



Tree

-Mendous

Love

PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY
NOT FOR USE
PLEASE PURCHASE

... From The Manger

... To the Cross



Tree-Mendous Love

... From The Manger To The Cross

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHRISTMAS DIRECTOR—KEEPING CHRISTMAS.....	2-3
AT A GLANCE.....	4
ADAPTING TREE-MENDOUS LOVE TO FIT YOUR CHURCH.....	5
CHRISTMAS MUSIC.....	6
STAGE AND PROPS.....	7
COSTUMES.....	8
STUDENT USHERS—AFTER THE SHOW.....	9
PUBLICITY.....	10
TEACHERS.....	11-12
TRIM THE TREE!.....	13
ORNAMENTS.....	14-15
ORNAMENT PATTERNS.....	INSERTS
CHURCH JANITOR.....	16
THE KID.....	17
THE PRELUDE—THE PROCESSION.....	18
“THE TREE” INTRODUCTION.....	19-20
CHURCH JANITOR INTRODUCTION.....	21
NURSERY—Babes In Joyland.....	22-23
PRESCHOOL—Gingerbread Christmas.....	24-25
KINDERGARTEN—The Gift.....	26-27
THE JANITOR SPEAKS.....	28
GRADES ONE-TWO—Candy Canes.....	29-30
GRADES THREE-FOUR—Star Over Bethlehem.....	31-32
GRADES FIVE AND SIX—Poinsettia.....	33-34
THE JANITOR AND THE KID.....	35-36
GRADES SEVEN-NINE—Magi From The East.....	37-38
GRADES TEN-TWELVE—Candle Light.....	39-40
ADULTS—To The Cross.....	41-42
ADULTS—Hannah Meets Mary.....	43-45
THE JANITOR AND THE KID RETURN.....	46-47
CONCLUSION.....	48
ALL SPRUCED UP FOR CHRISTMAS PARTY.....	49-50

TREE-MENDOUS LOVE

...From The Manger To The Cross



TREE-MENDOUS LOVE is an easy-to-prepare Sunday School/All Church Christmas Celebration. Feature folks of all ages in small groups to create a remembrance of that Bethlehem night when Jesus was born.

TREE-MENDOUS LOVE is rehearsed during Sunday School by separate groups with their teacher. Gather the whole group for a final rehearsal and this Christmas program is set to go!

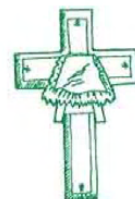
TREE-MENDOUS LOVE is a forty-five minute presentation sprinkled with humor, inspiration while re-telling of the night Jesus was born. A large Christmas tree takes front and center stage. Each small group adds ornaments until it is a breathtaking sight for the audience.

TREE-MENDOUS LOVE involves the audience singing Christmas Carols. Teach three original Christmas songs by Christian songwriter Jonathan Miller of GLORY SOUND STUDIOS. Add special musical selections performed by local talent to complete the program's musical portion.

TREE-MENDOUS LOVE concludes with an all church ALL SPRUCED UP FOR CHRISTMAS PARTY! Serve snacks, play Christmas music and celebrate.

COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

Make as many copies as needed for local church use. Give interested folks our order form, mailing address, web site address: www.cemlife.com and toll free telephone (1-888-236-5433). Your cooperation allows CLOSE ENCOUNTERS MINISTRIES to continue producing exciting, inspiring, positive Christian programs at low cost to churches across the nation and the world. Copyright-All Rights Reserved protected.



CHRISTMAS DIRECTOR

....Keeping Christmas!



Lead your church into a relaxing, enjoyable celebration of the dear Bethlehem story. This is easy and fun when you create well organized teams who take complete charge of their small part. Make program copies and assign individual sections to Sunday School classes, church committees, small groups of friends and willing individuals who agree to become part of this event.

Follow our easy directions. Ask small group leaders to organize their group complete with props or costumes suggested for their segment. Be prepared to help the teachers/leaders but for the most part they should be able to handle their material. The result will be the trimming of a central Christmas tree along with the retelling of the night Jesus was born.

Prepare your heart. For some of your church members, holiday programs presented by your local church comprise most, if not all, of their Christmas celebration. Do it for the Lord! Do it for those folks!

One Step At A Time. It is very possible that as you read this workbook you are thinking, "Why me? I cannot do this!" Put those feelings aside and dive into this charming presentation of Christmas as seen through the eyes of a faithful church janitor who is weary, heavy laden and wondering if the Christ Child still has relevance in this sad, confusing world. May you delight in a Winter Blessing using this special touch of Jesus' Birthday story.



DELEGATE. Sunday School teachers and small group leaders become involved in preparing their small groups for the program. Trust the staff to carry out their tasks. Never apologize when asking people to help.

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

PRAY! Pray for the staff, students and set-up. Take all details before the Lord and then-RELAX! God is in control. Carry out the tasks at hand.

PLAN! Read this workbook, make a personal copy and mark areas requiring special attention. Adapt the material to fit the size of your church. Eliminate what cannot be used, divide parts according to available participants. Combine parts when necessary. Give teachers and participants copies of their segment. Place each small group's segment in a colorful folder.

PREPARE! Hopefully you have ordered TREE-MENDOUS LOVE...FROM THE MANGER TO THE CROSS with more than one month lead time. Copy materials for individual classes and assign responsibility for small group practice to each teacher/leader.

Some churches 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 essential.

*This is an ALL CHURCH production!
Involve adults as readers, musicians and leaders.
Adapt the program to use available number of participants.*



At A Glance
Tree-Mendous Love
... From The Manger To The Cross

This is a sample run down of the program as suggested. Insert your own favorite Christmas Carols and Special Music wherever it is appropriate for your individual program. Eliminate what you cannot use. Consider the total program time as you plan music options.

PRELUDE
PROCESSION

"The Tree" Introduction
Church Janitor Introduction

NURSERY: Babes In Joyland
Audience Carol: "I Heard The Bells On Christmas Day"

PRESCHOOL

KINDERGARTEN
GRADES ONE AND TWO
GRADES THREE AND FOUR
GRADES FIVE AND SIX
GRADES SEVEN-NINE
GRADES TEN-TWELVE

ADULTS

ADULTS

CONCLUSION

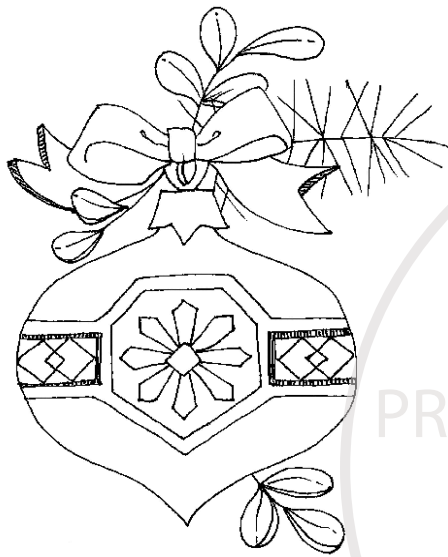
CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY

ALL SPRUCED UP FOR CHRISTMAS PARTY!



Adapting Tree-Mendous Love To Fit Your Church

Preview and then adapt the program to fit the needs of your local church. TREE-MENDOUS LOVE is designed to last about forty five minutes to one hour, depending upon time required for special music as desired. ALL SPRUCED UP PARTY is not included in this time frame.



SMALL CHURCH

If your church is small (10-20 participants), consider removing segments that require more people than available. OR, combine speaking parts so fewer people are needed for performance. For a combined junior and senior high school class, eliminate one presentation and feature the vignette you like best. OR, use the same students to present both segments. Adults are crucial to the small church presentation. Ask a variety of teens and adults to participate. Some people may participate several times.

MEDIUM CHURCH

Adaptations take the form of personal preference. Choose presentations you personally like the best and eliminate the rest. The goal is to tell the Christmas story so don't leave out anything important to the story!

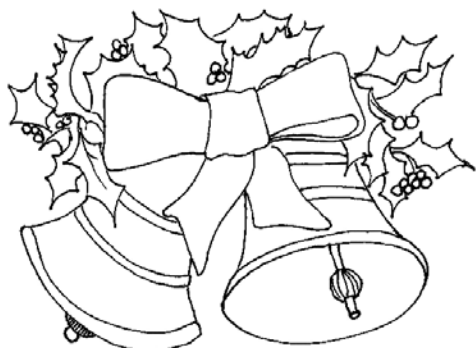
LARGE CHURCH

Organize speakers, snack makers, servers, prop masters, sound and lighting staff and others who make the program exciting. Use as many people as possible.

ALL SPRUCED UP PARTY

Ask one adult Sunday School class or the Women's Group or a small group of friends to take complete responsibility for the party. They decorate, plan and prepare food and arrange for clean up.





Christmas Music!

Coordinate music with the church music director, organist and pianist. Choose Christmas Carols to be sung by participants and the audience. Include hymnal page numbers in a printed program or illuminate words on a screen.

CAROLS

Traditional Christmas Carols are suggested. Change carols to fit your congregation. If your Sunday School has an established weekly Opening, practice carols for three to four weeks prior to performance. Choose contemporary Christmas choruses from music you already enjoy.

NEW MUSIC

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS MINISTRIES is pleased to present three original Christmas songs composed by *Jonathan Miller* for *GLORY SOUND STUDIOS!* Use the songs as desired (solo, group).

1. Tree-Mendous Love!
2. The Bell Song-Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding!
3. Magi Lullaby-Star of Heaven

Sheet music for piano, words only sheets and Double Channel CD (sample voice + accompaniment only) available! Call us at 1-888-236-5433 or see website: www.cemlife.com for more information. **SOLD SEPARATELY**

SPECIAL MUSIC

Feature local church and community talent. These musical options are NOT in the existing program and may be inserted where desired. OPTION: Use one or more of the GLORY SOUND STUDIO collection as featured specials. Be sure to think about time limitations during planning stages.

VOCAL SOLO
VOCAL GROUP (DUET-TRIO-QUARTET)
CHILDREN'S CHOIR-ADULT CHOIR

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE
HANDBELL/CHIME CHOIR
INSTRUMENTAL SOLO



Stage And Props



TREE-MENDOUS LOVE...FROM THE MANGER TO THE CROSS is a unique presentation of the Bethlehem story using a minimum of props and staging. Each small group carries personal props on stage as needed.

SET UP. The church sanctuary will be decorated for Christmas. Christmas trees, Nativity, twinkle lights, poinsettias, candles and other displays add to the festive atmosphere. Leave all holiday decorations in place.

STAGING. Place a Christmas tree front and center. The only trim on the tree are white twinkle lights intertwined top to bottom. Ornaments and Christmas symbols will be placed on and around the tree by individual groups.

SEATING. Reserve seating for classes and teachers before the audience enters the area. Display bows or rope off saved rows. Assign assistants to sit with younger children.

SOUND SYSTEM. Use the existing sound system to its' best advantage. Place one or more microphones within easy reach of participants. Students must be heard clearly as they speak. This detail will make the difference between a frustrating experience and a delightful program for the listeners.

LIGHTING. Turn off normal lighting and overhead sanctuary lights. Light Christmas trees, candles and other mood lighting. Place small spot lights on the floor if desired.



Costumes

TREE-MENDOUS LOVE...FROM THE MANGER TO THE CROSS suggests simple costuming for some participants. Some people dress in Holy Land costume, others wear modern day attire and others put on garments appropriate to their character. When costuming a large group, one solution is to ask each participant to prepare their attire. Parents of young students may be willing to supply the necessary clothing. Not every group needs to be costumed. Follow specific directions for each segment.



PATTERN SUGGESTIONS

Pillow Cases: For small children, cut a neck hold in the top of the pillowcase. Cut up the front to the neck hole. Cut arm holes 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.

Fabric: Two wide strips of fabric (one over each shoulder) crossed across the back and front of the person, tied with a sash makes a great costume.

Head Wraps: A square of fabric over the head with a wide ribbon or piece of cloth around the top of the head makes a headpiece. If you make large scrunchies (like girls wear around pony tails) and put them over the square fabric around the head, it holds the fabric tightly.

Bathrobes: Purchase bathrobes at garage sales/resale shops. Use contrasting fabric for headdresses and sashes to complete the costume.

Angels: Dress angels in white cotton or silver lame' for in most fabric stores. Angels may wear cardboard wings or remain wingless. Place gold or silver tinsel garland taped in a circle on each angel head. Tie tinsel around the waist for a sparkling angel belt. Angels may wear face/hair glitter for that "extra sparkle"!



Student Ushers

Once everyone is costumed to perfection, recruit a few angels, shepherds and wise men as ushers who hand out programs and seat people before the performance.

Involve a variety of ages. Place students at each door and coach them to say, "Welcome to *TREE-MENDOUS LOVE...FROM THE MANGER TO THE CROSS*. May I show you to your seat?" Or, "Where would you like to sit?" It is an added personal touch that is much appreciated by older members of the audience.

