

Christmas Play, 2008
Who Belongs at the Manger

Purpose

The Goal of this Children's Christmas Program is:

- 1) To have the children learn (in an experiential way) the story of Jesus' birth,
- 2) To give the congregation a chance to remember and reconnect with the Christmas Story,
- 3) To be part of an event in which the congregation gathers and celebrates Jesus' birth.

The General Concept/Idea

The primary dialogue and movement of the play will be a BROTHER and SISTER trying to identify the pieces of a nativity scene which they had mixed in with their other toys the previous Christmas. As the brother and sister go through their TOY BOX, they will be trying to remember and decide what belongs around the manger. As the pieces are "found" and placed in the Nativity Set, life-size people/figures take their places around the full size Nativity Set in front of the altar.

The "dialogue" will be read by two readers at the pulpit and the lectern. The BROTHER and SISTER will mime/lip synch what is being read.

As new figures are placed in the Nativity Scene, there will be musical breaks where carols/Christmas Songs are song (by children, soloists, and/or congregation).

Character Outline

The brother (Jimmy) and sister (Lizzy) are 10-11 years old.

Lizzy is a little bit older and in general acts a little bit more mature. She likes to think she knows a lot but occasionally Jimmy comes in with some surprising insight and knowledge. She likes

Jimmy is a rambunctious boy. He tends to get distracted the most by the toys he finds while looking through the toy box. Lizzy has to keep reigning him in and refocusing on the task.

In general, they like each other and get a kick out of gentle ribbing and teasing.

The Mom is really sharp. She is less "put out" about the pieces being missing than enjoying an opportunity for them to have a project to help prepare for Christmas.

Cast of Characters

Jimmy

Lizzy

Mom

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Mary
Joseph
3 Shepherds
3 Wise Men
Angels
Barn Animals (children in costumes or cut out)
Living toys:
Power Ranger,
Star Wars figures (Darth Vader, Obi Wan Kenobi, Luke Skywalker (with lightsaber)
Dolls, Stuffed Animals, GI Joe, Barbie & Ken
Harry Potter
Woody
Buzz Lightyear
Batman
Superman
Transformer

Act 1

The chancel is set with the stable backdrop. In front of the stage is the stable of the nativity Set.

All of the characters in the play are seated in the front pews on one of the sides. OR

The program begins with a welcome to everyone that is there. Then they are invited to stand and sing a Christmas Carol.

LIGHTING-The House lights go down and people sing by watching the words on the Screen.

While this is being sung, all of the participants march in and take their places in the side pews.

The "voices" for Jimmy & Lizzy take their place behind the Lectern and the Pulpit.

The Mom comes on stage calling for Lizzy & Jimmy. . .

Mom Lizzy! Jimmy! Stop what you're doing and come in here!

Lizzy *(Coming on stage)* What's wrong?

Mom Where's your brother?

Lizzy I think he's in the middle of a battle.

Mom Jimmy! Quit playing your Game Boy and get in here!

Jimmy Mom, I'm about to capture a Zapidos!

Mom Jim - -my. . .

Jimmy There! Gotch ya!. . . I'll be right there!

(Jimmy comes on stage still carrying his Game Boy)

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What's so important?

Mom Remember last Christmas when we were putting stuff away and y'all wanted to play with the Nativity figures? What did I say?

Lizzy You said we could as long as we put them away when we're done.

Mom Well, guess what. . . When I opened the box to set up our Nativity Set, all I found was the stable (*pointing to the stable already set up*)

AND the manger (Mom holds it up and places it on the Nativity set. As she does so, one of the stage hands (dressed in black) places the manger in the life-size Nativity Scene. This will be the same process all the way through the play. . . Whenever something is added to the small Nativity set, a life-size version is added to the life-size one.

Lizzy Jimmy, I told you to put those things up.

Mom I don't care whose fault it is. You both wanted to play with them so you both need to work together to find them. I suspect that their probably in the Toy Box.

Jimmy It'll take forever to find them. If they've been in there for a year, they will be all the way at the bottom!

