

## **Pageant - For Little Current United Church – December 14, 2025**

**Paper Bag Nativity Pageant** - *by Rev. Micol Cottrell, minister at Grace United Church in Hanover.*

### **Songs:**

It came upon a midnight clear # 44 in Voices United.

Once in Royal David's City # 62.

Hymn #75: While shepherds watched their flocks by night.

Hymn # 69 - "Away in a Manger"

**Needed:** Large paper leaf bags with following costumes:

Mary (blue scarf to wrap around head)

Joseph (bathrobe, walking stick)

Angel #1, Angel #2, Angel #3 (or all three could be played by one angel)

Inn keeper (clipboard or book, tea towel to put over shoulder)

Shepherds (bathrobes, shepherd crooks)

3 Kings (crowns and gifts)

sheep (sheep ears)

star (a large star on a stick)

Donkey (a brown sweat shirt, long brown felt ears on headband)

It is helpful to have a note inside each bag saying what the character is.

**As well you will need** a manger, a small suitcase for Mary, and a baby Jesus (doll wrapped on a blanket).

**Other cast** – Narrator

Scripture reader

Adult helpers for the front (maybe 2 – one on each side)

**Signs:**

Nazareth,

Bethlehem,

"oh – ahh"

"applause"

We will also need people to hold the signs – though some could do double duty

(When we made the signs, we had them double sided – so the cities were on one side of each sign and the sounds on the other).

Welcome to our first paper bag pageant. The way we do it is pretty simple. On the steps are a lot of paper bags. They don't have my lunch in them - instead they contain character names and costumes. If you want to be in our pageant you simply choose a bag. You never know who you will be. The actors improvise the movements to the story I'm going to read... you make it up as you go along. It's like the show "Whose Line Is It Anyway?" Now, if you don't want to be in the pageant, you're not off the hook. The congregation gets to be the choir, the landscape and the villagers. I'll let you know what you have to do.

While we get ready we'll leave you with this commercial message brought to you by It Came Upon glass polish – nothing makes your glass midnight clear like It Came Upon Please join in singing

**It came upon a midnight clear # 44 in Voices United.**

I have heard that the actors are ready. Let's give them a warm welcome as we prepare to tell the wonderful story of Jesus' birth. (children and adults enter and take places at the front of the church on the pews).

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### **Narrator:**

In times past, whenever the people of God were oppressed, or troubled, or had gone astray, God would raise up for them a deliverer who would rescue them from oppression and restore their freedom as God's people. But at the time of our story, it had been many long years since such a deliverer had appeared, and the people were ruled by one foreign power after another and a long line of corrupt and cruel kings. But the people did not forget King David, the shepherd boy from Bethlehem who had gone on to become their greatest king.

(ohh-ahhh sign – lifted for congregation)

And so the people were looking for a messiah from the line of David, someone anointed by God as king, who would deliver them from all that was oppressing them and restore the kingdom of Israel.

(applause sign – lifted for congregation)

Now according to the Gospel of Luke, the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way:

*Scripture reader:*

**The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus."**

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Let us go to Nazareth. [Sign: Nazareth] Here we are! (child – or adult – holding the sign Nazareth walks across front of church with Narrator following and then stays at the side, holding sign)

We find Mary doing some housework. Mary was sweeping and singing to herself. Oh, oh Mary, what's that... Here comes someone to visit you... look it's an angel. Mary looked up and saw the angel, jumped in surprise and said "Who are you?"

The angel looked at Mary, shook their hand and said, "Well hello... I'm an angel of God and I have an incredible offer just for you.... You've heard of God, the maker of such great things as the world.... Well God is with you and wants you to have a son and call him Jesus." (The "ohh-ahh" sign is held up)

Mary looked at the angel and said "Sure"

Thank you Mary and Angel, have a seat. (applause sign)

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The Gospel of Matthew tells the story a little bit differently:

*Scripture reader:*

**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."**

Down the street from Mary we find Joseph (come on out Joseph) hard at work. He is a carpenter. There he is now, hammering away making something wonderful. What are you making Joseph? Joseph picks up a piece of wood, hammers in some nails... then picks up another piece of wood, hammer some more nails in... well look at that, he's made a baby crib ... Hey Joseph, you may just want to hold onto that. While he was at work some of the villagers (that's you audience) came up to him and said "Hey Joseph, Mary's pregnant!" (congregation repeats "Hey Joseph, Mary's pregnant!") Joseph is shocked. He hits his hand with the hammer. Oh, Joseph that's got to hurt. Joseph, you look tired. Are you tired? Maybe you should lay down and have a nap.

Joseph lays down and falls asleep. Listen, you can hear him snore. Joseph is dreaming. Let's take a look at what he is dreaming about.

