

Christmas Presence



Bring Your Gifts To Him!

Christmas Presence



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“My Presence will go with you
and I will give you rest.”

Exodus 33:14



Christmas Presence



The beauty of
Christmas
is not in the
Presents but in
His Presence.

Celebrate Jesus this Christmas by giving your most precious possessions. They may not be what you think. The toys and widgets and slippers are not the gifts Jesus desires. He wants something more...so much more!

CHRISTMAS
IS THE SPIRIT
OF GIVING
without
A THOUGHT
of getting.

These pages contain plans and script
for an All-Church Christmas program
designed to put stars
in the eyes of young and old.
Open ~ It~Carefully!





Fill Christmas With the Presence of Jesus!

Remember Jesus' birthday with a delightful tower of Christmas presents built center stage as small groups of friends and classes bring their personal gifts as simple offerings.

Easy to do yet meaningful, Christmas Presence reminds everyone, young and old, what Christmas is really about...and it isn't the glittery presents under the Christmas tree.

Christmas Presence is an inter generational holiday program organized during the weeks before Christmas. Enjoy the journey. Become a Christmas giver.

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Gather the family!
Bring Christmas to life!
Fill the air with joy!

*Sound like fun?
Let's get started!*

Turn The Page....



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Very Important 'Techy' Information
IF PURCHASING **Christmas Presence Christmas Program**
AS AN INSTANT DOWNLOAD,
PLEASE NOTE ~

**DOWNLOAD ONE PRINTED MASTER COPY OF THE PROGRAM.
PERMISSION! Make as many individual segment copies
as needed for your group!**

THE FILE DOES **NOT** SAVE TO YOUR HARD DRIVE.
DO NOT WRITE ON
THE ORIGINAL MASTER COPY!!!!
MAKE ALL PRINTED COPIES
FROM THE DOWNLOADED MASTER COPY

This is a **ONE TIME ONLY**
Instant Download.

Some churches enjoy memorization and others avoid it. Except for young non readers, read all program segments. If your church is fond of memorization lead time must be longer and more intense rehearsal is necessary.



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Our Christmas Presence Director

The Bethlehem Story is powerful!
It changes lives every time it is told.

This is an "easy to do" Christmas celebration. Assign small group leaders who agree to take charge of individual segments.

No Age Limits!

Make program copies.

Assign program segments to Sunday School classes, church committees, small groups of friends and willing individuals who present:

Christmas Presence!

Follow Directions

Small group leaders organize one small group complete with props and costumes. Individual leaders prepare people using their script segment. Help as needed.

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

Are you thinking, "I cannot do this! Why me?" Put those feelings aside. Build a tower of presents while hearing about the presence of Jesus for the first time. The audience and participants "live" the adventure of a lifetime.

Delegate!

Trust the staff to carry out their tasks. Check in with them to give support.



Be Positive!

It is worth extra effort in the midst of personal preparations, parties and travel to make Christmas events sparkle.

Statements like, "*We can't do it*", "*We never did it this way*" or "*No one wants to do it*" don't work! If the 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 speaking parts or combine speaking parts as needed. Give teachers and participants segment copies in a colorful folder.

Prepare!

Hopefully you have ordered *Christmas Presence* with more than a month lead time. Assign responsibilities, prepare props, design staging, teach music. Have fun!

No Memorization!

Some groups enjoy memorization and others avoid it. Memorization requires lead time and intensive rehearsal. Except for the youngest non readers, create a Reader's Theater. Decorate printed segments with a colorful backing. Their script segment is placed on one side for easy reading.

This is an ALL CHURCH/SCHOOL Production!

Involve adults as readers, musicians and leaders.

**Adapt the program
using available number of participants.**





Adaptations

Christmas Presence lasts about forty five minutes depending upon music and additions or eliminations made to the original program. The Wrap It Up Party is not included in this time frame. Adapt the event to fit your favorite Christmas traditions and time limitations.

Small Church

Remove segments requiring more people than available. Combine speaking parts. Don't worry about correct ages. Segments may 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 church presentation.

Some people participate several times.

Medium Church

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

Large Church

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

Wrap It Up Christmas Party

Ask a Sunday School class, parents or group of friends to complete party plans. Decorate, plan and prepare food and clean. The Wrap It Up Christmas Party is a fun option. No time for a social gathering? Plan a great program and eliminate the party!



Christmas Music Tips



Choose traditional Christmas Carols
for audience participation.

Include lyrics in a printed program or on a screen.

*Sing Christmas music your group knows and enjoys.
Coordinate music
with music director, organist/pianist.*

Christmas Carols

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

Special Music ~ Make It Personal!

Talented people from church and community make this event sparkle. These options are NOT listed in the existing program. Consider time limitations during planning stages.

VOCAL SOLO

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

VOCAL GROUP

HANDBELL/CHIME CHOIR

CHILD/ADULT

INSTRUMENTAL SOLOS



Rehearsal...No Problem!



No Rehearsal!

Really? Christmas Presence is easy to stage and easy to present. Divide segments between small groups of classes and friends. Communicate basic information to each small group leader. No formal rehearsal required. **It has been done!**

One Rehearsal!

Arrange at least one dress rehearsal to maintain order...and sanity! The day before the event works well. Folks remember instructions close to performance. Costumes, props, lighting, last minute changes should be in place on stage. Practice speaking into microphones. Move groups to proper places. Encourage everyone with simple instructions, music practice and prayer. **Highly Recommended!**

Several Rehearsals!

Do you enjoy a full out, memorized, choreographed Christmas event? If this is you, schedule several rehearsals. Adapt the program to fit your needs. This extra preparation may include more music presentations. Rehearse choirs, handbells, vocals and instruments with the chosen music as desired.

Memorization requires intensive attention.

Notes:



Stage And Props

Christmas Presence is a unique stage presentation using a minimum of props. Small groups carry personal props. The stage is set simply 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 holiday atmosphere. Leave them in place.

