



STEALING CHRISTMAS

PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY
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FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

STEALING CHRISTMAS!



FROM HERE TO ETERNITY



*If I could sit
in the park
with God,*



*I would thank Him
For giving me
Today
and
Eternity!*

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**"For God so loved the world
that He gave His one and only Son,
that whoever believes in Him
shall not perish but have eternal life."**

John 3:16



STEALING CHRISTMAS
FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

Think About It: “Knock, Knock.” “Who’s There?”
“Jesus.” “Jesus Who?” “Exactly!”

The Bethlehem story comes to life in a fun, 1ST CENTURY MEETS 21ST CENTURY ‘hang on to your seat’ Christmas program. Our small town is preparing the annual Live Nativity in The Village Square. Someone stole Baby Jesus from the manger! Who can it be? Why? Will Christmas be ruined?

Laugh, Love and Tell the Christmas story involving your children, teens and grown ups on stage. The audience sings familiar carols. Add music for the on stage participants. “Stealing Christmas Melodies”, a 3 song CD/lyrics/piano package is available for singers of all ages.

We help you figure it out!



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AFTER THE SHOW, CELEBRATE!
DECK THE HEARTS PARTY!

Stealing Christmas...From Here To Eternity touches the hearts of watchers, reminding everyone that no one can ‘steal’ Christmas. Jesus comes just as sure as winter follows autumn and summer follows spring.



These pages contain plans and script for a unique Christmas program designed to change lives from Here to Eternity.

*Open Carefully!
Let Christmas Begin!*



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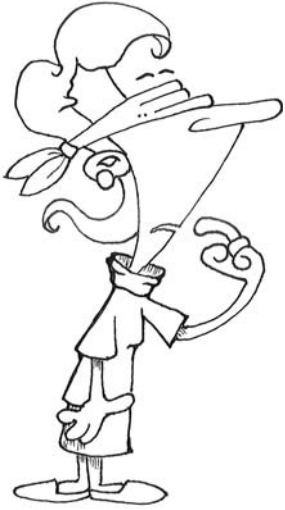


OUR CHRISTMAS DIRECTOR

“People may hear your words, but they feel your attitude.”

~ John Maxwell

Take off the blindfold. See ... You Can Do This!!!



Guarantee a successful team. This holiday effort becomes a unique event in the very 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 who agree to become the people of *Stealing Christmas...From Here To Eternity*. **Lead!**

When All Else Fails, Follow Directions

Individual leaders organize their small group 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 appealing presentation of Christmas as experienced by a small town. **No fear!!**

You Can Do Anything, But Not EVERYTHING!

Trust your staff to carry out their tasks. Check in with them often. Surround yourself with the best people, delegate authority and don't interfere unless needed. **Delegate!**

Be Positive, Patient and Persistent

All things are difficult before they are easy! Make Christmas sparkle! It is worth extra effort in the midst of personal preparations, parties and travel.

It really IS easy to organize this event.



"WE CAN'T DO IT"
 "WE NEVER DID IT THIS WAY"
 "NO ONE WANTS TO DO IT!"
 DON'T LISTEN! IF THE CHRISTMAS DIRECTOR'S ATTITUDE IS RIGHT,
 EVEN THE GROUCHIEST SAINT RESPONDS CHEERFULLY!

*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! Carry out the tasks at hand.

Prepare For Success!

Do today's work well!

Print a working copy. Do NOT write on this master copy! Mark areas requiring special attention. Adapt: Eliminate what cannot be used, divide parts or combine parts. Give leaders and participants their segment copies.

Assign small group practice to each leader.

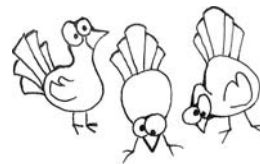
No Memorization!

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

Some groups enjoy memorization. Others avoid it. Except for the youngest non readers, it is possible to read all parts. Memorization requires lead time and intense rehearsal. Consider decorating printed parts with a colorful paper backing facing the audience.

This is an ALL CHURCH/SCHOOL Production!
 Involve adults as readers, musicians and leaders.
 Adapt the program using available participants.

*Keep
 It
 Simple!*



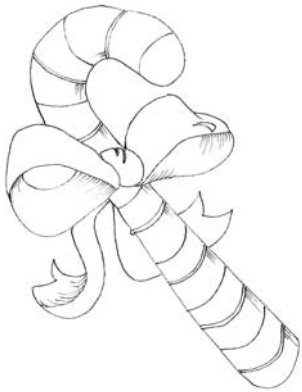
Mix it up!

ADAPTATIONS

“The more you adapt, the more interesting you are.”

Stealing Christmas...From Here To Eternity is about forty five minutes (or less) depending on music and personal choice additions or eliminations. *Deck The Hearts Party* is not included in this time frame.

Reflect your favorite Christmas traditions.



Small Church

“Do not despise these 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 (paraphrase)

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!

Deck The Hearts Party

Life Is In The Bubbles!

Ask a Sunday School class, parents or friends to complete plans. Decorate, plan and clean up. This is a fun option. If time does not allow a social gathering, plan a great program and eliminate the party.

We help!



Up With Music!

SOUNDS OF THE SEASON



“Oh sing to the Lord a new song.”

Coordinate music with music director, organist/pianist. Choose favorite Christmas Carols for audience participation. Include lyrics in a printed program or on large screen.

Choose Christmas music your group knows and enjoys.



Carols

Select traditional and contemporary Christmas songs from your music collection. The entire audience sings. **Insert carols as desired.**

We Love This New Music! Stealing Christmas Melodies

OPTION: CLOSE ENCOUNTERS MINISTRIES is pleased to present 3 original Christmas songs composed by Jonathan Miller, GLORY SOUND STUDIOS, Winston-Salem, NC. *See website for current pricing.*

Use these songs as desired. (Solo, group audience, background).

Piano and lyric sheets, double channel CD (sample voice + accompaniment performance tracks). Call 1.888.236.5433 or order directly from our website: www.cemlife.com Listen to samples in our online music catalog. Can be performed several ways (solo, small group, audience). **INSTANT DOWNLOAD** to save time, shipping and handling **OR SHIPPING** available. **YOUR CHOICE!**

EXTRA TIP! *Check It Out:* www.cedarmont.com Offers ‘Gospel Christmas Songs’. 15 classic carols and spirituals arranged and performed in an upbeat Gospel style. Lyrics and split track versions are included for singalong! Check out all the fun options at the Cedarmont Kids website. **See the current price points.**

Special Music ~ Make It Personal!

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

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| VOCAL SOLO | INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE |
| VOCAL GROUP | HANDBELL/CHIME CHOIR |
| CHILDREN/ADULT CHOIR | INSTRUMENTAL SOLO |



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!



Set It Up!

STAGE AND PROPS

Stealing Christmas...From Here To Eternity is a fun stage presentation using a minimum of props. Small groups carry personal props. Set the stage with inexpensive, easy-to-find items and lighting.

Keep it simple!