He's dreaming that he's sleeping... But look who's coming, it's an angel (ohh-ahh sign) Joseph jumps up and says "Who are you!!! Angel asks "Are you Joseph?" Joseph looks at the angel puzzled and answers, "yes." Angel responds, "Joseph, I've got an offer you can't refuse. You know God?... Well God thinks you're one great fella. . . Don't get mad at Mary, that's God's baby. . . Things are going to be a-ok!. . . God's going to take care of you. . . Don't be afraid.... God is in control!"

(applause)

Thank you Angel #2, I think that Joseph will sleep better tonight. Have a seat you two.

Joseph slept better after that. He married Mary and they were getting all ready for the new baby. But, before long something else happened that interrupted their lives.

The Gospel of Luke says,

*Scripture reader:*

**In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 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.**

We'll watch Mary and Joseph again.

Mary and Joseph are getting ready for the trip to Bethlehem. Mary is packing a few last things, as Joseph brings their Donkey to the door. Come on up donkey, it's your turn. Hello Donkey, how are things going?

\_\_\_\_\_ Are you ready for the long hike to Bethlehem? \_\_\_\_\_

Mary, do you have everything? \_\_\_\_\_ Great. Mary puts the bags on Donkey's back and Mary, Joseph and the Donkey head out on their long walk. Up the Aisle you go. It was a long walk. They walk through the whistling wheat (prompt congregation to make whistling sounds)... past the flowing rivers (congregation: river sounds).... through the wind storms (congregation: wind sounds). Finally Mary and Joseph make their way into Bethlehem (sign holder of "Bethlehem" stands up) They look all around them at this busy city. Joseph, did you by chance make a reservation for tonight? \_\_\_\_\_ No! well, you better start asking people if you can stay with them? Joseph and Mary walk around asking the villagers - that's you congregation - if they can stay with them. All the villagers shake their heads and say "Nope, there is no room here". Mary and Joseph, how are you feeling? \_\_\_\_\_

They walk to the last Inn (at the front here) and see The Inn Keeper. Come on out Inn Keeper. They ask him/her if he/she has a room for them. The Inn Keeper shakes his/her head and says "Nope No Rooms. . . Don't you know that all the rooms are gone in Bethlehem?. . . But you can stay in the barn . . ."

So Mary and Joseph and the Donkey went to the barn. Mary had her baby – show us the Baby Mary (ohhh-ahhh) and they laid him in a manger. (applause)

Thank you Mary and Joseph. Now a commercial from our sponsor Royal David's City Tourism Council. Spend a day, spend a lifetime in Royal David's City!!!. Please join as we sing, **Once in Royal David's City # 64.**

The Gospel of Luke continues the story by telling us:

*Scripture reader:*

**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 Saviour, 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 a peace among those whom he favours!" 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.**

Well, what a day Mary and Joseph have had. Things are calming down for the happy couple so let's leave them alone so they can rest a bit. Across town, on a lonely hill shepherds were taking care of their sheep. The sheep run around and the shepherds bring them back together. The sheep just baa and baa and baa. The sheep slowly fall asleep. Then the Shepherds fall asleep. Some of them snore.

As they sleep an angel appears. Come on out angel. The angel nudges the shepherds and wakes them up. The shepherds jump up in fright. The angel says to them "Do not be afraid. . . I'm here to tell you some good news. . . A baby is born who is the Messiah. . . You will find the child wrapped in bands of cloth. . . and lying in a manger. . ." Then in the sky a lot of angels, a whole multitude of angels appeared flapping their wings - That is you congregation ... flap your wings. And then, as fast as they appeared, the angels disappear. The Shepherds look at each other, look at their sheep and hurry off to find the baby. They ask the town people if they have seen a baby wrapped in cloth and lying in a manger. The Townspeople (that's you congregation) shrug their shoulders and shake their heads. The shepherds run towards a barn and find Joseph, Mary, and their Donkey (all return to the front). In front of them is a baby wrapped in Cloth.

### **Hymn #75: While shepherds watched their flocks by night.**

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Now according to the Gospel of Matthew,

*Scripture reader*

**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.**

There were three wise people from the east, who were star gazers (look up in the sky kings). One day as they are looking in the sky, a star appeared. Star, where are you? Come on out! The wise men picked up their lamps, and three gift baskets and began their journey, following the star. They walked past a field of wheat (congregation waves hands like wheat), by a flowing river (congregation makes water sounds) and through a blowing desert (congregation makes wind sounds). The star leads them to Bethlehem (hold up the sign). They ask the town's people if they have seen a baby. The townspeople say no. They finally see a barn with a lot of people in it. The barn is filled with Mary, Joseph, Donkey, the shepherd and the sheep. The three wise people approach and give the baby gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh.

Well, that's the story. But wait, there's more! The shepherds and kings went forth into the town to tell everyone what they have seen and heard, and the townspeople and the guests at the inn come to see for themselves what has been going on.

[Sign: Applause]

And Mary and Joseph pondered all these things in their hearts.

**Children Sing: "Away in a Manger"**