Mom just gives them "the look". . . and they get it.

OK. We'll find them

Mom leaves and Jimmy and Lizzy kneel down beside the TOY BOX and begin looking around inside.

Lizzy This is all your fault. You just had to play war with them.

Jimmy You're the one that wanted to play dress up with them!

Lizzy Oh, never mind. Let's just find them. . .

Jimmy starts grabbing stuffed animals and throwing them over his shoulder.

Lizzy Jimmy!

Jimmy What!?! . . .

Lizzy just keeps staring at him using her "big sister" look. . .

Oh, alright.

What are we looking for again?

Lizzy We're looking for everybody that belongs at the manger. Like Mary and Joseph and . . .

Jimmy What did Joseph look like?

Lizzy I don't know. . .

Jimmy I bet he was big and strong! We should make GI Joe be Joseph!

Jimmy holds up GI Joe (and places him on the Nativity Scene?)

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Lizzy Right. . . and I guess Barbie can be Mary!

Lizzy holds up Barbie (and puts them in the Nativity Scene. . . first standing up and then making her kneel down.)

Jimmy Cool! This is fun!

Lizzy Jimmy, get real. Joseph and Mary did not look like GI Joe and Barbie.

Jimmy How do you know?

Lizzy For one, Joseph was a CARPENTER not a SOLDIER!

Lizzy digs around in the Toy Box and holds up JOSEPH.

Here we go! Joseph was just a good honest guy.

Jimmy But why couldn't Mary look like Barbie? You don't think Mary was beautiful?

Lizzy I'm sure Mary was beautiful. . . but no woman who just had a baby looks like Barbie!

Look for someone who doesn't look very rich. . .

Look for someone who looks like a loving mother. . .

Jimmy *(Holding up the MARY figure)* Like this?

Lizzy Yeah, that looks like Mary!

Jimmy places her in the Nativity. . . The lights go down to just a spotlight on the life-size Nativity (Mary and Joseph).

SONG

ACT 2 – Entrance of the Wise Men

Lizzy Alright. . . We're off to a good start. We've got Mary and Joseph . . .

Jimmy I still think it would be cool to have GI Joseph. . .

(holding up GI Joe)

Lizzy Stop playing around. We need to find everybody else who belongs at the manger.

Jimmy Here's your cute little Barbie playhouse you used to play with all the time.

Jimmy pulls out a doll house.

It looks a lot better than that old barn that mom has. We should use it for Mary and Joseph!

Jimmy finds a Barbie Car and pulls it out.

And here's the car they used to get to Bethlehem, too!

Lizzy Jimmy, they didn't have cars way back then. Jesus was born even before mom and dad were.

Jimmy If they didn't travel in cars, how did they get around?

Lizzy Mostly walking, I think. Maybe a donkey or horse if they were lucky.

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Jimmy But you're not going to tell me that they all lived in barns, are you?

Lizzy Of course not. They had to spend the night in the barn because all the hotels were full.

Jimmy Oh. . . Here's one of the Wise Guys!

Holding up one of the WISE MEN.

Lizzy He's not a "wise guy". . . He's a WISE MAN!

Jimmy Whatever. At least I found him. How many more are there?

Lizzy I'm pretty sure there were three. . . But we better make sure.

Lizzy heads off stage briefly and comes back with a Bible.

Meanwhile, Jimmy starts playing his Game Boy.

When Lizzy returns she says to Jimmy

Lizzy Jimmy! Come on, we've got work to do!

Jimmy Just a minute. Let me finish this battle.

Lizzy Oh no. I know how long your battles take. Just pause it.

Jimmy pauses the game, puts it down and then looks at Lizzy.

Jimmy You're going to find out how many wise men by looking in there? How will you ever find it?

Lizzy Don't you pay attention in Sunday School? There are two main parts to the Bible: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The New Testament is where it talks about Jesus. Since the Nativity Scene is all about Jesus' birth, then all we have to do is look at the beginning of the New Testament!

Lizzy starts looking through the Bible and turns to Matthew.

