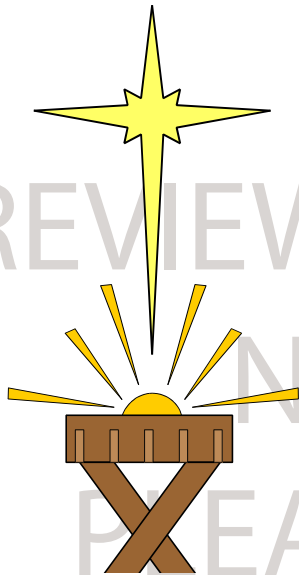


GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER ...Backstage At the Inn!

A Sunday School Christmas Celebration

GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER is an easy-to-prepare and easy-to-present Sunday School Christmas Celebration. Rehearsals occur in separate Sunday School classes during the weeks preceding the program. Gather the group for a final dress rehearsal and the celebration is set to go.



GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER is a *forty five minute* Sunday School presentation featuring children, teens and adults participating in a variety of mini-vignettes surrounding the activity in the Bethlehem stable on a night so long ago. *It is funny, inspirational and motivational as your group tries their best to rehearse a solemn Christmas program but keep frustrating the Stage Manager!*

GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER involves the audience singing the original theme song, “*God Made A Way In A Manger*”, and a variety of familiar Christmas Carols.

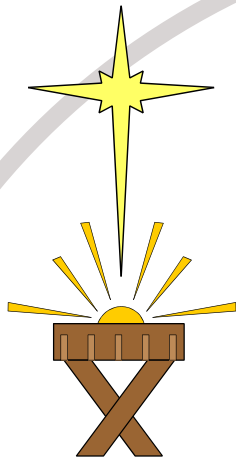
GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER challenges the congregation to enter the real celebration of the *Jesus Season*, remembering how God made a way for each of us to become children of God through the birth of Jesus.

GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER concludes with an all church **MANGER PARTY**. Serve snacks, play Christmas music and fellowship with each other.

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CHRISTMAS DIRECTOR



Here we go again! It's that time of year when Christians everywhere search for ways to truly honor the birthday of our King. However, the rush, the bother, the worry and anxiety cause those same Christians to put aside a real celebration in favor of a tinsel copy.

How can we let it happen? Is shopping really more important than worship? Is a picture perfect home better than remembering that scruffy stable of 2000 years ago? Of course not! So, it is time to get busy and bring the story of that Bethlehem night to life once again...for your kids...for your church folks...for you!

For some of your church members, the holiday programs presented by your local congregation comprise most, if not all, of their Christmas celebration. It is very possible that as you are reading this you are thinking, "Why me? I cannot do this. I do not have time. Oooo, I feel so guilty!" Well, put those feelings aside and dive into this charming presentation of the Nativity scene with a minimum of hassle.

DELEGATE. Sunday School teachers must be involved in preparing their classes for the program. Trust the staff to carry out their tasks. Never apologize when asking people to help.

PRACTICE A POSITIVE APPROACH. The Christmas season is always busy but also fun, exciting and meaningful. It is worth extra effort in the midst of personal family preparations, party going and travel. Simple preparations will be appreciated by everyone involved. Statements like "We can't do it", "We never did it this way" and "No one wants to do it", have no place in this program. If the Christmas Director's attitude is right, even the grouchiest saint responds cheerfully.

PRAY! Pray for the staff, the students and the set up. Take the details before the Lord and then-RELAX! He's the Power in control, you carry out the tasks at hand.

PLAN! Read this workbook and mark areas requiring special attention. List details you will handle personally. Give teachers and participants copies of their portions of the program.

ADAPT! If it is necessary to adapt **GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER** to accommodate your local church, avoid staff confusion by making changes during preliminary planning.

PREPARATION TIME. Hopefully you have ordered **GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER** with more than one month lead time. Copy materials for individual classes and assign responsibility for small group practice to the teacher. Some groups enjoy memorization and others avoid it. Except for the youngest non readers, it is possible to read all parts. If you desire memorization, lead time must be longer and more intensive rehearsal will be necessary.

This is an All Sunday School production!

Involve all adult classes.

They may become members of the living nativity.

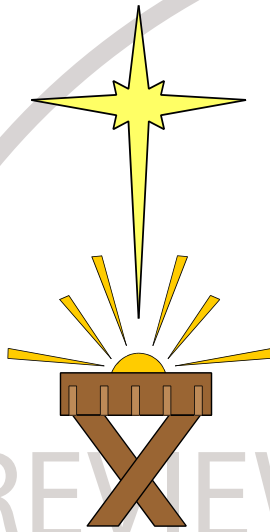
ALL teachers must be willing to cooperate with the general theme and be willing to practice with their students. Meet with the teaching staff to be sure they understand how **GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER will be prepared and presented. Each teacher has a speaking part incorporated into their class presentation.**

MUSIC. Traditional Christmas carols are suggested. If desired, change the carols to fit the needs of your local congregation. To practice the carols and the theme song, classes use Sunday School time. If your Sunday School has a traditional *Opening*, practice the music for 3-4 weeks. Discuss music options with your music team. It may be desirable to sprinkle special music (solos, instrumentals, duets, trios, choir, etc.) as the program proceeds. You decide!

SET UP. The church sanctuary will be decorated for the Christmas season. Leave those items in place. If there are decorations (i.e.. Banks of Poinsettias) that need to be moved, assign a team to do it. Simple nativity props are utilized. A bare stage area is needed. Seat classes and teachers together in the sanctuary. Reserve seating for participants before the audience enters the area for the program. Make pew signs or drape the ends of the saved rows with rope. Assign adult/teen assistants to handle younger children during the program.

USE A MICROPHONE! Be sure students can be heard clearly as they speak. It may make the difference between a frustrating experience for the audience and a successful program. Do not neglect this detail.

PUBLICITY



Publicize “GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER...Backstage At The Inn!” through all normal church communication channels. Announce it in the church newsletter, the weekly worship bulletin and from the pulpit.

CHURCH BULLETIN. Begin informing the congregation about this special Christmas Sunday celebration at the beginning of December.

CHURCH NEWSLETTER. Print an announcement in November and December newsletters. If you plan the special **MANGER PARTY** fellowship time, let people know there will be an enjoyable Christmas fellowship following the program.

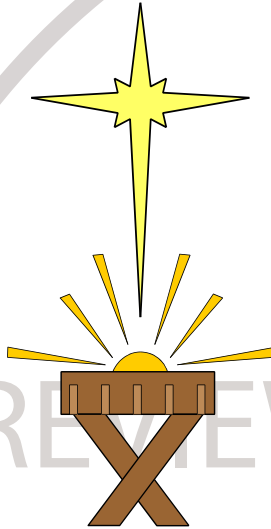
LOCAL NEWSPAPER. Include announcements for **GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER** along with other holiday programming of the church.

TELEVISION/RADIO. Consider advertising this special event on your local cable advertising channel. Often spots are available to church at little or no cost. Check it out! It may be one more avenue of publicity.

INVITATIONS. Send personal family invitations home with students one or two weeks before Christmas Sunday. This is especially effective for families who send their children to your Sunday School but are not involved themselves.

TEACHERS!

