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PAGEANTS OF PRAISE

by Roy Speckhard

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
THE CHRISTMAS STORY.....	9
THE PAGEANTS:	
1. A VISION OF LOVE.....	13
2. THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS.....	23
3. LO, I STAND AT THE DOOR.....	28
4. WHITER THAN SNOW.....	35

DEDICATION

TO THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS
AND CHILDREN
OF
OUR SAVIOR'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
COLONIE, NEW YORK

INTRODUCTION

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

The presentation of the annual Christmas pageant is a solidly entrenched tradition within most Christian churches, Sunday schools and day schools. Children, and particularly their parents, eagerly look forward to this very special event. Unfortunately, in many instances this annual nativity celebration is more a showcase for amateur talent than a truly spiritual experience.

This compendium is based upon three fundamental assumptions: 1) that the Christmas pageant offers a unique opportunity for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, 2) that the pageant as a dramatic reenactment of the Christmas story offers a particularly powerful way to spiritually involve everyone concerned in a true celebration of the birth of the Savior, and 3) that most directors of Christmas pageants – “Who’s turn is it this year?” – earnestly desire to make the pageant as spiritually powerful as possible.

CELEBRATING THE MYSTERY OF THE WORD MADE FLESH

How many times have Christians looked at the world at Christmas time and sadly bemoaned how “secular” our Christmases have become? How often have we cried out to “put Christ back into Christmas”? How deeply we yearn to see our Lord and Savior assume his rightful “starring role” in all our Christmas celebrations!

But to truly put Christ back into Christmas means, first and foremost, to put the Gospel of Jesus Christ back into Christmas and to surround it with the praise, worship and honor rightfully due our Almighty God. For Jesus, as the Scriptures plainly tell us, is the Word, the Way, the Truth and the Life for all mankind. Any celebration of Christmas that lacks the Gospel as its living cornerstone will fail to show the way, or bring the truth, or give life to a darkened and lost world – in short, will never succeed in putting Christ back into Christmas.

Regardless of how many joyous remembrances of angels on high, or shepherds watching their sheep, or mangers, or wise men, or guiding stars, or “silent nights” we might share with one another, they represent dead and meaningless activities unless they point plainly and directly to the greatest fact of history: that Jesus, born of a virgin, was sent by the Father – because the Father so loved the world – to be born a man, to die on a cross, and be raised up again victoriously. And that whosoever accepts this “Babe of Bethlehem” as his or her personal savior shall not die but have eternal life.

This is the only celebration worthy of Christmas. But it is often hopelessly lost amid rhyming jingles, colorful and clever pageantry, and the overriding determination that each and every child in the pageant have the opportunity to “shine” for the proud and adoring

parents and relatives filling the pews.

But there is only one who should “shine” at Christmas and that, of course, is Jesus. For Christmas time is a time for remembering, retelling, celebrating and holding forth the glorious solution to the mystery of the ages – the mystery of the Word made flesh in the birth of a child, in the giving of a Son, and in His proclamation that the Kingdom of God has come to dwell among us.

“But thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, though you are small among the clans of Judah,
yet out of you will come one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from old, from ancient times.”

We truly celebrate Christmas only when men and women are confronted by the eternal Gospel of Jesus Christ; and when, through the power of the Holy Spirit, they are led personally to the revelation of the mystery of the Word made flesh. Anything less than that only strengthens the grip of “X-mas” in a world that already has too many Xs against it.

THE CHRISTMAS PAGEANT AS AN OFTEN LOST OPPORTUNITY FOR PREACHING THE GOSPEL

If the annual Christmas pageant primarily elicits responses of “Aren’t they cute,” rather than “Thank you, Jesus,” then it has essentially failed; and a great opportunity to bring the healing ministry of the Gospel to sinful man has been lost.

If the annual Christmas pageant is approached simply as a “kiddie show,” rather than as the revelation of the mystery of the ages, then it would be better if it were not presented at all. How easily Satan can use such occasions to further harden the hearts of unbelievers or to weaken the faith of believers. Simply put, if the “kiddie show” isn’t preaching the Gospel, then it is hardening hearts or, at the very least, demeaning the great miracle of Christmas.

