

A Rehearsal-Free Christmas Pageant

The NARRATION SCRIPT

Intro music (note: Ideally, people should have their costumes on by the time they are entering the sanctuary).

Welcome and Introduction (M.C. says the following):

Merry Christmas... and Welcome to the Christmas Interactive Family Worship Service.

One of the more amazing things to me about the Christmas story is that it can't happen without the people who are in the story. God does not just swoop in and make this story happen all by God's self. Instead, for the story to happen, there need to be willing people in the story. Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and even the angels are obedient and follow through with what they are told to do. And so today, we will have an opportunity to do the same thing: By choosing to participate in the story, we will make the story happen.

With this in mind, I would like to briefly explain to you what "participation" looks like

First, the lyrics for all the songs that we're singing today are in the bulletin – so keep that bulletin with you!

Second, you'll notice in the bulletin that underneath the song titles (not the lyrics) there are instructions. These instructions are the interactive portion of this worship service. As we listen to the story and sing the songs together, we will create with our bodies and costumes our very own live nativity scene. The costume that you selected when you first arrived will help you know when to come up and be part of the nativity scene. For example, during the singing of "Do you hear what I hear" you'll notice in the bulletin that all the animals are to come to the gathering space, here, and will stay here until the end of the worship service. Again, please remember when you come up front to bring your bulletin with you.

The third thing I'd like to share with you, is that if you did not choose a costume, but still want to be part of the nativity scene, please consider yourself a townspeople and come up during the singing of "Go Tell it on the mountain." But it's ok to stay seated as well.

When we sing the last song, "Joy to the World," we will leave the front of the sanctuary, and make a circle.

Lastly, I want to remind us that this is an interactive worship service, which means there'll be some movement and some noise. It's a little echo-ey in here, but please do not be worried about the noise except to please turn cell phones off or to silent.

At this time, please stand with me and join me in the call to worship that is printed in your bulletins.

CALL TO WORSHIP (M.C.) –PLEASE STAND

Leader: Come, holy people, called by God, let us follow the way prepared for us.

People: Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth among those who please God.

Leader: Once again the world is surprised at a manger, as the glory of God surpasses what is expected.

People: Let us go to Bethlehem to see what God has made known to us.

Leader: There in Bethlehem and here today at [*name of your church*], we are reminded anew of the wonder of God's ways.

People: Let us glorify and praise God for all that we have seen and heard!

Please join me in the Unison Opening Prayer and the Lord's Prayer in the bulletin (M.C.)

Amazing God, on this night so long ago, You gathered a group of unlikely outsiders—Mary, Joseph, shepherds, and others to be part of a great miracle: the birth of Jesus, our Savior. Today You have sought us out and brought us to the manger. You have interrupted our routines with Your Good News. You have gathered this unlikely assortment of folk to become a holy people, a community of faith. We want to respond. Show us how. Help us receive your renewing love as we praise You for offering us salvation in the name of Jesus, Who taught us to pray, Our Father, who is in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

***Opening Song**

"Lord, we lift your name on high"

(See Insert)

Please be seated

OFFERTORY - At this time we are invited to offer our gifts and tithes (M.C.)

instrumental music

Offering prayer (M.C.) – God thank you for the gifts you have given us. Help us to see these gifts and to share them with others. We ask your blessing on these gifts that we offer today. Thank you for your love, mercy and grace. We pray these things in your name, Amen.

Actual CHRISTMAS PAGEANT begins here

Narration – (Narrator or M.C.) – In the Genesis story, we hear that God created the world with language. God *said*, “Let there be light.” God *said*, “Let there be night and day.” God *said*, “It is good.” Then, in the first chapter in the Gospel of John, we hear how this language, the Word, is with God and Jesus.

John 1:1-4, 9 –13, 18b (Reader #1)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

9 The true light, which helps everyone to see, was coming into the world. 10 Jesus was in the world, and Word that shaped the world was in him; yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. 12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. 18 It is Jesus, a child of God, who by being close to the Father's heart, has made God known.

SING “This Little Light of Mine” [*if you have advent candles in the worship space, this is a good time to light them*]

Narration – (Narrator or M.C.) – In the 1st chapter of the Gospel of Luke, we learn of Mary’s willingness to work with God even though what is being asked of her will not be easy. Being pregnant when not married is against the rules where and when she lives. There are some very hard consequences for breaking these rules – the worst consequence being death.