PREPARATION



Involve as many students as possible. If there are more students than speaking parts, decide how to involve your extra students. Assign jobs of holding visuals, carrying props and dressing in costume. Consider dividing some of the speaking parts so more than one student may speak. If there are less students than parts, allow students to say two or three segments. Adapt the program to fit the needs of your church!

Highlight individual parts. Decide if your students will memorize their speaking parts or read them. Scripture verses may be memorized by all students. If students read their parts, back the copies with colorful construction paper, glitter and Christmas stickers. The copies must remain in good shape throughout practice and performance.

Practice with your class. In the weeks preceding the Christmas program, rehearse during Sunday School and discuss costuming. If a visual is suggested for your class, consider taking class time to make it together. Tailor the individual sketch to your group.

Communicate with parents of your students. Let them know when the program will be performed, invite them to attend and be sure they know what items or costuming (if any) their child is responsible to bring with them the day of the program.

Be responsible!

This is the time to take charge as Leader.

The person representing the Stage Manager will appreciate your control during rehearsals and performance.

DURING GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER...

Meet your class on the day of the program to prepare for the processional. Dress in costume, line up according to the Christmas Director's instruction and enter the sanctuary as directed. Sit with your class in the designated area. Lead them on and off stage. Perform your own part with enthusiasm. Coach students quietly if they have problems speaking their parts.

AFTER GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER....

Plan to stay for the MANGER PARTY. Collect all visuals and program copies from your students before they attend the party. Mingle with the party goers and enjoy the experience with your students and their families.

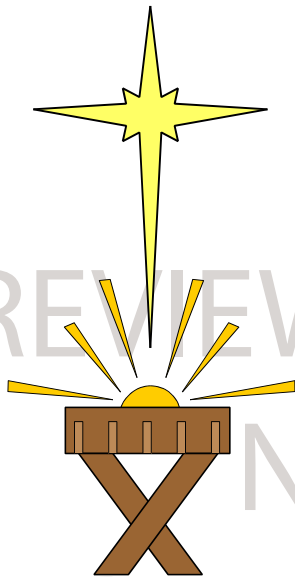
IF YOU NEED HELP....

The Christmas Director is available if you need help but you will be responsible to have your students ready to participate.
The program will come together at the last moment with very little formal large group rehearsal.

ENJOY THE EXPERIENCE....

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to touch the lives of children and adults. Take time to enjoy your small part of the bigger picture. The Jesus story is classic and life changing. The spiritual experience is amazing!

GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER AT A GLANCE



PRELUDE

Piano and organ prelude of traditional Christmas melodies

PROCESSIONAL

Classes enter the sanctuary in small chaotic groups talking, laughing, pushing

INTRODUCTION

Stage Manager interacts with some participants
Song: "God Made A Way In A Manger"

NURSERY/PRESCHOOL: JESUS LOVES ME!

Students dress in Holy Land Costume
Song: "Jesus Loves Me"

KINDERGARTEN: HAY THERE!

Students dress in Holy Land Costume/carry hay to place in manger
Song: "Jesus Is A Little Lamb"

GRADE ONE HAS A LITTLE LAMB

Students dress in Holy Land Costume
Congregation Sings: "As Shepherds Watched Their Flocks By Night"

THE LIVING NATIVITY SPEAKS

GRADE TWO: ANGELS OF THE HEAVENLY KIND

Students dress as Heavenly Angels
Congregation Sings: “Angels We Have Heard On High”

THE LIVING NATIVITY SPEAKS

GRADE THREE: WISE MEN AND THEIR TREASURES

Students dress as Wise Men from the Orient
Congregation Sings: “We Three Kings As Orient Are”

GRADE FOUR: THE STAR IN THE EAST

Students dress as Bethlehem Travelers/carry stars to give to Mary
Reprise With Congregation: “God Made A Way In A Manger”

GRADE FIVE: JUST A TOUCH

Students dress in Holy Land Costume
Congregation Sings: “O Little Town of Bethlehem”

GRADE SIX: GOD’S GREAT NEWS!

Students dress in Holy Land Costume

THE LIVING NATIVITY SPEAKS

Reprise With Congregation: “God Made A Way In A Manger”

THE MANGER PARTY

STAGE AND PROPS

GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER...Backstage At The Inn is a unique presentation celebrating the night of Jesus' birth. Pretend to be preparing the very same Sunday School program with the audience looking in on the preparations and missteps that always occur during rehearsals. Construct the stage area as simply as possible in ancient Holy Land style. The real focus should be on people, their costumes and their presentations. Retain all existing Christmas decorations and add only what is needed for the living nativity scene.



Lighting: Turn off normal lighting and sanctuary lights. Light Christmas trees, candles and other mood lighting as desired. Place a small spot light on the floor directly in front of the manger. Place other spot lights on the floor near the rear of the stage so that participants are lit from below and behind. A dim overhead light may be used for mood lighting.

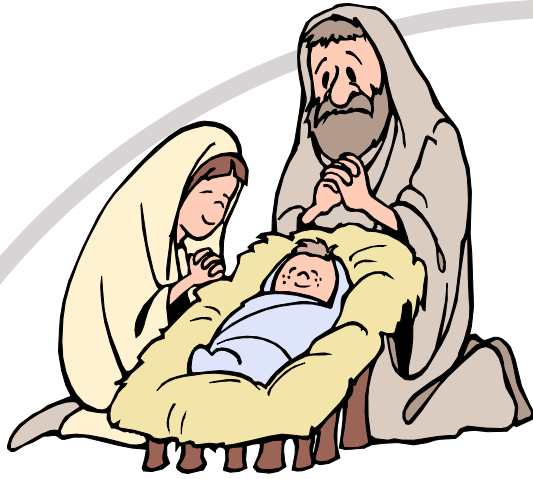
Manger: Place a manger front and center stage. This can be made from a wooden crate or cardboard box. Place hay in the manger and cover the hay with white baby blankets. If desired, sprinkle or spray glitter onto the blankets so that the manger glistens in the spot lighting.

Seating: Place a wooden bench just to the rear of the manger. Only Mary will sit while on stage. Some characters may sit on the floor, kneel or lean against a wall when necessary.

Palm trees: If available, place two large palm trees or bushy plants just to the outside rear of Mary and Joseph. This features the Holy Family in the center spotlight.

Animals: Add a few cardboard stable animals for effect. These are drawn on cardboard, painted and cut with box cutters.

Sound System: Use the existing sound system to its' best advantage. Place one or more microphones within easy reach of teachers and students. If a traveling microphone is available, place it on the **Stage Manager** who directs the activity and narrates the scene.



Holy Land Costumes: An important feature of the traditional nativity presentation is the re-creation of clothing worn at the time of Jesus' birth. When costuming a large group, the best solution is to ask each participant to devise individual outfits. There may be a few main characters who need extra help from the staff. For example, drape Mary in a white or blue and white gown and head covering. Design large capes for the parade of the kings. Make shepherd staffs from plywood or dowel rods. Suggest the use of bathrobes, sandals, sheets, long t-shirts with rope belts, bare feet, simple caftans and head wraps. Some jewelry may be used when appropriate.

When dramatizing the traditional nativity scene, use your imagination and props available at little or no cost. It cannot be done incorrectly. Have a wonderful time making the visual connection to this timeless story. Focus on the story of the baby Jesus and the staging will naturally compliment the scene.

