

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT, DECEMBER 21, 2014

After the Offering of Gifts, Doxology and Prayer of Dedication the 3-6 year olds in angel costumes come to the front steps, accompanied by Beth Burke on piano.

*Angel Band* (Ten little angels in that band)

*He's Got the Whole World in His Hands*

## THE CHRISTMAS STORY: A FAITH QUEST

Presented by the children of FUMC Faith Quest and assisted by younger children and older youth.

*N = Narrator; M = Mary; J = Joseph; S = Shepherd; K = King; D = Donkey; Cow; A = Angel; H# = Innkeepers; N2 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Narrator*

N: Thank you angels! Watch for those ten little angels later!

The past few weeks children of Faith Quest have created our own Christmas program.

We thank our teachers and shepherds for such a responsibility, and for their help. Of course, our main sources are the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

But you will hear and see some things you cannot find in the Bible. You might say we read between the lines, and use our children's gift of imagination.

So, come along and imagine with us, "What was it really like when Mary, Joseph, and a clever donkey joined the great Faith Quest?"

Draw your attention to nearby Nazareth (*waves hand to the piano*) where Joseph and Mary are packing for an important trip.

### 1. *Mary and Joseph packing to leave* (in front and near piano)

- M: (*Mary enters the scene*) Hello, Joseph. Shalom.
- J: Shalom, Mary. What's up?
- M: Joseph, remember I told you about a wonderful visit I had with a messenger of God? That I am called to be the mother of a special baby? And that I said, yes? You said my story requires great faith and you would have to think about it. Have you decided?
- J: Yes, Mary, and my faith was helped by a dream I had last night. We will marry and go to Bethlehem for the census as husband and wife. You may have to give birth there.
- M: Thank you, Joseph, for your faith in me and your love. My soul magnifies the Lord.
- J: We must pack and there is no time to lose.
- M: I know, Joseph, I have already started. Which dress—the blue one or the white one?
- J: Mary, I don't care. I'm not the fashion police. Remember, we don't have much room for extra luggage.
- D: I second the motion not to over pack. Of course, these humans cannot understand a word I say. They are very fine people as far as humans go. I have faith they will do the right thing and not overload me.
- M: I have the food ready for our journey, Joseph. You can pack it on the donkey. I will be able to walk, at least the first part of the way to Bethlehem.

- J: *(while packing the donkey)*  
Bethlehem, house of David. Hometown of my father and grandfather, so that is where we must go to be counted in Caesar's census. There may be lots of his soldiers. I must have faith that we will get there safely before Mary delivers the baby.
- M: Joseph is a good man. I have already given God's messenger my yes to be the mother of this baby we will name Jesus. Now my time is almost here. I have faith all will be well.
- N: And so Mary, Joseph and the donkey set off for Bethlehem, about 70 miles South as the crow flies. But walking, it is more like 90 miles through winding mountain trails and probably took about a week.

## **2. Mary & Joseph on the road Nazareth to Bethlehem**

- J: *(After walking down the side aisle, looking at the map many ways, about half way down stop)*  
This map has more lines on it than there are roads. And this crooked way has no signs directing us to Bethlehem. If it wasn't so cloudy I could tell which way is South.
- M: I begged you to ask for directions miles ago. Why don't we stop at the next water station? You can ask there. The donkey, and I, could both use a rest stop.
- J: We just passed a water station and there may not be another for a while. But I will ask directions of this stranger I see approaching. *(When you meet)* Excuse me, sir. Do you know the way to Bethlehem?

- K: Bethlehem? That means "House of Bread." What a lovely name. But I don't know its whereabouts, so I cannot help you.  
I am on a Faith Quest with two companions from the East. We are encamped just over the hill with our camels. We were not told the name of our destination. We have no map, except a bright star guides us at night when we travel. We have faith we will find the place we are called to go. I trust you will find your Bethlehem, too. Good day!
- J. Shalom.  
What a strange fellow, not from these parts I take it. Not very likely we will ever meet again.
- D: That stranger mentioned camels. I wonder if I will ever see such a creature.
- N: Those strangers will eventually make their way to Jerusalem. King Herod's advisors will quote from the prophet Micah that Bethlehem is their likely destination. They arrive later, when Jesus is older. Perhaps then the donkey will see his first camel.

