

# Christmas IS Cancelled!

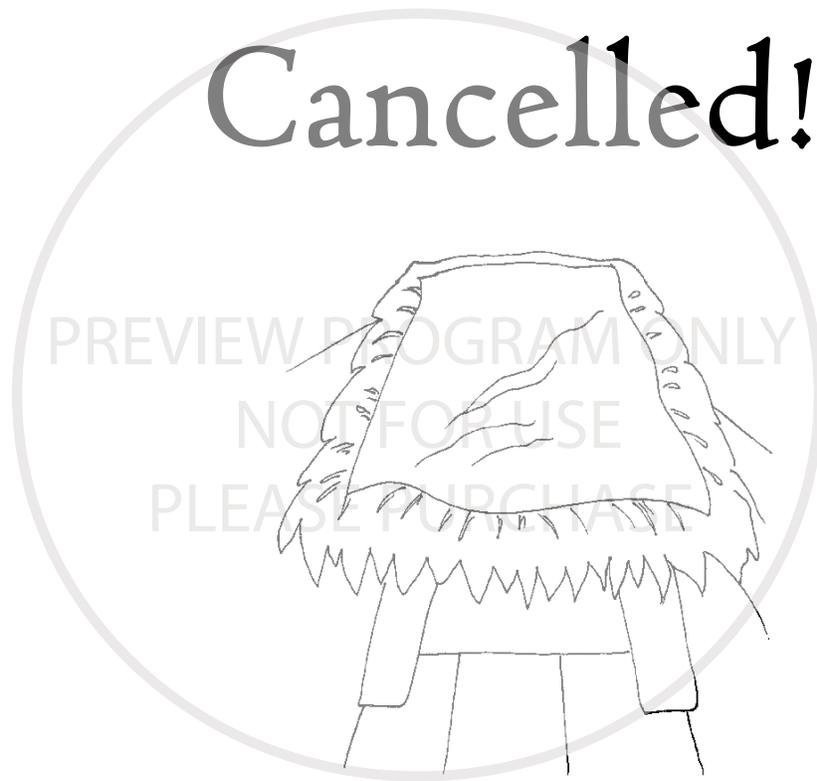
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It's The Gospel Truth!

Christmas  
IS

Cancelled!



It's

The

Gospel Truth!



What if Christmas IS Cancelled?  
What will we do?  
How will we feel?  
What if Christmas never happened the first time?

In C.S. Lewis' "The Chronicles of Narnia",  
It is always winter and never Christmas.

Today, some Moms and Dads threaten  
"If you don't behave, we won't have Christmas."  
Some schools forbid mention of the manger.  
Some stores fill their shelves with holiday gadgets  
Ignoring Jesus' birthday celebration.

But....Shocking!  
What if WE cancel Christmas!  
The kids, the costumes, the props.  
Lighting, sound, advertising.  
It's just too much. Everything has gone wrong.

So...this year  
**Christmas IS Cancelled!**  
*It's The Gospel Truth!*



*(Let's find out how it happened.)*



## Christmas IS Cancelled!

### *It's The Gospel Truth!*

#### *Long ago, On a not so Silent Night....*

*Let it be our little secret. We are not really cancelling Christmas this year. Whew! You are relieved, right? This Christmas the audience gets a "behind the scenes" peek at our chaotic Christmas program preparations.*

Rehearsal mayhem on stage becomes so crazy that our narrator finally announces "Christmas IS Cancelled". What happens next is a wonder to behold. No one can cancel Christmas. Christmas comes no matter how dark the world, how confused the people, how discouraged the church because in the middle of chaos God's Baby, our Gift, is born.

That is the promise that keeps Christmas coming. It's Jesus. Always Jesus!

The Bethlehem story unfolds in bits and pieces with perfect imperfection. Creative children, teens and grown ups tell the story of Jesus with the help of a friendly, all knowing narrator. Funny yet filled with the spirit of Christmas.

After the program comes the party! Celebrate at the **Bring Back Bethlehem Christmas Party!**

*Christmas IS Cancelled* is a delightful way to remind everyone that Christmas doesn't have to be perfect, just filled with love. Merry Christmas!

*These pages contain plans and script  
for a unique Christmas program  
designed to involve young and old.*



*Open it carefully!  
Let Christmas Begin!*



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## Our Christmas Director

*“Imperfect people are all God has ever had to work with.  
That must be terribly frustrating to Him, but He deals with it.*

*So should we.”*

*~ Jeffrey R. Holland*

*Pretend to be chaotic on stage but behind the scenes  
organize this all church Christmas event. No age limits!  
Assign small group leaders who guide preparations for  
individual segments.*

Make program copies. Assign segments to Sunday School  
classes, church committees, small groups of friends and willing  
individuals who agree to become part of *Christmas IS  
Cancelled.*



### Follow Directions

Leaders organize their small group complete with props and costumes. Be  
prepared to help. Individual leaders should handle their segment. The  
Bethlehem story is powerful and changes lives every time it is told

### Prepare Your Heart

For some church members, holiday programs 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 possible that you are thinking, *“Why me? I cannot do this!”* Put those  
feelings aside. Dive into this appealing presentation of Christmas as  
experienced by a frazzled, all knowing narrator, unruly kids and an audience  
who thinks Christmas is really cancelled. The audience and participants  
experience a very funny turn around before Christmas actually arrives.

### Delegate

Leaders become involved by preparing their small group. Trust the staff to  
carry out their tasks. Check in with them often.



## Be Positive

Make this Christmas event sparkle! It is worth extra effort in the midst of personal preparations, parties and travel.

*Statements like, "We can't do it", "We never did it this way" or "No one wants to do it", are inappropriate. If the Christmas Director's attitude is right, even the grouchiest saint responds cheerfully!*

## Pray

Take details before the Lord and then – Relax! Carry out the tasks at hand. God is in control.

## Plan

Print a working copy. *Do NOT write on this master copy!* Mark areas requiring special attention. Adapt as needed. Eliminate what cannot be used, divide parts or combine parts as needed. Give teachers and participants copies of their segment in a colorful folder.

## Prepare

Hopefully you have ordered the master copy with more than a month lead time. Assign responsibility for small group practice to each teacher/leader.

## No Memorization

Some groups enjoy memorization and others avoid it. Except for the youngest non readers, it is possible to read all parts. Memorization requires lead time and intense rehearsal. Think about decorating each person's short part with a Christmas styled backing that faces the audience. Their script segment can be placed toward them for easy reading.

