

God Made a Way In a Manger

PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY
NOT FOR USE
PLEASE PURCHASE

...Back Stage at the Inn

A Sunday School Program for All Ages

GOD
MADE
A WAY



PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY
NOT FOR SALE
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IN A
MANGER

...BACKSTAGE AT THE INN



true love



was born

in a manger



HE MADE A WAY IN A MANGER

Words and Music: Steve Merkel, Lee Black

Longing for a Savior
A hopeless world would wait
Sin demanded justice
At a price we could not pay;
But God displayed His mercy
The greatest gift of love
When we could not reach heaven
Heaven came to us.

He made a way in a manger
A way to the cross
Messiah the promised
Before time had begun.

FOR GOD SO LOVED THIS WORLD
THOUGH HE KNEW WHAT LOVE WOULD COST
HE MADE A WAY IN A MANGER
TO MAKE A WAY TO THE CROSS.

In Bethlehem a stable
Became a throne of grace
As God Himself our Savior
Drew near to take our place;
His mother smiled in wonder
As shepherds stood in awe
The Sacrifice of heaven
Lay sleeping in the straw.



He is the life that died our death
The precious Lord Jesus
Laid down His sweet head.

He made a way in a manger
A way to the cross
Messiah the promised
Before time had begun.



GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER BACKSTAGE AT THE INN

Think About It: "Knock, Knock". "Whos there"?
"Wayne". "Wayne Who"? "Wayne In A Manger"!



Can you imagine backstage shenanigans while preparing your annual Christmas program? Sure you can! You have been there. You know the challenges of getting everyone on the same program page, organizing costumes, calming little feet, hands and mouths, getting parents on board for the long march to Christmas. Yikes! It's Christmas! Here we go!

We help you figure it out!

Easy to Prepare, Easy to Present. Prepare to laugh, sing and be inspired to celebrate the Bethlehem story one more time. The poor 'stage manager' has a short time frame and on top of that is not completely positive this "Bethlehem thing" is true. Kids to the rescue!

NOT FOR USE FUN DETAILS PLEASE PURCHASE

1. **Time Frame:** 45 minutes or less depending on extra choices.
2. **People:** Feature children, teens, grown ups.
3. **Presentation:** No memorization. Read segments on stage.
4. **Music:** Carols, special music, Theme song sheet music included.
5. **Party:** Include a MANGER PARTY to end the celebration!

See? Easy Peasy!

*These pages contain plans and complete script for a unique
Christmas program designed to change lives forever.*

*Open Carefully!
Let Christmas Begin!*



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OUR 'REAL' STAGE MANAGER AKA: CHRISTMAS DIRECTOR

*"A leader is best when people barely know he/she exists.
When their work is done, their aim fulfilled,
their team will say 'we did it ourselves.'"*

Guarantee a successful team. This Christmas event creates a unique memory in the best ways from beginning to end. **Ask for help!**

Print program copies. Assign segments to Sunday School classes, church committees, small friend groups and willing individuals. **Lead Them!**

When All Else Fails, Follow Directions
Small group leaders organize their short segment complete with props and costumes. Help as needed. **Let them lead!**

Is Your Heart Ready?
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!**

Baby Steps
Are you thinking, "Why me? I cannot do this!" Dive into this humorous, meaningful presentation of a crazy Christmas rehearsal you hope you never experience. **No fear!**

You Can Do Anything, But NOT Everything!
Trust your staff. Check in with them often. Surround yourself with the best people, delegate authority. Don't interfere unless needed. **Delegate!**

Be Positive, Patient and Persistent
It is worth extra effort in the middle of personal preparations, parties and travel. **All things are difficult before they are easy!**



Plug Your Ears

If the Christmas Director's attitude is right, even the grouchiest saint responds cheerfully! **Keep that famous sense of humor!**

*"We can't do it."
"We never did it this way."
"No one wants to do it!"
"My back hurts."*

*Think of it this way: "Today I was told I am pretty.
The full statement was actually, 'You are pretty annoying'
but I only look at things positively!"*

Prayers Go Up. Blessings Come Down!

God Is In Control
Take details before the Lord and then - Relax! **Do the 'next thing'.**

Prepare For Success! ~Adapt!

Do today's work well!

Print a Director's Copy. Do NOT write on this master copy! Mark areas requiring special attention. Eliminate what cannot be used, divide or combine parts. Give participants their segment copies.

Assign small group practice to each leader.

No Memorization!

"My memory is bad." "How bad is it?" "How bad is what?"

Some groups enjoy memorization. Others avoid it. Except for the youngest non readers, it is recommended to read parts. Memorization requires lead time and rehearsal. **Tip:** Decorate printed parts with colorful paper and stickers and *(heaven help you)* glitter!



ADAPTATIONS

This is an **EVERYBODY JOIN THE FUN** Production!
Involve adults as readers, musicians and leaders.
Adapt the program using available participants.

Keep It Simple!



Adapt a 30-45 minute production. Use theme, script and arrange the best of the best. Add music for the audience to sing and special musical pieces performed by children, teens, grown ups.

Reflect your personal favorite Christmas traditions!
You won't hurt our feelings. Really, change anything you want!

Small Church

“Do not despise small beginnings...” Zechariah 4:10 nlt

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

OR: Use the same few people to present more than one segment. Teens and adults are crucial for the small church presentation. Some people participate several times.

Medium Church

“Do not wear out doing good.”

At the right time we will reap if we do not give up.: Galatians 6:9

Choose segments you like best. The goal is to tell the Christmas story. Don't leave out anything important -like the **BABY!**

Large Church

Get a large group of people to do a few simple things.

Organize musicians, snack makers, servers, prop masters, sound/lighting crew and talented volunteers who make the event visually exciting. **Go Big!**

The Manger Party

A chosen group decorates, plans and cleans up. If time does not allow a social gathering, plan a great program, forget the party!



I & CHRISTMAS MUSIC

Glory to the NEWBORN King!

Coordinate music with the music director, pianist, organist, praise band. Choose Christmas Carols to sing with the audience and stage participants.

Include song lyrics in a printed program or project lyrics on large screen.



EXTRA! EXTRA!

Teach our simple theme song (*we were inspired*) to everyone before and during the program. Easy to learn. Print lyrics in the program and invite the audience to sing it.

