

THE LITTLE SHEPHERD

by Rachel Olson



CHRISTIAN PUBLISHERS

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The Little Shepherd

A Sunday school pageant
for Christmas
by Rachel Olson

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)

THADDAEUS

ARABUS (The dog)

REBEKAH (Thaddaeus' sister)

MIRIAM

SARAH

JOSHUA (Innkeeper's son)

JOSEPH

MARY

NAROO (The donkey)

INNKEEPER

SHEPHERD #1

SHEPHERD #2

SHEPHERD #3

ANGEL #1

ANGEL #2

ANGEL #3

SHAINA (The sheep)

BALTHAZAR

MELCHIOR

GASPAR

SERVANT

ZARA (The cow)

HEROD

PRIEST

LORD ISHMAR (The Chief of the Camels)

JESUS (A toddler for the last scene)

1 GREETER

6 NARRATORS

PRODUCTION NOTES

This play focuses on a small shepherd boy named Thaddaeus who possesses a special gift — the ability to talk to animals. His friendship with a dog, donkey, cow, sheep, and camel teach him about the special baby born in Bethlehem.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES: This program is designed for all age students, from nursery through eighth grade. The youngest students (Nursery, Preschool, and Kindergarten) are used as a choir and also as the flocks of sheep. Older students may be assigned the speaking parts. There are 25 speaking parts, which may be expanded by having more than one angel on each part or by using more shepherds. The speaking parts may be reduced by doubling up some of the parts. Most of the parts are relatively short for easy memorization. The student selected for Thaddaeus should be able to memorize well. He should be a fourth-grader or older. The narration does not need to be memorized.

SCENERY AND LIGHTING: Limited scenery is a plus for the church that does not have room or access to any type of scenery. The only piece of scenery really needed is a manger. A stable could be constructed from large (8' x 8') cardboard pieces but is not necessary. For added emphasis, lighting should be reduced in the church and either a spotlight (if available) or front lighting only used so that all attention is focused on the children.

PROPS: Props used during the play include **three scrolls** for the wise men, the **three gifts** presented by them, a **scroll** for the priest, a **doll** to represent baby Jesus, and possibly some type of **lanterns** used by the children, Joseph, and the Innkeeper.

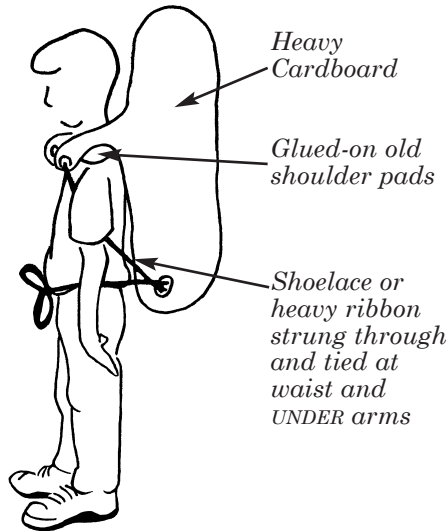
COSTUMES: Costuming is best kept simple with togas and pieces of cloth for head coverings. The animals only need headpieces, which may be constructed using patterns for Halloween costumes. The rest of their costumes may be togas with gloves or socks on their hands to represent paws. The donkey, Naroo, needs reins. The animals do not crawl but walk upright, as humans do.

For the camel, Lord Ishmar, I used a large cardboard hump which strapped on similar to wings that angels wear. the

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hump came directly behind the actor's head (not protruding out of his back) so that the actor could stand upright. The costume, then, was oversized to accommodate the humped area and made the actor almost appear to have a second person standing directly behind him except no extra feet. This worked great. I used gold blanket material for the camel's toga, and then attached some red velvet tassels over the hump area to appear as a saddle for the king. See illustration below.

Costume toga must fit OVER hump to hide the cardboard.



Camel's Hump

MUSIC INCLUDED FOR:

Nursery, preschool, kindergarten group
 First and second grade group
 Third, fourth, and fifth grade group
 Small group or soloist
 Older choir or congregation

SOURCES FOR SUGGESTED MUSIC

Songs used in *The Little Shepherd* are only suggestions. Any music that your director chooses can be inserted into the program.

Traditional Carols: (May be found in most hymnals.)

“O Come, All Ye Faithful”

“Away in a Manger”

“Go, Tell It on the Mountain”

“We Three Kings”

“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

“Joy to the World”

“While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night”

Other Songs Suggested in Program:

“In a Little Stable,” *Little Children Sing to God!* Concordia Publishing House, 3558 South Jefferson Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63118-3968. (800) 325-3040 or cphorder@cph.org.

