

Christmas play 2004

Carol: *O come all ye faithful*

Welcome and opening prayer

Song: *Canticle of the gift*

Scene 1: The box

Group of modern day children are sitting down chatting on stage, with a huge wrapped box on one side. Child 1 comes on to join them.

Child 1: Hi. How you doing?

Child 2: Fine. And you?

Child 1: Okay thanks. Looking forward to Christmas.

Child 2: Yeah, same.

Child 1: Looks like a good load of presents this year.

Child 2: There is. But I am curious about this one. *(Gets up and leans on the box)*. I really wonder what's in this box.

Other children get up and join together around box.

Child 3: It is huge. What can it be?

Child 4: Who is it for?

Child 2: Does it say?

Child 4: *(Holds on to label)* Here's a label.

Child 5: What does it say.

Child 4: *(Reading label slowly)* "Happy Christmas to all at St Johns".

Child 5: So, is it a present for everyone?

Child 1: I wonder what it is.

Child 2: Perhaps it is a bottle of wine for everyone.

Child 3: Move it and see how heavy it is.

Child 4: *(Moves the box and then shakes it)* It isn't heavy enough to be bottles.

Child 3: *(Child shakes it again)* It doesn't make any noise, and it isn't very heavy.

Child 5: Perhaps it is a scarf for everyone, to keep us all warm if the heating breaks down.

Child 1: I'm dying to know. This is so intriguing,

Child 3: Do you think that we can open it without anyone noticing?

Child 4: Only if you are careful!

Child 2: Do you think we should?

Child 5: No-one will mind.

Child 1: Not if they don't know!

Child 3: The wrapping opens quite easily. Hang on a minute *(gentle opens the wrapping and then opens the box. Then looks inside)*

Child 4: What can you see?

Child 3: Hang on a minute. *(Looks right inside)*

Child 2: *(Jumps up and down excited)* Quickly, quickly!

Child 3: *(Looks up and puts finger to mouth)* Shhhh *(Looks back inside box and slowly picks up the baby inside the box and holds it close. Other children gasp, then touch the baby.)*

Child 1: Why is there a baby in the box?

Child 2: You mean, this baby is a gift to us all?

Child 3: Isn't he beautiful.

Child 4: Whose baby is he?

Child 3: I don't know, but the label said that he is a gift to our church.

Child 5: Who would give us all a baby?

Child 1: And at Christmas?

Carol: *Hark the herald angels sing*

Scene 2: Out in the fields

A couple of shepherds sit around the fire, on holding a lamb. Two others join them from each side.

Sheprd Ben: The fire looks good.

Shepherd S: It is. Come and join us. We've just cooked some supper.

Sheprd Ben: *(Takes a leg and starts to eat it)* Thanks, Mmmm, this is good.

Shepherd P: My wife asked me the other day what we do all night when we sit around the fire.

Shepherd E: What did you say?

Shepherd P: I said that we are philosophers. We think and we discuss.

Shepherd E: Did she ask what we philosophise about?

Shepherd P: I said that we talk about life, the future, politics, religion, life in Bethlehem.... the Romans. She wasn't very keen on us talking

about the Romans; she said that we could get into trouble if we get caught.

Shepherd C: Did you tell her that there is no-one here to listen to us?

Shepherd P: She said that the Romans get everywhere.

Shepherd T: (*Looks under bench*). I don't think that there are any Romans here tonight!

Shepherd C: Some people say that the Romans won't be here much longer.

Shepherd T: Why not?

Shepherd C: There was some chap talking in the synagogue the other day about the coming of a Messiah. Apparently God is going to send a Messiah to free us all.

Shepherd T: How does he know?

Shepherd C: Apparently it is in the prophets, and apparently, so he said, the Messiah is going to come from Bethlehem. And the chap thought that it is going to be very soon because all the signs are there.

Shepherd T: Suppose a Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem? Whose house do you think he will be born in?

Shepherd C: The chap said that the Messiah will have a very humble birth place.

Shepherd B: If this really happened, what would we do? I mean, you would have to do something if the Messiah was born in your town. After all, look at it (*looks at picture of town on screen as if looking into the distance*), it is not as if Bethlehem is very big.

Shepherd S: We would have to have to take a gift. Or something.

Shepherd B: I would take a lamb. Every family needs a lamb.

Shepherd S: I agree.

