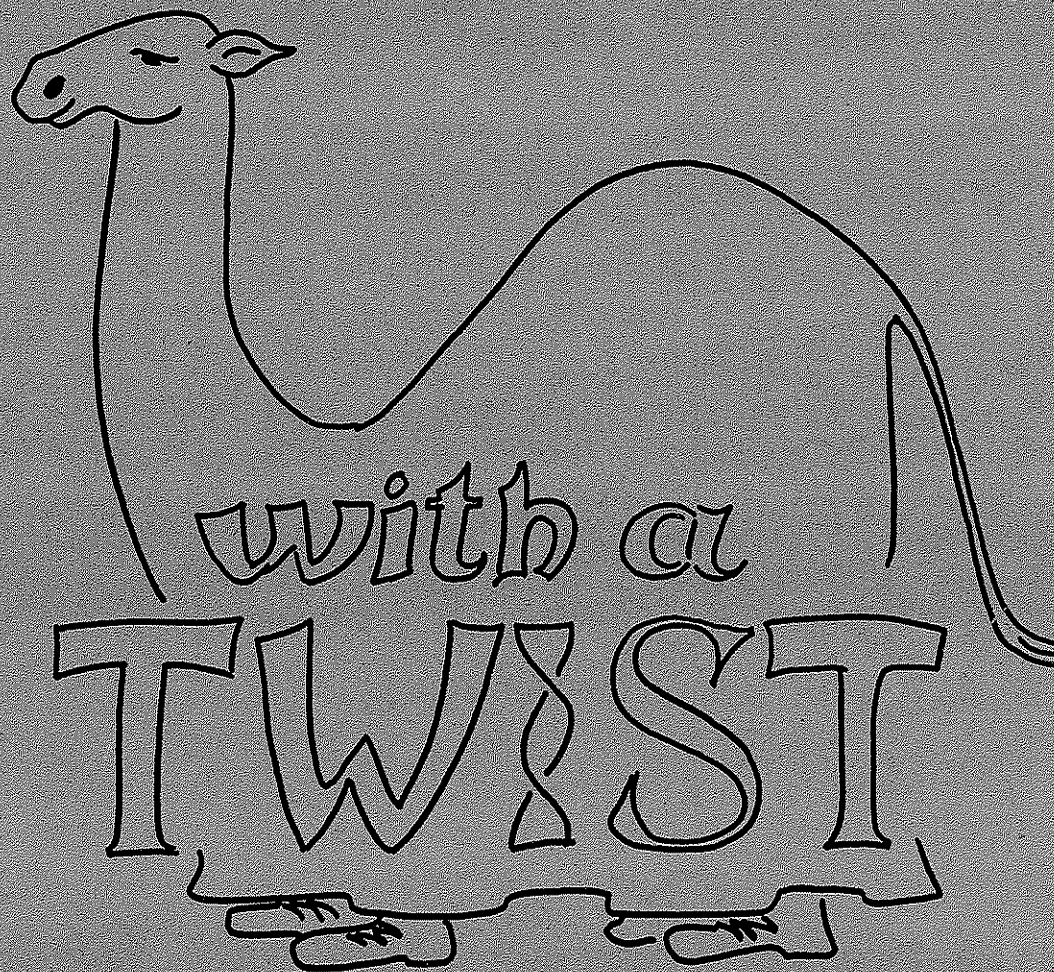


Christmas Programs



Written by
Elinor P. Briggs

For
Religious Education Committee
Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
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Christmas Programs

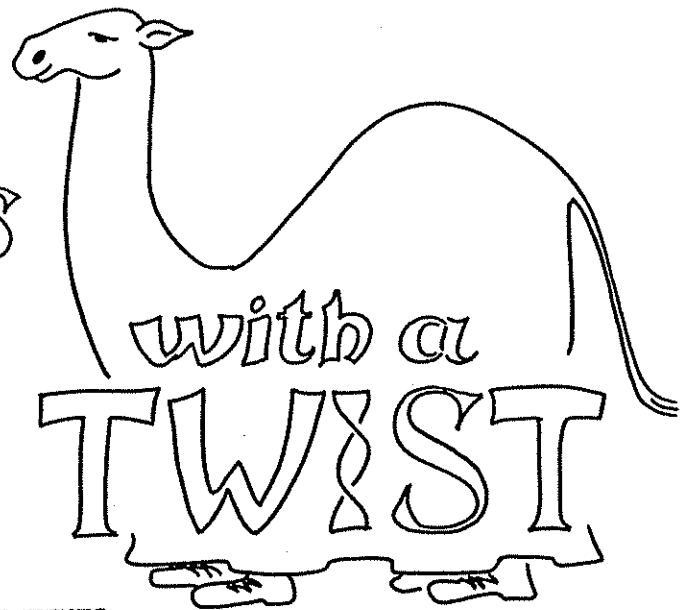


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CHRISTMAS PROGRAMS WITH A TWIST
by Elinor P. Briggs

Prologue

Middletown Meeting has known fat times and lean times as to membership and numbers of children. We have always, as long as I can remember, had a good time together once a month and especially at Christmas.

As a small child I can recall Christmas as a time that a group of adults put on a play; usually humorous. Sometimes it didn't even have much to do with Christmas but it was fun.

When the number of children swelled to a goodly crowd, the task of putting on a program fell to the Religious Education Committee. There has always been a wide variety; from tableaus, musicals, plays, shadow plays to candlelight carol services.

The last few years we have, again, a small group of children, varying in age and with uncertain attendance at First-Day School. Added to that is the fact that our membership is now widely scattered and often has a long distance to come to Meeting. But our "Socials" (once a month get-togethers) must go on! Christmas needed a boost because that is the time when most of our families are home and it is helpful to have a good reason to get together.

Therefore we started an intergenerational program of audience participation with carol singing; anyone who enjoys being in a play, having a part; and anyone who likes to paint simple scenery or make props having the fun of doing that, usually with the help of the children.

Once we got started on this idea it has worked well, requiring the minimum of time and effort for most and as much as you feel like doing for the rest. One key ingredient is spontaneity; these plays grew out of the interests and skills of the group.

Method

General:

To produce these plays you'll need actors - child and adult; scenery, props and costumes; music; and a little practice time. This section suggests how to manage these elements. Be sure to read it carefully before you select a play. Remember - you can use this process even if you decide to create your own original play.

Actors:

Children:

Since children are often the ones that you hope will be in the play and enjoy it, it helps to start with them. They usually enjoy acting out stories and have probably done a lot of it. If they haven't, choose a Bible story (Joseph and his coat, Noah building the Ark, etc.,) or any story you like and have them act it out.

Pantomiming is fun too. Sit in a circle and pretend to pass a ping-pong ball, a very heavy box, a bunch of flowers, etc. Try standing and pretending to throw and catch a basketball. Give them a variety of things to do to help them get the fun of making actions look real without props.

Adults and Older Children:

Anyone who enjoys being in a play should be included. You can assure them that it will be easy and they need do only as much as they want. We don't memorize lines. The Play is all ad lib. We do try to practice enough to know who will introduce an idea and when.

Scenery:

The scenery can be as simple as you wish. We have used folding screens. Other times we have had refrigerator boxes (cartons), and plain brown wrapping paper. The scenery has been used over and over, sometimes with small changes, sometimes more. If animals (made up of people) are used, use the whole room for the play so animals can be led across the room through the audience, rather than across the back of the stage.

We tape the wrapping paper strips together across the back of the "stage". The children are good at painting sky, sand, far-off hills, and stone or plain walls if you put pencil lines for boundaries and use big brushes. If you wish, the older ones can put in small buildings, stars, trees, etc.

The refrigerator boxes are especially good since you can paint a scene on each side and just turn them to the next scene when ready. Two boxes give the illusion of the scene, which is really all you need.

Props and Costumes:

Props aren't really needed unless it is fun for you and the children. Someone almost always has a stuffed lamb and a box (and doll) for the manger. (We had the children insist on the baby of the Meeting being the Baby Jesus one year. Needless to say the Mother was also in the scene as a shepherd!)

Paper mache or clay is fun for the children to do. Making the jars, lambs and other things can be fun if you have the time and someone in the group enjoys it!

People are good at finding a costume at home for themselves and/or their child. Simplicity is really the best! The wise men have used crowns from MacDonalds with a little added paint.

Stage Managing:

This person is in charge of seeing that the scene is set and changed and that all props and costumes are ready. It is really good to have a non-actor do this. It is important that they attend rehearsals enough to know when and how to change a scene!

Music:

Whatever you like: recordings, a group, solos, audience participation between scenes; anything appropriate to your Meeting adds greatly to the program.

