

Together at Christmas

A Children's Christmas Service



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Notes For Leaders

—Speaking Parts—

There are four mini-dramas with a total of 86 lines that can be assigned to two or more children playing the part of siblings and one or two parents. The same children can be assigned to all four mini-dramas, or different children may participate in each scene. Children should be dressed in modern-day casual clothing. Aprons can be used in the cookie-baking scene. There are also 14 Scripture readings and an As We Gather reading (indicated by an **R** in the script), which can be read by one or more older children.

—Children's Songs—

Songs by children are indicated in the script and include "Away in a Manger" and "God Loves Me Dearly" (for youngest children). Additionally, children can be assigned verses of congregational hymns, if desired. All children with speaking and non-speaking parts should gather to sing in a designated area.

—Centerpiece Display—

A table (such as a kitchen table) with stools or chairs is the main centerpiece where the family will gather for various Christmas activities. In each mini-drama, the props will be changed as follows: 1) "From Buying Presents to Being Present": props should include several magazines, newspapers and laptop computers as well as note pads and pencils for each child. 2) "From Sending Cards to Sending Peace": props include several Christmas cards, stamps and envelopes. 3) "From Sharing Cookies to Sharing Joy": props include mixing bowls, spatulas, cookie sheets and cookie tins or other types of cookie containers. Real cookies and decorating ingredients could be used if desired. 4) "From Wrapping Presents to Wrapping Someone in Love": props include wrapping paper, tape, scissors and both wrapped and unwrapped gift boxes of various sizes.

Additionally, a large "To-Do List" (large enough for the congregation to see) should be present on a backdrop behind the table. The "To-Do List" should include "Buy Presents," "Send Cards," "Share Cookies," and "Wrap Gifts." With a check box in front of each. After each item, enough space should be available for a child to add to the list items mentioned in script ("Be Present," "Send Peace," "Share Joy," "Wrap Someone in Love"). A permanent marker should

be available for child(ren) to write on the list so that the congregation can see what is written.

—Nativity Tableau—

The script calls for costumed nativity characters including Mary, Joseph, angels and shepherds. Instructions are included as to when these characters should enter and exit. The nativity tableau is optional, but if using one, a manger with a doll representing baby Jesus should be used. It can be set up on either side of the family table centerpiece as space allows.

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+ Order of Service +

Pre-service Music

As We Gather

℞ Look around. Those gathered today have various backgrounds, different traditions and assorted things on their Christmas "to-do lists." Yet we have one thing in common. As Christians, we are part of one family with one mission: To be Jesus' witnesses in the world. Pray for the family today, that together this Christmas, we will find opportunities to connect others to Jesus.

Processional Hymn..... O Come, All Ye Faithful

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:

O come, let us adore him, O come let us adore him,

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

Highest, most holy, Light of Light eternal,

Born of a virgin a mortal he comes;

Son of the Father, now in flesh appearing.

O come, let us adore him, O come let us adore him,

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

Yeah, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;

Jesus, to thee be glory giv'n!

Word of the Father now in flesh appearing!

O come, let us adore him, O come let us adore him,

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

Invocation

P In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Call to Worship (from Psalm 148)

P Praise the Lord!

C Praise him all his angels; praise him all his hosts!

P Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth!

C Young men and maidens together, old men and children!

P Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted.

C Together at Christmas, let all the people praise the name of Jesus! Amen!

Prayer of the Day

P Holy Father, thank you for sending us your Son Jesus to redeem us and claim us as children of God. Bless the children here this day who give glory to Jesus through their message, and may all who hear it take it to heart. Amen.

A Meditation

P What are your favorite Christmas traditions? Exchanging gifts or family gatherings; decorating the house or going to parties; children's Christmas services, perhaps? Whatever they may be, your favorite traditions are probably not done in isolation, but experienced together with family or friends. We value being together in community. It's something God values too. In Jesus, we have been brought together as children of God, created to work, serve and worship together. Certainly, Christmas is a great time for us to celebrate the birth of Jesus, the One who reconciled us to God. But, what about some of those seemingly frivolous traditions we enjoy? Don't they distract us from the true meaning of Christmas? Shouldn't we give them up? Now before you take down those Christmas lights or return any presents to the store, consider this: Colossians 3:17 says, "Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus." As God's family, we have traits that look a lot like Jesus. So, no matter what activities we engage in, at Christmas or any time, we can find ways to demonstrate his character. We can take another step, from buying presents to being "present"; from sending cards to extending the peace of Christ; from sharing cookies to sharing our joy in the Lord; from wrapping presents to wrapping someone in love. After this hymn of rejoicing, listen as the children share with us ways to leverage our traditions to be witnesses for Jesus together at Christmas.

Song by Congregation.....Hark the Glad Sound

Hark the glad sound! The Savior comes,
The Savior promised long;
Let ev'ry heart prepare a throne
and ev'ry voice a song.

He comes the pris'ners to release,
In Satan's bondage held.
The gates of brass before him burst,
The iron fetters yield.

