

Children's Christmas Program – *The Precious Christmas Star*

Puppets: Jer, NI, Tr, Ash, An, Ty

Live Nativity (Grades 2-5) Joseph, Mary, Angels, Shepherds, Magi

Serving as Audience to the Puppets and as Choir (along with Nativity characters) = 4's-1st Grades

Introduction – Tr & An & Ash puppets appear

Tr: (booming voice) **Hello everybody! Welcome! Welcome!**

An: **Yes!** (together with Ash, An takes over from Tr) **Welcome to “The Precious Christmas Star” show!** (NI & Ty appear and listen as Ash & An make their pitch)

Ash: **Come, see the great star!**

An: **A glamorous star! A wondrous and glo-o-o-rious star!**

Ash: **Follow the Precious Star!**

An: **Step right up and get your ticket, only one buck per ticket – get your ...**

NI: (interrupting) **Ticket! Who needs a ticket to come to church?**

Ash: **Not for church – for following *the Star!*** (Jer appears)

Tr: **But, Stella and Nebula!** (referring to Ashlyn and Angela's puppets) – **since when can you get people to pay to look at a star?**

Ty: **Yeah, nobody has to pay to look at the stars!**

Jer: **What stars?**

An & Ash: **Those stars!** (all the kids raise their stars and pump them excitedly)

Jer: **Wow!** (the three Magi stand up from their pew in the congregation – halfway back from the front on the far organ side – they gaze across the sanctuary at the children holding up their stars, and shade their eyes to pick out individual stars)

NI: **Look at *all of them!*** (kids keep pumping stars; the Magi move out of pew, to the parking lot outside aisle, moving slowly towards the front, motioning to each other to look at stars here and there, stopping for Lydia to tap Colby's shoulder to point silently at yet other stars, then Colby points at the stars on the tree and finally Koy points at the big star hanging down front and center, gradually moving around the front aisle to arrive in front of the puppet stage in time for their first Magi speeches)

Ash: **And just think ... every single one of them is worth at least a buck to look at!** (the other puppets all turn to *stare* at her; An stands beside her)

An: **Well, it would be a neat way to get some money for Christmas shopping!**

Tr: **Is that all you two can think about ... getting money for shopping?!?**

Ash: **No, that's not all ...** (cut off while trying to say "... we think about")

Ty: **Making money off the Christmas star, good grief!**

An: **We know that's not all there is ...**(cut off while trying to say "... to celebrating Christmas." Ash & An move out of sight, as if pouting – actually resting for a bit)

Jer: **Why would anybody want to pay to look at the stars?** (Magi arrive in front of puppet stage, face puppets without having their backs to the congregation)

Nl: **Why would anybody pay attention to the stars in the first place?**

L: **We pay attention to the stars!**

Jer: **Who ... who are you?**

C: **We are *Magi!***

K: **Wise watchers of the stars from the East.**

Nl: **Wise watchers ...**

Ty: **... of the stars ...**

Jer: **... from the East!**

K: **Yes! Wise watchers of the stars from the East!**

C: **Some time ago we saw something very unusual among the stars in the skies.**

L: **... a convergence of planets ...**(Ash & An appear again, listening closely)

K: **... leading us in this direction, until we arrived here in Palestine.**

L: **We have come as followers of that star** (pointing at star above live nativity).

Tr: **That's the star that Stella and Nebula wanted us to *pay* to watch.**

Ash: **Yes, but we really do know different.**

An: **We know Christmas isn't about getting people to pay something.**

Jer: **That's a relief to hear!**

Nl & Ty & Tr: **It sure is!**

An: **Listen, we'll sing to you about Christmas.**

Ash: **Everyone is welcome to come and find Jesus – *No charge!*** [music starts]

An & Ash: **“O come, little children ...”** (as An & Ash sing the “Manger Carol,” NI & Ty & Jer & Tr take a break. The children in the pews come forward and adults take their star wands and put them into containers at the base of the steps going up to highest level. Then ages 4 – grade 1 sit in chairs in choir loft area as an audience to the puppet show. Mary and Joseph take baby Jesus to lay him in the manger and sit behind it. Angels go with them and stand on either side of Mary and Joseph. Shepherds sit down around their “campfire” on the floor between the audience and the puppet stage; they hold their shepherds crooks upright beside them. – to give time for all of this movement, An & Ash sing p. 1 of the song twice, then take a break as the Children’s Choir sings “He Is Born” and “O come, Let Us Adore Him” as the final part of the song.)

