

Nativity Pageant

Nativity Ceremony

This pageant tells the Christmas Story as if an older brother or sister were explaining to the younger children what happened on the first Christmas. The story is interspersed with Christmas carols, designed to be sung by the children and the congregation. The carols were selected not only on the basis of their texts, but also due to their suitability for the treble voice.

The script is designed so that the older children can take narrator parts. The younger children don't need to memorize lines; they only need to remain in their character for the time they're on stage. During the singing of *Ihr Kinderlein Kommet* (O Come, Little Children), you might send several adults into the congregation to invite any children not performing to come up to join the play. This allows even the toddlers to take part without subjecting them to rehearsals and costumes.

Costumes can be quite simple. The shepherds, Joseph and Mary can wear long pieces of rough cloth draped around them and closed at the waist with cord belts. Make simple headdresses out of pieces of cloth. Children's stores are a good source for angel and sheep costumes.



The Cast

angels
shepherds, with optional sheep dog
sheep
three kings
Joseph
Mary
baby Jesus
Narrators

The Music

Adeste Fideles
Away In A Manger
While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks By Night
Angels We Have Heard On High
Ihr Kinderlein Kommet
Ideo Gloria
Coventry Carol
Joy To The World

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Children:

O come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him, Born the King of angels;

Congregation:

O come, let us adore him, O come let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Women:

Sing, choirs of angels, Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
Glory to God, In the highest;

Congregation:

O come, let us adore him, O come let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Men:

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, Born this happy morning;
Jesus to thee be glory given;
Word of the Father, Now in flesh appearing;

Congregation:

O come, let us adore him, O come let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.



Narrator:

Long ago the Romans had conquered the Middle East, the countries along the coast of Northern Africa, and much of Europe. The emperor, who was named Caesar Augustus, decided to count all the people in his empire, so he could be sure that everyone paid their share of taxes. He commanded everyone to return to their native cities for a census. So Joseph took Mary, who was with child, and went from their home in Nazareth, in a country called Galilee, to Bethlehem, the city of Joseph's ancestor David, which was in a nearby country called Judea.

And while they were on their way, the time came for Mary to give birth. Mary and Joseph had walked for many days in the desert heat and had slept out in the cold at night. And Joseph, knowing that Mary had no strength left, searched for a warm place to spend their last night before the baby's birth. But so many travelers were on the road at that time that the inn at Bethlehem was full. Joseph knocked on door after door at the homes of all of the wealthy residents, begging their hospitality, only to be disappointed that their houses were already full of visitors.

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Finally, Joseph came across a poor couple who offered to share their simple meal with him and Mary. That night the tired travelers found a place to sleep in their stable, along with the animals.



Children:

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the poor baby wakes,
But little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.
I love you Lord Jesus, look down from the sky
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Congregation:

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask you to stay
Close by me forever and love me, I pray,
Bless all the dear children in your tender care
And fit us for heaven to live with you there.



Narrator:

When Jesus was born, Mary wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, which had been filled with hay for the donkeys and horses. The straw, heated by the sun during the day, kept the baby Jesus warm throughout that night. Mary and Joseph lay down to sleep with the animals. In the fields outside of town, shepherds were camped out, keeping watch during the night, in case thieves or wild animals came to attack the newborn goats and lambs. At midnight an angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds, and a bright light filled the sky like fire. And the shepherds, knowing that this light was no ordinary star, but a sign from God, were filled with fear.



Women:

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,

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The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.

All: (descant)

“Fear not,” said he, for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind;
“Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.

Men:

To you, in David’s town, this day
Is born of David’s line
The Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;
And this shall be the sign:

The heavenly Babe you there shall find
To Human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swathing bands
and in a manger laid.”

Women:

Thus spake the seraph, and forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of angels praising God, who thus
Addressed their joyful song:

All: (descant)

“All glory be to God on high
And on the earth be peace;
Good will henceforth from heaven to men
Begin and never cease.”



Narrator:

When the angels disappeared into Heaven the shepherds said to each other, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this Saviour that the Lord has sent His Angels to announce." And taking the newborn animals with them, they hurried into Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph at the stable, with the baby Jesus, lying in a manger. And when they saw the Child, they offered him a lamb from their flock and food from their packs, since they were poor and had nothing else to give. Mary and Joseph accepted their gifts in silence, grateful for the honor that the shepherds had paid their Son.

As the shepherds walked back through the town, they told everyone they met on their way what they had seen, claiming that this poor Child, lying in a manger, had been sent to fulfill the words of the prophet Isaiah. The people who heard their strange story

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wondered at its meaning. So the shepherds returned to their fields, glorifying and praising God, just as the angels had predicted they would do.



Children:

Angels we have heard on high,
Singing sweetly through the night,
And the mountains in reply,
Echoing their brave delight.
Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Women:

Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why these songs of happy cheer?
What great brightness did you see?
What glad tidings did you hear?
Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Men:

Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the new-born King.
Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Congregation:

See him in a manger laid
Whom the angels praise above;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,
While we raise our hearts in love.
Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.