PURCHASE 'GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER MELODIES'! Spark your program with three original songs by Glory Sound Studios and Jonathan Miller! Music package arrives with Double Channel CD for rehearsal and performance, printed piano sheet music and lyrics! Ship or Download ~ Your Choice!

YOUR CHOICE --ADD MORE!

Add special music. Choose talented people to sing solos, duets, trios, choir, praise and worship, beginning instrumentals, hand bells, chimes, children's chorus, all instrumental. This is the perfect moment to let musicians shine!
Who will you choose?

ADD CONTEMPORARY CHRISTMAS PRAISE MUSIC.
. HAVE FUN CHOOSING MUSIC YOUR GROUP ENJOYS!



THE LORD'S PRAYER
(TUNE: AWAY IN A MANGER)

Leonard Sweet, American theologian, pastor and author,

Consider printing the lyrics or showing lyrics on large screen so the audience can sing this sweet Christmas version of "The Lord's Prayer."

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN
ALL PRAISE TO YOUR NAME!
YOUR KINGDOM AMONG US,
YOUR WILL DONE THE SAME.
O'ER MORTALS AND ANGELS,
COME, LORD, REIGN ALONE;
OH, HEAR US AND BLESS US
FROM HEAVEN'S HIGH THRONE.

THE BREAD THAT WE YEARN FOR
PROVIDE US EACH DAY;
AS WE FORGIVE OTHERS,
OUR SINS TAKE AWAY.
IN TIMES OF TEMPTATION
TO LEAD US BE NEAR,
FROM EVIL DELIVER
YOUR CHILDREN MOST DEAR.

FOR YOURS IS THE KINGDOM
O'ER ALL THINGS YOU REIGN;
AND YOURS IS THE POWER
ALL THINGS YOU MAINTAIN.
TO YOU BE THE GLORY
RESOUNDING AGAIN
FROM ALL OF CREATION,
FOREVER! AMEN!



GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER PIANO MUSIC

Teach this short lullaby to the children and then to the audience. Sing when participants are proceeding to their seats or as an opening and closing. (Sheet music only)



God Made A Way In A Manger
Words and Music: Ellen Bunnell

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

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

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





SET THE STAGE

God Made A Way In A Manger is a fun stage presentation using a minimum of props. Small groups carry personal items. Set the stage with inexpensive, easy-to-find props and light the area dramatically.

Keep It Simple!

SET UP

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

Feature them!

STAGING

Your stage becomes a 'rehearsal stage' for the Christmas program. Include scattered nativity items not yet in the right places. Make it look like the stage is still being set for the big show. Stack and lean items against the walls and fill the edges of the stage with important items.

Messy but not too messy.

SEATING

Reserve participant small group seating. Assign helpers to sit with young children. Each small groups gathers on stage to present their short segment.

Follow program instructions.

SOUND SYSTEM

Place microphone stand on stage. Attach personal microphones to main speakers. This detail make the difference between a frustrating experience and a delightful program.

Speak up!

LIGHTING

Lighting is important. Create a backstage feel, bright lights, spot lights, twinkle lights strewn across the floor as if ready to hang.

Create lighting interest.



DRESS UP! COSTUMES

The program is meant to be a 'dress rehearsal' for the real Christmas program.

Follow directions in each small group segment.



Create simple Holy Land costumes using available fabric, etc. Costuming a large group? Ask each participant to provide their attire. Parents of young students may be willing to supply the necessary clothing.

'KEEP IT SIMPLE' OPTION: Consider having each participant wear casual personal clothing (jeans, t shirts, Christmas outfits) with Holy Land head pieces, scarves, crowns, shawls, stars, etc.

Full costumes include robes, tunics, long t shirts belted with rope or men's neck ties. Fabric wrapped around head and looped down the front, overabundance of jewelry (pins, bracelets, necklaces) on wise men. White angel tunics and wings.

(see www.orientaltrading.com)



The **Bethlehem Star** can be costumed with gold spray paint or silver foil covered on body sized cardboard star. Attach fabric loops over neck or shoulders.



*Follow your creative heart to organize the costumes.
A team of 2 or more willing volunteers is very helpful.*



JUST THIS ONCE, GOSSIP IS OKAY! PUBLICITY

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



BULLETIN AND NEWSLETTER

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. **Tell Everyone!**

LOCAL NEWSPAPER

Don't Just Read The News, Make The News! Include an announcement with holiday publicity. Talk to a reporter and photographer. **Request a feature article.**

TELEVISION AND RADIO

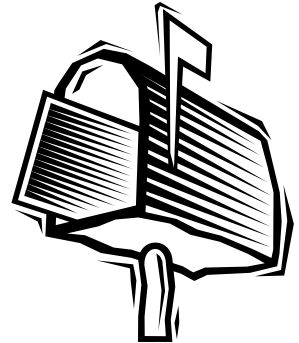
Advertise! Television and Radio stations often have free spots available as community service. Contact your local television news room and request a short feature. **Try It!**

SOCIAL NETWORKING

WEB SITE - FACE BOOK - INSTAGRAM - TWITTER

Does your church/school have an online presence? This is the perfect opportunity to advertise. Take pictures, include a short description, dates, times and party plans!

Woo-Hoo!



CHRISTMAS CARD INVITATIONS

Send family invitations. This is effective for non-involved families. Send real Christmas cards with invitations tucked inside. **So sweet!**



STEP UP!
LEADERS
NEEDED!



SHOW UP WITH A SMILE!

Dress in appropriate costume. Meet your small group. Sit with them in the designated area. Lead the group on and off stage. Perform your speaking part with enthusiasm. Coach students quietly if they have problems. Follow script details. **Relax!**

*Stage fright is not uncommon!
Sometimes kids get scared too!*

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STAY FOR THE PARTY!

Collect props and materials. Ask students to remain in costume. Mingle. **Enjoy the experience with students and their families.**

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ASK FOR 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 Christmas Director is available to help.**



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!



WORD UP!
MEMORIZATION?
THAT IS THE QUESTION!

TO MEMORIZE

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

Consider longer lead time and more rehearsals.

OR NOT TO MEMORIZE

This event is designed to be a full church, inter-generational experience. Base group organization on available small groups. Ask children, friends, older adults who may not normally participate to join the fun.

The event is more enjoyable if people relax without memorization.

Participants hold their printed parts and read. Practice in small group settings so everyone is familiar with their part and read with confidence.

