

Signs of Christmas

Young children, especially those aged three to eight, will love to tell the story of Jesus' birth using this Christmas program. The visuals, rhyming narrative, action poems, and favorite Christmas songs enable children and adults to consider and explore the signs and symbols they see at Christmas and their connection to the Babe in Bethlehem.

- ♦ The program contains six familiar Christmas hymns that the adults and children sing together. The program also includes three Christmas songs sung only by the children.
- ♦ An adult leader may narrate the Reader parts throughout the program or they may be assigned to different readers.
- ♦ Four action poems at different levels of ability allow children to participate as a group. The easy-to-memorize rhymes will reinforce the Gospel message of Jesus Christ, our Savior.
- ♦ Four simple craft projects for young children accompany this service. The children can make them ahead of time and use them in the service as directed. (See "Christmas Program Visuals, Project Crafts" later in this booklet.)
- ♦ Creative expression and customization are easy with this program. Individuals, or small groups of children, can recite readings that match their ability. Teachers, parents, or older children can also serve as readers. You can customize this program by using only certain parts or adding optional worship components.

Add Worship Components

Although not initially designed for this purpose, "Signs of Christmas" can easily be adapted for use in a worship service. The program clearly proclaims the message of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, and gives Him appropriate thanks and praise. If you use it in a worship setting, you will want to involve the pastor and add some of the following worship components: invocation, confession and absolution, hymns, Scripture readings, pastor's meditation, a Christmas prayer, and a benediction.

Christmas Program Visuals

Christmas tree—The tree, decorated in a special way, will be the focal point for the climax of the program. Use white Christmas lights on the tree to form a large cross shape on the front side of the tree. Place a lighted star atop the tree and colored lights throughout the tree branches. The white cross lights, colored lights, and star must each have a separate electrical power source so that the star and cross can go on and the colored lights can go off at specific points in the program. Plan electrical wiring accordingly. You may wish to have a volunteer create a box with three light switches for this purpose. (*You will find a simple lighting and wiring diagram in a PDF file accompanying this service.*)

Costumes—Children in the nativity scenes may wear simple Bible-times costumes. Costumes will be needed for Joseph, Mary, an angel, shepherds, and Wise Men.

Props—Use a life-like doll for baby Jesus. A painted cardboard box can serve as the manger. Gift wrap small boxes for the wise men to carry.

Project Crafts—In addition to practicing songs and speaking parts, children can also prepare for Christmas by making four simple crafts. Use the completed projects to enhance the program. (*Diagrams and instructions for the crafts are in a PDF file accompanying this service.*) Plan to divide the children into different groups, with each group designated to carry a different craft item, displaying them at the appropriate time. This way, each child isn't carrying four crafts. To lessen distractions you may want the children to place their craft on the floor near them until used in the service. After the crafts are used, an adult can quickly gather them into a basket so that they are no longer in the way.

Wreath—Glue green, crumpled tissue paper bits to the perimeter of a sturdy paper plate. Then with red markers draw a heart shape in the center of the wreath. The completed wreaths will be held up during “God Loves Me Dearly.” (*Recommended for the oldest children.*)

Candles—Decorate small cardboard tubes with paint or markers (or roll them with colored construction paper) to create a candlestick. Cut yellow paper into the shape of a flame. Glue or tape “flames” to the top of the tube. The candles will be held up during “Away in a Manger.” (*Recommended for the youngest children.*)

Angels—Cut a small triangular section from the edge of a sturdy paper plate (about one-sixth of the plate). Reattach this section to the opposite side of the plate. Next, cut a two-inch diameter circle and glue it at the center of the plate, between the “wings,” for the angel’s head. Draw facial features on the face circle. Then staple a short length of sparkly garland to the angel’s “body.” Display the angels during the chorus of “Angels We Have Heard on High.”

