

Greetings From The Heart

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The Secret Life
Of Christmas Cards



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of Christmas Cards



Greetings From The Heart

The Secret Life Of Christmas Cards

It is Christmas
in the heart
that puts Christmas
in the air.

~W.T. Ellis

I WILL HONOR
CHRISTMAS
IN MY HEART



AND TRY TO
KEEP IT
ALL THE YEAR.

~Ebenezer Scrooge "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens



The DREAM Lives!

Are You Dreaming?

Is There A Secret Life of Christmas Cards?

An exhausted mom discovers peace, joy and Jesus in the middle of her crazy Christmas season when her Christmas Cards come to life.

Come for the DREAM. Stay for the stable.

Celebrate Christmas on stage with small groups of children, teens and grown ups. Our tired mom discovers a dreamy world of wonder inside her Christmas cards.

Surprises at every turn!

"Greetings From the Heart" is an inter generational holiday program. Become a Christmas Dreamer. Join the fun!

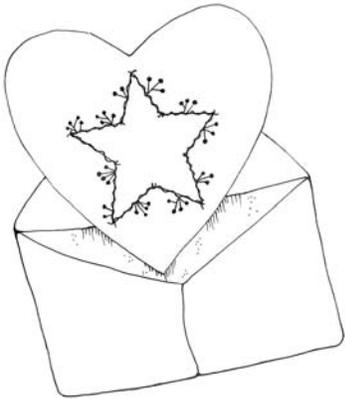
...And the Sweet Dreams Christmas Party!

Fill The Air With Christmas!

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

*Plan an All-Church Christmas program
Delight the eyes and ears of young and old.*

*Open Prayerfully!
Turn This Page*



Index



Introduction.....	1-4
Very Important Techy Information.....	5
Christmas Director-The Dream Plan.....	6-8
Adaptations.....	9
Music! Music! Music!.....	10
Stage And Props.....	11-12
Rehearsal-No Problem.....	13
Costumes.....	14-15
Publicity.....	16
Teachers-Your Leadership Is Valued.....	17
Just A Word About Memorization.....	18
Main Characters.....	19
Greetings From The Heart ~ The Secret Life On Christmas Cards 20-52	
At A Glance.....	21
The Prelude ~ The Procession.....	22
Christmas Card Readers.....	23-24
ACT 1: DREAM A LITTLE DREAM OF ME 25-37	
#1: Birth-Age 3 Mother and Child Memories.....	26-27
#2: Preschool Baby Jesus and The Angels.....	28-29
#3: Kindergarten Christmas Cookies.....	30-31
#4: Grades 1-2 No Room! I Mean It!.....	32-35
A Family Christmas Card: Real J-O-Y?.....	36-37
ACT 2: FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS 38-44	
#6: Grades 3-4 Shepherds Down Low! Angels Up High.....	39-41
#7: Grades 5-6 Wise Men Still Follow.....	42-43
Monologue: Mary's Song.....	44
ACT 3: DREAMS DO COME TRUE 45-52	
#9: Grades 7-9 Meet Me At The Manger.....	46-47
#10: Grades 10-12 We Tell The Old, Old Story.....	48-50
CONCLUSION: NEVER LET GO OF YOUR DREAMS 51-52	
SWEET DREAMS CHRISTMAS PARTY 53-54	



Very Important 'Techy' Information

IF PURCHASING 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

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This is a **ONE TIME ONLY**
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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 is longer and more intense rehearsal is necessary.



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--Christmas Director-- The Dream Plan!



One Picture Is Worth A Thousand Words.

Picture a trimmed, twinkling Christmas tree. Picture eager faces anticipating perfect gifts. Picture feast tables filled with the best holiday foods. Picture stacks of colorful cards with cheerful messages from loved ones far and wide.

Now....Picture Bethlehem and Baby Jesus. From His tender teen mother and wide eyed earthly father to shepherds, angels, wise men, a star and a humble stable, Christmas is God's rescue plan.

Enjoy snapshots of Bethlehem inside *cards* that come to life.
Tell the Bethlehem story and picture today's holiday fun.

*The Bethlehem Story is Powerful!
It changes lives every time it is told.
Christmas Is A Moment Away!*

Easy to organize. Assign group leaders who agree to take charge of individual segments. **No Age Limits!**

Make program copies. Assign segments to Sunday School classes, church committees, small groups of friends and willing individuals.

No memorization!

Follow Directions

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. Dive into the Christmas story as experienced by a tired mom dreaming of better times. The audience sees the Bethlehem story inside the Christmas cards come to life.

Bring it to the stage!

Delegate!

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

Positively Positive!

It is worth extra effort in the midst of personal preparations, parties and travel to make this Christmas event 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. Eliminate what cannot be used, divide speaking parts or combine speaking parts as needed. Give teachers and participants segments copies in a colorful folder.

Create YOUR vision!



Prepare!

Order *Greetings From The Heart* with more than a month lead time. Assign responsibilities, prepare props, design staging, teach music. **Keep it simple!**

No Memorization!

Except for the youngest children, it is possible to create a *Reader's Theater*. Decorate each printed segment with a Christmas Card backing facing the audience. Individual parts are placed inside for easy reading. Some groups enjoy memorization and others avoid it. Memorization requires lead time and intense rehearsal.

This is an
ALL CHURCH/SCHOOL
Production!

Involve adults as readers,
musicians and leaders.

Adapt the program
using available participants.



Adaptations

“Greetings From The Heart” lasts about forty five minutes depending upon music and personal additions or eliminations. It can be performed in less time. The “Sweet Dreams Christmas Party” is not included in this time frame.



Adapt to fit your Christmas traditions.

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.**

OPTION: *Use the same 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. The goal is to tell the Christmas story. **Don't leave out anything important.**

Large Church

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

Sweet Dreams Christmas Party

A Sunday School class, parents or group of friends completes party plans. Decorate, prepare food and clean the area. The *Sweet Dreams Christmas Party* is a fun option. No time for a social gathering? Plan a great program and eliminate the party.



Music! Music! Music! Carols! Carols! Carols!



Choose traditional Christmas Carols for audience participation. Print lyrics in a 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.

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Special Music - Make It Personal

Talented people from church and community make this event sparkle. These options are NOT included in the existing program. Consider time limitations. Choose music options geared to the talent levels of people involved.

