

THE GIFT OF A SON

by Marlin E. Thomas



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The Gift of a Son

An audience participation
Christmas dinner pageant

by MARLIN E. THOMAS

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PRODUCTION NOTES

This dinner party/pageant is a meaningful — and fun! — way to celebrate Jesus' birth. No rehearsal is needed — spontaneity is the key to its success. After enjoying a potluck dinner, guests find themselves On-stage as Wise Men, Shepherds, Angels, and more. A birthday party for Jesus completes the evening. The instructions that follow and the Director's Notes will explain how to make the program work for your congregation. Have fun!

Pageant Length: Approximately one hour.

Setting: A banquet/dining hall, preferably with a stage, decorated as it would be for a birthday party. A dessert table contains a huge birthday cake to be served later. One large banner proclaims "Happy Birthday, Jesus." Other congratulatory slogans may also be used.

Round tables that can hold six to eight people are suggested. A numbered sign should be placed on each table (one through nine). Tables should be filled up as the guests arrive so that each of the nine (or less) tables has enough persons to fill out the impromptu cast. (A designated host/hostess should direct the seating.) A piano should be located at a convenient place with the pianist seated nearby. Mary, Joseph, and the Narrator should also be seated at this table since they will be going On-stage frequently.

If your room is without a stage, you may put together a temporary one using a platform elevated on six- to ten-inch blocks or risers. Be careful to make it "stumble free" for the unrehearsed actors. Or you may simply designate one section of the room as the playing area.

Cast: A Narrator and the guests seated at nine (or less) dinner tables. It is advisable to use the same Mary and Joseph in every scene to add some continuity to the pageant.

The group at each of the numbered tables will portray one scene in the story of Jesus' life. (The table numbers correspond with the scene numbers.) A group leader will be seated at each table to assist in dividing up the parts and giving the group some direction. Each leader will provide single-scene scripts for the cast that he/she has copied beforehand. If desired, simple costumes may be placed near each table or in a big trunk or box that is shared by all nine tables. The group leader will provide

props, if any are required.

The children will be asked ahead of time to bring birthday gifts for Jesus' party and to have some songs ready to sing.

Staging: All you'll need are some strategically-placed mikes to pick up the sound. Cordless mikes may be used if available. An Off-stage mike should be provided for the Off-stage readers.

The Narrator should have a conveniently-located podium with mike, and a hymnal within reach for leading the singing.

The Narrator will call the cast members forward by tables as the script directs.

Accommodations: Seating arrangements may be handled a number of different ways: families may be seated together, individuals may be seated in random order, or place cards may be used. Your designated host/hostess can decide which way is best. Care should be given that the casted tables have a comfortable mix of younger and older adults, teenagers, and children.

Dinner will be served before the program begins. Tables may be cleared following dinner.

The birthday party may be handled in a way customary to the group presenting the pageant.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The following is a list of your responsibilities as director. The majority of your planning/organization will be done well before the actual night of the program so that you can relax and enjoy with everyone else. Your work will be done!

At least one month prior to the program:

1. When and where: Determine the exact date, time and location of the program with your pastor.

2. Group leaders and other important persons: Appoint nine group leaders to be in charge of a table for the program (Sunday school teachers are an excellent choice, as they are used to "taking charge.") Also appoint a Mary and a Joseph (two young people who are responsible and can act reasonably well) and a Narrator, if you don't wish to take on that responsibility. (The Narrator must be comfortable leading music.) It may also help to appoint a host or hostess for the evening (See "Accommodations" in the Production Notes.) He/she can ensure that the parts are distributed well. For example, a 13-year-old boy is needed at table nine to play the part of the boy Jesus. Care must also be taken that the more outgoing actors in your group are distributed evenly.

3. Meeting: Hold an informational meeting for all the group leaders, Mary, Joseph, and the Narrator (if someone other than you). This will be an important time to work out the details of the program. Subjects addressed should include:

**Assigning tables.* Prior to the meeting you can write the group leader's name and the number (1-9) you have assigned him/her on the outside of the playbooks. Hand them out.

**Summary of program.* Explain the "no-rehearsal" approach and how it will be executed.

**Assigning responsibilities.* Explain that each group leader is responsible for his/her particular scene. They will need to make copies of their scenes — enough for the cast members plus extras. As time permits, they may want to highlight individual parts on the copies for ease in reading. They will also need to collect any props called for. (This information may be found on the division pages before each scene.) They should aid their table in dividing up parts on the right of the program.

