

IT'S A
JINGLE

OUT THERE!

PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY

NOT FOR USE
COME **H**OMIE

TO THE

MANGER!

IT'S A JINGLE OUT THERE!

...Come Home To The Manger



IT'S A JINGLE OUT THERE is an Easy-To-Prepare and Easy-To-Present Sunday School Christmas Celebration. Rehearse in separate Sunday School classes (Nursery-Adult). Gather the group for a dress rehearsal and the program is set to go!

IT'S A JINGLE OUT THERE is a forty five minute presentation featuring children, teens and adult participating in a series of scenes presenting the story of Bethlehem's special Baby. It is funny, inspirational and motivational. The Kings from Orient, AR direct the action while trying to find their way home.

IT'S A JINGLE OUT THERE challenges the congregation to enter the real celebration of Christmas by worshiping Jesus our Savior. The story of Jesus is presented in a way that even the youngest participant will understand God's Salvation message.

IT'S A JINGLE OUT THERE concludes with an all church **WELCOME HOME** Party! Serve snacks, play Christmas music and fellowship with each other.

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DIRECTING THE DIRECTOR



IT'S A JINGLE OUT THERE...Come Home To The Manger is a wonderful way to celebrate the Christmas season within your church family! Ask many people to involve themselves in the presentation of this reminder of the true meaning of Christmas. Open the event to your community!

A lost family enters your darkened, empty church. They cannot find their way home. Hoping to find rest from a vicious winter storm, they hide inside the sanctuary. Little do they know that a lot of Christmas activity is about to take place. Small groups enter to prepare the sanctuary for a grand celebration. Some are practicing their parts and others are decorating and cleaning the area for Christmas Eve. Each time a new group enters, the family rushes to hide. In the process, they overhear what Christmas really means. Did I mention the lost family are the **3 Kings from Orient, AR?**

Let the story unfold in a casual way. Parts do not have to be memorized. Printed parts may be attached to props and read with strong, confident voices. This will not affect the successful outcome of the program. However, if memorizing parts is important, by all means take the extra time and effort to dazzle the crowd!

Encourage your small groups to practice several times during the Sunday School hour in the weeks before the program is presented. Sunday School teachers take the preparation lead for their classes. This cuts down on formal rehearsal time. It may be possible to have one large practice where groups learn where to sit and stand and when to enter and exit.

For some of your church members, holiday programs presented by your local church comprise most, if not all, of their Christmas celebration. It is very possible that as you read this you are thinking, *"Why me? I cannot do this!"* Well, put those feelings aside and dive into this charming presentation of a family who must find their way home to the manger. May your holidays forever be blessed by this special touch that says Christmas is important.

DELEGATE. Sunday School teachers prepare their classes for the program. Trust the staff to carry out their tasks. It makes your job as the Director much easier. Never apologize when asking people to help.

All teachers must be willing to cooperate with the general theme and be willing to practice with their students during Sunday School class time in the weeks leading to the program. Meet with the teaching staff to be sure they understand how **IT'S A JINGLE OUT THERE** will be prepared and presented. Most teachers have speaking parts incorporated into their class presentation.

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 effort. 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 all details before the Lord and then—RELAX! He is the Power in control. You carry out the tasks at hand.

PLAN. Read this Master Copy and mark areas requiring special attention. List details you will handle personally. Give teachers and participants copies of their portions of the program in colorful folders.

PREPARE. Hopefully, you have ordered **IT'S A JINGLE OUT THERE** with more than one month lead time. Copy the appropriate 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 is necessary.

**This is an All Sunday School production!
Involve adult classes as readers, musicians and leaders.**

IT'S A JINGLE OUT THERE

...Come Home To The Manger

INSERT SPECIAL MUSIC AT DESIRED INTERVALS.
SING THE CAROLS SUGGESTED OR CHANGE T
TO SUIT THE NEEDS OF YOUR GROUP.

NURSERY (BIRTH-AGE 3)

God's Little Lamb

Song: "Jesus Was A Little Lamb"

PRESCHOOL (AGE 4-PRE-KINDERGARTEN 5)

Pajama Party

Song: "Away In A Manger"

KINDERGARTEN

Let The Heavens Rejoice and The Earth Be Glad

Song: "Shepherds In the Field"

PASTOR PRAYS FOR HIS FLOCK

GRADES ONE AND TWO

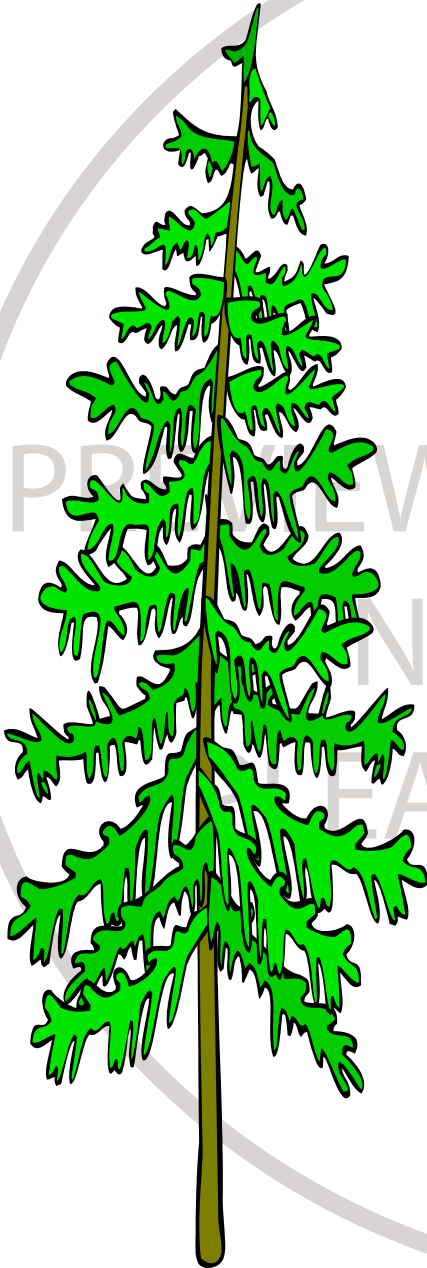
Touched By Angels

Song: "Angels We Have Heard On High"

GRADES THREE AND FOUR

Candy Cane Christmas-No Greater Love

Song: "The First Noel"



GRADES FIVE AND SIX

New Kid In Town

GRADES SEVEN-NINE

Honor the King of Kings

Song: "We Three Kings of Orient Are"

THE JANITOR AND THE BROOM

GRADES TEN-TWELVE

Easter At Christmas

ADULT CLASSES

It's A Jingle Out There...Come Home To the Manger

Song: "Joy To The World"

WELCOME HOME PARTY!

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ADAPTING "IT'S A JINGLE OUT THERE!" TO YOUR CHURCH



*This Sunday School program works well in all churches. Look at the specific sections for each class and adapt wherever necessary. The program is designed to last forty five minutes to one hour, depending upon time required for special music as desired. The **WELCOME HOME Party** is not included in this time frame.*

SMALL CHURCH: If your church is small, consider removing sections that require more people than you have available. However, it is possible to combine parts so that fewer people are needed for performance time. If you have a combined Junior and Senior High School class, consider eliminating one of the sections and featuring the one you like best using the students available. If there are very few or no adults willing to participate, choose one of the older teen classes to perform those parts.

