

THE CHRISTMAS NATIVITY

(Script adapted/quoted from the New International Version of the Bible)

(Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2)

by

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

NARRATOR

GABRIEL .....angel who tells Mary about pregnancy

MARY .....mother of Jesus

MESSENGER ANGEL .....angel who speaks to Joseph

JOSEPH .....Mary's husband

INNKEEPER .....owns inn and stable

SHEPHERD #1 .....herds sheep

SHEPHERD #2 .....herds sheep

SHEPHERD #3 .....herds sheep

WISE MAN #1 .....brings gift to baby Jesus

WISE MAN #2 .....brings gift to baby Jesus

KING HEROD .....king searching for Jesus

WISE MAN #3 .....brings gift to baby Jesus

CHOIR .....provides songs

## COSTUMES

- MARY: Long robe tied at the waist in a light color with a solid color scarf to cover her head, attached with barrettes or bobby pins
- JOSEPH: Long robe tied at the waist in brown, navy, or grey; headpiece - solid colored pillowcase tied with rope
- SHEPHERDS/INNKEEPER: Three-quarter length white sheet or piece of burlap with a hole cut for the head, tied at the waist with a sash or piece of rope; headpiece - solid colored pillowcase tied with rope
- WISE MEN/KING HEROD: Floor length sheet in bold colors such as crimson, purple, or gold with a hole cut for the head, tied at the waist with a contrasting colored sash; crowns made of cardboard covered in silver or gold glitter and faux gemstones (optional); fake beard or makeup to resemble a beard
- ANGELS: White floor length sheet with a hole cut out for the head, tied at the waist with silver or gold tinsel, Fabric may also be lined with tinsel, if desired. Wings made of cardboard and outlined or covered in silver or gold glitter; halo made of craft wire attached to a headband and wrapped in tinsel
- CHOIR: Can be dressed in traditional church choir robes or as additional angels

## SETTING AND SCENES

This play assumes your church has a stage area and the ability to change lighting. If not, the play can be performed without the lighting effects, in any large area of your sanctuary or fellowship hall.

SCENE: Stable - Strategically place wood fence sections in a square shape and fill the area with bales of straw. Place a trough or small crib in the middle to serve as the manger and scatter large, stuffed sheep, cows, and other animals around the area. You can also dress small children in animal costumes instead of using stuffed ones.

## PROPS

- Three wise men gifts: Paint a small cardboard box gold or black and fill with gold coins for the “gold and golden raisins for the frankincense and myrrh.
- A doll wrapped in a pillowcase, blanket, or sheet to represent baby Jesus. The doll should be placed underneath the manger out of sight but where Mary can easily access it later.
- A flameless candle or lantern for the innkeeper to hold
- Small stuffed sheep and tall canes or “crooks” for the shepherds to carry; or real animals if acceptable at your church

## APPROXIMATE RUNNING TIME

45 minutes

### SCRIPT NOTE

Although it is believed the Wise Men did not visit Jesus in the stable the night of his birth but much later, they are depicted in the stable nativity scene for the purposes of this play.

### MUSICAL SELECTIONS

Instrumentals can be played on the piano or organ, or you can purchase a CD with instrumentals to play to accompany the choir. Song selections are as follows:

- *O Little Town of Bethlehem*
- *What Child Is This?*
- *While Shepherds Watch Their Flocks*
- *Angels We Have Heard on High*
- *The First Noel*
- *We Three Kings of Orient Are*
- *O Holy Night*
- *Joy to the World*

## SCRIPT

(Throughout the play, the narrator stands STAGE LEFT towards the front of the stage where he/she can be easily seen. The choir is positioned STAGE LEFT of the stable area, which is CENTER STAGE. If possible, shine light on the narrator each time he speaks and dim the light each time he stops talking.)

**Narrator:** Over 2000 years ago, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary who was pledged to be married to a carpenter named Joseph.

(Lights come up on Mary and Gabriel who are standing STAGE RIGHT.)

**Gabriel:** Greetings Mary. You are highly favored and the Lord is with you!

**Mary** (trembling and afraid): What do you want? Why have you come to see me?

**Gabriel:** Do not be afraid. You have found favor with God and will conceive and give birth to a son. You will call him Jesus.

**Mary:** How is that possible? I am a virgin.

**Gabriel:** The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

**Mary:** I serve the Lord. May His will be done.

(Lights dim on Mary and Gabriel and they exit STAGE RIGHT.)

**Narrator:** Joseph, Mary's betrothed, found out Mary was pregnant before they came together. Because he loved her, yet believed she had been unfaithful, he decided to divorce her quietly so she would not be in disgrace. But before he could, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream.

(Lights come up on Joseph who is lying on a pallet "sleeping" STAGE RIGHT and the Messenger Angel who is standing next to him.)

**Messenger Angel:** Joseph, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. Her child was conceived from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you are to name him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.