PLANNING THE LIVING NATIVITY

Part of GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER is developing a simple Nativity scene on stage during the program. Place people in the traditional setting with just a little pre-planning.

NATIVITY PEOPLE: Ask Sunday School students from Junior High School, Senior High School, College and adults of all ages to fill the spots needed in the Living Nativity. Include every age group in the event. The audience will enjoy seeing a variety of familiar faces in the roles of shepherds, angels, wise men and Holy Family.



If a newborn is available, consider using him (or her) as Baby Jesus. Asking the real mother to portray Mary is advantageous. She is familiar with her own baby's needs. Using an older baby or toddler does not work well due to frequent motion, fussiness, etc. common to those ages. The audience attention could be drawn away from the focus of the action on stage. Instead, consider using a large baby doll wrapped tightly in fresh white cloths.

COSTUMES: All Living Nativity participants dress in traditional Holy Land clothing. One of two options may be used: Ask each person to provide their own costume or, provide costumes prepared at the church. Use bright, rich colors when purchasing materials for costumes. Metallic fabrics are easily available to communicate wealth for the Wise Men. Big, glittery jewelry may be worn with gold or silver crowns.

ANIMALS: Place large stuffed animals on stage. Farm animals reproduced on large pieces of cardboard may be positioned along the walls of the sanctuary or large room to give the audience the feeling that they are in the stable along with the characters. Small living animals may be used judiciously. Birds in cages, small kittens, rabbits, puppies, etc. can be featured to the great delight of the audience and children.

PROPS: Prepare a manger with hay (or shredded paper), a few shrubs, lights, benches, rocks, pottery, linen towels, metal bowls, etc. and arrange them pleasantly on stage.

REHEARSAL: It may be desirable to meet separately with the Living Nativity crew to practice their speaking parts. No memorization is necessary. There are three places in the program when the scene “comes to life” and speaks. It can be effective as an attention getting device during the event.

Be sure the characters understand how they are to get on stage. They quietly take their places as the elementary class talking about that character begins their section. They remain in place until the conclusion of the program. The only elementary students who remain in place are the Grade 3 students chosen to portray the Wise Men. *(If desired, teen or adult wise men may be chosen.)*

LIVING NATIVITY CHARACTERS

MARY AND BABY JESUS:

JOSEPH:

INN KEEPER:

SHEPHERD #1:

SHEPHERD #2:

SHEPHERD #3:

ANGEL #1:

ANGEL #2:

ANGEL #3:

WISE MAN #1:

WISE MAN #2:

WISE MAN #3:

MUSIC

Coordinate all music with church music director, organist and pianist. Every Christmas Carol is sung by the program participants and the audience. Include hymn book page numbers in a printed program.

One song that is sung by the participants alone is the original theme song entitled, “*God Made A Way In A Manger*”. Teach this simple chorus to the group in the weeks preceding the event. Print the words in the printed program and invite the audience to sing along as the program progresses.

If desired, add special music to the program. Consider appropriate musical pieces that feature local talent. *These parts are NOT pre-planned in the existing program.*



VOCAL SOLO

VOCAL GROUP (DUET-TRIO-QUARTET)

CHILDREN’S CHORUS

ADULT CHOIR

INSTRUMENTAL SOLO

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

HANDBELL/CHIME CHOIR

A MESSAGE TO THE STAGE MANAGER

*The **STAGE MANAGER** is the main character in the program. As this character, you are the person (male or female) who is directing the Sunday School rehearsal for **GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER**. It is divulged as the program proceeds, that you are a sceptic who becomes a believer at the end. As this important personality, you probably want to know what you have to do and how long it will take to prepare your part.*

Rest Easy! Carry a large clip board with the entire program printed on it. We hesitate to call it a “*cheat sheet*” but you may draw your own conclusions. Do not memorize all the lines you will be saying. Use the clip board and enjoy the experience.

Be Enthusiastic! Have a very good time with this **easy** Christmas presentation and enjoy the other participants. Communicate a sense of humor, joyfulness and awe at the re-creation of the nativity scene. When the program gets serious, reflect this in your attitude.

Forget Perfection! When working with children, teens and adults, know that anything can happen and probably will. A wise man once said, “*When you play with puppies you must expect puppy tricks*”.

Become the Director! The Christmas presentation comes together as you verbally organize the classes and bring them on stage at the appropriate times. Speak clearly and loudly. Take your time. Use a microphone. Wear casual clothing (slacks, vest, open shirt, pencil behind ear, glasses) and slightly messy hair.

Follow the Script! Each Sunday School teacher should prepare their individual class before the formal program. Follow their lead as lines are spoken by their students.

Highlight Your Parts! To read your parts easily, highlight each spot where the program states **STAGE MANAGER** with a bright yellow marker.

God Made A Way In A Manger

Words and Music: Ellen Bunnell

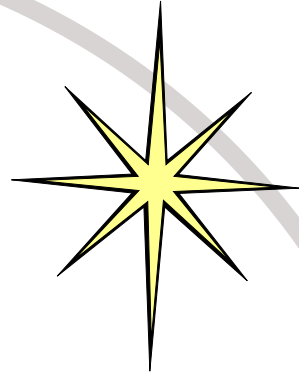
God made a way in a man - ger His
 Son was sent from a - bove. The
 child who came as a stran - ger be -
 came the sa - vior of lo - ve, Be -
 came the sa - vior of love.

God Made A Way In A Manger
 A crib, a cross and a crown!
 Into a world filled with danger,
 To save us and lay His life down,
 To save us and lay His life down.

God Made A Way In A Manger
 And Jesus still lives today.
 Ask Him to be your Savior.
 Tell Him you'll trust and obey,
 Tell Him you'll trust and obey.

THE PROCESSIONAL

*Gather **GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER** participants in an outer room before the program begins. Dim sanctuary lights making sure existing holiday lights are burning. Leave the stage spotlights on so students and teachers can read their parts. The classes enter together with teachers after the audience is seated.*



MUSIC: Ask the organist/pianist to play bright, happy Christmas music as the participants enter. Set the informal stage for the controlled chaos that follows! If desired, taped Christmas music may be used.

PARTICIPANTS: Class groups enter the sanctuary chaotically. They whistle, talk loud, call friendly greetings to each other and talk in small groups. They enter noisily from all entrances. Some students may skip, hold hands and even do cartwheels down the aisle. *Use the exuberant talent you have on hand!* Some students may walk casually across the stage talking, moving props into place or calling to friends and waving. A few instruments may be included with students blowing sour notes as if tuning them as they walk. Some of the larger props, like a wooden bench, manger, hay bales, animal backdrops, etc. may be carried down the aisles and placed on the stage haphazardly.

Any participant who wears a costume for the nativity scene should be putting on their costume and carrying their props. Give the audience the idea that a dress rehearsal is about to begin and they are privileged to peek in on what happens the day before the program.

Bring very young students into the sanctuary through the closest doorway to keep them out of harm's way as older kids jump, talk, skip and move erratically. They may come in before the others begin their entrance, if desired. Seat the youngsters in the front rows with their teachers.

INTRODUCTION

STAGE MANAGER: (*Center Stage--Holding clipboard, pencil behind ear, slightly upset and nervous--clapping hands.*) People! People! Settle down! Come now, find your seats. We do not have much time and there is so much to do! Please....fi-ind your seee-aaat!