Set Up

Christmas trees, Nativity, twinkle lights, poinsettias and candle in the sanctuary add to the festive atmosphere. **Feature them.**

Staging

Your stage becomes an outdoor park-like setting where a live nativity is about to take place. Include traditional items, manger, bench, green plants, pottery, baskets to make the stage look like a Nativity scene.

Missing but held in reserve - wrapped baby doll.

Seating

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

Sound System

Place microphone stands on the stage. Attach personal microphones to the main speakers. This detail makes the difference between a frustrating experience and a delightful program. **Speak up!**

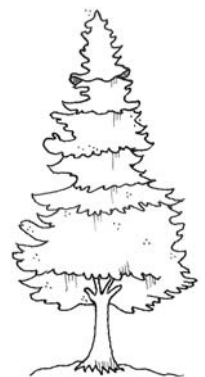
Lighting

Lighting is important. Create a park-like lighting by placing lights on the floor behind trees and props to resemble a soft evening glow. Lower the lights in the room. **Create lighting interest.**

Sign

HISTORICAL MARKER:

Place printed sign near stage.



JESUS STABLE

ON THIS SITE ABOUT 4 B.C.
ABSOLUTELY NOTHING HAPPENED.

HOWEVER, IN BETHLEHEM OF JUDEA
5916 MILES FROM THIS SPOT
JESUS, GOD'S SON AND SAVIOR
OF THE WORLD WAS BORN.

YOU CAN TAKE THAT
TO THE BANK!

ERECTED BY THE OLD TOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY,
THE OLD TOWN NATIONAL BANK
AND LOCAL PEOPLE OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.



Dress Up!

COSTUMES

Some participants become Bethlehem people and others wear modern outdoor clothing. Create simple costumes using what is available.

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

*Follow specific Costume suggestions
found in each small group segment.
Keep it simple and colorful.*

Consider Head wraps, bathrobes, long t shirts belted with rope or men's ties. Fabric wrapped over head and looped down the front of character works well.



Stealing Christmas takes place on stage in an 'outdoor' decorated park. Some speakers wear light jackets, winter coats, hats ear muffs, knit caps, boots. Try not to over-heat them!



Talk It Up!

PUBLICITY

Publicize through available 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.

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!

Web Site ~ Face Book ~ Instagram ~ Twitter

Social Networking! Does your group have an online presence? This is the perfect opportunity to advertise details. 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 your students and their families.**

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 ~**

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 ~

Memorization is not necessary. 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.

With limited rehearsal time, participants hold their printed parts and read. Practice in small group settings so everyone is familiar with their part and can read with confidence. Then gather to rehearse the full team.

Carry printed materials on stage in creative ways. Scripts segments can be backed with colorful paper, decorated with Christmas symbols.

OR, make paper copies of the specific parts each person holds. After a few minutes, the audience does not notice. It does not affect program quality.

*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!*

*Feature 'In the Park' characters who add a unique
current perspective to the Bethlehem story.
Humorous, meaningful and child-like.*

Narrator

1 Actor: Older teen or adult, male or female

The Narrator holds the on stage story together. Become the steady voice of reason, keeping everyone calm. Carry a clipboard to hold the full script. Dress in outdoor clothing: Light jacket, colorful scarf, hat. Stroll on and off stage to add information. Interact with featured modern day characters.

Teachers and Parents

A variety of leaders help students on stage. Some teachers have speaking parts and some parents are involved with younger children. Follow specific segment instructions.

Married Couple

One married couple

Short segment. Married couple walking arm in arm in the park to attend the Live Nativity. They wear comfortable light jackets and scarves. Follow specific segment instructions.

Cop On The Block

One actor: male or female

Short segment. A police officer assigned to guard the Live Nativity in the park. Wear any form of uniform and hat available. Interact with Narrator.



Climbers

2 Actors: Older teens or adults, male or female

Short segment. Argument ensues about who gets to 'fly' and place the star on the stable this year. Climb ladder to represent angels showing up in live nativity. Dress in work clothes with tinsel angel halos.

Maintenance Crew

3 Actors: Teen/Adults, male or female

Short segment. Three people secretly representing wise men. Wear work clothing, Carry silly versions of 'the gifts'. Follow specific segment instructions.

Manger Manager

1 Actor: Teen/Adult, male or female

Monologue. One person in charge of the entire event. Wear Light jacket, hat and scarf. Carry clipboard.

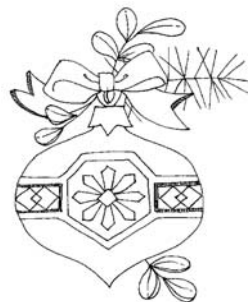
Featured Musicians!

Choose additional musical presentations. From talented children to adults, make music part of the fun. Insert as desired scattered through the program.

Consider time limitations.

Plan enough music

to complete the event.



STEALING CHRISTMAS FROM HERE TO ETERNITY 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. This is a printed program sample peek at the full event.



INTRODUCTION: Prelude
Processional

PARK AT YOUR OWN RISK

Narrator
Characters: Married Couple **BABY IT'S COLD**

OUTSIDE
Preschool: Who Stole The Baby From the Manger Bed?
Character: Cop On The Block Nobody Steals Christmas On My Beat!

ACT 1: MESSIAH ARRIVED SAFELY ~ MOTHER AND CHILD DOING WELL
Narrator
Kindergarten: Angels **FLY AWAY!**
Grades 1-2: Shepherds **FIND THAT BABY!**
Characters: Climbers **MY TURN!**
Music:

ACT 2: DANCING WITH THE STARS OF BETHLEHEM
Narrator
Grades 3-4: Wise Men and Stars **STARRY NIGHT**
Characters: Maintenance Crew **A GIFT IS A GIFT**
GRADES 5-6: Innkeeper **HOLIDAY INN**
Character: Manger Manager **BEFORE THE PART WHERE YOU GET PRESENTS**
Music:

ACT 3: WHAT HAPPENED IN BETHLEHEM DIDN'T STAY IN BETHLEHEM!
Surprise Introduction
THE GATHERING
Middle/High School: **FROM HERE TO ETERNITY**
CONCLUSION
Candle Lighting Ceremony
Music:

DECK THE HEARTS PARTY!



STEALING CHRISTMAS!

FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

THE PRELUDE

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

If using our original music, Stealing Christmas Melodies, (CD, 3 songs, piano sheet music, lyrics) consider those songs as the prelude. The audience hears the theme and the choruses.



THE PROCESSION

Gather participants in an outer room.

Participants walk to their reserved, front seats near the stage.

Adjust the entrance as desired.

Consider the shape and size of the room and the seating arrangement.

Stage a simple entrance for young and old.

Think about photography and video opportunities for excited families.