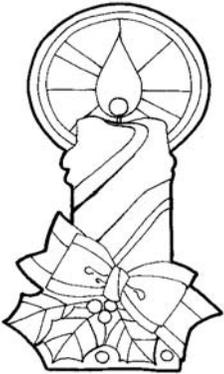
**This is an ALL CHURCH/SCHOOL Production!**

**Involve adults as readers, musicians and leaders.**

**Adapt the program using available participants.**

*Involve Everyone Available!*





## Adaptations

*Christmas IS Cancelled* lasts about forty five minutes depending upon music and personal choice additions or eliminations made to the original program. *Back To Bethlehem Christmas Party* is not included in this time frame. Adapt the program to fit your favorite Christmas traditions. It can be completed in less time.

### Small Church

Remove segments requiring more people than available. Combine speaking parts. Don't worry about correct ages for the segments. The segments are meant to be performed by any age as needed. Feature your favorite segments.

*OR, use the same few people to present more than one segment. Teens and adults are crucial to the small presentation. Some people participate several times.*

### Medium Church

Adaptation takes the form of personal preference. Choose segments you like best. The goal is to tell the Christmas story so don't leave out anything important.

### Large Church

Involve as many people as possible. Organize musicians, snack makers, servers, prop masters, sound/lighting staff and talented volunteers who make the program visually exciting.

## Back To Bethlehem Christmas Party

Ask an adult Sunday School class, parents or group of friends to complete party plans. They decorate, plan and prepare food and clean up. The *Back to Bethlehem Christmas Party* is a fun option. If time does not allow a social gathering, plan a great program and eliminate the party!



## Christmas Music Tips



*Coordinate music with music director, organist/pianist. Choose favorite Christmas Carols for audience participation. Include lyrics in a printed program or on a screen. Choose Christmas music your group knows and enjoys.*

### Carols

Select traditional and contemporary Christmas songs from your personal church music collection. The entire audience sings this music. Insert carols in the program wherever desired.

### New Music: Christmas IS Cancelled Melodies

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS MINISTRIES is pleased to present three original Christmas songs composed by Jonathan Miller, GLORY SOUND STUDIOS, Winston-Salem, NC. Use these songs as desired. (Solo, group, audience, background).

Piano and lyric sheets, double channel CD (sample voice+accompaniment performance tracks). Call 1.888.236.5433 or order directly from our web site: [www.cemlife.com](http://www.cemlife.com) Listen to samples in our online Music Catalog. This is an option for groups who desire new music. Instant Download OR Shipping available. Your choice!

### Special Music ~ Make It Personal!

Feature local talent. These musical options are NOT in the existing program. Choose music from your collection. Consider time limitations during planning stages. Talented people from church or community can make your program sparkle!

We recommend as delightful options: Happy Bells (included), "Breath of Heaven" (Mary's Song) by Amy Grant (not included)

VOCAL SOLO  
VOCAL GROUP  
CHILDREN/ADULT CHOIR

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE  
HANDBELL/CHIME CHOIR  
INSTRUMENTAL SOLO/GROUP



## Stage and Props

**Christmas IS Cancelled** is a fun stage presentation using a minimum of props. Small groups carry personal props. Set the stage with inexpensive, easy-to-find items and lighting. Keep it simple!



### Set Up

Christmas trees, Nativity, twinkle lights, poinsettias and candles in the sanctuary add to the festive atmosphere. Leave them.

### Staging

Your stage becomes a Bethlehem stable. Include traditional items: manger, bench, green plants, pillows, blankets, pottery, baskets and other items to make the stage look like a Nativity scene.

### Seating

Reserve small group seating. Assign assistants to sit with young children. Participants sit in the audience and come to the stage to present their short segment. Follow program instructions.

### Sound System

Place several microphone stands across the stage. Attach personal microphones to the main speakers. This detail makes the difference between a frustrating experience and a delightful program.

### Lighting

Lighting is important. Create a Holy Land low light style by placing lights on the floor, behind plants and props. Lower the lights in the room to create an old world atmosphere.

**Manger Light:** Instead of a real baby or a wrapped doll, place a light inside the manger shining upward. When participants look in the manger, the light will make their faces glow. Leave the light on for the entire program.



## Costumes



*Some participants become Bethlehem people and others wear modern clothing. Follow our suggestions for Holy Land costuming or create your own costumes.*

*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.*

### Costume Suggestions

**Pillow Cases:** For small children, cut a neck hole in the pillow case. Cut up the front to the neck hole. Cut arm holes in the sides. This makes a long, vest costume. Sometimes plain or striped flannel pillow cases are available and work great for little 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.

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

**Angels:** Dress angels in white cotton found in most fabric stores. Angels may wear cardboard wings, fairy wings (found in Dollar stores) or remain wingless. Place tinsel garland taped in a circle on each angel head. Tie tinsel around the waist for a sparkling angel belt. Bare feet or sandals work great. Angels may wear face/hair glitter for that "extra sparkle".

**Stars:** Dress little 'stars' using handmade posterboard, glittered star draped over their neck. Dress simply in black or white slacks, leggings and simple tops. The 'Stars' may wear star garlands in their hair and have a bit of glitter brushed here and there.

*Consider making smaller posterboard stars and attaching them to each wrist to make even more 'stars'.*



## After The Show

Ask young participants to remain in costume at the *Back To Bethlehem Christmas Party*. This is the time to congratulate the children for a job well done and reward them with hugs and small gifts as desired.

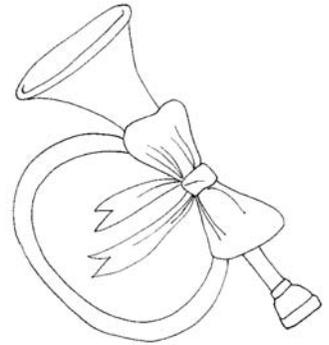
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## Publicity

*Publicize through all normal communication channels. Announce the event in the newsletter, the weekly worship bulletin and from the pulpit.*



## Bulletin and Newsletter

Inform the congregation/parents about this special Christmas event. Print an announcement in November and December newsletters. If planning the party, let people know there will be a Christmas celebration including food following the program.

## Local Newspaper

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

## Television and Radio

Advertise on local television cable advertising channel. Radio stations often have free spots available as community service.

## Social Networking ~ Web Site

Does your group have a web site? This is the perfect opportunity to advertise the Christmas event. Take pictures, include a short description. Include dates, times and party plans!