**PARTICIPANTS SCURRY TO FIND SEATS WITH THEIR CLASS.
AS THEY SIT DOWN, THEY QUIET DOWN
TO LISTEN TO THE STAGE MANAGER'S INSTRUCTIONS.**

**TWO TEENS STAND ON STAGE BEHIND THE STAGE MANAGER
WHISPERING TO EACH OTHER AND IGNORING INSTRUCTIONS.**

STAGE MANAGER: *Discovering the teens as the group quiets down....* Honestly, what's the matter with you two. I mean you! Sit! Now! Move it or lose it!

TEEN #1: (*Sarcastically...*) Okay, okay. We were just deciding where to get our next tattoo. What got your shorts in a knot?

TEEN #2: Too much coffee. I've seen it before. The symptoms are obvious...shaking hands, way too much energy and short temper. My mom's like that every day.

STAGE MANAGER: I did not have too much coffee. I didn't even have coffee today. Who has time for coffee when there's a Christmas program to produce. And can't you see? I'm not wearing shorts! (*Dramatically...*) Oh, I'm *so* underappreciated and *so* overworked! (*Shouting...*) Now, SIT DOWN!

TEEN #1: Okay, okay! The faster we get this thing going, the quicker we can get out of here. The mall awaits! Our class is sitting over there. They don't look very happy either.

BOTH TEENS JOIN THEIR CLASS.

STAGE MANAGER: (*Turning to the group, calming down and smiling...*) Welcome Christmas lovers, one and all. As you know, we are gathered to rehearse our annual Christmas program which, this year, is entitled "*God Made A Way In A Manger*". We do not have much time and I insist upon perfection as we speak and sing our songs. I know it's not too much to ask for your help. I have an important dinner engagement and I must finish on time.

Let's get going. We begin our story with Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus already in the Bethlehem stable. (*Turning to the empty stage...*) Where is my Mary? Where is my Joseph? Where-oh-where is my Baby Jesus?

COSTUMED MARY, JOSEPH AND BABY JESUS ACTORS ARE SITTING IN THE AUDIENCE. THEY MAY BE TEENS OR ADULTS WHO GET UP AND MOVE TO CENTER STAGE. CARRY A REAL INFANT OR USE A BLANKET WRAPPED BABY DOLL IN THE MANGER. JOSEPH HURRIEDLY PUTS THE MANGER IN PLACE, FINDS A BENCH FOR MARY AND PLACES THE BABY IN THE MANGER.

STAGE MANAGER: Aahhhh, that's the idea. I'm feeling more *Christmas-y* as the moments pass. Now we need to practice our theme song to begin the festivities. Sing from your place in the audience. Let the games begin...I mean...Let's hit the road...I mean...Break a leg...Oh, just let the music play! ...and let me hear that theme song loud and clear!

**ALL CLASSES SING THE THEME SONG
"GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER".**

PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY
NOT FOR USE
PLEASE PURCHASE

NURSERY/PRESCHOOL: Jesus Loves Me!

Dress Nursery/Preschool students in Holy Land costume. Long T-shirts tied in the middle, sandals or bare feet, bathrobes, head gear, stuffed animals in their arms all add to the mood.

STAGE MANAGER: I see some beautiful Bethlehem children in the front row all ready to practice their special part for “*God Made A Way In A Manger*”. Please come and sing for us.

Gather costumed students at the manger. Mary and Joseph welcome them softly, hug them, hold their hands and show them the baby.

TEACHER: Oh children, look! Baby Jesus has arrived at last. Let’s peek into the manger and see the baby. It wasn’t long ago that you were babies in your own mother’s arms. Babies are sweet and tiny and they smell good, well...most of the time. Baby Jesus was just like every other baby. He cried when He was hungry. He slept a lot, like other babies, and he had to learn to walk like you did...one step at a time.

(Looking at the Baby with awe...) Baby Jesus is God’s only Son. The Bible says, “*For God so loved the world that He gave His Only Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*” *John 3:16* Jesus must love us a lot.

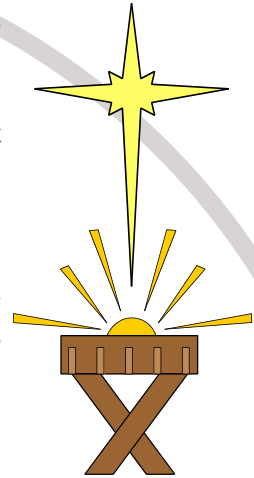
STAGE MANAGER: *(Interrupting...)* Let me say this as gently as possible, we must hurry. There is no time for explanation. Let these dear little ones sing and get them back to their seats.

TEACHER: *(Surprised...)* Oh! I couldn’t do that. These precious children need to know Jesus loves them. They will remember this for many years. I want to do it right.

STAGE MANAGER: There is lots of time for these children to learn about Jesus. Sing! Sing! Sing! We must stay on schedule for this dress rehearsal.

TEACHER: *(Shaking her head....)* Children, let’s sing our Christmas song to Baby Jesus.

NURSERY/PRESCHOOL STUDENTS SING WITH OR WITHOUT ACCOMPANIMENT: JESUS LOVES ME



KINDERGARTEN: Hay There!

Dress Kindergarten students in Holy Land costume. Long T-shirts tied with rope belts, bathrobes, head coverings, bare feet or sandals. Each student carries a handful of shredded paper to add to the manger. Students sit around the manger as the story is told by their teacher and the Inn Keeper.

STAGE MANAGER: That was wonderful. Next! I see on my chart our Kindergarten children have something to add to the scene. (*Clapping hands...*) Teachers, let's get moving!

TEACHER: We are going to talk about the manger. Let's place some hay in the manger and think about the kind of bed Jesus slept in when He was a baby. You know Mary and Joseph had to travel to Joseph's hometown, Bethlehem. There was no room in the Inn...

STAGE MANAGER: (*Calling...*) Inn Keeper! I need an Inn Keeper!

ONE HOLY LAND COSTUMED TEEN/ADULT COMES OUT OF THE AUDIENCE AND STANDS ON ONE SIDE OF THE STAGE WITH ARMS FOLDED. HE REMAINS ON STAGE THROUGHOUT THE PROGRAM.

TEACHER: Yes, there he is...an Inn Keeper. It was a busy night in Bethlehem. People were coming from all over the nation to register for the census of Caesar Augustus, the Roman Emperor. Everyone was required to return to his family home for this registration. Joseph was a member of David's royal family so he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea.

INN KEEPER: When the couple from the Galilean village of Nazareth got here, they ended up on my door step. Of course they wanted a room--everyone wanted a room-- and I didn't have one. I felt sorry for them. It was obvious her baby was to be born soon. I had one spot left...this stable where the animals stayed. If they don't mind, I don't mind. I am missing some fresh hay for this manger. How about adding some to make the bed a little softer.

KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS TUCK THEIR SHREDDED PAPER INTO THE MANGER.

TEACHER: The baby is stirring. I think we better sing our lullaby and put Him back to sleep.

**KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS SING: AWAY IN A MANGER
(AUDIENCE MAY SING ALONG AFTER STUDENTS SING VERSE ONE ALONE.)**

GRADE ONE Had A Little Lamb

Grade One students dress as Bethlehem shepherds. Bathrobes, head coverings, bare feet or sandals and a few shepherd crooks in the form of long dowel rods or crooks made of plywood or cardboard are good costumes. Some students may carry stuffed lambs.