MEDIUM CHURCH: For a medium sized church, changes may take the form of personal preference. Choose the parts you like the best and eliminate those you feel will not work for your Sunday School groups. It may be that all the parts may be presented with the people available.

LARGE CHURCH: Large churches have the luxury of using many people in many areas. Organize people in the weeks before the program who will participate as speakers, musicians, snack makers, servers, prop masters, sound and lighting staff and others who can make Christmas an exciting time. Use as many people as possible.

WELCOME HOME PARTY: The easiest way to plan the Christmas Party is to ask one adult Sunday School class or the women's group to take complete responsibility for the gathering. They decorate, plan background music, prepare food and beverage and arrange for clean up.

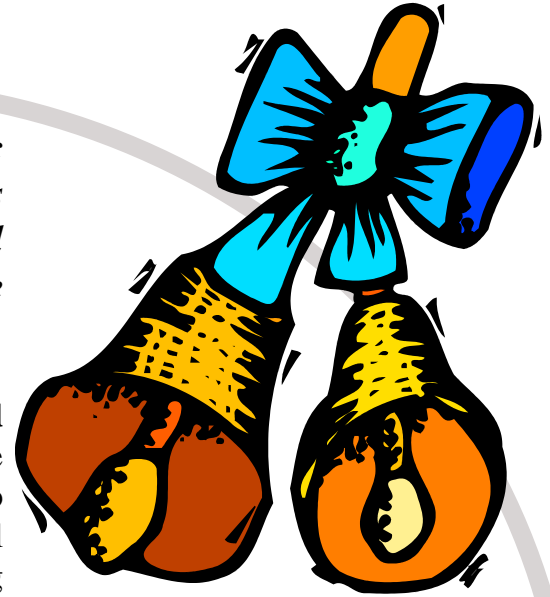
MUSIC! MUSIC! MUSIC!

...Carols! Carols! Carols!

Coordinate music with the 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.

Traditional Christmas Carols are suggested throughout the program. If desired, change the carols to fit the needs of your local congregation. To practice the carols, classes may use Sunday School time. If your Sunday School has a traditional Opening where all the classes gather, practice the carols there for three to four weeks.

Discuss music options with your music team. It may be desirable to sprinkle special music (Solos, Instrumentals, Duets, Trios, Choir) as the program proceeds. Consider appropriate musical pieces that feature local church and community talent. This is the time to use contemporary choruses. These musical options are NOT pre-planned in the existing program and may be inserted wherever desired. Choose Christmas music that fits the spiritual theme. Think about time limitations in early planning stages.



VOCAL SOLO

VOCAL GROUP (DUET-TRIO-QUARTET)

CHILDREN'S CHOIR

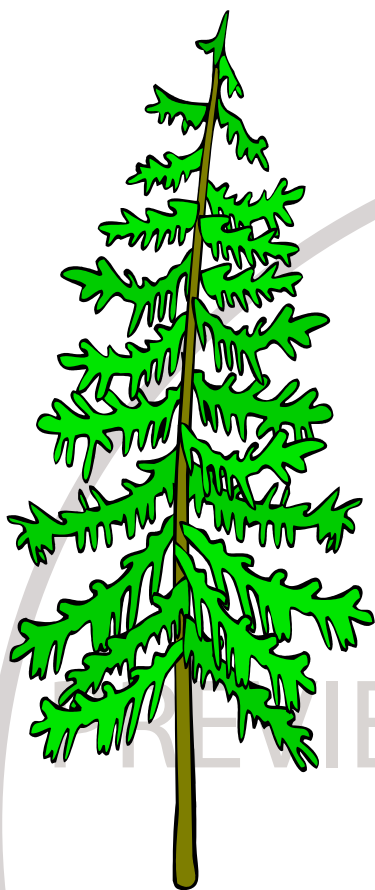
ADULT CHOIR

INSTRUMENTAL SOLO

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

HANDBELL/CHIME CHOIR

STAGE AND PROPS



IT'S A JINGLE OUT THERE...COME HOME TO THE MANGER celebrates the night of Jesus' birth. Each small group becomes part of a larger effort to tell the Christmas story in a unique way. The Jesus story is told and some fun holiday traditions are included. Construct the stage area as simply as possible. No background is necessary. Leave the Christmas tree, lights, flowers, nativity scene, candles and other items in place. The real focus should be on the people, props and presentations.

SET UP. Because the church sanctuary will be decorated for the Christmas season, there will be very little staging. Move flowers, nativity scene and other items that could interfere with groups moving on and off stage. Remove the pulpit but leave microphones and microphone stands.

SEATING. Seat classes and teachers together in the sanctuary. Reserve seating for participants before the audience enters the program area. Make pew bows or rope off the ends of saved rows. Assign adult/teen assistants to control younger children during the program.

SOUND SYSTEM. Use the existing sound system to its' best advantage. Place one or more microphones within easy reach of teachers and students. Students must be heard clearly as they speak. It may make the difference between a frustrating experience for the audience and a delightful program. Do not neglect this detail.

LIGHTING. Turn off normal lighting and sanctuary lights. Light Christmas trees, candles and other mood lighting as desired.

PROPS. Keep it simple. Prop suggestions are included with individual instructions. When visualizing the traditional nativity scene, use your imagination and props available at little or not cost. It cannot be done incorrectly. Have a wonderful time making the visual connection to this timeless story. Props can easily be carried by members of each group. Leave some space in a back hallway or side aisle for larger items. These can be picked up at the appropriate time. Keep it simple!

BIBLE COSTUMES



An important feature of this special presentation is the creation of clothing worn at the time of Jesus' birth. When costuming a large group, one solution is to ask each participant to devise their attire. If you do this, communicate clearly (to parents) so there are no surprises the day of the program! Costumes may be furnished by the church. Here are easy tips to help the staff gather the items.

Drape Mary in a white or blue and white gown with 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 worn when appropriate.

Pillowcases work well for children. Cut a neck hole in the top of the pillowcase. Cut up the front to the neck hole. Cut armholes in the sides. This makes a long vest type costume. Sometimes plaid or striped flannel pillowcases are available and work great for shepherds and wise men.

Two wide strips of fabric one over each shoulder, crossed across the back and front of the child, tied with a sash makes a good costume too. Use colorful fabric.

A square of fabric on the head with a wide ribbon or piece of cloth around the top of the head makes a Holy Land headpiece. If you take large "scrunchies" (like girls wear around their pony tails) and put them over the square fabric around the head, it holds the fabric on well.

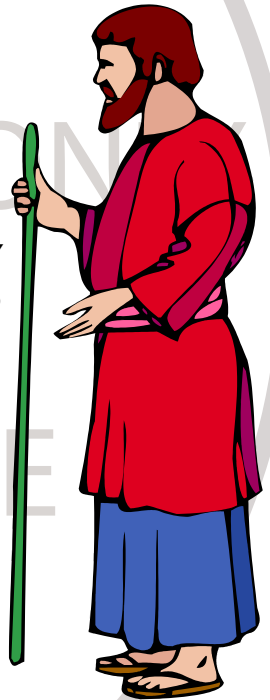
Look for bathrobes at garage sales and resale shops. They wrap in front and can be worn that way or may be sewn down the front with a neck opening large enough to slip over heads. Contrasting fabric for headdresses and sashes complete the costume.