## Christmas Card Invitations

Send family invitations home with students. This is effective for families who are not involved. Use real Christmas cards with invitations tucked inside. Children could make Christmas cards as a project and attach the invitation to be placed in their take home papers or backpack.



More For Teachers ~

## Your Leadership Is Valued!



### Show Up With A Smile!

*Meet your small group. Dress in appropriate costume, line up and enter the program area as directed. Sit with your group in the designated area. Lead them on and off stage. Perform your speaking part with enthusiasm. Coach students quietly if they have problems.*

*Stage fright is not uncommon!*

*Sometimes kids get scared too!*

### Stay For The Party!

Collect props and materials before the party. Ask students to remain in costume. Mingle and enjoy the experience with your students and their families.

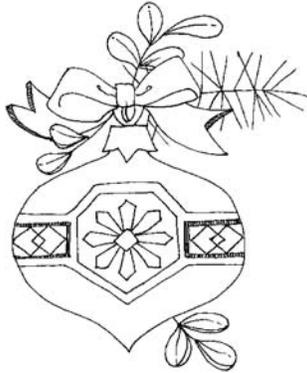
### Ask For Help!

The Director is available to help. Prepare your small group so they are ready to take to the stage. The program comes together with little formal large group rehearsal.

### Enjoy The Experience!

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to touch the lives and children and grown ups. Enjoy your small part of the bigger picture. The Bethlehem Story is classic and life changing. The spiritual experience is amazing!





## Memorization! That Is The Question!

### To Memorize ~

Some groups love the process of rehearsal and memorization. If that is true in your situation, take extra time to stage the program and memorize all parts.

*Consider longer lead time and more rehearsals.*

### Or Not To Memorize ~

Memorization is not necessary. This event is designed to be a full church, inter-generational experience. Base group organization on Sunday School groups. Ask children, friends, older adults and people who may not normally participate to join the fun. It makes the event much more enjoyable if they can relax without memorization.

*If there is limited practice time, the participants may hold their parts and read them. Practice in small group settings so that everyone is familiar with their part and can read with confidence.*

Carry printed materials on stage in creative ways. Depending on which segments are being performed, scripts can be backed with colorful paper, decorated with Christmas symbols.

*OR, simply make copies of the parts that each person can hold on regular paper. After a few minutes, the audience does not notice. It does not affect the quality of the program.*

*Whatever presentation method you choose,  
This is a memorable Christmas experience.  
Have Fun!*



## Main Characters

Have fun with folks who want to have fun.  
Their enthusiasm spreads to the audience!

### Narrator

*1 Actor: Older teen or adult, male or female*

The Narrator holds the program story together. Become the steady voice of reason, keeping everyone calm when mayhem begins. Use a clipboard to hold the script. *Dress in modern clothing as if attending a program rehearsal.*



### Teachers and Parents

A variety of leaders help students on stage. Teachers have speaking parts and some parents may be involved with younger children.

### Innkeeper

*1 Actor: Teen or adult male, Holy Land costume*

The innkeeper speaks at the end of Act 1. This person should also stand at one side on stage when the full nativity scene is in place at the beginning and ending of the program.

### Wise Men

*3 Actors: Teen or adult male or female, Holy Land costume*

The wise men speak at the end of Act 2. These actors should also stand at one side on stage when the full nativity scene is in place at the beginning and ending of the program.

### Mary

*1 Actor: Teen or adult female, Holy Land costume*

Mary speaks at the end of Act 3. This actor should also take her place at the manger when the full nativity scene is in place at the beginning and ending of the program.



## The Gang!

Choose segments according to the number of available people. From preschool to adults, include as many people as possible.

*Divide speaking parts between participants. If a segment suggests 10-15 speakers and you have 2 people, they speak back and forth.*

Eliminate segments as needed. Don't worry about ages. Mix it up. The segments are flexible. Adapt the program to fit your needs!

*People come from the audience to perform their parts and remain on stage as directed or return to their seats. No one waits behind stage. Everyone becomes the audience!*

## Musicians!

Choose special music as desired from local talent. From children to adults, make this a fun event that includes music! Think about children, teens and grown ups who enjoy singing or playing instruments. Insert their participation as desired throughout the program.

*Think about time limitations.*

*Plan enough activity  
to complete the event.*

Notes:



# Christmas IS Cancelled

*It's The Gospel Truth!*

## At A Glance



*Adapt and organize your program based on the number of available participants. Insert Christmas Carols and Special Music wherever it is appropriate. Consider the total time. Eliminate or combine segments as needed. This is a sample peek at the full event. **Change as needed.***

### Prelude

### Processional

**INTRODUCTION:** Chaos! How Did We Get Here?

**ACT 1:** There's A Baby In The Barn!

Preschool: Pajama Drama ~ Everybody Wants To Be Jesus  
Kindergarten: Stars Of The Show  
Narrator and Innkeeper: Getting Ready  
Music:

**ACT 2:** Mayhem In The Manger

Grades 1-2: Shepherds ~ Peace and Quiet  
Grades 3-4: Angels ~ Glorious Glory From Glory  
Grades 5-6: Small Beginnings

Narrator and Wise Men: The Map!  
Music:

**ACT 3:** Christmas IS Cancelled!

Teens/Adults: What If Christmas Never Came?  
Narrator and Mary: He Came!  
Music:

**CONCLUSION:** This Is How We Got Here

Candle Lighting Ceremony  
Music:

**BRING BACK BETHLEHEM CHRISTMAS PARTY**



# Christmas IS Cancelled

## *It's The Gospel Truth!*

### The Prelude

Church musicians (organ/piano/keyboard) play Christmas music as the audience gathers.

If using our original music, *Christmas IS Cancelled Melodies*, (CD, 3 songs, piano sheet music, lyrics) consider having those songs played during the prelude. The audience hears the new melodies and becomes familiar with the choruses.



### The Procession

Gather costumed participants in an outer room.  
Participants walk directly to the stage  
and take their places in the Nativity scene.  
The entire groups stands like manikins.

Manikins! Every person in the program crowds onto the stage at the same time. Stand or sit in traditional nativity spots. Hold chaotic, unruly positions facing the manger with arms in the air, in prayer, awesome faces, pulling at each other. Choose a position and do not move until end of introduction.