**The arrangement of the tables and stage.* It is helpful to hold

your meeting in the same room you will stage the program.

**Instructions for Mary and Joseph.* Emphasize that they are a very important part of the pageant. Ask them to be familiar with their lines (they don't need to be memorized) and to come up with simple costumes. Group leaders should be told that it is more efficient for Mary and Joseph to keep their props at Table 3 as opposed to being scattered among the various scene tables in which they appear.

**Costumes.* Decide as a group if you want them or not. They are optional, except in the case of Mary and Joseph. (It sets them apart as the primary characters.) You may wish to have a large box with several biblical-looking robes and tunics, white angel robes, shepherd's staffs, etc., for all the tables to share. You may already have many costumes on hand from past pageants and plays. If not, you will want to ask a seamstress to help you out.

**Group leader participation.* Encourage the group leaders to take part in the pageant themselves. They should be able to cue in the extras. It will help them to read over their scenes several times in advance of the program.

**Questions.* Close the meeting by making sure all group leaders understand their responsibilities.

4. Children's songs: Ask the children's Sunday school department music leader to have some Christmas songs ready by the night of the program.

5. Children's gifts to Jesus: Tell the Sunday school teachers in the primary grades that the children will need to have gifts for baby Jesus the night of the program. These gifts can be a Sunday school craft project, wrapped boxes, gifts (food or other) for needy families, or each child's favorite personal toy or other item.

6. Soloists: Arrange for two soloists to sing during the program. The suggested song for the first solo is "Once in Royal David's City." If it isn't in your hymnal, you can find it in *Hymns for the Living Church*, Hope Publishing Company, 380 South Main Place, Carol Stream, IL 60188, or you may substitute another appropriate song if desired.

Lyrics for the second solo, "Bring a Torch, Jeanette Isabella," are printed in the script. The music may be found in most collections of Christmas songs.

7. Dinner: Coordinate with your social group or whoever is planning the potluck dinner and clean-up. Make sure they let church members know that dessert will be provided.

8. Cake: Arrange to have a decorated birthday cake for Jesus and find someone to serve it that night.

9. Set-up and decorations: Ask for help in decorating the room. (See “Setting” and “Staging” in the Production Notes.) This is an excellent project for a youth group. They can also set up tables and chairs, the Off-stage microphone, numbered cards for the tables, etc., and help in the clean-up afterwards.

10. Options/Considerations: Assigning one scene to each of nine Sunday school classes in advance is a way to avoid impromptu performing, if desired. It all depends on the goals of the evening and the flexibility of the group.

In the event that less than eight persons at nine tables show up, either cancel Scene 1, or delete the extras from the scenes. In the event that more than nine tables are filled, designate nine tables as the cast member tables.

Above all, read through the script to familiarize yourself with the program so that you can take care of details — and don’t be afraid to delegate!

NARRATOR: (*Introduction before the meal*) Good evening. Welcome to this very special, 1,991st (*or — st/nd/rd/th*) birthday celebration for Jesus Christ. As you all know, Jesus' birthday is the most celebrated birthday of all time. It has special meaning for me, because my personal contact with Jesus has made my life different — and better — than it would have been otherwise. I know that's true for many of you who are here tonight also.

For our birthday party program tonight, we have placed scripts on nine of the tables. Those of you who are sitting at those tables have the unique privilege of helping us remember how life was back in the days of Jesus' birth. I will serve as the narrator for the entire play, and ———— and ———— will play the parts of Mary and Joseph throughout the play. All the other parts in this Christmas story will be enacted by you following the meal. You will each portray one aspect of the Christmas story. If you wish, you may use costumes to help create your characters. All other furniture and stage props are either on the stage, or will be provided by the group leader at your table. You may arrange the physical aspects of the scene as you wish. The important thing is not the costuming but your portrayal of how you think your scene was acted out.

You may divide the parts among yourselves as part of your dinner conversation. A group leader at your table will assist you in assigning parts, props and costumes.

Before we begin the meal, let's pray.

