

Covid-Friendly Christmas Pageant

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Note to Director:

Planning a Christmas Pageant in the middle of a pandemic instantly takes me back to a childhood favorite book, “The Best Christmas Pageant Ever” which had its fair share of challenges. This year we’ve all got our fair share of challenges, but we also have an amazing opportunity to connect people with the hope and joy of Christmas in a new way. Hopefully this will get your own creative juices flowing to find the best way to celebrate Christmas with the kids in your ministry in your context.

For my particular context, this is how I plan to create a shareable Christmas Pageant experience for our kids, their families and our church and community. This script reads in about 10 minutes, but there are lines that could be cut to make it shorter. It is taken from the New Living Translation with a few liberties.

We will pack costumes in large Ziploc bags to deliver to kids playing the following characters of the Christmas story:

- Narrator (can use several if necessary for your context; dress in Christmas attire)
- Gabriel (if you have a willing boy angel; if not, just use an angel)
- Mary
- Joseph
- Angels (several)
- Shepherds (several)
- Wise Men (several – I never do 3, just personal preference)
- Star
- Sheep, Donkey, etc. (toddler-sized, use any barn animal costumes found on the cheap after Halloween; this is a way we include our nursery aged kids)

We will deliver costumes and props to families with a paper copy of their part that needs recorded in mid-November before the business of the holiday season creeps up on our families. We will set a firm deadline for recordings to be sent allowing plenty of lead time to put all the videos together into the final project. Some of the narration will be done as voiceover on top of characters acting out scenes.

If you have sibling groups, this is an opportunity to have them create an entire scene. For example, in my church I have two sets of twins, including 3 boys and 1 girl. I will have this family of kiddos play shepherds and an angel so they can record the entire shepherd scene.

Separately, we will have each family record their children singing (still in costume) one or two simple Christmas classics – such as *Away in a Manger*, *What Child Is This* or the first verse of *Silent Night* or *Joy to the World*. Our music minister will work with me to make this happen. We will send a YouTube video with instructions for recording the song and a separate YouTube video with the piano accompaniment. Once all the videos are sent to us, we will create a final version of the video in the style of the virtual choir videos that have been made popular throughout this year.

The Christmas Story (from Matthew 1:18-2:12; Luke 1:26-55; Luke 2:1-20)

Script & Instructions:

- NARRATOR** This is the story of how Jesus was born.
- God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth in Galilee to a virgin named Mary, who was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David.
- GABRIEL/ANGEL** (Gabriel enters a room) Greetings, Mary! The Lord is with you!
- NARRATOR** Mary was confused, trying to figure out what the angel was talking about. She was also a little scared – as I’m sure you would have been too!
- GABRIEL/ANGEL** Don’t be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God! You will give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever. His kingdom will never end!
- MARY** But how?!? What?!? How can this happen? I’m not even married yet.
- GABRIEL/ANGEL** (smiles) The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby born will be holy and will be called the Son of God. For the word of God will never fail.
- MARY** I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true.
- Oh, how my soul praises the Lord! How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! God made this promise to our ancestors, and God has been merciful!

NARRATOR

But Mary still had to tell her fiancé Joseph that she was going to have a baby – a special baby through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Mary told Joseph all about what the angel had said, and Joseph wasn't sure what to think. But he was a good man and did not want to disgrace Mary, so he thought he'd break their engagement quietly.

While he was considering this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream.

JOSEPH

(pretending to sleep – couch, bed, floor...it doesn't matter)

(wake up startled)

ANGEL

Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. The child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Mary will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus. He will save his people from their sins.

NARRATOR

All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet: "Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel, which means God is with us."

JOSEPH

I will do exactly what the angel told me to do. I will marry Mary, and we will name our son Jesus.

NARRATOR

At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, said that a census must be taken throughout the Roman Empire. So everyone had to return to the town of their ancestors to register for the census. Since Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem, David's ancient home.

He and Mary traveled there from the village of Nazareth – about 80 miles.

