Abiding in the Fields

By Gregory Banks

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THE STORY

The angels who announced the coming of the Messiah proclaimed it first to some simple shepherds abiding in the fields. Here is a very special Christmas play that reminds us that sometimes the church must reach out to those in the streets around us.

Bo Miles, a new Christian with a worldly past, is anxious to help with the church's outdoor nativity. The other members who feel too busy to help are glad to let Bo handle the job - until his disreputable street friends create problems. But Bo shows the members the true mission of the church is to reach out to everyone, and at the end, the local bag lady turns into the best angel a modern day nativity ever had.

Other Eldridge plays by Gregory Banks include:
"To See Christ at Christmas"
"Miracle at Christmas Camp"
"A Christmas Apart"
and "Why My Child?"

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 m, 8 w, 5 children)

BUCK PORTER: Pastor of the Christian Friendship Church.
PATRICIA PORTER: Pastor's wife, church treasurer.
PAULA PORTER: Oldest daughter, sweet on Bo, about 17.
BELINDA PORTER: Their younger daughter, about 15.
TIM BROWNE: Youth Pastor at church.
TARA BROWNE: Tim's wife.
TIMMY BROWNE: Their young son, about 9.
WINNIE BROWNE: Their young daughter, about 6.
BO MILES: Zealous new Christian with a worldly past, about 20.
MARTHA RYKER: Secretary and custodian at the church.
JOSH RYKER: Teenage son of Martha.
STEVIE RYKER: Younger son of Martha, about 8.
JANIE MILES: Bo's bitter and lonely sister-in-law. Her husband, Bo's brother, recently died in a drunk driving accident.
MAXIE MISNER: A homeless bag lady.
BILLY*(Swipes)* **AARON:** Restless little boy who steals to prove independence, about 12.
PENNY AARON: Billy's aggravating tag along sister, about 10.
ERICA AARON: Billy and Penny's alcoholic mother.
DAVID WARDLOW: Old friend of Bo's, a local drug dealer.

*(*The roles of the children, TIMMY, WINNIE, STEVIE, BILLY, and PENNY, are interchangeable and can be played by boys or girls.)*

PLAYING TIME

Runs 45 minutes.

SYNOPSIS

Scene 1: A Sunday morning in early December in the church sanctuary.
Scene 2: One evening several days later at the manger on the church lawn.
Scene 3: The next evening at the manger.

SETTING

Scene 1 is set at the back of the Christian Friendship Church sanctuary. This can be staged very simply with several rows of folding chairs facing upstage. A pulpit might also be UPS. All the action will take place DS, in front of the seating.

Scenes 2 and 3 are set in a manger scene constructed CS. Part of the church wall can be seen UPS and SL where there is also a door into the church. SR may be a tree or shrubbery leading to the church parking lot. In the manger scene there should be two stalls in the back for animals, hay or straw strewn about, and two bales of hay stacked behind one another. Crib should be in the middle of the scene.

COSTUMES

In Scene 1 everyone is dressed for Sunday church service with Pastor in his robes. In Scenes 2 and 3 everyone is dressed warmly and the youth in the nativity have on Biblical or animal costumes over their clothes. Maxie is dressed in rags which don't keep her warm, while Erica is dressed somewhat sloppily. David wears dark clothes and perhaps a leather jacket.

PROPS

Purse containing a small notebook for Patricia; straw for Bo to scatter; blanket, doll and tissue for Janie; two cups of cocoa for Patricia; assorted bags for Maxie; purse holding $10 bill and other items for Tara; empty beer can for David.

SCENE 1

(AT RISE: The PORTERS, the BROWNES, the RYKERS and BO MILES are meeting after Sunday morning church service.)

PASTOR: I appreciate each of you staying for a few minutes after our service this morning. I'd like for us to conduct a manger scene again this year. We had a lot of positive feedback in the community last year, and I think it would be a good experience for our youth and young adults again this year. Well, what do you think about it?

BO: I'd like to be in it, if I could, Pastor. I came by and looked at it last year, before I got saved. It made a big impression on me. When people stand out there *(Points toward front of church.)* in the cold and tell about the birth of Jesus… *(Touchingly.)* Well, an effort like that is why I came here. I have a lot of friends I could get to come and see it.

PASTOR: Good, Bo, there's one we can count on. How about the rest of you? Tim, I was hoping you might take charge of it.

TIM: Well, Buck, we've kinda *(Slowly.)* got a lot going on. We're trying to put on a Christmas play and even do some caroling this year. We, the youth group, sort of decided that we might pass on a manger scene because there are so many other things going on.

PATRICIA: Buck, dear, are you sure a manger scene is worth all the time and effort? It's pretty difficult for everyone to spend four hours out there in the cold every evening. I'm not necessarily saying you shouldn't have one this year, just simply listen to what everyone has to say about it, with an open mind. *(Added emphasis on the last line.)* May I even suggest having it for just a couple of days instead of a couple of weeks.

TARA: Tim and I haven't done any of our Christmas shopping yet. We've already tied up three nights a week with church and play practice. I don't want to seem

End of Freeview

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