DINNER

NARRATOR: (*One or two customary party jokes may be included here if appropriate. Other party activities, such as door prizes, may also be included.*) Now, to get us into the traditional Christmas program spirit, the boys and girls are going to sing some special songs for us.
(*CHILDREN may sing prepared music or volunteer as desired.*)

SCENE 1

Prophecy About the Messiah's Birth

(Text: Various Scriptures, NIV)

CAST

Reader 1 (God)

Reader 2 (Jacob, an older man)

Reader 3 (Balaam)

Reader 4 (David)

Reader 5 (Joel)

Reader 6 (Isaiah)

Reader 7 (Micah)

Reader 8 (Jeremiah)

PROPS: None

COSTUMES: (Optional) Biblical robes for each reader (except Reader 1, who reads the part of God Off-stage).

NOTE TO GROUP LEADER, TABLE 1: You will need to make seven copies of Scene 1 for the cast, providing, of course, that you play a part and read from your playbook.

1 **NARRATOR:** Usually the first one to know about the coming
 2 of a new baby is the mother. In Jesus' case, however, it
 3 was the father. God, the Father, knew about Jesus' birth
 4 thousands of years before Mary, his mother did.

5 In this first scene we will hear what God and some
 6 of his prophets said about Jesus' arrival. Those from
 7 Table One who will speak the words of prophecy may
 8 come forward now.

9 **READER 1 (God):** *(Off-stage)* "And I, (God the Father), will put
 10 enmity between you and the woman, and between your
 11 offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will
 12 strike his heel." *(Genesis 3:15 NIV)*

13 **READER 2 (Jacob):** I am Israel, Judah's father. "The scepter
 14 will not depart from him, nor the ruler's staff from
 15 between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs. The
 16 obedience of the nations shall be his." *(Genesis 49:10 NIV)*

17 **READER 3 (Balaam):** I am Balaam, a prophet of God from
 18 Mesopotamia. "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but
 19 not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will
 20 rise out of Israel." *(Numbers 24:17 NIV)*

21 **READER 4 (David):** I am David, king of Israel. One day God
 22 said to me, "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your
 23 inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.
 24 Therefore, you kings, be wise; serve the Lord with fear
 25 and rejoice with trembling. Blessed are all who take
 26 refuge in him." *(Psalms 2:8-11 NIV)*

27 **READER 5 (Joel):** My name is Joel. As a prophet, I preached
 28 in Judah when Elisha was preaching in Israel. Some day
 29 soon, "God will pour out his Spirit on all people. Even
 30 on all God's servants, both men and women, he will pour
 31 out his Spirit in those days to come. There will be wonders
 32 everywhere, and whoever calls on the name of the Lord
 33 will be saved." *(Joel 2:28-32 NIV)*

34 **READER 6 (Isaiah):** I am Isaiah. "To us a child is born; to us a
 35 son is given. The government will be on his shoulders,

1 and he will be called a wonderful Counselor, a mighty
2 God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” (*Isaiah*
3 9:6 NIV)

4 **READER 7 (Micah):** (*From near Off-stage*) Psst, I’m Micah. I
5 worked for many years with Isaiah. Do you want to know
6 where the child will be born? Then listen . . . “But you,
7 Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the
8 clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will
9 be ruler over Israel — whose origins are from of old, from
10 ancient times.” (*Micah 5:2 NIV*)

11 **READER 8 (Jeremiah):** (*With a wistful voice, full of longing*) Oh
12 me, oh my . . . what a dreadful sight . . . I, Jeremiah, saw
13 thousands of my fellow countrymen and women going
14 into slavery. And all because of wicked rulers. “But the
15 days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up
16 to David a righteous branch, a king who will reign wisely
17 and do what is just and right in the land. In his days
18 Judah will be saved. His name will be, ‘The Lord our
19 Righteousness’.” (*Jeremiah 23:5-6 NIV*)

20 **NARRATOR:** Those words of prophecy on the coming
21 Messiah created a feeling of expectancy among the
22 people. They longed for a Savior to deliver them from
23 oppression. Let’s recognize that by singing together
24 hymn number —, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” first
25 verse.

SCENE 2

The Angel Appears to Zechariah and Mary

(Text: Luke 1:5-38, NIV)

CAST

Zechariah

Gabriel

Mary

Extras (Group of Worshipers)

PROPS: Censor for ZECHARIAH, woodcarving for MARY.

COSTUMES: (Optional) Wings and white robe for GABRIEL, biblical robe for ZECHARIAH. (MARY will already be in costume.)

NOTE TO GROUP LEADER, TABLE 2: You will need to make two copies of Scene 2 for the cast. (MARY will read from her playbook.) Discuss beforehand how the EXTRAS should act as the WORSHIPERS; they will not need copies.