VOCAL SOLO

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

VOCAL GROUP

HANDBELL/CHIME CHOIR

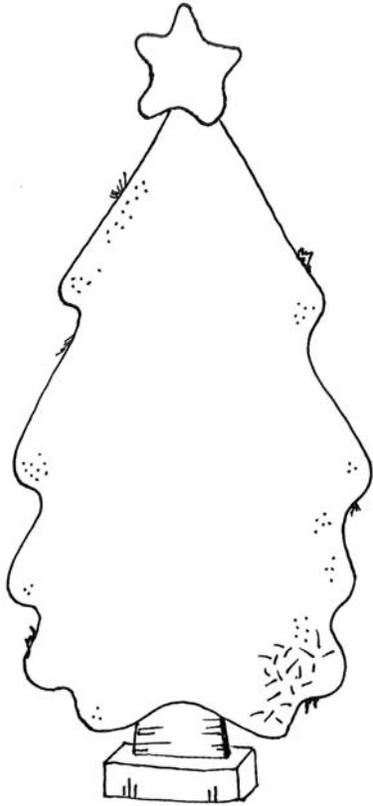
CHILD/ADULT CHOIR

INSTRUMENTAL SOLOS



Stage And Props

This is a unique stage presentation with a minimum of props. Small groups carry personal props. The stage is set simply with inexpensive, easy-to-find props and lighting.



Set Up

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

Staging

Each small group becomes part of a stop action holiday card. Carry appropriate props to bring the card to life. Focus on people and props, not background. A plain white wall is also appropriate. Place general Holy Land items on stage. (Pottery, green plants, wooden benches, pillows)

Mom's Place: Place a rocking chair, end table with lamp and basket with Christmas cards at one side of the stage. Add homey items as desired: afghan, pillows, photos, table top Christmas tree or decoration.

Props

Make simple props from cardboard. Use existing Nativity scene items already owned by the church/school.

Seating

Assign assistants who sit with children. Participants sit in the audience and come to the stage.

Follow program instructions.

Sound System

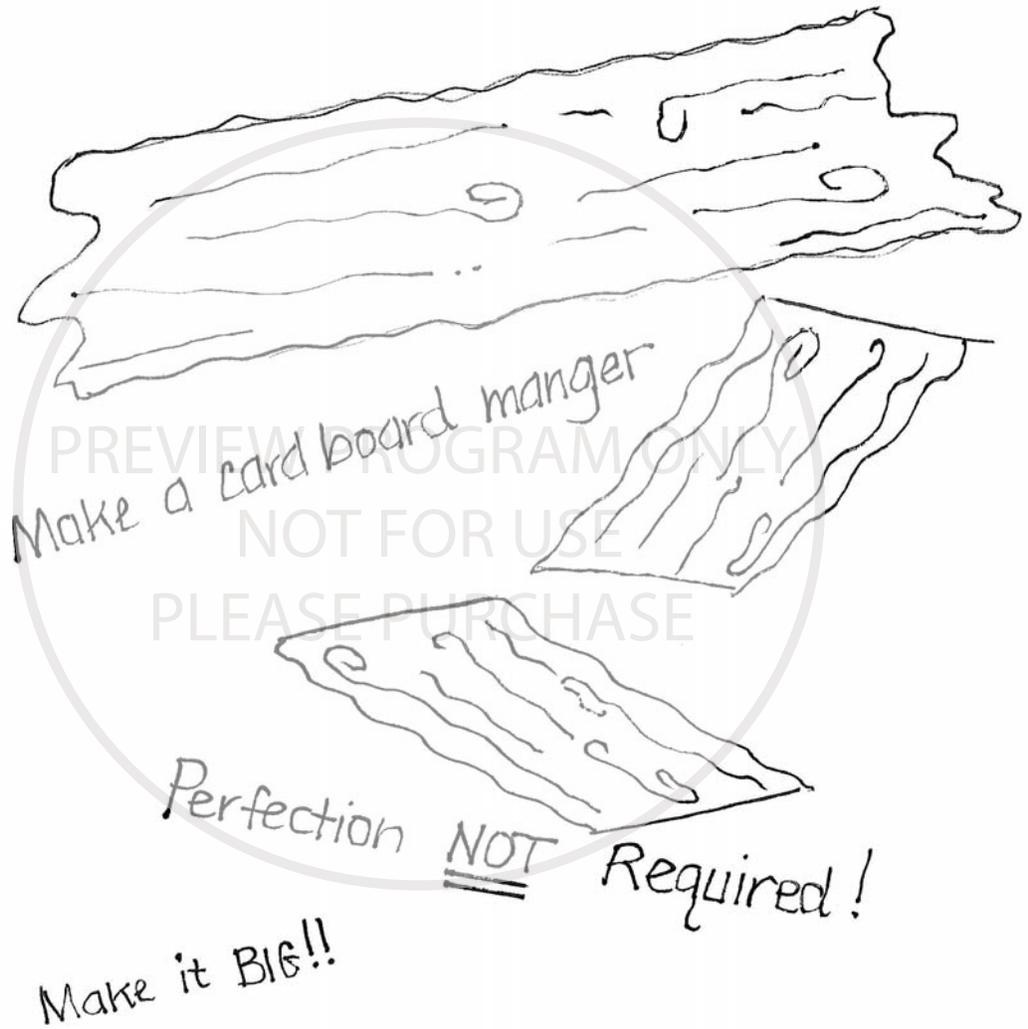
Place microphone stands across the stage. Attach personal microphones to the main speakers. This detail makes the difference between a frustrating experience and a delightful event.

Lighting

Dim the room lights. Leave holiday decorations lit. Place small spotlights on the floor in front of the area where Christmas cards will come to life.



Rough Cut Bethlehem Wood



Make a cardboard manger

Perfection NOT Required!

Make it BIG!!



Rehearsal...No Problem!

No Rehearsal!

Really? Easy to stage and easy to present. Divide segments between small groups, Sunday School classes and/or friends. Communicate basic information to small group leaders. No formal rehearsal required.

It has been done!

One Rehearsal!

Plan one dress rehearsal to maintain order...and sanity! The day before the event works well. Folks remember instructions best 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. This extra preparation may include music presentations. Rehearse choirs, handbells, vocals and instruments with the chosen music as desired.

Memorization requires intensive attention.

Notes:



Costumes



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

When costuming a large group, one solution is to ask each participant to prepare their attire. Parents of young students may be willing to supply the necessary clothing.

Costuming is important because the goal is to bring each Christmas Card to life.

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Full Costumes

Pillow Cases: Cut a neck hole in one pillow case. Cut up the front to the neck hole. Cut arm holes in each side. This creates a long vest. Plaid or striped flannel pillow cases are available and work great for little shepherds and wise men.

Fabric: Two wide strips of fabric crisscrossed over each shoulder front to back. Tie with a knot. Attach rope or belt.

Head Wraps: A square of fabric over the head with a wide ribbon or strip of cloth around the top.