Carol: In the bleak mid winter

Scene 3: The wise men set off

Three wise men come onto the stage and greet each other.

Wise man 1: Good, we all made it on time.

Wise man 3: What's the plan now?

Wise man 2: We set off later today. We need to check everything is ready.

Wise man 1: Okay, I am looking after the scrolls (*picks up bag of scrolls and takes one out*). This is the important one that tells us about the new star we have all seen and how it signifies the birth of a king

They all take a look, then it gets wrapped up again and put back in the bag.

Wise man 2: Is the star moving much?

Wise man 3: It is still going at the same speed. We need to set off soon or else we may lose sight of it.

Wise man 2: Gifts, have we got the gifts?

Wise man 1: I have got the gold, but I want to share it out for us all to carry some each.

Wise man 2: I've got the frankincense.

Wise man 3: And I've got the myrrh.

Wise man 2: Good. Then we need gifts to bribe people on the journey.

Wise man 1: Got them (*opens up coat to show a load of watches etc*)

Wise man 3: Right, we've got the plans, the gifts for the king, and the bribes.

Wise man 1: Right, let's head off then.

Wise men put on their hats and sunglasses, pick up their things, and head off to the back.

Carol: We three kings

Scene 4: Back to the fields

Shepherds are sitting around a fire in the fields.

Shepd Ben: Another clear night.

Shepherd S: The sky looks lovely tonight.

Shepherd C: Is that a new star over there?

Shepherd B: I think so. I don't remember seeing it before.

Shepherd T: You know what we were talking about the other night, what that chap was telling you?

Shepherd C: You mean about the Messiah being born in Bethlehem?

Shepherd T: Yes, that's right. It got me thinking about where a Messiah would be born.

Shepherd C: What did you think?

Shepherd T: Well, I reckon that his parents would know about it. Bethlehem is mostly small family homes, hardly fitting for a king, so I reckon that his parents would have to find somewhere suitable, and I reckon that the best place for this is in the synagogue. So I wondered whether your chap already knows the parents.

Shepherd C: Well, he didn't say. But he did think that the Messiah is coming soon, so perhaps he knows something.

Shepherd B: Do you want some more food?
 Shepherd C: Thanks
Several say thanks and take some, then quietly eat during a pause.
 Shepherd C: Is that a light over there? (*Points down aisle*)
 Shepherd B: Not sure, maybe, it's a bit faint.
 Shepherd S: I see it. It's getting brighter.
 Shepherd C: Wow – what is it?
Suddenly the angels rush up the aisle onto the stage and arrange themselves, whilst the shepherds fall to the floor.
 Shepherd T: (*Look and sound scared*) Who are you?
 Angel: Don't be afraid, you can get up from the floor (*puts out a hand to help the shepherd get back his feet, perhaps other angels help the other shepherds to their feet also*)
 Shepherd P: So, who are you?
 Angel: As I said, no need to be afraid. We are angels, and we have come to bring you some good news. Tonight in Bethlehem a child has been born, and he is the Messiah, the Christ. He will be the Saviour of the world.
 Shepherd C: So it's true! Where can we find him?
 Angel: He will be in a stable, lying in a manger.
 Shepherd E: Why are you telling us this? Why us?
 Angel: So that you can go to worship him.
 Shepherd C: We should go quickly.
 Angel: Yes, but before you go, we want to sing you a song! Just sit there for a minute. (*Angel organises the other angels*).

 Song: *Hosanna*

 Angel: Right, you can go now.
Angels then run off the stage to the back of the church
 Shepherd S: Wow!!!!
 Shepherd T: Do you think that is what your chap in the synagogue had been telling you?
 Shepherd C: It sounds like it.
 Shepherd B: But did you hear what the angels said? The Messiah is in a stable, not somewhere posh.
 Shepherd K: I am not sure it makes sense, but we should go and find him.
 Shepherd S: But what about the sheep?

Shepherd P: They will be okay.
 Shepherd E: Let's bring a lamb as a gift.
 Shepherd C: Good idea.
Shepherds gather up a lamb and leave the stage.