1 **NARRATOR:** One fine day in October, many years ago, an
 2 angel from God appeared to two God-loving Jews and
 3 gave each of them a very special message. Let's watch
 4 now as Table Two lets us peek behind the curtain of time.

5 *(Actors from Table Two take their places On-stage. EXTRAS*
 6 *from Table Two form a small group of WORSHIPERS next to her.)*

7 **ZECHARIAH:** *(Slightly stooped, voice showing the stress of life.)*
 8 Hello, there. I'm Zechariah, a country priest from Judea.
 9 This is my week to help offer sacrifices in the temple at
 10 Jerusalem. In fact, last night I was selected by lot to offer
 11 the incense of prayer this morning. See, here is my
 12 censor . . . *(An Off-stage voice breaks in.)*

13 **GABRIEL:** *(Off-stage)* Zechariah . . . Zechariah . . . *(GABRIEL*
 14 *appears from backstage. ZECHARIAH falls to his knees and*
 15 *shakes in fright.)* Do not be afraid, Zechariah. God has
 16 heard your prayer. You and Elizabeth will have a son
 17 named John. He will bring back many of the people of
 18 Israel to the Lord their God. He will prepare the people
 19 for the coming of God's Anointed One. *(GABRIEL*
 20 *disappears again backstage. ZECHARIAH rises, tries to speak,*
 21 *waves his hands helplessly, and returns to his seat at Table Two.*
 22 *Group of WORSHIPERS return to their seats, scratching their heads.)*

23 **MARY:** *(A young woman enters On-stage. She is tenderly toying*
 24 *with a woodcarving. She speaks as if in a dream.)* And then
 25 Joseph said to me, "Mary, I have been watching you
 26 during the last few weeks. You are a beautiful young
 27 woman now, and I have begun to really love you. I would
 28 like for you to become my wife. Here . . . here is a
 29 woodcarving I made for you. I hope you will accept it . . ."
 30 *(MARY's voice trails off as she sighs in contentment and holds*
 31 *the carving close to her.)*

32 **GABRIEL:** *(Appears in the doorway and speaks gently.)* Hello,
 33 Mary. May God be with you. *(MARY sucks in her breath,*
 34 *startled.)* Do not be afraid, Mary. You have found favor
 35 with God. You are going to have a baby soon, and you shall

1 **name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the**
2 **Son of the Most High God. The Lord will give him the**
3 **throne of his father David, and he will reign forever. The**
4 **Holy Spirit will make it possible. Nothing is impossible**
5 **with God.**

6 **MARY:** *(Kneeling)* **I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as**
7 **you have said.** *(GABRIEL exits and MARY stands motionless*
8 *for a brief moment. Then she quietly returns to her table in awe.*
9 *GABRIEL also returns to the table.)*

10 **SOLOIST:** Rises and sings verses 1 and 2 of "Once in Royal David's
11 City."

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SCENE 3

Mary Visits Elizabeth/The Angel Visits Joseph

(Text: Luke 1:39-56, Matthew 1:18-21, NIV)

CAST

Mary

Elizabeth (An older woman)

Naomi

Esther

Ruth (A young girl, about 10 years old)

Sarah

Joseph

Issachar

Gabriel

Extras (Friends of Elizabeth)

PROPS: None.

COSTUMES: (Optional) Seven adult biblical robes, one child-sized robe (for RUTH), six lengths of cloth for headcoverings for the females. White robe and wings for GABRIEL. (MARY and JOSEPH will already be in costume.)

NOTE TO GROUP LEADER, TABLE 3: You will need to make seven copies of Scene 3 for the cast. (MARY and JOSEPH will read from their playbooks.) Discuss beforehand how the EXTRAS (the FRIENDS) should act; they will not need copies. Also, make sure you place two chairs On-stage off to one side for MARY and ELIZABETH to sit on.

1 **NARRATOR:** Well, you can imagine the turmoil in the hearts
 2 of Zechariah and Mary as each of them carried secrets
 3 deep within themselves. Zechariah soon told his secret,
 4 but Mary kept hers hidden for nearly six months. Then,
 5 one day after John had been born, Joseph heard about
 6 Mary's secret. Table Three will share the drama of those
 7 times with us.