Bathrobes: Collect bathrobes from garage sales/resale shops. Use contrasting fabric for head pieces and sashes.

Foot wear: Bare feet or sandals.

Angels: Dress in white cotton or silver lame'. Wear wings or go wingless. Place gold or silver tinsel garland taped in a circle on each angel head. Tie tinsel around the waist for a sparkling belt. Bare feet or sandals. Face/hair glitter for that extra sparkle.



Stars: Dress little 'stars' using hand made posterboard glittered stars draped over their neck like a necklace. 'Stars' dress simply in black slacks or leggings and simple tops. The 'stars' may wear tinsel garlands in their hair and have a bit of glitter brushed here and there.



Show Off

Ask young participants to remain in costume as guests leave or attend The *Sweet Dreams Christmas Party*. Congratulate the costumed children for a job well done. Reward them with hugs and small gifts as desired.

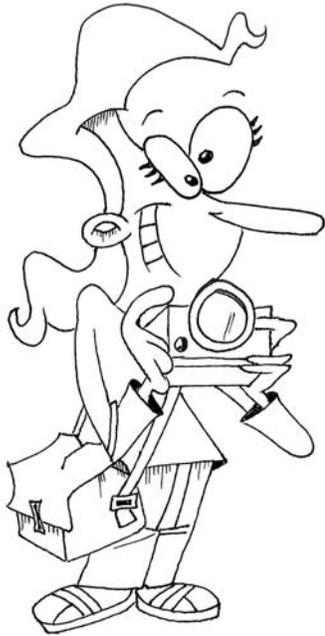
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Publicity

Publicize 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 Christmas event. Print announcements in November and December newsletters. Let people know there will be a Christmas celebration including food following the program.

Local Newspaper

Include an announcement with church holiday publicity. Ask a reporter and photographer to plan a feature article. Prepare to be interviewed.

Television and Radio

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

Social Networking -Web Site

The web site is a perfect opportunity to advertise the Christmas event. Take pictures, include a short description. Include dates, times and party plans!

Christmas Card Invitations

Send family invitations home with students. This is effective for families who are not involved. Send real Christmas cards with invitations tucked inside.





Teachers - Your Leadership Is Valued!

Show Up With A Smile!

Sit in the designated area with your group. Lead them on and off stage. Perform your speaking part enthusiastically. Coach students quietly if they have problems.

Stage fright is not uncommon!

Sometimes the kids get scared too!

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After The Program

Collect props. Students may remain in costume. Mingle with guests.

Enjoy the party.

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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, take extra time to stage the program and memorize parts.

Consider longer lead time and more rehearsals.



Or Not To Memorize -

Consider a Reader's Theater. It does not affect the final presentation. Ask children, friends, older adults and people who may not normally participate to join the fun. The event becomes inclusive!

With limited practice time, prepare participants to read their parts. Practice in small group settings so that everyone speaks with confidence.

Carry printed speaking parts in creative ways. Depending on which segments are being performed, back the scripts 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? Small flashlights.

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



Main Characters

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



Christmas Card Readers

Station teen and/or adult Christmas Card Readers at the edges of the sanctuary. One reader stands center stage. If the room is dark, carry small flashlights. Read a variety of card messages. Hold real Christmas cards with script segment inside. Read clearly as if reading a real Christmas message.

Mom

This person may be a young mother, middle aged mom or grandmother. Her short comments guide groups on and off stage. The exhausted, friendly mom is comforted, amused and inspired as she reads her Christmas cards. She sits in a comfortable chair at one side of the stage with a container of Christmas cards (and script) in her lap.

'Mom' gives reason for the cards to come to life as she dreams after a long, exhausting day of Christmas preparations.

J-O-Y Family

Choose actors who become mom, dad and three children of various ages. Taking their Christmas card photograph becomes a tug of war over joyfulness. One parent sit in a chair, each child holds large letter (J-O-Y), one parent holds camera/phone for picture. Dress up for Christmas!

Mary

Mary's Song is a monologue spoken by one girl/woman dressed as Mary. Sit on a bench or small chair, manger in front, carry child in long blanket. Come to life to speak lines. Read from script.



Greetings From The Heart !

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The Secret Life
Of
Christmas Cards

20



At A Glance

Prelude

Procession

Christmas Card Readers

MOM

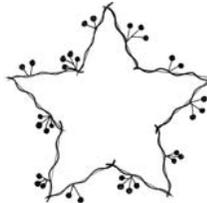
ACT 1: Dream A Little Dream of Me
Preschool: Baby Jesus and The Angels
Kindergarten: Christmas Cookies
Grades One and Two: No Room! I Mean It!
Skit: A Family Christmas Card – Real Joy?

ACT 2: Follow Your Dreams
Grades 3-4: Shepherds Down Low! Angels Up High!
Grades 5-6: Wise Men Still Follow
Monologue – Mary's Song

ACT 3: Dreams Do Come True
Grades 7-9: Meet Me At The Manger
Grades 10-12: We Tell The Old, Old Story

Conclusion

Sweet Dreams Christmas Party



Greetings From The Heart

The Secret Life Of Christmas Cards

The Prelude

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



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.
OR, the participants may sing a favorite Christmas Carol as they walk.



Christmas Card Readers



OPTION: Find *Google images of 'first Christmas card'*. The colored and uncolored first card is found online. Show on a large screen as the introduction is read.

COSTUME OPTIONS: Readers dress as Victorian Carolers. Long dresses, formal shirts and long coats, old fashioned hats. If not available, dress as today's carolers.

**Station Christmas Card Readers at the edges of the audience.
If the room is dark, read by the light of small flashlights.**

#1: (*Center Stage*) The first Christmas card was a postcard. From the 1843 design, one thousand cards were lithographed and hand colored. It featured a Victorian family celebrating Christmas by toasting the health and happiness of their family, friends and nation.

Around the family are drawings featuring feeding people in need. This first card did not sit well with church folks. It showed too much partying. The reminder of doing good for the poor was too hard hitting.

#2: Since that first Christmas card, millions of cards have been sent all over the world. In case you never received one of these lovely bits of art with added personal messages, Let us remind you:

"Jesus! The gift of God's great love. The joy of all our praise. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all the earth. PS Hi Mom and Dad! I couldn't afford to send you a gift this year so I am sending this card instead. If you are wondering, I'd like a new guitar this year. Send money! Merry Christmas"

#3: "May the Birth of the Christ Child fill your holiday with love. PS It was good to hear from you this year. Sounds like everything is great with your family. We have had a terrible year! Letter enclosed. We numbered our problems for easy reading. Sending love! Merry Christmas."