INTRODUCTION

PARK
AT
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OWN
RISK

*Lights are turned down, leaving decorations lit.
Empty manger is placed center stage.
Narrator stands behind empty manger.*

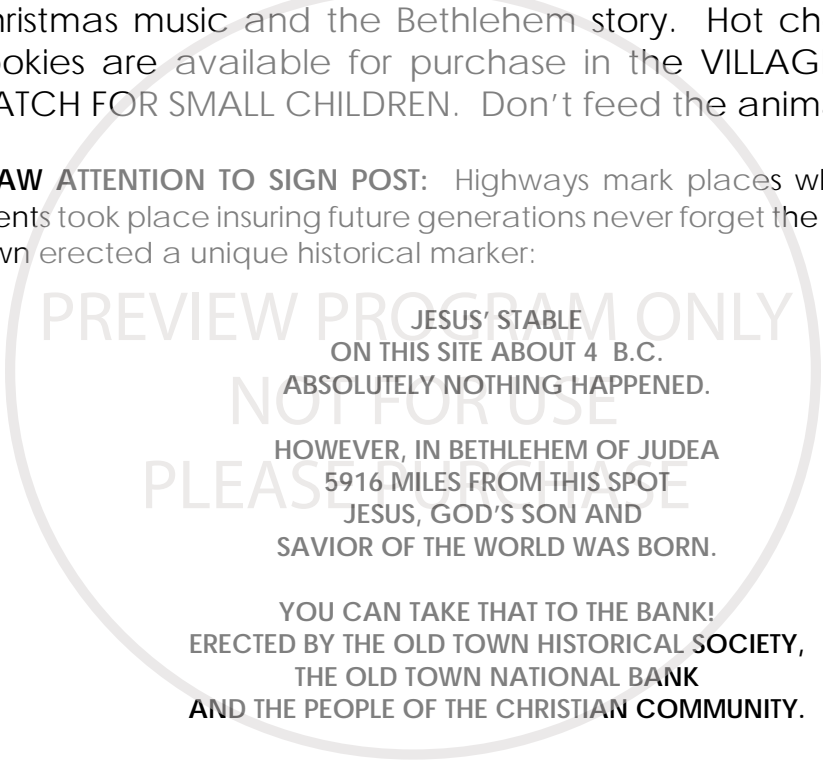




NARRATOR: Welcome to Old Town Village Square. Get a 'cuppa' cocoa and relax. Returning guests to our Live Nativity won't need reminders. New guests, please follow instructions.

READ FORMALLY: Park at your own risk. Do not park on the grass. Handicap accessible parking is available near the stable. Buses and taxis have 5 minute access to the bike lane for disembarking passengers. **DO NOT HIT BIKERS.** "Drive Through Nativity Viewing" is recommended. Adjust your car radio dial to 1620 AM to hear Christmas music and the Bethlehem story. Hot chocolate and cookies are available for purchase in the VILLAGE INN KIOSK. **WATCH FOR SMALL CHILDREN.** Don't feed the animals.

DRAW ATTENTION TO SIGN POST: Highways mark places where important events took place insuring future generations never forget the event. Our Old Town erected a unique historical marker:



JESUS' STABLE
ON THIS SITE ABOUT 4 B.C.
ABSOLUTELY NOTHING HAPPENED.

HOWEVER, IN BETHLEHEM OF JUDEA
5916 MILES FROM THIS SPOT
JESUS, GOD'S SON AND
SAVIOR OF THE WORLD WAS BORN.

YOU CAN TAKE THAT TO THE BANK!
ERECTED BY THE OLD TOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY,
THE OLD TOWN NATIONAL BANK
AND THE PEOPLE OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.

Walk with me. Notice we are in the old section of our village square. We decorate for a happy season. Every year the residents of Old Town build the humble stable where Jesus was born . People young and old participate.

When I was a tiny tot, I played a sheep, then a shepherd, then graduated to a wise man and finally I became the "climber" angel who topped the stable with the Star of Bethlehem. That was a big year. I still have the picture in my photo album. My halo was just a little crooked. The ladder just a little shaky.

This year, I am honored to be the Narrator, the Story Teller.



ANNOUNCEMENT: I painfully announce that someone stole Baby Jesus.

(EVERYONE REACTS IN UNISON WITH A SHOCKED, "OH NO!")

Our Old Town forefathers celebrated the story of Bethlehem ever since our town was established. Every year we have displayed the very same baby in the manger. Over the years our baby has become cracked and a bit shabby but we don't care. People come from every corner of the county to see that baby. And he's gone. Disappeared. It feels in our hearts like someone is "Stealing Christmas".

MARRIED COUPLE: BABY, IT'S COLD OUTSIDE!

BUNDLED UP MARRIED COUPLE HURRIES ON STAGE



Husband: (Upset) Did you say Baby Jesus is missing? Impossible!

Wife: Dear, I heard it clearly, "Someone stole Baby Jesus". I am shocked, shocked I tell you. Who would do such a thing? Why, it's unheard of! We cannot begin Christmas without that baby.

(Shouts) Stop the Live Nativity!

Husband: Sshhh, Sweetheart, calm yourself. Remember your blood pressure. I can fix this. Stay here. Try to stay warm.

Baby, it's cold outside.

Wife: I'm so cold! We walked all the way from our house to the Village Square and now Christmas won't happen. Stealing Christmas is just mean.

(Cry into hands.)

Husband: (Pulls Narrator Aside Angrily) Get over here. This is your fault. How could you let that happen? Do you see that crying woman? My wife depends on that baby being in that manger every single year. That Baby IS Christmas! Do something! Find the thief. Fast! Before we freeze!

Narrator: My fault? How can this be MY fault? I showed up with my script. All the nativity people are waiting behind the stable like every year. The animals are unloaded from the truck. I am not taking the blame for this.

Husband: I am calling the police. We are making a formal 'missing baby' report. You should have thought to do that. Unless....Did YOU steal Christmas?

Wife: A Narrator Stealing Christmas! Hmpf! What is this world coming to?

Narrator: NO! It's wasn't me. I'm just the Narrator!

MARRIED COUPLE LEAVES STAGE



PRESCHOOL:

WHO STOLE THE BABY FROM THE MANGER BED?

Actors: **Preschool Leaders, Children**

Include all available preschoolers

Costumes: Jackets, hats, scarves

Youngest children come to the manger with their leaders. Because they are so young, keep it short and simple. Leaders help them form a 'hand holding circle' around the manger. They notice Baby Jesus is missing.



Practice this rhyme before the program. It is the old fashioned rhyming game "Who Stole the Cookie from the Cookie Jar". They will learn the little rhyme quickly.

Walk slowly in a circle.

Say the rhyme adding a different name to each question.

If one or more children do not want to play the circle game, let them sit quietly and close the circle with next child's hand.

Leader: Welcome to the manger, children! It's so exciting to come to the Live Nativity before everyone gets here. We get to see Baby Jesus first.

Leader: Look in the manger. The baby is missing! Where can He be? Is Jesus lost? Did someone steal him? Let's make a circle around the manger.

WHO STOLE THE BABY FROM THE MANGER BED?

_____ (NAME) STOLE THE BABY FROM THE MANGER BED!

- ...WHO ME?
- ...YES YOU!
- ...NOT ME!
- ...THEN WHO?

_____ (NAME) STOLE THE BABY FROM THE MANGER BED.

- ...WHO ME?
- ...YES YOU!
- ...NOT ME!
- ...THEN WHO?