Gather to rehearse the full team.

Carry printed materials on stage as rehearsal copies. White paper with the individual segment printed on it works great.

It is supposed to be a dress rehearsal!

WHATEVER PRESENTATION
METHOD YOU CHOOSE,
THIS IS A MEMORABLE
CHRISTMAS EXPERIENCE.

HAVE FUN!



UP WITH PEOPLE!

MAIN CHARACTERS

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



STAGE MANAGER

1 Actor: Teen or adult, male or female

The Stage Manager holds the stage story together. Be the frazzled, loud director trying to get the Christmas program perfect with a variety of players. Carry a clipboard with the full script. Dress in casual clothing, open white shirt, blue jeans, sneakers, dramatic (theatrical) scarf around neck.

Optional: Fedora hat tipped to one side (really dramatic!)

Read from clipboard. Interact with each small groups.

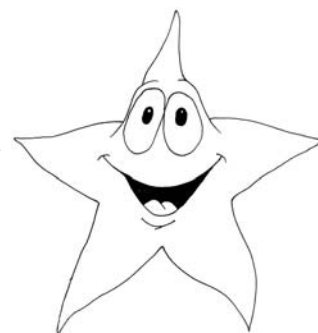
BETHLEHEM 'STAR' THE STAR OF THE SHOW!

1 Actor: Teen or adult, female

The STAR of the Show! The Bethlehem Star weaves in and out of the on stage rehearsal. Maintain an entitled, diva, prideful, all knowing attitude. Wear a large gold, spray painted, spray glittered, cardboard star. Wear gold starry tinsel in hair. Glitter in hair and on shoes. Everything worn should 'sparkle'.

(Christmas decoration departments have 'sparkle'.)

www.orientaltrading.com Adult Gold Star Costume #13665700
current price: \$16.49 per set (star and star point cap)



MARY, JOSEPH, BABY JESUS

Teens or Adults, Doll (Will be on stage for whole program)

Silent and in place, center stage, for the entire program. Speak in conclusion only.

Holy Land costume

TEACHERS AND PARENTS

A variety of leaders help participants. Some teachers have speaking parts. Some parents are involved with younger children.

Follow individual segment instructions.



GOD MADE A WAY



IN A MANGER

...BACKSTAGE AT THE INN



GOD MADE A WAY IN A MANGER AT A GLANCE

Adapt schedule based on available participants. Insert Christmas Carols and Featured Music wherever appropriate. Consider total time. Eliminate or combine segments as needed.

Check this complete program peek.



PRELUDE PROCESSIONAL

INTRODUCTION

Stage Manager
The "Star" of Bethlehem
Preschool: Look Up!

ACT 1: UNEXPECTED GUESTS!

Stage Manager
Kindergarten: Hay There!
Grade 1: Certain Poor Shepherds
Grade 2: Angels, Wings and Things!

Music

ACT 2: UNEXPECTED MANAGER

Stage Manager
Grades 3-4: Caravan Parade ~ Is Bethlehem Too Far Away?
Grades 5-6: Caravan Parade ~ Not That Far From Bethlehem

Music

ACT 3: UNEXPECTED MANGER

Stage Manager
Middle/High School: The Talk!

CONCLUSION: WOULD YOU LIKE TO HOLD THE BABY?

Candle Lighting Ceremony/Prayer

Music

COME TO THE MANGER PARTY!



THE PRELUDE

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



THE PROCESSION

Gather participants in an outer room.

Participants reach their reserved, seats near the stage in a crazy, haphazard manner. Enter from all doorways, talking, running, leapfrogging.

Adjust the entrance as desired.
Consider the shape
and size of the room
and the seating arrangement.

Think about photography
and video opportunities
for excited families.



INTRODUCTION



STAGE MANAGER: (*Seated on floor, center Stage, clipboard with full script, pencil behind ear, coffee mug, messy paperwork on the floor, upset and nervous, clapping hands*)

People, People! Settle down! Find your seats. We do not have time for nonsense. (*Shout*) One rehearsal and one rehearsal only! Fi-ind Your Se-eat!

**EVERYONE HURRIES TO SIT WITH THEIR CLASS AND LEADER.
THE BETHLEHEM STAR, BOWING AND CURTSEYING
ON STAGE BEHIND STAGE MANAGER.**

(*Sees Star*) Honestly, what's the matter with you? Take off that star. I'm the Stage Manager of this Christmas production. Move it or lose it!

BETHLEHEM STAR: Don't you know who I am? It may be that 'God made a way in a manger' but I, the Star of Bethlehem, got everybody to Bethlehem. Without me, there would be no big birthday celebration. This whole Christmas, celebration, party *thing* is mostly about ...ME, I'M THE STAR OF THE SHOW! (*Elegant bow*)

Manager: (*Weary, hand to head*) Divas! How will I ever survive? Perhaps you haven't been informed. I am the Stage Manager. I am the Star of the show. Sit down!

Star: I am the best and brightest.

Manager: What's with you? Do you think the world revolves around you?

Star: No, that's the Sun. I am the Star! The Star of the show. (*Posing*) I'm ready for my close up, Mr. Stage Manager.

Manager: (*Groan*) What have I done to deserve this? Miss one meeting and, bam, I'm voted to direct the Christmas program. I don't even like Christmas. Next year, I am unavailable.



Star: Personally, I think you drink too much coffee. You have the symptoms. Shaky hands, too much energy, short temper, not enough appreciation for the Star of the Show. Yes, I've seen this before...classic symptoms. Coffee Addict.

Manager: (*Whisper aside*) I can do this. I can do this.

Star: (*Thinking out loud*) Or maybe, you didn't sleep last night. We 'stars' have this knack of knowing when you are sleeping and when you are awake.

Manager: You ARE NOT a real star! Now....sit....your....crazy...self....down!

Star: Okay, okay. I'm just getting into my part. I'm a method actor. It's all the rage these days. I practiced! Listen. (*Dramatically*)

Star Light, Star Bright
The first star I see tonight
I wish I may, I wish I might
Have the wish I wish tonight.

Manager: (*Shaking head*) I am so under appreciated and so over worked. GET AWAY FROM ME! The faster I get this thing going, the quicker I get out of here.