Bells—Decorate 8-ounce plain disposable drinking cups with markers and Christmas stickers. Thread a large jingle bell onto a chenille stem. Then poke the stem through a hole in the bottom of the cup. Twist the stem ends to form a handle. “Ring” these bells as the congregation sings, “Now Sing We, Now Rejoice.”

This electronic version of *Signs of Christmas* makes customization easy. Leaders can use the easy-to-use RTF (Rich Text Format) versions of the complete script, as well as the sheet music and art file for the project design directions. Use the RTF files to adapt the script, adding or deleting parts, and customize the performance folder by placing specific child names where they appear in the program. Most word processors open an RTF file into an untitled document. Purchasers have permission to make copies of the program and lyrics sheets for practice and a one-time presentation at the church or school. Any other reproduction of all or any part of this program is illegal.

Many Christmas bulletins can be purchased for use during the program presentation. Call 1-800-325-3040 and ask for a Christmas bulletin brochure.

Purchase of this program allows you to make rehearsal copies of the music and print all song lyrics in a program bulletin. The songs are also available on the *Favorite Christmas Songs CD*, 22-3020.

Leader Notes

You'll enjoy using this electronic text format. It can be cut and pasted to match your congregational needs, including matching a part for each student, choosing the songs to use, and cutting or adding certain portions to the program. Make full copies of the program containing the assignments for each student (*ideal for memorization and rehearsals*), or block and print portions for a class or an individual student. Print an abbreviated version as a folder or bulletin for use at the time of the program. The size is laid out to fit an 8½x5½-inch format or margins can be adjusted to fit any size bulletin.

This services features

- a **handy half-page format** that allows you to carefully explore the whole program in order—even after it has been customized—and then easily print out pages that can be manually arranged to photocopy in proper sequence for your booklet.
- a **setting that is appropriate** for preschool programs, early-childhood centers, or the early-childhood levels of a Sunday school or day school. Easy customization means that it is also suitable for a different style of program as well, including adaptations to fit a worship setting.
- a kid-friendly, child-appealing **opportunity to learn the words to familiar and new songs**.
- **nine songs**—six for the whole congregation to sing and three for children only. Easy customization means you can choose to add, delete, or substitute songs to suit your needs. Make sure you secure permission from the publisher for any additions in order to comply with copyright laws. (All songs on *Favorite Christmas Songs* come with permission to duplicate them in programs like this one; printable lyrics sheets and accompaniments are on the CD with the recordings.)
- **speaking parts** that are very **flexible**:
 - Some of the parts are simple and easy for an early-childhood student to recite.
 - Some of the parts are suitable for an early reader to read.
 - Some of the parts are most suitable for an adult leader to read.
 - Four action poems allow children to say-and-do their part from memory.

If you have more students,

- combine them in pairs or trios to say their part;
- divide each recitation into smaller parts;

- have whole classes speak some of the phrases;
- assign some children to small singing ensembles rather than speaking parts.

If you have fewer students,

- have one, two, or a cluster of older students serve as readers or narrators;
- invite family members to work together on sections of the text, dividing the parts or sections among families.

Music Notes

Songs suggested for this program are featured “with vocals” and/or “accompaniment only” on Concordia’s *Favorite Christmas Songs* CD.

<http://christmas.cph.org/cd.asp>

Offering

Consider using the offering money for a special project. You may choose to support places where children can hear the Gospel through missions or another Christian preschool project. Identify mission projects for your children with the help of the LCMS Mission Services office at 1-800-248-1930, ext. 1345, or through the LCMS Department of Children’s Ministry at 1-800-248-1930, ext. 1269.

We hope and pray that you and your children will enjoy using this program.

The Editors and Staff at CPH

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A Christmas Program for Young Children

Note to the user: this copyright information is legally required to be in the front of any printed copies of this program.