Dress angels in white cotton or silver lame' found at most fabric stores. Angels may wear large cardboard wings or remain wingless. Place gold or silver tinsel arranged in a circle on each angel head. Tie tinsel around the waist of the costume for a sparkling angel belt. Angels may wear face glitter for that extra sparkle.

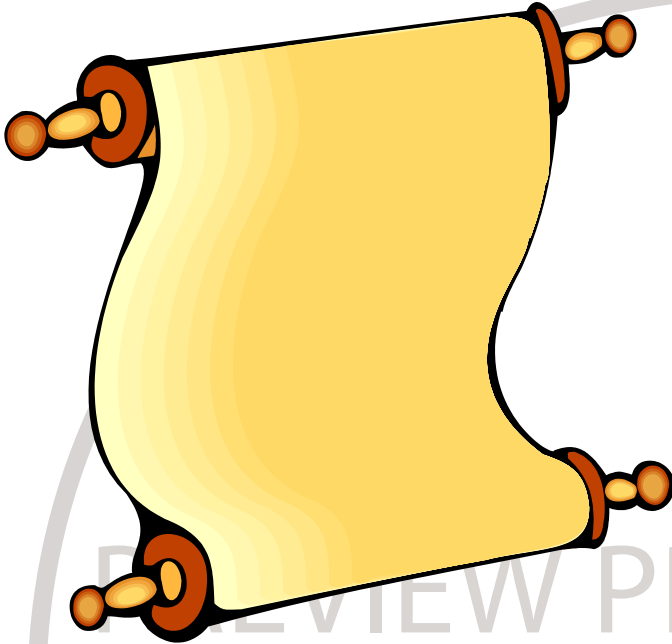
FUN OPTION FOR COSTUMED KIDS

Once everyone is costumed to perfection, consider using some angels, shepherds and wise men as ushers who hand out programs and seat people before the performance. Use a variety of ages. Younger students may accompany older kids and just stand and SMILE! Place children at each door and coach them to say, *"Welcome! Merry Christmas! May I show you to your seat?"* Or, *"Where would you like to sit?"* It is an added touch that closes the generation gap and is much appreciated by older members of the congregation.

After the program, ask several participants to remain in costume at the WELCOME HOME PARTY. They may serve punch and coffee or greet the guests at the door and wander through the area while people eat and talk.



PUBLICITY



*Publicize **IT'S A JINGLE OUT THERE...Come Home To The Manger** through all church communication channels. Announce it in the church newsletter, weekly worship bulletin and from the pulpit. Include an announcement in a Christmas mailing to homes.*

CHURCH BULLETIN AND NEWSLETTER.

Inform the congregation about this special Christmas Sunday celebration at the beginning of December. Print an announcement in November and December Newsletters. If you plan the **WELCOME HOME PARTY**, let people know there will be an enjoyable Christmas fellowship time following the program.

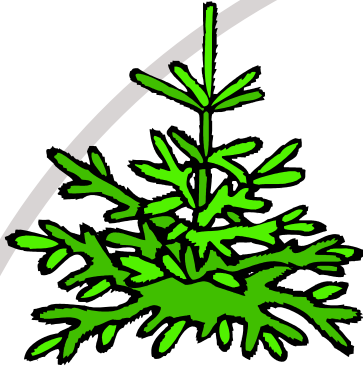
LOCAL NEWSPAPER. Include announcements for **IT'S A JINGLE OUT THERE** along with other holiday programming of the church. Talk to a reporter and photographer to see if a feature article is possible.

TELEVISION AND RADIO. Consider advertising this special event on your local cable advertising channel. "Spots" are often available to churches at little or no cost. Check it out! It may be one more avenue of great publicity.

INVITATIONS. Send family invitations home with students one or two weeks before Christmas Sunday. This is effective communication for families who send their children to your Sunday School but are not involved themselves. Use real Christmas cards with invitations tucked inside!

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 students 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 class.

Highlight individual parts. Decide if students will memorize 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 and Christmas stickers. The copies must remain in good shape.

Practice with your class. During the Sundays preceding the Christmas program, rehearse during Sunday School time and discuss costuming. If a visual or prop is suggested for your class, decide how this will be provided. Customize the individual scene 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 their child is responsible to bring with them the day of the program. If a rehearsal is scheduled, be sure parents know when and where to deliver their children.

Be responsible!

**This is the time to take charge of your students.
The Christmas Director will appreciate your cooperation
during rehearsals and performance.**

BEFORE THE PROGRAM

Meet your class before the program to prepare for their entrance. Dress in the appropriate costume, line up according to the Christmas Director's instruction and enter the sanctuary as directed. Sit with your class in the designated area.

DURING THE PROGRAM

Lead your group on and off stage. Perform your own part with enthusiasm. Coach students quietly if they have problems speaking their parts.

AFTER THE PROGRAM

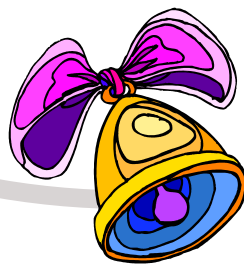
Plan to stay for the WELCOME HOME PARTY. Collect props and program copies from your students before they attend the Party. Ask students to remain in costume for the gathering. Mingle with the party goers and enjoy the experience with your students and their families.

IF YOU NEED HELP....

The Christmas Director is available if you need help but you will be responsible to have your group ready to participate. The program will come together at the last minute 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 life changing.



THE KINGS FROM ORIENT, AR

Three people portray “The King Family” from Orient, AR. This little family may be any combination of ages but must represent a father, mother and child. They verbally guide Sunday School classes on and off stage with short comments made as they try to find their way home to Orient, Arkansas. These central characters pull the program together and give a reason for the small groups to be inside the church. Hopefully, the audience will catch on (before being told) to the similarities in the Christmas carol, “We three Kings of Orient Are....”

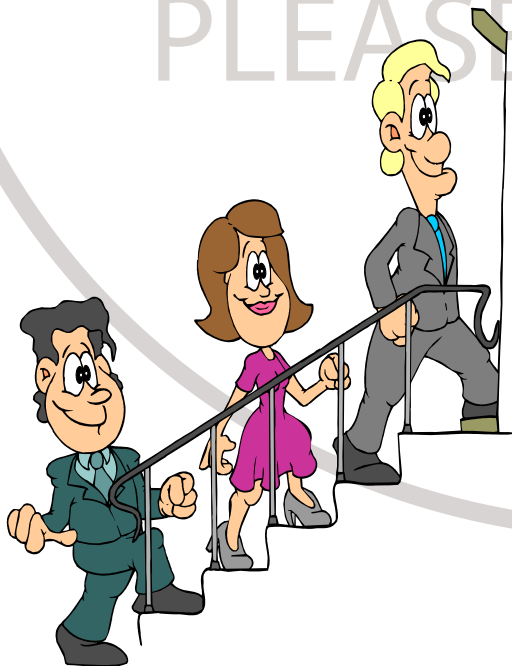
**NO MEMORIZATION!
CARRY ROAD MAPS WITH HIDDEN SCRIPT
WEAR COATS, GLOVES HATS, BOOTS
CARRY LIT FLASHLIGHTS**

Once introductory remarks, prayer and singing is done, enter the darkened sanctuary from the back and walk slowly down the center aisle. Flash the flashlights around the room, onto the ceiling and floor and generally act as if you are exploring this new environment. Become lost travelers seeking shelter from a harsh winter storm.