Rather, the children’s pageant presents us with an ideal and unique opportunity for worship, for preaching and teaching, and for assisting the Church in carrying forward its Great Commission. It should receive the same care and reverence accorded other celebrations within the Church.

THE PAGEANT AS RELIGIOUS DRAMA

The form of the pageant is dramatic. It tells a story in an immediate and visual manner, inviting its audience not only to “stop, look and listen,” but also to spiritually enter into the great action that is being portrayed. It is both an historical drama – the reenactment of the birth of God in human form – and a spiritual drama that grapples with the events and

basic needs of our daily lives.

In preparing to produce a pageant, it is extremely helpful to remember its several audiences. First and foremost, the pageant is presented before the Lord himself in a form of praise and worship: a living sacrifice of our time and talents gratefully offered to the Lord and Savior. Every aspect of the pageant must be presented in a spirit of joyful reverence and thanksgiving. Hence, it must be our best gift. “Good enough” is simply not good enough.

There is, of course, an important secondary audience. This is the congregation, its ranks often swelled by numerous unsaved family members and friends who have come primarily to see “the kids” in action; or perhaps simply because “what would Christmas be without a children’s pageant.” Here is a field ripe for the seeds of the Gospel according to our Lord’s promise that, if we will but faithfully spread the Gospel seeds, they will accomplish the purpose for which they have been sent forth. Hence, in addition to praise and worship, the pageant reaches out as a powerful tool of evangelism to the unsaved and the weak in faith, and acts as an uplifter and encourager of all the saints.

Finally, an audience often overlooked is the pageant participants themselves, the children and adults who gather together to say the lines and sing the songs that worship and preach. Their spirits and faith too can be strengthened and uplifted through the drama of the Christmas story as they enter, in a direct manner, into the ageless mystery and joy of Christmas. One of the primary responsibilities of the pageant director is to keep in mind that rehearsals are not just “work sessions” and the presentation not simply “show time,” but opportunities for ministry to the lives of each and every participant.

In short, the audience for a pageant is everyone involved with it – the Lord, the congregation and the participants. There is not “us” and “them” but a continuous flow of Gospel ministry from participants to congregation, and together, to the Lord. Everyone is both audience and participant. Through praise and worship the presence of the Holy Spirit fills every aspect of the service. Everything flows together to the glory of God.

CONCERNING THE FOLLOWING SCRIPTS

The following scripts, which have been used and tested in an actual pageant presentation, are offered to the church with the prayer that some may find them useful additions to their Christmas celebrations. Each lasts approximately one hour.

The scripts themselves seek to reflect the threefold ministry opportunities of the pageant drama. Each is represented in three “acts” or sections. The initial section begins with familiar secular objects and events in order to place the Christmas story firmly where it belongs, within the common circumstances and concerns of everyday life. Quickly, however, the drama moves from the secular to the spiritual, to the fact that the message

of Christmas is about the great love and sacrifice of God, rather than about man.

The introductory section is then followed by the second “act.” This is the visual reenactment of the original events of Christmas as recorded in the Scriptures, when the word is made flesh and comes to dwell among us in a lowly stable in Bethlehem, pointing the soul of men toward the great, eternal and blessed mystery of the Gospel.

Finally, with our eyes firmly focused on Jesus, the third section of each script presents the Gospel call to repentance and salvation. It reminds us of the great mystery of God’s love and his coming return to earth as victorious King, and it urges us to carry the Christmas message within our hearts, not only at Christmas, but throughout the year.

The focus throughout all scripts, even though they differ in particulars, remains trained on a constant theme – the changeless love of God in a ever-changing and darkened world.

Each script includes an extended prologue that sets the “spiritual scene” and introduces the dominant overall theme. Each script reflects an entire service, including a suggestive responsive reading, a place for a message from the pastor and an offering, all interspersed with suggested songs that can be sung by a choir, a group of children, the congregation as a whole, or not at all. As an aid to pageant directors, there are also a number of technical and directorial references included at the conclusion of each script.