#4: "This Christmas may you be closer than ever to those you love, to the blessings of joy, to the promise of peace. PS I will be glad when all this Christmas fuss is done and I can take down the decorations. Can't stand all the company and nutty family showing up. This time of year drives me crazy! Merry Christmas!"



#5: "Joy to the World. Wishing you and your loved ones the blessings of this holy season! PS It's been an awful year. No joy around here. The only 'God Bless You' happens when we sneeze. Merry Christmas."

#6: "Wishing Your Family As Good A Christmas As Our Family Is Planning. PS Our kids are as smart as ever. We enjoyed our Caribbean vacation. Bought a new house this year and got all new furniture. Both of us landed great new jobs with big raises. Our new AKC registered champion puppy sends his love too. Hope your year has been good. Merry Christmas."

#7: "Sending Christmas wishes across the miles. PS. I worry all the time. I am losing sleep. I've been very sick. Why don't you ever call? Merry Christmas!"

#8: "You are in our hearts this Christmas. PS We'll bring the green bean casserole and you bring your usual mandarin orange Jello salad (even though we don't like it much). Meet you at Mom's at 1:00 Christmas Day. Try to be in a good mood this year. Merry Christmas"

#9: "From my corner of the world to yours: Happy Holidays! PS Hawaii is beautiful this time of year. How deep is the snow where you are? Ha, ha! Merry Christmas"

#10: "All I want for Christmas is to love and be loved by you. PS But you better get me something! Merry Christmas!"

#1: Peace!

#2: Joy!

#3: Happiness!

#4: Love!

#5: Christmas!

#6: Hope!

#7: Jesus!

#8: Lights!

#9: Bethlehem!

#10: ...and the cards! All those Christmas cards!

Exit



Act 1: Dream A Little Dream of Me

Mom

Costume: *Wear a comfortable bathrobe and pajamas with fluffy slippers. Carry a laundry basket filled with jumbled laundry. Sit in a comfortable chair with a basket of Christmas cards. Place the program in the basket for easy reading.*

Entrance: *Carry the laundry basket. Walk slowly from back to stage, sighing and exhausted. Yawn and stretch. Light the small lamp and get comfortable. Place the card basket and script in your lap.*

Become a tired mom who is comforted, amused and inspired while reading Christmas cards.

Mom: Everyone is in bed. The dishes are done. Cookies are baked. The furniture is dusted. Once I fold the laundry I can go to bed. Judging by the amount of laundry I do every day, I am convinced there are people living here I have never met.

I'm so tired. There are so many Christmas cards. People take time to send a card and note once a year. You would think I could find a moment to read their messages and remind myself of what Christmas means.

(Yawn) Jesus, Bethlehem, shepherds, wise men, stars, stables...maybe I can read just a few. I'm so tired. My eyes keep closing. I'll just rest my eyes for a moment.

CLOSE EYES.

FALL ASLEEP WITH CARDS IN HAND.

**THE CHRISTMAS CARDS COME TO LIFE.
THE STORY OF JESUS UNFOLDS IN A DREAM.**

25



Christmas Card #1: Birth-Age 3 Mother And Child Memories

Actors: Young mothers/babies/toddlers.
Costume: Best Christmas outfits
Stop Action: Mothers hold babies without moving. Stand, Sit, Smile.

Tired Mom: (Looks at card in hand.) My children will never remember their first Christmas. I was so excited. I over did the celebration. It was my first real connection with Mary. I cannot imagine having a baby in a stable, in a manger, with strangers.



(Read Card) "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the Inn." Luke 2:7

No Sweeter Thing

(May be read by one or more young mother.)

Life holds no sweeter thing than this—
To teach a little child the tale
Most loved on all the earth.
And watch the wonder in his eyes
While you tell him of the baby's birth.

You tell of shepherds and a song
Of gentle, drowsy beast and hay
Where snuggled in that night so long
God's tiny Son and His young mother stayed.

Life holds no sweeter thing that this
To tell a little child in Christmas candle glow
The story of a Babe who's birth
Became the loveliest of truths we know.



"Away in a manger", how precious the words
That tell us of Jesus, our Savior and Lord.
Born in a stable in Bethlehem town,
The wee Babe from Heaven on Christmas came down.

"Away in a manger", it thrills us to hear
Of Mary's sweet Babe, we'll ever hold dear.
Asleep on a bed of sweet smelling hay,
The week King from Heaven in swaddling clothes lay.

Oh, come to the manger from out of life's cares
Come worship the Savior with praise and with prayers.
Come every nation, the great and the small.
Come worship, as families, the Savior of all.

Then truly we'll honor our dear Savior's birth
And the peace we dream of will come to this earth.
-Kay Hoffman

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Music Option: Away In The Manger

Audience Sings: Sing the first verse of "Away In A Manger" softly as mothers come to life and move in the scene, hugging babies and singing the lullaby along with the audience.

Exit



Christmas Card #2: Preschool Baby Jesus and The Angels



Actors: Preschool Children, Preschool Teacher
Costume: Homemade angel costumes
 Tinsel shaped as halo in hair. Large white t shirts with belts.
 Each child holds doll in blanket.

Stop Action: Spread group across the stage. Some stand, sit and stand on step stools. Tell them to 'stand still like statues' until they respond to teacher.

Tired Mom: (*Look at card*) Signed...Your Little Angels. Well, look at that! My own children slipped a little card into the basket. I never saw it until now. How cute. Little angels all over the place and baby dolls too.

Preschool Teacher:

All my heart this night rejoices
As I hear, far and near.
Sweetest little angel voices;
"Christ is born",
their choirs are singing
Till the air, everywhere,
Now with joy is sweetly ringing.

Angels! It is time to tell the Christmas angel story about the night Jesus was born. What did the angel say to the shepherds?

Children: Glory to God in the Highest!

Teacher: Who was in the field that night?

Children: Shepherds!

Teacher: What did the shepherds do?

Children: They ran to Bethlehem!



Teacher: Who did the shepherds see?

Children: Jesus in the manger!

Teacher: Remember Baby Jesus and the night you sweet angels sang your special song to Him.

Glory, Glory, Angels Sang

(Tune: "Jesus Loves Me")

Glory, glory angels sang
On the night when Jesus came.
He smiled sweetly on that day.
Baby Jesus in the hay.

Chorus: Glory to God,
Glory to God
Glory to God
And peace to men on earth.

Exit



Christmas Card #3: Kindergarten Christmas Cookies!