“Jesus Is His Name,” *Sing a Song of Scriptures*. Lillenas Publishing Co., Box 419527, Kansas City, MO 64141-9527. (816) 931-1900.

“He Is Born,” various arrangements © by New Spring Publishing/ASCAP, Brentwood Music, Inc., P.O. Box 1028, Brentwood, TN 37024. (615) 261-6500.

Special Music:

“God’s Own Son,” words and music by Rachel Olson. (Music included with play.)

6 God's Own Son

Words & Music: Rachel Olson

Calypso ♩ = 120

1. Christ was born at Christ - mas to start God's sav - ing plan;
2. Just a lit - tle ba - by, but he grew up to be
3. So take a hand in friend - ship and share some Christ - mas love

He showed how much he loves us by the
The friend you've al - ways want - ed and
The great - est gift that God could send was

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nail prints in his hand. And I be - lieve this ba - by Je - sus is
need - ed des - per - ate - ly.
Je - sus from a - bove.

real - ly God's own Son. And I will live with him for - ev - er, Sal -

va - tion has been won.

D.S. %

D.S. %

D.S. %

- 1 **PROCESSIONAL:** “O Come, All Ye Faithful”
 2 *(Children from first grade and up enter and take their places in*
 3 *the front pews. GREETER, NARRATOR #1 and NARRATOR #2*
 4 *stand at the pulpit or a podium.)*
- 5 **GREETER:** Welcome, people of God, to our *(Insert your church’s*
 6 *name.)* Sunday school Christmas program. We hope that
 7 something the children say or sing tonight will fill your
 8 hearts with the true meaning of Christmas.
- 9 **NARRATOR #1:** Tonight we bring you a story about a special
 10 little shepherd named Thaddaeus who lives in
 11 Bethlehem. The other children make fun of Thaddaeus
 12 because he says he talks to animals and has strange
 13 dreams.
- 14 **NARRATOR #2:** But God uses the special talents of Thaddaeus
 15 to help him understand when something wonderful
 16 happens in town. *(GREETER, NARRATOR #1 and*
 17 *NARRATOR #2 exit. THADDAEUS and his dog, ARABUS,*
 18 *enter.)*
- 19 **THADDAEUS:** You know what, Arabus? I had a beautiful
 20 dream last night.
- 21 **ARABUS:** *(Sniffing around for food)* Was it about food?
- 22 **THADDAEUS:** No. You’re always hungry! Come here. *(ARABUS*
 23 *goes over by THADDAEUS.)* I dreamed a magnificent star
 24 appeared — bigger than any I’d ever seen.
- 25 **ARABUS:** Was it made of sweetbread?
- 26 **THADDAEUS:** No! I just remember it was so beautiful I
 27 couldn’t take my eyes off it. *(REBEKAH, MIRIAM, SARAH,*
 28 *and JOSHUA enter.)*
- 29 **REBEKAH:** Mom was right. She said we’d probably find you
 30 out here. It’s getting late.
- 31 **THADDAEUS:** I just wanted to talk to Arabus. Besides, it’s too
 32 crowded in town.
- 33 **MIRIAM:** Did Arabus tell you what to do about all the people?
 34 *(ARABUS growls at MIRIAM but THADDAEUS puts an arm*
 35 *around him to quiet him.)*

- 1 SARAH: Well, he's right about the crowds. I've never seen so
 2 many people. And they're all pushing and shoving.
- 3 JOSHUA: Everything in the market was bought by noon.
- 4 MIRIAM: Where are all the people coming from?
- 5 REBEKAH: Mother says it's some counting thing from the
 6 Romans.
- 7 JOSHUA: All the rooms at our inn are going fast. Father says
 8 the money will help during the slow times.
- 9 REBEKAH: Come on. If you plan on going out with the other
 10 shepherds tonight, we have to get home. *(She turns to go,*
 11 *along with MIRIAM and JOSHUA.)*
- 12 SARAH: Wait. *(Points Off-stage.)* Look at those two. That lady
 13 seems awfully tired. *(JOSEPH and MARY with NAROO, their*
 14 *donkey, enter. JOSEPH lets go of the reins.)*
- 15 JOSEPH: Good evening, children. Could you direct me to
 16 an inn?
- 17 REBEKAH: Joshua's father has an inn. We could take you there.
- 18 MARY: Thank you for your kindness.
- 19 THADDAEUS: Are you OK? I mean, you don't look so good.
- 20 REBEKAH: Thaddaeus!
- 21 JOSEPH: It's all right. My wife is going to have a baby very
 22 soon. She is very tired.
- 23 JOSHUA: Follow me, then. It's not too far. *(He starts to exit with*
 24 *JOSEPH, MARY, and the other CHILDREN pushing in front of*
 25 *THADDAEUS and ARABUS.)*
- 26 SARAH: *(Turning around)* Hey, Thaddaeus. You take care of the
 27 donkey.
- 28 REBEKAH: *(To JOSEPH)* My brother is a little strange, but
 29 basically OK. He says he can talk to animals.
- 30 MARY: *(Turns to THADDAEUS.)* Then he shall tell you about us,
 31 Thaddaeus. Take good care of him.
- 32 THADDAEUS: Oh, I will. *(The CHILDREN, MARY, and JOSEPH*
 33 *cross to Stage Left and stand in the shadows.)*
- 34 ARABUS: Hello, my name's Arabus. What's yours?
- 35 NAROO: Naroo. I hope they'll be able to find a room.

