

IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL



10-MINUTE CHRISTMAS PAGEANTS

**5 Biblical, Low-memorization, Low-rehearsal Plays
that Include Everyone Who Wants to Participate**

N.A. Hart

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THAT INCLUDE EVERYONE WHO WANTS TO PARTICIPATE**

N.A. HART



WRITTEN
DEER

Grand Rapids, MI

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See the Guide to Bible Verses Used for verses and versions of the Bible quoted in each play.

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Introduction

Christmas pageants make the church happy.

It isn't just that the actors are adorable or that the story of Christmas is a glad one. It's also a chance for people who usually *receive* ministry (children, young people, people with intellectual disabilities) to minister to the broader church.

How fitting it is to tell the story of God becoming a powerless human baby through the words and actions of those who are often powerless. We hear the words anew when they come out of a child's mouth. We revel in the joy of the story when a person with Down syndrome declares, "Glory to God!" And the actors are so proud that they are important enough to tell the story.

High involvement

Because of this, it's vital that everyone who wants to have a role in telling that wonderful story is given the opportunity to do so, no matter their age or physical or intellectual disability.

Some years, I've struggled to get 6 participants; other years I've had 35. So each pageant can be tweaked. In lean years, for example, all the angel lines go to one person. In busy years, I divide up what is normally one biblical character among several actors. You'll notice in *A Message! A Message!* that there are 4 angels bringing messages to Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds, although in the Bible they are all Gabriel. That was the result of a busy year. Feel free to divide or consolidate roles as fits your level of participation.

In addition, I always have a role for people who show up at church on pageant morning and want to be involved despite never having shown up for a single rehearsal, or even being a visitor to your congregation: they are shepherds and sheep. In every in-person pageant there is a time for shepherds and sheep to walk (or crawl) from the back of church to the front. The latecomers don't have a speaking part (outside of baa-ing), but they get to throw on a costume, follow the crowd, and be part of the action. It makes the morning more hectic for the leader and volunteers, but it's worth it. Truly, the more the merrier.

Mostly biblical

My favorite pageants are almost entirely biblical, with the majority of the text coming straight from the Bible. Extra-biblical characters are few, and mostly serve to introduce the congregation to each person in the story, and to provide segues and emphasize the theme. And, unless your church has 15 wireless microphones, to run around the sanctuary with a mic for the actors to speak into.

Each pageant takes no more than 10 minutes to perform, fitting well within a Sunday morning service. If your church prefers to make an evening of the pageant, you can easily pad them out with choirs and soloists and dancers.

Low rehearsal

I allow pageant participants to read their part. Some people are comfortable memorizing lines, and some families with enforcing memorization, but not all, so anyone who wants their part printed on a piece of paper they read from can have that. Those who want to memorize can certainly go for it. Whatever makes the actors feel confident is what we do. In each pageant there are also a number of lines that are purposely very short so they could be done by a non-reader who repeats the words after someone whispers to them.

Each play can also be done well with only one or two rehearsals. In my 20 years of leading Christmas pageants, I've gotten the entire cast at a rehearsal only once. That's the reality of highly-scheduled families these days. The actions and words of the pageants are simple. Most parts have a few lines and then the person is silent for the rest of the pageant, but gets to stay on stage. That's doable, and less stressful for all involved.

One of the ways to make the high-participation, low-rehearsal play work is to have a strong narrator—strong in terms of performance and actor-wrangling ability. The narrator can provide grounding in the storytelling while maneuvering the actors into place while holding the microphone for them to speak into. You can divide up the narrator role if you have enough people who want that speaking part; if you do that, consider having a separate person be the actor-microphone wrangler.

These five Christmas pageants are not huge spectacles. You don't have to have a stunning display with professional sets and lights and live animals to tell the story of Jesus well. You just need a few volunteers willing to corral all the participants, and actors willing to put on a costume and go in front of the congregation.

In person or virtual

These plays can be performed either in person or virtually. The first three plays were designed to be done in person, the last two virtually. Following are some tips for how to do each the other way.

To do *Jesus's Family Tree* and *A Message, A Message!* virtually, film the sections that involve interactions in small groups or families.