Narrator:

On the eighth day after Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph presented him at the temple, since this was the custom of the times. Because of the shepherds' message, a crowd of people lined the streets praising God as Mary passed by carrying Jesus. A group of village children came to see this baby, too. Although he was just a child like them, his birth had long been expected by the priests. And now respected men of the town were offering him gifts and worshipping him.

The children also wanted to offer what little they had to the baby King. Since they had no money or valuables, their gifts were quite simple. One child offered Jesus the scarf that

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he wore to protect his own head from the dust and wind. Another boy brought him some candy made of honey, dates and almonds. A little girl put her favorite toy in his hands, a smooth, shiny stone that she played fortune-telling games with. And the last child wrapped up her lunch of bread and olives for the baby Jesus.



Children:

*Ihr kinderlein, kommet, O kommet doch all!
Zur Krippe her kommet in Bethlehems Stall
Und seht was in dieser hochheiligen Nacht
Der Vater im Himmel für Freude uns macht.*

Women:

O come, little children, O come, one and all,
O come to the manger in Bethlehem's stall,
And see what the Father, in Heaven above,
Has sent to us here as proof of his love.

Men:

The hay is his pillow, the manger his bed,
The beasts stand in wonder to gaze on his head;
Yet there where he lies, so weak and so poor,
Come shepherds and wise men to kneel at his door.

Congregation:

Now, "Glory to God," sing the angels on high,
"And Peace upon Earth," heavenly voices reply.
Then come, little children, and join in the lay
That gladdened the world on that first Christmas Day.



Narrator:

The star's bright light remained in the sky over Bethlehem for days, attracting the attention of astronomers in far-away countries. They, too, knew it was no ordinary star, as they had spent many years studying the heavens for signs. Three of these wise men started out towards Bethlehem together. They brought gifts with them, valuable gifts, gifts fit for a king, because the wise men were also wealthy men and they knew that a star as big and as bright as the one over Bethlehem could only be the sign of the King of all Kings.

Along their way, the wise men heard news of a baby named Jesus, who had been born in a stable near Bethlehem on the night the star first appeared in the sky. They listened to the stories of angels announcing this baby's birth and of certain shepherds who now spent all day in the fields singing praises to God. They also met soldiers of Herod,

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the King of Judea, who was desperately searching for a baby boy recently born in his country. And the wise men realized that their gifts were meant for this baby Jesus. For only the King of all Kings could put such a fear in the heart of the mighty King Herod.

The wise men made their way slowly through the desert on camel-back. At the end of twelve days, they arrived at the stable in Bethlehem and knelt at the manger to present their gifts to the baby Jesus. One brought him a chest of gold, the second, a vase of precious frankincense, and the last, a basket of bitter myrrh.



Children:

On this day, earth shall ring,
With the song children sing
To the Lord, Christ our King,
Born on earth to save us,
Him the Father gave us.
Ideo, o, o, Ideo, o, o, Ideo Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Men:

His the doom, ours the mirth,
When he came down to earth,
Bethlehem saw his birth,
Ox and ass beside him,
From the cold would hide him.
Ideo, o, o, Ideo, o, o, Ideo Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Women:

God's bright star o'er his head,
Wise men three to him led,
Kneel they low, by his bed,
Lay their gifts before him,
Praise him and adore him.
Ideo, o, o, Ideo, o, o, Ideo Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Congregation:

On this day, earth shall ring
With the song angels sing,
Praising God, Heaven's King,
Born on earth to save us
Peace and love He gave us.
Ideo, o, o, Ideo, o, o, Ideo Gloria in excelsis Deo.

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Narrator:

After leaving Bethlehem, the three wise men, fearing Herod's soldiers, made their way home through a different country. And an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, instructing him to take Mary and the baby into Egypt to escape Herod's anger. Frustrated that Jesus had disappeared in the night, Herod instructed his soldiers to kill all the newborn boys in his kingdom.



Children:

Lullay, thou little tiny child, by by lully, lullay.

Women:

Oh, sisters, too, what may we do, for to preserve this day?

This poor youngling, of whom we do sing, by by lully, lullay.

Children:

Lullay, thou little tiny child, by by lully, lullay.

Men:

Herod, the King, in his raging, charged he hath this day

His men of might, in his own sight, all children young to slay.

Children:

Lullay, thou little tiny child, by by lully, lullay.

Congregation:

That woe is me, poor child, for thee! And ever morn and day,

For thy parting, neither say nor sing, By, by, lully, lullay.

Children:

Lully, lullay, thou little tiny child, By, by, lully, lullay.



Narrator:

Two years later, the angel returned to Joseph in a dream and told him it was safe to return home. Joseph, still fearful for the life of his child, took Mary and Jesus back to Nazareth, his home in the country of Galilee, where Herod had no influence.



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Children:

Joy to the world, the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing.

Congregation:

Joy to the world, the Saviour reigns:
Let men their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains,
Repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness
And wonders of his love.