Meet with the ushers to explain how to greet guests, especially if students have never done this task. Assign each person or a team of two to a specific door.

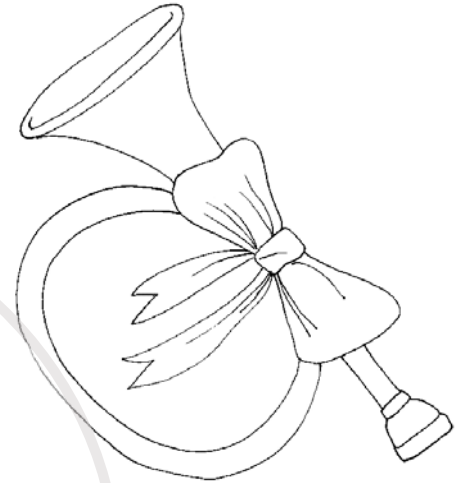
PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY
NOT FOR USE
After The Show

Ask participants to remain in costume at the ALL SPRUCED UP PARTY. They may serve beverages, greet guests and wander through the party area while people eat and talk.



Publicity

Publicize *TREE-MENDOUS LOVE...FROM THE MANGER TO THE CROSS* through all normal church communication channels. Announce it in the church newsletter, the weekly worship bulletin and from the pulpit.



CHURCH BULLETIN AND NEWSLETTER

Inform the congregation about this special Christmas event. Print an announcement in November and December newsletters. If you plan the ALL SPRUCED UP FOR CHRISTMAS PARTY, let people know there will be a Christmas celebration including food following the program.

LOCAL NEWSPAPER

Include an announcement along with other holiday programming publicity. Talk to a reporter and photographer to see if a feature article is possible.

TELEVISION AND RADIO

Consider advertising on your local television cable advertising channel. Radio stations often have free spots available as community service. Check it out! It may be one more avenue of great publicity!

CHRISTMAS CARD INVITATIONS

Send family invitations home with students. This is effective for families who send their children to Sunday School but are not involved. Use real Christmas cards with invitations tucked inside.





Teachers!

Pray! Prepare! Present!

ADAPT THIS PROGRAM
TO FIT THE NEEDS OF YOUR GROUP

Involve as many students as possible

If you have more students than speaking parts, divide the existing parts so more people can be involved. If you have less students than parts, allow the available people to say two or three parts. Assign specific jobs of holding visuals, carrying props and dress in costume to specific people.

PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY

Highlight individual parts

Decide if your students will memorize their speaking parts or read them. If scripture verses are spoken, all students can memorize them and say the verse in unison. If your students read their parts, back the copies with colorful construction paper, glitter and Christmas stickers. Performance copies must remain in good shape.

Practice with your class

Rehearse in the weeks before the program. Use the first few minutes of each Sunday School class to practice and discuss costuming and props. Assign specific tasks and remind them often. Adapt the segment you are assigned fit your small group. Make changes as needed.



Communicate with parents

Let parents know when to have their children at formal rehearsals and the performance. Invite them to attend and be sure they know what props or costuming their child is responsible to bring. It may be a good idea to collect items and store them in the classroom before performance day.

The Christmas Director values your leadership! *Show up with a smile and helpful attitude!*

Meet your class for the Processional. Dress in appropriate costumes in a back room, line up according to specific instructions and enter the sanctuary as directed. Sit with your class in the designated area. Lead them on and off stage. Perform your own speaking part with enthusiasm. Coach students quietly if they have problems speaking their parts. Stage fright is not uncommon!

After The Program

Plan to stay for **THE ALL SPRUCED UP PARTY**. Collect props and program materials before your students attend the party. Ask students who are in costume to remain as they are for the gathering. Mingle with 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. You will be responsible to have your students ready to participate. The program will come together at the last moment with 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 Bethlehem Story is classic and life changing. The spiritual experience is amazing!



Trim The Tree!

Since TREE-MENDOUS LOVE is based on trimming a Christmas tree, it is important to obtain an artificial or live tree in addition to the existing Christmas tree on stage.



Your TREE-MENDOUS LOVE tree should be as large as possible so everyone in the audience can see it easily. Place the large tree center stage with a colorful tree skirt or sheet draped at the bottom.

If a smaller tree is the only one available, set it on a table with a colorful sheet draped below it. Consider filling the draped area under the table with white twinkle lights.

PLEASE PURCHASE

LIGHTS: Before the program, place white twinkle lights on the tree. The more lights the better for visual delight from the audience viewpoint. Consider a small spotlight placed on the floor behind the tree for dramatic effect.

STAR: Position a large tree topper star on the tree. Borrow or purchase the star topper. If desired, make an oversized star from cardboard and cover with glitter.



Ornaments!

TREE-MENDOUS LOVE tells the story of the night Jesus was born in Bethlehem. As the familiar story unfolds, each small group adds ornaments to the tree. As the program proceeds, the tree is gradually filled with memorable symbols of Jesus' birth.

This program includes patterns for ornaments that can be copied and decorated during weeks preceding the program. There may be specific ornaments you will want to change by using the "real thing" as available.

Do not feel obligated to use our patterns. The final effect is a charming "homemade" tree reflecting the colorful creativity of your participants.



COPY TIPS: If using the patterns provided, make as many copies as needed for each person. Example: Angel pattern—if 8 students are on stage, make (or provide) 8 angels to add to the tree.

Use white heavy paper to make the ornament copies. They must be stiff in order to stand out properly on the tree. If heavy paper is not available, back each ornament with white posterboard and glue into place.

HOLE: Punch one hole in the top of each ornament. Be sure the hole is not going to pull out while children wait for their group to perform.



RIBBON: Purchase red ribbon for each and every ornament. The consistent color makes the tree look uniform and red represents the blood of Christ on the Cross. Make the loop big enough to tie a bow at the top of each one. This can be done by one person or a committee or may be completed by separate small groups.

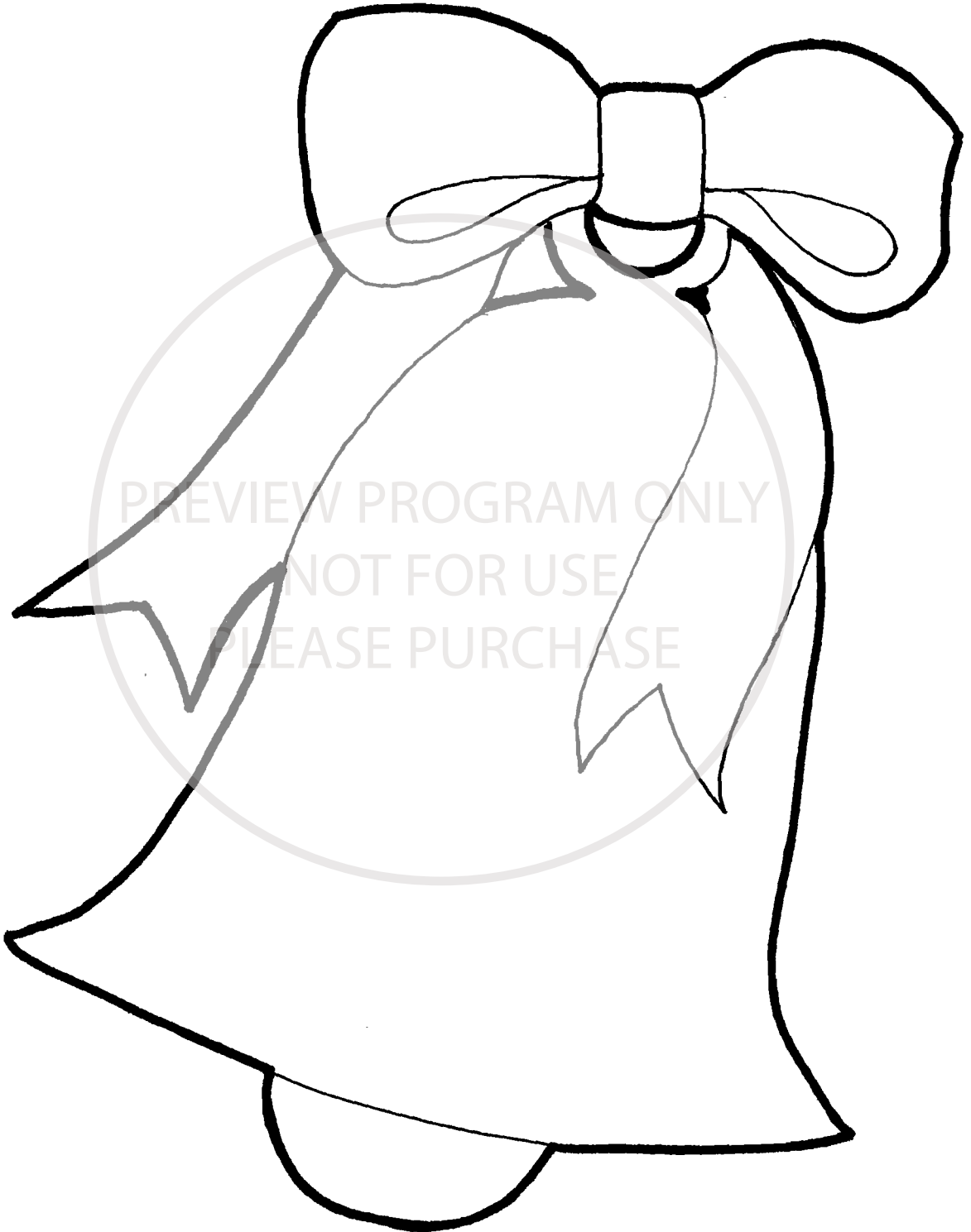
HOOKS: Purchase Christmas tree hooks for each ornament. This will make it easy to attach ornaments quickly.

COLOR: Paper ornaments may be colored by the small groups or may be left white. Another shimmering choice is to leave them white but sprinkle glue and clear/white glitter on each one so they sparkle.

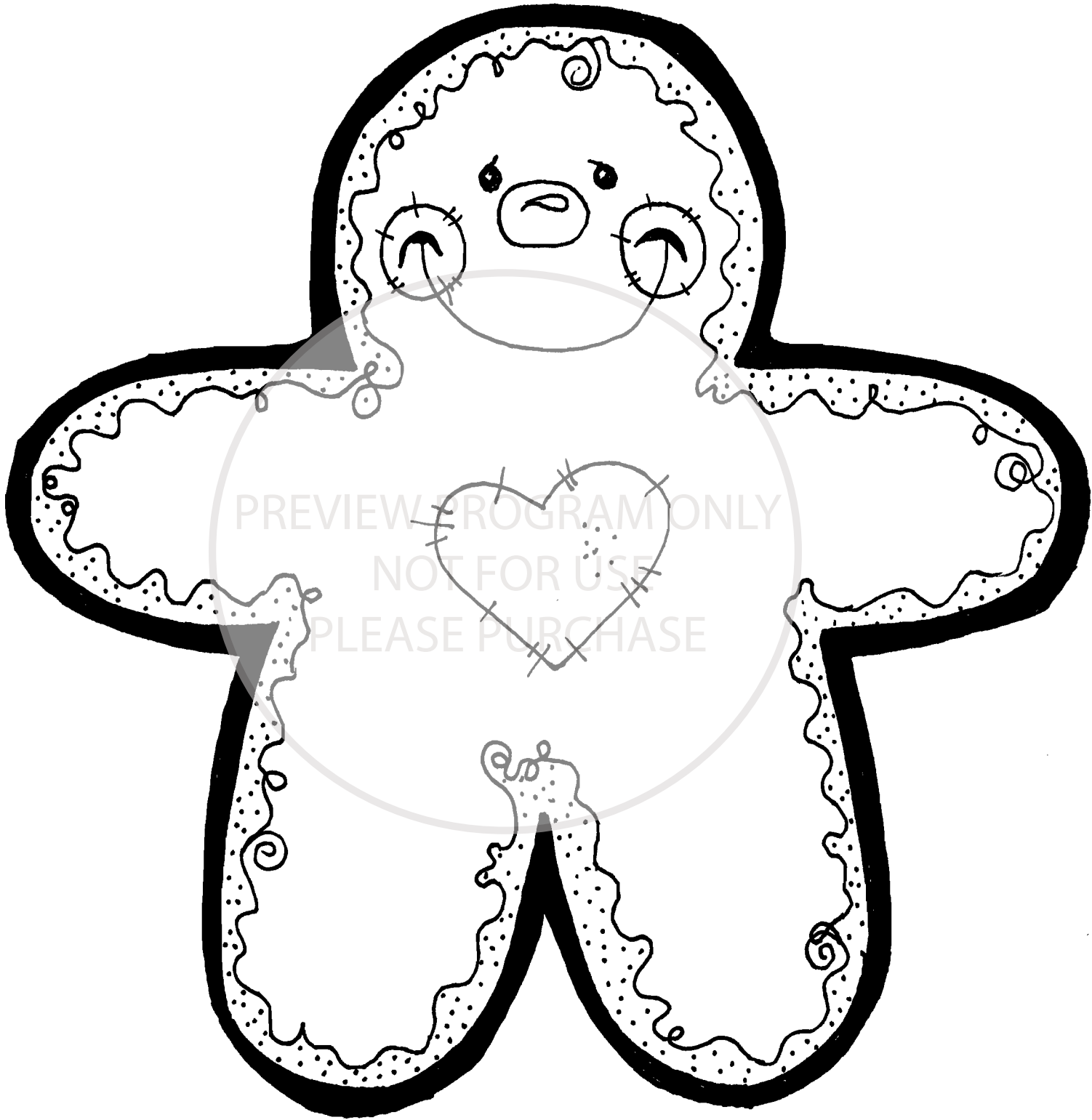
REAL ORNAMENTS: Consider using a few real ornaments among the handmade offerings. Some easy and appropriate choices are real candy canes, silk poinsettias, bells, large glass balls and real pine cones. See what is available and have fun designing your own tree.

