

How Great Our Joy!

By Stan Pethel

Drama by Nan Allen

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Characters

(In order of appearance)

SHEPHERDS (3)—Male, any age; dressed in rugged biblical costumes.

ELI—Bethlehem innkeeper; male, middle aged; dressed in biblical costume.

SARAH—Eli's wife; female, middle aged; dressed in biblical costume. Wears an apron and carries a dish towel.

JOSEPH—Male, young adult; dressed in biblical costume.

MARY—Female, young adult; dressed in biblical costume.

BABY JESUS—a baby (or lifelike doll) wrapped in swaddling clothes.

MAGI (3)—Male, middle aged; dressed in regal Middle Eastern costumes appropriate for the time.

Staging Suggestions

(optional)

You may create four areas on the stage:

- (1) a campfire for shepherds
- (2) interior of a Bethlehem inn for Eli and Sarah
- (3) a stable for Mary and Joseph: hay, manger, etc.

(4) interior of wealthy Middle Eastern home

1. How Great Our Joy! /Sing We Noel

SCENE 1

(all dialogue is addressed to the audience; however, characters may interact with each other.)

SHEPHERD #1: There we were living out in the fields near Bethlehem. We had gathered all of our sheep and bedded them down for the night. Some of the guys were dozing by the fire, some were drowsily keeping watch over our flocks...

SHEPHERD #2...and then suddenly we were shaken awake by the image of an angel among us! The angel spoke to us saying, "Do not be afraid...for I bring good news of great joy."

SHEPHERD #3: This certainly got our attention, but the angel explained this news further. "Today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

SHEPHERD #1: We knew the prophecies that the Messiah would come one day, but we would have never imagined that He would be born *that very day*, and so nearby.

SHEPHERD #2: The prophet Micah *had* predicted the Messiah's birthplace – Bethlehem, but no one knew exactly *when* the Savior would come.

SHEPHERD #3: *(music begins)* But the Father had it all planned out—He made all of this happen at the exact moment and at the perfect place.

2. In the Fullness of Time

SCENE 2

ELI: *(to the audience)* It was chaos in Bethlehem. So many people were in from out of town to pay their taxes. We had rented out every room in our little inn—even letting someone have our own room. But this young couple came knocking on our door begging for a place to stay. Then this happened. *(speaking to someone offstage)* Sarah, come here!

SARAH: *(enters wearing an apron and wiping her hands on a towel)* What is it, Eli? I have a lot of work to do. There are so many guests, I'm having a hard time just keeping them fed. What is it?

ELI: There's someone—a young couple, at the door.

SARAH: *(impatiently)* What do they want?

ELI: A place to stay.

SARAH: Oh Eli. You want them to stay here? No. No. No. Not one more person will fit into this house. Send them somewhere else. *(begins to exit)*

ELI: They've been everywhere else. All of the inns are as packed as we are. They have no other place to stay.

SARAH: *(slightly annoyed)* I'm sorry, but...

ELI:...the woman is about to give birth, Sarah. Seems like any moment.

SARAH: Why didn't you say so? Put them in the stable for now. It's not fancy, but it's out of the weather—and there's clean hay and plenty of wood on the hearth. *(loosening her apron)*

ELI: I'll see if they'll take it. I won't charge them anything.

SARAH: Of course, you won't. *(handing Eli the towel and her apron)* You finish up in here and I'll go out and see about the wife.

(Sarah exits) (Eli stands there speechless)

ELI: *(to the audience)* Sarah was there when the Baby was born. She said He was beautiful, but she also said that the mother told her a secret. She said this Child was a special gift from God—the Savior we had all longed for.

The prophet Isaiah had said that those who walk in darkness will see a great light—*(music begins)* that the Light of the World would open the eyes of the spiritually blind so that all we may see Him and believe. When I saw Him, I understood...

3. Bringer of Light – What child is this?/It Came Upon the Midnight Clear/The Light of the World

SCENE 3

(Mary and Joseph are at center)

JOSEPH: *(holding the child)* He is so beautiful, Mary.

MARY: Yes, He is. Just like His Father.

JOSEPH: *(pauses, looks a bit unnerved)* Wait. *(then relaxes)* Oh yes, He does.

MARY: Joseph, the angel told me that He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.

JOSEPH: Yes, and the angel told *me* that we must name Him Jesus...because He will save us all from our sins.

MARY: Yes, I know, but I don't know what all this will mean.

JOSEPH: Nor do I. But we do know that this is truly God's Son...

MARY: ...and we are His humble servants.

4. Heaven's Love

SCENE 4

(all dialogue is addressed to the audience; however, characters may interact with each other.)

MAGI#1: When we first saw that magnificently brilliant new star in the sky, we were amazed!

MAGI #2: See, we are Magi, stargazers and in our experience, this star had never appeared on any of our charts. And the more we studied it, the more we saw that it seemed to move—as if beckoning us to follow.

MAGI #3: I was a little skeptical myself until, after some study, I realized that this *could* be the star that was announcing the birth of King of the Jews.

MAGI #1: We could not believe that we, so far away from the center of Judaism, could have been chosen to make this journey.

MAGI #2:...but journey we did!

MAGI #3: And when we finally got to Bethlehem, our hearts were full of joy...so full that we opened our gifts, laid them at His feet, and bowed down to worship Him.

5. In the Midnight Sky

SCENE 5

(all dialogue is addressed to the audience; however, characters may interact with each other.)

SARAH: I saw Him take His first breath.

ELI: He was born under my roof.

SHEPHERD #1: We were the first to be invited to see the newborn King.

MAGI #1: We saw Him, as a young child, underneath the star that had guided us all the way.

SHEPHERD #2: Yes, we saw Him with our eyes, and yes we felt privileged to be invited, but we all knew that all praise goes to our Heavenly Father.

(all characters nod in agreement as song begins)

6. This Gift of God/To God Be the Glory

SCENE 6

(all dialogue is addressed to the audience; however, characters may interact with each other.)

MARY: There would be sorrow in our lives, but each time, I'd remember the words of the psalmist that the Father gives His favor for a lifetime...

JOSEPH: ...that our weeping may last for the night, but ... joy comes in the morning.

SHEPHERD #3: And He will even turn our sorrow into dancing. He sees every tear...

MAGI #2: He heals the brokenhearted—He binds up our wounds.

MAGI #3: ... We will shout for joy and our joy will overflow and be made known...
so that all may see the Light of the World.

7. Share the Joy – Benediction