## **3. Mary and Joseph looking for a place to stay in Bethlehem** *(now coming up the other side aisle)*

- M: Joseph, I am getting very tired. I feel I will give birth soon. Are we on the outskirts of Bethlehem? Can you find a place for us to stay?
- J: I will knock on this house, Mary. I have faith they will help us. *(Knocks. When door opens...)* Sir, we need room to bed down. Do you have room?

H1: We are having a party. You can come in and celebrate my daughter's wedding, but there is standing room only.

M: No, Joseph. This place is too noisy and crowded. I have faith we will find a more suitable place.

J: Thank you for your offer. We will look for a quiet place.

D: Joseph just blew a chance for a blow out party. Oh well, first things first.

J: *(Knocks on second house. When door opens...)* Do you have a room for the night?

H2: Do you have a reservation?

J: No. I didn't think we would need a reservation.

H2: Sorry, we are all filled up, unless you have a reservation.

M: Joseph, I did tell you in Nazareth a reservation might come in handy. I have faith we will find a place, but it needs to be soon.

J: *(Knocks on third house-the decorated side door. When door opens...)* Sir, good evening, Shalom. Do you have a room to spare? My wife is ready to give birth after a long week of travel.

H3: Shalom. We have no room here. All my relatives are in town for the census. The house is overflowing with in-laws and outlaws. But I see your predicament. I can offer you space in the animal shelter around back. It is quiet and the animals breath keeps it warm enough for such a night as this.

J: Mary, will this do?

M: It will have to do, Joseph. It is almost time. Thank you dear landowner. Look, our donkey is already leading the way.

D: I knew things would work out. I am going to feel right at home in this place.

#### **4. Entering the Stable and Mary placing the baby Jesus in the manger**

COW: Who goes there?

D: At last, someone who understands my language. We come from Nazareth. The human female is ready to give birth. Is this a safe place?

COW: Safe, and we can keep it warm for your human friends. Welcome. But why did you not stay at a people shelter for the night?

D: It's a long story I can tell you later.

COW: Well, come in. You are most welcome.

J: Mary, God has led us to a good and quiet place. I have prepared a bed of hay in this corner. Rest here, while I unload and feed our donkey and prepare some supper for us.

[PAUSE HERE, "O HOLY NIGHT" sung by Kieren Grogan]

M: Joseph, the baby has arrived. We have our kid! Just as we were told by God's messenger, it's a boy! We shall name him, Jesus, Yahweh saves!

J: O, what a wonderful, holy night! How are you feeling, Mary? You are such a brave and faithful woman. I love you. Now, we are a holy family.

J: We have no crib and I have no time now, to make one. Mary, after you feed Jesus, I will put him on fresh hay in this manger where the animals eat.

**SONG: AWAY IN A MANGER, #217, VERSES 1-3**

1. **Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.  
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,  
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.**
2. **The cattle are lowing; the baby awakes,  
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.  
I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky  
and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.**
- 3 **Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay  
close by me forever, and love me, I pray;  
bless all the dear children in thy tender care,  
and fit us for heaven to live with thee there.**

N: I draw your attention to the narthex and balcony for the first proclamation of Jesus' birth.

**5. Angels appearing to the shepherds** (*angels in balcony, shepherds and sheep below*)

N2: And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

S: It's a slow night. Nothing ever happens much on this work shift. Maybe I will take a nap.

N2: And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them,

A: Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

N2: And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Angels: **Alleluia. Glory to God. Peace on earth. Good will to all.**

S: Wow! Do you believe that? Far out! But how will we find this baby in a manger?

A: If you have faith, my little angels will guide you to the place.

S: What will we do with the sheep we must watch?

A: They can come, too. All creatures are welcome in God's kingdom.

N: So the shepherds and the sheep, guided by the little angels, made their way to find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes. (*Angels lead down center aisle.*)

## 6. *Shepherds (and sheep) dancing to Bethlehem*

S: *(After catching a straying lamb)* Come here, little lamb. Didn't you hear that all God's creatures are invited?

**SONG: WHILE SHEPHERDS WATCHED THEIR FLOCK, VERSES, #236, VERSES 1 and 4**

1. **While shepherds watched their flocks by night,  
all seated on the ground;  
the angel of the Lord came down,  
and glory shone around,  
and glory shone around.**
4. **"The heavenly babe you there shall find  
to human view displayed,  
all meanly wrapped in swathing bands,  
and in a manger laid,  
and in a manger laid."**

S: Look! I see the town lights of Bethlehem. I believe I know where that animal shelter is—do you see that glow of light over there?