## Introduction: Chaos! How Did We Get Here?

*All participants become **manikins** on stage in various stages of crying, falling, costumes half on, pulling on each other. Chaos! The Narrator stands in the middle just behind manger. The only person speaking and moving is the Narrator.*



**Narrator:** *(With script on clip board ~ To Audience)* I have an important announcement. Thank you for coming. I regret to inform you that you might as well go home. File out quietly. Ushers will assist you at the exits. Christmas IS Cancelled. I'm pulling the plug on this chaos!!!

*(Exasperated-Looking at on stage chaos)* Look at this mess. I warned them. I said, "If you keep acting 'crazy', Christmas IS Cancelled"! Don't blame me. I tried to pull it off. I really did. We made costumes, found props, set up the Bethlehem scene. All the traditional 'stuff' we know you want to see at Christmas. We sang songs. Nobody learned their parts!

*(Walk around chaotic scene)* Just look at this mess! No one did anything to cooperate. Children crying. People yelling. Ripped costumes. I worked so hard. I gave up my weekends. Made dozens of phone calls. Put up with bad attitudes.

I just wanted a sweet program reminding us about the Bethlehem story. I needed shepherds, angels, wise men, Mary, Joseph, Innkeeper and a baby...one simple baby. Is that too much to ask? Well, it's over. I have had enough! Christmas IS Cancelled. Mark my words. I can do that, you know! Christmas IS Cancelled. I have no choice.

Christmas should be happy, peaceful, loving. Not this Christmas. Not this gang. All I need to know is: How Did We Get Here?

*All program participants back quietly off the stage and sit in a reserved section of the audience.*

**Narrator:** *(Alone on Stage, look at emptiness)* This is where it all began. I was filled with Christmas joy. I was certain everyone could handle themselves. Christmas seemed so simple then. Maybe that's where I went wrong.

Exit - Shaking Head Sadly



# ACT 1: There's A Baby In The Barn!

## Preschool

### Everybody Wants To Be Jesus

*Actors: Teacher, Parents, Children*

*Costumes: Children carry jingle bells.*

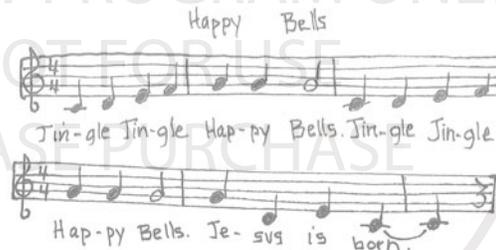
*(Make jingle bell bracelets or let them carry a variety of bells.)*

**Teacher:** This manger is where Baby Jesus will be when we have our Christmas program! One of you will pretend to be Baby Jesus. No crying!

**Children circle the empty manger.**

No one expected God's Baby to come to Bethlehem. Or be born in a barn! It was such a tiny village. Angels told God's story. Shepherds ran to the village to see the baby boy. His name was Jesus. And that is why we celebrate Christmas, Jesus' birthday!

*Children jingle their bells and sing:*



Parent #1: It is obvious. My little one should be Jesus this year. Look how he rings those little bells.

Parent #2: It IS obvious! MY little one should be Jesus this year. You did it last year.

Teacher: Now, now. The youngest child is usually chosen to be Jesus. Let's not fight! Be patient.

Parent #3: Well, if *my* baby doesn't get to be Jesus, count our family out of the program. We deserve the honor this year.



Teacher: Don't feel that way. Everybody wants to be Jesus. We would miss you and we need your help.

Parent #1: If that family isn't coming, we aren't going to do it either!

Parent #2: If they aren't coming, we aren't going to be in the program either.

Teacher: Oh my, what will we do? We can't have three Baby Jesus'. We have to agree on ONE Baby Jesus.

Parent #3: It's simple, choose MY little one.

Parents #1 and #2: No-o!

Teacher: Listen to your sweet children sing. How can we miss those voices ringing and singing in our Christmas program?

*Jingle, Jingle Happy Bells.*

*Jingle, Jingle Happy Bells.*

*Jesus, is born.*

Parent #3: Without the perfect Baby Jesus, Christmas will have to be cancelled. Look how talented my baby is! No decision to be made here.

**Teacher:** It wasn't easy to be Jesus. He was cute and cuddly in the manger but he was whisked away to Egypt to hide from leaders who wanted to end His little life. He grew up with neighbors who did not understand God's Big Salvation Plan. Until the time Jesus went to the Cross and arose three days later, people questioned God's truth. Could you really handle all that considering that everybody wants to be Baby Jesus?

Parent #3: Maybe we should rethink our attitudes. Being Jesus is an awesome responsibility. We'll let the Narrator choose.

Parent #1: We would hate to be the cause of hearing "Christmas IS Cancelled" this year.

Parent #2: Or ANY year. We are just happy to tell Jesus' birthday story with our little ones.

## Exit



## Kindergarten Stars Of The Show

**Actors:** Teacher, children

**Costumes:** Children wear large stars.

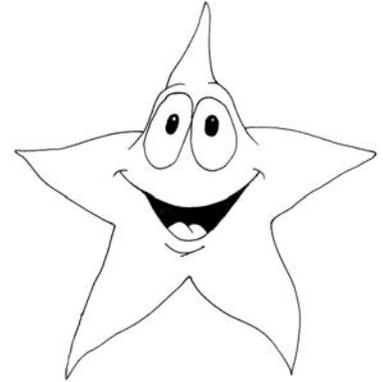
Carry small stars.

Some may wear stars in their hair.

Glitter to make the stars shimmer.

Clothing may be white shirts, black skirts/slacks.

**Divide activity between participants available.**



**Teacher:** (Guide children on stage) It's our job to be Christmas Stars. You could say we are the 'stars of the Christmas show'! Scatter around the stage. Glow. Smile! Stand tall! Wave your 'stars'.

*Children scatter across the stage  
and wave their arms with stars attached.*

**Teacher:** There must have been millions of stars in the sky the night Jesus was born. Each star had the perfect view of a tiny village in Bethlehem. Do you know the Bible says angels are called 'stars'? When it's your turn, tell us about Christmas stars!

*"While the morning stars sang together  
and all the angels shouted for joy...." Job 38:7  
Jesus said, "I am the bright and morning star!" Revelation 22:16*

#1: Star of wonder, Star of night!

#2: Star with royal beauty bright!

#3: Guide us to thy perfect light.

#4: When they saw the Star they rejoiced!

#5: We saw His star in the east and came to worship Him.

#6: The Christmas star still shines.

