

Children's Christmas Service



Leader's Guide

Children's Christmas Service

**From
Heaven
Above**

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Children's Christmas Service From Heaven Above

Notes For Leaders

-Speaking Parts-

There are 64 lines that can be assigned to three or more children playing the part of angels, costumed in white robes, tunics or shirts. One angel is assigned the role of "Herald," as indicated in script. There are 17 brief Scripture readings (indicated by an "R" in the script), which can be read by one or more older children. Additionally, there are six rhymes that can be recited by younger children.

-Children's Songs-

Songs by Children indicated in the script are verses from the hymn "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come." All children with speaking and non-speaking parts should gather to sing these verses where indicated. The hymn "Away in the Manger" can be sung by young children alone, or with all children.

-Centerpiece Display-

A manger with a doll as baby Jesus is placed in a prominent location. At the foot of the manger are six gift-wrapped shoe boxes (lids wrapped separately so that boxes can be opened without unwrapping). Each box is labeled 1-6, so that children can determine the order in which to open them. Inside each box is a paper or cloth sign with the following words: Box 1: LIGHT. Box 2: JOY. Box 3: PEACE. Box 4: FORGIVENESS. Box 5: LIFE. Box 6: A picture of BABY JESUS. Behind the manger is a large, five-pointed star made from foam core. Star can be mounted on a free-standing pole or hung from wires. Six push pins are placed in the star, one on each of the five points and one in the center. As the gift boxes are opened throughout the script, the signs inside boxes 1-5 are to be placed on the five points of the star. The picture of baby Jesus in box 6 should be placed in the center of the star. The opened boxes should be left open on the floor around the manger.

-Nativity Tableau-

The script calls for costumed nativity characters including Mary, Joseph, an angel and shepherds. Instructions are included as to when these characters should enter and exit. If not enough children are available for a tableau, images can be displayed on a permanently placed or portable screen.

-Manger on the Mantel-

As you begin rehearsals for this service, you may want to provide Manger on the Mantel handouts from Creative Communications for each participant to use during the weeks leading up to the service. Then, after the service is over, children can pass out Manger on the Mantel handouts (Code MANA) to children and families in the congregation and Manger on the Mantel keepsake books (Code MANB) can be provided for parishioners, if desired, as remembrances of the service.

Display Pieces

LIGHT

JOY

PEACE

FORGIVENESS

LIFE





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Music Guide

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Tune.....Adeste Fideles irregular

1

1

This system contains the first five measures of the piece. The treble clef staff begins with a whole rest, followed by a half note G4, a quarter note A4, and a half note B4. The bass clef staff begins with a whole rest, followed by a half note G3, a quarter note A3, and a half note B3. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C).

6

6

This system contains measures 6 through 10. The treble clef staff has a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a half note B4, a quarter note C5, and a half note B4. The bass clef staff has a half note G3, a quarter note A3, a half note B3, a quarter note C4, and a half note B3.

11

11

This system contains measures 11 through 16. The treble clef staff has a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a half note B4, a quarter note C5, and a half note B4. The bass clef staff has a half note G3, a quarter note A3, a half note B3, a quarter note C4, and a half note B3.

17

17

This system contains measures 17 through 21. The treble clef staff has a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a half note B4, a quarter note C5, and a half note B4. The bass clef staff has a half note G3, a quarter note A3, a half note B3, a quarter note C4, and a half note B3.

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!

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation.
Sing all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God in the highest:
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

Creative
Communications
Sample

Tune.....In Dulci Jubilo 66 77 78 55

1

8

15

22

27

Creative Communications Sample

Song by the Congregation Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
Give ye heed to what we say: Jesus Christ was born today.
Ox and ass before him bow, and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!

Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
Now ye hear of endless bliss: Jesus Christ was born for this!
He has opened heaven's door, and we are blest forevermore.
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!

Creative
Communications
Sample

Children's Christmas Service

From Heaven Above



Children's Christmas Service

From Heaven Above

Notes For Leaders

-Speaking Parts-

There are 64 lines that can be assigned to three or more children playing the part of angels, costumed in white robes, tunics or shirts. One angel is assigned the role of "Herald," as indicated in the script. There are 17 brief Scripture readings (indicated by an "R" in the script), which can be read by one or more older children. Additionally, there are six rhymes that can be recited by younger children.