He comes the broken heart to bind,
The bleeding soul to cure,
And with the treasures of his grace
To enrich the humble poor.

Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,
Thy welcome shall proclaim
And heav'n's eternal arches ring
With thy beloved name.

From Buying Presents to Being Present

(A few children gather around a table looking through newspaper ads and/or computers searching for gift ideas. Names of gifts can be substituted.)

- _____ 1. It's time to write our Christmas present wish lists!
- _____ 2. I'm almost done with mine. I hope I get a red Razor A scooter. I put it on my list three times, just to make sure.
- _____ 3. I want a New Galaxy Style Nintendo.
- _____ 4. That's too expensive. You'll never get that! Unless ... you ask Grandma. She always says yes!
- _____ 5. Speaking of Grandma, what are we going to get her this year?
- _____ 6. How about a "World's Best Grandma" mug like this one (*pointing to ad or computer screen*)?
- _____ 7. We got her that last year. How about one of those pretty necklaces to hold her glasses so she doesn't keep losing them?
- _____ 8. (*Parent, entering room*) Hi, kids. How are you doing with your Christmas lists?
- _____ 9. Well, we all know what we want, but now we have to figure out the presents we want to give.
- _____ 10. And Grandma is a tough one. We don't know what to give her.

- _____ 11. (Parent) Well, I think you already know what she really wants.
- _____ 12. I know. Grandma always says she just wants to spend time with us.
- _____ 13. (Parent) That's what she looks forward to the most.
- _____ 14. But don't you think we should give her something else? After all, it's Christmas. Won't she want a nice surprise?
- _____ 15. (Parent) Christmas isn't all about the presents we give and receive. It's about "presence." You know—being together.
- _____ 16. You mean like getting together for Christmas dinner?
- _____ 17. (Parent) More than that. Christmas celebrates the gift of God's presence with us. And that gift came as quite a surprise to some!

Ⓜ The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High." (Luke 1:26-32)

_____ 18. Mary sure was surprised! And Joseph too!

Ⓜ An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel," which means, God with us. (Matthew 1:20-23)

Song by Congregation..... Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel

Oh, come, oh, come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

Oh, come, our Wisdom from on high, who ordered all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

Oh, come O Rod of Jesse's stem, from ev'ry foe deliver them
That trust your mighty pow'r to save; bring them in vict'ry through the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

Oh, come, O Key of David, come, and open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

Oh, come, our Dayspring from on high, and cheer us by your drawing nigh,
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

Oh, come, Desire of nations, bind in one the hearts of all mankind;
Oh, bid our sad divisions cease, and be yourself our King of Peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

_____ 19. "Immanuel! God-With-Us." So, God likes to spend time with us too.
Just like Grandma.

_____ 20. *(Parent)* Yes, and his presence changed our lives forever.

Ⓜ He emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:7-9)

_____ 21. I know Jesus' death paid the price for our sins.

_____ 22. *(Parent)* Sin separated us from God, but now, all who believe in Jesus are forgiven and welcomed as a part of God's family.

Ⓜ To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:12)

_____ 23. Grandma says being with family gives her lots of comfort and joy. That's what Jesus' presence gives us!

_____ 24. *(Parent)* That's right, and Jesus lets us share his gifts with others.

Ⓜ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. (Romans 12:15)

Ⓜ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

_____ 25. So, when we're "present" with people, we can help them experience Jesus' presence.

_____ 26. I guess being together at Christmas is a pretty good present after all. *(check off "Buy Presents" on To-Do List and add "Be Present")*

Song by Congregation..... God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen

God rest ye merry, gentlemen, let nothing you dismay,
Remember Christ our Savior was born on Christmas Day;
To save us all from Satan's pow'r when we were gone astray.
O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy.

In Bethlehem, in Israel, this blessèd babe was born,
And laid within a manger upon this blessèd morn;
The which his mother Mary did nothing take in scorn.
O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy.

Now to the Lord sing praises, all you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas all others doth deface.
O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy.

From Sending Cards to Sending Peace

(A few children gather around a table filled with Christmas cards.)

- _____ 27. *(licking an envelope)* Ugh. My tongue hurts. I can't lick another envelope.
- _____ 28. Why do we have to send so many cards? There are people on our list that I don't even know!
- _____ 29. Yeah, like this one: Debbie Brown. Who's that?
- _____ 30. Isn't she our neighbor down the street? I heard Mom say Ms. Brown has been going through a rough time.
- _____ 31. *(Parent, entering room)* Are the cards ready to be mailed, kids?
- _____ 32. *(licking an envelope)* Yes. This is the last one. It's for Ms. Brown.
- _____ 33. *(Parent)* Oh, yes. Debbie will appreciate our card. *(sighing)* But what she really needs right now is some peace.
- _____ 34. Then we gave her the perfect card! It says "Wishing you joy and peace this Christmas."
- _____ 35. I think it's going to take more than a card to bring her real peace.
- _____ 36. *(Parent)* That's right, and the prophet Isaiah told us exactly how God would bring true peace to our world. Do you remember?

® For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)