Each script offers active roles (speaking and non-speaking) for around 40-50 participants. Since there are normally many more children available than can be used actively in the scripts, it is important to include sufficient additional pageant-related activities to meaningfully involve every child. Additional opportunities for participation exist in a variety of ways, such as songs organized by age groups, special large group activities in which each child can participate (for example, signing of name to a banner prominently displayed throughout the service) and frequent vocal interaction with active pageant participants. It is vital that no child feel excluded from a personal involvement in the service as a whole. Directors are urged to devise creative ways for such general involvement wherever possible.

The Narrator has the most critical role in each script. It is one of only four roles that is most effectively performed by an adult (the Three Kings in the Christmas Story portion are the other three). The Narrator has, by far, the greatest number of lines, is constantly on the move and bears the primary responsibility of involving all of the children through constant vocal and physical interaction. He/she is, in fact, the “master of ceremonies” for the action part of each script.

As for costumes, sets and props used in the pageant, they can be as elaborate or as simple as desired. The few objects essential to the scripts are identified and discussed in

the scripts themselves or in the "Directorial and Technical Comments" section which follows each script. Throughout, of course, directors should feel free to edit and adapt the scripts in accordance with individual congregational tastes, needs and circumstances. Finally, since the same actual Christmas story (based upon the record of the Scriptures) is included in each of the scripts, it has been printed only once (see pages 8 - 11) and should be inserted where indicated within the script.

ORGANIZING THE PRODUCTION

While individual circumstances will vary, pageant directors should plan on a four to five week production period. Experience has shown that all of these activities can probably be most comfortably carried out using the four or five Sunday afternoons or evenings prior to the final presentation. Directors themselves, of course, will have had to have done their general overall planning prior to the start of this period.

PRELIMINARY ACTIVITIES: (Prior to Production Period.)

- Become very familiar with the script.
- Plot out general patterns of movement and staging.
- Appoint at least one, preferably two, assistant directors to help with costumes, props, decorations, etc. and assist with the supervision and direction of the children during rehearsals and final presentation.

CASTING: (One or two weeks.) Be sure to secure a firm commitment from the children **AND THEIR PARENTS** to attend all rehearsals. For smaller groups, many of the speaking parts can be "doubled up."

REHEARSALS: (Three weeks, 2-3 hours each.) All rehearsals should begin and end with prayer. Constant efforts should be made to remind all pageant participants of the spiritual nature of their activity.

REHEARSAL #1:

- Carefully explain all aspects of the script to the participants, especially its spiritual purposes.
- Read through entire script twice and set basic speaking and movement patterns.
- Become familiar with all props and set objects.

REHEARSAL #2:

- Lines memorized! Fitting of costumes.
- Two careful "run throughs," omitting the songs. (To save much time and confusion group songs should, if at all possible, be learned and practiced elsewhere, for example, during normal Sunday School classes.)

REHEARSAL #3: Final uninterrupted dress rehearsal, including all of the songs.

FINAL PRESENTATION

We extend to you our very best wishes and our prayers for a spiritually enriching and exciting Christmas pageant. In the final analysis, whether or not these scripts are ever used is of little consequence. What matters, and it matters a great deal, is that Jesus be lifted up before man in everything the Church does. That, and that alone, is our prayer for the Christmas pageant – that it become, in every instance, a true Pageant of Praise to the Lord.

THE CHRISTMAS STORY

Based upon the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke.

(The following is the Christmas Story portion for the scripts which follow it. It constitutes the second section of each pageant script and should be inserted where indicated.)

NARRATOR #2: Come, let us go to Bethlehem and witness the holy birth of our Lord and Savior. For it is here that the almighty hand of God moved, and an angel of the Heavenly Host, the majestic Gabriel, came to earth to declare the intentions the Lord to a maiden named Mary.

GABRIEL: Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.

NARRATOR #2: Mary was troubled at the words of the angel and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her:

GABRIEL: Do not be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord will give him the throne of his father, David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. His Kingdom will never end.