-Star and Manger Centerpiece Display-

A manger with a doll as baby Jesus is placed in a prominent location. At the foot of the manger are six gift-wrapped shoe boxes (lids wrapped separately so that boxes can be opened without unwrapping). Each box is labeled 1-6, so that children can determine the order in which to open them. Inside each box is a paper or cloth sign with the following words: Box 1: LIGHT. Box 2: JOY. Box 3: PEACE. Box 4: FORGIVENESS. Box 5: LIFE. Box 6: A picture of BABY JESUS. Behind the manger is a large, five-pointed star made from a foam core. The star can be mounted on a free-standing pole or hung from wires. Six push pins are placed in the star, one on each of the five points and one in the center. As the gift boxes are opened throughout the script, the signs inside boxes 1-5 are to be placed on the five points of the star. The picture of baby Jesus in box 6 should be placed in the center of the star. The opened boxes should be left open on the floor around the manger.

-Nativity Tableau-

The script calls for costumed nativity characters including Mary, Joseph, an angel and shepherds. Instructions are included as to when these characters should enter and exit. If not enough children are available for a tableau, images can be displayed on a permanently placed or portable screen.

-Candle Lighting-

If you are including candle lighting in your service, it can occur during the singing of the closing hymn, "Hark the Herald Angels Sing." Hand out candles to parishioners as they enter. Be sure to tip only unlit candles to light, and supervise small children.

Children's Christmas Service

From Heaven Above

Pre-service Music

As We Gather

We gather today to connect with family, unwrap gifts and listen to the voices of excited children celebrating Christmas. It's what people do this time of year. Our celebration today, however, is different. This is no ordinary family. We are brought together as the family of God. The gifts unwrapped here may not be the ones on our wish lists, but they're everything we've ever wanted and needed. The children with us are excited because they get to share God's gifts with us. Therefore, with hope and anticipation, let us join our hearts and voices together and worship Jesus—the greatest gift of all.

(The children may enter down the center aisle during the processional hymn as the manger-and-star centerpiece with the gifts are brought to the front.)

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!

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation.
Sing all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God in the highest:
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

P Come, let us celebrate God's gifts in this joyous season.

C Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.

P Come, let us worship the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

C O come, let us adore him!

P Come, let us humble ourselves before the Lord, recognizing that we live in the darkness of our own sin, undeserving of his gifts.

C Lord, have mercy on us.

P Come and rejoice. The true light, which gives light to everyone, has come into the world.

C From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace already given.

P Come, let us adore him,

C Christ the Lord, our good and perfect gift sent from above.

Prayer of the Day

P Father of light, shine upon us as we hear your Word. Fill us with the same joy and awe as those who first met Jesus. Bless the children who lead our worship and proclaim the Good News of your extravagant love for all. Amen.

Song by the Congregation.....Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
Give ye heed to what we say: Jesus Christ was born today.
Ox and ass before him bow, and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!

Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
Now ye hear of endless bliss: Jesus Christ was born for this!
He has opened heaven's door, and we are blest forevermore.
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!

A Meditation

P What's on your Christmas list? Is your list inspired by ads on television or displays in the stores? Do you long for that new gadget that will make your life so much easier? Maybe you're hoping for some of life's necessities that you can't afford to buy yourself. Perhaps you just want a well-loaded Visa gift card so you can pick out your own gift. Well, it's time to unwrap some gifts! You may not recognize them as items on your list, but I guarantee you will receive exactly what you've longed for and everything you need. You see, the Gift-Giver knows you well. He loves you more than you can imagine. He has the resources to satisfy the desires of your heart. The book of James tells us about the Gift-Giver. He says: "Every good and every perfect gift comes from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." The Gift-Giver is your heavenly Father, the Almighty God! His gifts, as James says, are perfect—perfect for me, perfect for you, perfect for the whole world. While your gift list likely changes over the years, God does not change. In fact, God's gifts to us have been planned since the beginning of time. He even provided hints through his prophets, which we read in the Old Testament. Yet, his gifts are always new, always relevant. It is said that good things come in small packages. That's how God presents his gifts to us—in one small package: A baby. John 3:16 tells us, "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Because of that baby, we have a life redeemed from the wages of sin, a life that overflows with God's blessings. Now, you may think I've just spoiled the surprise before the children even say a word. Don't worry, there's plenty more to discover in their presentation, which is inspired by a hymn Martin Luther wrote to teach his own children. The song was originally based on a secular singing game of Luther's time that went like this: "Good news from far abroad I bring, glad tidings for you all I sing. I bring so much you'd like to know—much more than I shall tell you though." After each verse, the singer would then propose a riddle for other children to solve. Listen now, as our children—through songs, riddles and the truth found in God's Word—unwrap for us the good and perfect gifts of God found in the baby born in Bethlehem—our Savior, Jesus.