In *Jesus's Family Tree*, we hear about “the shoot of Jesse” from Isaiah and meet people in Jesus’s family tree. Rahab saves the Israelite spies, and David kills Goliath, both of which would be difficult to portray unless 2-3 people are in the same space. The play ends with people in any kind of costume coming down the aisle of the church. The idea is that because we have been adopted into God’s family, we can all be part of Jesus’s family tree: the shepherds and the sheep can be, the Magi can be, a princess can be, an astronaut can be, etc. Each new character can appear on screen while the narrator’s voiceover says, “X can be.”

In *A Message! A Message!* we are in the angels’ break room in heaven, where they are waiting to be sent out by God to tell people what God needs them to hear. The angels race out one at a time to tell Zechariah, Mary, and Joseph their messages. It would be nice if the angel could be with the person they’re giving the message to—although not necessary.

What Are You Waiting For? is a newscast with a roving reporter meeting all the players in the story and interviewing them “in the street.” Very few characters are grouped in this pageant, so it would work fine to have each person on screen giving their lines separately.

Both *Do Not Be Afraid* and *The Light to Live By* were designed to be performed virtually. *Do Not Be Afraid* has a narrator telling about all those times people in the story were told not to be afraid, while the participants speak the same line, “Do not be afraid.” *The Light to Live By* goes through John 1:1-14, with lots of participants asking what John’s poetic words mean. The play focuses on Jesus coming to *our* neighborhood, and on what it means that Jesus is the light of the world. To do those in person, arrange the actors around the performance space where they can speak their lines when their turn comes. And, as always, give those shepherds and sheep a few moments to shine when they are mentioned.

Never stress-free

Directing a Christmas pageant will never be stress-free. There are too many costumes to arrange, too many squirmy participants to rein in, and too many scheduling conflicts. But the results are always joyful, and everyone will be happy that you put yourself through it. Even you.

Jesus's Family Tree

Setting: There is not a specific setting. The narrator addresses the congregation in real time. There is a Christmas tree somewhere in the sanctuary.

At Rise: The narrator is in the center or at a podium (whichever works better for your church's sound people). The two scouts are under a blanket on stage, being very quiet. Each new character walks onto the stage to say their lines, and then remains in place. Eventually the stage will be full of people.

NARRATOR

(NARRATOR points at the Christmas tree.)

This isn't a normal Christmas tree. It's a Jesse Tree. It gets its name from something the prophet Isaiah said about the Messiah:

ISAIAH

A small tree will grow from the stump of Jesse. That branch will grow from Jesse's roots. The Spirit of the Lord will always be with that new king to give him wisdom, understanding, guidance, and power. He will find joy in obeying the Lord. Then wolves will live at peace with lambs, and leopards will lie down in peace with young goats. Calves and lions will live together in peace. And a little child will lead them.

NARRATOR

The Jesse that Isaiah mentioned was King David's father—David, who was Israel's first great king and who wrote so many of our favorite Psalms. The little child who will lead them all was Jesus. That Jesus was born in Jesse's family means that David was Jesus's great- great- great- great- great- great- great- great- great- great- great- great- great- great- great- great- great-grandfather. Phew!

Let's meet some more people who are related to Jesus, who are in Jesus's family tree.

Rahab was Jesse's great-grandmother. She was a Canaanite woman who lived on the wall in the city of Jericho. After 40 years of wandering around the wilderness, the Israelites entered the land the Lord had promised to them. They sent scouts to check out Jericho. And Rahab did a brave thing.

RAHAB

(RAHAB walks to the blanket.)

It's safe.

(The two SCOUTS emerge from the blanket.)

SCOUT 1

Thank you, thank you!

RAHAB

I told the king I saw you sneak out before the gates closed. They're off looking for you on the road.

SCOUT 2

Good thinking!

RAHAB

I kept you safe, now you need to keep me safe. I know all about your God and how he led you through the waters on dry land. So I know you'll win when you come to conquer my city. Promise me you'll save me, my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all their families.

SCOUT 1

That's a lot of peop—

SCOUT 2

*(Elbows SCOUT 1 before he or she finishes talking,
and then hands RAHAB a red rope or ribbon.)*

We promise. Throw this red cord out your window so our soldiers know to save you.

NARRATOR

They kept their promise. Rahab and her whole family were saved. She married an Israelite and they had a son named Boaz, who married Ruth.