- 1 THADDAEUS: I'm sure they will. Where are you from?
- 2 NAROO: Northern parts — the town of Nazareth. I have carried
- 3 Mary over many miles. She is a very brave woman.
- 4 ARABUS: Why did you come to Bethlehem?
- 5 NAROO: I have heard my master say that this is the town of
- 6 their ancestors. All people have to go to their own cities
- 7 and be counted.
- 8 ARABUS: Humans have some very odd ways.
- 9 NAROO: That's true. God's ways, on the other hand, are a
- 10 miracle! Mary is carrying a precious baby, God's Son. I
- 11 think he will be born tonight! *(All react.)*
- 12 *(Light shifts to others at Stage Left, where the INNKEEPER has*
- 13 *joined the group.)*
- 14 JOSHUA: Father, I have brought some travelers. They are
- 15 looking for lodging.
- 16 JOSEPH: Yes, we have come a great distance, traveling from
- 17 Nazareth over the past few days.
- 18 INNKEEPER: You have come a long way then, friend, but I am
- 19 sorry. I have no rooms available. *(JOSEPH looks back at*
- 20 *MARY.)*
- 21 MARY: Tell him we'll take anything. I can't walk any farther.
- 22 JOSEPH: Please, sir. We'll take any place where my wife can
- 23 lie down. She is with child, and the baby is due soon.
- 24 INNKEEPER: I can't think of any inns nearby that have space.
- 25 The town is full because of the census.
- 26 JOSHUA: Father, what about the stable? It was cleaned today,
- 27 and there's just enough room to lie down.
- 28 INNKEEPER: I don't know. A stable? Would you consider that?
- 29 MARY: We will use the stable.
- 30 INNKEEPER: I will take you there. Follow me.
- 31 REBEKAH: We'll go and get your donkey.
- 32 JOSEPH: Thank you very much. *(INNKEEPER, MARY, and*
- 33 *JOSEPH go to stable area. INNKEEPER exits. The other four*
- 34 *CHILDREN go back to THADDAEUS.)*
- 35 REBEKAH: We found them a place to stay. Joshua will take the

- 1 donkey. Let's go home, Thaddaeus.
- 2 **JOSHUA:** Come on, donkey. I'm taking you to the stable. *(He*
3 *takes the reins and leads NAROO over to the stable area.)*
- 4 **THADDAEUS:** *(Calling after JOSHUA)* Are they staying at your
5 place?
- 6 **MIRIAM:** Sort of. They're in his stable.
- 7 **THADDAEUS:** The stable! Don't you realize that lady is going
8 to have a special baby?
- 9 **REBEKAH:** It's the only place in town to stay. And who told
10 you it was a special baby?
- 11 **THADDAEUS:** Naroo.
- 12 **SARAH:** Who's Naroo?
- 13 **THADDAEUS:** The donkey. *(SARAH and MIRIAM groan.)*
- 14 **REBEKAH:** Oh, Thaddaeus, you're always pretending. Let's go
15 home. *(MIRIAM, SARAH, REBEKAH, THADDAEUS, and*
16 *ARABUS exit. NURSERY, PRESCHOOL and KINDERGARTEN*
17 *CLASSES enter with SHEPHERDS. Children have "sheep ears"*
18 *on.)*
- 19 **SONGS:** "In a Little Stable," "Away in a Manger"
20 *(The little CHILDREN then sit all around the front as the flocks*
21 *of sheep.)*
- 22 **SHEPHERD #1:** I wonder if he found the sheep. Do you see
23 him yet?
- 24 **SHEPHERD #2:** No. There's not much light tonight. We
25 should've sent someone older.
- 26 **SHEPHERD #3:** *(Pointing)* Here he comes. And he found the
27 sheep. *(THADDAEUS, ARABUS, and SHAINA [the sheep] enter.)*
- 28 **SHEPHERD #1:** Congratulations. Trying to round up one
29 sheep is sometimes harder than the entire flock.
- 30 **THADDAEUS:** It wasn't any problem once Arabus told me her
31 name was Shaina. Then I just called her. *(SHAINA nudges*
32 *THADDAEUS' arm.)*
- 33 **SHEPHERD #2:** Oh, Thaddaeus, don't start that make-believe
34 again. *(Suddenly the ANGELS enter. The SHEPHERDS all fall*
35 *down, scared, except for THADDAEUS.)*