STAGE MANAGER: Thank you, Kindergarten! That was wonderful. I am missing my shepherds. There must be some shepherds in the room somewhere!

TEACHER: (*Standing...*) We're over here! We had a little lamb but he ran away. Maybe we can find him before tomorrow's Christmas program.. Should we practice on stage anyway?

STAGE MANAGER: (*Exasperated...*) Yes, yes, come to the stage. How could you lose the little lamb? Would the shepherds in Bethlehem have lost their little lambs? I don't think so!

THREE TEEN OR ADULT SHEPHERDS COME FORWARD SILENTLY AT THIS TIME. THEY REMAIN ON STAGE WHEN THE GRADE ONE SHEPHERDS TAKE THEIR SEATS AT THE END OF THEIR PRESENTATION.

GRADE ONE SHEPHERDS COME TO THE STAGE IN COSTUME, CARRYING CROOKS AND STUFFED SHEEP. THEY GREET MARY AND JOSEPH, STAND BEHIND THE HOLY FAMILY AND SIT ON THE FLOOR NEAR THEM.

TEACHER: Shepherds in Bethlehem were lowly people. No one really liked a shepherd. They may have been dishonest common folk. All in all, shepherds are people who have faults just like anyone else, but God selected them to hear about the birth of Jesus first.

STAGE MANAGER: (*Thoughtfully...*)Doesn't it seem strange that God would want sinners to find Jesus first? After all, He was a king! He should have been born in a palace. Important people should be announcing His arrival. Sometimes I just do not understand the ways of God.

TEACHER: It's just like I tell my first graders, God loves sinners. He thinks we're wonderful! He loves us so much that He sent Jesus from Heaven to become "Sin" for us. Shepherds are the perfect example of sinners. I'm proud that my students have been asked to represent the imperfect Bethlehem shepherds.

SHEPHERD #1: I saw an angel!

SHEPHERD #2: The angel told us to come to Bethlehem and search for a baby in a manger.

SHEPHERD #3: It was cold in the field tonight.

SHEPHERD #4: Even the sheep were huddled together near the fire pit.

SHEPHERD #5: At first I thought I was seeing sparks of fire in the sky.

SHEPHERD #6: I saw a host of angels, and they were singing a beautiful song.

ALL STUDENTS: Is it time? Can we sing our lullaby now? Please?

GRADE ONE SHEPHERDS SING THEIR LULLABY WITH OR WITHOUT ACCOMPANIMENT TO THE TUNE OF “MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB”.

Jesus is a little Lamb, little Lamb, little Lamb

Jesus is a little Lamb,

And shepherds ought to know.

We followed Him to Bethlehem, Bethlehem, Bethlehem.

We followed Him to Bethlehem,

The angels said to go!

In a manger He will sleep, He will sleep, He will sleep

In a manger He will sleep,

While shepherds bow their knee.

The shepherds’ joy is now complete, now complete, now complete.

The shepherds’ joy is now complete,

Our Savior we can see!

CHRISTMAS CAROL: AS SHEPHERDS WATCHED THEIR FLOCKS BY NIGHT

When the congregation has finished singing the Christmas Carol,

Grade One Shepherds return to their seats.

The teen/adult shepherds remain in place as part of the living nativity.

THE LIVING NATIVITY SPEAKS

The STAGE MANAGER leaves the area while the Christmas Carol is being sung to allow the following conversation to take place at the end of the song:

SHEPHERD #1: Hey, have you noticed something odd about our STAGE MANAGER? He doesn't seem to be enjoying the dress rehearsal.

SHEPHERD #2: Yeah, duh! He's not a happy guy. You better not talk. He'll catch us. Straighten up. Look like the shepherd you know you are.

JOSEPH: Shhh, cut it out guys. He'll be back any second.

INN KEEPER: My feet are killing me. How long do you think this rehearsal is going to last? Anybody want to go out for a pizza later?

MARY: Shh, you're going to wake the baby. I've been thinking about the STAGE MANAGER. It seems like he's hearing about Jesus for the first time. Maybe he doesn't understand Who Jesus really is. (*Whispers...*) Maybe he's not...a believer...a Christian!

SHEPHERD #3: Oh, I can't believe that. How did he get to be the STAGE MANAGER? He *must* know Jesus. Let's just keep watching and see what happens. Here he comes. Sshhhh...Back to your poses.

The STAGE MANAGER returns to begin the next portion of the rehearsal.

GRADE TWO

ANGELS OF THE HEAVENLY KIND



Dress Grade Two students to resemble angels. White sheets draped around them and tied with a rope, silver or gold tinsel halos placed in their hair and bare feet or sandals make the perfect costume. Wings are not required unless desired.

STAGE MANAGER: (*Rushing into the room...*) Come, come, it's time for angels. Where are the angels? Oh, I'm getting a headache. I can't believe we have to have angels in this program..

GRADE TWO TEACHER: (*Standing from his/her seat in the audience...*) You can't believe we're having angels? Why, angels are very important in the Christmas story. We can't have Christmas without angels! Come on, angels. Let's show them what we've got!

STAGE MANAGER: (*Disgusted....*) Yeah, yeah, whatever. The stage is yours. Stand on one side of the nativity scene. Don't forget that tomorrow night the lights will be very dim so I hope everyone knows their part.

GRADE TWO STUDENTS DRESSED AS ANGELS GATHER AS AN ANGEL CHOIR ON THE STAGE.

THREE TEEN/ADULT ANGELS JOIN THE LIVING NATIVITY. PLACE THESE ANGELS IN THE BACK. ONE ANGEL MAY STAND ON A SHEET COVERED LADDER/RISER IN THE BACK CENTER STAGE WITH TWO OTHERS ON EITHER SIDE WITH HANDS RAISED OR HOLDING LIT LANTERNS, LIT CANDLES OR FLASHLIGHTS.

GRADE TWO STUDENT #1: Don't be afraid! I bring you the most joyful news ever announced, and it is for everyone!

GRADE TWO STUDENT #2: The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord has been born tonight in Bethlehem!

GRADE TWO STUDENT #3: How will you recognize him?

GRADE TWO STUDENT #4: You will find a baby wrapped in a blanket, lying in a manger!

ALL GRADE TWO STUDENTS IN UNISON: Glory to God in the highest heaven and peace on earth for all those pleasing him!

STAGE MANAGER: Nice job, kids. Tomorrow night I want you to speak up loud and clear. By the way, you don't really believe angels came the night Jesus was born, do you?

ALL GRADE TWO STUDENTS: Yes! Yes! We believe in angels!

TEACHER: God's Word says the angels announced the birth of Jesus, our Savior. We believe God's angels came from the heavenly places as messengers to all people of earth. The Bible speaks of angels many times. In fact, there are over 300 references to angels in scripture. Jesus talked about angels.

STAGE MANAGER: I never considered the story of Jesus as true. Of course, I always enjoy Christmas. I love to light the tree. I like to watch *Charlie Brown's Christmas* on television. And the presents are great! But....true? Nah, I don't think so.

GRADE TWO STUDENT #1: Oh please, think about it. I believe in Jesus. I know He's real. He came at Christmas just like in our Sunday School show.