8 *(EXTRAS on Table Three may serve as friends of ELIZABETH,*
 9 *standing in small groups as she talks with MARY.)*

10 **MARY:** *(Walks along the pathway from her table to the stage. She*
 11 *spies ELIZABETH On-stage, and calls out to her.)* Elizabeth!
 12 Elizabeth!

13 **ELIZABETH:** *(An older woman. Begins speaking immediately*
 14 *while MARY continues walking until she reaches the stage.)*
 15 Mary, oh Mary. Blessed are you among women, and
 16 blessed is the child you will bear! *(The two women embrace.)*
 17 My, what a favor this is that the mother of my Lord should
 18 come to visit me. As soon as the sound of your greetings
 19 reached my ears, the baby within me kicked for joy!
 20 Blessed are you, who has believed that God will
 21 accomplish what he promised.

22 **MARY:** My soul praises the Lord and my spirit rejoices in
 23 God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble
 24 state of his servant. From now on all generations will
 25 call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things
 26 for me. Holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who
 27 fear him, from generation to generation. *(MARY and*
 28 *ELIZABETH sit down On-stage and talk quietly together. The*
 29 *FRIENDS of ELIZABETH talk among themselves.)*

30 **NAOMI:** Now, what do you think that means?

31 **ESTHER:** I don't know. Ever since Elizabeth got pregnant,
 32 she's been acting strangely.

33 **RUTH:** *(A 10-year-old)* Mom, where did that girl *(Pointing to*
 34 *MARY)* come from? I've never seen her before.

35 **SARAH:** Shh! *(Turning to FRIENDS)* You know, I can't help but

1 think that things are going to be mighty different around
2 here from now on!

3 NARRATOR: Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three
4 months. Right after John's birth she returned home.
5 (*MARY and ELIZABETH return to their table.*)

6 NARRATOR: Two or three months later, Joseph heard some
7 things which *greatly* distressed him.

8 JOSEPH: (*Speaking in a troubled voice to his friend, ISSACHAR*)
9 I tell you, Issachar, I don't know what to do about this.
10 First, Mary disappears for three months... then she
11 comes back with a tale about a miracle birth from her
12 cousin, Elizabeth... and now I hear that she is supposed
13 to have a miracle baby, too. I can't believe it! I don't know
14 what to do.

15 ISSACHAR: Well, you know, Joseph, you don't have many
16 choices. Either you claim Mary's baby as your own,
17 or... you accuse her of sin. It's really quite simple.

18 JOSEPH: It's not my baby, Issachar. How many times do I
19 have to tell you that? But I don't want Mary to get into
20 any trouble, either. I love her too much for that... (*In*
21 *exasperation*) This really is an impossible situation!

22 ISSACHAR: It's not impossible, Joseph. You're being too
23 hard on yourself. You'll just have to decide one way or
24 the other what to do. Either claim the baby, or say that
25 Mary saw someone else while she was visiting at her
26 cousin's house. No one's going to believe that story about
27 the angel... (*With a sudden burst of insight*) You could, of
28 course, just break the engagement. Then... let nature
29 take its course. Oh well, good night. I'm going home to
30 bed. (*ISSACHAR returns to his table, and JOSEPH sits on the*
31 *edge of the stage, staring out into space. He finally falls asleep.*)

32 GABRIEL: (*Appearing in the doorway*) Joseph... *Joseph* — son
33 of David. Listen to me. I am Gabriel, the messenger of
34 God. Ten months ago I brought good news to Zechariah,
35 the husband of Mary's cousin. Then, later, I brought news

1 of a miracle to Mary. Now listen to me, Joseph. Take Mary
2 home as your wife, and do not be afraid of what others
3 will say. Her miracle child has come from God's Holy
4 Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to name
5 him Jesus. He will save his people from their sins.
6 (*GABRIEL exits. JOSEPH slowly wakes up, rubs his eyes, and*
7 *shows sudden surprise. Then he hurries over to MARY, sitting*
8 *at her table.*)

9 **JOSEPH:** Mary, oh Mary. I had an awesome dream last
10 night . . . You said God's angel spoke to you? Well, at first
11 I didn't believe it, but last night he spoke to me, too.
12 A . . . a . . . and guess what, Mary? He said your son would
13 save his people from their sins! His name is supposed to
14 be Jesus!

15 **MARY:** (*Nods vigorously in agreement.*) I know! I know!