Act I – Jesus is Born in Bethlehem (Tr & Jer & NI & Ty appear)

Tr: (to the Magi) **So you see, the story is about a baby boy.**

Jer: **Whose name was Jesus.**

NI: **But we’re getting ahead of ourselves. Let’s start at the beginning.**

Tr: **Yes. It all began in the time when the Roman army ruled the land of Palestine.**

Ty: **And the Caesar who ruled the Roman Empire ...**

Jer: **... his name was Caesar *Augustus* ...**

Ty: **... decided that a census should be taken.** (An & Ash appear again)

Tr: **A census at that time meant that everyone had to go back to the town where their father’s father’s father used to live, so that the Caesar could count how many people were in that family.**

Ty: **And then they would have to *pay taxes*** (spoken with disgust).

An: **I *knew somebody* had to *pay something* in this story!**

Jer: **But it wasn’t because of the star.**

Tr: **No, it was because the Roman Empire needed money to pay its soldiers.**

NI: **And everybody was hoping and praying that someday soon the Messiah would come and save the people from the Roman Empire and its army.**

Ty: **True! But in the meantime, they had to pay the Roman taxes anyway, as a part of the census.**

Tr: **And that's why Joseph and Mary left the town of Nazareth where they lived and went to Bethlehem, where their great-great-great-great (take an audible deep breath) ...great-grandfather King David was raised by his father Jesse. It was the town of their ancestors.**

Nl: **Mary was expecting a baby.**

Ash: **Oh, how sweet!**

Ty: **It probably wasn't so sweet if they had to pay taxes on *three* instead of two people in their family!**

Jer: **And it must have been really hard to be having a baby without being married.**

Tr: **Not to mention having to ride on a donkey ... at least we think Mary rode on a donkey, because that's how people traveled in those days.**

An: **Can you imagine the jolting joggling of riding on a donkey when you're soon to give birth!**

Nl: **But they got to Bethlehem in time ... before the baby was born.**

Ash: **I'm so glad!**

Tr: **And they found shelter in a stable, among the animals, because there was no room in the hotel.**

An: **So they *didn't have to pay* for their room ...**

Jer: **The innkeeper didn't have any rooms left, and we *hope* they didn't have to pay to stay in the barn out back.**

Nl: **And Mary gave birth to her firstborn child, a baby boy, her son. She tucked him securely in swaddling cloths and placed him in the manger ...**

Ty: **... which was probably filled with straw for the animals to eat.**

Tr: **And Joseph gave him the name "Jesus," just as an angel had told him to do.**

(puppets all take a rest – the Magi join rest of Grades 2-5 in the action rhyme)

The First Christmas (Action Rhyme)

Original Author Unknown

From <http://www.theholidayzone.com/christmas/action.html>

Clop, clop, clop went the donkey's feet,
Clop, clop, clop down the stoney street.

Nod, nod, nod went Mary's head.
 She was tired, and she needed a bed.
 Knock, knock, knock went Joseph at the door.
 "Do you have room for anyone more?"
 "No, No, No!" the innkeeper said,
 "I don't even have one more bed."
 "Wait, wait, wait," the innkeeper said,
 "You can use my stable for a bed."
 "Shh, shh, shh...What is that I hear?
 The cry of Baby Jesus, oh so dear!"

Congregational Carol (as the Live Nativity returns to its places; Magi go back to puppet stage) – printed in the bulletin, one verse:

There's a Song in the air, there's a star in the sky,
 There's a mother's deep prayer and a baby's low cry,
 And the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing,
 For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a king.