STAGE MANAGER: Well, maybe I will think about it. In the meantime, the audience helps us sing the next song. **STAGE MANAGER LEAVES THE AREA.**

CHRISTMAS CAROL: ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH

When the congregational Carol is finished, Grade Two angels return to their seats. The Teen/Adult Angels remain in place as part of the Living Nativity.

THE LIVING NATIVITY SPEAKS

JOSEPH: *(To the three angels...)* Hi guys! Welcome to Bethlehem. What do you think about our illustrious Stage Manager? Saved? Not saved? Don't know? Don't care?

MARY: Don't care?!? You have to care. Jesus cares.

ANGEL #1: We just got here. I don't have an opinion yet. I think I have a rash under this robe.

ANGEL #2: I wonder what real angels wear. Do they dress in white and have wings? When I found out I was going to be an angel, I looked up Bible verses in the Christmas story and found out there was one angel who spoke and was then joined by a host of others who sang.

INNKEEPER: You actually looked something up? I am impressed!

MARY: Let's stay focused people! Keep an eye on the Stage Manager. I have a feeling something interesting is going to happen.

ANGEL #3: Personally, I like pretending to be an angel. Wanna see me fly? *(Pretend to spread arms to fly.)*

EVERYONE ON STAGE (IN UNISON): NO!!!

STAGE MANAGER: *(Entering from off stage...)* Now what? Living Nativity people do NOT speak! Remain frozen in your position. If I want your participation, I will ask for it. Next! Who's next?

GRADE THREE: WISE MEN AND THEIR TREASURES

Dress all Grade Three students in Holy Land garments. Some may be wise men with sparkling fabric and lots of jewels. Others may be servants carrying the treasures. Footwear may be sandals or soft slippers. Make three oversized boxes or glass containers to represent gold, frankincense and myrrh.



STAGE MANAGER: Here we go, people! Listen up! I need all my Grade Three wise men and their foot servants at the back of the church. Come on, don't waste time. We have to get you *wise guys* down the aisle and kneeling at the manger in record time!

GRADE THREE TEACHER: Stage Manager, my class has decided that we want to pray before we rehearse. It's a habit we've developed over the year...to ask God's blessing on our efforts.

STAGE MANAGER: (*Sarcastically...*) Ohhh sure...Pray! Take all the time you want. We can stay here all night! Don't you realize we have work to do? You know the old saying, "God helps those who help themselves". Well, that's where we're at. "Help me, help you!"

GRADE THREE STUDENTS: (*Chanting In Unison...from their seats*) We want to pray! We want to pray! We want to pray!

STAGE MANAGER: Okay, okay. If it gets you to the back of the church, pray...but make it quick! (Under his breath as students move to back of church...) Pray! What good does prayer do anyway? Never helped me one little bit. Pray! And they believe in angels, too! What kind of people have I gotten myself involved with. (*Fold arms. Move to one side of the stage.*)

STUDENT #1: (*Standing in the audience...*) Dear Lord, We want to take a moment to thank You for coming to us as a baby.

STUDENT #2: (*Standing in the audience...*) Thank you for leaving heaven with all it's treasures and pleasures and coming to earth to be our Savior.

STUDENT #3: *(Standing in the audience...)* Forgive us when we don't follow You as we should. Forgive us for letting the rest of the world put us in its' mold.

STUDENT #4: *(Standing in the audience...)* Help us to bring our treasures to You. May we always lay ourselves at Your feet and offer our lives to You.

STUDENT #5: *(Standing in the audience...)* Help us to be the best Wise Men and Servants this church has ever seen! In Jesus' Name....

ALL GRADE THREE STUDENTS: *(Standing and In Unison...)* AMEN!

TEACHER: *(Students move to back, center aisle...Teacher continues to talk to Stage Manager at the front. Become very chatty and insistent. Keep talking fast and right in his face until one student comes to drag you away.)*

We're ready now. Go on, kids, and get ready for your grand entrance. By the way, did you know the wise men came from a far country. It could have been Babylon where Daniel had been a wise man so many years before. Also, the wise men are always pictured as THREE wise men but actually the Bible never says "three". There may have been as many as twelve—or even more! When you include their servants, their camels, donkeys, food, tents, clothing and other stuff, they must have made quite an impression.

They saw a star. It was no ordinary star. It was probably an alignment of two or more planets and could have been designed by God for that very time. The wise men were star gazers and, as I'm sure you know, they followed that dilly of a star for a very long time. But, soon enough it landed right over the place where Jesus and Mary and Joseph were staying. We're not sure it was on THAT night...*the* night Jesus was born...but He was still little.

The treasures they brought were life savers. Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh were worth a lot of money and money was what Joseph would need to take Jesus and Mary away to Egypt to protect them from an evil ruler who wanted Jesus dead. Yes sir, the wise men were really something.

STUDENT #6 COMES TO THE FRONT, GRABS THE TEACHER BY THE HAND AND DRAGS HER/HIM BACK TO THE REST OF THE CLASS AT THE BACK OF THE CHURCH.

STAGE MANAGER: (*Quietly, to himself...*) Whew! I've got to admit these people certainly know a lot about the Christmas story. Who would take time to learn all those details unless they really believed it. Maybe there is something about this Jesus that I ought to think about....later.

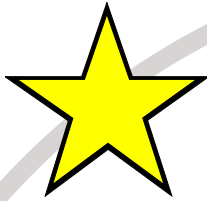
(*Brightening...*) Now everyone, when the music starts and the audience sings "We Three Kings Of Orient Are", come down the aisle one at a time...slowly...quietly... When you get to the manger, bow and kneel.

CHRISTMAS CAROL: WE THREE KINGS OF ORIENT ARE

CHOOSE THREE WISE MEN FROM THE CLASS TO REMAIN IN THE LIVING NATIVITY SCENE. THEY KNEEL BEFORE THE MANGER WITH THEIR CAPES OUTSTRETCHED BEHIND THEM. THE REST OF THE CLASS RETURNS TO THEIR SEATS.

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GRADE FOUR–THE STAR IN THE EAST



Dress Grade Four students become Bethlehem travelers who have also seen a huge star and wonder about what it is. Each Holy Land costumed student carries a homemade glittering star to give to Mary. Make the stars in class

STAGE MANAGER: Grade Four! Grade Four! Where are you? We need Bethlehem travelers on stage. Come on. Get up here with your stars.

TEACHER: (*Cheerfully...*) We're coming! Give us a minute. We didn't have much time to practice our parts so don't be too hard on us. We promise that we will practice before tomorrow's program.

STAGE MANAGER: (*Resigned....*) I should have known someone would forget to practice their parts. We'll work with it.

TEACHER: Well, my class is the best and the brightest and the smartest in all the land. We won't need much practice! You'll see! Let's go, kids. On stage. Stand around the baby and the others and show your stars. Take your parts with you. You can read them for now.