#7: Look up and you may see it.

#8: The angel's starry song is heard.

#9: By those who stop to listen.



#10: The greatest Christmas gift is given

#11: To all who will receive Him.

#12: Hang a shining Star upon the highest bough.

#13: And have yourself a Merry little Christmas now.

#14: Star light, star bright, the wise men followed His star that night.

#15: You can be a star, the very star of Bethlehem, today!

#16: Just shine your light to lead people to His Way.

**Sing!**

*Ask 'stars' to gather as close together as they can on stage.*

*Sing to the traditional tune "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star".*

Twinkle, twinkle Christmas star

Way up high is where you are.

Up above the world so high

Like an angel in the sky

Twinkle, twinkle Christmas star

Jesus came to love us all.



Exit



## Narrator and Innkeeper Getting Ready!

**Actors:** Narrator, 1 male (any age) Innkeeper

**Costumes:** Innkeeper wears common Holy Land clothing

**Innkeeper:** *(Put hand over eyes, looking into audience, calling in a loud voice)* Hey! Anybody out there? I told you I don't want to be here. My mother made me do it. Can you hear me? I didn't learn my part and I'm not going to. Fair warning! I hate this costume. I'm leaving. Find another Innkeeper.

**Narrator:** *(Run onto stage from back of room)* Wait! Don't go! You are my last hope. You have to be our Innkeeper. What is the stable in Bethlehem without the Innkeeper? You are in charge. The big boss!

Innkeeper: I get stage fright. Once you get more than five people in here, I will freeze in fear. You wouldn't want that, right?

Narrator: Look around. There are more than five people in here now and you are perfectly normal. Except for your attitude.

Innkeeper: *(Looking around, getting more fearful as the crowd size becomes obvious)* Silence.

Narrator: Innkeeper?

Innkeeper: *Silence.*

Narrator: Innkeeper? Oh come on, give me a break. Just read your part and we will work out the rest later.

Innkeeper: *(Rattling pages, clearing throat)* Silence.

Narrator: *(Hit on back to get him started.)*

Innkeeper: Hey! You don't have to get physical. Find someone else to be the Innkeeper.

Narrator: If you won't be our Innkeeper, Christmas IS Cancelled. You are the only person who can make Christmas happen in the stable. **Read!**



Innkeeper: (*Hostile attitude, reading*) I keep an inn in a tiny village. It's the only inn in town so I am popular. I cram dozens of people in the same room. They find a corner to sleep.

(*Be softer in tone*) I see it in your eyes. I couldn't help it. You think I have a bad attitude toward teenagers. These clueless kids showed up in the middle of the biggest crowd we ever had in Bethlehem. Taxes! Everyone had to sign up to pay more taxes. What an unhappy crowd.

I know what you are going to say. "How could you turn away the Messiah, the Baby Jesus? What's the matter with you?" I couldn't help it. I didn't have one spot left. They didn't have much money either. How could I know He was the Messiah? He was just a 'soon to be born' baby at the time. You say, "Isn't there something you could do? Couldn't you try harder?"

My inn was no place to deliver a baby. My customers would be upset in the night if a strange baby was being born. Not to mention no privacy. I'm not the bad guy here. If Jesus came to your house in disguise you would slam the door too. You don't want to let strangers in because you are busy.

If I could go back, I'd do things better. I would give them my room. I would put out fresh linen. I would hold the baby. I would take a picture of him. But I can't go back. And it's not because I want you to think I'm a good guy. I would do it because of who Jesus is. I know the life he lived, how he died and I know the reports that he rose from the dead.

I ignored God. I am so sorry. You are a lot like me. Think about how you treat Jesus. Someday you will have the same regrets I have. It's too late for me to change my part of the story. It's not too late for you.

Narrator: (*Quietly*) So....what do you think? Can you be our innkeeper or do we have to cancel Christmas?

Innkeeper: (*Quietly folding the paper script*). It's not too late for me. Don't cancel Christmas. The costume is looking better and better.

Exit

Audience Christmas Carol: "O Little Town of Bethlehem"



## ACT 2: Mayhem In The Manger Grades 1-2

### Shepherds: Peace and Quiet

**Actors:** *Teacher, Students*

**Costumes:** *Simple Holy Land Shepherds*

**Divide speaking parts between available participants.**



**Teacher:** Come on everyone. Gather together on stage. You are Bethlehem shepherds. I am excited. I know you can do it. We have one problem. You talk too much!

**Students:** *Talk loudly...chatter as a group. Wiggle and push each other. Ignore the teacher.*

**Teacher:** *(Quietly)* We do not have much time to practice so I must ask you to be quiet.

**Students:** *Talk loudly...chatter as a group. Ignore the teacher.*

**Teacher:** *(Quietly)* Please! I need your attention.

**Students:** Ignore the teacher.

**Teacher:** *(Shout!)* Peace and Quiet! I need Peace and Quiet. Now!

**Students:** *Immediately become silent. Look at teacher.*

**Student #1:** Wow, you don't have to yell. We can hear you.

**#2:** We like to talk.

**#3:** We are great looking shepherds. Great costumes.

**#4:** I bet shepherds talked to each other the night Jesus was born.

**Teacher:** Let's visit the manger and talk about shepherds, sheep and angels.



**Students:** *Sit and stand around the empty manger.*

#5: I wonder if this is what it was like for the real Bethlehem shepherds.

#6: One minute they were sitting by a fire watching sheep and the next minute they were sitting by a manger looking at a baby.

**Teacher:** The shepherds wanted peace and quiet. Their sheep were 'temple sheep', raised as sacrifices for God's Temple. Never forget who the Bethlehem shepherds were serving. God!

#7: They must have been surprised when angels showed up.

#8: They never expected to end up at a manger that night. They were excited. They talked a lot!

#9: Have you ever seen an angel?

#10: No! And I don't want to see one. It would scare **the socks off me!**

#11: I want to see that! Flying socks! The shepherds were scared too.

Teacher: They ran to Bethlehem and found the baby. They ran around the village telling everyone God's Son was born! No more peace and quiet for them! Only loud joy and laughter. Speaking of laughter, we have a song to make folks....think!

### Students Sing: While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks

*This is a silly parody of Christmas lyrics to a solemn old Christmas hymn.*

*If you think your audience will enjoy the humor and join in laughter, let the students sing them. Piano music is found in most hymnals or online.*

**Serious:** While shepherds watched their flocks by night

All seated on the ground.