Actors: Kindergarten, Kindergarten Teacher

Costume: Oversized kitchen aprons, large baking utensils

Stop Action: *Group stands at a card table covered with holiday table cloth. Teacher stands at center of scene in a large apron, flour on face, holding cookie sheet proudly in the air. Stand 'as still as a statue' and smile. Hold utensils in the air. Rise on tip toes to see the cookies.*

Surprise Option: *As a treat, place homemade cookies in individual sandwich bags. Fill ribbon trimmed baskets. As Kindergarten children leave the stage, let them give cookies to audience while a Christmas Carol is sung. OR, a small coupon on colorful paper:*

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GOOD FOR ONE FREE CHRISTMAS COOKIE
NOT FOR USE
AT OUR 'Sweet Dreams Christmas Party'
PLEASE PURCHASE

Tired Mom: I love making Christmas cookies. As long as I can remember, cookies have been part of Christmas. My mom cut out angels, stars and even Baby Jesus. We decorated them with frosting and candy.

We put them on the kitchen table told Jesus' Bethlehem story. Of course, that didn't stop us from biting the heads off the wise men!

Start Action: *Children wave their kitchen utensils and crowd around the see the cookie tray. Together they say, "Don't push!" "Let me see?" "Did you see Baby Jesus?" Practice saying the jumbled lines all at the same time.*



Kindergarten Teacher:

Christmas Fragrance

Assign a few lines to students who learn their short parts. Even if the last line of each stanza is spoken by a student, it adds to the presentation. This may depend upon student ages and maturity.

It's Christmas time at our house,
Anyone could tell;
Even if you couldn't see
You'd know it by the smell.

There's fragrant air a-drifting;
It's loaded with good sniffs
Of gingerbread and popcorn
And baking cookie whiffs.

The kitchen's full of odors
Of pudding, steam and cake
And lots of other goodies
Mother likes to make.

There's aroma from the greens too
That mingle with the rest;
But if the truth be really told,
I like cookie smell the best.

For I think the Christmas magic
Is a treat that's hard to beat
With it's tantalizing promise

ALL STUDENTS: Of the treats we're going to eat!

-Solveig Paulson Russel



**Audience Sings: God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen
Or Choose Another Carol/Special Music**

Distribute cookies or coupons to the audience while the Carol is sung.



Christmas Card #4: Grades 1-2 No Room! I Mean It!

Actors: Grades 1-2 students, Teacher, Mom,
Mary, Joseph, Innkeeper

Divide speaking parts between available students

Costume: Holy Land costumes

Props: Traveling packs, walking sticks, cardboard
"No Room! I Mean It" sign

Stop Action: Students face one direction as if walking together. Pretend to walk with arms mid air and legs mid stride. Some look up, some look down. One student may carry a lantern held high to light the way.

Tired Mom: There were so many people on the road to Bethlehem. Danger. Confusion. Mary and Joseph are in that crowd.

They signed their names to be taxed. The real event was happening in a Bethlehem barn where Jesus, Messiah and Savior was born while they are busy doing other things...important things. They had no idea history was about to change.

My card says: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."
Psalm 119:105

Teacher: "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. All went to be taxed, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David) to be taxed with Mary, his espoused wife, being great with child."
Luke 2:1-3



Start Action: *Students move, trying to see what is down the road. Several students speak. They may read their parts. Combine or expand parts as needed.*

#1: Where are you going?

#2: I am going to Bethlehem. It sure is crowded.

#3: I cannot believe our taxes. If I pay more money, I can't feed my family.

#4: My feet hurt. My sandals broke on the road.

#5: I'm hungry. Do you have bread?

#6: I'm so tired. I hope there is a nice hotel in Bethlehem.

#7: Anybody got extra money I can borrow?

#8: *(Everyone together)* NO!

#9: I can't explain but I think something big is happening tonight in Bethlehem...and Beyond!

#10: Run! If we are fast enough, we can beat those shepherds running into Bethlehem and get the last hotel rooms!

Stop Action: *Students stand still near Mary, Joseph, Innkeeper until they move to speak. Innkeeper shakes head "no". Joseph's arms spread as if saying, "You are our last hope." Mary stands behind Joseph, head bowed. Students stand and sit on stage and steps across the stage.*



Tired Mom: This isn't the first time the Innkeeper shook his head that night. He's thinking how much money he could have earned if he had built those extra rooms in the backyard. Now he is turning away this cute young couple. The card reads:

*"The little town was filled when Mary and Joseph sought a bed.
'No Room' the keeper sadly said but offered them his cattle shed."*

Teacher: The cattle shed! What kind of place was that for a king? It was dark. It was humble. He expected them to say, "Thank you anyway. We will try another place."

Students move around Mary, Joseph, Innkeeper

#1: Is this guy the Innkeeper?

#2: He didn't have a room for Mary and Joseph.

#3: Couldn't he squeeze two more people and a tiny baby into his hotel? They don't look very big.

#4: He's thinking, "What CAN I do for these two"?

#5: What could he do? No Room means NO ROOM!

#6: Maybe the Christmas card can speak for itself. I want to know what happens.

Mary, Joseph, Innkeeper come to life to speak their lines.

Innkeeper: No, I'm sorry. There is no room in the inn.

Joseph: We won't take up much space. Can you find a small corner...any corner?

Innkeeper: Sorry. No Room. I mean it.

Mary: Joseph, It's almost time for the baby to come. I need a place to sit down.

Joseph: I'll pay whatever you ask. Please help us.



Innkeeper: I do have one place but you don't want to stay there.

Mary: Yes we would! Where is this place?

Innkeeper: It's the cattle shed. The stable where we keep our animals. It isn't much. Not much more than a cave. The donkey will be comfortable and well fed.

Joseph and Mary: *(Together)* We'll take it!

EXIT

OPTION:

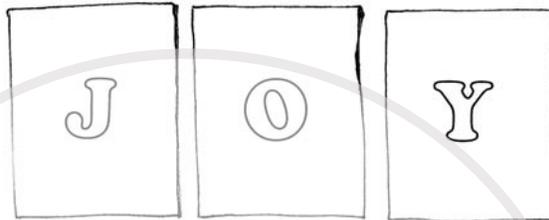
Special Music or Audience Christmas Carol
"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

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A Family Christmas Card: Real J-O-Y?

Actors: Two parents, three children
Costumes: Dressed for a family portrait
Props: Chair for one parent, cell phone/camera, 3 separate J-O-Y letters
Stop Action: Children gather around one parent in chair. Children hold colorful letters. Parent photographer stands in front of them with camera.
Child #1 holds the "J" upside down.



Parent #1: For the last time, stop talking. Look at the camera. Smile. I am sick of your constant bickering.

Child #1: I do not bicker. I have valid opinions.

Child #2: And MY opinions don't count! Like, it is my opinion that your shoes are stupid.

Parent #2: Stop the insults. We are here to take our annual Christmas Card photo. I want smiles. Smile!