Presenting the Theme and Practicing the Play:

This process will take at least three weeks: one to present the theme, one to practice, and one to present the play.

Introducing the theme is probably the scariest part for the leader. I was very uptight the first time I tried it. But I couldn't believe how well everyone entered in. They really took off once they got the story theme and added ideas that I never thought of.

It is important to have everyone there to hear the theme the first time. It is best to tell it as a story so that everyone gets a picture of the basic idea for the play. It helps if ahead of time you have asked a few key people to take certain parts. In fact, it helps to have an idea of parts for everyone if you can.

Most of the plays are set up so that a small group can work on its part without the whole cast. This makes it easier to get a group together to practice.

Once you've presented the story and roles have been decided on, divide up into groups to act out the various parts of the play. Run through the play without too many suggestions the first time. You may need to ask questions, such as: "How would you feel to see angels singing in the sky? How do you show that you are angry at your brother? How do you act when you are afraid and someone is lost? How do you act when you are tired of Christmas shopping? How do you feel when your plans aren't working out the way you want? Etc." Discuss what the characters are thinking and feeling. You may suggest lines that people might use.

By adlibbing the lines of the play, no one has to memorize a lot. The ones who like to speak can! Those who don't can just join in and enjoy themselves! One of the funniest lines in the play No Room At the Inn was spoken by one rather quiet man during the discussion of the Prodigal Son story. When they were talking about the fatted calf he popped up with "And I do so like that fatted calf!" It brought the house down. The practices are really fun because the play is never the same twice. Each time you do it you get a new idea and the play grows!

After the group gets the feel of what is happening in each scene, stop and check to be sure that the important idea for the play is coming across clearly. If it is, good! Go ahead and enlarge it with extra ideas. If it isn't, go back and be sure that all the players help to reinforce it with lines that repeat or make it clearer.

The children need to hear the story and then think about their parts in a small group, talking over what might be said. If they are elementary age they do need to learn what they should say. An adult, in the play, can often help them.

Practices? These are always a problem! For the children we use the First-Day School time. For the adults, we occasionally do the same but also we have a soup and sandwich lunch after Meeting, going through the play a couple of times afterwards. We paint some simple scenery then also.

You may have the usual problems, such as the main character coming down with chicken pox the day before the performance, or someone having to go out of town at the last minute. Someone always fills in and the play goes off as usual. We have had a lot of fun and people look forward to the Christmas program to see what we will dream up next!

Questions:

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ANGELS' NIGHT OFF



In this play be sure to use your own ideas as to what the people might say! Use situations that are up to date for this year. The situations (on earth) are just suggestions as to the kind of scene that you can use.

Scene I - The scene is set in Heaven with white clouds and blue sky around about. A blue sheet can be the background. White sheets spread over chairs or boxes work easily and are moved quickly. You can be as elaborate or simple as you like!

There are several angels (men, women and children) sitting and standing around, playing games (checkers, Monopoly, etc.) and talking together. (How tired they are. How difficult to take care of people. Being a guardian angel is hard work. People are unpredictable. Examples of experiences with a person, etc.!))

There is a chief angel who enters, calling out that this is a very special night and everyone has a night off; no need to go to earth to take care of careless people. Each angel has a special ornament that they carry (this can be a star, or any other gadget which the audience can see.) The head angel suggests that they all put their magic piece on a cloud in the center, since they won't need it for the night. The chief angel goes with great drama and places his magic piece down first. All do the same, but some do it reluctantly.

There are joyous comments: a night off! Aren't we going to have a heavenly time! What shall we do?, etc.

Then remarks: What will happen on earth if we aren't there? Can the people survive if we are not watching? etc.

The chief angel is reassuring. Forget about Earth! Let them struggle on their own. After all what could happen in one night! Especially THIS night! etc.

After the chief Angel exits, there is general discussion of what to do. One angel suggests that there will be a calamity, his person will get into real trouble! Some of the others join in. One says that after all the trouble to get his person this far, how can he leave him alone for one night, etc.

One by one the angels leave, each one surreptitiously picking up his magic ornament as he/she goes by center stage. After everyone leaves the Head angel slips in and picks up his own magic ornament and exits.

Scene II - Takes place in Palestine on a very dark night. In the center of the stage is a house. (Two large boxes together make the barrier needed.) An angel appears on the edge of the stage, ornament in hand.

Two soldiers, one an Israeli and the other an Arab, one on each side of the building, are pacing toward the front, obviously on guard duty. Neither can see the other. Each is very nervous. As each one approaches the front of the house, gun at the ready, the angel steps forward a little to see better. As they come front and turn they see each other and they bring their guns up as though to shoot.

The angel quickly holds up the magic ornament, the scene freezes for a moment and the scene lightens. As the soldiers see each other clearly, they recognize each other. They had known each other as children. They stop, sit down and talk, sharing memories with each other and leave as friends again, giving each other best wishes for the season.

After they go, the angel also leaves, perhaps commenting on the close call and what would have happened if he/she had taken the night off.

Scene III - The scene is an empty, small apartment kitchen. Enter a young woman carrying a bag of groceries and dumping them angrily down on the center table. The table holds dirty dishes, etc.

Enter young man, also angrily. They turn on each other. As they talk and sometimes shout at each other, an angel comes on the stage (front side) where the audience can see her/him but out of the scene.

Problem: Younger brother has come to the city to live with older sister. Brother is going to college, sister is working to pay their way. They wish to go home for Christmas 200 miles away where their large family lives.

All the problems of living on a little income, loneliness, wishing to go home, etc. come out. Not keeping the small apartment clean; dishes, clothes and room can be discussed.

The final straw is not being able to go home for Christmas. Reason: Brother borrowed the 'jalopy' without asking and had a minor accident requiring a new tire. Older sister had bought a new dress, thus no money for the emergency of the new tire. No available public transportation even if they had had money for it. Each accuses the other of selfishness, etc.! The sister wishes he'd go home! He says he's going out! He'd made some unexpected money waiting on tables at a local restaurant and he was going out with the guys! Goodbye! And he turns to go!

At this point with the angry words having become louder and more cruel the angel holds up the magic emblem that she/he carries. The scene freezes a moment.

Then the brother and sister turn towards each other. The sister saying that the tire was bad already, not really safe and that she was so thankful that he was not hurt! The brother saying that he knew she really needed the new dress and that he was sorry that he had borrowed the car without permission.

The brother confided that he had planned to buy a turkey with the money he had made and they would have a great Christmas together.

While the brother goes to buy the turkey, the sister starts to clean up the kitchen. A moment later he returns and tells his sister that he had met their elderly neighbor who was alone and had invited her to come tomorrow to share the dinner.

Scene ends with angel leaving, putting away the magic emblem and muttering about how much humans needed guardian angels!

(These scenes can be changed and others added here as you wish. Ideas about current events (elections, Nicaragua, etc.) or things that happen in a family

are fun to explore. The use of refrigerator boxes with four sides makes changing the scenes easy.)

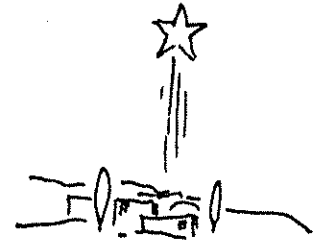
Scene IV - This scene is back in the white cloud heaven. The angels return a few at a time chattering about what they had seen and done. Have a couple of angels that did not do a scene tell (quickly) of their adventure rather than the ones you have had a scene for, if possible. The chief Angel hurries in and tells them to hurry: they are needed to sing to some shepherds in the fields and at a stable at Bethlehem.

They all hurry out.

Scene V - This is the stable scene with the manger, Mary, Joseph and any of the other characters you have space and people for. The angels can also be there or not as you wish. Songs and Bible reading can be done here and any other part of the Christmas program that may be traditional at your Meeting.

There are directions for angel wings included with "The First Christmas".

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS



Scene I - Herod's Palace

1. Herod with his advisors and soldiers standing at attention. Discussion about how to get more money, how to keep Jews paying taxes, what Herod needs more money for.
2. Enter three Wisemen. Question: where they can find the new-born king? Surely the Palace should be the right place? Tell their story of following the star, etc. Sense the anxiety of Herod and the advisors and they leave hastily, making excuses! Exit.
3. Herod asks for advice. Advisors finally suggest that the soldiers go and find this Baby so that Herod can do away with Him. Herod sends the soldiers off on the mission. Exit soldiers.