- 1 ANGEL #1: Do not be afraid. I bring you exciting news of
2 great joy.
- 3 ANGEL #2: Tonight is born in the City of David a Savior, who
4 is Christ the Lord.
- 5 ANGEL #3: This will be your sign. You will find the baby
6 wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.
- 7 ALL ANGELS: Glory to God in the highest and on Earth peace
8 to men with whom God is pleased (*Luke 2:10-12, 14; author's*
9 *paraphrase*).
- 10 ANGEL #2: God has come among men to begin the salvation
11 plan.
- 12 ANGEL #3: You are the first to know — go and see, then spread
13 the news.
- 14 ANGEL #1: Go quickly to Bethlehem and praise God for his
15 marvelous works.
- 16 ANGEL #2: You will find the baby with his mother in a stable.
- 17 ANGEL #3: Praise to God — he has sent his Son! The work of
18 salvation has finally begun. (*The ANGELS disappear and the*
19 *SHEPHERDS rise, looking at one another.*)
- 20 SHEPHERD #3: Am I dreaming? Did you see this also?
- 21 SHEPHERD #1: Yes. My heart is still pounding.
- 22 SHEPHERD #2: They were so beautiful. I have never seen or
23 heard anything like it before.
- 24 SHEPHERD #1: This is truly wondrous news we have heard!
- 25 SHEPHERD #2: We must go and find this child.
- 26 SHEPHERD #3: How? There are so many stables around here.
- 27 THADDAEUS: I know where they are! It's the special baby
28 Naroo talked about. Come on, Arabus, Shaina. Follow me.
29 (*He runs out, with the ANIMALS and the SHEPHERDS close*
30 *behind. At this time the NURSERY-PRESCHOOL-KINDER-*
31 *GARTEN CHILDREN may either go back to their rooms for a*
32 *"birthday party for Jesus," or, if space permits, go to their seats*
33 *in the church. The FIRST and SECOND GRADERS take their*
34 *places up front.*)
- 35 SONGS: "Go, Tell it on the Mountain," "Jesus is His Name"

1 *(They return to their seats after the songs while NARRATOR #3,*
 2 *the WISE MEN, and SERVANT take their places up front.)*

3 **NARRATOR #3:** That same night, in another part of the world,
 4 far removed from the little town of Bethlehem, some
 5 learned men were studying the heavens and noticed a
 6 change in the night sky.

7 **BALTHAZAR:** Wait. Melchior, Gaspar, come here quickly. See.
 8 *(Points.)* Over there — in the West.

9 **MELCHIOR:** What is this? I have never seen such a large star
 10 before.

11 **GASPAR:** It is so beautiful and perfect. And it appears to be
 12 much closer than any of the other stars.

13 **BALTHAZAR:** *(To SERVANT)* Get the books. We must start
 14 searching at once for the meaning of this star.

15 **SERVANT:** Right away, master. *(SERVANT bows, exits, gets scrolls,*
 16 *and enters again while WISE MEN are talking.)*

17 **GASPAR:** It is too beautiful to have an evil meaning. It must
 18 deal with something grand.

19 **MELCHIOR:** The sign of a ruler, perhaps — a great king born
 20 tonight.

21 **BALTHAZAR:** Yes, Melchior. I believe you are right. It does
 22 seem to be the signature of a mighty king.

23 **GASPAR:** *(Reading in a scroll)* This one talks of rulers, but not
 24 one worthy of so great an omen.

25 **SERVANT:** Remember the books of the captivity, masters.
 26 They spoke of a great king — a savior of his people.

27 **BALTHAZAR:** Yes. Here it is. A Messiah to lead his people from
 28 darkness — the King of the Jews.

29 **GASPAR:** This *must* be his sign. The great King must be born
 30 this very night.