16 **JOSEPH:** Come now, Mary. It's time to plan the wedding. I
17 want you to be my wife *before* the baby is born! (*MARY*
18 *stands up, hugs JOSEPH, and then they both sit down, talking*
19 *quietly and excitedly together.*)

20 **NARRATOR:** Well, let's let the happy couple plan their
21 wedding in peace, as we sing all three stanzas of the
22 heart-warming Christmas carol, "O Come, All Ye
23 Faithful," number ____.

SCENE 4

Jesus Is Born in Bethlehem

(Text: Luke 2:1-7)

CAST

Jewish Messenger

Reuben

Simon

Jacob (A young boy)

Innkeeper

Joseph

Mary

Extras (Townspeople)

PROPS: Ram's horn for JEWISH MESSENGER, bench, stool, or chair, pallet for MARY, bucket of water, gourd dipper, manger, oil lamp, large blanket for MARY and JOSEPH, with cloth-wrapped doll (baby Jesus) hidden inside.

COSTUMES: (Optional) Four adult biblical robes, one child's robe (for JACOB). MARY and JOSEPH will already be in costume, but MARY will need a pillow to put under her robe to show she is "great with child."

NOTE FOR GROUP LEADER, TABLE 4: You will need to make five copies of Scene 4 for the cast. (MARY and JOSEPH will read from their playbooks.) Prep the EXTRAS beforehand so they know how to act as TOWNSPEOPLE; they will not need copies. Also, arrange for a couple of people from your table (perhaps a couple of the EXTRAS) to place the props (all but the ram's horn) in the "stable" at the appropriate time.

1 **NARRATOR:** Birthday parties are special for everyone, but
 2 they're extra special for children. As Scene Four opens,
 3 our children are going to come forward and present their
 4 special gifts of love to Jesus. Then Table Four will show
 5 us some scenes from that first Christmastime so very long
 6 ago.

7 *(CHILDREN's groups come forward and present their gifts.)*

8 **JEWISH MESSENGER:** *(Walks On-stage blowing a shofar if*
 9 *available, then approaches one of the mikes and reads*
 10 *dramatically.)* Shma! Shma! Shma! Listen to this
 11 announcement from King Herod. Caesar Augustus,
 12 Emperor of the World, has ordered everyone in his
 13 domain to be registered. King Herod has decreed that
 14 this registration shall take place in each man's city of
 15 birth. No one shall delay his registration for more than
 16 one year.

17 *(TOWNSPEOPLE at Table Four stand up and talk together in*
 18 *fear.)*

19 **REUBEN:** What's that Roman Caesar up to now? Does he
 20 think he'll get more money out of us?

21 **SIMON:** I don't think it's Caesar. I think it's another one of
 22 King Herod's brainy ideas!

23 **JACOB:** *(A boy. He gestures.)* Those soldiers are looking at
 24 us! *(The men sit down quickly. JOSEPH takes MARY, stuffed*
 25 *with a pillow, and together they move slowly to the stage. At the*
 26 *mike they encounter an INNKEEPER.)*

27 **INNKEEPER:** Good evening, my good people. Where, might I
 28 ask, do you come from?

29 **JOSEPH:** We come from Nazareth, in Galilee. We have come to
 30 the ancient city of David for the registration.

31 **INNKEEPER:** So you are a descendant of David, then?

32 **JOSEPH:** Yes, and so is my wife, Mary. She is descended from
 33 David's son, Nathan, and I *(A bit proudly)*, am descended
 34 from King Solomon.

35 **INNKEEPER:** Now, *that*, I tell you, is a heritage to be proud of.

1 **JOSEPH:** Thank you, sir. Thank you . . . But, kind sir, we are
 2 looking for a room for the night. The trip has been long,
 3 and we are tired. You can also see, sir, (*Glancing at MARY*)
 4 that it will not be much longer for my wife. She really
 5 needs a good place to rest.

6 **INNKEEPER:** So I can see. Let me see, now. The inn is
 7 full, and it would not be a good place for a woman with
 8 child, anyway. All the other places in Bethlehem are full,
 9 too. But I tell you what. I will make a place for you in
 10 the stable. It is in a nice, quiet cave, and the animals will
 11 not bother you. Your donkey can stay there, too. And my
 12 wife will send for the midwife any time you call. Come
 13 this way. (*The INNKEEPER leads the way backstage and back*
 14 *around onto the stage through the far entrance.*)
 15 (*Meanwhile, one person from Table Four has placed a manger*
 16 *on the stage, with a bench, a stool, or a chair nearby. There is*
 17 *also a pallet for MARY, a bucket of drinking water with a gourd*
 18 *dipper, and an oil lamp.*)

19 **INNKEEPER:** (*Reappearing from backstage.*) There you are.
 20 Everything has been taken care of. Fresh straw, water,
 21 and a light. Be sure to let us know if you need anything.

