ
27 has come today.

28 *(Solo or duet of children singing.)*

29 Suggested Solos: "O Holy Night", or
30 "Away In a Manger". *(One chorus only)*

31 **RECITATION:** "The Many Names of Jesus" *(Six child*
32 *readers to Center)*

33 **LEADER:** In the Bible, Jesus was given many names
34 to describe him and his mission here on
35 earth.

- 1 CHILD 1: Isaiah called him Immanuel, Wonderful
 2 Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting
 3 Father, the Prince of Peace.
- 4 CHILD 2: Isaiah also called him Mighty Traveler,
 5 Anointed Preacher, Arm of the Lord,
 6 Divine Servant, Righteous King.
- 7 CHILD 3: Matthew called him The King and the
 8 Son of David. Mark described him as a
 9 Wonder Worker and Tireless Servant of
 10 God and Man; and Luke considered him
 11 the friend of outcasts and sinners.
- 12 CHILD 4: Among John's many descriptions of
 13 Christ are those picturing him as The Son
 14 of God, The Son of Man, The Divine
 15 Teacher and The Great Physician.
- 16 CHILD 5: John also described him as The Light of
 17 the World, The Good Shepherd, The
 18 Resurrection and the life, The True Vine
 19 and The Giver of the Spirit.
- 20 CHILD 6: Paul called him The Peacemaker, The
 21 Lord of Glory, The Conquerer of Death
 22 and The Sacrificial Lamb.
- 23 LEADER: It is this Redeemer, this Author and
 24 Finisher of Our Faith whose birthday
 25 we celebrate today.
 26 *(Instrumental interlude — organ or solo*
 27 *instrument)*
 28 The children of our _____
 29 Sunday School class present now for you a
 30 a drama pageant entitled:
- 31 DRAMA
- 32 PAGEANT: "Why Do You Cry, Baby Jesus?"
- 33 NARRATOR: On a night almost 2000 years ago, while
 34 shepherds were watching their flocks in
 35 the hills of Galilee, a messenger of God

appeared and spoke to the shepherds.
 They were frightened. But the angel said
 to them, "Be not afraid. I bring you news
 of great joy. On this night your Savior is
 born in the city of David." There came
 then a bright light. The shepherds saw
 within it a heavenly host of angels who
 sang these words: "Glory to God in the
 highest, and on the earth peace among
 men of good will." After this glorious
 moment there was silence. The shepherds
 left their flocks and went down to the
 city of Bethlehem and in a stable, lying
 in a manger, they found the Baby and
 Mary and Joseph. They told Mary what
 the angels told them about the Baby
 Jesus. Mary listened quietly and kept
 these words, pondering them in her
 heart. The Baby Jesus, lying in the
 manger, was crying, and she could only
 wonder about the meaning of this life now
 beginning.

CHILDREN'S

CHOIR:

(Singing)

Baby Jesus, why do you cry?

Heaven sings your glory

Angels tell the joyful story

Glad news fills the sky

Why do you cry?

NARRATOR:

The Baby Jesus was flesh, yet he was
 God. He knew comfort. He knew pain.
 Was he crying for himself, or for the
 world whose suffering he would now
 share? *(Pause)* Visitors who heard the
 news of his birth came to the stable to

celebrate his coming. Shepherds.
 Townspeople. And three very wise
 noblemen from the East. They were a
 king, an astrologer and a magician. They
 stood in awe at the entrance to the stable
 for they had found, at last, the object of
 their search. The wondrous star of
 Bethlehem had led them to this humble
 place. They had come to pay homage to
 the newborn Messiah king. Their tall and
 richly outfitted camels, standing outside
 the stable, soon attracted many curious
 onlookers. Certainly a most unusual event
 must be taking place, and they wanted to
 be witness to it. What they saw was the
 curious ceremony of three noblemen
 from the east presenting gifts to a new
 newborn crying baby. The first of these
 important men to approach the manger,
 in a stately demeanor, was a bearded king.
*(Enter King from Stage Left, kneel at
 manger.)* He wore a crown of exquisite
 jewels and he carried a casket of gold
 coins which he placed beside the crude
 manger bed, as he kneeled in honor of
 the infant king. There was quiet for only an
 instant. Soon again the Baby Jesus was
 crying harshly.