Staging

Tower of Presents: Center stage becomes a growing tower of brightly wrapped, large (empty) box presents. The presents are the stars of the show!

Pillar Candle: One large, lit pillar candle is carried to the front and placed on stage by a child. At the end, the same child returns to carry the light out of the room.

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.

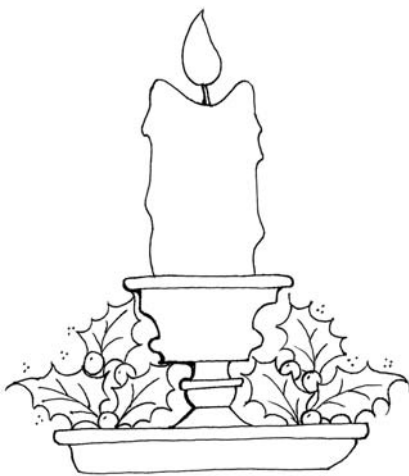
Sound

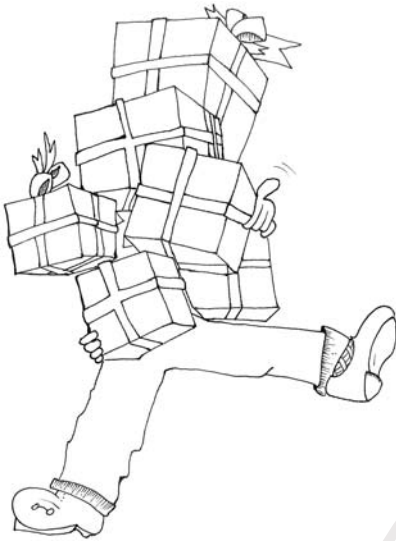
Place microphone stands across the stage. Attach personal microphones to the main speakers. This detail makes the difference between a frustrating listening experience and a delightful program.

Lights

Light the growing tower of presents with twinkle lights. Add glow sticks or spotlights to make the stage come to life dramatically. Dim bright room lights. Leave holiday decorations lit.

Existing Christmas lights remain lit while three 'voices' speak from the back of the room darkness at the beginning and end.





Creating the Tower of Presents

Feature center stage where a tower of brightly wrapped gifts arises.

Tower Team

Assign one small committee to prepare large empty containers wrapped as Christmas presents. The visual effect will be better if one or more people on the team wrap and stack in the days before the program.

Tower Boxes

Gather empty **boxes** of various sizes. One container can be a large **gift bag** sitting on top with bright tissue paper and ribbons spilling out as desired. The largest box becomes the base. Build up group by group until the tower is complete at the end of the program.

Add Christmas ribbon to each gift. Vary the colors and widths.

The boxes must be seen from the last audience row so the bigger the better. Wrap in the brightest varieties of holiday wrapping available. Choose one or two of the boxes to wrap in crumpled aluminum foil to give extra sparkle in the stage lights. Consider spraying the boxes with glitter so they are visually fun.

Tags

Make large gift tags that attach to each wrapped present in the tower. The tags can be hand printed or printed from a computer. The letter must be LARGE!

Table

Depending upon the distance from the audience and the sizes of the boxes, consider placing a card table covered with a plain, to the floor, table covering in Christmas colors or white. That raises the tower height for visibility. Cascade white twinkle lights down the front of the table and puddle them on the floor.



Publicity!

Publicize Christmas Presence through normal communication channels. Announce it in the church 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 **Wrap It Up Christmas Party**, invite people to a Christmas celebration including food following the program.

Plan ahead!

Local Newspaper

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

Prepare to be interviewed!

Television and Radio

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

Check it out!

Social Networking ~ Web Site

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

Use new technology!

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.

Impressive!



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 in the designated area with your group. Lead them on and off stage. Perform your speaking part with enthusiasm. **Coach students quietly.**

Stage fright is not uncommon!

Sometimes the kids get scared too!



After The Program

Stay for the Wrap It Up Christmas Party. Collect props before the party. Students may remain in costume. Mingle with guests. **Enjoy the party.**

If You Need Help

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

The Director is available.

Enjoy The Experience

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to touch the lives of 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!**





Just A Word About Memorization!

To Memorize ~

Some groups love the process of rehearsal and memorization. If that is true in your situation, plan 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. Consider a Reader's Theater. It will not affect the final presentation. Ask children, friends, older adults and people who may not normally participate to join the fun. The event becomes much more inclusive! **Decision time!**

If there is limited practice time, allowing the participants to read their parts is helpful. Practice in small group settings so that everyone can speak with confidence.

Carry printed speaking parts in creative ways. Scripts can be backed with colorful paper. Make copies of the parts that each person can hold. After a few minutes, the audience does not notice. It does not affect the quality of the program.

Option: Darkened room? Use small flashlights to read.

*Whatever presentation method you choose,
This is a great inter-generational
Christmas experience.
Have fun!*



Christmas Presence



Bring Your Gifts To Him!

“My Presence will go with you
and I will give you rest.”

Exodus 33:14



Main Characters

*Have fun with folks who want to have fun.
Their enthusiasm will spread to the entire audience!*

Family: Man, Woman, Child

The three voices of a small family speaking from the dark, ignites the light for the entire program. Not seen, only heard, from an invisible place, these characters introduce **Christmas Presence** and conclude it.

Speak clearly, slowly, with emotion.

Silent Child With Pillar Candle

One silent older child processes slowly in the darkened room. The child may wear normal clothing or be dressed in a choir robe or plain white angel robe.

The child carries a lit pillar candle. Reaching the stage, he/she places the candle on the piano/organ or on a special stand that sits high and out of the way with no chance of tipping over while groups file on and off stage.

Option: Battery operated pillar candle

The Gift Giver

One narrator who introduces each of the three acts with Christmas wisdom and humor. This person can be anyone from an older teen to senior citizen.