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A Christmas Program for Young Children

Welcome

Leader: Long ago, God's people looked for signs of the promised Savior. Isaiah, the prophet, wrote: "The Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call Him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). Today, we see signs and symbols that point us to Jesus, the Savior, too. Listen now as the children explain the Christmas signs and symbols we see all around us. Watch as the children show how these familiar symbols emphasize the real reason we celebrate Christmas—the day Jesus, our Savior, was born.

Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful

(LW 41, Favorite Christmas Songs 12)

Adults sing as children enter. Children may join in singing the refrain.

1. Oh, come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant!
Oh, come ye, oh, come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him Born the king of angels:
Oh, come, let us adore him,
Oh, come, let us adore him,
Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!
2. Highest, most holy, Light of light eternal,
Born of a virgin, a mortal he comes;
Son of the Father Now in flesh appearing!
Oh, come, let us adore him,
Oh, come, let us adore him,
Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!
3. Sing, choirs of angels, Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God In the highest:
Oh, come, let us adore him,
Oh, come, let us adore him,
Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!
4. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, Born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory giv'n!
Word of the Father, Now in flesh appearing!
Oh, come, let us adore him,
Oh, come, let us adore him,
Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

The Angels

Action Poem

Group 3—Young children

Here is an angel (*Hold hands palms facing away, with thumbs crossed.*)

Sent from above. (*Point upward.*)

He tells us of Jesus (*Index finger points to left palm and to right palm.*)

Who brings us God's love. (*Hug self.*)

(*Note: An angel enters and stands opposite the manger scene. Shepherds enter and stand near angel.*)

Reader 1: Christmas brings the angels bright,
a message to proclaim.
The shepherds found the baby boy—
Christ Jesus was His name.

Reader 2: Angels are God's messengers,
sent from heaven to earth.
On Christmas they announced the news
about our Savior's birth.

Reader 3: *And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.*

Reader 4: *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.*

Reader 5: *This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest" (Luke 2:8–14a).*

Angels We Have Heard on High

(*LW 55, Favorite Christmas Songs 1*)

Children and congregation sing

(*Note: At the chorus, children in Group 3 lift up the angels they made previously. Shepherds move to stand near manger.*)

1. Angels we have heard on high,
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply,
Echoing their joyous strains.
Refrain: Gloria in excelsis Deo;
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

2. Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
Which inspire your heav'nly song?
Refrain.

3. Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the newborn king.
Refrain.

The Tree

(Note: As Reader 2 completes his/her lines, the colored Christmas tree lights and star are extinguished to reveal the white lights of the cross.)

Reader 1: The final Christmas sign is this—
the Christmas tree so bright.
With candy canes and ornaments,
the tree lights up the night.

Reader 2: Look closer now and you will find
a different kind of tree.
See, it's the cross where Jesus died
to save both you and me.

Reader 3: *The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead—whom you had killed by hanging Him on a tree. God exalted Him to His own right hand as Prince and Savior that He might give repentance and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:30–31).*

Jesus Christ Is Born Today (LW 127)

First stanza is rewritten for Christmas; stanzas 2 and 3 are from the original hymn. Or use "Silent Night, Holy Night" (Favorite Christmas Songs 14).

Children and congregation

(Note: Children may use bells, angels, candles, or wreaths as they sing.)

1. Jesus Christ is born today, Alleluia!
See the baby in the hay, Alleluia!
Jesus came from heaven above. Alleluia!
Thank You, God, for your great love! Alleluia!
2. Hymns of praise then let us sing, Alleluia!
Unto Christ, our heav'nly king, Alleluia!
Who endured the cross and grave, Alleluia!
Sinners to redeem and save. Alleluia!

3. Sing we to our God above, Alleluia!
Praise eternal as his love; Alleluia!
Praise him, all you heav'nly host, Alleluia!
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Alleluia!

Joy to the World

(LW 53, Favorite Christmas Songs 8)

Adults sing as the children exit.

1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive its King;
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.
2. Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let all their songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.
3. No more let sin and sorrow grow
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as the curse is found.
4. He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders of His love.