CHILDREN'S

CHOIR:

(Singing)

Baby Jesus, why do you cry?
 All the people praise your birth
 Golden treasure of great worth
 A mighty king brings nigh
 Why do you cry?

1 **NARRATOR:** The Baby Jesus was the child of God and
2 man. Infant and Savior, he cared for nothing
3 gold. Precious metals . . . jewels of great
4 value. . . none of these gifts would give
5 him peace. (*King backs slowly to Stage*
6 *Left; enter astrologer and kneel at*
7 *manger.*) As the richly adorned king
8 backed respectfully away from the
9 manger bed, the dark-robed astrologer
10 came before the crying baby and bowed
11 his head in tribute. He carried a cask of
12 sacred frankincense. Gently, he placed
13 it before the manger, then he signaled his
14 servants to burn a quantity of it.
15 (*Servants enter from Left with smoking*
16 *incense, stand at manger.*) Soon, gossamer
17 strands of smoke filled the air, imparting
18 to the stable the mystic aroma of reverent
19 worship. There was a hushed moment,
20 but the weeping of the Baby Jesus
21 continued. (*Astrologer turns, walks to*
22 *Stage Left by first king. Servants follow.*)

23 **CHILDREN'S**
24 **CHOIR:** (*Singing*)
25 Baby Jesus, why do you cry?
26 Heaven sings your glory
27 Angels tell the joyful story
28 Glad news fills the sky
29 Why do you cry?

30 **NARRATOR:** Wiseman, shepherd, towns person and
31 servant. No one knew the incarnate
32 purpose of this beautiful child. Born to
33 the strains of heavenly music, beneath
34 the light of a brilliant star, no one
35 perceived him as both great and humble,

one in the other. *(Pause) (Enter Magician and Attendant, approach manger slowly. Anoint Baby's head.)* The third nobleman, a magician of slender stature, moved slowly to the manger. He carried a large earthen jar which he softly placed at the head of the manger bed. He gave a sign, and one of his attendants lifted its lid. Ceremoniously, the magician scooped out, on two long fingers, a quantity of a red-brown ointment. A gasp came to the lips of the onlookers, for they all knew that this balm was the highly-treasured ointment of myrrh, meant only for persons of the very greatest power and position. But the Baby Jesus continued to cry. *(Magician and Attendant move to Stage Left)*

CHILDREN'S

CHOIR:

(Singing)

Baby Jesus, why do you cry?

Giv'n are gifts of great esteem

Will high tributes fill your dream?

Where does your answer lie?

Why do you cry?

NARRATOR:

The ceremony of gifts had been completed, and still the Baby Jesus cried. With downcast eyes, the noblemen from the east retired to a corner of the stable. Why was there not a sign of heavenly acceptance for their honored gifts? Had they not shared the greatest symbols of their powers? They could not understand. The important actions of the wise noblemen had been seen by a small shepherd boy who