(*Stand and urn to participants and audience*) Welcome Christmas lovers, one and all. We are gathered to rehearse our annual Christmas program which, this year, is "God Made A Way In A Manger". I insist upon perfection. It's not too much to ask for your cooperation. Let's go! Let's go! Lights! Camera! Action!

Why am I standing here alone? Joseph, Mary, Baby Jesus...where are you? I need you on stage, now!

**COSTUMED JOSEPH, MARY AND BABY JESUS
SET UP A MANGER AND BENCH/SMALL SEAT
FOR MARY CENTER STAGE AND GET INTO POSITION.**

That's the idea. I feel more Christmas-y now. Let the games begin. I mean, let's hit the road. I mean, break a leg. Who's up first?



PRESCHOOL:

Actors:

Costumes:

LOOK UP!

Preschool Children, Leaders

Become Living Stars

Cardboard: Cut star shape, gold spray paint, glitter, attach ribbon/twine over neck of each student.

Stickers: Star stickers all over clothing, tags, glitter.

www.orientaltrading.com Kid's Star Costume Full body metallic fabric over foam, easy and comfortable to wear. 39" x 38" #4/4358 \$12.39 each.

Angel Star Headband: Each headband features five gold stars. #13780780 \$9.29/dz

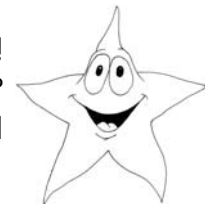
Glo Sticks: Each STAR wears one or more necklace and bracelet glo stick, Light before they enter the area.

Posterboard stars attached to the palm of each little hand. Slide wide elastic through each star and tie in back. (Be sure to make it tight enough so the stars do not slide off hands.) Make stars from neon yellow posterboard, enough for each student to attach one to each hand. Spray glitter each star.

Preschool "star" children walk to the manger with Bethlehem Star in the lead. Walk single file to the stage from the center aisle. Bethlehem Star and leaders help them form a circle around the manger scene.

Keep segment short and simple.

BETHLEHEM STAR: Shh, don't tell anyone. I am the Star of the Show! I came to help all of you little stars find your way to Bethlehem. See? I found Mary and Joseph and Baby Jesus in the manger. I helped you find the way too! Now it is time to do our job.



LEADER: What is our job? We are brand new at this 'star' thing.

STAR: Why, our job is the easiest thing. We fancy stars shine. Start with a big, big shiny smile. Twirl around. Wiggle your fingers!



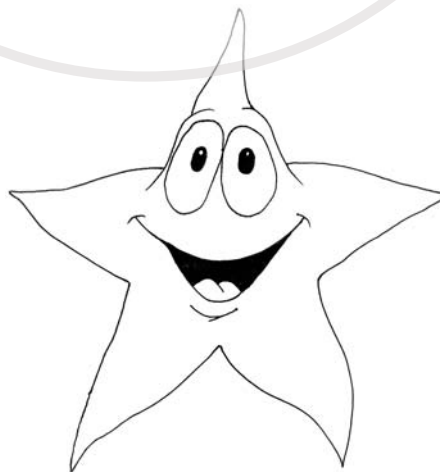
Stars shine brightest in the dark. When God created stars He said, *"Let there be lights in the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be signs for seasons and for days and for years."* (Genesis 1:14)

Tonight, we Bethlehem stars are lights to guide people, wise people, to this place. To see God's promise, Baby Jesus. I'm so happy you are little lights!

LEADER: Look in the manger, children. Baby Jesus is trying to go to sleep. He is going to have a busy life on earth. He needs His rest. He sees us shining. Maybe he will go to sleep if we sing Him a quiet song.

TWINKLE, TWINKLE LITTLE STAR
HOW I WONDER WHO YOU ARE.
SENT FROM HEAVEN UP ABOVE.
HERE ON EARTH TO BRING US LOVE.
TWINKLE, TWINKLE LITTLE STAR.
YOU ARE JESUS, YES YOU ARE!

EXIT



ACT ONE

UNEXPECTED GUESTS

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KINDERGARTEN
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GRADE ONE
GRADE TWO



ACT ONE: UNEXPECTED GUESTS
KINDERGARTEN: HAY THERE!
“God is So Great That He Became Small.”

Actors: Kindergarten students, Teacher/ Innkeeper
Bethlehem Star in Background
Costumes: Holy Land costumes
Props: Torn, thin, newspaper strips (manger ‘hay’) in a basket



STAGE MANAGER

My clipboard says KINDERGARTEN: HAY THERE! I need you on stage right now. All kids in “Hay There”, up here now! Time stops for no one! Costumes! Check! Hay strips! Check! Innkeeper Teacher! Check!

TEACHER: Everyone grab some hay for the manger. Get a big handful and place it wherever you think Baby Jesus will feel it best.

Children take a handful of newspaper ‘hay’ from the basket and place it in the manger.

Since I am dressed like the Bethlehem Innkeeper, I’m going to tell you the story of the Innkeeper. Here I am, pretending to be an Innkeeper.

Children! Do you see that bright star back there? It is sparkling so bright I can’t get any sleep and I’m cranky. I’m grumpy. I’m in a bad mood.



Bethlehem Star: *Big Smile, wave arms and wiggle fingers.*
Here I am!

TEACHER: See? That star pokes her nose in my business every single night. Shining, shining, shining. Is she ever in a bad mood? I have customers that need their sleep. Just tonight, this young couple shows up. Guess what? They had a baby! And here he is in my raggedy manger. That was an unexpected surprise. Who knew on this busy night my Inn would become a hospital?



*If students are old enough to learn these short parts,
let them take turns saying this little poem. If not, seat them around
the manger and read it to them as a short story time.*

LITTLE BABY IN THE HAY

OUR LITTLE BABY IN THE HAY,
SLEEP UNTIL THE BREAK OF DAY.

DRESSED IN CLOTHS SO CLEAN AND SWEET,
BABIES NEED DRY, WARM FEET.

EXCITEMENT GROWS WITHIN EACH EYE,
A FRIEND FOR ALL, SO BRIGHT AND SHY.

YOU KNOW US IN EACH SECRET PART,
SENT GOD'S GIFT TO FILL OUR HEART.

YOUR NEEDS ARE SMALL, O LITTLE CHILD,
NO SOFT SILK, SO MEEK AND MILD.

A WORLD OF HOPE, FILLED FULL OF PEACE,
ARRIVES TO LET OUR LOVE INCREASE.