SING WITH THE PRESCHOOL GROUP
Choose a simple chorus to sing with the children
as they stand around the empty manger.
This song is an easy option (no piano needed).

CHRISTMAS! CHRISTMAS!

(Tune: Praise Him, Praise Him All Ye Little Children)

Christmas, Christmas, now it's time for Christmas,
Jesus came, Jesus came!
Christmas, Christmas, Now it's time for Christmas.
Jesus came, Jesus came!

Leader: Let's find your moms and dads and tell them Baby Jesus is missing.
They will be surprised! Come with me.

*Lead children off stage.
They may sit with their families
or sit in the designated program area.
Your choice.*





COP ON THE BLOCK

“Nobody Steals Christmas On My Beat!”

Actors: Cop and Narrator

Cop: (Hurries On Stage) 9-1-1 call for a police officer! What’s going on here?

Narrator: Old Town Live Nativity is ready to begin. Someone stole the baby. People are upset. The show cannot begin without Baby Jesus.

Cop: I see. And where were YOU when this supposed thief was Stealing Christmas? Nobody Steals Christmas on my beat!

OPTION: COP SINGS “YOU CAN’T STEAL CHRISTMAS” THEME SONG FROM STEALING CHRISTMAS MELODIES MUSIC PACKAGE AS A SOLO.

Cop: You look suspicious to me. I have my handcuffs here someplace.

Narrator: Handcuffs! Wait! I didn’t steal Baby Jesus. I am the Narrator, the Story Teller. Why would I steal the baby?

Cop: I’m asking the questions here. You tell me! Stealing Christmas is a serious offense in this town that will earn you a hefty fine and Christmas Day in jail!

Narrator: (Shocked) Christmas Day in jail? That is cruel and unusual punishment. Listen, we can work this out.

Cop: (fingers in ears) la, la, la, la, no bribes. I didn’t hear that! Honest cop here. I buy my own doughnuts. So YOU DID steal Christmas! Guilty! I knew it!

Narrator: NO! I mean I will work undercover and find the thief. That Baby Jesus doll is a tradition. It is old and fragile. Everyone loves that baby. That’s all I meant. I don’t even have any doughnuts.

Cop: Yes, I’m certain that’s exactly what you meant. Quit looking so guilty.

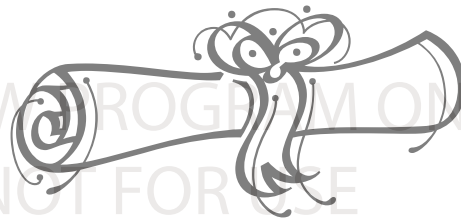
Narrator: The crowd is gathering. Cars are lined up to see the show. I’ll keep the program going for the sake of Old Town’s Christmas. YOU! Find that baby!

Cop: (Put up hands to direct traffic while leaving stage) Right! Hey! Stop! One Way Only.



ACT 1

MESSIAH ARRIVED SAFELY



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MOTHER

AND

CHILD

DOING

WELL



NARRATOR

Our Bethlehem story in the park reads much like a newspaper headline. Worldwide publishers would create a huge 'Second Coming' banner stating,

"MESSIAH ARRIVED SAFELY
-MOTHER AND CHILD DOING WELL!"

I'm afraid our local news headline in the morning will be,

"LIVE NATIVITY IN CHAOS-BABY JESUS MISSING!"

Or worse,

"LIVE NATIVITY NARRATOR SUSPECT IN LIVE NATIVITY THEFT"!

We have no choice but to carry on and hope no one notices the empty manger. No matter what anyone tells you, I DID NOT STEAL THAT BABY. I DID NOT STEAL CHRISTMAS!

(Calming down) In 1 BC, folks shouted good news from person to person, street to street and town to town. No telegraph, no telephone, no television, no twitter.

The unlikely town criers near Bethlehem were scraggly shepherds passing on information from an unlikely source, angels. Yeah, right, so they say! Who is going to believe THAT?

Turns out millions of people around the world, generation to generation believed those angels and shepherds. That's why a baby boy born in Bethlehem is Good News!



KINDERGARTEN

FLY AWAY!

Actors: Kindergarten Students dressed as angels, Leaders
Include as many children as available.

Costume Tips: Keep it Simple.

Halo/Face: 'Angels' wear gold/silver tinsel halos gently placed on heads. Add pink cheeks, glitter spray in hair and on faces. Wear white shirts, blouses, sweaters, dresses or long robes. No wings or add wings as desired on all or a few students. Your choice.

Belts: Optional tinsel ropes.

Wings: Optional (simple, colorful wings can be purchased at Dollar Tree stores or ordered at their web site www.dollartree.com (Fairy wings \$1.00 each in lots of 6-green, purple, pink) and online at www.orientaltrading.com Choose to put wings on every angel or just a few depending upon budget.

Angel costumes? Check www.orientaltrading.com This white angel gown is absolutely beautiful. It is made from white polyester and sure to stand out. Fits kids' size 4-8. Other sizes available.

See website for current pricing.



Kindergarten students 'fly' with arms from seat to stage to announce their 'good news of great joy'. Teach words that will be said in unison by children and leaders. After their segment, they remain on stage waiting for shepherds.

Leaders and students interact with the good news being shouted like a repetitive cheer. Leaders say the line first, students repeat what is said with great joy! Encourage the children to repeat loudly.

Leader: ('Fly' the angels to the stage. Let them flutter a moment or two as they are arranged in front of the empty manger.)

The park looks beautiful. The town crowd is gathering to see Jesus' Birthday story unfold. Angels always come first to tell the shepherds that Mary and Joseph and Baby Jesus are safe in a humble stable in Bethlehem. Angels are God's Messengers. That's us! Are you ready to shout God's Good News with 'wings' lifted high?

Angels: YES! (Lift arms in air)



Leader: There were shepherds camping on the hillside with their flocks of sheep. They set night watches over the sheep. Suddenly, there were angels! The shepherds were really afraid but the angels said:

SING LITTLE ANGELS

(TUNE: "Jesus Loves Me")

Prop Option: Each Little Angel rings jingle bells.

SING LITTLE ANGELS, SING THIS SONG.
BABY JESUS, HE IS BORN.

SING LITTLE ANGELS, SING THIS SONG.
WE BRING GOOD NEWS ALL NIGHT LONG.

JESUS IS BORN, JESUS IS BORN,
JESUS IS BORN,
AND ANGELS SING THIS SONG!

ANGEL CHEER

Leader: DON'T BE AFRAID!

Angels: DON'T BE AFRAID!

Leader: WE ARE HERE WITH GOOD NEWS!

Angels: WE ARE HERE WITH GOOD NEWS!

Leader: A GREAT AND JOYFUL THING HAPPENED!

Angels: A GREAT AND JOYFUL THING HAPPENED!

Leader: IT IS FOR EVERYONE AROUND THE WORLD!

Angels: IT IS FOR EVERYONE AROUND THE WORLD!