(GABRIEL departs.)

NARRATOR #2: And it came to pass in those days that Caesar Augustus, the Roman emperor, issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. Everyone had to go to the town of their birth in order to register.

(JOSEPH enters and takes his place beside MARY.)

NARRATOR #2: So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in the province of Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea in the town of David, because he was of the house and lineage of David. He went there to register with Mary, to whom he was pledged to be married, and who was expecting a child. This had bothered Joseph greatly, but an angel had appeared to him also, saying, "Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus."

And Joseph believed the heavenly messenger sent by God. And while they were there in Bethlehem, the time came for the baby to be born and Mary gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

**SONGS: "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"
"Oh Little Town of Bethlehem"**

(During the singing of the final song, a small band of SHEPHERDS appears and stands around an imaginary fire.)

NARRATOR #2: And there were shepherds living in the fields nearby keeping watch over their flocks by night. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared to them (*GABRIEL enters.*) and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were very afraid. But the angel said to them:

GABRIEL: Do not be afraid. For today I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today, in the city of David, a Savior has been born to you. You will find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

NARRATOR #2: And suddenly a great company of heavenly host appeared with the angel praising God and saying:

GABRIEL: Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, good will to men!

SONG: "Angels We Have Heard on High"

PROCESSION OF THE ANGELS

NARRATOR #2: When the angels had left them and gone back into Heaven, the shepherds said one to another:

Shepherd #1: Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass and which the Lord has now made known to us.

(As the NARRATOR speaks, the SHEPHERDS make a brief "journey," ending up at the manger. After interacting briefly and silently with MARY and JOSEPH, and peering worshipfully into the manger, they kneel around the manger where they remain for the remainder of the service.)

NARRATOR #2: So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby who was lying asleep in the manger. When they had seen Him, and after they had worshipped Him, they spread the word concerning what they had heard and seen, and all who heard them were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

SONG: "Away in a Manger"

NARRATOR #2: After Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and during the time of King Herod, some kings from the East traveled to Jerusalem in search of Him.

KING #1: *(From the rear of the sanctuary.)* Where is the baby who has been born King of the Jews?

KING #2: *(Also from the rear.)* We have seen His star when it came up in the East.

KING #3: *(Also from the rear.)* And we have come to worship Him.

NARRATOR #2: When King Herod heard this, he was greatly disturbed and all Jerusalem with him. He called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law and asked them where the Christ was to be born. "In Bethlehem of Judea," they replied, for this is what the prophet had written.

Then Herod sent the three Kings to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and make a careful search for the child, and as soon as you find him, come and report it to me, so that I, too, may worship him."

After they had met with King Herod, the three Kings went on their way, and the star they had seen in the East went before them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed, and upon arriving at the house, they saw the Baby Jesus with His mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened up their treasures and presented the baby with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

SONG: "We Three Kings"

PROCESSION OF THE THREE KINGS

NARRATOR #2: The three Kings remained with the child for a time and then, after having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their homes another way.

(The THREE KINGS exit back up the center aisle, joining together in the refrain of the song as they leave.)

NARRATOR #2: And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him.

DIRECTORIAL and TECHNICAL NOTES

Ideally, Narrator #2 should be a different person from Narrator #1. This is an excellent role for a teenager. While Narrator #1 must move around quite a bit, Narrator #2 can very effectively deliver his/her lines from the pulpit or lectern while the action is taking place in or directly in front of the chancel. A manger with a bench behind it sits in the middle of the chancel.

While Narrator #2 is speaking, Mary enters the chancel area and sits on the bench behind the manger. Gabriel also appears, standing behind and slightly above Mary.

Whether or not a physical representation of the Baby Jesus, for example, a doll wrapped in an old blanket, is used is immaterial. It is suggested, however, that Mary go through the motions of placing the Babe into the manger around which she and Joseph huddle adoringly.

THE PROCESSION OF THE ANGELS: At this point, the sanctuary lights dim and, as the song is being sung or played, a band of 12-20 angels carrying candles (battery powered candles are recommended) come slowly down the church aisles toward the chancel, where they arrange themselves around the manger and remain for the rest of the service.