Act II – The Shepherds hear the Good News (Jer & Ty & Tr appear to talk with the Magi; shepherds can interact according to what is said about them)

Jer: **Now comes my favorite part ...**

Ty: **Mine, too! The Shepherds out in the fields, ...**

Jer: **... keeping watch over their flocks by night.**

L: **Shepherds?**

C: **Simple, poor people?**

Ty: **Yes, poor ... like me ...**

Jer: (with excitement) **... and able to watch the stars all night!**

K: **Ahh, yes!** (understanding the significance of the comment) **The ones who watch the stars all night!**

Tr: **They were young men like Enoch and Yaacov here** (referring to Jeremy & Tyler), **out in the fields, in the middle of the night, keeping the sheep safe.**

Ty: **And while the sheep were grazing or sleeping, they would look up at the night sky and see all the stars.**

Jer: **Imagine the beautiful stars in a sky where no city lights dim their sparkle!
Their twinkling would dance in the heavens!**

Ty: **When suddenly ...** (NI appears among the puppets. The angels move towards the shepherds, with main angel – Lauren – spreading hands out in greeting to the shepherds) ...

NI: **... an angel of the Lord appeared to them ...**

Jer: **Can you imagine!**

Ty: **Glory shining!**

Tr: **The Glory of THE LORD!**

Jer: **And they were TERRIFIED!** (shepherds quake in fright, facing angel, hold onto each other)

Ty: **TERRIFIED!**

NI: **Come on, boys, don't get all psyched about this.**

Ty: **But it must have been amazing! To be so shook up!**

Tr: **Somehow, I don't think it was fun to be scared, fellows.**

NI: **The angel said to the shepherds:**

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

NI: **And suddenly a great company ...** (Ash & An appear and stand beside NI. Cassie and any other angels come beside Lauren and spread arms open) **... of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,**

Lr: **Glory to God in the highest! And peace to all the people on earth with whom God is pleased.**

Congregational Carol 197 vss. 1 & 2 of Angels, We Have Heard on High

(Puppets rest. Magi join in singing?)

Five Little Angels – Reading by 4 year olds – 1st Grade class

5 little angels high above me

The first one said "Do you see what I see?"

The second one said " A star is shining in the night

**The third one said " Oh what a beautiful sight
 The fourth one said " A child is sleeping in the night
 The fifth one said " He will bring us goodness and light
 5 little angels sing with joy about the birth of a baby boy (sit down)**

Act III – the Shepherds Go to Bethlehem (Tr & Jer & Ty appear to talk with the Magi)

L: So ... let me get this straight – it was *an angel* in the sky?

Ty: A whole *host* of angels!

C: Giving a message ...

K: just like the stars we saw in the East gave a message to us ... that we should come and honor the new King.

Tr: (answering) Yes, the angel gave this message to the shepherds: The Messiah who will save the people of God ... is born in the town of David

Jer: So the shepherds hurried to Bethlehem ... (shepherds move to manger)

Ty: ... and found Mary and Joseph and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

**Tr: And then they went and told everybody all about all that they had seen.
 (Shepherds leave and pretend to talk to the "audience kids" and to the congregation, and then settle back down in their fields with their flocks)**

Jer: And all who heard the shepherds were amazed at what they said.

Ty: The shepherds glorified and praised God for all the things that they had heard and seen! (shepherds raise a hand to praise God)

(Puppets rest. – Magi join rest of Children's Choir)

Children's Anthem *Shepherd's Carol (Rise Up, Shepherds and Follow / Go, Tell It on the Mountain)* (solo: Lauren)

(afterwards, the 4's-1st grade children sit on the steps; Magi return to the puppet stage)

Act IV – the Magi find the New Born King (An & Ash & NI appear with the Magi)

K: So, how long ago did all of this happen?

NI: About two years ago.

L: (talking to the other two magi) That means the convergence of planets we saw, the very unusual patterns in the stars

- C:** the Star we saw before we started on this long, long journey ...
- K:** appeared at about the time when this Messiah was born!
- An:** You started to follow the star two years ago?
- K:** Yes. We saw signs in the stars that a new king was born.
- L:** And a special star led us to this place (point to star above the manger).
- C:** We brought gifts to give to the new king.
- Ash:** But you don't have to pay anything!
- An:** Yes – we can't charge you to follow the star!
- K:** But the gifts are *not* for *you*.
- C:** We just want to honor *him* ...
- L:** ... *Jesus*, the newborn King.
- (puppets rest)

Children's Choir – one verse of "We Three Kings" (Magi join the choir in singing)