STUDENT #1: Mary, Joseph, did you know about the brilliant star that is shining over this place? We saw it and we want you to know that God commanded all the heavens to celebrate the birth of His Son, Jesus. (*Hand star to Mary.*)

STUDENT #2: I like Jesus described as "the bright morning star". It is the most beautiful name ever given to Him. (*Hand star to Mary.*)

STUDENT #3: Do you know it was based on Old Testament prophecy? Numbers 24:17 says "A star shall come forth out of Jacob". (*Hand star to Mary.*)

STUDENT #4: I guess it was certain that Christians should remember Old Testament words and think of Jesus. (*Hand star to Mary.*)

STUDENT #5: We have brought twinkling stars to shower your baby with love. (*Hand star to Mary.*)

STUDENT #6: We have traveled all day and now we must find rest. We heard that a special child was born tonight into this weary and worn world. (*Hand star to Mary.*)

STUDENT #7: At least *we* might find a place to lay our heads for this night. He has no place to lay his little head. He is resting in an animal's feed trough—a manger. (*Hand star to Mary.*)

STUDENT #8: God made a way for the world to be saved through the baby in this manger. Yes, *God Made A Way In A Manger.* (*Hand star to Mary.*)

STUDENT #9: I saw the star resting directly above the stable. That doesn't happen every day. Maybe He's a prince. (*Hand star to Mary.*)

STUDENT #10: I've heard hoof beats crossing the desert sand,
Just the sounds of an eastern caravan.
They said they were on their way to see the newborn King.
With a star that bright, with a guiding light,
I think a very special King is born tonight. (*Hand star to Mary.*)

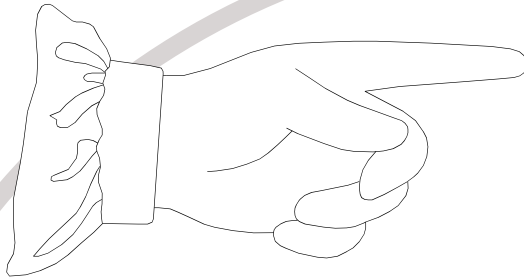
**SONG: Ask the audience to sing
“God Made A Way In A Manger” with the students.**

STAGE MANAGER: Well, I must say, I *am* impressed with your class. Handing stars to Mary reminds me of all the times I have forgotten to give ANYTHING to the Lord, including myself. You have given me much to think about. It's time to take your seats.

TEACHER: *Hand the Stage Manager a star before leaving the stage.*

*Adjust parts to number of students available. Combine or stretch parts as needed.
Students who may not have had speaking parts hand stars to Mary at the end.*

GRADE FIVE: JUST A TOUCH



Students dress in Holy Land costumes. Practice their parts during Sunday School in the weeks preceding the presentation. They may read their individual parts. Tell the students that after their presentation they should take their seats quietly.

TEACHER: (*Calling from seat...*) Oh Stage Manager, don't forget my class. We've been waiting patiently but there is a limit! We're ready and we're ready now.

STAGE MANAGER: Yes, yes, yes, I'm ready for you. The faster you get up here, the happier I will be.....so move it!

STUDENTS RUSH OUT OF THEIR SEATS AND SCRAMBLE TO SURROUND THE BABY IN THE MANGER. SOME STUDENTS MAY SIT AND OTHERS MAY STAND.

STUDENT #1: Ohh, look. It's a baby. Do you mind if I touch the baby? (*Touch quickly*) Sometimes I wonder if the shepherds asked Mary and Joseph if they could touch the baby. Maybe Mary let them hold her precious boy...if their hands were clean.

STUDENT #2: May I touch the baby? (*Touch quickly*) One of God's gifts to us is that rare moment when we become thoughtful and loving just as God meant for us to be all along. It usually happens when we are with a baby.

STUDENT #3: May I touch the baby? (*Touch quickly*) When we see a baby or hear a baby cry or laugh, we are surprised at how our hearts jump with love.

STUDENT #4: May I touch the baby? (*Touch quickly*) Ever since the first human baby was born, babies have need tender touches of love. Babies know they are wanted and loved when someone touches them.

STUDENT #5: May I touch the baby? (*Touch quickly*) Even the mightiest of men needed

touches of love when they were babies. The world's strongest men could not walk. At one time our most well-spoken leaders could not speak. Brilliant people were innocent in their newborn baby world.

STUDENT #6: May I touch the baby? (*Touch quickly*) And now here is Mary's baby. Like all other babies, "His little self" needs a parent's hug. Joseph and Mary are the perfect parents to give loving touches.

STUDENT #7: May I touch the baby? (*Touch quickly*) Hear the Good News! God has come among us in the person of Christ! How can our faith in Jesus ever become dull and boring?

TEACHER: The Fashioner of stars, the Creator of the universe, the Seeker of my soul came to lowly Bethlehem to be born in a manger and to be held in a young woman's arms. Christmas is the most amazing story ever told about God or man or babies. I have been touched by God.

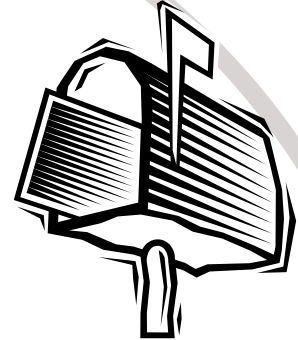
STAGE MANAGER: (*With awe....*) May I touch the baby? May I hold the baby? (*Hold the baby*) I finally understand God's Good News. God has come and dwelt among us in the form of this tiny baby boy, Jesus. But...what happened next? How did He make such a huge difference in the world? I know Christ lives in today's world in us. He speaks through our lips. He walks with our feet. He performs His works of mercy with our hands. How could I have missed the message for so long?

CHRISTMAS CAROL: O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM
ASK THE CONGREGATION TO SING WITH THE STUDENTS.
AFTER THE CAROL, GRADE FIVE STUDENTS QUIETLY TAKE THEIR SEATS.

GRADE 6: GOD'S GREAT NEWS!

Grade six students dress in Holy Land costume.
Practice parts in the weeks preceding the program.

TEACHER: Come on, kids. The Stage Manager has just experienced the love of Jesus for the first time. There may be something we can do to tell him the rest of God's great news about Jesus! We can practice our real parts later.



STUDENTS STAND AROUND THE STAGE MANAGER WHO IS STILL HOLDING THE BABY.

STUDENT #1: You've been a great Stage Manager. You've been pretty patient with all of us and we understand that you yell at us because you love us and want us to do well in the program tomorrow.

STUDENT #2: We wonder if you understand the story of Jesus. He came to earth as a baby but He grew into the man who saved the world.

STAGE MANAGER: Saved the world?

STUDENT #3: He saved the world. Jesus became our Savior when He died on Calvary's cross. He didn't have to do it. He chose to die to wash away our sin.

STUDENT #4: When Jesus died, his enemies said, "We got Him. He won't be causing us trouble anymore."

STAGE MANAGER: You mean He had enemies who thought He was a troublemaker?

STUDENT #5: The enemies hated Him so much that they made sure He would die. They didn't know they were fitting into God's plan. Something very special was about to happen.

STUDENT #6: Once Jesus was placed in a tomb, guards surrounded the stone that was rolled over the opening.

STUDENT #7: Three days later the women friends of Jesus discovered the stone rolled away and an angel sitting on it, waiting for them. Jesus had risen from the dead!

STUDENT #8: And that's Easter! Jesus became our Savior. He became YOUR Savior. All you must do is believe that Jesus died and rose for you. God loves us so much that He sent a baby. *"For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."* (Luke 2:11)

STAGE MANAGER: I believe! I do believe. No one ever explained it to me before today.