1 managed to climb onto a narrow
2 outcropping of the rock that formed one
3 wall of the stable. He was deeply impressed
4 by the events he had witnessed. He was
5 pleased that the Baby Jesus should be so
6 highly honored. But he was sorry that
7 the Baby Jesus continued to cry so
8 unhappily. The forlorn sobbing made him
9 think of the sad bleating of the newly
10 born lambs in his father's flock. So many
11 times, he had been able to comfort them.
12 Maybe now he could do the same for the
13 Baby Jesus. Without hesitation, he climbed
14 down from his perch and went directly to
15 the hay bin behind the stable. He filled his
16 arms with a bundle of fresh, sweet smelling
17 hay. (*Boy enters from rear, through congrega-*
18 *tion, carrying bundle of hay. Proceeds to*
19 *manger.*) No one noticed him as he came
20 back into the stable and walked clumsily
21 up to the far side of the manger bed where
22 he spoke to Mary, the mother of Baby
23 Jesus. (*Mary lifts the baby into her arms*
24 *as boy puts hay in manger.*) She smiled at
25 him and quietly lifted the crying infant so
26 that the boy could arrange his armload of
27 hay in the hollow of the manger. When he
28 was done, Mary tenderly placed the Baby
29 Jesus in the soft nest of fresh hay. No one
30 was really aware of this simple act. But
31 in a moment everyone stopped. Suddenly
32 they all were aware that the Baby Jesus
33 stopped crying. And as they looked at his
34 infant face, there came to it a gentle smile.

1 It was only a very small smile, of course,
 2 but it was enough to bring a feeling of
 3 marvelous joy and peace to everyone
 4 present.

5 **CHILDREN'S**

6 **CHOIR:**

(Singing)

7 Baby Jesus, why do you smile?
 8 What has made you happy now?
 9 Does your laughter show us how
 10 to give and love and care?
 11 Can we learn to care?

12 **OFFERTORY**

13 **AND CAROL:**

(Congregation sings a stately carol)

14 Suggestions: "O Come All Ye Faithful,"
 15 "Noel, Noel," "Hark, the Herald Angels
 16 Sing."

17 **RECITATION**

18 **PRESENTATION:** "The Letters of Christmas"

19 **LEADER:** Now our _____ grade
 20 Sunday School class would like to present
 21 "The Letters of Christmas."

22 *(Nine children proceed to Center, each*
 23 *holding a large poster card. One side has*
 24 *a single black letter in dark green, the other*
 25 *side [unseen at first] has a single letter in*
 26 *red. They line up and show the sides with*
 27 *the green letters. It reads:*

28 *I S A S R M C H T)*

29 **1ST CHILD:** I is for the infant born at Christmas.

30 **2ND CHILD:** S is for the star that shone on high.

31 **3RD CHILD:** A is for the angels with their message.

32 **4TH CHILD:** S is for the shepherds who believed.

33 **5TH CHILD:** R is for the Romans, cruel and hateful.

34 **6TH CHILD:** M is for the Magi from afar.

35 **7TH CHILD:** C is for the coming of the Savior.

1 8TH CHILD: H is for the happiness of everyone.
 2 9TH CHILD: T is for the thanks we give to God.
 3 LEADER: You've told a lovely story.
 4 You've told it very well.
 5 But your letters are all mixed up.
 6 What you mean is hard to tell.
 7 *(All nine children flip over their cards. It*
 8 *now reads: C H R I S T M A S.)*

9 CHILDREN'S

10 GIFT CEREMONY:

11 LEADER: Christmas is a time of giving
 12 We give to everyone
 13 To help us all remember
 14 That God gave us his son.

15 PROCESSIONAL: Suggested Carol: "O Little Town of
 16 Bethlehem."

17 *(The children from all Sunday School*
 18 *classes proceed down main aisle, place*
 19 *their gift at the base of the altar area.*
 20 *Exit Chancel by the side aisles.)*

21 LEADER: These gifts of Christian love will be
 22 delivered to: *(Name of charitable children's*
 23 *organization)*

24 A PRAYER:

25 PASTOR: O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and
 26 everlasting God, grant that the words and
 27 music we have heard this day with our
 28 outward ears may, through thy grace,
 29 touch our inward hearts so we may forever
 30 keep Christmas as a celebration of the most
 31 wonderful birthday of all — the birthday
 32 of thy son, Jesus Christ.

33 CLOSING CAROL: *(Entire congregation sings)* Suggested
 34 Carol: "Silent Night."

35



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customerservice@christianpub.com