Fingerplay – age 4 – Grade 1 and Grades 2-5

From <http://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art47949.asp>

Three great kings (Hold up three fingers.)
 on a cold winter's night (Hug self, shivering.)
 Found the baby Jesus (Rock make-believe baby.)
 guided by the light (Point to sky.)
 The first king (Hold up one finger.) said,
 "We've come so far" (Stretch out arm, as if to show distance.)
 The second king (Hold up two fingers.) said,
 "We followed the star" (Point to sky.)
 The third king (Hold up three fingers.) said,
 "Great gifts we bring" (Extend hands out in front.)
 And together (Hold up three fingers, wrap other hand around them.) they said,
 "Great praises we sing" (Pretend to sing.)
 Then they knelt (Kneel.) and they prayed (Hands in praying position.),
 and they bowed their heads (Bow head.)
 As they worshipped baby Jesus in His manger bed. (Kneel in prayer.)

Act V – The Magi Explain Their Gifts

(after the Fingerplay, An & Ash appear and call to the Magi to come back to them)

An: **Oh, Magi ...** (beckoning voice)

Ash: **Magi, Magi, Magi ...**

K: (the Magi move to the puppet stage) **Yes? What is it?**

Ash: **We have some questions about this gift-giving business.**

An: **You said you brought gifts to give to Jesus.**

C: **That's right. We brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh ...**

L: **Gold ... because he is our most precious King.**

K: **Frankincense ... because he will save us from our sins.**

C: **and Myrrh ... because he will die to give us Life.**

An: **Those are very expensive gifts!**

Ash: **We would never be able to pay for gifts like that.**

L: **But that's not what the New King expects from you.**

K: **The New King simply asks you to give what you have to give.**

C: **So we have brought what we are able to give ...**

K: **... and you can give what you are able to give ...**

L: **The star leads us to God's most precious gift, the gift of his Son Jesus -- so we can give to Jesus our most precious gifts.**

Ash: (feeling sorry for herself) **But I don't have anything precious to give ...**

C: **Oh, but you do!**

K: **There is never anything more precious than your *self*.**

L: **That's even more precious than gold, frankincense, or myrrh – to give your heart to Jesus; to give your time, your love, your very selves to help others.**

An: (beginning to understand) **And we don't have to have money to do that!**

Ash: **You really are wise people from the East! I'm *glad* the star led you to us!**

An: (musing, a bit to herself) **Hmmm. My Christmas presents do not have to cost lots of money ... instead / can be my present to everyone this Christmas ... I can give my time, my smiles, my little art creations ...**

Ash: **We'll give *ourselves!*** (NI & Tr & Jer & Ty appear) **Hi, Gang! The Magi just helped us realize something very important –**

An: **... the precious Christmas Star leads us to *God's* most precious gift – his Son Jesus! Don't you think that deserves *our* most precious gift?**

Ash: **And the Magi helped us understand that the most precious gift we have to give is ourselves.**

All the Puppets: Let's give *ourselves* to Jesus, the newborn King!

NI: **Let's invite everyone to follow the star with the Magi ...**

An: **... and give themselves as special, precious gifts to Jesus!**

L: Yes! Please come with us! (The puppets begin to sing [next page], and the Magi beckon to 2's and 3's to come down center aisle, who bring brightly wrapped gifts. The Magi wait for them and then usher them to place all of their gifts in front of the manger, the children sit on the step in front of the manger; the Magi kneel on either side of them, facing the manger. The 4's-1st graders then stand behind the Live Nativity. The congregation joins in with the puppets to sing a second time the song printed in bulletin.)

Gifts Processional Song – tune of "We Three Kings" (words by PJ, open to revising)

**We wise children follow the Star,
as it brings us from near and far
to honor Jesus, Precious Jesus,
giving him all we are.
O, Star of wonder, Star so bright,
sending all our fears to flight,
help us give ourselves to follow,
guide us with your precious light.**

Congregational Carol with the children as they stay gathered around the manger –

Silent Night – vss. 1 & 4 (puppets down after vs. 1;
2s and 3s go back during second verse;
Others get bells to be ready to play)

Children's Bell Choir *O Holy Night*