## 7. *Shepherds finding Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus*

S: Thank you angels. We have found the shelter. Will the baby be inside? Who should go in first? Since we are visiting a baby let our youngest shepherd go in first with some of the sheep.

J: Mary, our first visitors are here. Some shepherds with their sheep. Come in dear ones. There is always room in the place where Jesus lives.

M: Come closer. This is Jesus, His name means "God saves!" All are welcome here.

D: Yes, come closer sheep. Your breath will help keep the baby warm. Where are you from?

Sheep: We were outside town with the shepherds. Then God's messengers appeared and led us here.

S: We are very honored and humbled to be the first to see the savior baby. We are poor, but thanks to our sheep, we can offer some simple gifts for you:

- Some food, including lamb stew.
- A wool blanket.
- And a little lamb.

**SONG: THE FRIENDLY BEASTS, #227, VERSES 1-4**

1. **Jesus, our brother, strong and good,  
was humbly born in a stable rude,  
and the friendly beasts around him stood,  
Jesus, our brother, strong and good.**
2. **"I," said the donkey, shaggy and brown,  
"I carried his mother uphill and down,  
I carried his mother to Bethlehem town;  
I," said the donkey, shaggy and brown.**
3. **"I," said the cow, all white and red,  
"I gave him my manger for his bed,  
I gave him hay to pillow his head;  
I," said the cow, all white and red.**
4. **"I," said the sheep with curly horn,  
"I gave him my wool for his blanket warm,  
he wore my coat on Christmas morn;  
I," said the sheep with curly horn.**

**8. Shepherds telling everyone what they have heard and seen**

A: Shepherds and sheep, you have received the great gift of faith tonight. You now have a responsibility to share this good news with others.

S: How will we tell others? What direction shall we go?

A: Take these birth announcements and pass them out in every avenue. The sheep can help, too.

*All children pick up **Birth Announcements** and go down center and side aisles, stopping at pews to tell the good news and pass out the birth announcements.*

**SONG: SILENT NIGHT, # 239, VERSE 1**

1. **Silent night, holy night,  
all is calm, all is bright  
round yon virgin  
mother and child.  
Holy infant, so tender and mild,  
sleep in heavenly peace,  
sleep in heavenly peace.**

N: We hope you have enjoyed our telling of the Christmas Story. After our shepherds and sheep return to the front we will sing another song we all know. Pastor Jerry...

*(After closing remarks by Pastor Jerry, and calling up teachers, shepherds and mentors to present a rose)*

**SONG: Happy Birthday, Dear Jesus**

**Happy Birthday to you!  
Happy Birthday to you!  
Happy Birthday, dear Jesus,  
Happy Birthday to you!**

**A BIG THANK YOU** to all parents, shepherds and teachers for helping the children prepare for today's program.

*Preschool:* Beth Rohland, Lori & Madison Mariani

*Kindergarten-First:* Betsy Duginski, Diane Misoni, Carrie Edmondson, Laura Cowan

*Music:* Beth Burke, Sheryl Del Conte, Sue Carole Volovsek who accompanied today's carols

*Faith Quest:* Carrie Hockerman, Sue Marquardt, Karen Petersen, Karli Johnson, Zoë Martin, Gbemi Taylor

*Middle & H.S.* Mike Zahn, Jen Marzu, Wes Ebert

*Sound Board:* Steve Lindsley, Andy White

Also, our appreciation of high school youth who contributed music in today's worship:

Thomas Lahren, Brad Burrill, Libby Haptwig, Jordan Miles, and Elly Niemeyer for their jazzy prelude, "The Bells Swing"

Elena Kuehn for her guitar rendition of "What Child Is This"

Kieran Grogan for singing "O Holy Night"

...and for the bakers who provided cupcakes for the "Birthday Party for Jesus"

**Have a Blessed Christmas!**

The Birth Announcement children passed out:

## It's a Boy! His name is Jesus

*"For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." – Isaiah 9:6-7*

**Date: December 25**

**Time: 12:07am**

**Weight: 7 lbs, 7 oz**

**Length: 19 in**

At the Bethlehem Inn Stable

Baby, family and the world are all well.

**HELP SPREAD THE WORD!**

See cards at [www.etsy.com/shop/JenBoyntonDesign/](http://www.etsy.com/shop/JenBoyntonDesign/)