You know you should not be inside the church but you are desperate for food, shelter and warmth. Each time someone enters, **HIDE IN PLAIN SIGHT** to avoid being caught.

No memorization is necessary. Carry a complete script. The script may be disguised in a road map or folder. Be very familiar with the entire program. You are the people who introduce each group before they come to the stage. Practice your lines aloud. Mark the script appropriately.

This is one time in your life you can “ham it up”! Speak loudly so the audience can hear your lines. If microphones are available, use them. Have fun with your part. This is a wonderful way to celebrate the Christmas season. Enjoy the experience!



LET THE PROGRAM BEGIN!

There is no formal PROCESSIONAL. Student groups and their leaders meet in another room to get into costume, practice one more time and pray together. The groups may wander into the sanctuary any time before the INTRODUCTION begins to take their seats together.

DARKEN THE LIGHTS JUST BEFORE THE INTRODUCTION BEGINS.

INTRODUCTION

Choose two male voices of any age who stand in the front, at the side or in the back (balcony) speaking words of Jesus.

READER #1: JESUS SAID, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." (John 10:10b)

READER #2: "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me." (John 14:1a)

READER #1: "I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." (John 14:6)

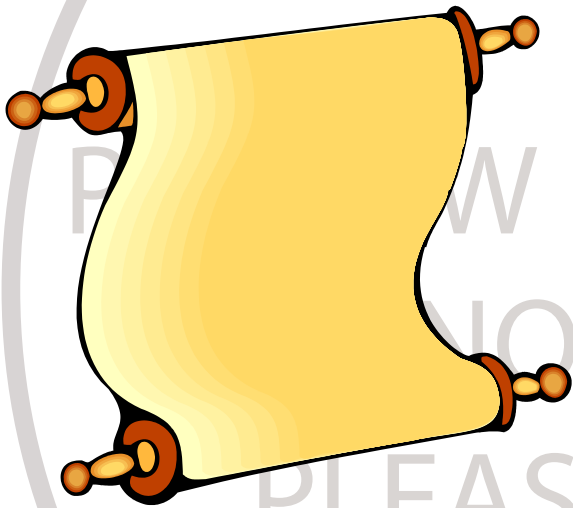
READER #2: "I am in the Father, and the Father in Me..." (John 14:11a)

READER #1: "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." (John 14:15)

READER #2: "He who has My commandments, and keeps them he it is who loves Me: and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him....(John 14:21)

READER #1: "...love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:12b)

READER #2: "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Mark 1:17)



THE KING FAMILY ENTERS FROM THE BACK OF THE SANCTUARY.

Wear warm winter coats, hats, mittens and boots. Carry flashlights and maps. Place the script inside the maps.



DAD KING: *(Shine flashlight from side to side. Ignore the audience as if the seats were empty.)* Hurry up, King family! Get inside. The door was unlocked and it's nice and warm. No one is here and we can wait out the storm. Well, come on. What's keeping you?

MOM KING: *(Shine flashlight.)* We can't come in here, dear. Why, it's a church! It just wouldn't be right.

CHILD: *(Shine flashlight. Whining....)* Dad, I'm cold and I'm hungry. Can't we just go home?

DAD: *(Disgusted....)* Yeah, sure. If I could find the way home, we'd be there right now. I admit it. We're lost. There, are you happy? We're lost!

MOM: No one is blaming you dear. Just because we depended upon you to mark the map and drive sensibly and ask directions when you were first lost, doesn't mean we BLAME you. We're just....disappointed in you.

DAD: If I had realized the depth of our "lostness", I would have asked directions at the gas station. How hard can it be to find the Interstate connection for Orient, Arkansas? After all, we have lived there all our lives. We're the Kings of Orient, AR. I know where I live!

CHILD: *(Whining....)* Find a phone. Let's order pizza. I'm so hungry.

MOM: Flip the lights and let's get warmed up first.

DAD: Sssh, I hear someone coming. Quick! Hide!

Scurry to a hiding place and remain there until the group leaves.

NURSERY (BIRTH-AGE THREE)

GOD'S LITTLE LAMB

Carry or lead Nursery children from a side area or from their front seats. They are dressed in their Christmas best. Each child carries a teddy bear, stuffed dog or other soft animal. If a live puppy or kitten is available, carry it on stage.



TEACHER: Come with me, children. It's time to practice our part for the Christmas program. I'm so glad we beat the winter storm. We must hurry before it starts snowing again. Look how pretty the Christmas lights are! And the flowers are lovely. Do you think there were Christmas lights and flowers in the stable in Bethlehem when Jesus was born? **(Let children respond.)**

HELPER OR PARENT: I'm afraid not. There were live animals in the stable. Lots of animals. Cows and goats, sheep and donkeys—maybe even a little dog. I see you brought your animals to share on Christmas night. Show me your wonderful animals! Can you make the same sound as your animal? **(Let children respond.)**

Let's sing our Christmas song about Baby Jesus and the animals in the stable. I know you learned the words in Sunday School.

JESUS WAS A LITTLE LAMB
(Tune: "Mary Had A Little Lamb"—SING TWICE!)

**JESUS WAS A LITTLE LAMB,
LITTLE LAMB, LITTLE LAMB.
JESUS WAS A LITTLE LAMB.
HE CAME ON CHRISTMAS DAY. (Everyone: Baa-aaaa)**

**BABY JESUS IN THE HAY,
IN THE HAY, IN THE HAY.
BABY JESUS IN THE HAY.
COME IN MY HEART (Point to heart) TO STAY.**

**WE HAVE BROUGHT OUR ANIMALS, (Shake animals)
ANIMALS, ANIMALS.**

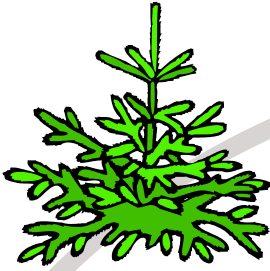
**WE HAVE BROUGHT OUR ANIMALS.
FOR JESUS ON THIS DAY.**

TEACHER: Wonderful! You sing so beautifully! We are ready for Christmas. Let's go home and get lots of rest before the program. Don't forget to bring your special animals with you.

EXIT

THE KING FAMILY

*Re-enter from the hiding place
when Nursery children are seated.*



MOM: Weren't those children precious? I wanted to jump out and hug every one of them. Why are we hiding, dear?

DAD: I don't trust church people. If they find us in their church, they may have us arrested. We'll rest and read the map. Soon we'll be on our way and no one will be the wiser.

CHILD: Why don't we go to church, dad? Is it because you don't trust church people?

DAD: Umm, Ummm. Don't ask so many questions. Just do as I say. We're the King Family. We don't need church.

MOM: Yes, dear. Of course, there is that perfectly lovely lady who invited me to a church tea last month. She seemed like a nice person. I wanted to go but I know you have this uncomfortable feeling about church so I said no as kindly as I could.

DAD: Church is for wimps. Why, you can't possible believe that story about a baby who came to save the world? I don't need saving. I'm fine just the way I am.

CHILD: Yeah, me too! I'm fine just the way I am. I'm just hungry at the moment.

MOM: I heard the door open. I think we have company again.

Rush to the hiding place.