Leader: A SAVIOR HAS JUST BEEN BORN IN BETHLEHEM!

Angels: A SAVIOR HAS JUST BEEN BORN IN BETHLEHEM!

Leader: LOOK FOR A BABY IN A BLANKET IN A MANGER.

Angels: LOOK FOR A BABY IN A BLANKET IN A MANGER.

Leader: GLORY TO GOD AND PEACE ON EARTH!

Angels: GLORY TO GOD AND PEACE ON EARTH!

Leader: OK, LET'S GO HOME!

Angels: OK, LET'S GO HOME!

Leader: No, you don't have to repeat that. I mean "Let's go back to Heaven."

FLUTTER AND WAIT FOR SHEPHERDS TO COME TO STAGE.



GRADES ONE AND TWO: FIND THAT BABY!

Actors: Grade 1-2 students dressed simply as shepherds. Leaders.
Divide speaking parts between available participants.

Costume Tips: Choose simple long robes with head covering. Oversized is fine and charming. Carry long sticks, stuffed lambs as desired.

Shepherd costumes? Check out: www.orientaltrading.com Perfect for nativity scenes or Christmas plays! Includes polyester gown and headpiece. The gown is white with green stripes and gold trim. Headpiece is white with a black band. Add your own sandals. Child size medium 38" Check website for current pricing.

*Shepherds enter from back and hurry to see the angels.
They fall down on stage as angels flutter their wings, arms in air and smile!*

Leader: Shepherds! Follow me! Look, angels from Heaven. Did you hear their song? Did you hear their message of good news?

Shepherd Student: I'm scared.

Shepherd Student: I'm terrified!

Shepherd Student: Look how bright they are!

Shepherd Student: Angels from Heaven! They are real!

Shepherd Student: I fell down and hurt my knee!

Shepherd Student: Quit complaining! This is big...really big!

ANGELS LEAVE THE STAGE.

Shepherd Student: They are leaving! Wait, don't go!

Shepherd Student: We have to find Baby Jesus!

Shepherd Student: Someone stole Baby Jesus! I heard it on the news.



Shepherd Student: Let's get to Bethlehem and see what the angels are talking about!

Leader: The Bible says the shepherds ran to Bethlehem, found Jesus and then told everyone about God's Gift, the angels' message and that they had personally found Jesus in the manger. We have an important message. No one can steal Christmas! Let's get going with our good news from God!

Shepherd Student: The manger looks so empty. We must FIND THAT BABY and bring him back to Mary and Joseph.

FIND THAT BABY NOW!

SHEPHERDS SING TOGETHER WHILE LOOKING IN,
UNDER, AROUND THE EMPTY MANGER

(TUNE: "There Ain't no Bugs on Me"-upbeat and lively)

Google it if you don't know the tune.

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FIND THAT BABY NOW,
FIND THAT BABY NOW
WE DON'T KNOW MUCH
ABOUT BABIES AND STUFF
BUT FIND THAT BABY NOW.

FIND THAT BABY NOW.
FIND THAT BABY NOW
GOOD NEWS CAN'T WAIT.
WE CAN'T BE LATE.
FIND THAT BABY NOW!

ALL SHEPHERDS CHANT: FIND THAT BABY! FIND THAT BABY! FIND THAT BABY!

RUN OFF STAGE



CLIMBERS

“My Turn!”

Actors: 2 fighting siblings (male or female teens/adults)

Costumes: Simple angels. Climbing rope around waists.

Props: One Ladder, One large stable star (metal, wood, poster board **or** www.orientaltrading.com adult gold star costume. Wear it!)

Tips: Argue/fight just like kids, even if you aren't. No memorization. Be familiar with script when reading.

Walk from back to stage, arguing and carrying one folding ladder that can be set up near the manger on stage and one large star.



#1: Let me carry the ladder. It's my turn to climb the tree.

#2: I've got it. And, it's my turn!

#1: You did it last year. Don't argue with me. It's MY turn to be the angel who puts the star on the stable! You be the angel that holds the ladder and looks with great admiration at me.

#2: (Set up ladder and go up one or two steps) Give me a break! I took tree climbing lessons so I could impress everyone with how fast I get in this tree with that stable star. People are watching. Cars are going by. Children are taking their Nativity places. Their costumes are so cute. The animals are in the park. This is no time to fight. Just give me that star and get out of my way.

#1: I'm telling mom.

#2: Let me get this right. You are all grown up and you think mom is going to care who puts the star on the Live Nativity stable? You are delusional!



#1: She WILL care. Mom likes me best. She made my costume. And don't call me names!

#2: She will like ME best when she sees me put the star up there while swinging from that tree in my halo and wings. We have done this every single year since we were little kids. This year....IT'S MY TURN!!!

#1: Is not.

#2: Is too.

#1: Baby Jesus is missing.

#2: Who?

#1: Baby Jesus. Look. Empty manger. The shepherd kids ran by a minute ago shouting, "Find that Baby. Find that Baby." I thought they were joking.

#2: Oh come on. Nobody steals Baby Jesus. That would be like...like...Stealing Christmas! Can't happen.

#1: Look for yourself, hot shot. Where is the Baby?

#2: (Search the manger) He has to be here someplace. Cars are coming, children are rehearsing their lines, Village Square lights are lit. Unless....PUT HIM BACK! You can't steal Christmas because you are mad at me. PUT THAT BABY BACK IN THE MANGER RIGHT NOW!

#1: Stop being such a 'wack-a-doodle'! I did not take that baby. Hand me the ladder and get out of my way. I have a plan. We will distract them. I swing from the tree, place the star up there and you say, "Ta-Da". Angels always say "Ta-Da".

#2: Sometimes I wonder if I'm related to you. Angels don't say "Ta-Da".

#1: Oh? What have they said to YOU?

#2: Angels say....well....I never actually saw or heard an angel but I am sure they do not say "Ta Da!" swinging on a rope from the top of a tree at Christmas putting a star on a fake stable!



#1: We can keep fighting or we can be heroes and find that Baby. If someone did steal the baby, maybe they put him in the tree. Give me the ladder.

#2: You sneaky climber! Ok, climb the tree. Find the baby and while you are up there put the star on the stable and try not to break your leg. (Stomp off stage in a huff with the ladder.)

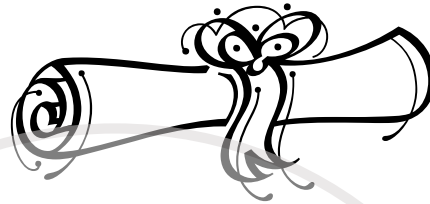
#1: That was you....last year. Hey, are you mad? Wait! I need that ladder! Baby Jesus might be up there! Did YOU take that baby? DID YOU?

CHASE OFF STAGE WITH LADDER AND STAR.

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ACT 2



DANCING WITH THE STARS OF BETHLEHEM



NARRATOR

As you can see, the show goes on. Baby Jesus is still missing. So far the only people to notice cannot do anything. Cars are driving past the park slowly. Children are taking their Christmas Nativity parts seriously. Organizers are in chaos even though they have had one full year to prepare.