Child #3: Quit poking me. You made my letter crooked.

Child #1: Hurry up and get this done. I have things to do.

Child #2: You don't have anything to do unless you count 'complaining'.

Parent #3: This picture has to be perfect. I ordered 500 Christmas cards to send to every friend, relative and neighbor. If you ruin it, I will make you all suffer. So... SMILE!

Child #3: Why can't Christmas ever be about us? Why can't we just be happy? Every year we get Christmas over with as fast as possible.

Parent #2: Look this way. Give me that old family twinkle? Think 'perfect'. The sooner I get the right faces, the sooner you get out of here.



Child #3: Christmas is supposed to be peace, love, family. Instead, we get 'smile, hurry up, get out of here'.

Child#2: Oo, somebody has been reading the Christmas cards.

Parent #1: Our card must show how much we love each other, how peaceful and beautiful our home is. You know, how much better we are than anyone we know. Good idea! Everybody hug each other!

Awkward hugs and funny faces.

Child #1: Seems fake but I do like the 'toy' theme.

In Unison: Toy theme?

Child #1: Yeah, toy theme. See? (Point to letters) T-O-Y. I love toys.

Parent #1: (Angry) No! Your letter is upside down. It's Joy! Joy! Joy!

Child #2: (Groans) No-o, now we have to start over. Why didn't anyone notice this dingle berry had the sign upside down?

Parent #2: This is the last year we are doing this. It's JOY! Look like you are all filled to the top with Christmas JOY!!! I want JOY on your faces. Now!

Everyone cooperates with big, holiday smiles

Child #3: Just for that moment I felt a tingle. It was like a 'happy' tingle.

Child #1: Me too! I almost felt joyful. How did that happen?

Child #2: I didn't step on your foot. That is cause for celebration.

Parent #1: This is going to be our best Christmas card. That's what the season means. Cards, cards, cards!

Parent #2: One more time. Stand straight, hold those letters, smile and...this time...say "Joy!"

ALL: JOY!

Option:

**Audience Sings Christmas Carol
Special Music**



Act 2: Follow Your Dreams

Mom

Yawn and stretch. Get comfortable in the chair with the basket of Christmas cards and script on lap.

Mom: I must have fallen asleep. I can do this. Next card. "Follow Your Dreams". Nice Christmas thought. I'm so tired. I would like to follow my dreams...right to my bed, my pillow, my soft blanket....(Drift off to sleep.)

Wake up, girl! Another card. I know I can do this. Just a few more cards. Christmas is moving so quickly. The shepherds, angels and wise men must be in this stack somewhere. They followed their dreams and ended up in a stable in Bethlehem.

I have to organize these cards. They look like my busy life. Crazy, crooked, tossed around and forgotten. I'll try to do better. It's not quite Christmas yet.

My cards always bring me back to the reason I sit up late getting ready for...ready for...what? I never seem to have time to think about the reason for the season.

Christmas is a celebration with Jesus. He was born! For me! I must never forget why Christmas is special.

Now, if I can only stay away long enough to follow my dreams. Or maybe I can just rest my eyes and dream about shepherds, angels, wise men, babies.... (Close eyes)



Christmas Card #6: Grades 3-4 Shepherds Down Low! Angels Up High!

Actors: *Students, Teacher, Mom*
Divide speaking parts between available students.
Costumes: *Bethlehem Shepherds, Angels*
Props: *Cardboard sheep, cardboard shepherd staffs*

Stop Action: *Students stand still until they say their lines. Shepherds look up fearfully, one arm shading eyes. Angels stand still in middle of the shepherds with arms held up.*

Tired Mom: Looking at these Christmas shepherds and angels with today's eyes I see how important they are. Could Jesus have been born without shepherds and angels? Sure. But it would not have been as fun.

Teacher: Shepherds were the worst of the worst. Worthless. Considered only good enough to watch sheep on the hill day and night and night and day. "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night."

Shepherd #1: Who is that? The light is so bright! Are they people? Can't be. They are flying in the air!

#2: You see them too? I thought I was dreaming!

#3: Angels! God's angels! They looked me right in the eye. I'm shaking.

#4: The brightest angel looks happy.

#5: "Fear not". I got that part. My knees are still shaking!

#6: What are they doing here? The field is lit up but the sheep are calm.

#7: Look! It's not one or two, there are thousands on the hillside. We're outnumbered!

#8: Run for your lives!



#9: Wait! I think they are going to speak.

#10: Give them a chance. Maybe they come in peace.

#11: Whenever anyone says they come in peace...RUN!

Tired Mom: (*Hold up card*) Keeper! Angels are my favorite! When Joseph and Mary did not feel in control during the months before Jesus was born, angels let them in on a secret. "It's God's plan! Don't worry!" Then shepherds saw angels. They look beautiful to me. I'm not sure why the shepherds were afraid. They spoke, they sang. All was right with the world...for one wonderful night!

Teacher: The angels said to the shepherds, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."

Luke 2:10

Angel #1: The night His star was shining,
The angels sang above.
For laid within a manger
Was the Child of wondrous love.

#2: The night His star was shining,
Few men knew of His birth.
But yet the heavens echoed,
For angels knew His worth!

#3: (*To audience*) We'll let you in on a secret. We are not REAL angels. We just play angels on stage. Angels show us how to praise God. That is exactly what they did on the hillside with surprised shepherds.

#4: **Serve God.** Angels are one way God works but so are people. We are God's first choice to love and serve others on earth.

#5: **Be available.** Angels are ready to go when God says "Go"! Even the smallest jobs are important when God says, "I need you".



#6: **Tell the Good News of Jesus.** An angel told Mary. An angel told Joseph. An angel told shepherds. When the angels went back to Heaven, it became our job to tell EVERYONE....Jesus is Born!

#7: We can come to God any time in prayer. I wonder how many times I prayed and God sent angel help.

#8: Angels are so excited about God's greatness that they sing "Holy, Holy, Holy" all the time. Let praises of God fill the air!

#9: Don't be afraid! Behold I bring good news of great joy for all the people! A baby has been born your you in the city of David! A Savior, Christ the Lord. This is the sign: Find the baby wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger!

Audience Sings: Christmas Carol
"Angels We Have Heard On High"

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Christmas Card #8: Grades 5-6 Wise Men Still Follow



Actors: *Students, Teacher, Mom*
Divide speaking parts between available students.