WE SEE YOUR LIFE AS TIME GOES BY.
HOPE AND PEACE AND LOVE CLIMB HIGH.

TEACHER: It's busy tonight in Bethlehem. People traveled from all over Israel to sign their names for the Roman leader. Joseph is a member of King David's royal family. That's why this little family is visiting my Inn.

Of course Mary and Joseph wanted a room. Everybody wants a room tonight. I don't have space. Hmm, That's not true. I have one small space, a stable with a manger to feed the animals. If they don't mind, I don't mind. I need hay for the manger. Thank you for helping make Jesus' manger bed a little softer.

PUT MORE NEWSPAPER HAY IN THE MANGER. EXIT.



GRADE ONE: CERTAIN POOR SHEPHERDS

Actors: Grade One children, shepherd teacher
Costumes: Holy Land shepherd outfits
Props: long crooks (cardboard, dowel rods, walking sticks)

STAGE MANAGER

Shepherds! I need shepherds! On stage right away! Where's the head shepherd? You know about shepherds and angels and music and messages and I do not. Get this show going.

Shepherds run from the back to the stage.

Shepherd Teacher: Come on shepherds, before SOMEBODY (like a stage manager) yells at us again. Gather 'round and learn about real Bethlehem shepherds.

(Become a real shepherd, bowing) I am a Shepherd from Bethlehem. We are poor, sad excuses for human beings. Nobody likes shepherds. Nobody invites us to dinner at their house.

We may have stolen a shekel or two in our day. I'm just sayin'. We may have cheated a farmer out of his sheep now and then. We are the common folk. We have faults just like everyone.

I have a secret. God chose us as the first people to shout good news all over Bethlehem. Why? I can only guess God knows we shepherds need Him in a big way.

Divide speaking parts between available, willing students.

#1: I am a shepherd too. I know the secret! A baby is in Bethlehem.

#2: We can find the baby. I have no idea where!



BETHLEHEM STAR

(From corner of stage, jumping up and down, wiggling fingers)
Yoo, Hoo! Over here! Over here!



#3: Maybe we should look over there, where the star is standing. The angels said we would find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

#4: I'm cold. This sheep field needs a bigger campfire. Even the sheep keep close to the campsite on a cold night.

#5: You won't believe me since I'm a shepherd. I am not lying. I really saw angels. They were all around us singing, speaking and smiling.

#6: At first I thought I was seeing fireflies in the sky. But they came closer. That's when I fell on the ground. It was scary.

#7: It was more than scary. It was a beautiful thing. They told us to hurry up and get to Bethlehem. God had delivered a gift.

Shepherd Teacher: We have a job to do. First we worship at Baby Jesus' feet and tell Mary and Joseph what happened. Then we head out into the streets to shout God's good news to everyone we see. People have to know! People need the Lord!



All shepherds turn and bow their heads at the manger.

EXIT



GRADE TWO: ANGELS, WINGS AND THINGS!

Actors: Students, Teacher, Bethlehem Star, Stage Manager

Divide speaking parts between available students.

Costumes: White clothing

White Options: Dresses, tunics, shirts, pants, tinsel halos, glitter on hair and faces, wings or no wings, bare feet or sandals

Props: Any kind of handheld music instruments.

STAGE MANAGER

Hitting Clipboard: Angels! I need angels! Where are the angels that promised to show up for dress rehearsal. If Angels don't show up on this stage in 15 seconds, I will eliminate angels from the Christmas story.



BETHLEHEM STAR

Standing on stage/back corner

I'm pretty sure you can't do that. Angels are important to this story. "God Made A Way in A Manger" but He also made way in the Heavens for the news to spread to everyone. Let the 'star' of the show take over. I'm good at this!



Singsong, lilting Voice: Oh Bethlehem angels! Where are you? Come on stage. Rehearsal is nothing without you.

SECOND GRADE ANGELS AND ANGEL TEACHER FLUTTER
DOWN EVERY AISLE, WAVING ARMS LIKE THEY ARE FLYING.

Angel Teacher: We're coming! There was a last minute music rehearsal with Heavenly Father before we made the trip to Bethlehem. He gave us last minute instructions.

#1: Heavenly Father said this night is going to be "Big, really big. Big, big, big!"

#2: Heavenly Father said I'm a good singer so I should tell everyone the good news.

#3: I missed the meeting. What good news? What did I miss?



#4: Look! In the manger.

All angels gather in a circle around the manger, Mary and Joseph.

#5: Ta-Da!!! Surprise! It's Jesus! We followed Heavenly Father's directions.

#6: We must look a little scary. I told the shepherds "Don't be afraid. I'm here to tell you about a great and joyful event for everybody around the world." The shepherds calmed down and enjoyed our visit.

#7: "A Savior has just been born in David's town." That mean's a baby boy was just born in Bethlehem.

#8: "A Savior who is Messiah and Master. Look for a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

#9: And then we sang...I love that song. Come on...everybody sing to Baby Jesus....



ANGELS SONG
TUNE: 'AWAY IN A MANGER'
GLORY TO GOD IN THE HEAVENS ABOVE
AND PEACE TO ALL PEOPLE,
OUR FATHER SENDS LOVE.
SING PRAISES TO HEAVEN
IN BETHLEHEM TOWN
AND WORSHIP THE SAVIOR
FOR YOU HE CAME DOWN!

#10: It still brings a tear to my eye.

#11: I see the shepherds arrived, saw the baby and I can hear them shouting the good news to everyone they see.

#12: Time for all heavenly hosts to fly back to Heaven! Let's fly!

ANGELS EXIT BY WAVING ARMS
TO BACK OF ROOM.



ACT TWO
UNEXPECTED MANAGER



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GRADES 3 AND 4
GRADES 5 AND 6



ACT TWO: UNEXPECTED MANAGER



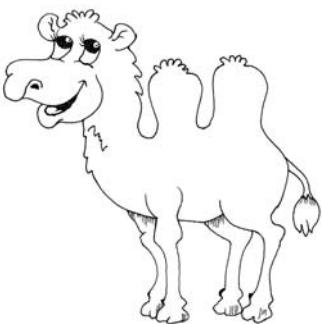
THE CARAVAN PARADE PLANS

IF YOU WANT TO HAVE VISUAL FUN AT THIS POINT IN THE PROGRAM, ORGANIZE A MINI PARADE! WE OFFER CREATIVE TIPS. USE WHAT YOU LOVE. ELIMINATE WHAT DOESN'T WORK. CREATE A FUN PARADE FOR YOUR GROUP.