Soon the entire Living Nativity gathers in hope that Baby Jesus will return. The entire town sighs a "Christmas is here" breath before they move along their merry way.

Personally, I am a little chilly. I am also a little worried that I may be blamed for stealing Baby Jesus. Handcuffs are not a great Christmas outfit accessory for anyone. Spending Christmas Day in jail is not fair, not fair I say.

Just for the record: I am innocent! I did NOT steal the baby! I did NOT Steal Christmas!

Has anyone in the audience discovered our Stealing Christmas thief? No? Well, keep looking. He has to be here and you know what they say, "Confession is good for the soul". King David once asked God to "Pardon my guilt, O Lord, for it is great". Same thing. I think the thief could be any one of you. Look to your right. Look to your left. Look deep in your hearts. You ALL look guilty to me.

Let's see where we are in the script. Ahh, yes. Act 2, Dancing With The Stars of Bethlehem. Here is our Old Town version of the Wise Men and the Stars.



GRADES 3-4:

STARRY NIGHT

Actors:

Grades 3-4 Students

Include as many participants as available.

Divide speaking parts as desired. No Memorization.

Costumes:

Holy Land Wise Men and Hand Held Stars

Props:

Each Wise Man holds a small wrapped gift
(small boxes simply wrapped in gold, silver, brown paper)

FUN STAR OPTION: www.orientaltrading.com Offers cute glittery star wands. Students portraying stars can hold star wands and wear white shirts. Bright make up and spray glitter in hair. Add hand made glittery stars—on shirts, shoes, backs, headbands. AND, Kid's Star Costume IN-4/4358 Just one costume featured is an oo-aa moment!

Your choice! Let them shine!

GRADE 3 STARS

'Stars' enter from the back and 'twinkle' onto the stage to background Christmas music (your choice). Students shake their stars, twirl and dance along the way. When they reach the stage, spread out across the stage and stand as still as statues (stop action) smiling at audience.

Star #1: Are you smiling? Everybody smile!

Star #2: I will not smile, twinkle and dance at the same time. I'm here. That's as much as I agreed to do this year.

Star #3: (Shout) Car coming! Wave and smile!

Everyone waves their stars and smiles ear to ear as if a car is moving past them.

Star #4: Somebody stole Baby Jesus. The Wise Men will be here soon expecting to find a Baby King. What are we going to do?

Star #5: We are going to 'twinkle' just like our teacher told us to do.

Everyone waves their stars and does a crazy dance move, any dancing or twirling will do.

Star #6: Stealing the Baby Jesus is just like Stealing Christmas. It's wrong, just wrong. I love Christmas.

Star #7: (Shout) Car!

Everyone waves their stars and smiles as if a car is moving past.



GRADE 4 WISE MEN

While quiet music ("We Three Kings") is played, all 'Wise Men' walk slowly, single file from back area. They walk among the twinkling stars and kneel at the empty manger with their gifts.

More than three is fine.



#1: Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews?

#2: We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.

#3: When King Herod heard we were coming, he was upset and all Jerusalem was upset.

#1: (*Looking in empty manger*) No, I really mean it. Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews? Baby Jesus is not in the manger. He's missing!

#4: Missing! We traveled all this way and Jesus is missing?

#5: Someone stole Baby Jesus! Give me a break. You only traveled from Fourth Street!

All Stars and Wise Men act shocked!

#6: Impossible! Baby Jesus has been at our town's Living Nativity every single year since I was born.

#7: Sshh, maybe no one will notice. Play along. Present your gifts and say your lines. (*Announce Loudly*) I bring GOLD. Jesus is the King of Kings.

#8: I bring FRANKINCENSE. It's sweet aroma reminds us to worship Jesus.

#9: I bring MYRRH. This funeral perfume shows Jesus will suffer and die. We bring these gifts from east of Israel in Arabia.

#10: Stealing Christmas is not fair, not fair at all! Let's find the thief and make them give Baby Jesus back to the manger, back to our town! Go home a different way and tell everyone what happened!!!

STARS AND WISE MEN LEAVE THE STAGE.



MAINTENANCE CREW A GIFT IS A GIFT!

Actors: 3 teens or adults
Costumes: Work clothing
Props: Garden tools (Rake, Shovel),
 #2 carries bag with dinner roll in zip lock bag, hot dogs, pennies, furry teddy bear

THIS SEGMENT IS PURE FUN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE PROGRAM.
 RELAX, LAUGH AND MAKE EVERYONE LAUGH.

#1: I saw the Wise Men and the stars in the Living Nativity. That's our cue to clean up the park before the program ends. Let's get busy.

#2: What?

#3: GET BUSY!

#2: I am not LAZY! I might be a little tired.

#1: Get rid of the garbage. Use the RAKE!

#2: I love CAKE!

#3: It's hopeless. Ignore him.

#1: Every year we get assigned the same job...clean up, clean up, clean up. Just once I'd like to be part of the Bethlehem scene.

#3: I thought we had a chance this year. I want to be one of the shepherds. They inspire me to be a better person. The Bethlehem Shepherds had stories to tell the rest of their lives. Now that is something to LOVE.

#2: GLOVE? Nah, Thanks anyway. I don't need gloves.

#1: Love! He said LOVE!. I wanted to try out for the part of an angel this time. Did you see those costumes? The halo would fit over my HAT.

#2: FAT? I am not fat. I have been on a diet. And, I did not bring my CAT! Why would I put a halo on my CAT? What' wrong with you two? Did you hear Baby Jesus is missing? I'm very upset. No one should Steal Christmas like that.



#3: I heard the RUMOR!

#2: It's not funny at all! What HUMOR?

#1: Rumor! Rumor! We heard the RUMOR that Baby Jesus has been stolen. We thought the thief would bring him back before the wise men arrived with their gifts. The manger is still emp-TY.

#2: TEA? I brought my own. Thanks anyway. I wanted to be a wise man this year. Just think of it. Me, wearing jewels and a crown. And leading a live camel into the park. I brought the three gifts in case somebody backs out. I am ready to take their place.

#3: Oh no, what did you BRING?

#2: SING? Nah, I can't sing. I don't think the wise men sing anyway. They just walk real slow and kneel at the manger with their presents. Weird stuff they bring. I found what I needed. Want to see?

#1: (Sigh) We might as well. What did you BRING?

#2: SING? I told you I cannot sing! Look. (Pull gifts out of bag one at a time and hand them to the others.) I brought a **dinner roll, a package of hot dogs, a roll of pennies and a furry teddy bear.** That should bring the baby back.

#3: You Huckleberry! That is embarrassing. Why in the world would you think those are appropriate gifts for Jesus? Put those away before anyone sees them.

#2: I heard the wise men talking amongst themselves. They brought ROLL, FRANKS-IN-CENTS and FUR. So I brought a dinner roll, a bunch of franks and 50 cents. And I found the cutest furry teddy bear for 'fur'.

#1: NO-O-O! They brought GOLD, FRANKINCENSE and MYRRH!