Costumes: *Wise Men, Star*
Props: *3 Gifts, One large cardboard Christmas Star on long stick with streamers*
Stop Action: *Star student holds star high as Wise students look at the star. Involve as many students dressed as wise men as available. Three students carry gifts high. Stand still until speaking parts begin.*

OPTION: *All Wise Men wear sunglasses!*

Tired Mom: Isn't it just like God to send help when Joseph and Mary needed it? Far from home, chased by powerful people, newborn baby, no job. How would they survive? Kings from a far off land show up with gold, frankincense and myrrh. Practical items that could be sold to live every day life.

Teacher: "The wise men went their way and the star...went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. Coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary and they bowed down and worshiped him. They opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, incense and myrrh. Having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country another way."
From Matthew 2:9-12

STAR: *One student wears sparkly clothing, face and hair glitter as available. Hold large star hanging from a stick. Gently swing the star. Walk forward as wise men follow.*

#1: That star is weird. I need sunglasses. *(Option: All Wise Men put on sunglasses at the same time.)* It seems to move ahead of us.

#2: Could be trouble....Let's not get involved.



#3: That star is talking to us. Search for a king. Could this be a sign from Heaven? I don't want to miss the sign.

#4: That star could lead us to a miracle. I'm willing to follow.

#5: We are standing in the east. The star seems to be moving west.

#6: (*Follow the star*) There it goes! Hurry up! Follow it!

#7: Get the camels! Get the food! Pack the tent! Get my slippers and pajamas! I'm not going without my stuff!

#8: Gifts! Somebody wrap gifts. We cannot show up without presents. No matter how long it takes, we will find the king. AND! We will take gifts. That's a great plan!

#9: Gold! I will give gold. Kings love gold! That's pretty impressive.

#10: Kings like Frankincense. It smells great and it's worth a lot of money. Anybody know a guy who's got Frankincense...cheap?

#11: I guess I'll give Myrrh. It is a trendy gift and the market place has some. We can pick it up on our way out of town.

#12: Grab the camels. They are leaving without us!

ALL: Let's go! (*Follow Star. Exit by running back the center aisle.*)



Monologue:

Mary's Song



Actors: Mom, Teen or Adult Mary, Baby/Wrapped Doll
Costume: Simple Holy Land
Props: Manger, Bench (Stable Items)
Stop Action: Mary is seated on a small bench behind a manger Look tenderly at newborn baby wrapped in long blanket. Come to life to speak lines. Read from script.

Tired Mom: This card is simply and elegantly Christmas. Mary, a manger and a baby boy. I wonder what Mary is thinking. She cannot possibly know the challenges life will bring with Jesus in her life. And the wonder of it all.

Mary: (From Luke 1:46-55 TM)

I'm bursting with God-news;
I'm dancing the song of my Savior God.
God took one good look at me and look what happened—
I am the most fortunate woman on earth!
What God has done for me will never be forgotten,
The God whose very Name is holy, Set apart from all others.

His mercy flows in wave after wave
on those who are in awe before Him.
He bared His arm and showed His strength,
scattered the bluffing braggarts.
He knocked tyrants off their high horses,
pulled victims out of the mud.

The starving poor sat down to a banquet;
the callous rich were left out in the cold.
He embraced His chosen child, Israel;
He remembered and piled on the mercies, piled them high.
It's exactly what He promised,
beginning with Abraham and right up to now.

MARY REMAINS IN PLACE FOR NEXT SEGMENT.

OPTION:

**Audience Sings Christmas Carol
Special Music**



Act 3: Dreams Do Come True

Mom

Joseph and Mary risked their families, lifestyle, finances and their very lives. They were in trouble. This Christmas Card says it all Jesus was born into an earthly family that loved Him, protected Him, raised Him well and followed Him to the Cross. They never expected to stand at an open grave.

(Praying) Lord, Help me be like Mary. Give me Your strength when my strength is gone. Make me brave when I am afraid. Let others see You in me. Give me grace to be your servant. Amen.

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Christmas Card #9: Grades 7-9 Meet Me At The Manger

Actors:

Students

Mary remains in place

Divide speaking parts between available participants

Costumes:

Holy Land

Stop Action:

Mary, Joseph watch baby at Manger

Add Holy Land people as desired

#1: "For unto us a Child is born, for unto us a Son is given and the government shall be upon His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over His kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time and forever."

Isaiah 9:6-7

Mary: Joseph, the baby finally fell asleep. Look at those little eyelashes. And those fingers! I counted them. 10 fingers and 10 toes. I don't think there has ever been a more beautiful baby. We are agreed, His name will be Jesus.

Joseph: The angel said, "Name him Jesus" so Jesus it is. He will be strong and kind. He is God's Child but God has allowed Jesus to be my child for a few years.

Mary: Jesus belongs to the world but just for tonight He belongs to us, only us. You speak to the shepherds, dear. And greet the angels for me. I am a little tired. I need to rest.

Shepherd: We don't want to disturb you but you are not going to believe what happened on the hillside a few minutes ago.

Joseph: I might.

Shepherd: (Dramatically) There was an amazing light. There were thousands of angels. They spoke. They sang. They gave directions. That is how we ended up here. We wanted to see "the Child born in the City of David who is Christ the Lord."



Shepherd: Angels said, "He will be wrapped in swaddling clothes." Look at that baby wrapped up tight.

Angel: (Speak to Shepherd) We mentioned you would find him in a manger. Here he is. Good job getting here in record time. Tell everybody you meet on the streets what happened!

Wise Man: We don't want to disturb you either but you are not going to believe what happened to us.

Joseph: I might.

Wise Man: There we were, minding our own business, when out of nowhere there was this really bright light. The star moved so we followed. Deserts, mountains, towns, cities. We met King Herod and finally ended up here. A most unsanitary place for a king by the way.

Wise Man: We brought gifts. By the way, you might want to avoid King Herod. He's a bad guy. We are going to find a new way home.

Joseph: Good idea. Thanks for stopping by.

Audience Sings:

**Silent Night
Special Music**

Exit



Christmas Card #10: Grades 10-12

We Tell The Old, Old Story

Actors:

Students

Divide speaking parts between available participants

Adults may be included

Costumes:

Modern Clothing

Props:

Lit candles

Students stand along the center aisle front to back.