Here we go. The first book in the New Testament is Matthew. . .

First it lists a bunch of names. . . I guess there all of Jesus' relatives. . .

Here we go, "The Birth of Jesus the Messiah".

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."

Jimmy I thought his name was "Jesus."

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Lizzy Hold on, I haven't gotten to that part.

When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Lizzy See?

Jimmy But what about the WISE GUYS?

Lizzy Hang on. . . (*Lizzy keeps reading.*)

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Lizzy See? I told you.

Jimmy Yeah, but how many are there supposed to be?

Lizzy Hmmmm. I guess it doesn't really say. I'm still pretty sure that there were three of them.

Jimmy Maybe there needed to be three of them to carry the three gifts to Jesus: the gold, frankfurters and s'mores.

Lizzy It was gold, FRANKINCENSE and MYRRH! Let's just find the other two.

Jimmy (*Holding up HARRY POTTER*) What about Harry Potter? He's really smart because he's always outwitting Voldemort! EXPELIARMUS!

Jimmy places Harry Potter in the Nativity (and the life-size one temporarily walks onto the life-size nativity).

Lizzy Harry Potter was not at the manger. . .

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Jimmy (*Finding Obi Wan Kenobi*) Oh-oh. . . Obi Wan would make a great wise guy, “Let the force be with you, Jesus.”

Lizzy stares at Jimmy while she’s looking through the Toy Box.

Jimmy finally gives in and puts Harry and Obi Wan back in the Toy Box.

Rather quickly, Lizzy finds the other two wise men.

Lizzy Here they are! (*as she holds them up and puts them in the Nativity*).

Jimmy But where’s the star? The story you read said they were following a star that stopped over the manger. . .

Jimmy digs back into the Toy Box looking for the star.

Lizzy Jimmy. . . (*she says this to get his attention and, when he’s looking at her, slowly points to the star.*)

Jimmy Oh. . . (*after a pause*) Cool! That’s one less thing that we have to find!

Lights fade and the congregation sings FIRST VERSE “We Three Kings of Orient Are”.

ACT III

Jimmy Okay. Who else belongs at the manger?

Lizzy We need some shepherds.

Jimmy Are you sure? The story you read didn’t say anything about shepherds.

Lizzy picks up the Bible and looks at the Matthew account again verifying that it didn’t have any shepherds.

Then she yells,

Lizzy MOM! WE NEED SOME HELP!

Mom comes back on stage in a caring, affirming mood.

Mom Hey look! You’ve found Mary, Joseph and the Wise Men.

Jimmy And Lizzy says that there are supposed to be some shepherds.

Lizzy But the Bible doesn’t talk about them.

Mom (*Surprised*) You were reading the Bible?

Lizzy Yeah. We needed to know how many Wise Men there were. We’re pretty sure there were three.

Lizzy hands her the Bible opened to where she was reading.

Mom after taking it and looking at it says:

Mom Oh. You were reading in the Gospel of Matthew. That is the one that tells us of the Wise Men, but there are three other Gospels or stories of Jesus.

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She turns in the Bible to Luke. . .

Here is Luke's story about the birth of Jesus. . .

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Lizzy Ahhh. . . That's where it talks about the manger!

Mom In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see--I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Lizzy So there were shepherds!

Jimmy But how many do we have to find?

Mom The Bible doesn't tell us how many there were. . . But I remember that this Nativity Set has _____ (fill in the number for the particular Nativity Set we use.)

I need to get back to baking cookies. . . Keep up the good work. You're almost there.

Mom walks off stage.

Jimmy Here's a sheep! *Does our Nativity set include a cow?*

Lizzy Oh, and look at this cute little *PUPPY DOG* (or some other stuffed toy/costume combo).

Jimmy Now look who's playing around.

Lizzy But it would look soooo cute!

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Jimmy Well then I want to add. *(we can work in whatever barn animals, dinosaurs, wild animals that we have toys and costumes for!)*

Lizzy We can't put all of creation around the manger. Get those other animals out of there and let's find the shepherds.

Lizzy and Jimmy remove all the "non-sheep" animals.