Song Tonight

Scene 5: Stable 1

Stable scene, starting with Mary in seat with baby in arms. Joseph enters.
 Joseph: Are you alright there?
 Mary: I am, thank you. Isn't he a lovely baby!
 Joseph: He is. (*Comes and stands behind Mary, with hand on shoulder*)
In comes the Inn keeper
 Inn keeper: I've just come down to see if you are okay.
 Joseph: Yes, we are, thank you.
 Inn keeper: How is the baby?
 Mary: He is doing well, thank you.
 Inn keeper: I have brought you a small gift. (*Passes over folded blanket to Joseph*)
 Mary: Why, thank you!
Joseph shakes it loose
 Mary: It is lovely.
 Joseph: It is. Many thanks. Here Mary, let me put it round the baby.
 Inn keeper: Do you have a name for him?
 Mary: We are calling him Jesus.
Knock at door
 Inn keeper: Let me go and see who it is.
Inn keeper goes off stage and then comes back with the shepherds.
 Shepherd S: We have come to see your baby and worship him.
 Shepherd B: We have brought a lamb as a gift.
Shepherds offer the lamb and kneel down. There is then another knock at the door.
 Inn keeper: Let me go to have another look.
Inn keeper goes off stage and then comes back with the wise men.
 Wise man 1: We have travelled from a long way away. We followed a star which has come to rest over Bethlehem.
 Wise man 2: We have come to worship the new born king.

Wise man 3: And we have brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.
Wise men lay down gifts and kneel.

Song: *The Giving Song*

Scene 6: Stable 2

Same stable, now with angels, shepherds and wise men around the seated Mary and Joseph.

Bridegroom: (*Comes onto stage*). None of you will know me, but Jesus gave me a special gift on my wedding day. You see, we were running out of wine, and my best man told Jesus's mother. She then told Jesus, and Jesus then, by some miracle, turned whole vats of water into wine. I wanted to bring you a gift to say thank you ... maybe a bottle of fine wine, but I wasn't sure.

Leper comes onto stage.

Leper: I suffered from leprosy for many years. I could not lead a normal life, and I was cut off from society. I was poor and hungry, and hardly anyone would help me. Until one day Jesus saw me, and made me well. Since then I have been much happier. I have a job and make enough money to be able to eat and buy clothes. I have come to say thank you. I wanted to bring you a gift but what do give to such a great healer?

Centurian comes onto the stage with servant.

Centurian: I am a centurian in the Roman army. One day my servant was so ill we thought she would die. But Jesus said a prayer and she was better again. I want to say thank you to you for giving us back my servant.

Servant: And I want to say thank you for giving me back my life and making me well again. We wanted to bring you a gift but what do you give to someone who gives life?

Martha comes onto the stage.

Martha: My name is Martha. I had a brother called Lazarus. He had been dead for several days when Jesus arrived in our town. He was very sad, but he said a prayer and suddenly Lazarus was alive

again. I want to say thank you for giving us back our brother. I wanted to bring you a gift but what do you give to someone who can do such great things?

Mary Magdalene comes onto the stage.

Mary M: My name is Mary, another Mary. My life was a complete mess until I met Jesus. I was in a real state, but he helped me get my life back again. His gift to me was forgiveness. The high-ups and religious people all looked down on me, but Jesus cared, and I am very grateful. I wanted to bring you a gift but what do give to someone who shows so much love?

Matthew comes onto the stage.

Matthew: I am Matthew. No-one liked me because I worked for the Romans. I collected taxes from people who didn't have much to start with, just to make the Romans richer. But Jesus called me to follow him. For the gift of his call, I want to say thank you. I wanted to bring you a gift but what do give such a kind leader and teacher?

John appears in the pulpit.

John: I am John, one of his closest followers. I was with Jesus when he taught the people. I was with Jesus when he turned water into wine, when he healed the blind man and leper, when he healed the Centurian's servant, when he brought Lazarus back to life, when he forgave Mary for her sins, and I was a friend of Matthew. I saw all the things that Jesus gave to so many people.

But I also saw him arrested and tried by the authorities. And I saw Jesus die on the cross, giving his life – as a gift for us all. And three days later I saw him when he came back to life. And we now know that he has given his victory over death to us all – the gift of love and eternal life.

Jesus, we all want to say thank you but what can *we* give? You teach us that the best we can give is ourselves – to dedicate our lives to you and to use the gifts you give each one of us to your glory.

We know that the most important part of Christmas is not the receiving but the giving of gifts.

Song: Light of the world

Closing remarks and prayer

Carol: See amid the winter's snow