(The angel exits STAGE RIGHT and Joseph "wakes up.")

Joseph: I must find Mary and make her my wife.

(Joseph exits STAGE RIGHT, carrying his pallet with him. Lights dim.)

**Narrator:** In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. Everyone was required to go to their hometown to register. So Joseph took Mary, who was great with child, on the hard journey to Bethlehem to register.

(Choir sings *O Little Town of Bethlehem* as Mary and Joseph walk slowly from STAGE LEFT to STAGE RIGHT.)

**Narrator:** When Mary and Joseph arrived, they looked for a place to stay.

(The innkeeper joins Mary and Joseph STAGE RIGHT.)

**Innkeeper:** What do you want?

**Joseph:** My wife is about to give birth and we need a place to stay.

**Innkeeper:** There are no rooms left. Can't you see how crowded the city is?

**Mary:** Please help us. I need a warm place to have my child.

**Innkeeper:** There is a stable nearby. You can stay there.

**Mary** (looking at Joseph): How can the Son of God be born in a dirty stable?

**Joseph:** It's okay, Mary. The Lord will provide and you and the baby will be out of the cold. (To the innkeeper): Thank you.

(The innkeeper exits STAGE RIGHT and Mary and Joseph walk to the stable area CENTER STAGE. Mary lies down on a bed of straw (or hay) and Joseph kneels next to her.)

**Narrator:** The time soon came for the baby to be born. Mary gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

(As the narrator speaks, Mary rises and wraps the baby doll in a blanket and places it in the manger. She kneels next to the manger and Joseph stands on the opposite side.)

**Mary:** I will call him Jesus, just as the angel instructed of me.

**Joseph:** He is the promised Messiah, the Son of God.

(Choir sings *What Child Is This?* and lights are dimmed on the stable scene.)

**Narrator:** And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

(Lights rise as shepherds walk on STAGE RIGHT as the choir sings *While Shepherds Watch Their Flocks*. When the song is over, Messenger Angel approaches them from STAGE RIGHT.)

**Shepherd #1** (covers his eyes with his arms and trembles as the angel approaches): Who are you? Why are you here?

**Shepherd #2:** Go away!

**Messenger Angel:** Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

**Shepherd #3:** What? The Messiah we have waited for has come?

**Narrator:** Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

(Shepherds look up and point to the sky as the choir sings *Angels We Have Heard on High*.)

**Shepherd #1:** Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.

**Narrator:** So the shepherds hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby who lay in the manger.

(The messenger angel exits STAGE LEFT and the shepherds walk CENTER STAGE to the stable as lights are turned on. They kneel on one side of the manger. Depending on how much room you have, the shepherds may stand.)

**Shepherd #2:** We are humbled to look upon our Savior.

**Joseph:** Thank you, and God bless you.

(The choir sings *The First Noel* and lights dim on the stable scene.)

**Narrator:** Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east.

(As the narrator speaks, all three Wise Men walk onstage from STAGE RIGHT and lights come up on them.)

**Wise Man #1** (to Wise Man #2): Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews?

**Wise Man #2** (to Wise Man #1): We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.

**Narrator:** King Herod heard about the wise men and the baby who was called the King of the Jews and was disturbed. He called the wise men secretly to him.

(As the narrator speaks, King Herod walks on from STAGE RIGHT.)

**King Herod** (speaking to the Wise Men): Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.

(King Herod exits STAGE RIGHT and lights dim.)

**Narrator:** King Herod had no intention of worshipping the baby. Jealousy and fear lived in his heart and he planned to kill the child. But the Wise Men went on their way and followed the star

they had seen until it stopped over the place where the child was. They saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him.

(The Wise Men walk slowly from STAGE RIGHT to the stable area at CENTER STAGE as lights come on while the choir sings *We Three Kings of Orient Are*.)

**Wise Man #1:** (kneeling and presenting Mary with his gift): We are Wise Men, astrologers, from the East. We have traveled a long way, guided by a bright star, to find your child and bring him gifts. I brought the gift of gold.

**Wise Man #2:** (kneeling and presenting Mary with his gift): I have brought the child the gift of frankincense.

**Wise Man #3:** (kneeling and presenting Mary with his gift): I have brought the child the gift of myrrh.

**Mary:** Thank you for these gifts. May the Lord bless you and keep you safe on your journeys.

**Wise Man #1:** King Herod asked us to return to him to let him know where your child is, but we were warned in a dream not to go back to him.

**Wise Man #2:** We will return to our country by another route.

**Narrator:** This was the first Christmas. After the wise men had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to escape to Egypt. There, the holy family lived until King Herod was dead, and then they went to live in a town called Nazareth. Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man. He was the Son of God, born to save his people by bearing their sins.

(Choir member sings solo of *O Holy Night*.)

(Choir and cast sing *Joy to the World*.)