Scene II - Field with the Shepherds watching their sheep

1. Talk about beautiful night, hard times, going to pay taxes in Bethlehem tomorrow, when can they hope to be free of Herod, the Romans, etc.
2. Enter the wisemen following the star, with the camel (see directions in "The Wise Men".) Wisemen ask where the New-Born King may be. Shepherds listen to their news, wondering. Wisemen continue on towards Bethlehem following the star. Exit.
3. Soldiers come along on the road used by the wisemen and ask Shepherds if they have heard of a new King? Have they seen the wisemen? Shepherds evade answering since they dislike the Romans! Soldiers decide to break up into two groups to hunt for the Baby. Exit.
4. Shepherds, excitedly, wonder if this can be the one who will save them from all their troubles with the Romans, etc. Will this be "the shoot from the stump of Jesse" that Isaiah (11:1-4a) promised? Suddenly three angels appear and Shepherds are afraid and the angels say, "Fear not for ...". When they finish they leave and shepherds sing (any song you wish). Shepherds decide to go to Bethlehem and see! Exit.

Scene III - Manger Scene with Mary and Joseph

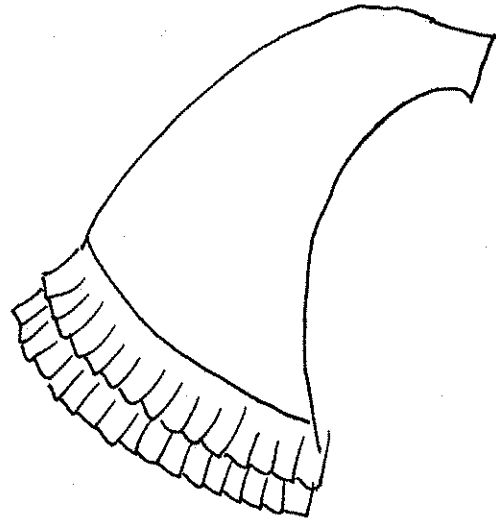
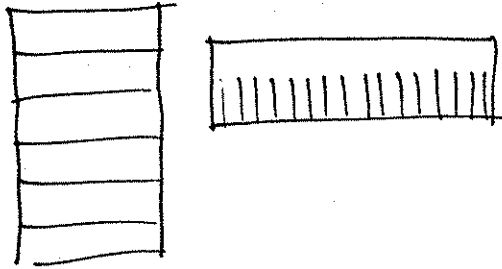
Enter the Wisemen offering gifts. (Singing off stage as they come on and during the entrance of all rest of the members of company.) Followed by the shepherds who kneel with the Wisemen. Sing "Silent Night" or --?

During song two soldiers enter ready to rush forward to seize the Family. They hesitate and look. Whisper together for a moment and then slowly put down their swords and shields, joining the rest kneeling and looking at the Baby. Curtain.

ANGEL WINGS

Cut two wing shapes
from brown wrapping paper
Paint white

Cut white tissue paper into
strips. Cut each strip up halfway.



Paste top of each strip on the paper wing starting at the bottom and continuing to the top. Pin on the shoulders and tape a wristband onto the back for hand to hold or go through.

NO ROOM AT THE INN



Scene I - Upstairs in the Inn in Bethlehem in the evening.

A wealthy woman is seated at a table. Her maids are hovering around her bringing jewelry, scarves, etc., for her to try on. As they are scurrying around a knock comes on the door. The Innkeeper appears, saying that another lady must share the room since the inn and town are very full because of the decree of Herod that all must pay taxes in the town of their birth.

Another woman moves into the room with her entourage. As they get settled they discuss, as gossip, a variety of topics:

The widow's lost piece of silver (Luke 15:8)

The ten foolish maidens (virgins) and their lamps (Matt. 25:10)

The Widow's offering (Luke 21:1-4)

Et cetera. Anything that you can think of!

A knock at the door. The Innkeeper asks if the women would be willing to share another room with another lady. The answer is an outraged NO! The Innkeeper pleads that the room is needed for a woman expecting a child. He can't persuade them and leaves. The maids and women are very vocal about the nerve of the innkeeper expecting them to move.

Scene II - The main room on the first floor of an Inn.

The wife, children, and Innkeeper are busy serving food to a group of men gathered around a table. As they are eating another man enters asking for a room. The Innkeeper asks the men if one of them will share a room with this man. The answer was a hesitant yes. One more could crowd into one of the rooms. The conversation continues among the men. Stories might include:

The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-24)

The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37)

Taxes/Caesar (Luke 20:21-25)

Laborers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16)

Lost Sheep (Matt 18:12-13)

House Built Upon the Rock (Matt 7:24-27)

Sower went out to sow (Mark 4:3-8)

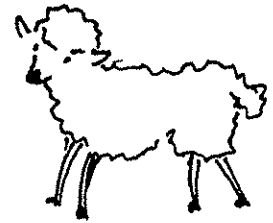
Et Cetera. Up-to-date feelings about taxes and other topics that come up are fun to include.

There is a knock on the door and Joseph appears begging for a room for his wife who is so very tired. The Innkeeper says that there is no room but Joseph repeats his request. The Innkeeper turns and asks the men if any will give up his room. There are general replies of no, of course not! Go somewhere else. Joseph assures them that he has.

The Innkeeper feels sorry for him and suggests the Inn's stable. It is clean and warm. Joseph accepts and the son is directed to show him the way.

Scene III - The Stable Scene. It includes the manger, with Joseph and Mary watching. It can be a tableau with the shepherds, the wisemen, angels, animals, etc. Or you can have the shepherds and wisemen come in one or two at a time. Singing and Bible reading can also be a part of it.

ON A WINTRY HILL



Characters needed for this play are seven shepherds (parts can be redistributed for fewer if wished), three wisemen, Mary and Joseph. There can be any number of angels or a chorus off stage or the carols may be sung by the audience. Of the shepherds, the oldest brother, Samuel, has a slightly longer part, as does Little Brother.

Scene I - A hillside near Bethlehem. Some Shepherds are sitting on the ground watching the sheep.

Samuel: What a beautiful night this is! That star is so bright!

Thomas: Yes, it really is! It almost seems like day.

Simon: The sheep seem very quiet tonight. Maybe we can get some rest for a change!

Andrew: It seems so peaceful and still compared to usual.

James: And - I know why! -- Little Brother isn't here!

Simon: Did you ever see anyone make so much noise or get into so much trouble? He is really unbelievable!

James: I hope Father keeps him home for a while. He is more trouble than he is a help!

Samuel: You are being too hard on him! He tries, you know!

Simon: Why do you defend him? He's a real pest! You can't count on him for anything because he always goes off to see - or rescue - something. You have to admit that it has been quiet today!

Samuel: Yes, it has. He probably is staying home tonight. It is late and getting dark for him to find us.

(At this moment, stumbling as he runs, falling on the ground at their feet, Little Brother enters from the right.)

Philip: Well! Look who's here!

Thomas: Where have you been, Little Brother? You were supposed to be here an hour ago!

Little Brother: (Brushes his knee and holds his elbow as though it hurts.) I - I lost my way.

Samuel: How could you do that? You have been here often enough!

Little Brother: I saw the most beautiful flower by a stream. I just stopped for a moment to see it and -

Simon: I know, it got dark! Really, Little Brother, when will you grow up!

Little Brother: It was yellow and shone just like the sun!

Samuel: Well - did you remember the dates and cheese? Or did you put them down while you admired the flower?

Andrew: Or maybe you found a wandering wolf and shared the cheese with it.

Little Brother: (Reaching into the pack he is carrying) Oh - yes. Here they are. (Struggles to get them out.) Oh dear, I can't get them out!

Thomas: Let me help you. -- There! (Taking package.)

James: I'm really hungry! This looks good. How about some bread, Simon. Let's have some supper.

Andrew: I'll get it. We need some water from the spring. Here, Little Brother, take the jug and bring some water.

(Exit Little Brother to the right. The others gather around breaking the bread, cheese, etc. Little Brother soon returns, running again, and falls, spilling the water.)

Little Brother: (Excitedly) Samuel! Simon! Come and see the men on the camels, all dressed in robes and crowns, and - oh - you should see! They are magnificent!

All: Oh Little Brother! Out here? You're ridiculous! Stop imagining things! Do stop this nonsense! At night? etc.!

Little Brother: But I saw them! Really! Please come and see.

(Enter a Wiseman. Shepherds draw back alarmed)

Wiseman I: Please, good shepherds, may we inquire of you if we may have water here? Is it good, pure water?

Samuel: Yes, of course. Let us help you.

Wiseman I: Yes, please. We have travelled far! We have followed that star for many weary miles. (Turns and calls to the other wisemen.) Come, my friends, these shepherds have offered to help water our camels. (Enter two more wisemen).