PLACEMENT: Allow each participant to choose a good spot for their ornament. Clue taller students/adults into placing their ornaments high on the tree so that by the end of the program, there is even distribution. Don't forget that a few ornaments should be placed on the sides and back of the tree as necessary.



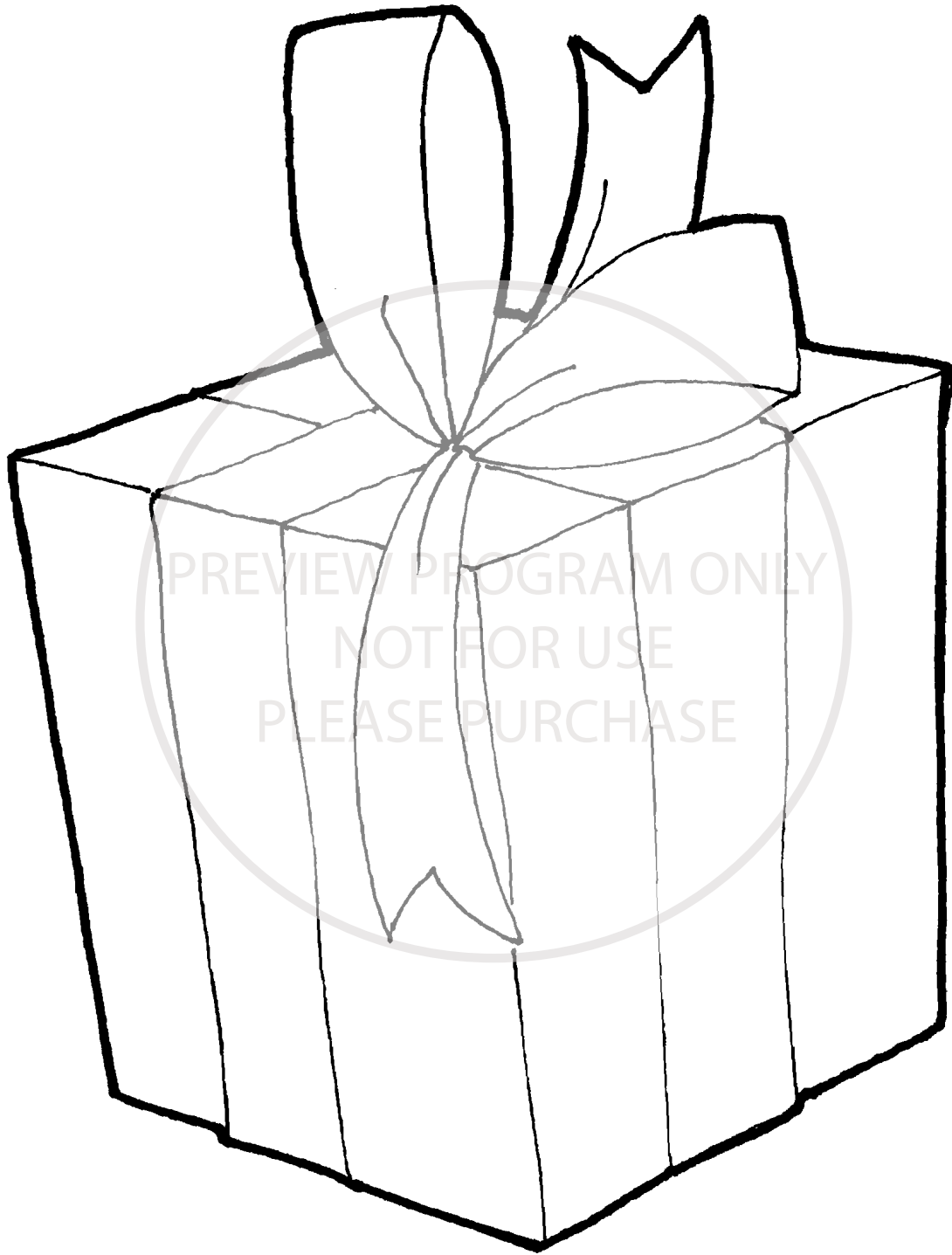


PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY
NOT FOR USE
PLEASE PURCHASE

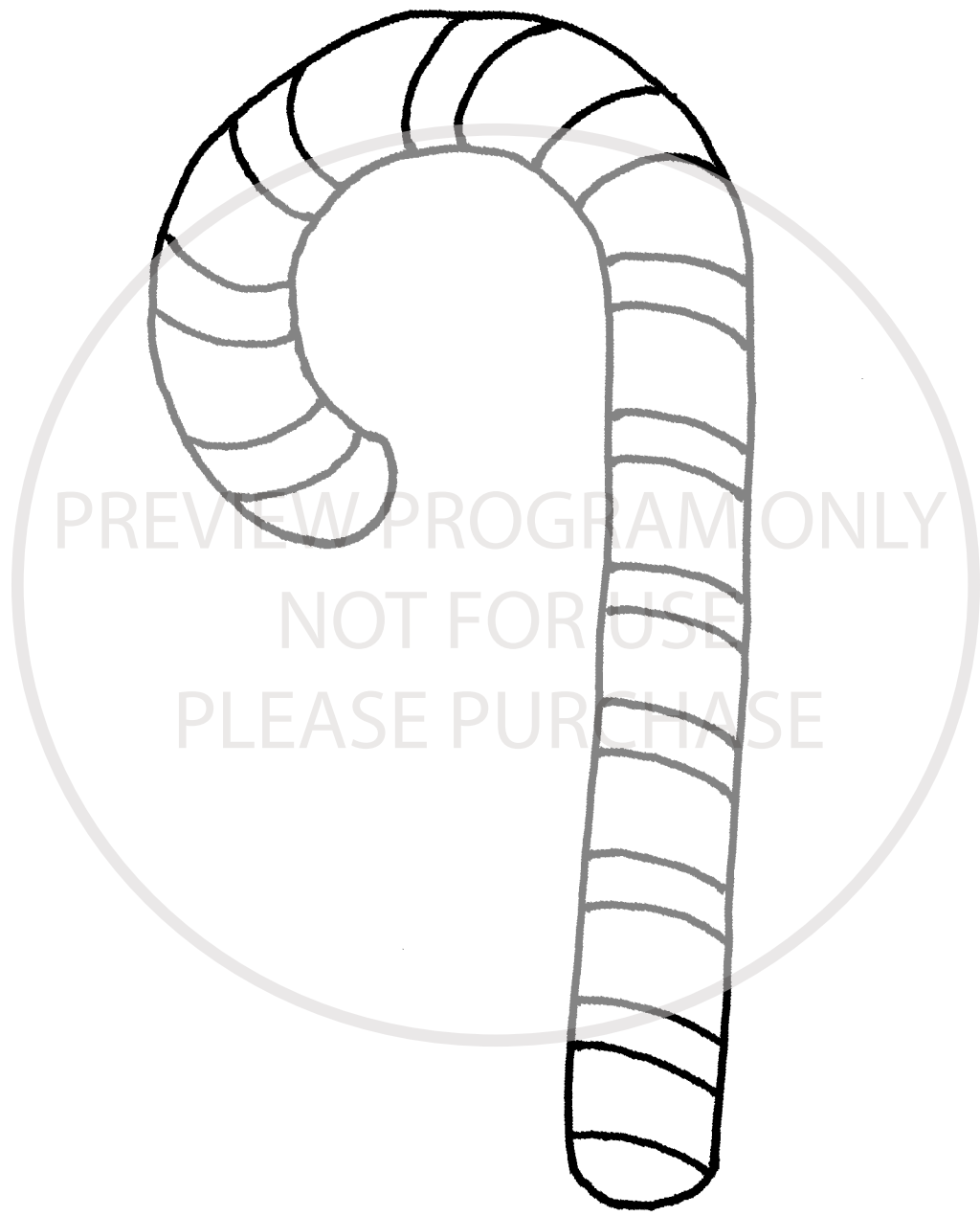




PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY
NOT FOR USE
PLEASE PURCHASE.



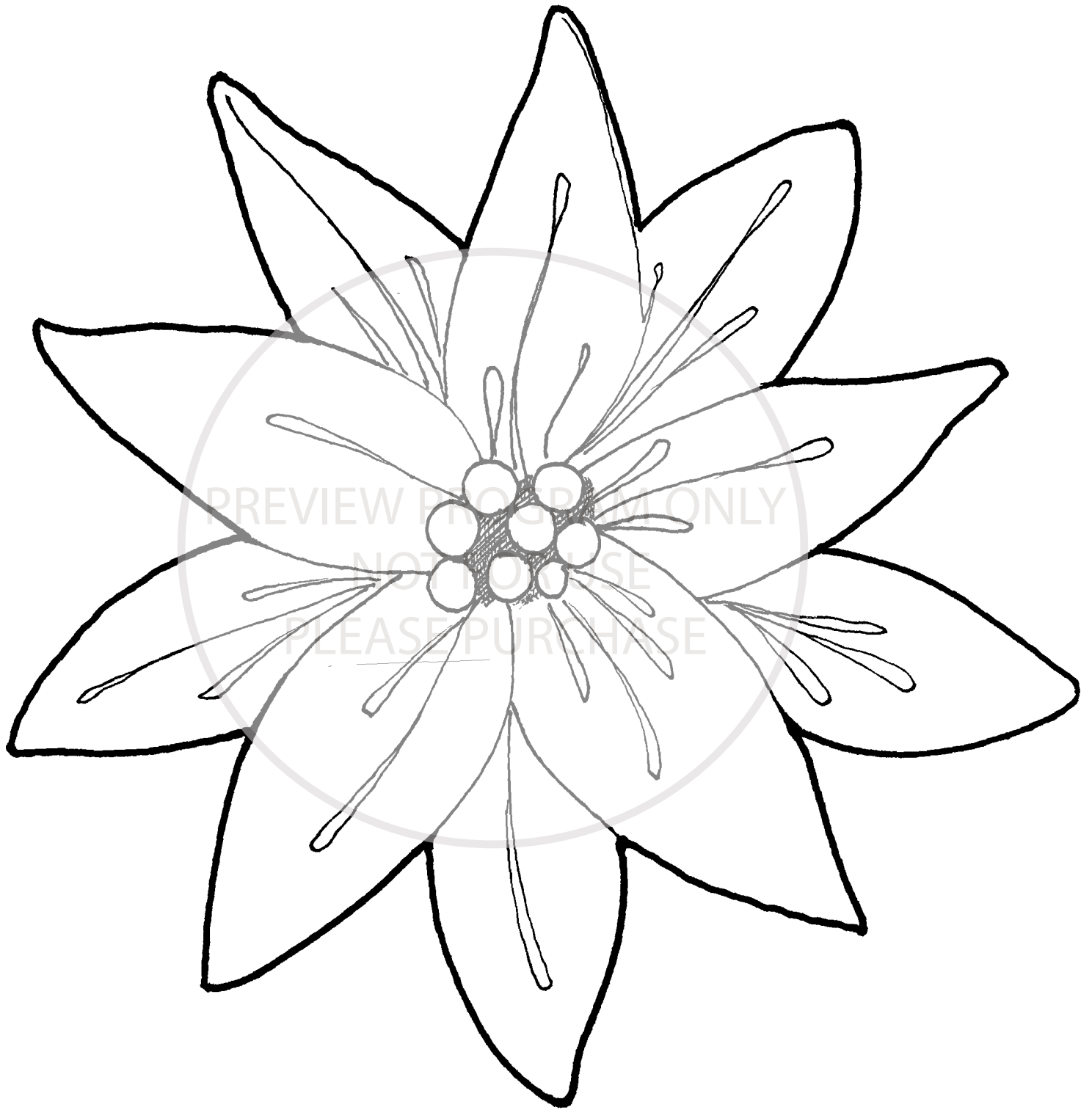
PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY
NOT FOR USE
PLEASE PURCHASE