THE PROCESSION OF THE THREE KINGS: The refrain of the song is sung by the three kings as they come forward down the center aisle toward the chancel. They approach the manger and each of the kings sings the verse appropriate to the gift he is bringing as he kneels and presents the gift to the Baby Jesus. Finally, all three kings are kneeling before the manger.

THE PAGEANTS

1. A VISION OF LOVE

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

Proverbs 29:18

Perhaps the greatest message at Christmas is that God loves us so much that the Father sent the Son to earth to be born as a human child in order to begin His wondrous plan of redemption. But unless we have the spiritual “eyes” that can see this wondrous event for what it is, the true meaning of Christmas is completely lost.

The following pageant is based upon the idea of our need to develop a proper Christmas “vision,” so that we might clearly “see” God’s great love for us, as that love is reflected in the Babe of Bethlehem. It is not only a vision of true Christmas joy and peace, but also a vision of eternal light without which the people surely perish.

The Christian vision of love is contrasted throughout with the world’s vision, a vision so dim and so blurred and false that it requires fundamental correction by the “optommytwists” who, with their special SONGlasses, restore a clear vision of God’s everlasting Christmas love. Only then can we lay hold of the true Christmas vision and, having laid hold of it, pass it on to a world in darkness.

ORGAN PRELUDE

OPENING ANTHEM: “Amazing Grace”

(Played on the bagpipe.)

OPENING HYMN: “Amazing Grace”

(“I was blind, but now I see”)

PROCESSIONAL: “Hark, The Herald Angels Sing”

RESPONSIVE READER: The Angels proclaim the birth of Jesus and the amazing grace of a loving God poured out to sinful man. Tonight we celebrate this amazing love as we behold the great vision of Jesus at Christmas. Would you stand/remain standing and join me in proclaiming this beautiful vision through the words of the Psalmist as found in the responsive reading on page one of your bulletin.

READER: The Lord is my Shepherd;

CONGREGATION: I shall not want.

READER: He maketh me lie down in green pastures;

CONGREGATION: He leadeth me beside the still waters and restoreth my soul.

READER: He guideth me in the paths of righteousness;

CONGREGATION: For his name's sake.

READER: Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death;

CONGREGATION: I will fear no evil for Thou art with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

READER: You prepare a table before me, in the presence of my enemies.

CONGREGATION: You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

READER: Surely goodness and love will follow me;

CONGREGATION: All the days of my life.

ALL: And I shall dwell in the House of the Lord forever.

READER: Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING: The Scriptures chosen for today to move us in joyous celebration of Christmas are:

#1: Matthew 6:22-23: "The lamp of the body is the eye. If, therefore your eyes are clear, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness."

#2: John 14:21: "He who loves me will be loved by the Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."

#3: Proverbs 29:18: "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

HYMN (Congregation): "The Heavenly Vision"
("Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus")

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

CHRISTMAS PRAYER
(Three young CHILDREN step forward.)

ALL: Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise him all creatures here below.

CHILD #1: Come Father God of grace and love,
Down from your mighty throne above.
Be with us now, this Holy Night,
With your great love, so shining bright,
From which all blessings flow.

CHILD #2: Come Jesus, Savior, Lord and King
Live through us that we might sing,
Sing of the peace and joy and love,
That you bring down from Heaven above,
To your creatures here below.

CHILD #3: Come Spirit of Truth, Blessed Dove,
Give us a vision of God's great love.
Let us see his will be done,
and our great salvation come,
Through the Father's Holy Son.

ALL: Praise him above, ye Heavenly Host,
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

SONG (Choir): "Be Thou My Vision"

(NOTE: Each of the children has brought with them a "Letter to God" which he/she has previously composed. The letter reads "Dear God, I want to see Jesus" and has been signed by the child.)

(NARRATOR #1 comes forward wearing sunglasses. He is having difficulty finding his way around. A child comes to him.)