Ruth was another foreigner in Jesus's family tree. She was from Moab. She'd married an Israelite who'd moved to Moab, but he died. When her mother-in-law Naomi went back to Israel, to Bethlehem, Ruth decided to go with her rather than stay in her own country. When Naomi told her not to come along, Ruth said:

RUTH

Don't force me to leave you! Don't make me to go back to my own people. Let me go with you. Wherever you go, I will go. Wherever you sleep, I will sleep. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God.

NARRATOR

Ruth went back to Bethlehem with Naomi where she married Rahab's son, Boaz. Their son Obed was Jesse's father and David's grandfather. When David was still young, years before he became king, he trusted God and walked towards a giant on the battlefield, armed only with his shepherd's staff, a sling, and a stone that he picked up on the spot.

GOLIATH

(GOLIATH stomps onto his mark and shakes his spear at DAVID.)

What is that stick for? Did you come to chase me away like a dog?

DAVID

(DAVID walks towards GOLIATH with a shepherd's staff and a sling.)

You come to me using sword, spear, and javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord All-Powerful, the God of the armies of Israel. You have said bad things about him. Today the Lord will conquer you and I will kill you. This is the Lord's battle and he will give you to us!

*(DAVID mimes throwing a stone with his sling and GOLIATH falls on his face.
DAVID remains standing over GOLIATH for the rest of the pageant.)*

NARRATOR

Many, many years later, John the Baptist was born—he was Jesus's cousin. Here's the song his father, Zechariah sang after John was born:

ZECHARIAH

Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to help his people. He has sent us a mighty Savior from the family of his servant David, just as he promised through his holy prophets long ago. And you, my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most High, because you will prepare the way for the Lord.

NARRATOR

Mary was Jesus's mother. When an angel told her that the Holy Spirit would overshadow her and she would have God's special son, the Savior, this is what she said:

MARY

I praise the Lord with all my heart. I am very happy because God is my Savior. I am not important, but he has shown his care for me, his lowly servant. From now until the end of time, people will remember how much God blessed me. Yes, the Powerful One has done great things for me. His name is holy. He always gives mercy to those who worship him. He reached out his arm and showed his power. He scattered those who are proud and think great things about themselves. He brought down rulers from their thrones and raised up the humble people. He filled the hungry with good things, but he sent the rich away with nothing. He did not forget his promise to give us his mercy. He has done what he promised to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever.

NARRATOR

Forever. That's a very, very long time. It even includes right now. And because Mary's baby boy went on to die on the cross to make us right with God, we are adopted into God's own family. You, and you, and you, and even me. We can all be part of Jesus's family tree.

The shepherds can be.... *(SHEPHERDS walk to the front with the SHEEP)*

The Magi can be.... *(the MAGI walk to the front)*

(Anyone else who has dressed up or wants to walk to the front can come up.)
(NARRATOR names each person or dressed-up-identity as they come, "The X can be.")

We are all part of Jesus's family tree, part of God's big story!

A Message! A Message!

Setting: The break room for the angels in heaven.

At rise: The narrator stands ready with a microphone; the narrator speaks one line and then runs around the sanctuary, holding the microphone for each person when they read their line(s). The angels are gathered on one side of the sanctuary. Zechariah stands behind a table. Mary sits in a chair. Joseph is lying down in a raised area, or if the front of your sanctuary doesn't have one, then slumped dramatically in a chair as if sleeping. Shepherds and sheep are at the back of the sanctuary.

NARRATOR

Here at the break room in heaven, the angels wait for God to send them out.

ANGEL 1

God hasn't given us a message to send in a long time.

ANGEL 2

If we don't get something soon, my wings are going to be out of shape.

ANGEL 3

Yeah, I miss talking to people.

(TRUMPET BLAST)

ALL ANGELS

(They speak together, doesn't have to be in unison.)

A message! A message!

ANGEL 1

My turn!

(ANGEL 1 flies over to ZECHARIAH, who is pretending to do priestly stuff at the table.)

(ZECHARIAH sees ANGEL 1 and is terrified.)

ANGEL 1

Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give birth to a baby boy and you will name him John. You will be very happy. He will be a great man for the Lord. Even before he is born, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will make people ready for the coming of the Lord.

ZECHARIAH

What? How can I be sure? My wife and I are way too old.

ANGEL 1

(Angry.)