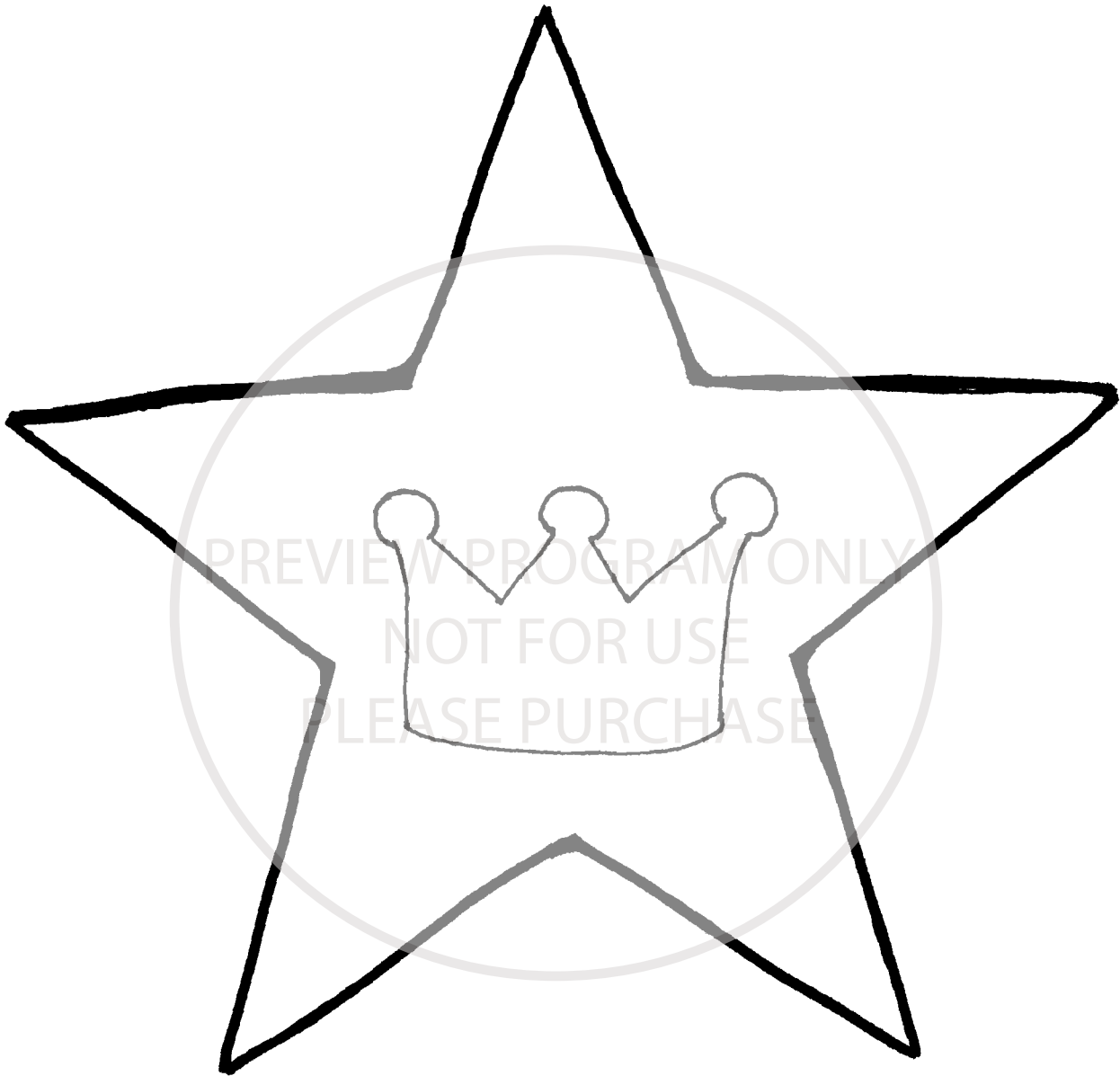
PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY
NOT FOR USE
PLEASE PURCHASE



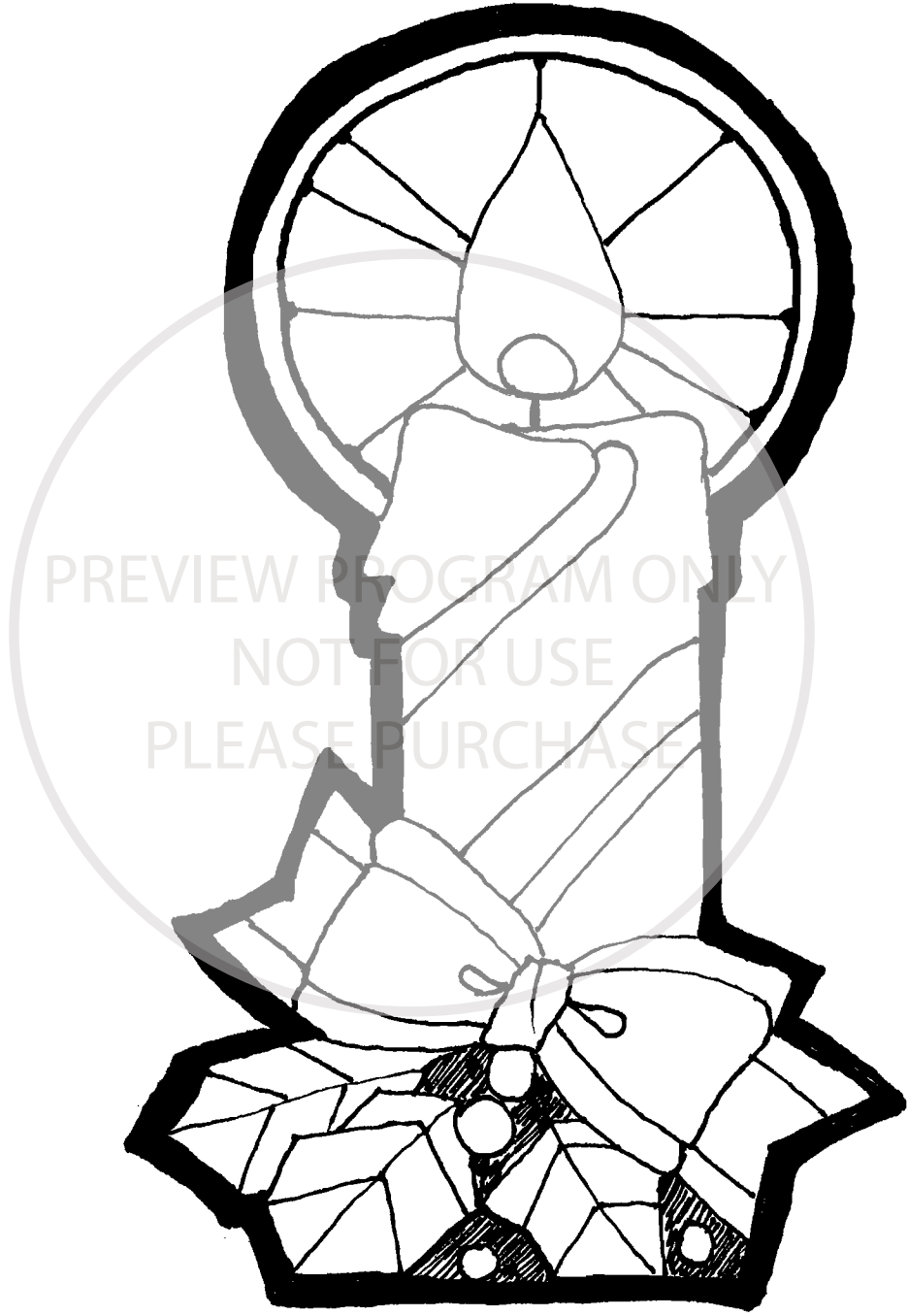
PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY
NOT FOR USE
PLEASE PURCHASE