Jimmy What do the shepherds look like?

Lizzy Well, they wore work clothes because they were always out working with the sheep. . . sort of like cowboys.

Jimmy Ah ha! Woody would make a good shepherd!

Jimmy pulls Woody from Toy Story out of the Toy Box and places him in the Nativity.

Lizzy I said they were like cowboys, not that they were cowboys. They didn't wear boots, and jeans and cowboy hats.

Jimmy Well, what did they wear?

Lizzy I guess they were dressed like Joseph. . . sort of wearing robes and stuff.

Jimmy Then Luke Skywalker would make a good shepherd. He's got the robes. . . and he could use his light saber to fight off wolves and sheep rustlers.

Jimmy puts Luke Skywalker in the Nativity Set.

While we're at it, let's put Darth Vader in there. He's wearing robes.

Jimmy adds him to the Nativity.

Lizzy You are NOT putting Darth Vader in the Nativity Set.

She quickly reaches in and takes him out.

He was evil and he does not belong around all these holy people.

Jimmy *(Kind of sheepishly)* But he felt sorry about it at the end. . .

Jimmy's playfulness is gone and he dejectedly takes Luke Skywalker out of the Nativity and puts him back in the Toy Box saying,

He wasn't ALL bad. . .

Lizzy Jimmy. I'm sorry. It's just that some people belong at the manger and some don't.

Let's find those shepherds.

Jimmy and Lizzy find the shepherds and place them in the Nativity.

The lights go down on Jimmy and Lizzy. The Congregation sings, "Go Tell It on the Mountain."

ACT IV – The Angels

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For the beginning of this act, I'm going to assume that there is one angel included in the Nativity Scene that we are using. If there isn't, I'll change the dialogue appropriately to introduce the discussion about angels.

Lizzy I think that might be everything.

She says while she's rummaging through the Toy Box. Then. . .

Wait a minute. Here's the ANGEL.

She places in the Nativity Scene.

Jimmy Why is there an angel there? The stories in the Bible don't say anything about an angel at the manger.

Lizzy You have to an ANGEL in the Nativity Scene.

Jimmy Well if you're going to have ONE angel, I think you should have a bunch! The Bible says that there were a gazillion angels that appeared to the shepherds. If they came to the shepherds, why wouldn't they show up at Jesus' birth?

Lizzy Well . . .

Jimmy I bet they were there but everybody was inside the barn and didn't go out and look up in the sky! I'm going to add some angels. . .

Rummaging through the TOY BOX. . .

Let's see. . . Angels have wings and can fly. . . So we need to add people who can fly.

Here's SUPERMAN. He can fly.

And BUZZ LIGHTYEAR. At least he has wings. . .

And BATMAN. He can at least glide. . .

Ooh. How about a TRANSFORMER!

While Jimmy is adding these "angels," Lizzy is watching on thinking (with her hand in her chin?). After Jimmy adds BATMAN (or the last "angel"), she says:

Lizzy Jimmy, you're right. If we're going to have one angel, then we should have a bunch of angels.

Find as many of my dolls as you can. . .

Lizzy goes off stage.

While Lizzy is off stage, Jimmy is pulling dolls out of the Toy Box and muttering stuff like:

Jimmy I can't believe how many stupid dolls she has!

Lizzy returns with a box of Kleenex®.

She pulls one out, pokes a hole in it, and puts it over the head of one of the dolls (giving it a white robe) and places it in the Nativity set.

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Lizzy Here. Let's turn all of these dolls into angels.

While they are transforming the dolls into ANGELS, the life-size angels gather in front of the Life-Size Nativity and begin singing their ANGEL SONG (probably to the tune of Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star but with new, appropriate verses)

*1. Twinkle, twinkle, Little Star; How you led the wise men far,
Now to shepherds late at night,
We must go and shed some light,
Twinkle, twinkle, Little Star; How you led the wise men far.*

*2. We bring tidings of great joy, about the birth of a baby boy.
He is made of grace and love, in the image of God above,
We bring tidings of great joy, about the birth of a baby boy.*

*3. It's not about a brand new toy, but true life you may enjoy.
God has chosen you to be, to know you're loved and set free,
It's not about a brand new toy, but true life you may enjoy.*

ACT V – Everyone Else

Lizzy There! I think we found them all. Everybody that belongs around the manger is there:
Mary. . . Joseph. . . the Wise Men. . . the shepherds and animals. . . lots of angels. . .
Here. . . Let's clean up this mess!