Wiseman II: Greetings, my friends.

Wiseman III: Bless you for your help.

Samuel: Andrew and Little Brother go and water the camels. (They exit.)

Philip: Where are you travelling so late at night?

Wiseman III: We travel at night, following that star.

Wiseman II: We go where it leads. Tonight it is so bright, surely our journey is nearly at an end!

Samuel: It seems strange, following a star. From what kingdom do you come?

Wiseman I: Our paths have joined from different parts of the world far away. Each of us has been called to follow this star and find the Prince of Peace.

Wiseman II: He is to be born soon. We have hurried because we wish to see Him. We are old - and tired - and have travelled so far -- just to worship Him.

Samuel: If you are tired, stay and rest with us.

Wiseman I: See that star? How bright it is! It draws us on. Come, Friends, we must be on our way.

Philip: Can you not wait?

Wiseman III: Why don't you come with us! Come and join us!

Simon: We cannot go with you. We must watch our sheep.

(Enter Andrew and Little Brother)

Andrew: Your camels are watered.

Wiseman II: Thank you for your help. This night is one that will be remembered always! You should come and follow the star with us.

Samuel: And our sheep? Who will care for them?

Wiseman I: Leave them! (Pause, as he looks at each one of them) Ah - I see you will not. Goodbye. -- Goodbye! (exit).

Simon: What do you suppose that they meant?

Samuel: The Prince of Peace?

Philip: (to Little Brother) Well, empty-headed little one, where is our water? Go and get it. And walk this time! (Exit Little Brother)

Samuel: Why do you suppose that those three men think that following that star will bring them to the Baby that will be our King?

Andrew: Maybe they are Wisemen. We have been hoping for a King to lead us to freedom.

James: Let us hope that they are right! We need to fight and overthrow the Romans and chase them back to Rome!

Simon: But they called Him the 'Prince of Peace'! What did they mean? That doesn't sound like a war!
Philip: Well, I'm sure that I don't know. And - I'm going to sleep - after I get a drink of water. Where is that scamp?

(Enter Little Brother carrying a lamb)

Little Brother: See the little lamb that I found. Its mother left it and ...
Samuel: Oh Little Brother, you find every little lamb! You'll have to care for it, you know.
Little Brother: Oh yes, Samuel, I'll love to!
Philip: Well, where is the water jug?

(Suddenly there is singing: "Glory to God," etc., off stage - or perhaps children, as angels, enter on a raised platform behind them, or any way your stage permits, and sing a carol. It should be the part of a carol where the angels tell the shepherds about the Baby in the manger in Bethlehem. At first the Shepherds draw back in fright and then slowly start to listen eagerly. Afterwards the angels leave and the singing stops.)

Simon: Let's go and see the Child!
James: Yes, the King has come at last!
Samuel: The sheep will be all right, I suppose.
Thomas: Yes! - Let us go! -- Come on! (Exit James and Thomas, following direction of the star and the way the Wisemen took)
Andrew: Little Brother can watch the sheep. He has the little lamb to care for. (All exit except Samuel and Little Brother.)
Samuel: Stay here, Little Brother. Take care of the lamb. (Aside, as he hesitates.) I guess he will be all right. Seeing the Child cannot mean anything to him. (Exits, following others.)
Little Brother: (Calling after him.) But Samuel, I want to see the Christ Child! Please? (Sits down still holding the lamb. He speaks to it.) I'd love to see the Baby, wouldn't you? -- The sheep are quiet. -- Shall we go? -- I can carry you. -- Bethlehem isn't too far! (Rises with difficulty.) You are heavy! But I think I can carry you. It isn't too far! (Exits).

Scene II - The stable with the manger, Mary, Joseph, and angels (if you wish). A carol is sung, such as "Away in the Manger", "The First Noel", "We Three Kings", etc.

(Enter the Wisemen who present their gifts. The shepherds follow quietly as though fearful they will wake the Baby. They kneel and watch.)

Wiseman I: See how quietly He sleeps.
Simon: There is a radiance about Him.
Samuel: He is a beautiful Child!
Wiseman II: He is born to be the Prince of Peace.
Philip: He is so small!
Wiseman III: Look, He is waking up!
Wiseman I: He sees our gifts.
Andrew: He is so serious!
James: I wonder what He is looking at now?

(All turn to see Little Brother entering quietly with the lamb. He seems afraid when they look at him, ready to go out again. Joseph comes toward him, stretching out his hand.)

Joseph: Come, child, and see the Baby. (Leads Little Brother to the manger.
He kneels down with the lamb in his arms.)
Wiseman I: See the Baby smile? Why, He's laughing! He likes the lamb! (All
nod and smile; comments such as "See that!", "How wonderful!", etc.)
Samuel: (Stepping forward to kneel next to Little Brother) Little Brother,
I'm glad you came!
Thomas: (Joining them) I'm glad you brought the Lamb, too! (All sing
"Silent Night".)

CURTAIN

PEACE IN THE STABLEYARD



This is a one-act play taking place in Bethlehem on the evening before Jesus was born. There are several characters including an innkeeper's child; Charlie, the grey donkey; Jess, the white donkey; Mollie, the brown and white cow; Juliet, the pig; Myrtle, the dove; Hilda and Gretel, the two sheep; and Shep, the sheep dog.

When the scene opens the door to the stable is open on the rear right. A mourning dove is up on a trestle at the rear center, the pig is in a pen on the left and the cow is tied by the stable door rear right.

Innkeeper's child: (coming in from the left leading the two donkeys across to the front right.) Here, Charlie! Come on, Jess! I'll tie you here for tonight. You can have this hay. No biting and kicking, now! Whoa there! (He/she ties them while they push and shove trying to reach the hay. He/she exits left)

Charlie (mule 1): Move over will ya, Jess! I can't reach the hay and I'm hungry!

Jess (mule 2): Move over yourself! --Why are we out here anyway? It's even getting cold!

Mollie (cow): Listen to you two! Quarreling already and you just got here. I'm cold too, and I'm not saying a word!

Juliet (pig): Who says you're not! I can hear you way over here!

Charlie (mule 1): Jess, watch your big feet, dodo! That's my hay you're trampling to death!

Jess (mule2): Well, I've got a right to some too, don't I? I work hard!

Charlie (mule 1) (snorting): Huh! Not so I notice! Who do you think you are anyway? Everyone knows I'm worth more than you are.

Jess (mule 2): Who says so?

Charlie (mule 1): Everybody says so! Hey, gang, grey donkeys are better than white ones, aren't they? Beautiful, intelligent, superior! The best color is grey! Right?

Mollie (brown and white cow): You're a snob, Charlie! Now I'm not a bit prejudiced! I like brown and white; the only color for cows!

Myrtle (dove): Both of you donkeys are so dumb! You spend all day pulling and carrying instead of flying around for fun like I do!

Juliet (pig): Rrrright! And you're noisy and quarrelsome and---

Jess (mule2): Look who's talking! Just look at your manners! UG! You are nothing but a pig!

Juliet (pig): So I am! And proud of it! I have excellent manners for a pig. They are just right for me, - not for you, but for me! Besides I'm the smartest of the bunch of you. Look at old Mollie. Not a thought in her head! Just stands there chewing her cud all day --- and night!

Mollie (cow): I don't snort and snore all day. I don't guzzle and gorge myself like you do. - or bathe in that mud puddle! But I do get bothered by that old pigeon, Myrtle, buzzing me and dive bombing me just when I start to snooze!

Myrtle (dove) (Flapping her wings and shouting): I am not a pigeon! I am a Dove! A real, high-class person; peaceful and all!

Charlie (mule 1): Cool it, gang! Here comes Dumb-dumb, the Innkeeper's kid!

Jess (mule 2): - And the stupid sheep - and old Shep, the sheep dog! Chase him over here, Myrt, dive bomb him and I'll give him a kick!

Innkeeper's Child (putting the sheep in the pen with the pig and fastening the dog to its box): Good Shep! Good old dog! Take care of everything. Father says that there are a lot of strangers around tonight! (he/she exits)

Juliet (pig) (aping the child): Good old boy, good old dog! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Hilda (sheep 1): Why are we out here?

Gretel (sheep 2): Yes! and in this mud hole?

Juliet (pig): Well, I don't need you, either! You empty-headed balls of wool! (runs at them)

Hilda (sheep 1): Help! Help! let us out!

Shep (dog) (growling): Stop it, Juliet! I'll tell on you! I'll bark and get the Innkeeper out here.

Mollie (cow): La-de-da! A tattle-tale yet!