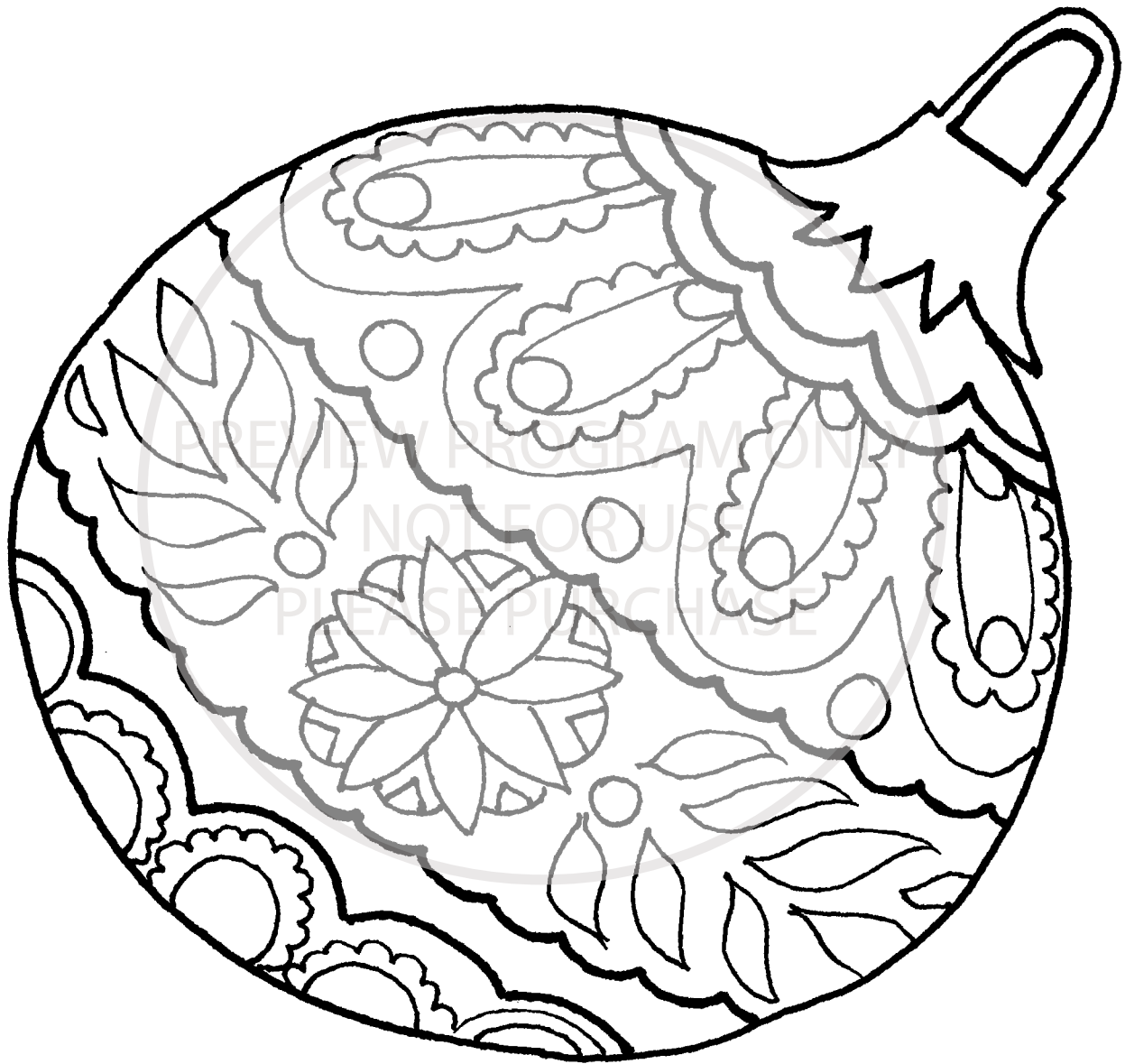


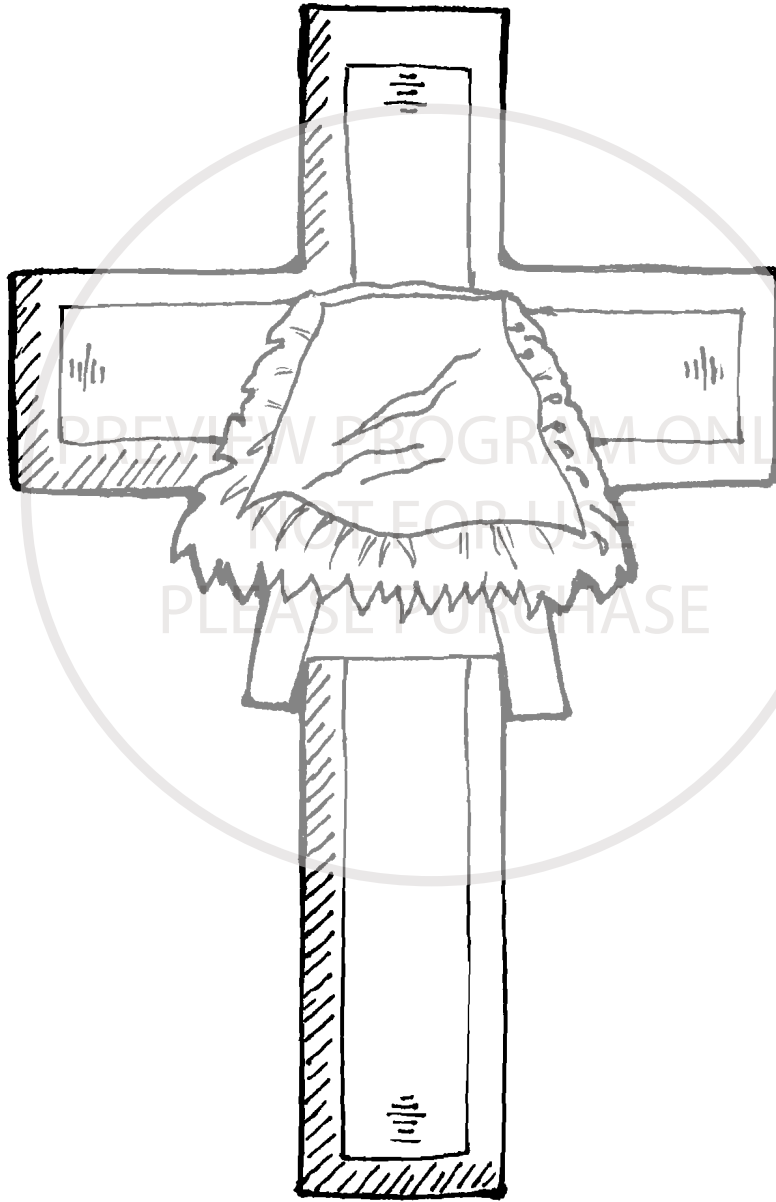


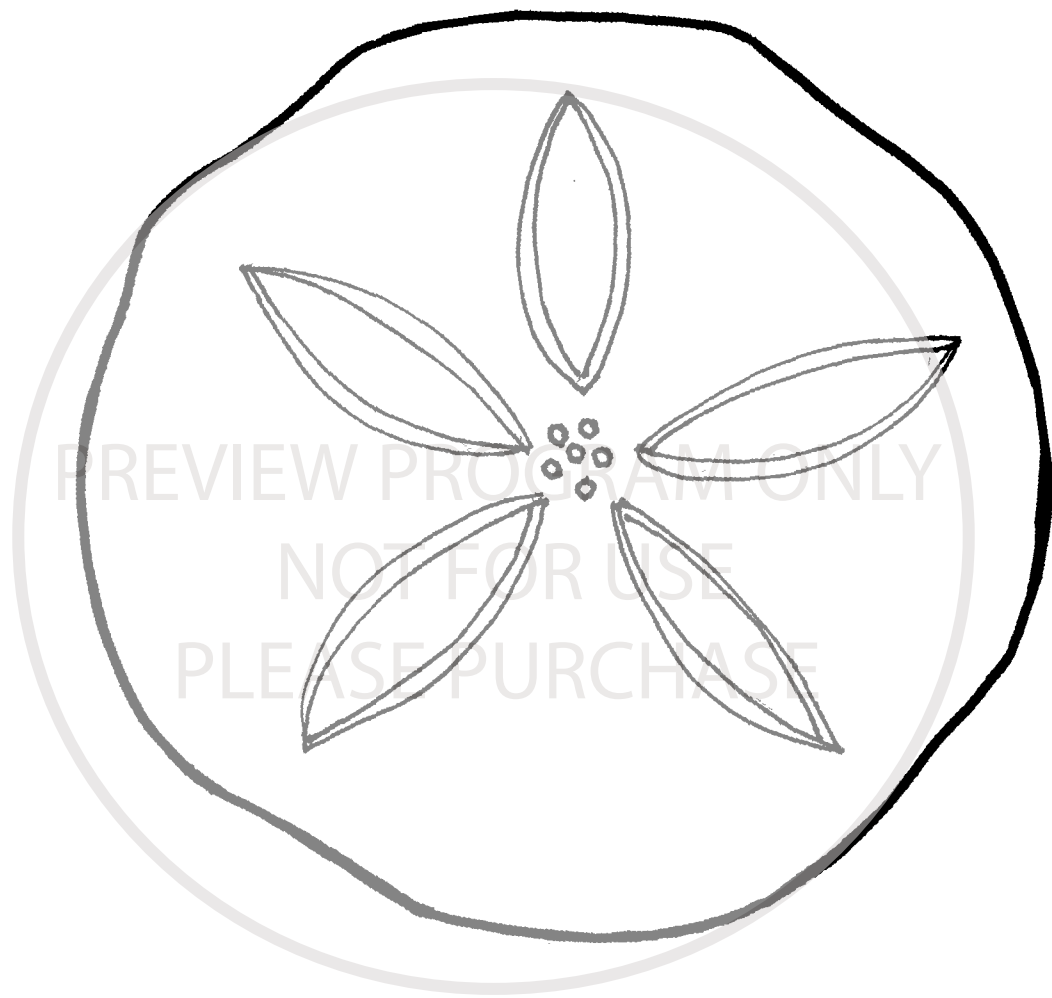


PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY
NOT FOR USE
PLEASE PURCHASE









Church Janitor



Become the church maintenance person who interrupts the Christmas program at every turn, commenting on the group segments.

The janitor is weary and cranky from non stop holiday church preparations. He/she bows to no man or woman who enters his/her cleaning "territory" and is not threatened by any criticism. Self assured, yet endearing, this character can be male or female of any age.

Dress in denim overalls with flannel shirt or typical work clothes. Wear an old Christmas flower in a lapel that communicates somebody decided to make the janitor look festive.

Carry a clip board with full script, huge push broom and large bucket. The bucket should be large enough to sit on once in awhile while on stage.

The "janitor" holds the segments together with humor and insight. Do not memorize! Carry the script and refer to it as a job list. Rehearse each part several times to become as familiar as possible with the wording and order of the program. Enjoy being the quirky janitor. Take the audience on a fun journey while a Christmas tree is being trimmed on stage and the story of Baby Jesus develops.

There's no time like Christmas to release your inner "Ham"!



The Kid



Become a young neighborhood street kid. This is an pre teen (boy or girl) who is interested in the Christmas "hoop-la" and brave enough to enter the church uninvited to get a few questions answered. Actor may be age 10-12 or any age acting as if they are young and innocent.

The Kid makes an appearance midway through the program.

Dress in casual clothing, worn and tired. Wear an old coat, scarf, hat. Carry a backpack to stuff ornaments.

The Kid is a character who opens the eyes of the grumpy janitor. Be self assured.

Have fun being The Kid. This is the time to speak up and enjoy being in the spotlight for a few minutes. Memorization is not necessary. Read the part aloud to be familiar with the words. Carry the script on stage and read the part with feeling.



The Prelude

Church instrumentalists (organ/piano/keyboards) play Christmas music as the audience gathers for the program. If using our original music during the program, consider having the same songs played beforehand so the audience can hear the melodies and become familiar with the choruses.



The Procession

Gather TREE-MENDOUS LOVE...FROM THE MANGER TO THE CROSS participants in an outer room before the program begins. Dim sanctuary lights. Existing holiday lights are left burning. Leave stage lights and spotlights shining so people can read their speaking parts. Be sure the central tree is lit before the group enters.

As the participants file to their seats from the back, they sing "We Wish You A Merry Christmas" along the way. *(This music is not included with the program. Teach the new words when small groups practice or just sing the traditional version.)*

We wish you a Merry Christmas!
We wish you a Merry Christmas!
We wish you a Merry Christmas!
And a Happy New Year.

When Jesus was born
That bright early morn,
The whole earth re-joiced
When God came to earth.



“The Tree” Introduction

Two people introduce the program. They stand on either side of the on stage tree. As they finish reading, they begin to leave the room, still talking and planning excitedly.

READER #1: Welcome! We invite you to come with us on a Christmas journey. This journey winds along an old, old trail. In fact, that old trail leads all the way to Bethlehem of Judea. The year? Word has it that Jesus was born sometime around Year One! We'll go with that for now. Our challenge is to explain this wonderful story in such a way that anyone, young or old, can understand it. Jesus...from the Manger to the Cross.

READER #2: I know how to explain Jesus' story! Listen to Psalm 1:1-3: “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season whose leaf does not wither.”

READER #1: That's it! A tree! A Christian Christmas tree! It will represent peace and eternal life. How convenient. There's a tree on stage right now. We'll use this tree. It's perfect! It remains green to remind us of life in the midst of death and rebirth.

READER #2: There was a tree in the Garden of Eden...the Tree of knowledge of good and evil.

READER #1: And the tree begins as a seed reminding us that life begins new when we trust in Jesus who rose up to new life after He died on the Cross.

READER #2: Our tree will represent the manger where Jesus slept and it will represent the Cross where He died. It points upward to remind us that God has prepared a place for us in Heaven.

READER #1: Look at that tree! It's green-ever green! Jesus is always alive-ever



present with us, eternal.

READER #2: And it's shaped like a triangle. What does that remind you of? Of course! It's the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

READER #1: The lights on our tree represent Jesus The Light of the world and each ornament will be a symbol of His birth. Let's get all the kids together to trim the TREE-,MENDOUS tree! And we'll add grown ups so they won't feel left out.

Begin to walk away together:

READER #2: And ribbons! Each ornament ribbon will be RED to remind us of the blood Jesus shed on the Cross.

READER #1: And music! We'll sing all the songs we know about Jesus birth in Bethlehem! We'll make this the most TREE-MENDOUS Christmas program ever.

READER #2: That's it! We'll call it TREE-MENDOUS LOVE...FROM THE MANGER TO THE CROSS. We'll tell the whole story from Jesus' birth in Bethlehem to the day He rose from the grave. I'm sure it will work. We better get started. There's a lot of work to do.

READER #1: I hope you plan to do most of the work. It's Christmas you know and I'm busy....very busy. And the church janitor isn't going to like this. He isn't going to like this one little bit!

READER #2: Oh, he'll be okay. I can wrap him around my little finger with the wink of my eye!

EXIT

Church Janitor Introduction



Janitor walks in from the back carrying a clipboard, large push broom and bucket. Clang and clank along the way. Sigh and groan and complain.



Janitor: *(Groaning...)* Oh no, not another mess. Look at that tree. Somebody stuck that thing up there and never trimmed it. They forgot to turn off the lights and look at all the needles on the floor. Who do they think I am...the janitor? *(Chuckling...)* Oh, that's right, I AM the janitor.

Nobody ever thinks about me during Christmas. Look at this job list! All I do is clean up after every silly party. The children forget to put lids on their glue after making paper chains and

I have never seen so many empty coffee cups. Doesn't anyone in this church know how to pick up after themselves?

And now this! Let me tell you, they better clean up or I'm gonna...I'm gonna....What am I gonna do? Maybe I'll just up and QUIT! Yeah, that'll teach 'em. I'll quit and let them clean up Christmas on their own.

Don't you think folks would want to put *me* in the Christmas spirit? I'll wait for that one to happen. Celebrate the Savior's birth and, oh yeah, make the janitor happy.

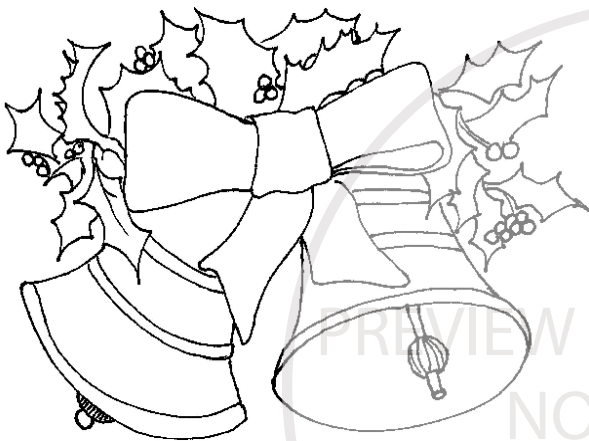
(Turn to the audience...) Oops! Is something going on in here? Did I miss something on the calendar? *(Looking at the kids...)* Ohhhh, it's the Christmas program, isn't it? I'm interrupting, huh? Well, you better keep this place clean. I'm going to check up on you too. No papers on the floor and keep your tissues in your pockets. Okay! On with the show!

EXIT



Nursery

Babes In Joyland!



ORNAMENT: Bell

Each child carries a bell ornament. Use the pattern included or provide real jingle bells for the babies to shake and ring. Attach a red ribbon and bow to each bell so it can be hung easily on the Christmas tree.