THE CARAVAN IS AS SIMPLE OR ELEGANT AS DESIRED. COMBINE GRADES 3-4 AND 5-6 TO BE THE WISE MEN AND THE PARADE PARTICIPANTS. ADD OTHERS!

ONE WAY TO SHOW OFF PARADE PROPS IS TO MAKE OVERSIZED CARDBOARD ITEMS. REAL FLAGS/ PROPS MAY ALSO PARADE. IF USING REAL ANIMALS FOR A SURPRISE 'WOW' FACTOR, PARADE GENTLE ANIMALS DOWN THE AISLE, ON AND OFF STAGE IMMEDIATELY WITH OWNERS!

THIS IS AN INDOOR, AISLE PARADE. PROCEED QUIETLY AND REVERENTLY ALONG EVERY AVAILABLE AISLE - CENTER AND SIDES. WISE MEN SHOULD ENTER ALONG CENTER AISLE.



WISE MEN: Choose three students to represent the wise men with gifts. They carry items to represent gifts. Holy Land costumes with lots of layered jewelry, sandals. (Boys or Girls) Single file with other participants between them.

BETHLEHEM STAR: The Bethlehem Star leads the parade to the stage alone. Other 'stars' follow. Use available participants to dress as small stars.

OPTION: Instead of costuming the caravan stars, make huge neon yellow posterboard stars or star shapes covered in foil, attach to long dowel rods and have students carry the dangling stars along the aisles.



FLAG HOLDERS: Any number of available students, walk single or double, wave dowel rod sticks with colorful fabric or crepe paper streamers. Separate the flag holders in the parade.

Simple Holy Land costumes.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS: Young students carry simple bells, tambourines, rhythm sticks or whatever is easily available.

Keep time to music.



ANIMAL HERDERS: Holy Land costumes. This segment of the parade can be tricky, yet fun.
You decide the comfort level.

*Decide long before the event if **real** animals are pulled in wagons or led on leads or carried. Owners of animals **MUST** be present and live animals must be calm, friendly and safe. Choose kittens, bunnies, puppies, birds, etc. that make the parade an "oo-aa" moment in the program.*

You decide!

OPTION: Stuffed animals may be carried. Use our graphics as patterns and make large cardboard animals to be lifted high attached to sturdy paint sticks or dowel rods.

BASKET HOLDERS: Gather woven baskets, large and small. Holy Land costumed children carry them on their heads or in their arms as they parade. Add flowing ribbons, crepe paper streamers, silk flowers to the baskets.

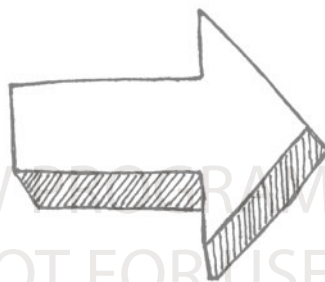
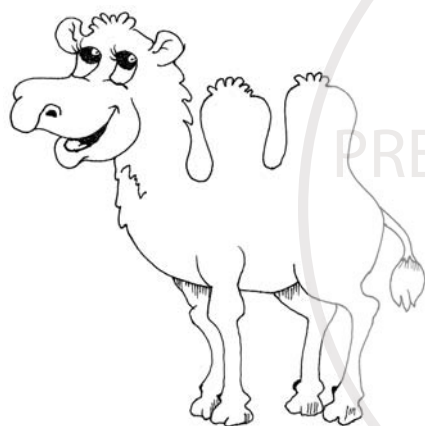
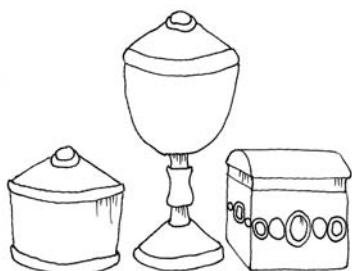


ANGELS: Add a few angels dressed in their best 'sparkle' as students are available. When the angels reach the stage, they stand across the back facing the audience with heads bowed and hands folded reverently.

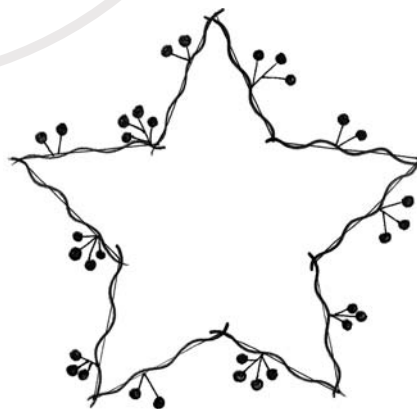
Add parade participants as desired. If Grades 3-5 have few children, include young children. Walk two by two carrying woven baskets by the handle. (With stuffed animals inside.) Older students/adults may join in the fun to create a joyful, reverent caravan parade to the stable with the wise men.



GRAPHIC IDEAS FOR LARGE POSTERBOARD/CARDBOARD VISUALS TO CARRY IN THE PARADE:



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*THIS WAY
TO BETHLEHEM*



STAGE MANAGER INTRODUCTION

Listen up, people! I need wise men! I need camels! I need gold, silver and myrrh. I need a Bethlehem Star. It's a parade, people. Is that too hard to understand? I need a parade. Line up! Let the parade music begin! (CD/Piano/Organ: Music)

Bethlehem Star, lead the parade. And this time try to be humble. Lose that "sparkle" attitude. Just point the way to Bethlehem and leave the rest to the rich guys. Wise men, walk slo--w---ly like you are majestically amazed to follow the Star. Hold up those baby gifts. The end of the parade means you kneel at the manger and sing to the baby. Can you do that? Don't waste time. Come! Come! Come!



PARADE PROCEEDS DOWN ALL AISLES TO THE STAGE.
AT THE STAGE, ALL PARTICIPANTS RUN INTO EACH
OTHER
IN A CONFUSED, CRAZY MANNER.

STAGE MANAGER DIRECTS: SPREAD OUT, BOW HEADS
FACING THE MANGER.