Lizzy starts picking up toys and putting them back in the Toy Box but Jimmy just stands there.

Lizzy notices and says

Lizzy Jimmy, come on. You helped make this mess and you need to help me clean it up.

Jimmy I think they want to be there, too.

Lizzy What are you talking about?

Jimmy picks up one of the toys (Buzz Lightyear) and says,

Jimmy I think Buzz would want to be there, too.

Lizzy Be where?

Jimmy At the manger! If Buzz had the chance to be there and worship the baby Jesus, don't you think that he would do it?

Lizzy I guess so. . .

Jimmy puts Buzz Lightyear on the Nativity.

Then he picks up one of Lizzy's favorite toys (a Barbie)

Jimmy You know Barbie pretty well. . . Wouldn't she want to be with Jesus?

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Lizzy Well sure, but Barbie wasn't around when Jesus was born! She can't be at the manger.

Jimmy Why not? I think they belong around the manger.

Lizzy I guess she would if she could. . .

She puts Barbie in the Nativity and picks up Ken.

I think Ken belongs there, too!

Jimmy Let's put them all around the manger!

They both start grabbing toys and putting them around the Nativity.

Jimmy picks up Darth Vader and pauses. . .

Jimmy Can Darth Vader be there, too?

Lizzy Well. . . like you said, he felt sorry for what he did in the end. I'm sure the shepherds and wise men had done things that they felt sorry for. . .

Putting Darth Vader in the Nativity. . .

Lizzy I think that he would also want to worship Jesus if he could. . .

Jimmy *As the lights are going down. . .* What about the dinosaurs?

All the "Toys" sing a song about Jesus loving all

1. *Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world.*

Red and Yellow, Black and white, we are precious in his sight.

Jesus loves the little children of the world.

ACT VI

Jimmy and Lizzy get up and stand in front of the Nativity Scene so Mom won't be able to see it.

Jimmy shouts:

Jimmy MOM! We're done!

When Mom comes on stage, Jimmy and Lizzy step aside to reveal the nativity Scene (with all the additional toys and figures) and say together:

Jimmy & Lizzy Ta – Dahh!

Mom looks on for a second, then says:

Mom There are a few more figures in this Nativity Scene than I remember.

Lizzy Jimmy and I felt that they all belonged at the manger.

Jimmy It's not fair that they should be left out.

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Lizzy Didn't Jesus come to bring life to everyone?

Mom *(After a little pause)* It doesn't look like any Nativity Scene that I've ever seen. . . But who am I to tell you or them that they don't belong at the manger.

But, there is someone you left out.

Jimmy No way! We put everybody that was in our Toy Box up there.

Mom I think you should look again.

Jimmy and Lizzy begin looking. . . way down in the bottom of the Toy Box.

After they've started she adds. . .

It might be kind of small. . .

All of a sudden, Lizzy pulls her hand out of the Toy Box with it closed around something.

Lizzy I can't believe it.

Jimmy What? Who did we leave out?

Lizzy We got so distracted trying to figure out who belonged AROUND the manger that we forgot who was IN the manger. . .

Opening her hand to reveal. . .

Baby Jesus!

Jimmy What would a Nativity Scene be without, Jesus?

Mom Yeah. . . What would Christmas be without Jesus?

As Lizzy places Jesus in the Manger, everybody starts singing, "Away in the Manger."

After that, we all sing, "We Wish You a Merry Christmas."

When that is done, we have acknowledgments, instructions about picture taking, and then Jesus' Birthday cake is brought in and everyone is invited into the Fellowship Hall for Jesus' Birthday party.

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