31 **MELCHIOR:** We should pay honor to the child and his family.
 32 It would be wise to find this king.

33 **BALTHAZAR:** But how will we find him?

34 **SERVANT:** Look, masters. The star seems to be moving —
 35 almost as though it calls one to follow it.

- 1 **GASPAR:** Then we must follow it. I feel it will lead us to him.
- 2 **MELCHIOR:** *(To the SERVANT)* Ready the camels. It may be a
3 long journey.
- 4 **SERVANT:** Yes, master. And what about gifts? Should I
5 prepare anything to give the new king?
- 6 **BALTHAZAR:** Definitely. I shall take him gold.
- 7 **MELCHIOR:** And I will bring frankincense, for it is the scent
8 of the kings.
- 9 **GASPAR:** Something warns me of sadness with this king. I
10 think I shall take myrrh. *(They all exit. The THIRD,*
11 *FOURTH, and FIFTH GRADERS take their places up front.)*
- 12 **SONGS:** “We Three Kings,” “He Is Born”
13 *(CLASSES return to their seats. THADDAEUS, ARABUS,*
14 *SHAINA, and the SHEPHERDS enter. They stand looking*
15 *toward the stable.)*
- 16 **JOSEPH:** Come in, friends. Here is the child you seek.
- 17 **SHEPHERD #1:** Angels spoke to us about this child. They
18 called him the Savior.
- 19 **MARY:** Yes. We have known that this baby was special for a
20 long time. He is sent from God.
- 21 **SHEPHERD #2:** Everything is just as the angels said.
- 22 **SHEPHERD #3:** Praise Yahweh for his wonderful works!
- 23 **SHEPHERD #2:** We have all been blessed. *(The SHEPHERDS go*
24 *and kneel before the manger. THADDAEUS, ARABUS, and*
25 *SHAINA are standing a short distance from them.)*
- 26 **SHAINA:** Thanks for finding me, Arabus. I almost missed
27 seeing this.
- 28 **ARABUS:** We’re pretty lucky animals, I’d say.
- 29 **SHAINA:** Thaddaeus, is this the baby Naroo told you about?
- 30 **THADDAEUS:** Yes, this is the special baby. *(ZARA, the cow,*
31 *wanders in from the back of the stable area.)*
- 32 **ZARA:** Hello, everyone. Quite a lot of excitement in my stable
33 this evening.
- 34 **SHAINA:** You must be pretty proud having him born in your
35 house.

- 1 **ZARA:** Yes, and to think that at first I was upset about humans
 2 staying here. But then Naroo told me about the
 3 special baby.
- 4 **ARABUS:** Where is Naroo? (*NAROO comes forward from lying*
 5 *down at the manger.*)
- 6 **NAROO:** Here I am, Arabus. Hello, Thaddaeus. Isn't he a
 7 beautiful child?
- 8 **THADDAEUS:** Very beautiful. Did you hear what happened
 9 to us?
- 10 **NAROO:** Just a little, from what those other shepherds were
 11 telling Joseph.
- 12 **SHAINA:** (*Jumping up and down*) Angels — all over the place!
- 13 **ARABUS:** They were so bright. It was just like daytime.
- 14 **ZARA:** What an exciting way to learn about this baby! Mary
 15 was talking about how he is God's Son and has a great job
 16 to do on earth — he will be the Savior of his people.
- 17 **SHAINA:** A Savior — that's what the angels said. (*The other*
 18 *SHEPHERDS stand up and bow toward the manger.*)
- 19 **NAROO:** Oh, it looks as though the shepherds are leaving. I'd
 20 better get back, too.
- 21 **ZARA:** Me too. Thanks for telling me about the angels.
- 22 **SHAINA:** Good night. (*NAROO and ZARA go back to the stable as*
 23 *the SHEPHERDS walk past THADDAEUS, ARABUS and*
 24 *SHAINA. They exit, talking to themselves.*)
- 25 **ARABUS:** Look, Thaddaeus. Up there.
- 26 **SHAINA:** It's a beautiful star.
- 27 **THADDAEUS:** *That's* the star, Arabus. The one in my dream.
 28 Now I realize it's because of this special baby. (*All exit. The*
 29 *next group moves to the front to sing. The singers may be older*
 30 *children, a choir, or the congregation.*)
- 31 **SONG:** "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"
 32 (*The singers exit. NARRATORS #4 and #5 enter.*)
- 33 **NARRATOR #4:** Almost a year has passed since that special
 34 night in Bethlehem. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus have moved
 35 into a small house now and things are going well.



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