(Angels, except "Herald," assemble in front, making sure the manger, star centerpiece and gifts are able to be seen by the congregation. Readers will go to the pulpit or other designated area when Scriptures are indicated. The angel assigned as "Herald" enters when indicated.)

The Gift of Light

- _____ 1: It's almost time! The package is on its way to Bethlehem!
- _____ 2: It seems like we've been waiting an eternity for this night!

- _____ 3. This is the night God will deliver his greatest gift to the world.
- _____ 4. And we get to announce it! Is everyone ready?
- _____ 5. Hark! Is that Herald I hear? He's leading the assembly that will accompany Gabriel to Bethlehem tonight.

("Herald" the angel enters.)

- _____ 6. *(Herald)* Herald the angel reporting for duty. Trumpets are tuned and the heavenly host is standing by.
- _____ 7. The town of Bethlehem has no idea what amazing event is about to happen.
- _____ 8. It's just like what God's prophet Micah said long ago:
- _____ R: But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days (Micah 5:2).
- _____ 9. But it seems the people of Bethlehem have lost sight of God and have forgotten all about his promises:
- _____ 10. They stumble around in darkness—along with the rest of the broken, sinful world.
- _____ 11. They would all be lost forever if it weren't for God's love for them.
- _____ 12. That's why he's sending this amazing gift!
- _____ 13. God's gift is the complete package—it includes everything people need.
- _____ 14. It's many gifts all wrapped in one little bundle.
- _____ 15. Gifts like the prophet Isaiah spoke of:
- _____ R: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone (Isaiah 9:2).
- _____ 16. Get ready, Bethlehem. Get ready, world! God is about to brighten things up with the gift of his Light!
- _____ 17. And not just any light ...
- _____ R: For God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6).
- _____ 18. This gift is a light that let's people see God's glory face to face!

(One angel opens a gift-wrapped box at the manger, taking out sign that reads "LIGHT." Sign is placed on the star as little children recite rhyme.)

What is this gift from heav'n above;
A gift that comes from God's great love?
A LIGHT that brightens each dark place:
God's glory seen in Jesus' face.

Song by the Congregation..... O Little Town of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by:
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heav'n.
No ear may hear his coming; but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.