CHILD #1: Here, you better use these. *(Hands HIM a pair of clear glasses.)*

NARRATOR #1: *(Puts on glasses.)* Oh, THERE you are. For a minute I couldn't see you. Everything was so dark. *(To CHILD.)* Thank you. I could have ended up in the Christmas tree. ... What a blessing glasses are, and especially the right kind of glasses. Can anyone tell me why we need glasses?

CHILD #2: They help us see better. They help us to read.

CHILD #3: They keep us from walking into Christmas trees.

NARRATOR: You've got a very good point there. The fact is that many people can't get along without glasses. They help us to find our way. They let us see things clearly and they help us to avoid danger, unless, of course, we're like the near-sighted Mr. Magoo who never seems to get into trouble. ... What a fuzzy world it would be if we didn't have glasses. But there are also a lot of other things that help us see better. Like what, for instance?

CHILD #1: Like microscopes that help us see tiny things.

CHILD #2: And binoculars and telescopes for seeing far away.

CHILD #3: And mirrors for seeing ourselves.

NARRATOR: All of these things are gifts from God, aren't they, to help us improve our vision. But that is just our physical vision. What about our spiritual vision? If our physical vision is poor, we can get into a lot of trouble, can't we? But if our spiritual vision is poor, we can get into even more trouble, not only here on earth but for all eternity.

Speaking of vision, wasn't that a beautiful song the choir sang for us. It is called, "Be Thou My Vision," and it is a beautiful prayer that, in all we do, our eyes may be totally focused on the Lord – a vision within us and a vision before us as we walk through life.

"Be THOU my vision, O Lord of my heart."

The world is full of visions. Visions of happiness. Visions of power. Visions of glory and visions of love. People want and need visions. Leaders present them. Artists create them and songwriters write about them. Take, for example, the secular song entitled "Vision of Love" – I'm sure many of you have heard it. It was sung by a woman who has a vision of a perfect love in her life that has come to rescue her. Listen to some of the lines.

"(You) carried me through desperation: I suffered from alienation – carried the weight on my own."

"I'm so thankful that I could see the answer that Heaven sent down to me."

"I'll be eternally grateful. Heaven is so close to me.

"I had a vision of love and it was all that you have given to me."

Beautiful words, and as you listen to the song for the first time, you almost feel that the singer may be singing about the true vision of Heaven come down to take away sorrow and suffering and bring true love into human hearts. But alas, the vision in the song is simply a man, and we are left with a deep disappointment because we know that no man, no human being, can even begin to compare with God's great vision of love, which is Jesus.

What a difference between “Be Thou My Vision” and “Vision of Love.” Two songs yearning for the same thing, the one bringing life and the other leading nowhere. If the Lord is my vision, I will live eternally. If man is my vision, then there is no true vision at all and, as the Scripture says, without such a vision, the people will perish.

The Bible tells us that buried within each man and woman is an image, a dim vision of their creator, a blurred vision that tells us all that there is a God and that he is a God of Love; although it tells us nothing at all about who God really is or about Jesus. And so the soul of natural man is trapped with this vision and a deep yearning to be able to see it more clearly. As in the song “Vision of Love” it is a faint and blurred vision of hope, but not a vision of Life. There is only one true vision of LIFE.

CHILD #1: *(Standing in place.)* Be THOU my vision, Jesus,
Let none other take your place.

CHILD #2: *(Standing in place.)* Be THOU my vision, Jesus,
Let me see thy shining face.

CHILD #3: *(Standing in place.)* Be THOU my vision, Jesus,
Clear and bright and true.

CHILD #1: *(Standing in place.)* Be THOU my vision, Jesus,
Let my eyes see only you.

NARRATOR: Millions of people with no vision at all, lost in perpetual sadness and despair. Millions of more people with a false vision, lost in a counterfeit happiness held together by sentimentality and self-deception. And millions of people who call themselves Christians with a vision so small and so blurred, that rather than joy and peace, it is but a source of constant anxiety. *(Pause.)* Something obviously needs to be done! Any ideas?