#2: Right! That's what I brought. See? FUR! I'm sure I heard them say 'FUR'!

#3: Myrrh! It was Myrrh! Let's get out of here before anybody sees US.

#2: Good idea. Hurry up! It's down on the corner. I can see the BUS.

EXIT



GRADES 5-6: HOLIDAY INN MY HOUSE IS A VERY, VERY, VERY GOOD HOUSE



Actors: Grade 5-6 Students
Divide speaking parts between available participants.

Costumes: Basic Holy Land style

Props: Hold items like pottery, wooden bowls, stacked linen, broom

*The Innkeeper enters the on stage scene followed by employees.
Calling out instructions:*

Innkeeper: Follow me. We have a lot of work to do. Our stable has to be ready in a few minutes for the arrival of extremely special guests. Trust me, it will be 'heavenly'. Get it? 'Heavenly'?

GROUP: Groan In Unison

#1: I'm not cleaning up after the cows. I will dust cobwebs. That's all I will do.

#2: I will sweep the floor and scatter fresh hay. I'm good at that.

#3: Who is coming? We are sprucing up like this is a Holiday Inn! This is just a stable, a barn, a cave. The only person who comes here is me. I tie the animals in their stalls and put feed in the manger...which by the way, needs a little carpenter work.

Innkeeper: You, work with the cows. You, dust the rafter cobwebs. You, sweep the floor and stack fresh hay. I will repair the manger. A young couple showed up. They searched Bethlehem. Every Inn is filled. I told them "my house is a very, very, very good house" but there is no room, no corner left to rent here either. Except this...the animal barn. They could not say yes fast enough.

#4: She is going to have a baby any minute. Are you sure you want them in our stable? Sounds like a lawsuit to me! Send them on their way.

#5: Let's give it a try. We are a great, experienced hospitality team. 'Holiday Inn' has a nice ring to it! A baby will be born right here! We will be famous all over the world! We can do it!

GROUP CHANTS: We can do it! We can do it! We can do it!



Innkeeper: I hear you. We'll take on the challenge. With all the other guests in the house no one goes home tonight anyway. Somebody tell Joseph and Mary they are welcome as soon as we tidy up.

GROUP CHEERS: Yay!

#6: I used to think Bethlehem was a tiny, dusty village where nothing happened. There are so many strangers here tonight I think life might change forever. You never know.

#7: (Looking around) You never know. Why, people may be talking about Bethlehem and our Holiday Inn thousands of years from now.

#8: (Look up dreamily) Wouldn't that be something?

This simple parody is based on Lerner and Lowe's theme song "Camelot", a familiar Broadway tune. The words can be spoken or sung a capella by one or more people. Google the tune for a fresh reminder.

Each evening, from December to December,
Before you drift to sleep upon your cot,
Think back on all the tales that you remember
Of Bethlehem!

GROUP ECHOES: BETHLEHEM!

Ask ev'ry person if he's heard the story,
And tell it strong and clear if he has not,
That once there was a fleeting wisp of Glory
Called Bethlehem!

GROUP ECHOES: BETHLEHEM!

Where once it never rained till after sundown
By eight a.m. God's baby boy was born...
Don't let it be forgot
That once there was a spot
For one brief shining moment that was known
As Bethlehem!

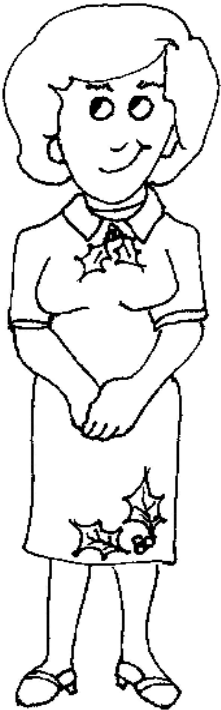
GROUP: (Dramatic Silence. Look at each other. Then-shaking heads as exiting) No Way!



MANGER MANAGER

BEFORE THE PART WHERE YOU GET PRESENTS

Actor: One teen or adult
Costume: Modern day jacket, hat, scarf
Props: Clipboard with Script



ENTER THE SCENE BRISKLY.

MANGER MANAGER: Wrong, wrong, wrong! This is all wrong. Where is my cast? The cars are lined up along the park, the lights are lit, angels are in the trees (I think), animals are tied in place. We are ready people!

I have a mutiny on my hands. No one will come to the stable until the thief, that rascal, returns our Baby Jesus. Who would do this?

The mayor asked me to be this year's Manger Manager. I was honored. How hard can it be? I made phone calls, found costumes, arranged schedules, advertised, begged folks to help, cleared the streets, arranged the snack kiosk. One thing goes wrong! No Baby Jesus-No Christmas! Somebody DID Steal Christmas. The whole town is upset. I have failed.

(Pause sadly to think) Nobody can steal Christmas. Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly." (John 10:10) Jesus said He came. I believe it. Our whole town gets to tell about the day He came. We will be brave. We will be true. We will not let anyone Steal Christmas.

(Calling out) So...To the person who is trying to Steal Christmas, bring Baby Jesus back to the manger!

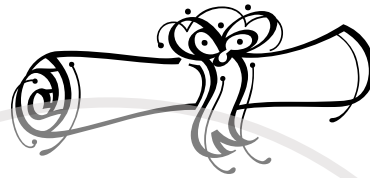
Our Town Nativity will remind us that Jesus arrived safely-Mother and Child are doing well. Dancing with the Stars of Bethlehem is delightful and What happened in Bethlehem doesn't stay in Bethlehem.

(From Luke 2) "So Joseph went from Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David's town, for the census...He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her first born. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the inn."

EXIT



ACT 3



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WHAT
HAPPENED
IN
BETHLEHEM
DIDN'T
STAY
IN
BETHLEHEM



SURPRISE INTRODUCTION
 CONFESSION IS GOOD FOR THE SOUL
"I am sorry."

Actors: young child, mom
Costumes: Jackets, hats, scarves
Props: Baby Jesus Doll wrapped in baby blanket

MOTHER AND CHILD WALK ONTO THE STAGE QUIETLY.
 CHILD IS HOLDING WRAPPED BABY DOLL.
OPTION: MUSICIAN PLAYS "AWAY IN A MANGER" QUIETLY

Mom: *(Sits on floor quietly in front of standing child)* Sweetheart, we have to give Him back. It is the right thing to do.

Child: I love Him.

Mom: Oh darling, I know you love him and when you took Him from the manger you wanted Jesus with you all the time. I understand.

Child: I love Him.

Mom: Jesus loves you too. I have something important to tell you. Even when we put Jesus back in the manger, we can take Him with us. He is always right here (point to heart) in our hearts.

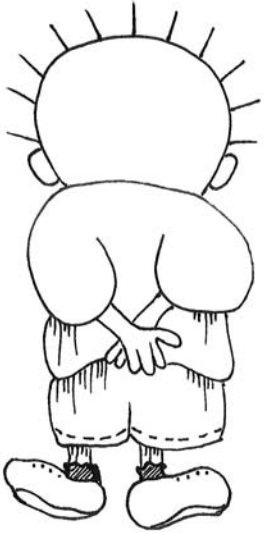
Child: (Puts hand on heart.)