The angel of the Lord came down

And glory shone around. And glory shone around.

**Silly:** While shepherds washed their socks by night

And hung them on the line.

The angel of the Lord came down

And said, 'Those socks are mine!' And said, 'Those socks are mine!'

Exit



## Grades 3-4

# Angels: Glorious Glory From Glory

*Actors: Students*

*Costumes: Angel costumes ~ White, tinsel in hair halos, sandals/bare feet, face/hair glitter, small ringing bells*  
**Divide Speaking parts between available participants.**



*Angels enter quietly from all areas ringing hand carried bells. (If there are not enough bells for every student angel, a few ringing bells are fine.)*

*Gather on stage near the manger.*

Angel #1: Hush! Quiet that tinkling sound. Can't you angels walk silently?

Angel #2: *(Ringing bell and walking)* I tried but every time I take a step a bell rings. *(Look around)* Sshh! Really. *(Ring bell)* Sshh.

Angel #3: If we can't be silent, Christmas could be cancelled. No one must see us!

Angel #4: Well, we messed up because those shepherds saw us in all our 'Glorious Glory From Glory'. Was I supposed to be invisible? I clicked the wrong button on my halo. *(Look up to Heaven)* I'm sorry!

Angel #5: Heavenly Father gave special permission for us to sing and speak. The shepherds saw us even though we scared them. The Good News is too good to keep silent. The Baby has been born!

Ring all the bells loudly.

Angel #6: Stop being so excited! We are going to wake the baby. *(Look in the manger.)* Look! It's a boy. Just like God promised. Jesus! Say it again, angel. I love hearing those words.

All angels ring bells quietly while angel speaks:



Angel #7: *Step forward toward audience, ring bells and speak:*

Do not be afraid.  
I bring you good news  
That will cause great joy  
For all the people.  
Today in the town of David,  
A Savior has been born to you;  
He is the Messiah, The Lord.  
~ Luke 2:10-11

Angel #8: We have done our job. Christmas can never be cancelled. As long as people are born, generation after generation, our words will ring true.

Angel #9: Through the ages, there will be those who say Christmas is not about the birth of God's Only Son. Some will say Christmas IS Cancelled for lack of interest.

Angel #10: Our 'Glorious Glory From Glory' message of Good News to all the people will remain true and firm:

For unto us a Child is born,  
To us a Son is given;  
And the government shall be upon His  
shoulder;  
And his Name shall be called

**Angel:** Wonderful Counselor!

**Angel:** Mighty God!

**Angel:** Everlasting Father!

**Angel:** Prince of Peace!

~ Isaiah 2:6

Angels stand in straight line across stage, ring bells.

Exit



## Grades 5-6 Small Beginnings

*Actors: Students become Bethlehem people.*

*Costumes: Holy Land*

**Divide speaking parts between available participants.**

*Students enter manger scene a few at a time. Pull on costumes as stepping onto stage. Two students sit on edge of stage with costumes in hand.*



Student #1: Christmas is cancelled. Why is everyone showing up for practice? Are we *still* supposed to be Bethlehem people?

Student #2: Christmas is cancelled? I had stuff to do today. Why doesn't anybody tell me anything? I can read my part. (Unfold paper script.)

#3: *(On stage. Looking into audience.)* Is Christmas cancelled?

#4: Put your costumes on. Even if Christmas IS Cancelled, we have something important to say. Lets say it to each other.

*Pull on costumes,  
gather around and look into lighted manger,  
read parts.*

#5: The baby is sleeping. The town is sleeping. Something wonderful happened in this stable tonight.

#6: Looks like the excitement is over. Let's keep in mind that Bethlehem is small but mighty. David's City. We are the people of King David.

#7: God promised His Son would come from Bethlehem, our little town. Could this be our Messiah?

#8: Can't be true. He's just a baby. He looks like every other baby in Bethlehem.



#9: What will our King of Kings Messiah look like? Who should we look for?

#10: He will be tall, dark and handsome. He will wear a jeweled crown and ride a white horse. Our king will carry gold and silver and food, lots of food. He will definitely be born in the palace in Jerusalem.

#11: He won't be born in a stable in Bethlehem, that's for sure. I like Bethlehem. It's my home town. Let's face it, we are not important.

#12: Whoever this baby is, he is cute. Look at those eyelashes and little toes. He sleeps as peacefully as the animals around him.

#13: Let's go home and let him rest. His family will be back soon. We don't want to disturb them.

*Leave the stage, taking off robes.*

*Some sit, some stand on edge of stage.*

#14: We showed up for practice. We practiced our parts. If Christmas IS Cancelled, at least we thought about what it was like to live on that day, in that place. Jesus means a lot to us. Christmas is when we remember everything that happened in Bethlehem.

Exit



## Narrator and Wise Men The Map!

*Actors:* Narrator, 3 wise men (any age, any gender)

*Costumes:* Holy Land with Crowns, carrying gifts

**Narrator:** I need Wise Men on stage right now. We only have a little time to pull this show together or Christmas IS Cancelled. Let's go!

*Enter:* Wise Men costumes are crooked and crowns are cockeyed on their heads.



Wise Man #1: It's probably a good thing to cancel the whole Christmas program.

Wise Man #2: I want to be one of the wise men. I will be disappointed if Christmas IS Cancelled. Let's work something out.

Wise Man #3: It's crazy time in the prop room! Nobody knows what they are doing. Little kids are crying. Big kids are talking on their phones. Nobody memorized their parts!

Narrator: *(Sigh)* Is that a good reason to cancel Christmas? My headache is a better reason. I should be in bed. I'll bring a note from my doctor. It will read: "To Whom It May Concern, The Christmas Narrator is unable to complete the program. Trust me, I'm the doctor. I know how ridiculous it is to get bunches of kids on stage at the same time. The Narrator is sorry. Good luck next year. Signed, The Doctor".

Wise Man #1: Won't work. I tried that. My teacher recognized my handwriting.

Wise Man #2: Won't work. We know where you live. We'll come to your house, stand on your porch and look sad.

Wise Man #3: As long as we're here let's practice. It won't hurt.

Wise Man #1: Who's got the map?



Wise Man #2: What map? We don't have a map.

Wise Man #3: I'm not taking a trip without a map. Bad things happen wandering around a desert without a map. Did you ever hear about that wise man, Hab-a-nim-i-nak?

Wise Men #1 and #2: *(Together)* No!

Wise Man #3: See? He didn't have a map either!