OPTION: Carry large bells on stage to ring at the end of "Babes In Joyland" or ask unseen ringers to ring from behind the audience at the end of the segment while the audience sings "I Heard The Bells On

Christmas Day".

Since babies cannot speak for themselves, ask their moms to carry them on stage and speak for them! Assign parts to available people.

TEACHER: Here we are! It's Christmas and there is a story to be told and a TREE-MENDOUS tree to be trimmed. Let's get our "Babes In Joyland" into the Christmas spirit.

MOM #1: I've been thinking that the closest picture we have of Jesus as a baby is our own babies. It is amazing that God sent His only Son to earth as a defenseless newborn. We get to make the BABY ANNOUNCEMENT!

MOM #2: Babies are joyful; Innocent and ready to face the world with joy.

TEACHER: That's why I chose BELLS to represent our little ones. Who can resist the sound of a Christmas bell ringing out the message that Jesus is born?



MOM #3: Bells always produce joy and excitement. Bells were used while worshiping God long before our Savior's birth.

MOM #4: There is no better news to announce to the world that over 2000 years ago, in a tiny town in the middle east, a baby was born. No one was interested that night but the joy that baby boy brought the world is hope for everyone.

MOM #5: Once there was a great church whose bells suddenly refused to ring. A messenger said, "God will not let the bells ring until the gifts of His people are right. On Christmas Eve the people brought the most expensive gifts they had but still the bells would not ring. Finally, even the king laid down his golden crown on the altar. No bells rang. The people were sad but a small boy, a beggar's son, who had only one small piece of silver to buy bread, crept up to the altar, gave his little bit and knelt to pray. Suddenly the bells rang loudly and more beautiful than ever before

TEACHER: *"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6*

May the bells we hear this Christmas call us to remember that God asks for one gift only; the gift of our hearts given to the Christ who is coming into the world.

JOYOUSLY RING REAL BELLS.

BELLS CAN BE RUNG BY PEOPLE
STANDING BEHIND THE AUDIENCE.

HANG BELL ORNAMENTS ON TREE BEFORE RETURNING TO SEATS.

AUDIENCE CAROL: "I Heard The Bells On Christmas Day"



Preschool Gingerbread Christmas



ORNAMENT: GINGERBREAD PEOPLE

Make ornaments from the patterns included and have students color, glitter them or consider making real gingerbread people cookies to hang on the tree. Punch a hole in the top of each ornament and attach a RED ribbon tied with a bow for easy hanging.

Several teachers/leaders may divide the teacher parts. If students are too young to respond, eliminate the longer parts and have them respond only as a group. Decide what to do based on ages and abilities of individual children.

TEACHER: It's our turn to trim the Christmas tree. Bring your Gingerbread People with you. Hold your ornaments high over your head so everyone can see how nicely you decorated them for the tree.

STUDENTS SHOW OFF THEIR ORNAMENTS TO THE AUDIENCE!

Mmmm...the smell of gingerbread just tingles my toes! No wonder people love to bake these spicy cookies at Christmas. Do you like gingerbread cookies?

STUDENTS: Yes!

STUDENT #1: My mom makes cookies at Christmas!



TEACHER: They smell good and spicy when mom takes them out of the oven. Mom created a cookie just for you to eat and enjoy! The spice reminds us of the spice that wise men brought to Jesus.

STUDENTS: Mmmm, good!

TEACHER: Who created you?

STUDENTS: God!

TEACHER: That's right. Gingerbread people remind us of God's creation of each of us. God loves us so much that He sent Jesus to earth to be our Savior.

STUDENTS: Why?

TEACHER: Why? Because people got lost along the way. They didn't love God and they didn't even know they were lost from God.

John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His Only begotten Son so that whoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

STUDENT #2: I don't like to be lost.

TEACHER: Nobody wants to be lost. People need Jesus to show us the way to heaven. Let's pray:

*Dear Lord,
I hurry, hurry, hurry and sometimes I get lost from You.
I am here because You created me.
You made me so you can enjoy me.
Help me remember the Gingerbread People
so I remember that I am special in Your eyes.*

Put your Gingerbread people on our Tree-Mendous Love Christmas Tree. Then everyone will know how much God loves people!

STUDENTS: We love you, Jesus!

Hang ornaments on tree before returning to seats.

**OPTION: SPECIAL MUSIC or
CHRISTMAS CAROL SUNG BY AUDIENCE
"Away In A Manger"**



Kindergarten The Gift



ORNAMENT: SMALL WRAPPED GIFTS/GIFT PATTERN

Make ornaments to represent wrapped gifts. These may be tiny packages with a red ribbon attached for hanging or they may be the pattern included that looks like a gift box. Each student should have a gift ornament to add to the tree.

Participation of students depends upon their ability to speak clearly. Assign short parts as desired. Leaders may divide Teacher parts as desired. Divide the parts between available participants. You may use as few as 2 children. Adjust to fit your needs.

TEACHER: Come on! Hurry up! It's our turn to trim the tree. Show everyone what we brought.

STUDENT #1: We have lots of presents!

TEACHER: For many people, gifts are what Christmas is all about. They give and get presents and never even think of the real meaning of Christmas. What is the real meaning of Christmas?

STUDENT #2: (Eagerly raises hand...) I know! Christmas is all about Jesus!

STUDENT #3: Christmas is all about presents!

STUDENT #4: Jesus!



STUDENT #5: Presents!

TEACHER: Now, now! No arguing in front of so many people. Let's think about it. The wise men brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to honor the infant King in Bethlehem's manger so....

STUDENT #6: That means Christmas is about presents!

TEACHER: Hmm, that's true. God also gives us the gifts of the Holy Spirit to help us follow God's direction in our lives.

STUDENT #7: That means Christmas is about presents!

TEACHER: Hmm, that's true. What's the best Christmas gift?

STUDENT #8: Jesus! That means Christmas is about Jesus!

TEACHER: Our greatest gift is Jesus Who gave Himself to us at Christmas. Listen to this great good news:

Luke 2:4-7: "So Joseph went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem, the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her first born, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

STUDENT#9: Let's tell everybody that God sent Jesus to be our best Christmas present ever!

TEACHER: I think we can do that. Put your gifts on the tree to remind us that wrapped inside is God's wonderful gift of Jesus.

PLACE GIFT ORNAMENTS ON TREE.

JANITOR ARRIVES ON STAGE
ONCE ALL KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS
HAVE RETURNED TO SEATS.



The Janitor Speaks....



Arrive on stage pushing a large broom. Appear to notice ornaments hanging on tree.

JANITOR: What have we here? It looks like some little church mice have been here while I was washing the kitchen floor. They left ornaments on the tree.

(Rearrange a few ornaments) Looks like a little bell. Ain't that cute? Can't make much of a mess with a little bell. Reminds me of a song by that famous fellow...Lo-ongfellow. Must have been a tall guy.

(Sing or say...) "I heard the bells on Christmas day, their old familiar carols play, and wild and sweet the words repeat of peace on earth, good will to men."

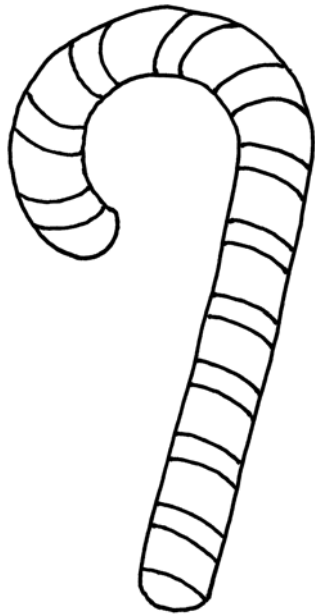
Peace on earth, good will to men? I want good will to ME!! I'm the loneliest janitor on earth. I come and go and no one evens knows I've been here unless I forget to clean something! Then they know my name!

Somebody left gingerbread cookies on the tree. Mmmm, they smell so good. Nobody will notice if I tuck one in my pocket for later. *(Place one ornament in a pocket.)*

And what have we here? Presents? Tiny presents wrapped with bows. I can't remember the last time I got a present. My favorite Christmas present was a little whittling knife my grandfather gave me. Oh, how I loved that knife. Or maybe it was that grandpa sat on the porch and taught me how to whittle that made it my best present. Yep, yep, yep...grandpa sure loved me.

EXIT WHILE PUSHING BROOM





Grades One and Two Candy Canes



ORNAMENT: REAL CANDY CANES

Give each student a real candy cane. Each cane should have a red bow tied to it for hanging on the tree.

Dress students in shepherd and angel costumes.

Divide parts between available participants. Use as few as 2 children. Practice reading parts. No memorization needed. Adjust to fit needs.

OPTION: Mini Candy Canes may be distributed to all members of the audience. Assign students to the task of filling baskets and passing them out as ushers.

STUDENT #1: I love candy canes!

STUDENT #2: Why do we get candy canes at Christmas?

STUDENT #3: It's because the candy cane is shaped like a shepherd's crook. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, came at Christmas.

TEACHER: *Luke 2:8: And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night."*

STUDENT #4: Do you know that song, "While Shepherds washed their socks at night"? I thought it was SOCKS...NOT FLOCKS!

TEACHER: Do you know the candy cane was created to honor Jesus? Your candy canes tell the Christmas story. The red stripe reminds us that Jesus gave His life for us. The white part reminds us that Jesus never sinned.

STUDENT #5: Jesus is our Rock-like hard candy! Hold it upside down it looks like the letter "J" for Jesus!

TEACHER: One bold stripe represents God and three thin stripes represent the Trinity-Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



STUDENT #6: Peppermint smells good and tastes good too. It's like Jesus came to make everything clean and fresh.

TEACHER: *Luke 2:9: An angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were terrified.*"

STUDENT #7 If people see our candy canes on the tree, they will know that shepherds were the first earth people to hear the Baby was born. Angels showed up and said....



STUDENT #8: DRESSED AS ANGEL

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." Luke 2:10

STUDENT #9: DRESSED AS ANGEL

"Today in the city of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."

STUDENT #10: DRESSED AS ANGEL

"This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Luke 2:10b

STUDENT #11: DRESSED AS ANGEL

Real fast, lots of angels showed up with the angel, praising God and saying:

TEACHER: Wait! Let's say it together.

ALL: *"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and good will to men."*

STUDENT #12: The shepherds were scared but they ran to Bethlehem and found Jesus and Mary and Joseph just like the angels said.

TEACHER: When the shepherds got back to their field they praised God for all the things they saw and heard. In fact they told everyone they met! Let's put our canes on the tree so we never forget the story of the shepherds and angels!

STUDENTS HANG ORNAMENTS ON TREE AND RETURN TO SEATS.



Grades Three and Four Star Over Bethlehem

ORNAMENT: STABLE

Give each student a Stable ornament. Each ornament should have a red bow tied to it for hanging on the tree. The pattern features a star. Sprinkle glitter on the stars so they sparkle on the tree.

ASK ONE TEEN OR ADULT TO ADD A LARGE STAR TO THE TOP OF THE TREE AT THE APPROPRIATE TIME. It can be a star made of posterboard and covered in glitter or it can be a real star ornament.



Divide parts between available participants. You may use as few as 2 children. Practice reading the parts. No Memorization needed. Adjust to fit your needs.

STUDENT #1: We need a Christmas star. It looks bare without the star on top.

STUDENT #2: Why do we need a star? We could put anything up there and it would look good. Maybe we should put a hat on the top of the tree!

STUDENT #3: We need a big star because that shows where God marked the spot where Jesus was born. It showed people how to find the Baby in the stable.

TEACHER: The stable could have been a rock cave instead of a wooden barn. We don't know the kind of space God arranged for Jesus. All we know is that the place where Jesus was born was warm and safe and private.

The Bible says, Luke 2:15-16: "When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.' So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in a manger."



STUDENT #4: Didn't they have hospitals with doctors and nurses and grandparents who could come to visit the baby?

TEACHER: God had better plans for this special baby boy. Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem with lots of other travelers to be included in a nosecount. The leaders wanted to know how many people lived in the land.

Luke 2:1-2: "In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone went to his own town to register."

STUDENT #5: Jesus was born in a barn? Animals live in a barn! I bet it smelled bad.

STUDENT #6: A baby wouldn't care. As long as his mom and dad were there, he was happy.

STUDENT #7: Jesus was God's Only Son who became our Savior. God always promised His Son would be born in Bethlehem. We just didn't know there would be a star to mark the spot over a stable.

TEACHER: Should we add a big star to the top of the tree?