Myrtle (dove): I'm glad I'm up here! Safe from that snapping dog!

Mollie (cow): He's tied, bird brain! He can't hurt anybody. Toothless! All bark and no bite, is right!

Juliet (pig): Speaking of dumb, he's a good one to go with the sheep! No mind of his own; comes running any time they whistle!

Jess (mule 2): What a Life! What a disagreeable bunch of companions you are! Here we are out here in the cold! What a dump!

Charlie (mule 1): Yeah! Just a gang of noisy, bossy animals!

Hilda (sheep 1): Cross animals, you mean! My leg still hurts where you kicked me last night.

Jess (mule 2) (laughing): Bruised leg of mutton, anyone?

Gretel (sheep 2): It is cold out here! Why can't we be in our nice warm stable? I'll bet it's all your fault, Charlie. I'll bet you knocked down the wall. I heard you kicking it last night.

Shep (dog) (lying down to sleep): It's enough that I have to put up with your stupid bleating all day without having to listen to it all night! I'm tired! Go to sleep, will ya?

Mollie (cow): For once I agree with you!

Juliet (pig): Rrrright! Even if he is just a bag of mangy fur!

Shep (dog) (jumping up): Now just a minute! Wait until I --

Gretel (sheep 2): Oh quiet! Go to sleep if you are so tired!

(Quietness settles as the animals go to sleep. A light from the stable grows brighter. The dove stirs.)

Myrtle (dove): How can anyone sleep with that light! -- Say, what is it, anyway?

Charlie (mule 1) (jerking at his rope): Go see what it is, Myrt. Here, maybe I can get loose.

(Myrtle gets down and goes to the door and looks in. Charlie pulls free.
Mollie turns to look in the door also.)

Myrtle (dove): Well! -- What do you know!

Charlie (mule 1) (going over to the pig pen): Maybe I can jiggle the latch on
the pen so that you can get out and come and see.

(Gate opens and the sheep and pig crowd over to the door)

Hilda (sheep 1): How wonderful!

Gretel (sheep 2): What a surprise!

Shep (dog) (tugging on his rope): What is it? What is it?

Juliet (pig): Everyone should see this. Here Jess, I'll bet I can pull that
knot loose. (Unties rope holding Jess.)

Jess (mule 2) (looking in the door) Oh! No wonder we were left out here!

Shep (dog) (jumping up and down): What is it? What is it? Oh, come on,
gang, what's happening? (Charlie and Jess go to his box)

Charlie (mule 1): I'll bet if we put our shoulders to this box we can shove it
over there to the door!

Jess (mule 2): Sure we can! (They push the box close enough for Shep to look
in.)

Shep (dog): What an adorable Baby!

Mollie (cow): Look at the Mother. Isn't she happy!

Charlie (mule 1): Yeah! And look at the Father! Isn't he proud?

Myrtle (dove): Look! The Baby sees us!

Hilda (sheep 1): He's smiling!

Gretel (sheep 2): He's laughing!

Shep (dog): We've made him happy!

Hilda (sheep 1): Say, who are those men coming in the door over there?

Mollie (cow): Look at those fancy clothes!

Gretel (sheep 2): They are giving him something. I wonder what it is?

Shep (dog): They look strange. But the Father doesn't seem worried, so I
guess it's all right.

(They stand quietly for a minute and then slowly go back to their places, one
by one, except Shep, who lies down in front of the door.)

Jess (mule 2): Say, Juliet, you sure are smart to be able to untie my rope.
Thank you!

Juliet (pig): Think nothing of it! Say, Hilda and Gretel, it's nice to have
you in here. It makes it warmer!

Charlie (mule 1): I'm glad that you couldn't sleep and told us about the
light, Myrt!

Hilda (sheep 1): Thanks for opening our pen so that we could see the Baby,
Charlie!

Shep (dog): Thanks, Jess and Charlie, for pushing my house over to the door
so that I could see.

Gretel (sheep 2): Yes, I'm glad that we could all see!

Mollie (cow): I wouldn't have missed seeing this for anything! I won't ever
forget it! It makes me feel friendly towards .. everyone!

Shep (dog): It's a wonderful night! This is a great place to be!

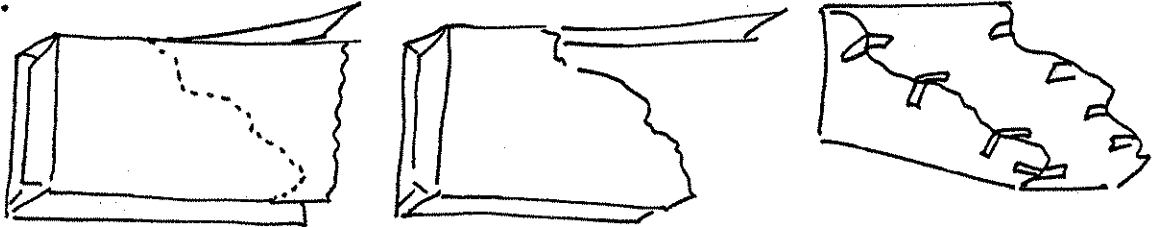
Myrtle (dove): I feel so happy and peaceful. We made the baby happy!

(The animals fall asleep. Morning comes. Enter the Innkeeper's child)

Innkeeper's Child (Going from one animal to another, asking how each one got loose. Calls toward Inn): Father! Father! Come and see the animals! They are all loose! Except Shep and his box is moved all around! They didn't any of them run away! Father! Come and see!

END

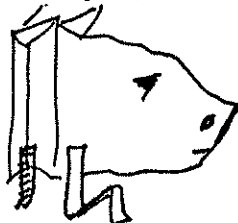
To give the illusion of each animal, make a simple head from medium size paper bags.



Cut out bottom of bag; cut other side along seam 2/3 way from open end. Draw head on side. Keep flat, both sides together and cut shape. Keep top free when cutting shape of head. Use tape to put top and sides of bag together.



Cut bottom back to fit shoulders. Cut triangles for ears, fold in half and glue on corners. Paint. Paint eyes, mouth, etc., when dry.



Fasten ribbons on side to tie on. Put piece of tape on back to pin to collar of actor.



For mane: 1. Wrap yarn around a piece of cardboard. 2. Sew with machine down middle. 3. Cut along each edge of board. 4. Bend board and tear out. Glue mane onto head for the donkeys. Horns are put on cow (and sheep), ears that flop for sheep, little ones for pigs, etc.

The parts in this play can be switched around and added to, according to the number of children you have for the roles in the play. Some children may like to work on simple scenery or be stage managers.

THE SHOP ON THE CORNER



This play takes place on a corner in the slum part of a town. A couple of large refrigerator boxes placed on either side of the stage and a brown paper back drop can be painted to show a street with run-down shops, garbage cans, etc. Use an old storm window or plastic to make a window (in or along side of one box) that someone can stand behind to look out. It needs to be set so that someone can enter the shop by going behind the box. You don't have to see a door.

Scene I

1. A Santa Claus is ringing a bell with the usual pot for donations and stands on one side. A policeman paces up and down on the street, this way and that. They talk to each other about the cold weather, the lack of people on the street, Christmas Eve and having to work, ETC!! A mother enters dragging two (number you wish) children. They are protesting that they want to go home! They cry, stamp their feet, sit down on the ground, pull back, etc. Mother pulls, says she has just one more gift to buy for Dad; they had better behave or no Christmas! She'll turn them over to the policeman! She complains: tired, no money, can't find gift, they better behave! No donation to Santa Claus! She sees the shop and goes in.

While she is in shop, Police and Santa share views of what a miserable time of year Christmas is (all the complaints), what a poor mother that woman is, and so on.

When mother and children come out, all are happy. Children say how wonderful Christmas is, Mother donates some money to Santa and says Merry Christmas to Policeman. Exit.

2. A couple of cross, wealthy women enter. They are angry about prices, lack of gifts, the time spent looking! They are hunting a gift for one of the women to give her husband. (This should be something ridiculous! The stranger the better!) The other woman wants to go home and is very cross with the first for having dragged her down here in this dreadful area.

They look at the Policeman and Santa. No donation! People always begging, etc. At least the policeman is here for protection!

See shop and wonder if they can possibly find the gift they are looking for there. Enter Shop.

Police and Santa shake heads about the wealthy: selfish, inconsiderate, expecting everything for nothing, etc.

Women come out of shop ecstatic! They found just what they wanted! The feeling of Christmas is wonderful. Generous donation to Santa! Merry Christmas to Policeman and a Happy New Year! Exit.

Santa and police can't believe it!