Wise Man #1: We have something better than a map. Look up. When you look for a king, a star is the best guide.

Wise Man #2: Now that you mention it, that star is really bright and it seems to be moving.

Wise Man #3: Let's get those camels moving. Where are the gifts?

Wise Man #1: What gifts? We don't have gifts!

Wise Man #2: I'm not meeting a king without taking gifts. It just isn't done. What do we have in the old saddle bags?

Wise Man #3: We have gold, frankincense and myrrh. Left over from our trip to Persia.

Wise Man #1: Is it wrong to "re-gift" when meeting a king?

Wise Man #2: Who cares? It's the thought that counts.

*Gather around the manger on stage.*

Wise Man #3: That's the king? Really? Looks like a baby to me. No crown. No robe.

Wise Man #1: *(Looking around)* No palace.



Wise Man #2: *(Kneeling)* He is a king. Kneel and pay homage. We will never meet a king of this importance again. Our gifts are not enough but we present them with great honor.

Wise Man #3: *(Kneeling)* He is a king. I am humbled to be in His presence.

Wise Man #1: *(Kneeling)* He is a king. May God bless every step of his life.

Narrator: *(Stand near the kneeling wise men)* What do you think? Should we cancel Christmas? Maybe it is important to remember a trip without a map, a star and gifts that made all the difference in the world to a newborn king.

Exit

Audience Sings Carol:

“We Three Kings”

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## ACT 3: Christmas IS Cancelled Teens/Adults

### What If Christmas Never Came?

*Actors: Mix Teens, Adults of all ages*

*Costumes: No Costumes Necessary*

*Divide Speaking parts between available participants.*

Assign each teen/adult speaker a specific place to stand.  
Some stand on stage, some in the aisles and balcony,  
Some speakers stand to speak from the audience.

*OPTION: Musicians play Christmas music quietly  
as background for the speakers.*

Each speaker seriously, quietly presents random thoughts of how the world  
would be different if somehow 'Christmas IS Cancelled'.

#1: I heard a rumor that Christmas IS Cancelled. How can it be?

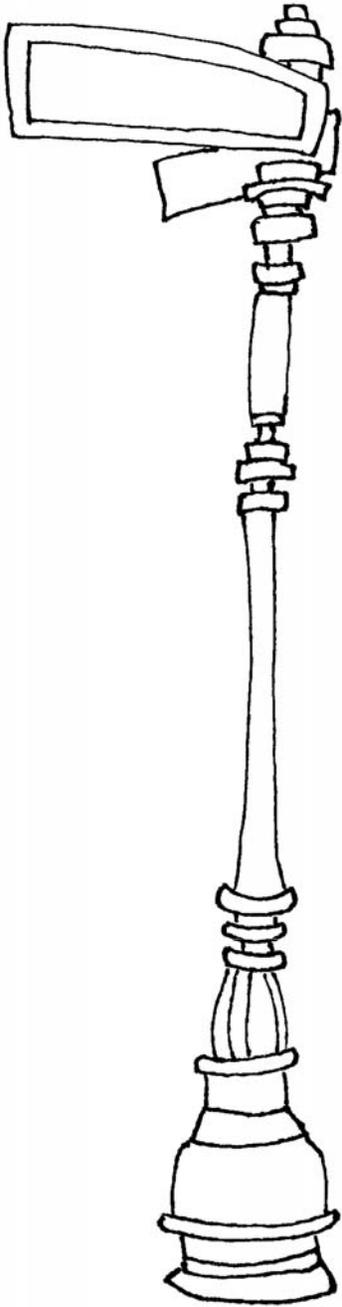
#2: It is hard to imagine a world without Christmas. That will never happen.

#3: "Loud voices" cry out to get rid of Christmas all together. Replace it with parties, winter festivals, gift giving...anything but the birthday of Jesus. The words of traditional Christmas carols annoy them. Some people even believe wishing each other "Merry Christmas" should be banned.

#4: **What would the world without Christmas be like?** The famous story C.S. Lewis wrote about the fictional land of Narnia paints a picture of a sad place. Narnia and all the creatures in it are under the power of evil. Sadly, for the creatures in Narnia, it is always winter but never Christmas.

#5: **I don't believe it.** Most of our country celebrates Christmas. People smile and say the right words and do nice things.

#6: For the sake of peace and correctness, many Christians remain silent -you know-go with the flow.



#7: **Christmas is NOT just a time of year**, a giving spirit, parades, parties or trees. Christmas is a Person. Jesus Christ. Take Christ out of Christmas and there is NO Christmas.

#8: **I would miss angels.** When the angels sang "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men*" they praised God for the gift of His Son. What if there were no Christ to believe in? No Jesus to live for or even die for? No angels to shout good news to all people about a baby born in Bethlehem....in a scrubby little manger. ...a baby who would change the world.

#9: **What if Christmas never came?** No Christmas Songs or Carols. No Silent Night, Joy to the World, O Holy Night, Away in the Manger. No Hark the Herald Angels Sing – never inspired, never written, never sung. The choirs are silenced, the Carolers hushed, they are no more. They never were.

#10: **No Christmas Trees or Lights.** The symbol of the evergreen-eternal life in Jesus, lights-Jesus is the light of the world, holly berries reminding us of Jesus' blood at the cross. Even the candy cane-the shepherd's crook, Jesus our Good Shepherd...gone, all gone....never existed.

#11: **No St. Nicholas.** The fourth century bishop of Myrna was a Christian and giving soul. History says he was so committed to Jesus that he was persecuted and martyred for Christ. He believed in Jesus!

#12: **No Gift of Salvation.** Salvation is the biggest Christmas gift. It is the gift of Jesus. James 1:17 "*every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Lights....*" But wait, if there is no Christmas, then there is no Jesus, if there is no Jesus, then there is no God the Father, if they are missing then there is no God. Perhaps that is what those who shout "No more Christmas! Cancel Christmas!" have wanted all along. No God.

#13: **No Immanuel.** Isaiah told us 700 years before Jesus was born that 'God with us' was on His way. He mentioned to look for One who would touch the sick, comfort the broken hearted, calm the sea and defeat death.



#14: **No Forgiveness of Sin.** "And she will bear a Son and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins." Matthew 1:21  
If Christmas never came, He never saved us. That wonderful baby boy was never born. Mary never sang her song of rejoicing. Jesus never became that man and never died on the cross for our sins.