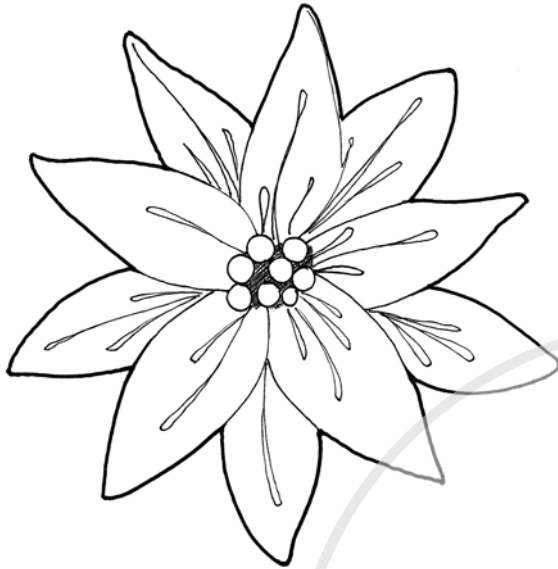
ALL STUDENTS: Yes! Yes!

**ONE PERSON CLIMBS A LADDER NEAR THE TREE
AND ADDS A STAR!**

**STUDENTS ADD THEIR ORNAMENTS
AND RETURN TO THEIR SEATS.**

**OPTION: SING AUDIENCE CHRISTMAS CAROL
OR
PRESENT SPECIAL MUSIC**





Grades Five and Six Poinsettia

ORNAMENT: POINSETTIA

There are two options for poinsettia ornaments. Use the pattern and make paper/posterboard replicas with a red bow attached for hanging OR purchase large red silk poinsettias with long stems. These may be laid along the tree branches instead of hanging them.

Consider having students place several pots of real poinsettias at the base of the tree.

Divide parts between available participants. You may use as few as 2 children. Practice reading the parts. No memorization needed. Adjust to fit your needs.

STUDENT #1: I see poinsettias all over town during Christmas. Why do people like these flowers?

STUDENT #2: Didn't you know the poinsettia is the traditional Christmas flower? They tell the Christmas story.

STUDENT #3: Well, I never heard that. I don't think that's true.

TEACHER: Oh, it's true alright. People all over the world think about Christmas when they see this flower. Dr. Joel Robert Poinsett was born in 1759 and was a planter, botanist, statesman and our country's first minister to Mexico. He found the flower there and brought it home in 1829.



STUDENT #4: It is enjoyed throughout the world at Christmas time. It was the custom in Mexico for villagers to leave a gift for Baby Jesus in their church on Christmas Eve. In one small village, a little boy who had no gift to bring, prayed that God would show him a way to give a gift to Jesus. God, in His mercy, looked down on the boy and answered his prayer. God caused a flower to bloom where he knelt—a flower so brilliant and fair. The miraculous flower was formed like a star with leaves that were red and bright. The boy's precious gift has become known as the "Flower of the Holy Night."

STUDENT #5: That's nice but it's just a story. How does the flower tell the real Christmas story?

TEACHER: This flower became so popular that it is called the Christmas rose. Jesus is like the rose, beautiful, fragrant and a real gift. Roses grow in the most unlikely place. They pop out of a thorny plant. Jesus came to sinful, thorny people like you and me.

STUDENT #6: I see something. It is bright red. That reminds me that Jesus came to shed His blood on the Cross.

STUDENT #7: The flower petals look like the star of Bethlehem that stood over the stable. The soft petals remind me of a baby's soft skin.

STUDENT #8: Even the leaves of the poinsettia turn their bright red color as they die. At Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Jesus, who came to die and rise from the dead so that we can live.

STUDENT #9: This flower is so beautiful that it is not surprising people want to tell the story of Jesus' birth with it.

TEACHER: Let's add our flowers to the Christmas Tree. It does remind us of Jesus' "Tree-Mendous Love".

**STUDENTS PLACE THEIR POINSETTIAS ON THE TREE
AND RETURN TO THEIR SEATS.**



The Janitor and The Kid



Choose one young person to be "The Kid". A boy or girl age 10-12 would be the perfect choice. No memorization is required. Reading is perfectly acceptable.

The Kid enters the room and starts looking around the tree. Sometimes he/she takes an ornament and stuffs it in a backpack. Sometimes he/she just looks at the ornaments.

The Janitor enters from the back of the room pushing a large push broom complaining and muttering under his breath.



JANITOR: (Grumbling...) I can't believe I'm still here. It's my Christmas holiday too. Scrub and pick up. That's the story of my life. Doesn't anybody else know how to clean? You'd think they were born in a barn.

THE KID: Jesus was born in a barn and He turned out okay.

JANITOR: Who's there? Hey you, Kid, what are you doing in here?

THE KID: Oh nothing. I just needed to get inside someplace for awhile. What is this place anyway?

JANITOR: You've got to be joking! This is our church...God's church. Where have you been all your life?

THE KID: Around the corner. Sometimes I hear people singing in here but I don't understand the words. Why don't you ever smile? I see you get out of your car every morning and you always look grumpy?



JANITOR: (*Shocked...*) Me? I'm not grumpy! I'm a very happy person. Everybody says so. I never say a discouraging word to anyone and I love my job. I work early and late. I'm here even when everyone else goes home.

THE KID: I just figured that anybody who works for God everyday would have a smiley face. But then, I don't really know much so I guess it's not so much fun to work here after all.

JANITOR: (*Thinking to himself...*) But, it IS fun to work here. I love this place, these people. I never once thought that anyone took me seriously when I complained. (*Looking upward...*) Lord, why didn't You let me know before that I was not a good testimony for You. I'm sorry. Help me look for the real meaning of being a Christian. Don't let me fail You. Amen.

THE KID: (*Grabbing an ornament and pocketing it*) What's this tree all about anyway? Something about Jesus, I guess.

JANITOR: How much do you know about the Christmas story?

THE KID: All I know is Santa Claus whips his reindeer into shape all year long for a trip around the world. He drops presents from his sky sled and hopes they fall down the chimney. Then he looks for a baby in a barn and kneels in front of him. Santa gives the baby three presents, gold chains, franks 'n beans and mercury...why a baby can use that stuff I'll never understand. Then people talk about Baby Jesus born in a barn and they give each other presents. It's not THEIR birthday! Why do they get presents?

JANITOR: Whew! That's some story. And it's a very good question. The birthday baby is Jesus and the rest of your story needs a little tweaking. This is our TREE-MENDOUS LOVE tree. Look at ornaments and you will see the story of Jesus coming to life right here. He was God's gift to earth. He's our Savior.

THE KID: What does He save? Baseball cards?

JANITOR: Let me walk you home. I can explain who Jesus saves. Then you can come back for Sunday School. Oh, you're gonna love this story. It starts with a girl named Mary and a young man named Joseph.

THE KID AND JANITOR LEAVE TOGETHER.



Grades Seven-Nine Magi From The East

ORNAMENT: GOLD CROWNS, GOLD STARS

Tie red ribbons to each ornament. Add glitter so they sparkle on the tree.

Divide parts between available participants. You may use as few as 2 students. Practice reading the parts. No memorization needed. Adjust to fit your needs.

TEACHER: It's time to add our two cents. Or maybe our gold offering. Did you remember to bring your Crown and Star ornaments for the Wise Men? Let's hear their story:

Matthew 2:1-2 "After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.'"

STUDENT #1: (*Bored...*) This story is getting old. Every year we have to get up here and talk about Wise Men from afar who traveled over hill and dale to get to Baby Jesus in a manger in Bethlehem. I'm tired of hearing it all the time.

STUDENT #2: Well, the tree's kind of nice. I think we should at least put our ornaments on the tree since we're already here....

STUDENT #3:and all these people are looking at us. Does my hair look okay?

STUDENT #4: I was absent last week. What are we putting on the tree? Do I have to say anything? I hate that part.

TEACHER: You have gold crowns and gold stars to remind us of the kings who came from a far country..it's called Iraq now. Even if you remember the story, it's a good idea that we let all the little kids know about it.



STUDENT #5: Yeah, we have to be good role models and all that stuff.

STUDENT #6: Maybe we should take this seriously. The kings came to worship THE King. Jesus never wore a gold crown. His crown was made of thorns. Yet Jesus became the most wonderful King of all the ages.

Matthew 2:9-10 "...the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed."

STUDENT #7: *Matthew 2:11 "On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh."*

Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh were three valuable gifts in those days. Joseph must have used them to get money for his little family's flight to Egypt. They had to run away from King Herod who wanted to kill Baby Jesus.

STUDENT #8: Those kings really were Wise Men. They saw a star in the sky and followed it to where Jesus was just born. They packed up their camels and servants and wealthy gifts and took off for Bethlehem. They were smart enough to avoid old King Herod.

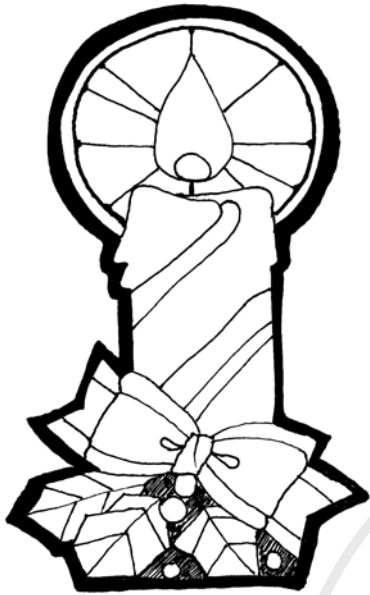
Matthew 2:12 "And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route."

STUDENT #9: Put your ornaments on the tree. People will know we have been here and everyone will know what the wise men knew. They knew the star meant something special. They followed it to the newborn King.

STUDENT #10: In many ways, Jesus' birth was quiet and ordinary. He came to live among us. God used one of His brightest creations to remind us of this miracle baby. He used important people, kings, to make that day important.

**STUDENTS PLACE ORNAMENTS ON TREE.
IF USING CLOSE ENCOUNTERS MINISTRIES MUSIC,
SING "MAGI'S LULLABY, STAR OF HEAVEN" AT THIS POINT.
IT MAY BE SUNG BY ALL STUDENTS, SOLOIST, OR SMALL GROUP.
OPTION: AUDIENCE SINGS CAROL: "WE THREE KINGS"**





Grades Ten-Twelve Candle Light

ORNAMENT: CANDLES

Tie red ribbons to each candle ornament. Add glitter so they sparkle on the tree. Some students may carry real lit candles.

Divide parts between available participants. You may use as few as 2 students. Practice reading the parts. No memorization needed. Adjust to fit your needs.

STUDENT #1: Our TREE-MENDOUS LOVE tree is looking pretty good. It's time to add a special touch, LIGHTS.

STUDENT #2: There are beautiful twinkle lights already shining but candles are even better. You can never have too much light.

STUDENT #3: The shepherds heard the word "Behold" and they "looked" and saw amazing angels. When we look for God we must have light. Jesus is our Light.

STUDENT #4: *Jesus said, "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:14-16*

STUDENT #5: That's beautiful! Jesus was born to be our Light and we are commanded by Jesus to carry His light into the world.

John 8:12 Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness."



STUDENT #6: When the shepherds returned to work after seeing Baby Jesus, they were glowing with praise for all that God did. They couldn't help themselves. God's Light kept bubbling up and they told everyone they met that God's Son was on earth!

Luke 2:20 "The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told."

STUDENT #7: The good news that Jesus is our Savior brings light to the whole world. If we go into a dark room and somebody lit one candle, it wouldn't be dark anymore. The light from that candle would shine on everything and give comfort.

STUDENT #8: We have porch lights, bedroom lamps, kitchen lights, reading lights and mood lighting. And we have US! We are the lights of the world! We can share the message of the Savior's birth!

STUDENT #9: Well, it's time. We can't hide our lights under a basket anymore. Put your ornaments on the tree and go forth and SHINE!

STUDENTS PLACE ORNAMENTS ON TREE.

MUSIC: AUDIENCE SINGS "Joy To The World"

OPTION: SPECIAL MUSIC AS DESIRED

OR GROUP SINGS THE SONG "SHINE" (NOT INCLUDED)



Adults

ORNAMENT: CROSS AND NAILS

Tie red ribbons to each ornament. Make small crosses and purchase large nails.

Divide parts between available participants. You may use as few as 2 students. Practice reading the parts. No memorization needed. Adjust to fit your needs.

STUDENT #1: I wish we could leave the story of Jesus at the manger in Bethlehem.