*Candles are lit and the story is read aloud
based on "The Night Before Christmas"*

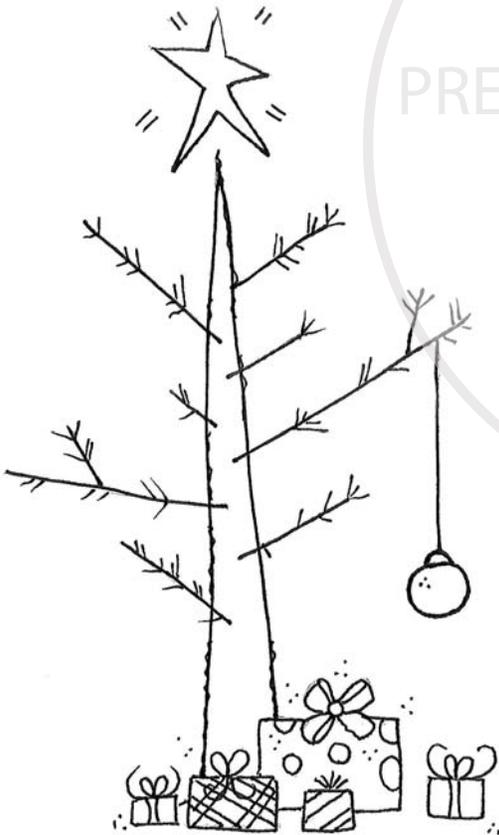
#1: 'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the town
Everybody was busy, it was time to bed down.
Rough stockings were pulled on all feet to keep warm,
A chill in the air caused a bit of alarm.

#2: As little ones slept, others searched, some in vain
For a warm place to sleep and keep out of the rain.
Mama in her kerchief, Papa in his cap
Had just gone to bed when they heard someone rap.

#3: And out on the street was a sight to be seen!
A man and young wife...not looking too lean!
The donkey she sat on was tired and spent.
They looked like they wouldn't have money for rent.

#4: It appeared the woman would soon have a child
And the weather was really not what you'd call mild!
Papa felt a pang in his heart for this little lost two
But his inn, full of beds, was filled up-what to do?

#5: Mama to the rescue, suggesting the barn.
'Twas better than nothing and certainly warm.
So off they all flew to see what they could do
Fresh hay in the manger-a baby was due!



#6: With gratitude, man and wife thank the old pair
Who walked back to the inn, just glad they could share.
But later, that night something woke them from sleep!
A bright light lit the room, from their bed they did leap!

#7: They look out the window and there not too far
Was the biggest, the best, the whitest new star!
And over the hilltops some shepherds ran down
And seemed to be searching through Bethlehem town.

#8: Papa and Mama ran into the street
Too ask a good shepherd to rest his sore feet
And tell them what happened that caused such a stir
So the shepherd reported all that occurred.

#9: He told of the angels who lit up the sky
With God's glory—and told of a baby nearby
Wrapped in blankets, laid in a manger with hay
In somebody's barn—and it must be this way.

#10: It might be OUR barn they explained to the shepherd
But what is so special about all that you heard?
The shepherd reported to them what was said—
The Savior! The Lord's in that small manger bed.

#11: The men on the run entered into the barn
And there on the hay the new baby kept warm.
The Savior it was! Of that they were sure!
And they called him Jesus—so perfect, so pure.

#12: And in the short distance they heard angels sing
"Glory to God, peace on earth, He's your King!"
What a wondrous event took place that great night
When Jesus our Lord came to earth to do right.



#13: To set an example, to show us the way
To our Father in Heaven Who loves us always.
To pay for our sins which, ourselves, we can't do
By dying and shedding His blood just for you.

#14: The shepherds returned to their sheep on the hill
With a song in their hearts of praise and good will.
Others came, rich and poor, in the days that went by
The star showed the way, shining bright in the sky.

And today we remember the babe in the hay-
Merry Christmas to all
Follow Him He's the Way!
-Jan Carlson

Exit

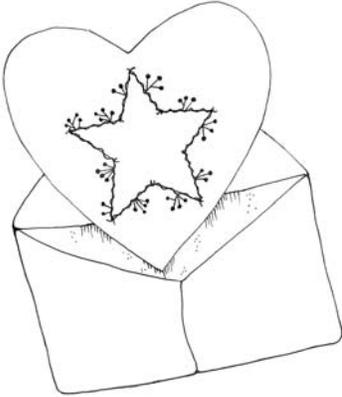
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Conclusion

Never Let Go Of Your Dreams

Mom

Stand, yawn, stretch, pick up laundry basket



And that's how it happened. Or at least, that is close to what happened. I see Jesus' story told every year in my Christmas cards. They arrive at my door so small and insignificant. I put them in a basket and keep baking, wrapping, decorating, visiting, eating and...forgetting the treasured messages tucked inside those envelopes.

If I just close my eyes for a few minutes I can go back in time to a tiny, dusty village. I might fall asleep but if I do I will dream a sweet dream.

Jesus could have been born anywhere but Bethlehem is where God chose to interrupt the world with a gift.

In the hustle and bustle of simple life, the village market opened, the overrun of visitors hit the streets to eat and pay their tax and head home. Dogs barked, children laughed, fathers headed for work, mothers swept the dirt from the doorways and life began again.

It is likely no one noticed two common people or even wondered what their story was. They were too busy. They were too tired. There was too much to do that morning to think that God had finally kept His promise and their Messiah had been born among them. Yet, there He was. Not much of a

king. Just a baby. Tired mom, quiet guests, unbelievable story in a humble barn. No one was looking because they were too tired and too busy. Not much has changed in 2000 years. I am proof that people are still tired.

But, I can dream. If I never let go of my dreams, even my Christmas cards can come to life.

Exit

Walk back center aisle carrying laundry basket.



Sing Christmas Carols

Candle Lighting Ceremony

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

Closing Prayer

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It is time for a fantastic
Sweet Dreams Christmas Party!



Sweet Dreams Christmas Party

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

Offer delicious food, background Christmas music and casual fellowship.



Preparations Before Party Day

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

Christmas Cookies galore
are a fun Christmas treat!

If this is a Sunday morning event,
consider serving a continental breakfast
complete with doughnuts, orange juice, coffee and tea.

Seating: Arrange seating based on the size of the anticipated gathering. Serve buffet style with guests moving around the room to chat. Place chairs in small circles for group conversation.

Music: Fill the room with Christmas music. This could be live music performed by local church musicians or CD's. Ask a teen to be the Sweet Dreams DJ! Set up music on a stage or in a prominent corner.

Centerpieces: Cover tables as desired. Feature Christmas centerpieces on each table. Candles, poinsettias, greens, Nativity figurines. Decide what accessories will make the room sparkle.



Preparations On Party Day

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

During The Party

Assign helpers to serve food and pour beverages. Greet guests as they come through the serving line. Move about the group to be sure everyone feels welcome. Find seats for those who may not be familiar with your church. Introduce people. Enjoy the program participants.

After The Party

The party is not over until clean up is complete. Help with dishes, remove tables and chairs while sweeping the area clean.

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Go Home To Sweet Dreams!!

PLEASE PURCHASE
*You Have Been A Good
and Faithful Servant!*

Merry Christmas!