Aside to audience as parade mingles at the stage:

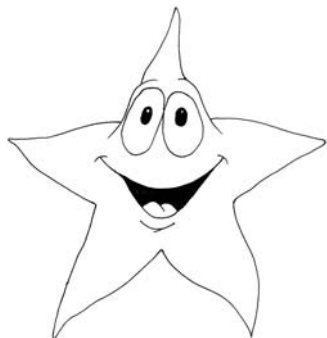
I am an UNEXPECTED STAGE MANAGER. How did I get myself into this? Personally, I don't believe this Christmasy, Bethlehem, Baby stuff. Give me a break. Some guy named Luke talked to a bunch of peasants, wrote down their fantastical story and I'm supposed to believe it?

Don't look at me like that! I'm here. I'm listening. I'm thinking. Christmas is in the air. People think about Jesus more at this time of year than any other time. Maybe I should too.

Organize people! Some of you...sit down! Some of you...worship!



THE CARAVAN PARADE



GRADES 3 AND 4

Actors:

Grades 3 and 4, 5 and 6 Students, Bethlehem Star

Divide speaking parts between available students.

Costumes:

Holy Land

Props: As assigned for parade plus posterboard stars (glittered) with individual parts printed on opposite side. Readers hold up stars as they read their segment.

GRADES 5 AND 6

GRADES 3 AND FOUR

Students stand across front of stage.

IS BETHLEHEM TOO FAR AWAY?

Original Lyrics: Carolyn Arends, from the album "Christmas: An Irrational Season"

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#1: If we close our eyes, can we see the star
Can we find our path in its light
And if we are still, tell me, can we hear
The song of the angels tonight.

#2: Can we find our way to the baby king?
Can we worship him now in the hay?
And can we believe he change everything
Or is Bethlehem too far away?

#3: If we dream our dreams with our wisest hearts
Will we dream of peace on earth?
Will our lips proclaim glad tidings of
The Wonderful Counselor's birth?

#4: Can we find our way to the baby king?
Can we worship him now in the hay?
And can we believe he can change everything
Or is Bethlehem too far away?



#5: O, little town of Bethlehem
How far it must have been
From heaven's throne of glory
To your humble manger scene.
If God saw fit to travel there
Should not also we?

#6: If we seek him we will find him in
The least expected place
For his kingdom comes in the power and might
Of his sacrifice and grace.

#7: Can we find our way to the baby king?
Can we worship him now in the hay?
And can we believe he can change everything
Or is Bethlehem too far away?
Is Bethlehem too far away?

GRADES 5-6

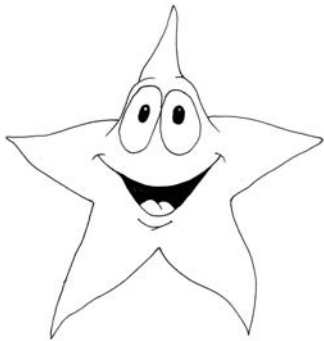
(Ask students to stand across front of stage.)

NOT THAT FAR FROM BETHLEHEM

Lyrics: Point of Grace, Album "A Christmas Story"

Writers: Gayla Borders, Jeff Borders, Lowell Alexander

#1: Underneath the stars
Just a simple man and wife
somewhere in the dark
his words cut the silent night.



#2: Take my hand
For the child
That you carry is God's own
And though it seems the road is long....

#3: We're not that far from Bethlehem
Where all our hope and joy began
For in our arms we'll cherish him
We're not that far from Bethlehem

#4: Let us celebrate
As the Christmases go by
Learn to live our days
with our hearts near to the child

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#5: Ever drawn, ever close
To the only love that lasts
And though two thousand years have past

PLEASE PURCHASE
#6: We're not that far from Bethlehem
Where all our hope and joy began
For when our hearts still cherish him
We're not that far from Bethlehem.

EXIT



ACT
THREE
UNEXPECTED MANGER



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MIDDLE SCHOOL
HIGH SCHOOL



ACT 3:

UNEXPECTED MANGER

INTRODUCTION



THE STAGE MANAGER INTRODUCTION



The *Caravan Parade* and those sparkling stars were quite impressive. You should have seen the backstage mess. Costumes on the floor. Kids crying. Teachers yelling. Some kid just escaped out the back window. (Don't worry, we caught him!) Glitter everywhere. And you all thought the dress rehearsal has been perfection.

Sometimes what you see up front, on stage, is not the real thing. Is Bethlehem the real thing? This Jesus story sounds so unreal. Like there's a 'catch' someplace in the story that I don't understand.

Let me think: A foreign country makes laws for Israel. Young couple gets weird messages from angels. Joseph and Mary get caught up traveling by foot at the worst time for Mary. No room to sleep, let alone have a baby. Stable available. Baby born. Manger available. Shepherds, bad guys, show up. Angels showed up. Wise men show up and bring just the right gifts for just the right time. Uh-huh, it COULD happen!

Right time. Right place. Right people. Right gifts. Was everything a coincidence or was it a God-Incidence? I'll never know for sure.

Checking Clipboard: Next! Ohhh no, teenagers....what have I done to deserve this? (Shout) I need middle and high school kids on stage now. Give me a break and get up here. This rehearsal is taking way too long. I haven't eaten and we all know what happens when I haven't eaten. I get grumpy. And 'h-angry'you wouldn't like me when I'm 'h-angry"! Let's go! Let's go! On Stage!



MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL: THE TALK!

Actors: Stage Manager, Teens
Costumes: Today's Fashion
Props: Backpacks, headphones, cell phones, sport gear

Divide speaking parts between available students.

#1: We're here to give you 'The Talk'.

Stage Manager: (Nervously...) The TALK?

#2: Yes, you know.... 'THE Talk'.

#3: Have you checked the facts? Jesus has been God's Plan since the Garden of Eden. God made a way in a manger. God's WAY is Jesus.

#4: This is how much God loves the world, "God (point up—"you know Who") gave us His one and only Son, (that's Jesus). This is why: so that no one needs to be destroyed; Anyone can have a wonderful, happy and forever and ever life. God loves YOU!
(From John 3:16)

Stage Manager: I never thought of it in terms of ME.

#5: Probably because you were busy being a 'sinner'.

Stage Manager: (Offended) Excuse me? That's kind of rude.

#6: Not really. We're all in the same boat. Everybody has done, thought or said bad things. . We've gathered a long, sorry record as sinners. We cannot live the lives God wants for us. So, God did it for us. Got us out of the sin mess and renewed us to please him. Guess who did that? Jesus!