3. A very anxious, elderly lady hurries in looking this way and that! She hurries up to the policeman begging for his help. She has lost her grandchild!

It is just a small child. She had promised her daughter to take care of it and while she was doing a last-minute errand the little child has disappeared!

The Policeman has not seen the child. When pressed to help he suggests that the grandmother look further. If, after a few hours, the child has not returned home, report it to the police station, etc. The Grandmother protests the child is too small to find its way home. She needs help now! As she calls the name of the child, dashing frantically back and forth, she looks in the window. There, the shopkeeper is holding up the child. The child waves and is delighted to have played the game of hide and seek.

The Grandmother hurries toward the door saying how she is going to spank that child, etc.!

Police and Santa venture that they are thankful not to be that little child! Children don't respect their elders or obey any more and so on!

Grandmother and child come out of shop. Grandmother is hugging the child and so happy that all is well. Merry Christmas! A gift is given to Santa's pot and a thanks to the policeman.

After they leave Santa suggests that something may be going on in the shop. Shouldn't the policeman check it out? The policeman says that it does seem strange that everyone goes in angry and comes out happy. It does need to be looked into! "Come along, Santa! If I need help you can call in to the police station for me!"

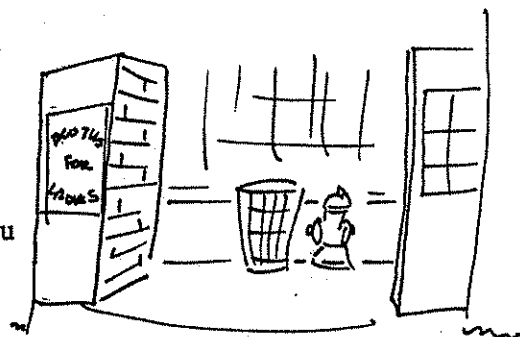
Scene closes as Policeman enters shop, cautiously followed by Santa.

Scene II - The inside of the shop is the manger scene in a tableau. The scene should include Mary and Joseph. The rest of the characters can be as many of the usual scene as you wish, including angels, animals, etc. You can have a Bible reading, carols and any other parts of the Christmas scene you wish.

These are suggestions for scenery. Box 1 on left, facing stage and Box 2 on right. Back of the stage is brown wrapping paper taped together to form the street scene.

Be sure to make the colors bright!

On another side of the boxes you can paint a stable scene with light, rafters, hay, etc. Then you can just turn it to face front for the second scene, putting them together, covering up the street corner scenery behind.



There are many more ideas that you may have for people coming to buy something in the Shop: A man looking for just the right gift for his wife and all the problems he has had; a child or children arguing as they look for something for their parents; someone trying to be a pickpocket following the victim into the shop. Try to have a problem and negative feelings that you have sometimes at Christmas, replaced by a feeling of love, warmth and happiness that remembering the true meaning of Christmas will bring.

SNOWSTORM ON CHRISTMAS EVE



(This play has parts that may be played by either sex. You can add people coming to the motel with different occupations and different ages. These are just some ideas to start from and change as you wish! You can add more children to the family. You might have a Santa Claus all dressed up and on his way to a party. And so on.)

Scene I - A small motel (any name you wish) is located at a lonely exit of an interstate thruway. There is a very bad snowstorm outside and two desk clerks are wondering if they can possibly get home. When they try to call on the phone the lines are down. Power is off but there is an emergency generator. The motel is full. The two share stories of the difficulties their families are having, let alone being without them on Christmas Eve. There is much grumbling about having to work anyway. (Here is a good place to get everyone's ideas about family problems, having to work on a holiday, driving conditions and stupid drivers, too much celebrating at the office, etc!)

An elderly couple enters shaking off the snow and cold! The man approaches the desk stating that they must have a room with two beds! He can't sleep because his wife snores. The wife says she can't sleep because he thrashes around, etc. The clerks politely say that they have no more rooms; didn't they see the 'No Vacancy' sign?

No! Of course not! It was hard enough to see the Exit sign on the Thruway or the Motel sign. Didn't they know that it was snowing? What are they supposed to do? They can't go any further. Can't the clerks see that they are elderly? And so on!

The clerks motion to the chairs in the lobby and say that this is the best that they have to offer.

The two, grumbling, sit down. Each scolds the other about getting in this mess. The wife saying she said to stay home. The husband saying, no, she was the one that insisted that they had to go to see the grandchildren on Christmas!

No sooner are they settled than a man enters carrying a large box. Approaching the desk, he demands a room. When they tell him that they are full, he says that is ridiculous: there is always a room if the money is right. He tries flashing a bill. They coldly assure him that there is NO ROOM! He tells them that he is President of a BIG Corporation and he has to have a room to spread out papers and to go over his important work.

They suggest that he continue on the turnpike to the next town.

He tells them that they had better turn on the radio; the road is closed between here and the next exit, let alone the next town. The clerks look at each other and moan that there is no way that they are going to get home! Imagine having to stay here tonight! They tell him to help himself to the chair that is left. He stalks angrily over to the chair muttering about how he is not going to be able to work here!

As he opens his box (file) and starts to shuffle papers, a woman enters dragging a child by the arm. She pulls it along toward the desk and is followed by a second larger child who complains about being left behind. The clerks ask

that they please close the door. The woman says that she needs a room; one will do. The children shove each other, raising their voices in an argument about a toy carried by the first. Mother says to be quiet. On hearing that there is no room she says that they can't go on. Each one in the family complains about being away from home on Christmas. There are angry voices!

The elderly couple look at each other and say what can you expect from the children when the parents don't know how to raise them! etc.

The next to arrive in the lobby is a very young couple. They are dressed in the latest teenage garb and hairdos, looking cold. The elderly couple exchange aside comments about what is the world coming to, etc. The business man looks at them in disgust.

They receive the same answer from the clerks as the others have. No room! They venture that they are on their honeymoon and so maybe they could have a room, just a little one?

No! and unfortunately they have even run out of chairs! They look at each other and shrug. As they sprawl on the floor they say that they are glad that their car hadn't gotten stuck any farther from the exit than it was. They had enough trouble staggering through the snow to get here. They are definitely unhappy! What a miserable Christmas Eve! What a miserable Honeymoon! Even her jeans, which she had worked so hard to make look old, are wet, etc. He snaps at her to shut up; others will hear her.

The elderly couple shake their heads and say no wonder the divorce rate is so high.

The next to come in is a truck driver followed closely by an elderly minister. The truck driver strides to the desk and says that he would like his usual room and hurry up with the key. He is tired! and angry because he promised to be home tonight with his family! He has driven at least 500 miles today and then not to be able to drive the 50 more to get home is infuriating! The stupid drivers that can't drive in snow and clog up the road so that the good drivers can't get through make him furious! They ought to stay home! etc.

The minister, standing close behind him, ventures to speak up and say that he is very grateful to him for picking him up when his car broke down on the road. He asks the clerks if he can use the phone to call his wife to let her know that he is all right.

The clerks say that they are sorry but they have no rooms left at all and their phone seems to be out. The best they can do is to offer shelter. The clergyman may have their chair (they carry one around for him to sit on). The truck driver can sleep on the floor.

The truck driver says that if that is the best they can do, okay, but at least he will go to the restaurant and get some food. When he hears that it is closed and all the help gone home he sinks to the floor with cross looks and comments.

The group settles down, each muttering, grumbling, etc., except for the clergyman, who comforts the elderly gentleman, saying that he is fortunate to have his wife with him. The clergyman is worried about his wife being home alone and probably worried about him! She had begged him not to go out after she had heard the weather report. But he had promised to read the Christmas

service for the small church in the next valley on Christmas Eve and felt that he must keep his promise. Then on the way home his old car had given out.

It becomes quiet and the clergyman takes out his Bible and turns the pages. The elderly woman asks him to read the Christmas story out loud.

The Christmas story is read. Then the young couple start to sing a carol (any one you like) and all join in.

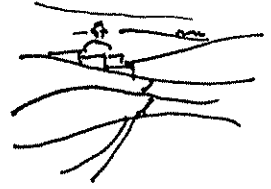
After they finish singing the carol, the elderly couple look at each other and say that they have some cookies and cakes in the car that they were taking to their children that they would like to share with the others. The clerks say that they will put on their coffee pot.

The truck driver says that he will help bring in the cookies, etc., and while he is outside why doesn't the clergyman come and see if they can't call someone on his radio who will let his wife know that he is all right.

Suddenly there is happy chatter and friendliness in the room and everyone looks at the clock saying that it is twelve o'clock and Merry Christmas every-one!