CHILD #1: *(Standing in place.)* We need a doctor.

CHILD #2: *(Standing in place.)* An eye doctor.

CHILD #3: *(Standing in place.)* An optommytwist.

NARRATOR: We sure do need one of those. And I think we have just the thing. Our Savior’s Vision Care Inc. where the motto is: “If it ain’t 20/20, we can help plenty. They sell vision aids of all shapes and sizes. Glasses for the eyes and glasses for the heart. Sun glasses to keep the light out and SONGlasses to let light in. *(Pause.)* Now all we need are some trained optommytwists.

(From one side comes a "HEY!" and from the other side comes a "YO!" and two CHILDREN come forward, dressed in white coats and carrying eye charts and other paraphernalia. They stop in front of the NARRATOR.)

BOTH: *(In unison.)* You called?

NARRATOR: Yes, I did. The world has a problem . Many Christians have a problem and it's called BAD VISION. We can't see God clearly enough. Often we can't see Jesus at all. Our vision is all blurred and distorted, and it's making us miserable. We have no vision of love, no Christmas vision at all. What can you do about that?

OPTO #1: Plenty, sir. You've come to the right place. Our Savior's Vision Care Inc. is on the job. *(Turning toward the OTHER.)* Doctor? Shall we proceed?

OPTO #2: Indeed, Doctor. But first we have to diagnose.

(The TWO turn toward the other CHILDREN and the congregation. They move about, looking at this and examining that, with plenty of "Ah's" and "Hmmm's." Six times, however, they let out a loud "Uh oh" and they point toward the front of the church. The children so identified go to the front where they stand quietly in a line. When their search is complete, the two OPTOS go back to the NARRATOR.)

OPTO #1: I think we've got it, sir.

OPTO #2: And I think we've found the right prescription for clearing up all this lousy vision.

OPTO #1: It's the SONGlasses, sir.

OPTO #2: They fit right over the heart. Vision clears up immediately.

OPTO #1: We'll show you how they work.

NARRATOR: Oh, please do. We need it so desperately tonight.

(The two OPTOS go to the front of the sanctuary and face the six CHILDREN standing there.)

OPTO #2: Ready, Doctor?

OPTO #1: Ready, Doctor.

OPTO #2: But first one last examination.

(The OPTOS begin to examine the six CHILDREN. As they do, the LIGHTS slowly dim to about a third brightness.)

OPTO #1: Hmmm. I see we're really going to need the SONglasses!

(OPTOS go quickly to the side aisle nearest to them and return with six pairs of SONglasses, large cardboard glasses with "SON – GLASSES" written boldly across the tops in luminous paint so that they can be clearly seen in the dimness.)

OPTO #2: Well, patients, how is your vision tonight?

THE PATIENTS: *(In unison.)* Our eyes are dim, we cannot see.

OPTO #1: But I have brought the specs with me!

OPTO #2: Just put them on and you will see.

(During the following sequence, ending with the singing of the song, "I Want to See Jesus," the LIGHTS slowly come back up to full brightness. Each of the "PATIENTS," in turn, comes forward to face the congregation.)

PATIENT #1: My eyes are dim. I cannot see. *(An OPTO comes forward and quickly fits on a pair of SONglasses.)* Yes! I can see! It is you, JESUS, the one prophesied to come out of Bethlehem, born of a virgin, to become ruler over all Israel.

PATIENT #2: *(To center.)* My eyes are dim. I cannot see. *(Is fitted with the SONglasses.)* My eyes are clear! Now I can see. JESUS ... you truly DID come so that we might have life and that we might have it abundantly.

PATIENT #3: *(To center.)* My eyes are dim. I cannot see. *(Is fitted with the SONglasses.)* I can SEE again! JESUS ... you WERE wounded for our sins and crucified for our iniquities.

PATIENT #4: *(To center.)* My eyes are dim. I cannot see. *(Is fitted with the SONglasses.)* I can see! It is clear! JESUS ... you ARE the one about whom the angel said, "He is not here. He has risen!"