I am Gabriel, the one who always stands ready before God. He sent me to talk to you and to tell you this good news. Now, listen! Because you didn't believe what I told you, you will not be able to talk until the day when these things happen.

ZECHARIAH

*(Turns to the congregation and tries to speak, but no sounds come out—hams it up.
He stays to the side of the table for the rest of the pageant.)*

ANGEL 1

(Returns to the angel break room.)

That'll show him not to trust God. He won't talk at all until his son John is born!

*(The angels play clapping games or some kind of thing
to show they're bored until the TRUMPET BLAST.)*

ALL ANGELS

(They speak together, doesn't have to be in unison.)

A message! A message!

ANGEL 2

My turn!

(ANGEL 2 flies over to where MARY is sitting.)

Greetings! The Lord is with you; you are very special to him.

MARY

(Looks very confused and frightened.)

ANGEL 2

Don't be afraid, Mary, because God is very pleased with you. Listen. You will have a baby boy and name him Jesus. He will be great. People will call him the Son of the Most High God, and the Lord God will make him king like his ancestor David. He will rule over us forever; his kingdom will never end.

MARY

How? I'm not married yet.

ANGEL 2

The Holy Spirit will make it happen, so the baby will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. God can do anything!

MARY

I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true.

ANGEL 2

(Flies back to the break room.)

That Mary is a good one. She'll be a good mom to the Savior.

(Angels are bored until the TRUMPET BLAST.)

ALL ANGELS

(They speak together, doesn't have to be in unison.)

A message! A message!

ANGEL 3

(Takes a moment to listen to God.)

I get to go into a dream!

(ANGEL 3 goes behind JOSEPH)

Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. The child in her was made by the Holy Spirit. She will have a son, and you will name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

(JOSEPH wakes up and goes to stand by MARY.)

(ANGEL 3 nods at them, happy, and flies back to the break room.)

(The angels are bored until the TRUMPET BLAST.)

(All the angels except for ANGEL 4 run around and eventually make their way to a hiding place, preferable higher than the other actors. ANGEL 4 hides behind Zechariah's table.)

(A volunteer adds BABY JESUS to MARY and JOSEPH, either in her arms or in a manger.)

(The SHEPHERDS and the SHEEP make their way down the middle of the aisle and stop at the front of church.)

(ANGEL 4 pops up dramatically and the SHEPHERDS are scared.)

ANGEL 4

Don't be afraid. I have some very good news for you—news that will make everyone happy. Today your Savior was born in David's town, in Bethlehem. He is the Messiah, the Lord. When you see a baby in a feeding box, you've found him!

ALL ANGELS

(Pop up dramatically and say together)

Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth! Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth!

(Everyone gathers around JOSEPH and MARY.)

(All sing "Jesus, What a Wonderful Child" or other Christmas song.)

What Are You Waiting For?

Setting: A TV news studio; one reporter “on the street.”

At rise: A news anchor is at a desk or podium. A roving reporter is nearby with a microphone, standing with Isaiah. Use the actual name of your church and name of the anchor and reporter. Angels, shepherds, sheep, and Magi are in a center aisle; angels close to the front, shepherds and sheep in the middle, Magi in the back.

NEWS ANCHOR

Good morning, CHURCH. I’m ANCHOR NAME. Here’s the news. We are in the season of Advent. During Advent we are waiting for an arrival. Do the people on the street know what we’re waiting for? Let’s go to a live report by REPORTER NAME. REPORTER?

REPORTER

NAME here, reporting live on the scene. I’ve come across Isaiah, and he calls himself a prophet. Isaiah, for our viewers who don’t know, what is a prophet?

ISAIAH

A prophet is a person who listens to and speaks the Word of God.

REPORTER

Very interesting. As you know we’re in this season that’s all about waiting. What are you waiting for?

ISAIAH

I’m waiting for God to send the Messiah.

REPORTER

Who is this Messiah?

ISAIAH

A light to those who live in darkness, a child who will break the rod of the oppressor. He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. There will be peace without end and he will rule with goodness and justice forever and ever.

REPORTER

Sounds like he'll change everything.

ISAIAH

He will.

REPORTER

Thank you, Isaiah.

(ZECHARIAH walks past.)

REPORTER

Excuse me, excuse me, sir. I'm here reporting for CHURCH News and I'm asking people what they are waiting for.

ZECHARIAH

(ZECHARIAH can't speak—mime and make it funny.)