PRESCHOOL (AGE 4-PRE KINDERGARTEN 5)**PAJAMA PARTY!**

Practice during Sunday School in the weeks preceding the program. Teachers and students hurry down the center aisle wearing pajamas, bathrobes and slippers. Some the students may carry fluffy white pillows.

TEACHER: I can't believe no one is here yet. The storm must be keeping everyone away. I am glad you kids made it safely. We will have plenty of time to practice our Christmas part. Have you been practicing our song? **(Let children respond.)**

You all look so wonderful in your pajamas. Have you ever come to church in your "jammies" before today?
(Let children respond.)

I never have! It certainly feels strange not to be wearing my church shoes and my best clothes. Our part of the Christmas program is to remind everyone that Jesus' bed was a manger. He slept in the animals' food dish!

HELPER/PARENT: The night Jesus was born, His parents made the best bed they could for their baby boy. The hay was sweet and fresh. A soft cloth covered His crib mattress. A few fluffy tufts of hay formed a teeny pillow for His baby head. He slept very well on His homemade, animal dish bed.

TEACHER: We are going to invite the audience to sing our song with us. We'll sing it first and they will sing it with us again. Maybe they can add a few more verses to it. Now remember! When we sing, we should get more and more tired until we are pretending to be sound asleep on the stage. Let's practice!

SING: VERSE 1 OF "AWAY IN A MANGER".

AUDIENCE SINGS VERSE 1 AND ADDS SEVERAL VERSES USING THE HYMNAL. PRESCHOOL STUDENTS YAWN, STRETCH AND FALL "ASLEEP" LEANING AGAINST EACH OTHER AND RESTING ON THEIR PILLOWS.

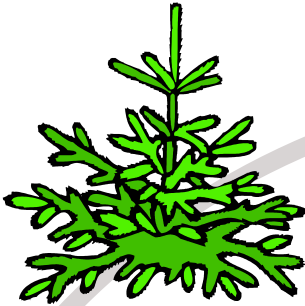
TEACHER: (*Clapping....*) Wake up! That was beautiful! Now, don't forget to wear your pajamas for the Christmas program. Bring your favorite pillow and your best singing voice. We're going to be the best preschool kids in the show! Let's go! You're done with practice!

EXIT

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KING FAMILY

Child and Mom return without Dad.



CHILD: I wish I had *my* pajamas on. Those kids made me very tired. Is it true that baby Jesus didn't have a bed to sleep in? How could people let the Savior of the world sleep in a barn with animals and...no bed?

MOM: I'm sure they did their best. I sort of recall that Mary and Joseph were traveling at the time. It must have been difficult for Mary to put her precious baby boy in that animal manger. Every mom wants the best cradle for her baby. Of course, I haven't read the Christmas story in many years. I may be wrong.

CHILD: Why don't we know the Christmas story, mom? I want to hear it.

MOM: Maybe we can find a Bible around here. After all, we are in a church. (*Find a Bible, sit together on the floor of the stage and read with the flashlights.*) Here's a Bible. I think the Christmas story starts in Luke. (*Read aloud.*)

(*New American Standard Version. Choose the Bible translation you enjoy the most.*)

From Luke 2:1-7: Now it came about in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth... and all were proceeding to register for the census, everyone to his own city.

...and Joseph, also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David in order to register, along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was with child. And it came about that while they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth.

And she gave birth to her first born son; and wrapped Him in cloths and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

CHILD: Oh, I see. Read some more!

MOM: **Luke 2:8:** And in the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night.

CHILD: Shepherds? Like the kind who take care of sheep?

MOM: Hurry and hide, I hear footsteps in the hall.

KINDERGARTEN

LET THE HEAVENS REJOICE AND THE EARTH BE GLAD!

Students dress as shepherds. Some may carry stuffed lambs if available.

Practice during Sunday School with the group in the weeks leading up to the program.

Students enter from their seats or from the side of the room.

TEACHER: *(Place students on stage.)* Come on! I need everyone to stand in their proper spots and act like shepherds. That's it, you stand there and you two over here. You look like shepherds to me! ...and what are you supposed to say in the Christmas program?

STUDENTS: "And there were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night."

TEACHER: Say it again. We can never have too much practice.

STUDENTS: "And there were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night."

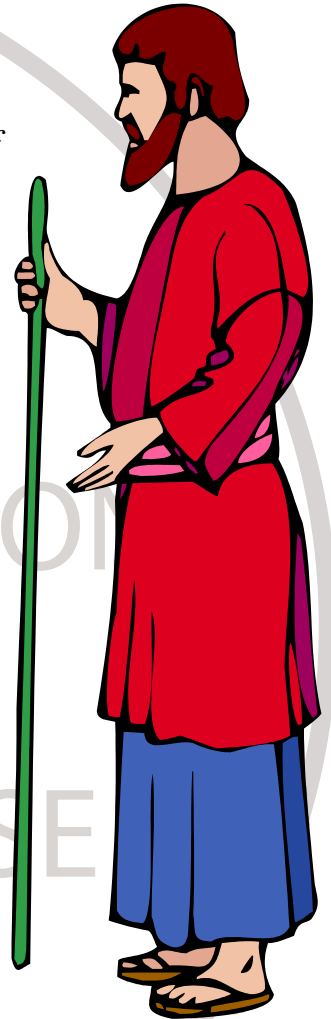
TEACHER: Excellent! Now one more time...louder!

STUDENT: *(Interrupting....)* What does "abiding" mean?

STUDENTS: Yeah! What does "abiding" mean?

TEACHER: Well, it means "staying with" or "living with". The shepherds were living with their sheep.

STUDENT: Did the shepherds love their sheep?



TEACHER: Do you love your pets at home? (**Let students respond.**) The shepherds took loving care of their sheep. They even slept in the field so nothing would hurt them in the night. I bet those shepherds even sang to their sheep.

STUDENT: Hey! We can be singing shepherds!

TEACHER: Let's sing that great shepherd song we learned in Sunday School.

In the weeks before the program, send home copies of SHEPHERDS IN THE FIELD so parents can help their young student learn the words. Practice the song during Sunday School each week.

SHEPHERDS IN THE FIELD

(Tune: "Row, Row, Row Your Boat")

**SHEPHERDS IN THE FIELD
WATCHING O'ER THEIR SHEEP.
KEEPING GUARD, ON DARK, COLD NIGHTS.
SHEPHERDS NEVER SLEEP.**

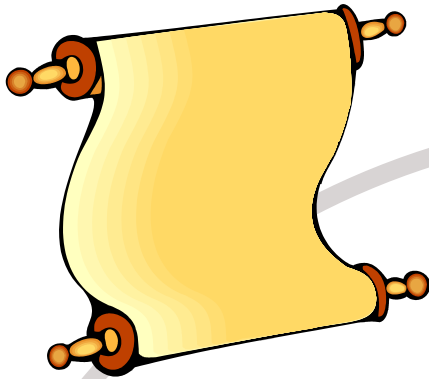
**SHEPHERDS IN THE FIELD
SEE A LIGHT ABOVE.
ANGELS WINGING, ANGELS SINGING.
SHEPHERDS SEE GOD'S LOVE.**

**SHEPHERDS LEAVE THE FIELD,
RUN TO BETHLEHEM.
BABY JESUS IN THE MANGER,
THEY WILL WORSHIP HIM.**

TEACHER: Well done! When the shepherds saw God's angels from heaven, they wasted no time getting to the stable in little Bethlehem. The sight of Baby Jesus sleeping in the hay was so exciting that they fell down and worshiped Him. Even shepherds could understand that God did something very special that night.