STUDENT #9: All the good works in the world won't matter if you spend eternity in hell. Don't put it off...you don't know what tomorrow may bring. Ask Jesus to be your Savior now.

STAGE MANAGER: *(Still holding baby....)* Dear Lord, Thank You for living and dying for me. Forgive me for my sin. I want to be clean and whole inside. Make me into someone who will do Your will. I believe, I truly believe that the baby in the manger became the Christ of the Cross. Amen.

ALL STUDENTS: YEA!

GRADE SIX STUDENTS TAKE THEIR SEATS QUIETLY.

Divide the parts between the number of students available. Combine if necessary.

PLEASE PURCHASE

THE LIVING NATIVITY SPEAKS

When elementary students are seated, the characters in the LIVING NATIVITY composed of Junior High School, Senior High School, College students and Adults, conclude “*God Made A Way In A Manger*” with the Stage Manager.

STAGE MANAGER: (*Place baby in Mary’s arms. Turn to face the completed Living Nativity scene...*) So, this is where it all started... in a dark stable, in a tiny town. Our simple scene is a demonstration of the most important event in human history. God came to earth as a baby but He remained on earth to become our Savior through His words, His death and His resurrection. I think we should add a cross and an open tomb hidden in shadows before tomorrow.

JOSEPH: The angels in heaven are rejoicing at your salvation! Joseph and Mary were insignificant nobodies from a nothing town...peasants. Yet God chose this humble couple to parent His greatest Gift to the earth. Joseph felt privileged to be the earthly father to God’s Son.

MARY: The King did not come from a palace. Such a mystery is too much for my mind. Joseph and Mary were humble, poor and uneducated. They owned no earthly power. The world would laugh and mock to see such poor circumstances and yet God was laughing with joy in celebration of the arrival of the Savior of the world, His Son.

STAGE MANAGER: (*Walking slowly in the Living Nativity scene, fixing a robe or adjusting a head covering...*) Joseph and Mary appeared to be caught in something beyond their control but every move was made by the hand of God.

INNKEEPER: In Bethlehem accommodations for travelers were uncomfortable at best. A series of stalls built inside an enclosure and open to a common area was all that was available. The Innkeeper had no control over such things as reservations and mercy accommodations. If there was no room, there was NO room. As I think about it, the Innkeeper gave the best he could. Mary was protected from strangers and prying eyes. Only Joseph and the animals were attending her. Instead of a crowded common room, Mary, Joseph and the newborn child bonded together as a family and praised God in the privacy of a hay covered cave.

MARY: The Baby had fresh, clean cloths wrapped around His tiny body. Mary must have counted fingers and toes, holding him in arms of love, laying Him in a feeding trough....God’s presence was there. They could feel His holiness, His support, His encouragement.

SHEPHERD #1: The shepherds were the first to hear. *“And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were terrified.”* Did you ever notice that every time an angel appears in the Bible, he says, “Do not be afraid”? They must have been something to look at. I think I would be one scared shepherd too!

SHEPHERD #2: It must have looked like a star burst, a bolt of lightning or a myriad of falling stars. Suddenly there was glory all around these humble, “poor in spirit” men. One angel spoke and a host of angels sang *“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and good will to all men.”*

SHEPHERD #3: The angels gave the simple address where the baby was staying. The shepherds lost no time in heading for Bethlehem. The sheep, it appears, were left to their own devices. Somehow I think those sheep had nothing to fear from predators or thieves that night. God was in control and those flocks were safe from harm.

ANGEL #1: The honored angel tried to reassure the frightened shepherds but it was tough. The angel said he was bringing *“good news for all people”*. The light, the music, the sheer numbers of angels would have frightened anyone.

ANGEL #2: *“Do not be afraid! I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you: He is Christ the Lord.”*

ANGEL #3: Finally, the promised Messiah had arrived. There was joy in heaven and delight in one small stable on earth. How were the angels chosen to bring the message? ALL of heaven’s angels must have surrounded those humble shepherds. This was the most amazing and greatest event that had ever happened in the universe. How could God choose?

STAGE MANAGER: Oh, how I would have loved to have been there. To have seen the vast aerial display of angels and to follow the shepherds and to peek into the old manger to see the tiny face of *my* Savior. He came to earth for *me*. He wasn’t an angel. He came as a man to touch *me*.

WISE MAN #1: God loves us so much, He thinks we’re so wonderful, that...He gave us a baby.

WISE MAN #2: What is the perfect gift to give a Baby King?

WISE MAN #3: It’s our heart. It’s better than the gifts of the wise men.

STAGE MANAGER: I have learned that our heart gift of love must be given individually since God has no grandchildren. It must be given with faith and trust and joy. Our hearts must be given because the baby in Bethlehem didn't remain a baby. He grew into a fine young man in Nazareth. He worked hard beside Joseph the Carpenter. He took His place in His earthly family seriously. He was obedient to suffer on the Cross of Calvary. And He didn't remain in the grave. Because He lives, we live too! God really did it! **God made a way in a manger!**

**CONGREGATION AND STUDENTS CONCLUDE
BY SINGING "GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER".**

**DISMISS THE GATHERING TO
THE MANGER PARTY.**

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THE MANGER PARTY

Assign a small group the responsibility of preparing the MANGER PARTY. This could be a few men and women handpicked for this purpose or an individual adult Sunday School class. THE MANGER PARTY should offer enjoyable desserts, background music and casual fellowship time.

PREPARATIONS BEFORE THE DAY

Menu: Plan the menu and prepare a **Christmas cake**. A pleasant option may be to ask people to bring their favorite **Christmas desserts**. If this is a Sunday morning event, consider serving a **Continental Breakfast** complete with doughnuts, orange juice and coffee.

Provide a variety of **beverages**—Coffee, tea, orange juice, Christmas punch, cream sugar.

Seating: Decide the best arrangement for seating depending upon the size of the group.

Set up tables and chairs

OR

Be informal with folks standing and moving around the room to chat

OR

Place chairs in small circles throughout the room for easy small group conversation.

Music: Prepare background Christmas music. This could be live music performed by local church musicians or tape/CD professional Christmas music.

Centerpieces: Cover tables with white paper and place Christmas centerpieces on each table. These may be as simple as one poinsettia in a vase or more elaborate decorations designed by the committee. Borrow Nativity sets to decorate each table? This makes a beautiful presentation and becomes an interesting conversation starter. Using colorful markers, print the words **GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER** down the centers of each table. Add holly and berries, musical notes or any Christmas symbol that can be drawn easily. Sprinkle with confetti or glitter. Add beautiful candles, flowers and ornaments as desired.

PREPARATIONS THE DAY OF THE PARTY

Decorate the serving table and other tables. Plug in the coffee pot and put the water on to boil for tea during the program. Set out the desserts, cream and sugar. Make and place a Christmas punch (your favorite recipe) on a nearby serving table.

DURING THE MANGER PARTY

Assign people to cut and serve desserts, pour punch and refill creamers and sugar bowls as needed. Greet each guest cordially as they come through the serving line. Move about the group to be sure everyone feels welcome. Find seats for those who may not be familiar with your church. Introduce people.

AFTER THE MANGER PARTY

Don't forget! The job is not done until clean up is complete. Ask everyone to help with dishes, taking down tables and chairs and sweeping the area clean.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!
GOD MADE A WAY IN
A MANGER—
FOR YOU!**