The segments can be read center stage.

Good Shepherd

One person (teen or adult, any age) dressed in Holy Land costume. The monologue can be read center stage.

The Innkeeper

One person (teen or adult, any age) dressed in Holy Land costume. The monologue can be read center stage.



Bethlehem Traveler

One person (could be two people) dressed in Holy Land costume. The segment can be read center stage.

The Gang!

Choose program segments based on 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 two people, they simply speak back and forth.

*Don't worry about ages. Mix it up. The segments are flexible.
Eliminate segments as needed.*

Small groups come from the audience to perform their parts and then return to their seats. Everyone becomes the audience.

No one waits behind stage.

Musicians!

Choose local talent as desired. Think about children, teens and grown ups who enjoy singing or playing instruments. Choose appropriate music that musicians can perform with a minimum of rehearsal.

Consider the time allotted and plan enough music to round out the event.

Notes:



At A Glance



Adapt the program according to 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

INTRODUCTION: Family Voices/Candle Processional

ACT 1:

THE GIFT

Narrator: The Gift Giver
Preschool: Joy!
Kindergarten: Peace!
Grade One: Life!
One Enchanted Evening: Good Shepherd
Music

ACT 2:

THE PRESENCE

Narrator: The Gift Giver
Grades 2-3: Light!
Grades 4-5: Praise!
No Room: Innkeeper
Music

ACT 3:

ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS

Narrator: The Gift Giver
Grade 6: Wisdom!
Teens: Worship!
What A Night: Bethlehem Traveler
Music

CONCLUSION: Family Voices/Candle
Audience Conclusion: Christmas Carols
Candle Lighting (Optional)
Closing Prayer

**IT IS TIME FOR THE
WRAP IT UP CHRISTMAS PARTY!**



Christmas Presence!

The Prelude

Church musicians (*organ/piano/keyboard*) play Christmas music as the audience gathers. *If desired, choose student musicians who perform one or two melodies at their current skill level.* Fill in with regular musicians to complete the Prelude.



Introduction: Family Voices/Candle

The Procession

*Gather participants in an outer room.
Light existing sanctuary holiday lights.*

As groups walk to their seats, the audience sings a Christmas Carol. The participants carry small flashlights or glow sticks/necklaces.

The Christmas decorations on stage and around the room are lit. As soon as it is silent, let the program begin.



Introduction: Family Voices/Candle

The voices of a child, woman and man are heard speaking clearly in the dark. They speak in calm, hushed tones.



Child: *(In a frightened, whispered voice)* It's so dark in here. I feel afraid. I don't like the dark. I don't like feeling afraid.

Woman: *(Soothing)* Hush child. Don't be afraid. Before God came to earth one dark, Bethlehem night, there was only darkness in the world. It was so dark in those days.

People did not know they lived in darkness. People loved the darkness. They did not want to hear God's message of love and hope and light because the things they did were evil.

Man: And then one night Jesus was born! He is the Light of the World. Jesus took away the darkness. That baby boy brought all of God's light to a dark world. We see that Light everywhere we look...in every corner.

Woman: There is no need to be afraid, Child. Once, God sent a man named John to point the way to God. John showed the way to the Light. He pointed to Jesus.

Child: How did John know the way? How did John know Jesus was God's Light?

Woman: God let him in on His big plan so people of the world would never have to be afraid again. John knew Jesus. He knew Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world."

Child: I still feel afraid in the dark. Tell me about Jesus.



Man: Jesus came but the world didn't notice. He came to His own people but they didn't want Him. But...whoever DID want Him, whoever believed Jesus was God like He claimed to be, He made to be children of God. It is a great thing God has done.

Woman: The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood. We saw Jesus' glory with our own eyes, God...truer than true, start to finish.

Child: And that was Jesus! Jesus is the Light of the world. I see it! I see the Light coming! It must be Jesus. God's Light is coming into the world and He's a BABY!

*One quiet older child enters the dark room from the rear.
Carry one lit pillar candle slowly, silently to the stage.*

*Place the candle on the piano or organ
Or on a tall stand at one side of the stage.
The candle remains lit and in place
throughout the program.*

Woman: *(Great excitement)* Look Child! The Light! It is coming into the world just like God promised! And there are others coming! They are carrying Jesus' Light into the world this Christmas. Watch them come. Watch them light the world with Jesus' love.

*Music begins. Option: Audience sings a quiet Christmas Carol.
All participants enter carrying glow sticks or small flashlights.
As they walk to their seats, light all Christmas decorations.*

Man: *(When all groups are seated)* Jesus said, "You are there to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill.

If I make you light bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hill top, on a light stand—SHINE!"

(From John 5:14-16)



ACT 1:

THE GIFT



Narrator: The Gift Giver

Shine! What a great message for Christmas. We think Christmas is about, "Mostly ME". We love the lights, the music, the television specials, the cookies, the presents, ...the cookies, the presents.

The presents. Now that's where we need to have a little Christmas talk. If there is nothing you love better than getting the biggest box under the tree wrapped in bright paper and tied up with ribbons, raise your hand. Oh! You're the one! I knew it!

I'm right there with you. I love presents too. There is hardly a holiday that I don't wonder, "Ok, where are my presents?" My birthday, first day of school, last day of school, Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day, Easter and...Christmas.

I can *almost* overlook the fact that Christmas is not MY birthday. I just try to rack up the loot. When I get to the last gift I think, "That's it? Is that all there is?" Hardly a shining moment.

Let's think about Christmas presents in a whole new way. Don't panic! I'm not suggesting that all those gifts stored in the closets and tucked under the stairs and beneath the Christmas tree should be returned. No, nothing that radical. Let's just think about: *Christmas Presence*.