REPORTER

I'm sorry. Can you write it down?

ZECHARIAH

(writes down on a paper)

REPORTER

(reads)

"I'm Zechariah. I'm waiting for my child to be born so God will open my mouth again." Sounds like there's a story there.

ZECHARIAH

(nods vigorously, writes a little more)

REPORTER

"Even though I'm a priest, I questioned God's ability and now I can't speak until my son is born." Is your child going to be the Messiah?

ZECHARIAH

(Shakes his head no, no, no. Writes more.)

REPORTER

(reads)

"No. My child will help people get ready for the Messiah, but he won't be the Messiah." This Messiah situation is getting interesting.

(Elizabeth joins them.)

ELIZABETH

Hello, I'm Elizabeth, Zechariah's wife.

REPORTER

Hello. I'm NAME from Church News. Your husband and I were just talking, sort of, about the Messiah.

ELIZABETH

Oh, the Messiah! You should talk with my cousin Mary. She's the one who's truly blessed. She came to see me and I was filled with the Holy Spirit because of the child she's carrying.

REPORTER

I hope I get the chance to do that. Thank you, both.

(MARY and JOSEPH walk by [with a donkey if you've got the costume for it].)

REPORTER

Excuse me, excuse me. What are you waiting for?

JOSEPH

I'm waiting for this road to clear so I can get Mary to Bethlehem before she gives birth!

MARY

Joseph, I think she means in a deeper sense than that.

REPORTER

It's however you want to answer the question.

MARY

I'm bursting with God-news; I'm dancing the song of my Savior God.
God took one good look at me, and look what happened—
I'm the luckiest woman on earth!
What God has done for me will never be forgotten,
the God whose very name is holy, set apart from all others.
His mercy flows in wave after wave
on those who are in awe before him.
He bared his arm and showed his strength,
scattered the bluffing braggarts.
He knocked tyrants off their high horses, pulled victims out of the mud.
The starving poor sat down to a banquet; the callous rich were left out in the cold.
He embraced his chosen child, Israel;
he remembered and piled on the mercies, piled them high.

REPORTER

You know, that sounds a lot like the Messiah that a man named Isaiah was talking about.

JOSEPH

Because this baby will be the Messiah. And now we don't mean to be rude but Mary is having contractions!

(MARY and JOSEPH rush off.)

REPORTER

(Walks towards the ANGELS in the aisle.)

I think I hear something back here.

(ANGELS pop up.)

REPORTER

Who are you and what are you waiting for?

ANGEL 1

We're angels and we're waiting to share the good news!

REPORTER

Oh! What's the good news?

ANGEL 2

This good news will cause great joy for all the people!

ANGEL 3

Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born.

ANGEL 4

He is the Messiah!

REPORTER

The Messiah—I just met his parents and his cousins! Well this is getting exciting. When will you tell your good news?

ANGELS

Very soon!

REPORTER

I'll leave you to it.

(REPORTER goes to the SHEPHERDS.)

Hello. I could smell you from down the road. So what are you shepherds waiting for tonight?

SHEPHERD 1

(Big, loud yawn.)

I'm on watch so I'm waiting for the dawn.

SHEPHERD 2

The rest of us are supposed to be asleep, so we're waiting for you to go away.

SHEPHERD 3

I'm waiting to be old enough to work in the fields. Sheep smell bad.

REPORTER

So sheep. Are you waiting for anything?

SHEEP

Baa baa baa baa

ANGELS

(Run up to the SHEPHERDS and announce in unison.)

Glory to God in the highest!

ANGEL 1

The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! You'll be in the right place when you find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.

SHEPHERD 4

Let's go!

(ANGELS, SHEPHERDS, and SHEEP go to the front to gather around MARY and JOSEPH.)

REPORTER

(Walks to the very back of the center aisle.)

Wow. You all look very fancy. Who are you?

KING 1

Kings!

REPORTER

And what are you waiting for?

KING 2

Star!

REPORTER

Is that the star over there?

KINGS

Yes.

REPORTER

Well don't let me stop you. That's where the Messiah is!

(KINGS walk to MARY and JOSEPH.)

REPORTER

ANCHOR, that's it from the field. Some people were waiting for the Messiah to come, and some people were waiting for other things, but all were glad to hear the good news: the Messiah is here. Back to you in the studio.