22 **JOSEPH:** Thank you, kind sir. Thank you so much. (*MARY*
 23 *smiles tiredly and lies down on the pallet. JOSEPH sits quietly*
 24 *nearby.*)

25 **NARRATOR:** As the family sleeps, let's listen as our soloist
 26 sings about this holy night. (*As the soloist sings the first verse*
 27 *of "Bring a Torch, Jeanette Isabella," JOSEPH and MARY turn*
 28 *their backs to the audience and kneel. JOSEPH drapes the blanket*
 29 *around MARY's shoulders, being careful that the doll wrapped inside*
 30 *stays hidden from the audience. Verse 1 of "Jeanette.")*

31 Bring a torch, Jeanette Isabella,
 32 Bring a torch, to the cradle run!
 33 It is Jesus, good folk of the village,
 34 Christ is born and Mary's calling:
 35 Ah! ah! beautiful is the Mother.

1 **Ah! ah! beautiful is her son!**
 2 *(During the second verse, MARY and JOSEPH stand and turn*
 3 *so they are facing the audience. They now hold the baby and are*
 4 *looking down at him. Verse 2 of "Jeanette.")*

5 **It is wrong when the child is sleeping,**
 6 **It is wrong to talk so loud;**
 7 **Silence, all, as you gather around,**
 8 **Lest your noise should waken Jesus:**
 9 **Hush! hush! see how fast he slumbers;**
 10 **Hush! hush! see how fast he sleeps!**

11 *(The pianist increases the tempo and volume slightly for the third*
 12 *verse. As the soloist sings the line, "Look and see how charming*
 13 *is Jesus," JOSEPH lifts up the child for all to see. Verse 3 of*
 14 *"Jeanette.")*

15 **Softly to the little stable,**
 16 **Softly for a moment come;**
 17 **Look and see how charming is Jesus,**
 18 **How he is white, his cheeks are rosy!**
 19 **Hush! hush! see how the child is**
 20 **sleeping;**
 21 **Hush! hush! see how he smiles in**
 22 **dreams.**

23 *(MARY and JOSEPH in place for the next scene.)*
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SCENE 5

The Shepherds Visit the Manger

(Text: Luke 2:8-20, NIV)

CAST

Angel

Shepherd 1

Shepherd 2

Shepherd 3

Shepherd 4

Extras (Angels and Shepherds)

(MARY and JOSEPH will already be On-stage when the scene begins.)

PROPS: None.

COSTUMES: (Optional) Four (or more) crooks and robes for the SHEPHERDS, one (or more) set of wings and white robes for the ANGELS(S).

NOTE TO GROUP LEADER, TABLE 5: You will need to make five copies of Scene 5 for the cast. Prep the EXTRAS beforehand as to how they should act as ANGELS and SHEPHERDS.

1 *(The four SHEPHERDS plus SHEPHERD EXTRAS from Table*
2 *Five take their places somewhere in the room, away from the*
3 *stage. They sit or stand, talking softly together and gesturing in*
4 *the direction of their sleeping sheep. The ANGEL plus any*
5 *ANGEL EXTRAS from Table Five prepare for their entrance.)*

6 **NARRATOR:** And there were shepherds living out in the
7 fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.
8 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, *(The ANGEL steps*
9 *forward, arms outstretched)* and the glory of the Lord shone
10 around them, *(The other ANGEL EXTRAS surround the*
11 startled SHEPHERDS) and they were terrified. But the
12 angel said to them:

13 **ANGEL:** Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy
14 that will be for *all* *(Gesturing)* the people. Today in the
15 town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ
16 the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby
17 wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.

18 **NARRATOR:** Suddenly, a great company of the heavenly host
19 appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

20 **ALL ANGELS:** Glory to God in the highest, and on earth
21 peace to men on whom his favor rests.

22 **NARRATOR:** When the angels had left them and gone into
23 heaven, the shepherds said to one another,

24 **SHEPHERD 1:** Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing
25 that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.

26 **SHEPHERD 2:** I'm ready. Let's go!