Scene II - Our Meeting usually follows the scene with the Creche Scene as a tableau with the children doing the main parts, angels, shepherds, wisemen, Mary and Joseph, animals, etc. We sing a carol or two while they pose.

THE TRIP TO BETHLEHEM



This play takes place just before Jesus was born in a small village about two days' journey from Bethlehem. The children of a large family are working to help their mother take care of everything. The Father is missing: gone on a trip to sell some wool from the sheep; gone to work somewhere else; perhaps dead. Choose a reason that you would like to use.

The girls must help with washing clothes, carrying water, cooking the meals and any other thing that you think of.

One of the boys is doing some carpentry, another is a shepherd and some young children may be playing a game.

Scenery for this play can be changed for each scene by using two large refrigerator boxes. Paint a scene for the home on one side. Turn the box and put a scene for the grain field and path on the next side. Turn it again for a scene showing little houses of Bethlehem in the distance on the third side. The last side will be the stable scene with plain walls, hay, etc.

Scene I - The scene opens outside the house with Mother telling the daughters what they should be doing (wash clothes at river, watch the littlest, grind grain, etc.). The youngest children are playing a game (use feathers, stones, etc.) The oldest brother is working with wood. He asks a younger brother to help hold something. The child doesn't want to but after a lecture on helping while Father is away, he does. Mother exits as do the sisters.

Second oldest brother enters calling for sisters to water the sheep. Two sisters enter and grumblingly go - after being reminded that it is their job, especially while Father is away.

A third brother comes in asking if they had heard the news? When they ask what the news is, he tells of hearing that every family must pay taxes to Caesar right away. The worst is that the parents have to pay them in the town that they were born in.

Mother enters and inquires what all the commotion is about. When they tell her she tells the oldest son to leave all the things that he is doing and go to the center of town to the elders and find out exactly what is happening. He exits leaving the family to discuss just how they are going to be able to do this with Father away. The sisters enter and join in the discussion.

Solutions: perhaps Father will be back in time; Mother should go but the baby is too small to leave and too heavy to carry all the way to Bethlehem; older Brother should go but who will keep the things repaired that are too heavy and hard for the rest to do; the second brother might go but who would take care of the sheep; the third brother is just too young to go and has never been to Bethlehem. It is a big responsibility carrying the precious money. Because of robbers on the mountain paths, two should go.

The second Brother takes out a gold coin and says that he would like to go! He can spend his coin for something special! No! No! Mother reminds him that his grandfather gave it to him and it must not be spent foolishly!

The oldest son returns and reports that the worst has happened. It is necessary to go quickly to avoid a fine or punishment. They can't wait for Father. They all talk about their hatred of the Romans and taxes!

Solution: If the two older boys go quickly they will get back in three days or so; the girls promise to care for the sheep. The third brother says that he will try to do everything that has to be done if big brother will instruct him in the most important things that he needs to do. Everyone hurries to help to get them ready to go very early in the morning.

Scene II - On the road to Bethlehem. The two brothers enter, the oldest is ahead of the second and turns to urge him on. When he sees how tired his brother is he agrees to stop to eat and rest for a few minutes.

As they eat they notice that they are sitting under an olive tree. They look for the fruit. There is none! How ridiculous to have an olive tree that bears no fruit!

They notice some seeds by the side of the road. They talk about the beautiful field of grain that they can see. These must be seeds that the farmer had tossed too far and which landed on the rocky path. Over there are some seeds that have grown for a while but now are withered because they had landed on soil that was not deep enough and in weeds.

The second Brother takes out his coin. He says that he remembers one time that he lost it and hunted and hunted for it. He isn't going to spend it in Bethlehem after all!

They need to hurry on. The path over the mountains is dangerous because of robbers. In two miles they will be safely across before night falls. Better hide the coin!

Just as they rise to start on, a Roman Soldier enters walking hurriedly down the road. He sees the two boys as he is about to pass by. He stops and lowers his packs to the ground. He turns to them and motions to them to pick them up and carry them, following him. He strides off. The two boys look at each other. The oldest one says that they have to carry them; the law says so. They are very furious and angrily jerk the packs up, saying that they are tired too but they only have to carry them for one mile! They follow the Roman soldier off the stage.

Scene III - On the top of the Mountain Pass.

The Roman Soldier enters. He stops and turns, looking for the two boys. The mile is up. As they enter they see him waiting. The second brother is glowering! The oldest comes forward and puts down the soldier's pack. He asks where the soldier is going. The soldier tells him that he is going home to Rome at last! He has walked many miles today and has many more to go to catch the ship home. The brother asks how long he has been in Israel. The soldier says two years. He has served his time and now he can go home. The oldest brother asks his age (16-18?) and discovers that they are the same age. The soldier tells of being homesick for his family, how he used to be annoyed by his sisters but how glad he will be to see them!

As they talk together they find that they feel alike about things (home, family, work, home cooking, etc. - choose one or two things). As the Roman soldier starts to pick up the packs, the younger one tells him he is glad to have his company through the mountains, that he feels safer. They all agree that company helps. The brothers offer to carry the packs further since the soldier is so weary. They start off again talking together.

Scene IV - This is the Manger scene. Joseph, Mary, and (if you wish) the wisemen, the shepherds, angels, etc. Carols can be sung, the Bible read; any way you feel like doing it.

At a time you choose the two brothers come in. As they enter they say that the town is so crowded that they don't have any place to stay. If they could find a place, they don't have any money! Perhaps they can sneak in here and sleep until morning and then they must be on their way home. Suddenly they see the Mother, Father and Baby, etc. They are startled and afraid - but also curious. They edge forward (while a carol is sung?) until they can see the Baby, then kneel down with the rest.

At the end of the scene, the younger brother moves to the manger and pulls out his gold coin and lays it in the Manger.

As they leave the older brother says that they must hurry home. He can hardly wait to tell the family what they have seen in the stable! The other brother agrees!

THE WISE MEN



Scene I - This scene takes place in a house somewhere in the Holy Land. A group of women are looking over some pieces of cloth. The cloth is bright and beautiful. As they talk about the cloth, they show how worried they are about the cost of buying it from the camel caravan of traders, accusing each other of having spent money on it that their husbands will be angry about.

At that moment a man knocks at their door and asks if they will make him a beautiful robe. He tells them that he is a Wiseman on his way to see the New Born King and needs a new robe.

After they assure him that indeed they can and he chooses the material, he asks them to be sure it is done tomorrow. When they ask if he has money to pay because that will be extra, he tells them of his gift of gold that he is taking to the Baby and that he has lots of money. He leaves promising to return tomorrow.

As they busily get to work, another knock comes on the door. The second Wiseman enters. His story is much the same. He needs a new robe in a hurry for he is following the star to see the new-born Baby. He needs it in a hurry. Choosing the material, he assures them that he has the money to pay for it. He is taking a gift of frankincense for the King. He too promises to return in the morning for his robe and leaves.

Excitedly they start on the second robe, only to be interrupted by the third Wiseman. He has heard that the women have beautiful cloth for a robe which he needs in a hurry. He too is following a star and needs the robe tomorrow. Can they do it? Yes, if he has the money. He does, and he tells of his gift to the Baby, myrrh.

The women start to work quickly! They have more to do than they have time! Again they are interrupted. A fourth Wiseman enters repeating, in his own way, the need for a robe to be made quickly, for the star keeps moving on and he must follow. The women are not sure if they can complete the task. When he promises an extra reward they say that they will try. His gift, he tells them, is to be a camel for the New Born King.

Scene II - (You can show the passage of time by having the actors freeze in position while someone holds up a sign saying "The Next Day".) The following morning, one by one, the four Wisemen come to don their new robes. The women, having worked all night, receive their pay and are especially glad to have completed the robe for the fourth Wiseman.

Scene III - (An empty stage showing the night sky, or a star in the background of your stage.)

The first Wiseman enters wearily from the right looking up at the star. He decides to sit down and rest. A moment or two later the second Wiseman enters. Seeing the first he approaches him and asks where he is going. They talk about the star, their journey, etc. Then the third Wiseman appears. On seeing the other two he joins them. They discover that he also is following the star. They talk about their gifts. Suddenly one sees the star is moving on and they must go. They leave and again the stage is empty.