ANCHOR

Thank you REPORTER. It's rare that we in the news industry get to bring good news that will bring great joy to all the people, but we've done that today. It makes me feel like singing!

(All sing "Joy to the World" or other Christmas song.)

Do Not Be Afraid

Setting: This pageant is designed to be done virtually, with one or multiple narrators (depending on how many people want to be involved). Participants can film themselves saying or singing “Do not be afraid” at home, wearing a costume or not, adding effects or not, in English or any other language they speak. Editor will insert participants saying “Do not be afraid” where indicated. If done in person, participants can be costumed as angels, arrayed around the stage, with non-speaking roles for Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, shepherds and sheep miming their actions during the narration.

God so loved me and he so loved you that he became one of us. Human. He was fully human and fully God. Kinda mysterious. In the best way.

But the news of Jesus freaked people out. Every time God sent an angel to tell someone, they first had to say:

DO NOT BE AFRAID

Think of those poor people. The priest Zechariah was alone in the temple lighting incense while the worshipers prayed outside—nobody else was supposed to come in. All of a sudden, there was an angel right in front of him. No wonder he was overwhelmed with fear.

DO NOT BE AFRAID

The angel Gabriel tried to get right to the good news when he came to Mary, saying, Greetings you who are highly favored, the Lord is with you, but that made her confused and disturbed.

DO NOT BE AFRAID

The shepherds were bunking down for the night out in the hills where there were no lights except for the moon and the stars, and no other people for miles. They were suddenly surrounded by the radiance of Christ’s glory and a shining light-man was talking to them! No wonder they were terrified.

DO NOT BE AFRAID

These were all wonderful, “**Don’t be afraid** of me and the news I bring from God,” messages. But there are other ways “**Don’t be afraid**” is used. Angels come to Joseph in dreams a couple of times with very important messages. The first time,

DO NOT BE AFRAID

to marry Mary. Then later, after Jesus is born, something more like this:

DO NOT BE AFRAID

(more urgently)

The angel tells him Jesus is in danger. The Roman ruler, Herod, wants to kill him. They flee to Egypt—funding their trip with the gold, frankincense and myrrh from the wise men, I bet. After another couple of years, an angel tells Joseph it’s safe to return.

DO NOT BE AFRAID

So what can we learn from all these angels’ words? After all, there’s a lot in the world that it is perfectly reasonable to be afraid of.

DO NOT BE AFRAID

of the God who loved us so much that he came down so that we can have hope, peace, and joy.

DO NOT BE AFRAID

to run to the God who loves you with a love that will never end.

DO NOT BE AFRAID

to depend on the God who will never give up on you.

DO NOT BE AFRAID

to call on the Jesus who scolded the disciples for stopping children from running to him.

So in a year when there’s a lot to be afraid of, we can embrace the Good News of Jesus with both arms and hold it tight: the light of Christ is in our world, in our city, in our homes, in our hearts. And that changes everything.

DO NOT BE AFRAID

The Light to Live By

Setting: This pageant is designed to be done virtually, with one or multiple narrators (depending on how many people want to be involved). Distribute the ACTOR lines to as many people who want to take part. If done in person, participants can be arrayed around the front of the sanctuary, or all over (if you have enough microphones). Be sure to include some costumed shepherds, sheep, and Magi so they can say, “My neighborhood?”

NARRATOR

Today, we’re going to talk about what the apostle, John, said about how Jesus came into the world. It’s a little different from the other versions of the story.

| In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.

ACTOR

(Makes a confused face.)

NARRATOR

| The Word was first. The Word present to God, God present to the Word. The Word was God.

ACTOR

(Makes a confused face.)

NARRATOR

| Before the world began, the Word was there. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.

ACTOR

So who is the Word?

NARRATOR

The Word is Jesus.

ACTOR

Why doesn't John just say that?

NARRATOR

(Shrugs.)

ACTOR

So Jesus existed before water and dry land and the sun and the moon?

NARRATOR

(Gives a thumb's up sign.)

ACTOR

And Jesus was with God and also was God? Explain that!

NARRATOR

That's a tough one. I think of it like this: I am one person, but I'm also a mother, and a daughter, and a friend, and a worker. Just like I'm each one of those things, but they aren't the only thing I am, somehow Jesus is God, but not the only thing God is. It's a mystery.