27 **SHEPHERD 3:** But what about the sheep? They'll
28 wander off and be eaten by wild animals.

29 **SHEPHERD 4:** Yes, they will! But I'll stay and watch
30 them. The rest of you go on. You can tell me all about it
31 when you get back. *(One SHEPHERD remains with the sheep*
32 *while the rest of the SHEPHERDS move excitedly to the stage.)*

33 **NARRATOR:** So they hurried off and found Mary and
34 Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When
35 they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what

1 **had been told them about this child, and all who heard**
2 **it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.** (*The*
3 *SHEPHERDS return to their table, stopping at the other tables*
4 *on the way to tell the good news of the infant's birth.*)

5 **NARRATOR:** (*Cont.*) **As the shepherds return to their places,**
6 **let's all sing heartily the first verse of "Hark! The Herald**
7 **Angels Sing."**

8 (*JOSEPH, MARY, and the baby exit the stage and return to*
9 *their table.*)

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SCENE 6

Jesus Is Presented at the Temple

(Text: Luke 2:21-28, NIV)

CAST

Joseph

Mary

Priest

Simeon

Anna

Extras (Temple Worshipers)

PROPS: Two “doves” (can be made from clay, or papier mâché birds may be purchased at craft supply stores). Doll wrapped in blanket (Baby Jesus).

COSTUMES: Three (or more) biblical robes for the PRIEST, SIMEON, ANNA, and the EXTRAS. (MARY and JOSEPH will already be in costume.)

NOTE TO GROUP LEADER, TABLE 6: You will need to make three copies of Scene 6 for the cast. (MARY and JOSEPH will read from their playbooks.) Prep the EXTRAS beforehand so they will know how to act as TEMPLE WORSHIPERS.

NARRATOR: Joseph soon found temporary living quarters for his new family. Eight days after Jesus was born he was named as the angel had said, and circumcised according to Jewish custom. When he was forty days old his parents took him to the temple. There, Mary underwent the ritual of purification, and Jesus was presented to the Lord. Table Six will present that part of the story.

(Table Six — SIMEON, ANNA, the PRIEST, and EXTRAS [temple worshipers] take their places On-stage. JOSEPH and MARY approach the stage from their table. MARY holds the doll [Jesus], wrapped in a blanket and JOSEPH brings two [clay] doves.)

JOSEPH: Look, Mary. Over there is the priest. Let's go make our presentation. *(MARY nods, and they solemnly approach the priest. JOSEPH elevates the doves, the PRIEST places his hands over the baby, and prays.)*

PRIEST: The Lord bless you, and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen. *(JOSEPH gives the two doves to the PRIEST and turns to leave.)*

SIMEON: *(Approaches MARY in excitement.)* Oh, there he is! There he is! *(JOSEPH turns back in surprise.)* There is the Lord's Anointed One! *(SIMEON takes the baby up in his arms and prays.)* Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles *(ANNA responds joyfully)* and for glory to your people Israel. *(ANNA exits to spread the news about the baby at the other tables. SIMEON speaks firmly to MARY.)* This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.

1 **NARRATOR:** It truly must have been a joyous moment when
2 the parents of such an important baby dedicated him to
3 God in the temple. Let's join in the happy mood as we
4 sing together the first verse of "Joy to the World." (*The*
5 *players return to their tablels as the song begins.*)
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SCENE 7

The Wise Men Visit Baby Jesus

(Text: Matthew 2:1-12, NIV)

CAST

Wise Man 1

Wise Man 2

Wise Man 3

King Herod

Priest 1

Priest 2

Joseph

Mary

Jesus (One-year-old child)

**Extras — Children (Servants of the Wise Men
and King Herod)**

PROPS: Gifts for the WISE MEN — gold, frankincense and myrrh. These may either be decorated boxes, or urns and gold costume jewelry. Pallet or bedroll for one-year-old Jesus. Wooden chair that JOSEPH is “fixing.”

COSTUMES: (Optional) Crown for KING HEROD, four rich-looking robes for the WISE MEN and KING HEROD, child-sized tunics or robes for the EXTRAS, a baby robe for JESUS, and two robes for the PRIESTS. (MARY and JOSEPH will already be in costume.)

NOTE TO GROUP LEADER, TABLE 7: You will need to make six copies of Scene Seven for the cast. (MARY and JOSEPH will read from their playbooks.) Tell the children what to do beforehand; they will not need copies.



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