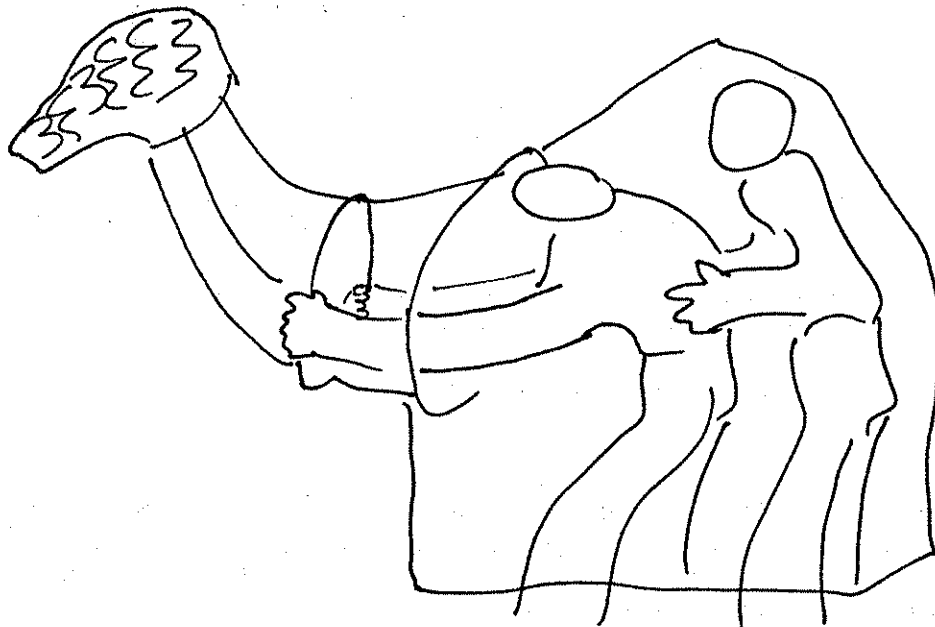
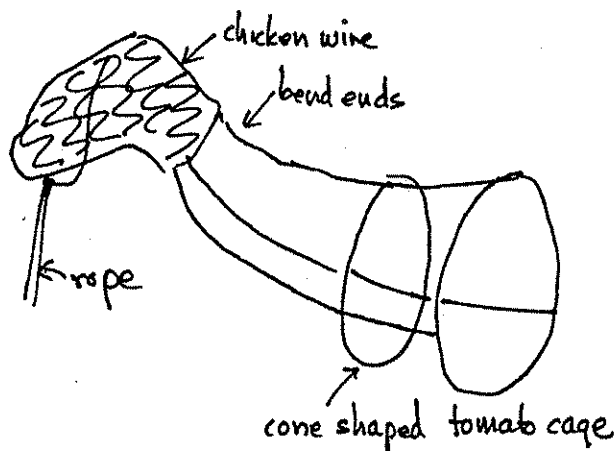
A loud and terrible camel-like noise is heard! The fourth Wiseman appears leading a reluctant camel. There is tugging, stamping of feet and shouting. But the camel sinks to its front knees first, rear knees next, down on the floor with his front end and finally all the way down with his back end. The wiseman pulls, pushes, nudges, etc., until the camel slowly rises, repeating the procedure of going down in reverse (rear end coming up first). They proceed slowly. The camel turning around (and around), eventually pulling the wiseman off in the wrong direction back the way they came.

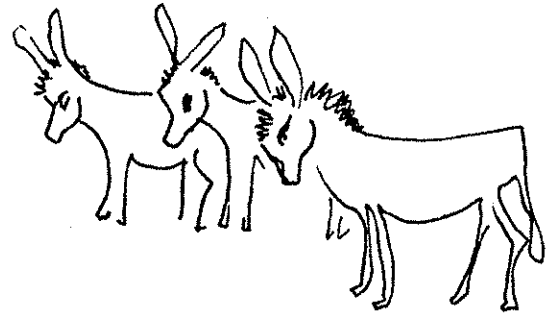
Scene IV - The final scene is the manger scene with Mary and Joseph, the three Wiseman, the shepherds and angels (whatever your group has cast for).

This can be a tableau while you sing a favorite carol and/or the Christmas Story from the Bible is read or you can act it out having the shepherds enter and kneel, the wise men present their gifts, etc.

CAMEL DIRECTIONS

The making of a camel needs some explanation. It is a two-person camel. The head can be made with a tomato cage for the neck and chicken wire pushed into approximate shape for a head with a rope firmly attached to the lower lip area. A layer of paper mache covers that, molding in eyes; glue on ear flaps and add a big lower lip (around the rope). Paint over it all, adding eyes and mouth when dry. Sew or pin on an old blanket or bedspread at the end of the neck. Have the two people practice; the position of the neck being low and important to the look of your camel and having the second person's head make the hump high over the back of the front.





DONKEY PARADE

This play is fun, especially for children. However, we had all sizes of donkeys and the children got to know some of the older members in a very different way, so that a small First Day School need not be afraid to try it.

Scene 1 takes place in Nazareth. When the scene opens, two traders have a number of donkeys lined up for sale. These donkeys can be big, small, lazy looking, old, sleepy, etc. The traders' conversation includes: the hard times, the need to sell at least two donkeys to pay for their food or taxes, and the wish to get rid of one donkey that has an especially bad temperament.

During this conversation that one, bad donkey needs to create one fuss by shoving, kicking and attempting to bite its neighbors. This causes the traders to hurry to move it or quiet it.

A buyer appears and the traders try to make a deal. (Each buyer asks different questions about the qualities of the various donkeys; the legs, whether they behave, whether they are old (looking at the teeth), etc.)

This first buyer wants a cheap donkey. It is to take the family to Bethlehem to pay taxes, the place of his/her birth. The traders are willing to sell the nasty donkey cheap and so the buyer goes off with the donkey with only one, small balky incident.

After congratulating each other on their success in getting rid of that donkey, another buyer appears. This buyer is going to Jericho (or some other town of his birth) to pay taxes. He goes down the line of donkeys, making comments about each one: too small, too old, has nice legs, etc. Finally he/she buys one and takes it away.

A terrible noise is heard and the first buyer re-enters pulling the nasty donkey, with the wife following trying to help without getting kicked or bitten. At one point the donkey stops and refuses to move!

The buyer demands his/her money back for this impossible beast! After much haggling, even shouting, a trade is made for another donkey. The buyer departs.

Joseph and Mary appear. They are looking for a donkey to take them to Bethlehem to pay their taxes. While Joseph talks to the traders, Mary goes along the line of donkeys, stopping at each one. When she comes to the balky donkey, she stops and pets it. Immediately it is quiet and gentle.

After looking at the donkeys, Joseph asks Mary which one she likes and she prefers the "problem" donkey. The traders have consciences and are worried. They suggest that Mary and Joseph would be better off with another one. But the price is right and Mary insists. They go off with the donkey following along quietly. The traders wonder, will they see that donkey again?

Scene II takes place on the road to Bethlehem. The first buyer and spouse enter and, seeing a tree, stop to rest. They talk while their "satisfactory donkey" stands quietly. Their conversation might include being tired, frustration about taxes (this can include some modern terms used about our taxes, "bottom line", "dependents", etc.), and how thankful they are that they did not buy the balky, contrary donkey.

At this point Mary and Joseph walk in, followed by that donkey. They may just walk slowly by or stop and rest also. Joseph might ask Mary if she is tired, saying that they are not far from Bethlehem now, it will be late when they arrive. How thankful they are to have this gentle donkey! etc. They go on, the donkey following docilely.

The first couple have watched in amazement. They ask each other if that could possibly have been the same donkey that they had. It certainly looked like it! They get up and follow, talking as they go.

Scene III is in the stable. Mary and Joseph and the donkey are there. You can have angels, wisemen, shepherds, any other animals you wish. The shepherds and the wisemen may come in during a song or already be there, as a tableau. The reading of the Bible passage can be a part of this scene. Everyone singing your favorite carols makes a good ending.

Suggestions for How To:

The scenery can be simple. For Scene I use two trestles with a cord tied between making something to which to tie the donkeys.

Scene II: Pieces of brown wrapping paper taped together to make a big piece can be a back drop for the second scene. If the children in the First-Day School enjoy slapping on paint, you can paint sky, desert and a big tree trunk with a few branches and leaves showing at the top. This is quite effective. Try adding a couple of flat-roofed houses in the distance.

Scene III: use the things you usually have for the creche scene - a manger, etc.

You can have as many donkeys as you need. It is fun to hear the comments the buyers make about them, since the audience often guesses who each one is. When we did this play, one buyer asked if this donkey behaved and did what you told it; everyone laughed because they knew that it was her husband. You never know what will happen!

To give the illusion of donkeys, make paper-bag heads and wear regular clothes, all one color. For the heads use middle-sized paper grocery bags. Follow the directions on page 19 (Peace in the Stable Yard), using long ears and short manes.