Only two alphabet letters change 'ts' to 'ce' but what a difference they make. Let's imagine that we invite Jesus to be present in our Christmas this year. You know, Jesus' PRESENCE in our homes and in our hearts.

I have a unique idea! Let's give Jesus presents for His birthday. If Jesus is present, He should get presents! Are you willing? Want to give it a try? Let's see how the Christmas story looks through the wrappings of some very special *Christmas Presence* presents.



Preschool:

JOY!

One young child places a large wrapped gift with JOY tag on the floor/table center stage. Other gifts will be stacked on top of it so be sure to place it as a solid foundation.

Teachers: Teachers become the voices for the young children. Encourage students to respond at the right times. Helpers may need to assist with the few speaking lines and movement on stage.



Shepherds and Angels

Costume Options: Students dress as angels and shepherds. Consider full costumes. OR, simply let children wear their best Christmas outfits. Place a silver Christmas garland circle in each angel's hair and each shepherd carries a long stick or cardboard shepherd staff. Shepherds wear shepherd head covering with modern clothing.

Enlarge this sheep graphic or design your own sheep on posterboard that one or more shepherds carry on stage.

Teacher: Wrapped up, cheerful and waiting to be opened, we bring you JOY! The night Jesus was born angels sang to shepherds. The air was filled with JOY! We are going to tell you a Bible story. It might have looked something like this!

Angels stand on stage and shepherds sit in front of them looking up at them as they hold their staffs and sheep.

Teacher: That first Christmas night shepherds were camping in the neighborhood. Ordinary workers on an ordinary night. They watched their sheep in the dark. Suddenly! Surprise! God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them.

Angels wiggle their hands like 'jazz hands'.

Teacher: The shepherds were really afraid but the angel said, "Don't be afraid. We are here with great news for everyone around the world. A Savior has been born in David's town! Look for a baby wrapped in a blanket sleeping in a manger."



Shepherds: Let's get over to Bethlehem! Fast! *(Run fast back the center aisle.)*

Teacher: And that is just what they did. They found Mary and Joseph and Baby Jesus. They were so joyful and they told everyone they met.

Shepherds: *(Running back to stage)* We just saw Jesus!

Teacher: The shepherds went back to their sheep, joyful, and praising God for all they had heard and seen.

Angels and Shepherds: And that's how Christmas started!

Bow deeply to audience.

Exit

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Kindergarten:

PEACE!

*One child places a large wrapped gift with **PEACE** tag on the floor/table center stage. Other gifts will be stacked on top of it.*

Teacher: *The teacher becomes the voice of peace. Encourage students to respond at the right times.*



Mary, Joseph and Jesus

Costume Options: Two students dress as Mary and Joseph. Consider full costumes or simple head pieces with modern clothing. The other children wear their best Christmas outfits.

Mary and Joseph stand on stage with Baby Jesus (wrapped doll). The group stands in a semi circle around them.

Teacher: We bring the gift of **PEACE**. Peace is wrapped in calm, warm feelings backed up with God's promise to keep us safe. On that Christmas night **PEACE** was all around the small village of Bethlehem. A wonderful thing happened. Jesus was born and was sleeping peacefully in a manger. It didn't matter that the manger was an animal feeding dish. What did matter is that God came into the world to bring perfect **PEACE**.

Student #1: Look at Mary. She is peaceful. Her baby has been born.

Mary: I was afraid. God said, "Don't worry, Mary."

Student #2: Look at Joseph. He is peaceful. His little family is safe in God's care.

Joseph: I was afraid. God said, "Don't worry, Joseph."

Student #3: I see Baby Jesus. He is peaceful. He is God's **PEACE** Child.

Student #4: God sent Jesus to give us **PEACE**.



Teacher: When Jesus grew up He said, "My **PEACE** I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled; do not be afraid." (John 14:27)

Student #5: I am happy Jesus gives me **PEACE** in my heart.

Student #6: The best Christmas present I can give Jesus is my heart.

Teacher: If we open our Christmas Presence gift, I wonder if we would find a dove of Peace inside reminding us of God's peace because Jesus was born far away....in a manger.

Sing: "Away In A Manger" a capella or with piano

OPTION

*Ask students to start the **sign of peace** by walking back the aisle and shaking hands with each person sitting on the end. Everyone greets each other with, "May the Peace of Christ be with you"... "and with you" until the audience has experienced the Christmas Presence Peace of Jesus.*

Exit



Grade One:

LIFE!

*One child places a large wrapped gift with **LIFE** tag on the floor/table center stage. Other gifts will be stacked on top of it.*

Teacher: *The teacher becomes the voice of LIFE. Encourage students to respond at the right times.*

Costumes: The children wear their best Christmas outfits.

Students come to the stage and stand casually in groups of two and three across the area as if speaking to friends. Divide speaking parts between available participants.

Teacher: Have you guys seen Jesus? Up close and personal...in the flesh, with skin on?

All Students: NO!

Teacher: I was reading the Christmas story and found an amazing thought. *"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."* Fine sounding, grown up words but let's think about Jesus as a kid like you!

Student #1: I love to eat. Lunch is my favorite. I bet Jesus loved to eat.

Student #2: Bread and olives and maybe...camel meat!

Student #3: Camel meat! Yuck! What kind of life was that?

Student #4: I love to sleep late in the morning. I bet Jesus slept late sometimes.

Student #5: His mom called, "Jesus! Get out of bed. The day's almost over." And there He was just sleeping under the blankets with his feet flopping out the ends.



Student #6: I like to work. Jesus worked hard during His life. He was a carpenter.

Student #7: Can you imagine Jesus fixing the leg on the kitchen table or sweeping the wood chips from Joseph's carpenter shop?

Student #8: Did Jesus had a football or a basketball or a baseball glove?

Student #9: I really love my grandma. She bakes the best cookies.

Student #10: I wonder if Jesus visited his grandma.

Student #11: Don't forget grandpa!