ACTOR

Okay.

NARRATOR

God created everything through him and nothing was made without him.

The Word gave life to everything that was created.

ACTOR

So Jesus helped with Creation?

NARRATOR

Yes.

And the life was light to live by—light for the people of the world.

ACTOR

So this is where Jesus gets the name, The Light of the World!

NARRATOR

Yes! What do we know about light?

ACTOR

(Can be a different actor per line.)

It's warm.

We can see because of it.

It shows us the way to go.

It lights up everything, good and bad.

NARRATOR

So how is Jesus like light?

ACTOR

(Can be a different actor per line.)

He loves us, and love is warm.

We see God better because of Jesus.

Jesus shows us how to live.

He shows us things about ourselves and the world that are good, and not so good.

NARRATOR

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness can never put it out.

ACTOR

I don't like the dark.

The dark is scary.

NARRATOR

Is that the kind of darkness John is writing about here?

ACTOR

Not really. I think he's talking about the darkness of when things go wrong, when evil things happen, when bad feels like it's winning.

But it can't win?

NARRATOR

No, darkness can't win over Jesus' light. Light is more powerful than dark. And the light of Jesus is the most powerful light ever—it is full of perfect love.

■ The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood.

ACTOR

*(Many actors, in their own neighborhood, dressed as themselves
or in costume as shepherds, sheep, and Magi.)*

My neighborhood?

NARRATOR

Yes! All those neighborhoods, and more.

■ The Word became human and made his home among us.

ACTOR

Jesus is at home with us?

ACTOR

Jesus is at home with us!

NARRATOR

And we are at home when we are with Jesus. He calls us family.

So what have we learned?

ACTOR

(Can be a different actor per line.)

Jesus has been with God from the beginning.

Jesus is God, but God is more than Jesus.

Jesus and God created everything.

Jesus is the life-giving light that will never go out.

Jesus became human, like me,

Jesus became human like me,

Jesus became human like me,

Jesus became human like me, and like you, and lived here on earth, with the rest of us humans.

Jesus is the light we live by.

(All sing "Jesus, the Light of the World.")

Guide to Bible Verses Used

Jesus's Family Tree

ISAIAH: Isaiah 11:1-3,6 ERV

RUTH: Ruth 1:16 ERV

GOLIATH: I Samuel 17:43 ERV

DAVID: I Samuel 17: 45 ERV, 17:46-7 NLT

ZECHARIAH: Luke 1:68-70,76 NLT

MARY: Luke 1:46-54 ERV

A Message, A Message

ANGEL 1: Luke 1:13-17, mix of NLT and ERV

ANGEL 1: Luke 1:19-20 ERV

ANGEL 2: Luke 1:30-33 ERV

ANGEL 2: Luke 1:35,37 ERV

MARY: Luke 1:38 NLT

ANGEL 3: Matthew 1:20-21 NLT

ANGEL 4: Luke 2:10-12 ERV (further simplified)

What Are You Waiting For?

ISAIAH: Isaiah 9:1-7 ERV/NLT

MARY: Luke 2:46-55 MSG

The Light to Live By

NARRATOR: John 1:1 NLT

NARRATOR: John 1:1 MSG

NARRATOR: John 1:1 ERV

NARRATOR: John 1:3-4 NLT

NARRATOR: John 1:4 MSG/ERV

NARRATOR: John 1:5 NLT

NARRATOR: John 1:14 MSG

NARRATOR: John 1:14 NLT

About the Author

N.A. Hart grew up in Toronto, Canada and Brisbane, Australia, and lived in three of the five boroughs of New York City, but wound up in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Family and cheap real estate drove her to it. She doesn't remember a time when she didn't love Jesus. Her parents still talk about how she read the entire *The Child's Story Bible*, by Catherine F. Vos (all 705 pages of it), when she was nine.

She has been Director of Children and Youth Ministries at two churches, and has been telling Bible stories to children and teenagers for over twenty years. The Old Testament is her favorite because it's full of real people who are mixed bags of failure and faithfulness, fear and trust—just like she is. Its only rival is the New Testament, which is full of real people who have wildly varying responses to Jesus coming into the world and changing everything—just like she does. She has two adult children. Her personal online home is at nataliehart.com, her publishing home is writtendeer.com, and she's on Facebook at www.facebook.com/nahartauthor.