MARY

(walk – around the house, outside, wherever)

JOSEPH

(walk – around the house, outside, wherever)

NARRATOR	By this time Mary was very pregnant, nearing the time for her child to be born.
	While they were in Bethlehem, Mary gave birth to her first child, a son.
MARY	(wrap baby doll in blanket and lay him in manger)
NARRATOR	Mary wrapped the baby snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.
ANIMALS	(act like the animal you're portraying; sit; crawl)
NARRATOR	That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified!
ANGELS	(enter a room; raise hands; show off wings; run; dance; leap)
SHEPHERDS	(hold sheep; walk around with sheep; act scared; fall in fear)
ANGEL	Don't be afraid! I bring you good news of great joy for all people! The Savior – yes, the Messiah, the Lord – has been born today in Bethlehem. You will recognize him when you find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.
NARRATOR	Suddenly, the angel was joined by a host of others, praising God!
ANGELS	Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to all!
SHEPHERDS	(hold sheep; get excited; put sheep down; leap for joy)
NARRATOR	The angels returned to heaven.
SHEPHERD 1	Let's go!
SHEPHERD 2	Let's go to Bethlehem to see this thing that has happened!
SHEPHERD 3	The Lord has told us all about this awesomeness! Let's go!

NARRATOR The shepherds hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph, and there was the baby they had been told about lying in the manger.

After seeing Jesus, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child.

SHEPHERD 1 We saw Jesus...

SHEPHERD 2 The Messiah...

SHEPHERD 3 A New King, a Rescuing King, a Forever King...JESUS!

NARRATOR All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often.

The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

SHEPHERDS Woohoo! Yay God!!! That was awesome! Jesus is here! We have a Savior!!! Woohoo!!! (in any order and with 1, 2 or all 3 shepherds saying each line)

NARRATOR Now, not everyone was as excited about this new rescuing forever king Jesus as the shepherds and angels. Jesus was born during the reign of King Herod. About that time, some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem asking about Jesus.

WISE MEN (enter any room; look inquisitive)

WISE MAN 1 Where is the newborn king of the Jews?

WISE MAN 2 We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him.

NARRATOR	King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, so he called a meeting of the leading priests and asked them where the Messiah was supposed to be born. It was Bethlehem.
8NARRATOR	Herod asked the wise men when the star first appeared. Then he told them to go to Bethlehem and search for the child so he could go worship him too – though we all know he had no plans to go worship Jesus!
	The wise men went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the house where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.
STAR	(walk around; run forward; stop abruptly and raise hands so points of star are out straight; smile big; look excited)
MARY	(sitting with doll)
WISE MEN	(look excited; walk forward; jump for joy)
WISE MAN 1	That star is so bright!
WISE MAN 2	Wow! This is exciting!
WISE MAN 1	Let's go inside and worship our new rescuing forever KING!
WISE MEN	(enter a room through a door; bow down and worship; lay treasure chest down as if presenting the gift)
WISE MAN 2	Let's give him the gifts we brought – gold, frankincense and myrrh.
NARRATOR	When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, because God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

MARY

As Christmas gets closer and closer, we wait excitedly for the gifts we will receive. When the day finally arrives, we have so much fun unwrapping our presents. Exchanging gifts is a fun Christmas tradition that was started by God that very first Christmas.

JOSEPH

That's right! More than 2,000 years ago, with the birth of Jesus, God gave us the first and best Christmas present of all time – God's one and only son.

For hundreds of years, prophets had told stories and given clues so that the people would be looking forward to the coming Savior!

ANGEL

Angels couldn't wait to shout and sing praises to God.

SHEPHERD 1

Shepherds left their flocks to go and worship newborn Jesus!

WISE MAN 1

Wise men traveled from afar, bringing gifts for the Christ Child.

JOSEPH

So...this year, when you get excited about Christmas and presents, be sure to remember God's gift of Jesus – the best and most exciting gift of all!

MARY

Everything God promised came true just as God said it would. There have been many different kings throughout the history of the world, but God sent the greatest king of all – a new-rescuing-forever king – JESUS!

ALL

MERRY CHRISTMAS, EVERYONE!