Teacher: Jesus' life as a kid might have been a lot like yours...except for a few things. Strange food, no girls in school, hard work, no television, no itunes, no video games, no electric lights. Come to think of it, Jesus' life was a lot different than yours.

But...Jesus said one thing that makes all the difference in the world. It was His gift to all of us and all the world. Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly." (John 10:10)

Student #12: If I were a shepherd, I would give Him a lamb.

Student #13: If I were a wise man, I would do my part.

Student #14: But what can I give Him?

ALL STUDENTS: GIVE HIM MY HEART!

Exit





One Enchanted Evening: Good Shepherd

One person (teen or adult of any age) dressed as a shepherd. No memorization required. Read the segment. Practice it aloud before the program.

Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." (John 10:11) He said, "I am the Good Shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me." (John 10:14)

I met Jesus the night He was born. Is *any* baby really ordinary? Cute, tiny, lots of dark hair and brown eyes. Dressed weird. His mother wrapped cloths around him. He was sleeping when we got there...well, that's what I remember. It was dark and smelled bad but manger was filled with clean, sweet hay.

I got a gift that night and I gave a gift that night. Today you might call it **Christmas Presence** but that night I just called it "awesome". We were in the sheep field. You know the field, right up the hill from Bethlehem. Turn left at the gate and take the stone path. We are the flock by the gnarly old olive tree. It was quiet and the wind was blowing just a little. Nice night.

If I tell you angels showed up, you won't believe me. That never happens! But....it did! Angels, angels everywhere. They were smiling and singing and hanging on the wind. One angel stepped out. Tall, bright, shiny guy! After he picked me up off the ground, he said, "*Don't be afraid.*" Yeah, right. I was shaking in my sandals. The sheep didn't even care.

This is the present the angels gave us. It wasn't wrapped in paper. It didn't cost a lot of money. They gave us a message...like a text message. It wasn't just for me. Listen to the Christmas present: "*I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Christ the Lord.*"



We waited for a savior for centuries. God keeps His promises. So we waited. Suddenly, He was here and who gets the good news? Shepherds! That's right. We are the people everyone loves to hate. You wouldn't believe the bad names people call us. In the midst of our common, ordinary lives, God shows up! Now that is some present!

Shepherds got the present and then gave it back. The angel told us to find the baby (We weren't looking for a king?) Wrapped in swaddling clothes (weird baby outfit), lying in a manger (an animal feed bin?). Well, okay. If an angel gives instructions, follow the directions. We did. We looked. We found that baby and Mary and Joseph.

It was a big deal. We told Mary and Joseph the whole story. Amazing! They believed us! Angels? No problem. Singing from Heaven? No problem. Mary and Joseph had seen it all. I think I saw Mary smile while we went on and on.

We ran into folks on the village streets. We told everyone we met what we saw on the hill and in the stable. They thought we were crazy. After all, shepherds don't know much. Along the path to the sheep field we praised God at the top of our voices.

When we got back to the field by the old olive tree, it was still dark, still quiet and the wind was still blowing just a little. Those silly sheep never noticed we were gone. They slept on. We didn't sleep that night. Shepherds had seen the Presence of Christ. God moved into the neighborhood!

I don't have a wrapped present to add to the stack. My gift is the best gift the world ever got: *"With good tidings of great joy for all the people of the world, Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Christ the Lord!"*

EXIT



Music



Choose one or more musical pieces to be performed by children, teens or adults.

Audience Christmas Carol *While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks By Night*

Notes:

PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY
NOT FOR USE
PLEASE PURCHASE



ACT 2: THE PRESENCE

Narrator: The Gift Giver



We weren't expecting that shepherd, were we? No one ever expects a shepherd to show up with an unbelievable story. I don't know about you but I listened very carefully.

Christmas Presence began with angels and shepherds and sheep. It started with a faithful young couple who had no clue how God was going to use their lives. Mary and Joseph were just willing to be used and to present God's Greatest Present to the world. They were willing to do the daily work of changing diapers, teaching Jesus to walk and later showing Him how to live as a teen and adult.

The Bethlehem story moves on. Who else saw the Christmas Presence? Did they know they were seeing the "Light of the World"? Who was waiting to receive God's best gift?

It is time to move from soft and sweet to real and down to earth. Let's go!

Exit



Grades Two and Three:

LIGHT!

Grade Two and Three students dress in their best Christmas outfits. Each student carries a small lit flashlight or glow stick. Divide speaking parts between available participants.

One child places a large wrapped gift with LIGHT tag on top of other presents center stage. Other gifts will be stacked on top of it.

Teacher: Our Christmas Presence present is LIGHT. We honor the Lord and we offer God's LIGHT to the nations. Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world." He is our hope and our salvation. Without light it is dangerous to walk our path. Without light we are afraid.



Student #1: My light shines to represent Jesus. He is God's Light existing since before time. Because of Jesus' Light, the people of earth have hope.

Student #2: My light shines for people who do NOT want to see Jesus' Light. They stay away from Jesus or make fun of Him because they are afraid Jesus will shine light into the darkness of their lives and change them.

Student #3: My light shines to chase the darkness. When I turn off Jesus' Light, I get lost.

Student #4: My light shines for Jesus and ME! How can I do less than live for Him after all Jesus has done for me.

Student #5: My light shines to remind me of the dim light in Bethlehem's stable. It was such a little place for such a wonderful baby.



Student #6: My light shines for the Star of Bethlehem. God thought of everything; even a bright "one of a kind" star to welcome Jesus.

Student #7: God's Word says, *"You are the world's light—a city on a hill, glowing in the night for all to see."*

Student #8: *"Don't hide your light! Let it shine for all;"*

Student #9: *Let your good deeds flow for all to see, so they will praise your Heavenly Father."* (Matthew 5:14-16)

Student #10: Keep shining! We can light the world with Christ's presence not only at Christmas but all year. We can do it! I know we can!

