

## Impromptu Nativity Play

This nativity play and many versions have been used inside church buildings as part of both formal and informal worship services as well as outside on a grassed area as part of community carols events.

By including participation from volunteers it engages the crowd and brings the story to life in a different way to a performance piece. The Facilitator should be someone who copes with impromptu speaking, can work the crowd, organize the players and keep the play moving along with the right speed and adapt and interject throughout with humor and a clear voice. The Facilitator and Narrator should practice together before the actual event, to work out some planned 'spontaneity' and how they want to signal to each other about when to pause, when to interject and when to start speaking.

### Parts/Costumes

Mary – a blue sheet or piece of fabric large enough to drape around her body and head

Joseph – a cowboy hat and waistcoat

Angel – a pair of angel wings and a halo

Wise People – top hats and bow ties and three wrapped gifts to represent gold, frankincense and myrrh

Grumpy King – a crown and a sign

Angels – spare wings and/or tinsel for halos

Advisors to the King – hard hat & fluorescent safety vest, glasses & clipboard, other dress up props such as fire hat, clown wig, police cap etc

Star – a pole with a tinfoil and tinsel covered cardboard star on the end

### Also required

Speaking parts printed out onto card

Glow-sticks or paper flags for the crowd depending on whether it is night or day.

Manger with straw

Baby doll wrapped in white cloth

Helpers to get the players quickly dressed

**Facilitator:** We are going to need a few volunteers. *(Choose the volunteers from the crowd, providing a running commentary as they are chosen and then dressed in their outfits. The watching crowd will hear your instructions but this can be part of the fun. You'll need... Mary, Joseph, Angel (a reading part), Wise People (3), Grumpy King (reading part), Angels (2+), Shepherds (2+ with at least 1 a reading part), Advisors to the King (2+), a Star. Get players 'dressed' in their appropriate costumes with a couple of helpers to quickly dress the players while the Facilitator provides the background commentary.)*

### Facilitator: Scene 1 – An Angel tells about the birth of Jesus.

In the first scene we have Mary standing at the front. An angel appears. *(Show Mary where to stand. The words on bold type are for the angel. Print them on a card. Tell the angel to jump out and say the words on the card when prompted. Get Mary to practice jumping in fright)*

#### **Narrator**

God sent the angel Gabriel to the town of Nazareth in Galilee with a message for a girl named Mary. She was engaged to Joseph from the family of King David. The angel greeted Mary and said, **"You are truly blessed!**

**The Lord is with you."**

Mary was confused by the angel's words and wondered what they meant. Then the angel told Mary, **"Don't be afraid! God is pleased with you, and you will have a son. His name will be Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of God Most High."**

Mary asked the angel, "How can this happen? I am not married!"

The angel answered, **"The Holy Spirit will come down to you, and God's power will come over you. So your child will be called the holy Son of God."**

## **Facilitator: Scene 2 – Travelling to Bethlehem**

In this scene we need to get Mary and Joseph walking to Bethlehem. It's a long walk and Mary is very pregnant so she is walking slowly and is very tired. Joseph has to help her. *(Explain the route you want Mary and Joseph to walk while the Narrator reads the next scene. It doesn't matter if they are still walking while the Narrator finishes but you don't want them to get too quickly to the finish point. Make sure Joseph understands that he has to walk alongside Mary supporting her)*

### **Narrator**

About that time Emperor Augustus gave orders for the names of all the people to be listed in record books. Everyone had to go to their own hometown to be listed. So Joseph had to leave Nazareth in Galilee and go to Bethlehem in Judea. Long ago Bethlehem had been King David's hometown, and Joseph went there because he was from David's family.

Mary was engaged to Joseph and traveled with him to Bethlehem.

## **Facilitator: Scene 3 – The Birth of Jesus**

In this scene Mary & Joseph can sit down. *(Show them where to sit and show Mary where to find the baby Jesus for her to hold. Hold the baby up in the air and get the crowd to practice saying, "Ooooh, Aaaah" in adoring voices when the narrator reads that the baby is born)*

### **Narrator**

Mary was soon going to have a baby, and while they were there, she gave birth to her first-born son. She dressed him in baby clothes and laid him on a bed of hay, because there was no room for them in the inn.

## **Facilitator: Scene 4 – The Shepherds**

In this scene the shepherds are in fields holding onto their sheep. And then some angels appear next to them and the shepherds are very frightened. *(Show the shepherds and angels where to stand and get the shepherds and angels to practice their group lines. Get the shepherds to practice looking frightened. Explain that later in the scene you'll need the shepherds to hurry to see the baby and then all talk at once about what they angel has told them.)*

### **Narrator**

That night in the fields near Bethlehem some shepherds were guarding their sheep. All at once an angel came down to them from the Lord, and the brightness of the Lord's glory flashed around them. The shepherds were frightened.

But the angel said, **"Don't be afraid! I have good news for you, which will make everyone happy. This very day in King David's hometown a Savior was born for you. He is Christ the Lord. You will know who he is, because you will find him dressed in baby clothes and lying on a bed of hay."**

Suddenly many other angels came down from heaven and joined in praising God. They said:

**"Praise God in heaven!**

**Peace on earth to everyone  
who pleases God."**

After the angels had left and gone back to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, **"Let's go to Bethlehem and see what the Lord has told us about."**

They hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and they saw the baby lying on a bed of hay.

When the shepherds saw Jesus, they told his parents what the angel had said about him. Everyone listened and was surprised. But Mary kept thinking about all this and wondering what it meant.

## **Facilitator: Scene 5 – The Wise People**

In this scene the Wise People have travelled from far away in the east. When they get to Jerusalem they meet a Grumpy King and his advisors. *(Show Grumpy King where to stand, get him to practice his grump face. The words on bold type are for the Grumpy King. Print them on a card. Advisors get ready to join the scene and get them to practice looking important. Direct the Wise People where they should come from into the scene.)*

### **Narrator**

When Jesus was born Herod was king. During this time some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem and said, "Where is the child born to be king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." When King Herod heard about this, he was worried, and so was everyone else in Jerusalem. Herod brought together the chief priests and the teachers of the Law of Moses and asked them, **"Where will the Messiah be born?"** They told him, "He will be born in Bethlehem, just as the prophet wrote,

Herod secretly called in the wise men and asked them when they had first seen the star. He told them, **"Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, let me know. I want to go and worship him too."**

## **Facilitator: Scene 6 – The Wise People don't listen to the Grumpy King**

The Wise People left the king and travelled following the star until they reach Mary and Joseph. *(Explain the route the Wise People should take. The star leads the way and the Wise People follow the star. While they are walking and before the Narrator reads their next line, get the crowd to sing "Twinkle, twinkle little star")*

### **Narrator**

The wise men listened to what the king said and then left. And the star they had seen in the east went on ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. They were thrilled and excited to see the star.

When the men went into the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother, they knelt down and worshiped him. They took out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and gave them to him.

Later they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, and they went back home by another road.

**Facilitator: Let's give a big thank you to our players tonight**

*Scripture readings from Contemporary English Version Matthew 2 and Luke 2*  
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