Mom: Yes, that's the most important place to carry Jesus. In your heart. Our whole town loves Jesus. Actors are waiting to take their places in the Live Nativity. Cars are lined up to drive by slowly and see the wonderful story of Jesus, born in Bethlehem. Everyone is waiting for Jesus so Christmas can begin. Let's make sure Baby Jesus is in the manger.

Child: (Kisses Baby Doll and gently places Him with blanket in manger.)

Mom: That's my sweet child. We did the right thing. Let's go and enjoy the wonderful sight we are about to see. Jesus is Home for Christmas!

HOLD HANDS AND EXIT SLOWLY



THE GATHERING! SEEING THE LIVE NATIVITY

Now is the time to arrange the entire Nativity scene on stage with every program participant. Set people up according to available space and existing props. Add items or eliminate items as needed.



These suggestions get you started.

Be free to create your own Gathering.

BEFORE SURPRISE INTRODUCTION TO ACT 3,
ALL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS LEAVE THE AREA IN SILENCE.
A CHRISTMAS CAROL MAY BE SUNG
BY THE AUDIENCE DURING THIS TIME.

After the SURPRISE INTRODUCTION, Process along aisles while Christmas music is played. If a large screen projection (starry night, stable, one large star) is available, shine it now.

Mary and Joseph lead the way and take their places at the manger. They may be seated or standing.

Shepherds follow. Some kneel, some stand facing the manger, heads bowed.

If Animals are included, add them to the scene. Sometimes it is fun to add a very calm dog, cat or colorful bird with their owner in costume. Cardboard sheep, cows, goats, etc. can be placed on stage as desired.

Angels 'flutter' in with Stars. Scatter across the front and back of the scene.

Innkeeper and Staff carry their props and stand at the edges.

Wise Men are the last to enter. If they wear flowing capes, let them spread out in the aisle majestically carrying their gifts. They are centered with backs to audience, kneeling before the manger and the front aisle area.

When all participants are in place, they should remain as still as possible (mid action, conversation) looking at Baby Jesus. No one speaks or sings as they become part of the living tableau.



MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

Actors: Middle/High School Students
Divide speaking parts between available participants.

Costumes: Coats, hats, scarves

Props: Glow Sticks (OPTION: Necklace Glow Sticks worn in hair/2-3 per person)

AS THE LIVE NATIVITY GATHERING
TAKES THEIR PLACES ON STAGE,
THIS GROUP SILENTLY TAKES THEIR PLACES,
SINGLE FILE ALONG THE CENTER AISLE.
SPREAD THE GROUP TO FILL
ENTIRE SPACE FRONT TO BACK.

#1: "Call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

#2: "The voice of him crying in the wilderness; prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low; the crooked straight and the rough places plain."

#3: "And the Glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it."

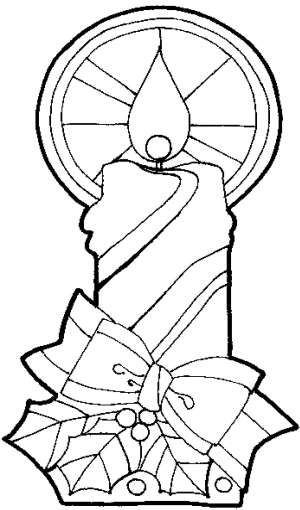
#4: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Emmanuel, God with us."

#5: "Arise, shine for thy Light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

#6: For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called....

#7: Wonderful!

#8: Counselor!



#9: The Mighty God!

#10: The Everlasting Father!

#11: The Prince of Peace!

#12: There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them and they were sore afraid.

#13: The angel said, "Fear not for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Christ the Lord."

ALL STUDENTS IN UNISON: (Joyfully) "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men!"

#14: "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; and He shall gather the lambs with His arm and carry them and gently lead those that are with young."

#15: "When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to The Rock that is higher than I."

#16: "God is not a man, so He does not lie. He is not human, so He does not change His mind. Has He ever spoken and failed to act? Has He ever promised and not carried it through?" (Numbers 23:19)

#17: God's promises have lasted from before Bethlehem, after Bethlehem until today and on and on forever. Count on those promises imprinted on your hearts 'From Here to Eternity'!

EXIT



CONCLUSION

Narrator: (Walks on stage and mingles with the characters who ignore this modern day presence.)

So there you have it. A small town filled with ordinary people. It is Christmas! Not just any Christmas but the 'Presence of God in a Baby Boy' Christmas. From the beginning, our small town was intent upon telling God's Christmas story 'From Here to Eternity'.

When our Baby disappeared, the unthinkable became thinkable...Stealing Christmas. Believers' hearts were broken and time stopped. Plans were interrupted, people gathered without purpose, the park was lit but the Living Nativity meant nothing without Jesus. In the midst of our chaos, we discovered the simple childlike answer was in the heart of a child. God is Love. He loved the world so much that He sent His Only Son so that anyone, anyone who believes in Him will be saved and will never, never die. That's why I love Him. That is why our innocent, little thief loves Him. Every time you see a heart, remember God's Love.

There is a time and place beyond us that is unknown. It is as vast as space and as timeless as eternity. It is God's New Covenant Plan to rescue His much loved people. We are those people. All the generations before us and all the generations to come are privileged to know God's great love through His Only Son, Jesus: Baby Messiah, Emmanuel, Son of Man, Risen Savior.

Our small town hearts are filled with thankfulness every Christmas. It would never happen without God's Son in a manger, in a humble, dusty village called Bethlehem where faithful, ordinary people said, "We've been waiting for you, Jesus".

By the way, I TOLD you I didn't Steal Christmas!

AUDIENCE CONCLUSION
CHRISTMAS CAROLS
OPTION: CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY
CLOSING PRAYER

IT IS TIME TO GET TOGETHER!
DECK THE HEARTS PARTY



DECK THE HEARTS PARTY!

Assign party planning to one small group.

A few men and women hand picked
or an adult Sunday School class or women's group.

*Offer delicious food, background Christmas music,
simple Christmas decorations and casual fellowship.*

PREPARATIONS BEFORE PARTY DAY

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

Christmas Cookies Galore

"Happy Birthday" Jesus Sheet Cake

Heart shaped cookies and heart shaped tea sandwiches

If this is a Sunday morning event,
consider serving 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: Cover tables with white or red coverings. Feature HEARTS on each table with various Nativity figures borrowed from friends. Add a pillar candle and red or white poinsettia to each table.



PREPARATIONS ON PARTY DAY

Decorate serving table and guest tables. Brew coffee, heat tea kettle while the program is in progress. Set out desserts, cream and sugar. Make your favorite Christmas punch and feature it on a nearby serving table.

DURING THE PARTY

Assign helpers to serve desserts, pour beverages and refill creamers and sugar bowls. Greet guests cordially 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!

Merry Christmas!

Nobody Stole Your Christmas Joy!!!