OPTION: Sing first verse, "This Little Light of Mine"
Wave small lights in the air while singing.

*This little light of mine
I'm gonna let it shine.*

*This little light of mine
I'm gonna let it shine.*

*This little light of mine
I'm gonna let it shine.*

Let it shine, Let it shine, let it shine!

Exit



GRADES FOUR AND FIVE: PRAISE!

Grade Four and Five students dress in simple Holy Land costumes. Divide speaking parts between available participants. Option: Instead of full costumes, consider head coverings only. It simplifies organization and looks interesting.



One child places a large wrapped gift with PRAISE tag on top of other presents center stage. Other gifts will be stacked on top of it.

*If using the new words to "My Kind of Town" (Chicago Is), find easy piano sheet music at www.musicnotes.com
Or, it can be sung a capella. Have fun!*

Teacher: *(Look at stacked presents)* Life, Joy, Peace and Light. Sounds like Christmas Presence to me. I think we have just the present to add to the tower. Where did I put that present?

ALL STUDENTS: PRAISE THE LORD!

Teacher: That's nice but can you think of a gift we can give?

ALL STUDENTS: PRAISE THE LORD!

Teacher: That's very nice but....

ALL STUDENTS: PRAISE!

Teacher: Oh! How silly of me. PRAISE is an important present. After all, the shepherds ran away from the stable in Bethlehem praising God all the way back to their hill and back to their sheep.

Student #1: We are Bethlehem people. We can talk about that night.

Student #2: I remember I wasn't in a "praise" mood. It was late. It was cold. These shepherd guys kept shouting outside my window. Something about a king...a baby...angels....I just wanted to sleep.



Student #3: Bethlehem is God's smallest town with the biggest heart. Even small places and small people can do great things for God.

Student #4: Who would have imagined the Savior, God's promised Messiah, would come from little Bethlehem.

Student #5: I stopped by the stable at the Inn just to check on the shepherds' story. It's true. A baby boy was born and it is a wonderful sight.

Student #6: Bethlehem...My kind of town.

Student #7: That's it! Bethlehem IS God's Kind of Town!

ALL STUDENTS SING: Feel free to be silly and 'ham' it up with song and dance.

God's kind of town, Beth-le-hem is...

God's kind of town, Beth-le-hem is...

God's kind of people too

People who...smile at you...and ...

Each time we roam, Beth-le-hem is...

Calling us home, Beth-le-hem is...

Why we just keep praisin' God

It's God's kind of town! And...

Each time we leave, Beth-le-hem is...

Tuggin' our sleeve, Beth-le-hem is...

The Roman soldiers, Beth-le-hem is...

The Inn's small stable, Beth-le-hem s...

One town that won't let you down

It's God's kind of town!

PRAISE GOD!

Teacher: That's a 'wrap'! Get it? Wrap? Wrap a present? Rap? Song? On, never mind. Just sit down and let the next gang bring their Christmas Presence present.

Exit





No Room: The Innkeeper

*Become the exhausted Bethlehem Innkeeper. Dress in simple Holy Land costume. Wear a plain apron tied around costume or a large kitchen towel draped over one shoulder. Carry a wooden tray or wooden spoon to lend to the working person's personality. **OR:** Wear jeans and a white t-shirt with a hand printed message on it "I (Heart) My Innkeeper".*

No memorization.

(Rush the stage as if in a big hurry.) No room! No room! I really mean it this time! I have done all I can. You have to move along. Tell your friends there is no room at The Bethlehem Inn.

I locked the door. Be aware that if you knock, no one will answer. The sign is out: NO VACANCY! Nobody believes me! The Romans have made a mess of things. People are arriving from all over the world at exactly the same time. Census! Counting everybody. For what? Who cares? Give me a break.

I would like to spread this business out. Feast or famine, that's what the hotel business is. Either everybody wants you or nobody wants you. There must be a better way to make a living.

Every ten minutes I have to make another decision. Room? No Room? Room? No Room? It's exhausting I tell you. Exhausting!

I have people in every room. I doubled the bed space. There are four in a bed. People on the floors. People in every hallway. People in the courtyard. I even have two people bunked under the dining room table. Pillows, mats, clothing, junk everywhere! I draw the line at putting people in my own bed. I need my rest!

I gave the last couple in the door the stable for the night. That baby was going to be born tonight with me or without me. The look in her eyes...I couldn't say "No Room" one more time. Not to them. I didn't even know where else to send them. Every Inn on the street is full. Every private home has guests. Bethlehem is full. No room.



The stable is crowded with animals but they grabbed it. Last time I checked their baby had been born. Fresh hay in the manger is the best I could do. They were happy.

I checked in with them and they told me it is a boy. A baby boy. Nice. They said they named him Jesus. Nice. Remind me to mention to them before they leave that he should not grow up to own an Inn. There must be something better for him.

Well, I have to be on my way. Hiding out. I see more travelers straggling down the street. Oh no, they look like shepherds. I cannot abide shepherds. They should be out 'abiding in their fields, tending their flocks by night'. You would think that one of these days I would get important guests. Someone I could dress up for and clean the corners. Someone like... a king. That will never happen. Well, you know what they say, "Great things happen in small places." A person can hope. Now get out of here. No Room!

PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY
Exit
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Music

Choose one or more musical pieces to be performed by children, teens or adults.



Audience Christmas Carol

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Notes:

PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY
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ACT THREE: ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS!

Narrator: The Gift Giver



Every gift under the Christmas tree comes down to how much someone loves me. What did I get for Christmas? How many presents have my name on them? Is that all there is?

Here is the question of the Christmas season: Name three presents you received last Christmas? Name two? Name one? It's hard to remember. Why? Could it be that the real gift was the 'thought'? Someone you love thought enough about you to decide what you might like, go to a store, buy it with their money, bring it home, wrap it, tag it, plan a time to give it to you and then...watch as you open it.