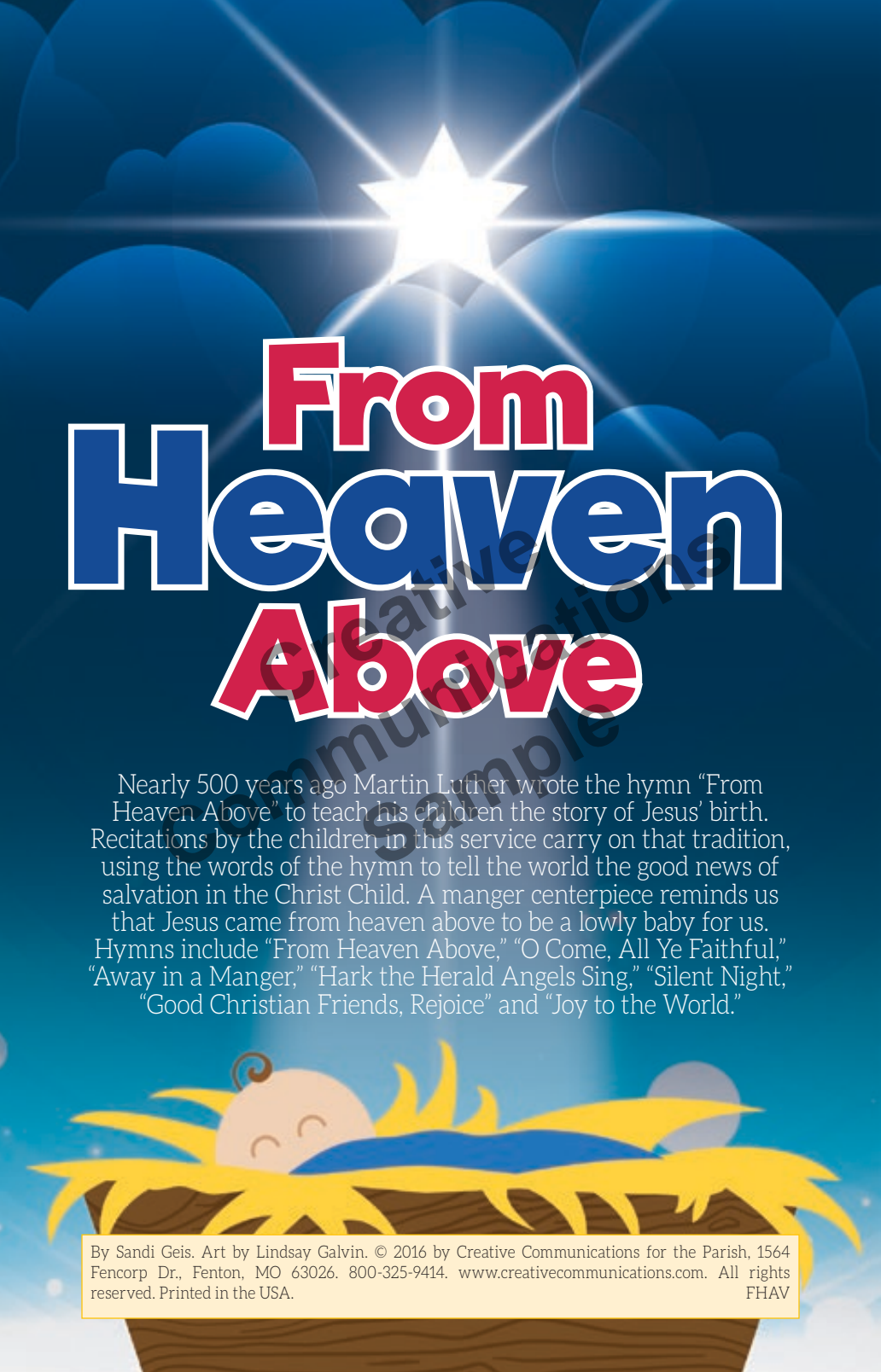
The Gift of Joy

*(Mary and Joseph enter from back and walk to manger
OR screen image is projected.)*

- ____ 19. Look! Mary and Joseph are about to enter Bethlehem!
- ____ 20. Mary was sure surprised when Gabriel told her she would have a very special baby, conceived of the Holy Spirit.
- ____ 21. Joseph was surprised too! But they believed and God made a way to bring them to Bethlehem, where the baby will be born.
- ____ R: In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child (Luke 2:1-5).
- ____ 22. It's time! Let's get an angel down there right away to be with Mary and Joseph.

*(Non-speaking angel or one angel with speaking part enters behind manger
OR screen image of an angel at the manger is projected.)*

- ____ 23. Well, look at that! God's greatest gift arrived and nobody even noticed!



From Heaven Above

Nearly 500 years ago Martin Luther wrote the hymn "From Heaven Above" to teach his children the story of Jesus' birth. Recitations by the children in this service carry on that tradition, using the words of the hymn to tell the world the good news of salvation in the Christ Child. A manger centerpiece reminds us that Jesus came from heaven above to be a lowly baby for us. Hymns include "From Heaven Above," "O Come, All Ye Faithful," "Away in a Manger," "Hark the Herald Angels Sing," "Silent Night," "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice" and "Joy to the World."



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