*Let Silence fill the room for a few seconds.*

#15: *(Joyfully shout)* **But Christmas did come!!!** *(Encourage audience to applaud)* Jesus was born! He came to live and die and rise from the grave to give us forgiveness, life and hope of Heaven! Christmas is here. Christmas can NEVER be cancelled!

#16: **Why did God do this?** He loves us! The good news is that Jesus came into this world and lived the perfect life you could never live on your own. He died on the cross and rose from the grave to save one person, YOU!

#17: **Trust Jesus** As your personal Lord and Savior. The biggest question you will ever answer in your life: Is there 'room' in your heart for Him? At Christmas? On New Year's Eve, during hot summer months and cold winter days? When things are going great and when things are terrible? Move over. Make room! Jesus has come and Christmas can NEVER be cancelled!

Exit



## Narrator and Mary He Came!

**Actors:** Narrator and Teen or Adult Mary

**Costume:** Mary wears Holy Land clothing

Sits Center stage at Manger

Narrator enters the stage and stands nearby

**MUSIC OPTION:** Not included with the program. Ask one person, Mary or another female, to sing Amy Grant's "Breath of Heaven" while Mary sits at the manger. "Breath Of Heaven (Mary's Song)". Purchase complete sheet music for several instrumental options and complete lyrics at [www.musicnotes.com](http://www.musicnotes.com)



I have traveled many moonless nights  
Cold and weary with a babe inside  
And I wonder what I've done  
Holy Father you have come  
And chosen me now  
To carry your son

I am waiting in a silent prayer  
I am frightened by the load I bear  
In a world as cold as stone  
Must I walk this path alone  
Be with me now  
Be with me now

[Chorus:]

Breath of heaven Hold me together  
Be forever near me  
Breath of heaven  
Breath of heaven Lighten my darkness  
Pour over me your holiness  
For you are holy  
Breath of heaven

Do you wonder as you watch my face  
If a wiser one should have had my place  
But I offer all I am  
For the mercy of your plan  
Help me be strong



Narrator: Why are you sitting here alone?

Mary: *(Hushed, with wonder)* He came.

Narrator: *(Place hand on Mary's shoulder)* Yes, He came. You are doing a good job. In the midst of all the chaos. He came. Nothing could stop him. You do know Jesus will be with us forever.

Mary: How do you know His Name? Jesus.

Narrator: Jesus is the name that everyone knows. We know *"She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."* His name is the name that *"everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"*.

Mary: He has other names. *"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."* Isaiah 9:6 My son, my baby, my boy. Jesus.

Narrator: *(Smiling)* It has been quite the adventure so far, Mary. There are more things to hide in your heart for another day but Heavenly Father is preparing you for many experiences that seem impossible tonight.

Mary: *From Luke 1:46-47*  
*"I'm bursting with God-news;*  
*I'm dancing the song of my Savior God.*  
*God took one good look at me, and look what happened-*  
*I'm the most fortunate woman on earth!*  
*What God has done for me will never be forgotten...."*

Narrator: *"Never be forgotten...."* We cannot cancel Christmas. No one can cancel Christmas. It doesn't matter how dark the night, how rough the way, how tired the body, how stressed the soul. Christmas will happen. We will remember the day Jesus came and angels sang. Shepherds watched and Wise Men followed a star.

Exit



## Conclusion: This Is How We Got Here

*Repeat the chaotic manikin scene from the INTRODUCTION.  
As much as possible, every participant stands in the same spot  
and recreates the same scene.*

Participants walk directly to the stage  
and take their manikin places in the Nativity scene.

*All participants become **manikins** on stage in various stages of crying,  
falling, costumes half on, pulling on each other. Chaos!  
The Narrator stands in the middle just behind manger.  
The only person speaking and moving is the Narrator.*

Manikins! Every participant crowds on stage at the same time.  
Stand or sit in traditional nativity spots. Some hold chaotic,  
unruly positions facing the manger with arms in the air, in prayer,  
awesome faces, pulling at each other. **Do not move!**

**Narrator:** How did we get here? When I told you to go home because  
Christmas IS Cancelled, I had no idea that I couldn't cancel Christmas.  
Nobody can cancel Christmas. That's the Gospel Truth!

I have no idea how we got here. That's what a lot of people said the first  
Christmas. "How did He get here?" One great Christmas reminder is that if  
we mess it up this year, we can come back next year to try again because  
Jesus is worth celebrating year after year. So in the midst of chaos that looks  
a lot like this, we pulled off Christmas one more time. We told the Bethlehem  
story, Jesus is in the manger, we sang the songs, we smiled, we shed a tear  
but most of all, we kept Christmas. Do not let anyone tell you to stop  
celebrating Jesus. Keep Him in your heart and even in the messy parts of life.  
Keep Jesus in your home.

**All participants come to life and say together: Merry Christmas!**

**Exit**

Audience Conclusion: Christmas Carols

Optional: Candle Lighting Ceremony

Closing Prayer

**IT IS TIME FOR A FANTASTIC BRING BACK BETHLEHEM CHRISTMAS PARTY**



## Bring Back Bethlehem Christmas Party!



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

Offer delicious food, background Christmas music and casual fellowship.

### Preparations Before Party Day

**Menu:** Ask people to bring their favorite Christmas dessert to share. Provide a variety of beverages.

*Christmas Cookies galore are also a fun Christmas option!*

*If this is a Sunday morning event, consider serving a Continental Breakfast complete with doughnuts, orange juice, coffee and tea.*

**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. Ask a teen to become the Born To Shine Party DJ! Set up the music on a stage or in a prominent corner!

**Centerpieces:** Cover tables as desired. Feature Nativity groupings on each table. Borrow sets from friends and gather shepherds, wise men, etc with candle and flowers. Coordinate table coverings by color and style.



## Preparations On Party Day

Decorate the serving table and guests tables. Plug in the coffee pot and put tea water on the stove 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 helpers to 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 with the guests.

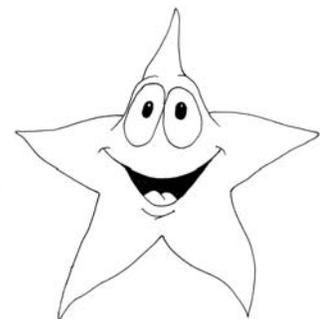
## After The Party

The 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!

Keep Christmas With Your Families  
Good and Faithful Servants!

Merry Christmas!  
*It's The Gospel Truth!*



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