We're ready for the Christmas program. Let's take off our shepherd costumes very carefully and go home before the blizzard gets worse.

EXIT



PASTOR PRAYS FOR GOD'S FLOCK

The sanctuary is dark except for the twinkling Christmas lights. The King Family remains hidden and listening. Pastor, dressed casually, carries a Bible and enters the quiet sanctuary from the back and walks slowly to the altar in silence. The following prayer may be tucked inside the Bible and read aloud.

PASTOR: *(On stage. Praying....)* Father, Thank You for giving me this flock of believers to shepherd. Make me worthy of the task. The holiday season is filled with reasons to forget You. Help me guide Your people back to the true Reason for the Season. It's such a "jingle" out there. We move from one activity to another and barely have time to remember Your arrival on earth.

Keep my flock safe from the storm that threatens us today. Watch over the stranger and the traveler passing through our town. May each one know this is a safe place from the storms of life. O LORD, remind us that You came as a baby but became the Christ of the Cross and the Savior of Resurrection!

If I had been the only sinner in the world, You would have died for me. Let me forget the hustle-bustle of the holiday season and move into Christmas worship. I will remember the obedience of young Mary and brave Joseph. I will never cease to be amazed at the excitement of the common shepherds. I wish I could have seen the Christmas angels and bowed at the manger with the Kings from the Orient.

(Pause....) It's such a silent night, Lord. I can hear my congregation singing with me. The words are silent, like the night.

PASTOR AND CONGREGATION SING TOGETHER SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT

PASTOR: *(At the end of the song....)* Amen.

EXIT SLOWLY DOWN THE CENTER AISLE IN THE DARK.

GRADES ONE AND TWO

TOUCHED BY ANGELS

Dress as Christmas Angels. Students carry large, glittery stars on sticks. Make the wands from posterboard/cardboard and thin dowel rods. The wands would be a good project for students to make as a class project. After the program, let them keep their star wand. If desired, add ribbon to the base of each star so that it flutters when waved.



TEACHER: Is every Christmas Angel here? Let's see, (*counting...*) One, two, three, four...hmmm, only a few missing. We have enough kids to practice. Brush off the snow and straighten those halos. We have work to do.

STUDENT: It's so quiet and dark.

STUDENT: That's okay. Our part in the program will be a surprise!

STUDENT: I love angels! They're my favorite part of Christmas.

STUDENT: (*Waving a star wand...*) Well, I love the stars! Do you know that God made a "ba-zillion" stars?

STUDENT: A "ba-zillion" stars? How many is a "ba-zillion"?

STUDENT: I don't know but I heard that the Christmas angels sang to the shepherds.

TEACHER: Do you remember what the Christmas angel said to the shepherd?

ALL STUDENTS: (*Gather as an angel group, wave star wands and say...*)

**GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST!
AND ON EARTH, PEACE TO MEN OF GOOD WILL.**

TEACHER: During our Christmas program, the audience will sing ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH. You scatter down each aisle while they sing and wave your star wand just like a music director.

ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH

AUDIENCE SINGS THE CHRISTMAS CAROL WHILE STUDENTS STATION THEMSELVES IN THE CENTER AND SIDE AISLES.

ANGEL STUDENTS SMILE AND WAVE THEIR STARS AS IF DIRECTING HEAVENLY MUSIC.

WHEN THE CAROL IS DONE, RETURN TO YOUR SEATS IN THE SANCTUARY.

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GRADES THREE AND FOUR

CANDY CANE CHRISTMAS “NO GREATER LOVE”

Students display a huge cardboard candy cane made from posterboard/cardboard. Tie a large red ribbon around the middle of the candy cane. No special costume needed.



Fill several baskets with real candy canes. Splurge and get the big ones! Tie a red bow around each cane. Students distribute the candy during their part of the program.

Enter from the rear of the sanctuary. Two students may carry the large candy cane to the stage.

Divide the speaking parts between the number of students available. Students may read their parts.

TEACHER: Follow me, kids. Be careful. It's dark in here. Don't drop the big candy cane. Come on. Just a little farther to get to the stage. Is everyone here?

STUDENTS: *(Speaking all at once.)* We're here! It's dark! I have the baskets. I have the candy.

STUDENT: I really like what our class is doing for this year's Christmas program. I never heard the real story of the candy cane before we started practicing.

STUDENT: Where is everybody? Are we the only Sunday School class practicing for Christmas? I love candy canes. They are so...pepper-minty!

TEACHER: We will tell the story of the candy cane and hand out real candy canes to the audience while they sing a Christmas Carol.

STUDENT: The candy cane is shaped like a shepherd's crook. It represents the humble shepherds who were the first to worship the newborn Christ.

STUDENT: It had to be special to be a gift for the King of Kings. Not just any piece of candy would do!

STUDENT: It had to be hard candy because the Church is built on the Solid Rock and God's promises are a firm foundation.

STUDENT: The candy cane is formed in the shape of the Good Shepherd's staff...a "J" that would also stand for the precious name of Jesus.

STUDENT: It's white stripes represent the virgin birth and sinless nature of Christ.

STUDENT: The candy cane's small red stripes represent the beating Jesus suffered on His way to the cross.

STUDENT: The large red stripe on the cane reminds those with eyes to see and ears to hear of the blood Jesus shed as payment for our sins.

STUDENT: The candy cane is a gift of love to tell His story, the greatest story ever told!

ALL STUDENTS AND TEACHER IN UNISON: For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16

**AUDIENCE SINGS WHILE CANDY CANES ARE DISTRIBUTED
THE FIRST NOEL**

GRADES FIVE AND SIX

NEW KID IN TOWN

Students dress in typical Holy Land costume. They become residents of Bethlehem who heard the promised Messiah has been born in their little village.

The group enters from several entrances. Walk singly and in two's and three's, depending on the number of students available. Gather on stage to gossip.



STUDENT: Did you hear what I heard? There's a New Kid in Town. Our Messiah was born in Bethlehem tonight!

STUDENT: That's what I heard! It cannot be true. After all these years....

STUDENT: Well, I do not believe it. If the Messiah was truly here, we would hear trumpets. White horses would lead Him into town. And born in Bethlehem? No way!

BELIEVING STUDENT: I believe it. I've been looking at the sky and there is a very bright star hanging over our heads. It seems to twinkle God's blessing on our tiny town. Look up! See for yourself!

STUDENT: I ran into a few shepherds. They were in a rush to get over to the Inn. They had some crazy story about a sky full of glowing angels. According to them flying angels sang some song about "Glory to God and peace on earth"....like we haven't heard that before!

STUDENT: Yeah, sounds like a UFO story to me. Everybody knows nobody can fly and never will. You know those low life shepherds. They'll do anything to get their fifteen minutes of fame.

BELIEVING STUDENT: Did you ever consider that the shepherds are telling the truth? Our prophets started talking about Messiah five hundred years ago. Have you forgotten Micah's prophecy that our Savior would be born in little Bethlehem? "And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah; are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; For out of you shall come forth a Ruler, Who will Shepherd My people Israel." (*Micah 5:2*)

STUDENT: Isaiah gave us clues: "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel." (*Isaiah 7:14*)

BELIEVING STUDENT: Isaiah told us, "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us: and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace." (*Isaiah 9:6*)

STUDENT: Oh come on! Think about it. Would God send our Prince of Peace in the form of a baby? I think not! He will come as a majestic King of Kings. He will live in a palace. Parades will be given in His honor. Seen one of those tonight?