(From Romans 3:23)

Stage Manager: What does that have to do with Bethlehem and Mary and Joseph and shepherds and wise men and...and....all this unbelievable angels and star stuff?



#7: That's just it. God made the place a poor, humble village. Bethlehem. He made quite an impression with His miracle baby. Every person in every culture pays attention. God also looked forward in time and saw all of us backstage at a church Christmas program.

#8: It's so exciting! Jesus arrived right on time to make this happen. People didn't really get ready for Jesus. They knew God promised them a Savior but they figured their Messiah would be a king or military leader who would run off cruel armies and provide delicious, nutritious food forever. Instead, Christ died for us. (From Romans 5::8) I know....hard to believe...Jesus loved us that much. He died on a cross when He didn't have to do that.

#9: Jesus rose from the grave and still lives! People hundreds of years before Bethlehem told the world this was God's plan.

Stage Manager: I go to church. I'm nice...mostly...to people. I work hard at my job. I'm a good person. I'm okay. After all, I'm the Stage Manager!

#10: Nope. You cannot be good enough to get to Heaven. Trusting Jesus to be your Savior is the only way. Jesus said, "I AM the Way, the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me".
(John 14:6)

Stage Manager: Thanks for The Talk, kids. You have done your job. I'll think about it later. I have one question for you....Where are your Holy Land outfits? You can't be in the show without the right clothes.

Teens: (*Shaking heads*) Noooooooo! He still doesn't get it!



EXIT



CONCLUSION:

WOULD YOU LIKE TO HOLD THE BABY?

Actors: Joseph, Mary, Stage Manager, Bethlehem Star
Shepherds, angels, wise men, stars to stand in their places

Bethlehem Star: (*Alone ~ Center Stage*) It looks empty up here. We need to finish the show with everyone who saw Jesus. Come! We need shepherds on stage. We need angels. Wise Men, come again and worship the King. Stars! You were watching that night too! Everyone! Come and see Baby Jesus!



STUDENTS WHO REPRESENTED
THESE BETHLEHEM CHARACTERS
GATHER IN THE NATIVITY SCENE ON STAGE.

DO NOT SPEAK.

ONCE IN PLACE, DO NOT MOVE.

ALL EYES FOCUS ON THE BABY IN THE MANGER.

DO NOT RESPOND OR LOOK AT STAGE MANAGER!

Bethlehem Star: That's perfect. If you do it like this on the night of the show, the audience will understand the Bethlehem story. I'm so proud of you. I'm proud of me too!

Take position at edge of scene.

STAGE MANAGER ENTERS NATIVITY SCENE SILENTLY.

WALK AMONG CHARACTERS. ADJUST COSTUMES.

MOVE CHARACTERS AN INCH OR TWO.

STOP THOUGHTFULLY.

STARE AT THE BABY IN THE MANGER.

TAKE YOUR TIME!

Mary: (Pick up baby tenderly.) Would you like to hold the baby?

Stage Manager: May I?

Joseph: Certainly. It's a boy. We named him Jesus.

Mary: (Handing baby) Be careful. Hold his neck in your arms. He is so tiny.



**Stage Manager: Face audience with baby. Speak directly to the baby.
Tuck speaking part in blanket before program.**

(Quietly to the baby, with heartfelt emotion) I'm the stage manager. But then, you know that. I guess no one else in Bethlehem can see me or hear me. I didn't bring a gift. I guess that's not important.

Thank you for everything you've done for me. You've been by my side every step of my life. I'll never forget that day when I lost everything and you were there to whisper I would be fine. I could count on you when I felt dark inside. You were right there. Even when I didn't feel good about myself, even when I didn't like anyone else.



I have been unkind to these children. I was impatient at practice time. Like that time I hollered at them. I hollered real loud. You love the children as much as me. I should treat them better. I think I talked to you about that.

I love you. You're my closest friend and that means I can hold my head high wherever I go. Thank you. I believe.

(Based on words spoken in "Mr. Krueger's Christmas" nativity scene)

**BOW HEAD.
HAND BABY BACK TO MARY.
EXIT STAGE QUIETLY.**

JOSEPH AND MARY STAND, HOLDING BABY.

AUDIENCE OR SPECIAL MUSIC: "WHAT CHILD IS THIS?"

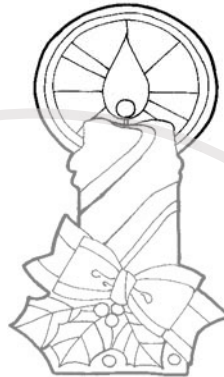
Bethlehem Angel: That's a wrap! Great job everyone. See you for the real show "God Made A Way In A Manger" tomorrow at 6 PM sharp. Don't forget your costumes.

**STUDENTS ON STAGE SCATTER
TO THEIR SEATS IN AUDIENCE.**



OPTIONAL AUDIENCE CONCLUSION

CANDLELIGHT CEREMONY



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PRAYER



COME TO THE MANGER PARTY!



Assign party planning to one small group,
Hand picked friends or Sunday School class
*Offer delicious food, background Christmas music,
simple Christmas decorations and casual fellowship.*

PREPARATIONS BEFORE PARTY DAY

MENU: Ask people to share their favorite Christmas dessert.
Provide a variety of beverages. Or:

Christmas Cookies Galore
"Happy Birthday" Jesus Sheet Cake
Variety of sandwiches, salads, chips

NOT FOR USE
IF THIS IS A SUNDAY MORNING EVENT,
SERVE A CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST
COMPLETE WITH DOUGHNUTS,
ORANGE JUICE, COFFEE AND TEA.

SEATING: Decide the best seating arrangement depending upon the size of the anticipated gathering. Position tables and chairs and serve food buffet style. Guests stand and move around the room to chat. Group chairs in small circles for casual conversation.

MUSIC: Fill the room with quiet, Christmas music. Live instrumental music performed by local church musicians or favorite CD performances.

CENTERPIECES: Full Nativity scene on buffet table. Place nativity figures, pillar candle and poinsettias to each table.



PARTY DAY PREPARATIONS

DECORATE SERVING TABLE AND GUEST TABLES.
BREW COFFEE, HEAT TEA KETTLE.
SET OUT DESSERTS
MAKE CHRISTMAS PUNCH

THE PARTY

Greet guests as they come through the serving line. 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!*