Luke 1:26 – 38 (Reader #2)

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, the messenger of God, Gabriel, was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to an unmarried woman engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The young woman's name was Mary. 28 And Gabriel said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29 But Mary was much perplexed by his words and wondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30 Gabriel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34 Mary asked, "How can this be, since I am unmarried?" 35 The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. 36 And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the messenger of God departed from her.

SING "HERE I AM" (verses 1 and 3)

NARRATION – (Narrator or M.C.) – The place of Jesus' birth is in Bethlehem, a small town a few miles south of Jerusalem. But Bethlehem was not Joseph or Mary's hometown. They had to go to Bethlehem because Caesar Augustus had made a law that everyone must be counted in the towns where their great-great grandparents (or ancestors) had been born. This was a long trip to travel by foot (about 60 miles or 3 days time). It would've been even more difficult since Mary was pregnant. When Mary and Joseph finally made it to Bethlehem, the hotel was already filled with people and there was no place for Mary and Joseph to stay. But there was a stable, where the animals rested, that Mary and Joseph were allowed to rest in as well.

SING "Little Town of Bethlehem" 1 & 2

[[MARY, JOSEPH AND BABY ENTER SANCTUARY AND TAKE SEATS IN CHANCEL]].

NARRATION – (Narrator or M.C.) – In this stable, with only Joseph to help her, Mary gave birth to a baby boy. She wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger. Mary and Joseph named him Jesus.

SING – *Away in a manger (verses 1 and 2)*

[[ANGEL with STAR MOVE BEHIND MARY AND JOSEPH]]

NARRATION – (Narrator or M.C.) – Now, it was night time and in the fields nearby, shepherds were watching their flocks. Then an angel stood before the shepherds and the glory of the Lord

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shone around all of them. And the shepherds were terrified. But the angel of the Lord said to them: Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."

Immediately after the angel stopped speaking, there were suddenly many angels praising God and saying "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors."

SING Hark the Herald Angels Sing

[[ALL OTHER "ANGELS" COME TO SURROUND THE BABY JESUS]]

NARRATION – (Narrator or M.C.) – Then the angels left the shepherds and the shepherds took a deep breath (or maybe five or six deep breaths). Then they looked at each other and said: "We better go see this baby!"

SING O COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL

[[ALL "SHEPHERDS" MOVE TO FRONT DURING SINGING]]

Narration – (Narrator or M.C.) – So this stable that Mary, Joseph and Jesus were staying was, as you heard earlier, home to some of the animals of the village. And these animals must've been pretty curious as to what a baby was doing in their feeding trough. If animals have thoughts, some of them might have sounded like this, "Hey this baby sure is cute, but where did our dinner go!?" and "What are all these humans doing in our home! Let's smell them and find out!" So it's quite likely that these animals may have gathered around Mary, Joseph, Jesus and the shepherds for a closer look.

SING –*do you hear what I hear? Vv 1 & 2*

[[ALL "ANIMALS" MOVE TO FRONT DURING SINGING]]

Narration – (Narrator or M.C.) – Now when the shepherds saw Mary, Joseph and Jesus in the stable, and saw that what the angel had said to them was true, they went out and made it known to whomever they met. Which means it's very possible that some of the townspeople went to the stable that very night to see and maybe even help Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus because of what the shepherds had told them.

SING *Go tell it on the mountain*

[[ALL TOWNSPEOPLE MOVE TO FRONT DURING SINGING]]

MC Closing statement to the congregation:

Well look at us! What a full and busy stable we are! In all this busyness and moving around, it is possible to forget why we came here in the first place. So I remind us today/tonight that we celebrate and remember the birth of Jesus not just because he was born, but because of the life that Jesus lived. The baby-Jesus grew into an adult-Jesus, an adult who chose to choose live God's way, all the time.

It *is* exciting that Jesus was born in a manger. But what is even *more* exciting is that Jesus was born of a mother, just like us, and grew up, just like us. Then, when he was all grown up, he chose to live God's way, and said to us, "You can do this too, and here, I'll show you how – just follow me."

This is the Good News today, and why we celebrate Christmas, because Christmas is the story that reminds us that any and all of us can choose to live God's way and live as God's sons and daughters. So let us go from here today, giving thanks to God for Jesus and reminding others that the gift of Jesus is that he chose to live God's way and lived to show us how we can do the exact. same. thing. Hallelujah! Amen!

SING – *Joy to the World*

[[Everybody leaves the front and makes a circle around the sanctuary while singing]]

Merry Christmas, Everybody!