STUDENT: ...and He will feed us when we are hungry and kill all our enemies.

STUDENT: Well, it's a wonderment. I just saw a young couple in the stable. They were taking care of a tiny baby boy, born just an hour ago. He's cute. Real cute!

STUDENTS: (*Separate and leave the stage, shaking heads and whispering....*) Is it true? Can it be true? A baby boy. Interesting. Very interesting.

GRADES SEVEN-NINE

HONOR THE KING OF KINGS

Students gather on stage wearing modern day clothes. Each person is wearing a crown or holding a crown. The crowns may be homemade or purchased from a party catalog or local party store. Burger King crowns turned inside out and spray painted gold work great!



STUDENT: My folks dropped me off just as the snow started again. We better hurry or we're going to be stuck here all night.

STUDENT: Check the kitchen refrigerator. If there's Pepsi and pizza, let it snow!

STUDENT: Did everybody bring their crowns? I guess we're supposed to be The KINGS OF ORIENT ARE. I hope we don't have to wear costumes. I got a great Christmas outfit I want to wear.

STUDENT: I hope we DO wear costumes. Those Kings really knew how to dress. Long robes of silk, woven with gold thread. Gold and silver jewelry, soft leather sandals on their feet. Yes, I could live very nicely as a King from Orient Are!

STUDENT: What makes you think that's how Kings of the Orient dressed?

STUDENT: 'Cause that's how I'd dress if I was a King from Orient Are.

STUDENT: You do know having the Kings appear in the nativity scene is historically incorrect. I think we should vote them off the island...I mean vote them off the stage.

STUDENT: Oh, lighten up. The important part of the Kings' story is that they showed up with valuable gifts at the right time. Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh were worth a lot in those days. It must have cost Joseph a lot of money to take off for Egypt for a couple years with Mary and Jesus.

STUDENT: I never thought of it that way. Joseph would have been a carpenter without a carpenter shop. When God led him to leave the country, God provided the money.

STUDENT: You mean the Kings didn't just worship Jesus and leave? It sounds like they were the most practical visitors. They even threw a baby shower.

STUDENT: There were probably more than three Kings too. Traditionally, wise men of the east traveled in groups of nine to twelve and brought along their servants, animals and tents. What a caravan!

STUDENT: And they believed God's message! Even when Herod tried to trick them into "ratting out" the baby's location, they were smart enough to go home a different way. There's a reason they were called the "wise guys".

STUDENT: Wouldn't you love to know the rest of the King's story? Did they believe they had seen God's Messiah? Did they tell others?

STUDENT: The important issue is, "Did they believe for themselves". We all know that we can believe with our heads and not our hearts. God calls upon each of us to take a step of faith to believe that Jesus is our Lord and Savior. I can't think of anyone in a better position to believe than the Kings who were far from home, maybe lost since they were following a star and being confronted with God's plan for the world.

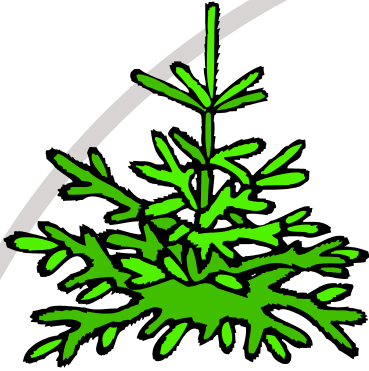
STUDENT: Well, all I can say is we should wear our crowns proudly and tell their story so the whole church understands what they did for Joseph's little family.

STUDENT: I see we are supposed to end with everyone singing, "We Three Kings of Orient Are". That's appropriate. Let's practice.

**THE AUDIENCE SINGS ALONG WITH THE GROUP.
WE THREE KINGS OF ORIENT ARE**

THE KING FAMILY

Come out from your hiding place.



CHILD: Did you hear that? They even wrote a song about our family. "We Three Kings of Orient, AR." Wow! I'm impressed.

DAD: I must admit, I'm learning a lot about Christmas. I never knew how much Jesus means to so many people. It makes me think that Christians are not such bad people after all.

MOM: I'm so glad to hear that, dear. I want to know Jesus too. I just don't know how to become a believer. It has been so long since I have considered the claims of Christ.

CHILD: Well, one of you better figure out how to become a Christian because I want to do it now. Parents are supposed to know stuff like this.

DAD: Shhh, I hear someone else coming. Doesn't anyone around here ever stay home during a storm. Come on, we better hide until we figure out what to do.

RETURN TO HIDING PLACE.

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THE JANITOR AND THE BROOM

One person representing the church janitor—or the real janitor—enters from the rear. Whistle or hum while pushing a very large broom down the aisle. Stand on stage, leaning against the broom, reading part placed inside a large Bible.

JANITOR: Whew! Sure is quiet in here. I guess everyone is gone for the day. Time to take a break. I have lots of sweeping to do before the Christmas program tomorrow evening. I spend a lot of time with this broom. Makes me think about brooms and Jesus.

Did you ever consider the life of the humble broom? It was born in a simple barn where loving hands tenderly formed it's shape. It's shaped like millions that came before it and yet unique in it's own right.

I'm certain that a broom starts life with great hope. Why, there must be many bright, shining floors that need help. Floors that support the feet of the young, the strong, the powerful. What a shock it must be when the broom finds itself in the dust and dirt of common life and the common folk.

After a life of useful duty, it is laid aside. No one looks at it much. Truth be told, it not much to look at. The wooden handle may be nicked and broken. The straw may be worn to nubs. The broom has literally given its' life in service of its' family.

I was thinking about the broom in comparison to the life of Jesus. Jesus was born in a simple barn. He even had a close relationship with straw! Loving human hands tenderly cared for Him as He joined the human race and yet remained unique. Just think, Jesus was the only Man who was also completely God.

Did young Jesus dream that the people of earth would joyfully accept God's plan for salvation? Would He be welcomed into the those palaces where bright, shining floors supported the feet of the young, the strong, the powerful? He found Himself more welcome in homes of common folk who recognized their need to be dusted and cleaned.

Even Jesus found Himself rejected and cast off, He was wounded and worn out for our sin. Laid aside? Laid in a tomb? Maybe we humans should have gotten what we deserved. But God is a gracious Creator and He never gives up on His Creation. So, He opened a tomb and Jesus walked right out, ready to sweep a few more sins away from future generations. And He's still sweeping today. (*Continue sweeping as you move off stage....*) Yep, that's what I think about the humble broom and Jesus.

GRADES TEN-TWELVE

EASTER AT CHRISTMAS

Students sit at various levels on stage. Carry seating on stage. Some may be in chairs, some on tall stools, some on the floor and steps. No special costuming.

STUDENT: I heard your car drive up to the church. Is it still snowing?

STUDENT: Yeah, I slid into the parking lot. You guys are going to have to help push if I get stuck. My mom said I had to be really careful. If I dent that car, I'll still be paying for it at graduation.

STUDENT: What are we supposed to do for the Christmas program this year? I missed church last week.