That is what God did when He sent His Christmas Presence to live among us. John said, *"So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son."*

John 1:14 NLT

There it is! God chose to move into our neighborhood and live with us! He thought enough about us to decide what we might like. Jesus was bought with a price. Jesus came to our home and called it His home. He wrapped Himself in love, tagged with faithfulness.

God planned the perfect time to give His presence and then...He watched as we opened His best present one person at a time believing in Jesus as our Savior through the ages. The Gift! The Presence! It turns out that is all I want for Christmas!

Exit



GRADE SIX:

WISDOM!



Divide speaking parts between available Grade Six participants. Instead of full costumes, consider Wise Men head coverings only. It simplifies organization and looks interesting. Add large, sparkling pins to each head covering. Include gold and silver jewelry.

One student places a large wrapped gift with WISDOM tag on top of other presents center stage. Other gifts will be stacked on top of it.

Students enter the back of the room. As they walk the aisle, they sing these strange words to the famous tune, "We Three Kings". Sing loudly as a dirge. Audience must be able to understand the words.

*We're the Wise Guys traveling far.
We just wish we had a great car.
Traveling's draining when it's raining,
Don't lose sight of that star.
Oh-h-h-h-h-*

*Keep on boundin. Up that mountain
Miles to go before we sleep.
Baby's waiting, we're donating
Gifts of gold for him to keep.*

Oh-h-h-h-h-

Teacher: Come on people, cheer up. You sound as if you would rather be anywhere but here.

Student #1: You try riding on a camel mile after mile. My behind is dragging.



Student #2: *(Overly cheerful)* I, for one, think this has been a grand journey. We got to tour the length of sunny Persia before arriving in Jerusalem.

Student #3: ...where we ran into a very interesting government leader. All we did was ask, "Where is the newborn King of the Jews"? That was a loaded question.

Student #4: It may have been the part about seeing the newborn King's star in the east and coming to worship Him that upset the guy.

Student #5: What was his name? Herod? He didn't seem all that upset to me. He put his arm around me. "Go to Bethlehem," he said. "Search for the child," he said. "Come back," he said, "So I can worship Him too." And then he smiled.

Student #6: I saw through that rascal right away. He didn't want to worship a king. He wanted easy information. No rival kings for him. He wanted to kill the boy.

Student #7: Well, that's not very nice. We were too smart for him. That's why they call us "Wise". We will go home a different way. Where is the map?

Student #8: What will Herod do to us if we don't show up in Jerusalem?

Student #9: We will be long gone, sleeping in our own beds by the time he discovers we flew the coop!

Student #10: Let's drop off the gold, frankincense and myrrh and get back on the road. Looks like rain.

Teacher: The Wise Men were too smart for Herod. They nodded, smiled and dropped off their baby gifts. Without one hint to Herod, they traveled home to Persia. Mary and Joseph used the gold, frankincense and myrrh to pay for the years they hid from King Herod in Egypt. God provides!



Student #11: James wrote, *"If you want to know what God wants you to do, ask Him and He will gladly tell you because He is always ready to give a bountiful supply of wisdom to all who ask Him."*

Student #12: We offer our Christmas present to the Lord; Our wisdom will be used to honor and glorify Him in all we think and do.

The group leaves the same way they entered, singing:

*We're the Wise Guys traveling far.
We just wish we had a great car.
Traveling's draining when it's raining,
Don't lose sight of that star.*

Oh-h-h-h-h-

*Keep on boundin. Up that mountain
Miles to go before we sleep.
Baby's waiting, we're donating
Gifts of gold for him to keep.*

Oh-h-h-h-h-

Exit



TEENS:

WORSHIP!



*Divide speaking parts between available participants.
No special costuming is required.*

**One student places a large wrapped gift with WORSHIP tag
on top of other presents center stage.**

Teacher: I don't know how to give our Christmas present. Our present is precious to the Lord. He looks for it wherever His people are found.

Student #1: Sounds like a puzzle. Here is a clue: Our present can be offered any time of the day or night.

Student #2: Our present can be given by the very young and the very old and everybody in between.

Student #3: I have no idea what it is. Somebody better tell me.

Student #4: Does this help? Jesus was tempted by Satan and said, "Get out of here, Satan. Scripture says, "Worship only the Lord God." (Matthew 4:10)

Student #5: Am I the only one not getting this? I missed rehearsal but it shouldn't be this hard. Tell me the name of our present!

Student #6: Another clue: The wise men came to worship Him.

Student #7: I get it. Is the word...could our present be...WORSHIP?

Teacher: That's it! WORSHIP!

Student #8: You could have told me sooner. I will worship God with all my heart. Christmas is a great time to start. "I will call on the Lord, Who is worthy to be praised."

OPTION: *Teens sing a contemporary praise song of their choice.*

Exit



What A Night!

Bethlehem Traveler

*Become a stranger in a strange land. Dress in simple Holy Land costume. Carry a traveling bag. **Option:** This can be read by two people, speaking back and forth.*

No memorization.

I have no idea what is going on in this dusty little village. I was commanded to come by the great Roman Empire just because my great grandfather was born here. I am beginning to regret my family heritage. People are on the move to sign the census.

I am staying over there at the Bethlehem Inn. Got the last room. That innkeeper is a cranky guy. And the food isn't great either. There are strangers in my room. I'm just glad to have a place to sleep.

I am a stranger in a strange land. I don't understand the local customs but I'm pretty sure babies are not supposed to be born in a barn. I found a young couple in the stable. And...you won't believe this....the young woman had just had a baby boy! I know! I didn't believe it either! I tried to back out quietly. They were so happy and invited me to take a peek at the baby.