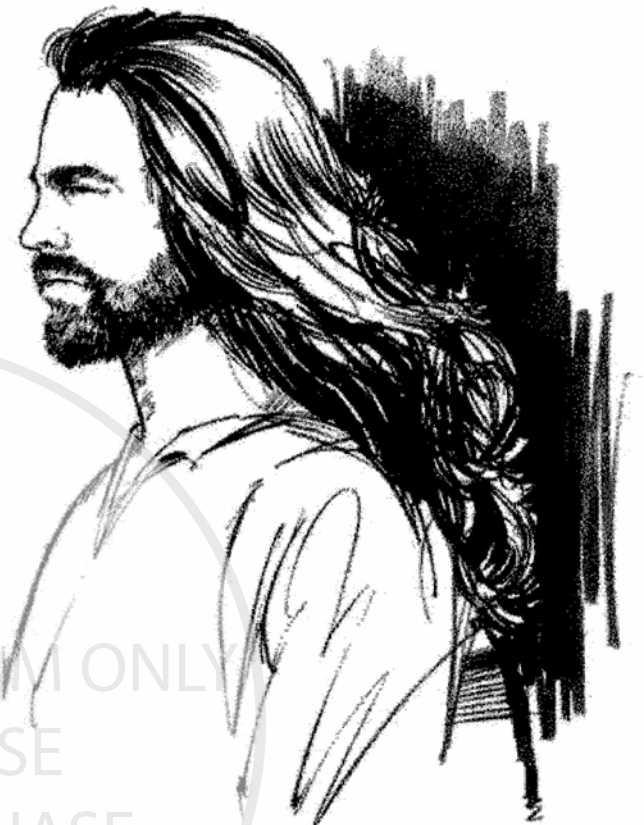
STUDENT #2: But there is one more part of His life we must know. Jesus went from the Manger to the Cross.

STUDENT #3: We are going to add special ornaments to our TREE-MENDOUS LOVE tree. We are adding the Cross of Calvary where Jesus died and we are adding nails to remind us that Jesus died to save us.

STUDENT #4: Jesus said, *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."* John 10:19

STUDENT #5: God sent His Son, Jesus, to rescue the people of earth from their sin. *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* Romans 3:23 and *"...the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Romans 6:23

STUDENT #6: So *sin* is what brings us to the Cross. God provided the only way to



Him. Each person must make the choice to trust Jesus...even you! *"God shows His love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8*

STUDENT #7: So, you see, the story of Jesus begins in Bethlehem and journeys to a Roman cross outside Jerusalem. That's where His life ended. That's where our story ends.

**STUDENTS PLACE CROSSES AND NAILS ON THE TREE
IN TOTAL SILENCE—COUNT TO 30**

STUDENT #8: Wait! The Cross was not the end of Jesus! Jesus didn't die on a Cross and stay dead. There's so much more! Jesus rose from the dead three days later. He promised He would be our Savior and He kept His promise.

STUDENT #9: TREE-MENDOUS LOVE lasted 33 years on earth and Jesus is forever seated on the right hand of God. Jesus became our living Savior and angels made another announcement. They said, *"Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said."* Matthew 28:5-6

STUDENT #10: And it didn't even end at an empty tomb! Jesus began appearing to many people and he left us marching orders. Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20

**STUDENTS LEAVE THE STAGE.
AUDIENCE SINGS HYMN: "I Serve A Living Savior" or "He Rose"
OR PRESENT SPECIAL MUSIC**



Adults



Choose two adult women to portray Old Testament Hannah and New Testament Mary. Their conversation tells the stories of Samuel and Jesus. No ornament, just a thoughtful conclusion.

One adult becomes the Narrator for the vignette.

The women dress in Holy Land costume, carrying water pots. They sit on a step or on benches placed on stage. No memorization necessary.

NARRATOR: There are two people you must meet as we celebrate Christmas today. We welcome two women who lived in different times. They never met in real life. One was dead long before the other was born. Let's imagine for a moment that Old Testament Hannah meets New Testament Mary at a well in a small village. I hear them coming. Let's eavesdrop on their unique conversation.

TWO COSTUMED WOMEN SILENTLY ENTER THE REAR OF THE ROOM. EACH CARRIES A WATER POT. WALKING SEPARATELY, THEY MEET ON STAGE AND SIT TOGETHER ON A BENCH.

HANNAH: Shalom, my dear. My, it is warm today, isn't it?

MARY: I feel the heat as well. I am Joseph's wife, Mary of Nazareth. Who are you?

HANNAH: I am Elkanah's wife, Hannah. We live in the hill country of Ephraim. Strange, I have never seen you at this well. Do you live near here?

MARY: I live in Nazareth with my husband Joseph, and Jesus, my little boy.



HANNAH: How nice. You have a little boy. I have a little boy too. His name is Samuel. I almost gave up after waiting so long to have a child. I got so old I thought God forgot to bless me with a baby.

MARY: I was not expecting to have a child either. Jesus' birth is a miracle of God. Most people do not believe me when I tell them what God did.

HANNAH: Don't worry, Mary. I know the power of God firsthand. He blessed me after years of waiting. My husband's other wife teased me unmercifully. I cried out to God and the High Priest, Eli, thought I was drunk, imagine that! I was begging God to give me a son. God answered the desperate prayer of a desperate woman. Samuel was the most beautiful baby. You should have seen his little fingers and toes. He slept through the night from his first day. But, I am bragging. I must be more humble about my boy.

MARY: I love to hear little details about babies. My baby boy was beautiful too. I was promised to Joseph when the Angel of the Lord appeared and said I was going to have God's Son. I didn't believe it at first.

HANNAH: Your Son is Messiah? I am honored to be in your presence! How we have waited for the Messiah to come. He is our hope and our salvation.

MARY: God had big plans for Joseph and me. We trusted God and you won't believe the adventure we have been having. It all started when we traveled to Bethlehem. There were angels and shepherds, wise men and a manger. We had to run away to Egypt.

HANNAH: I believe our God chose special jobs for each of us, Mary. Will our future be filled with peace or sorrow?

MARY: It doesn't matter. We are servants of the living God. Let it be as God chooses. I will enjoy my child and for now that seems to be enough.

(Stand and look heavenward....) Oh, how I praise the Lord. How I rejoice in God my Savior! For He took notice of his lowly servant girl and now generation after generation forever shall call me blest of God. For He, the mighty Holy One, has done great things to me. His mercy goes on from generation to generation, to all who reverence Him.



HANNAH: (*Stand and look heavenward...*) How I rejoice in the Lord. How he has blessed me! No one is as holy as the Lord! There is no other God, nor any Rock like our God.

MARY AND HANNAH: (*Hugging each other...*) Amen and Amen!

MARY: I must hurry along, Hannah. Will I meet you here at the well again?

HANNAH: I don't think so. I think our meeting was a gift from God for a special moment in time. We will meet again at His throne. Until then, go in peace, dear mother of the Son of God, Messiah, Christ, Savior of the World.

MARY: Go in peace, Hannah. Mother of Israel's great prophet, Samuel. You have done well, servant of God. We will hug in heaven. And, oh, the stories we will have to share! Farewell.

BOTH WOMEN LEAVE THE STAGE IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS.

NARRATOR: God used these loving mothers to raise up a nation of special people. Hannah's Song is found in I Samuel and Mary's Song or the Magnificat is found in Luke 1. Hannah and Mary never doubted God's good will toward them. In hard times these women had faith that God was always in control. Their whole lives sang, "Whatever God wants, I accept."



The Janitor and The Kid Return

ORNAMENT: One Large Sand Dollar



JANITOR: *(Enter pushing the broom and checking the job list...)* Well, it's almost Christmas Eve. I can turn off the lights and go home for a bit of hot chocolate and a few Christmas cookies. The program is over and folks should be at their own houses for a few days.

THE KID: *(Voice calling from back of room...)* Hey! Janitor! Where are you?

JANITOR: Who's there? I'm on the stage. Follow the lights and you'll find me.

THE KID: *(Run down center aisle with Sand Dollar Ornament...)* I'm so glad you're here. I thought I was too late.

JANITOR: I thought I took you home. How did you get in here?

THE KID: There's a broken window in the basement and I crawl through it. I only come in when it's cold outside or when I'm hungry. Did you know there's a lot of food in that old refrigerator in the kitchen?

JANITOR: Oh no, another job to add to the list. What are you doing now?

THE KID: I'm adding an ornament to the TREE-MENDOUS LOVE tree. It's a pretend sand dollar. I made it myself.

JANITOR: I can see that. Why on earth do you think that's a good Christmas tree ornament? Looks more like something for a beach party to me.

THE KID: I see the whole story of Jesus when I look at a sand dollar. It looks like four nail holes and a fifth one made by a spear.

One side has an Easter lily and in the center is the star of Bethlehem that appeared to the wise men and led them from afar.



The Christmas poinsettia is on the other side to remind us that Jesus was born.

If you break it open you release five white doves waiting to spread good will and peace.

JANITOR: You're right. It's the perfect final ornament! Put it on the tree, right here, front and center.

THE KID: I don't belong here. Maybe I shouldn't put my ornament on the tree. You do it. You own this place.

JANITOR: I don't own this place. I just clean it. Everyone belongs here, Kid. When you understand the story of Jesus and how it began in Bethlehem, you belong here. Put your sand dollar on the tree, right now!

**ORNAMENT IS PLACED FRONT AND CENTER ON THE TREE.
BOTH PEOPLE STAND BACK AND ADMIRE THE ENTIRE TREE.**

THE KID: What a beautiful Christmas tree! I get it! I understand Christmas. Jesus is my Savior too!

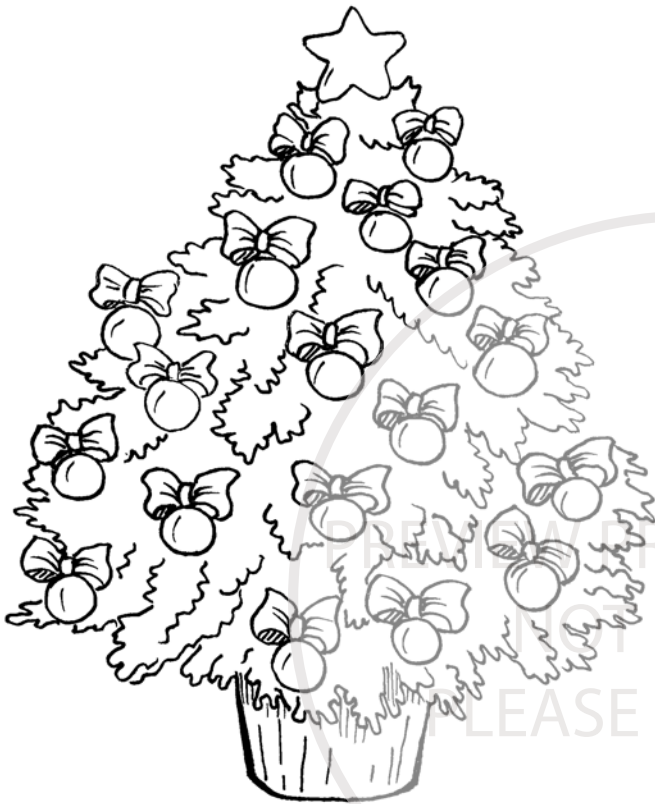
JANITOR: *(Arm around The Kid....)* We're going to be great friends, Kid. We both understand the good news of Jesus. God's Son came to earth as a baby in Bethlehem and died on a cross to save us from sin. And then, He didn't stay dead. But that's a story for another day!

(Walk together back the center aisle....) Hey, I could use a good helper around here. Tell me, what do you know about waxy build up? I've got a monster of a kitchen floor to scrub. Maybe it can wait until after Christmas. Let's check out the leftovers in that old frig.

WALK OUT OF ROOM TOGETHER.



Conclusion



Conclude TREE-MENDOUS LOVE...FROM THE MANGER TO THE CROSS with Christmas Carols and choruses of your choice.

Ask the audience to sing one verse of each chosen Carol as a medley.

Add a candle lighting ceremony with audience members participating.

Invite the entire group to attend the ALL SPRUCED UP FOR CHRISTMAS PARTY immediately following the program.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

*Merry Christmas!
Come to the Party!*



All Spruced Up For Christmas Party!

Assign party planning to one small group. This could be a few men and women hand picked for this purpose or an adult Sunday School class.

Offer delicious desserts, background Christmas music and casual fellowship.

Preparations Before Party Day

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

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

Music: Fill the room with Christmas music. This could be live music performed by local church musicians or favorite CD performances.

Centerpieces: Cover tables as desired. Christmas centerpieces should be featured on each table. Consider scattering a few lovely ornaments on each tables. Add one or two nativity set pieces in the mix to tell the Bethlehem story.



Preparations On Party Day

Decorate the serving table and guest tables. Plug in the coffee pot and put tea water on to boil while the program is in progress. Set out desserts, cream and sugar. Make your favorite Christmas Punch and place on a nearby serving table.

During The Party

Assign people who will cut and serve desserts, pour beverages and refill creamers and sugar bowls as needed. Greet guests 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 the program participants as they mingle.

After The Party

Don't forget! The ALL SPRUCED UP FOR CHRISTMAS PARTY is not over until clean up is complete. Ask everyone to help with dishes, removing tables and chairs and sweeping the area clean.

Go home knowing you have been
a good and faithful servant.

If your own Christmas tree is not yet trimmed,
you will have a lot to think about as you decorate!