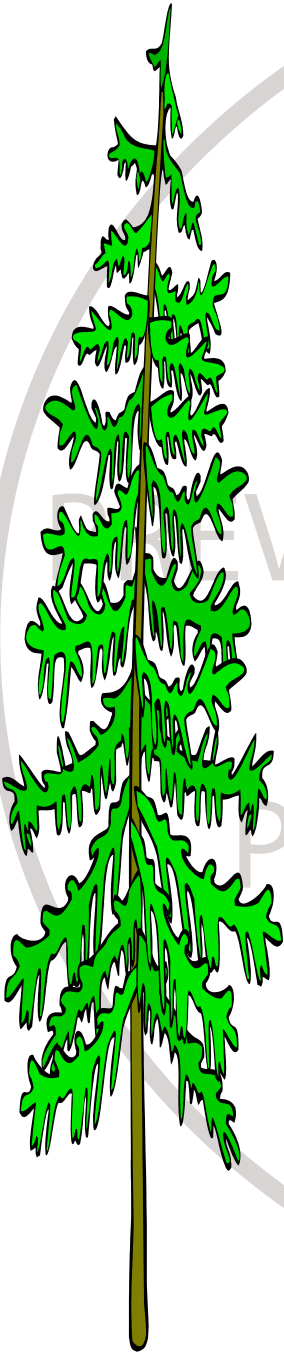
STUDENT: Nobody told me. I guess it's the same old shepherd, angel, baby, donkey, wise men, camel kind of thing. Same old...same old.

STUDENT: Is there a new story we should tell? After all, Christmas is pretty much based around the same story each time we tell it. The facts don't change.

STUDENT: Just for once, wouldn't it be fun to tell the Easter story at Christmas? That would mix everybody up. I can see it now, a big cross in the center of the stage. Easter lilies all around the altar. Maybe we could even build a paper mache tombstone.

STUDENT: Hey, that's not a bad idea. Easter at Christmas. I think we could make it work! Let's tell the "Rest of the Story". Jesus came to earth as a baby, grew up a small town kid, started a ministry that changed the world and then...DRUM ROLL....

ALL STUDENTS: THE CROSS!!!!



STUDENT: We can include this little poem when we speak....

DO YOU WORSHIP THE BABE IN THE MANGER,
BUT REJECT THE CHRIST OF THE CROSS?
YOUR REDEMPTION COMES NOT BY THE MANGER,
BUT BY CHRIST WHO DIED ON THAT CROSS.

THE BABE IN THE MANGER WAS GOD'S ONLY SON
WHO CAME TO THE WORLD TO DIE.
THE BABE IN THE MANGER COULD NEVER HAVE DONE
THE WORK OF HIS GOD ON HIGH.

THE BABE LEFT THE MANGER AND WENT TO THE CROSS
TO PAY THE WAGES OF SIN.
THE WAY OF FORGIVENESS IS NOT BY THE BABE,
BUT BY CHRIST WHO DIED IN YOUR PLACE.

STUDENT: Hey, that can work! The Cross of Calvary is the center of Jesus' story. I think we should talk about what He did so we can go to heaven.

STUDENT: God made our salvation so simple. Even I can understand it. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." That's our Christmas message!

STUDENT: Well, I'm glad we got that settled. Now, let's go and find some pizza. I'm starving!

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES

IT'S A JINGLE OUT THERE!

Ask folks from each adult Sunday School class to participate in this program conclusion. Costume: Winter coats, hats, mittens and scarves.

Enter from the rear of the sanctuary. Greet each other cheerfully as new folks approach the stage. Shake hands, hug and smile!



STUDENT: Welcome! Welcome! You all made it safely through the snow storm. I see the township finally plowed the streets. My old car chugged along very nicely.

STUDENT: I brought the food for the Christmas program party. Did you bring decorations? Who has the coffee?

STUDENT: Yep, I left everything in the church kitchen. By the way, do you know the High School class is eating pizza there right now?

STUDENT: I don't know why their parents let them drive on a day like this. Why, they could get themselves in big trouble. In my day, those kids would be shoveling snow about now. I don't know about kids these days.

STUDENTS: *(Everyone laughs good naturedly.)*

STUDENT: I saw a car in the lot I've never seen before. It's got ARKANSAS license plates on it. Anybody got family visiting?

STUDENT: I saw that car too. Lots of luggage in the back. They're traveling for sure.

KING FAMILY COMES OUT FROM THEIR HIDING PLACE

DAD: I confess. We're the KINGS FROM ORIENT, AR. We broke into the church during the worst of the storm. We're pretty lost.

CHILD: ...and hungry too. I smell that pizza!

MOM: We hope you will forgive us. We didn't know what to do. It's so awful outside and we needed a place to stay.

STUDENT: You broke into the church? Didn't you see the key in the box? We let anybody in here. You are welcome to stay as long as you need shelter.

DAD: A key? No, I just opened the door with a big push. We have seen just about everybody who goes to this church today. Kids and adults have been coming in and out to practice for the Christmas program. It seems that snow storms don't mean much to anybody around here.

STUDENT: Were they any good? I still haven't decided if I'm coming.

CHILD: Yeah, they were great. I heard the whole story of Christmas for the first time. I think...I think I want to "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ"....so I can be saved. Do you think that's possible? How do I do that?

STUDENT: *(Looking surprised....)* You don't say! Why sure. We'll pray with you. Anybody else want to pray?

DAD AND MOM: *(Sheepishly raise hands slowly.)*

STUDENT: Let's pray together. *(EVERYONE ON STAGE HOLD HANDS IN A CIRCLE.)* Dear Lord, we have Three Kings from Orient, AR who want to step over the line and become believers. They have come from afar and they want to meet the Savior. Forgive their sins. Come into their lives. Make them Your children for all time. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

EVERYONE APPLAUDS AND HUGS THE KING FAMILY.

STUDENT: Well, we have a party to prepare. We have lots of food for any Kings who may feel a bit hungry. Come with us. Stay with us. We may even have someone who can read a map. After all, "It's a Jingle Out There"!

EVERYONE SINGS CONCLUDING CHRISTMAS CAROL JOY TO THE WORLD!



WELCOME HOME PARTY!

Assign a small group the responsibility of preparing the WELCOME HOME PARTY. This could be a few men and women hand picked for this purpose or an individual adult Sunday School class.

The WELCOME HOME PARTY should offer enjoyable desserts, background music and casual fellowship.

PREPARATION 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 such as coffee, tea, orange juice, punch and don't forget the cream and sugar!

Seating: Decide the best arrangement for seating depending upon the size of the group. Set up tables and chairs or serve buffet style with guests standing and moving around the room to chat. Place chairs in small circles throughout the area for small group conversation.

Music: Provide background Christmas music. This could be live music performed by local church musicians to audio tape/CD professional Christmas music.

Centerpieces: Cover table with table linen or paper. Christmas centerpieces may be featured on each table. These may be as simple as one poinsettia in a pot or vase. More elaborate decorations may be designed by the committee. Borrow Nativity set to decorate each table. Unique groupings make a beautiful presentation and become interesting conversation starters. 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 while the program is being presented. Set out the desserts. Place a Christmas punch (your favorite recipe) on a nearby serving table.

DURING THE WELCOME HOME 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. Enjoy young program participants as they mingle, still dressed in costume.

AFTER THE WELCOME HOME 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!
IT'S A JINGLE OUT THERE!
...COME HOME TO THE MANGER



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