These two made the stable cozy despite the animals, the noises and the smell. They created a little corner with a lantern, pillows and mounds of hay. The baby was lying on a puffy mound of hay in a feed trough, a manger. He was wrapped in wide cloths and tucked under a cloth cover. Slept like a baby!



Evidently Joseph and Mary had been visited by angels...so they say. This baby boy is the long promised Messiah of the Jews...so they say. God's Only Son...so they say. God visited Mary in a holy, unique way and Jesus was born because God has a plan to save the world...so they say. I'm beginning to believe all the '...so they say's'.

Before I could get out, there was a huge ruckus. We were surrounded by a gang of men. They were running, jumping, talking all at once. Mary had to quiet them to keep the baby calm. They were shepherds. I could tell. Rude, crude, uneducated and they smelled like sheep. I was just a stranger so it wasn't my place to get rid of them.

Joseph welcomed the shepherds and gave hugs all around. "Meet Jesus", he says. And they did. They ooh'ed and aah'ed. They told an odd story about angels and even more angels on the hillside just outside the village talking and singing about this "Savior, sent from God, born in a Bethlehem manger" and directing the shepherds to this very stable. Mary didn't seem surprised at all.

One more weird thing, when I finally left Mary, Joseph and that cute baby Jesus in the old stable, I didn't need a lantern. There was this huge star overhead. It was low in the sky and the glow spread out over the entire village. I walked all the way back to the Bethlehem Inn in bright light. Like I say, I am a stranger in a strange land but you have to admit, what a night!

Exit





Music

Choose one or more musical pieces to be performed by children, teens or adults.

Audience Christmas Carol

Joy To The World

Notes:

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Conclusion: Family Voices/Candle

The voices of the same child, woman and man are heard speaking clearly in the dark. They comment as the candle leaves the area.

The same silent child who entered with the pillar candle now carries it slowly back the aisle and leaves the area.

Child: Look! The Light is leaving! Will I feel afraid again? I don't want the darkness to return. Jesus came to our dark world. I got used to having the Light of the world comfort me.

Woman: Hush child. The darkness can never return. Once Jesus was born in Bethlehem, darkness vanished forever.

Man: Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world." "Go and teach everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Teach them all I have commanded you." Jesus promised, "I will be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age."

Woman: That is where the Light is going. Children of the world need to hear the story of Christmas Presence. Jesus' light must shine into every dark corner.

Child: Will the children of the world hear about the angels and shepherds?

Woman: Yes, child. They will hear.

Child: Will the children of the world hear about Mary and Joseph and how faithful they were even when they were afraid?

Man: Yes, child. They will hear.



Child: And the Wise men. Will someone tell the children how they followed a star and found Baby Jesus and gave Him gifts?

Woman: Yes, child. There will always be someone who tells the story of Christmas Presence. Someone will build a tower of presents to point the way to Jesus.

Child: Will someone explain to the children of the world how to give their lives to Jesus?

Man: Child, they will only hear about Jesus if we tell them. Are you willing to share Christmas Presence with them? Will you tell the world about Jesus?

Woman: *(Calling...)* Child? Child? Child! Where are you?

Man: Look! There is our child! There! Running after the Light of the World.

Child: *(Calling....)* Wait for me, Light of the World! I'm coming as fast as I can. I will be that child who tells the world about the Christmas Presence of Jesus!



Audience Conclusion

Sing Christmas Carols

Candle Lighting Ceremony

Prepare a traditional lighting of candles for entire audience while singing Carols.

Closing Prayer



**It is time for a fantastic
Wrap It Up Christmas Party!**



The Wrap It Up Christmas Party *...A Party With Presence!*



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 or small group of friends.

Combine delicious food, background Christmas music and casual fellowship.

Preparations Before Party Day

Menu: A fun option is to ask people to share their favorite Christmas dessert. Provide a variety of beverages.

*Christmas Cookies galore
are a fun Christmas option!*

*If this is a Sunday morning event,
serve a continental breakfast
with doughnuts, orange juice, coffee and tea.*

Seating: The best seating arrangement depends upon the size of the gathering. Position tables and chairs and serve buffet style. Guests stand and move 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. Set up the music on a stage or in a prominent corner!

Centerpieces: Cover tables as desired. Feature wrapped Christmas present centerpieces on each table. Candles and greens complete the holiday look.

Preparations On Party Day

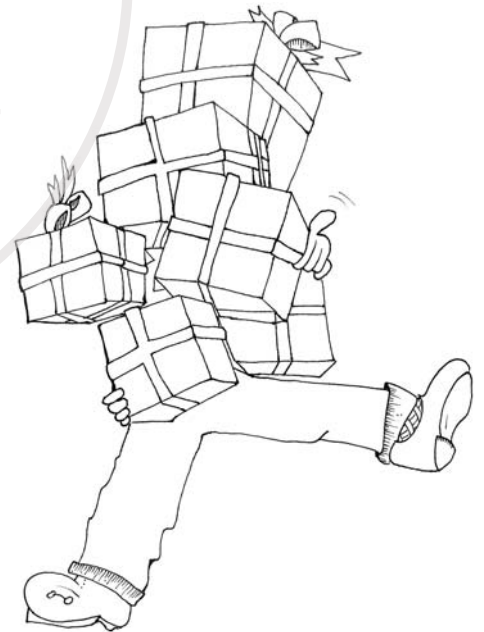
Decorate the serving table and guests tables. Plug in the coffee pot and boil tea water while the program is in progress. Set out desserts and beverages. Make your favorite Christmas punch and place on a nearby serving table.

During the Party

Assign helpers who serve food, pour beverages. Greet guests cordially as they come through the serving line. Move about the guests to be sure everyone feels welcome. Find seats for those who may not be familiar with the building. 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, remove tables and chairs while sweeping the area clean.



Go Home!

Be Filled With
Christmas Presence!

You Have Been A Good
and Faithful Servant!

PLEASE PURCHASE
Merry Christmas!