PATIENT #5: *(To center.)* My eyes are dim. I cannot see. *(Is fitted with the SONglasses.)* My sight is restored! JESUS ... you HAVE ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God, the Father.

PATIENT #6: *(To center.)* My eyes are dim. I cannot see. *(Is fitted with the SONGlasses.)*
I once was blind, but now I see! JESUS ... you ARE the Way, the Truth and the Life.
You ARE the one who said, "I am coming again."

SONG (Solo/choir): "Do You See What I See?"

NARRATOR: Do we see what they see? Do we really see it? Or does our vision get all blurred and distorted by the cares and concerns of this world? So often there is a cloud of darkness that separates us from God so that the eyes of our hearts can not clearly see the great vision of God's love which he has prepared for us.

All we had to do was to look into the darkness through the SONGlasses, to look at things with God inspired and God directed eyes. Thank you, Lord, for that miracle of vision.

But there still seems to be some darkness left. There is still a little more to go. We want our vision to be crystal clear – 20/20 – nothing in the way – because I have a feeling that God wants to reveal wonderful things to us tonight, to give us the full vision of his mercy, grace and love. ... So, what shall we do?

CHILD #1: I know Let's sing a song. Jesus likes us to sing to him.

NARRATOR: A great idea.

SONG: "Open My Eyes, Lord, I Want to See Jesus"

(As the song is sung, the LIGHTS are restored to full brightness. At the conclusion of the song, the CHRISTMAS STORY begins immediately.)

INSERT "CHRISTMAS STORY" HERE

NARRATOR #2: And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. And from that wonderful beginning, only a few years later, this same Jesus will trudge alone down the road to a cross on Calvary and then, praise God, onward to his glorious resurrection, the final great act of God's overflowing love for you and for me.

This is the Vision of Love that confronts and comforts us here tonight, a vision of a God who so loves this world that he sent his only begotten Son into the world so that all who might believe in him SHALL NOT PERISH but have everlasting life. Jesus is the vision that brings LIFE.

What a glorious message this Christmas season as we celebrate the birth of God's own and only Son. No longer does our vision of love need to be blurred, or confused, or short-sighted. No longer does it need to be focused on an invisible God or a future not yet come. For Jesus, born in the flesh like you and me, is that great vision; for as he himself said, "If you have seen me, you have also seen the Father, for the Father and I are one." No longer do we have to try to find light in the darkness, or strain to see "out there" at an empty manger or an empty tomb – striving desperately for a vision of perfect love. For that vision has truly been born and is truly alive and now lives within each of us. And in everyone who believes in his name, ready, willing, and able to bring to us incredible gifts and blessings in a never-ending love that will stretch throughout eternity itself.

CHILD #1: Jesus, my glorious Vision of Love
Come down this Christmas from Heaven above
And into my heart.

CHILD #2: Jesus, my glorious Vision of Love
Send down your PEACE from Heaven above
And into my heart.

CHILD #3: Jesus, my glorious Vision of Love
Send down your JOY from Heaven above
And into my heart.

NARRATOR: Jesus, the Babe of Bethlehem, is the world's true Vision of Love. But it is a vision not only to be held dearly in the heart, but also to be passed on to others, to all men and women, boys and girls. For it is a vision which the whole world yearns to see. We set our eyes upon Jesus and then we pass the vision on to others.

The children here tonight have spent this Advent season sharpening their spiritual visions of God's great love. Each has written his or her own letter to God, simply saying, "Dear God, let me see Jesus." We will now collect these letters and place them before the manger with the prayer that each child will come to clearly see God's great Vision of Love and will boldly pass the vision on to others.

(As the letters are being collected and placed before the manger:)

SOLO: "Pass It On"

NARRATOR: Right now, Jesus stands knocking gently at the door of each and every heart here tonight. Open that door to him, and he will come in and reside there forever. You too will "see" and know the glorious peace and joy of God's wonderful Vision of Love – Jesus, Christ, Son of the Living God. For with that vision firmly planted in your hearts and ever before your eyes, you shall not perish but have LIFE, both now and in eternity.

CHILD #2: I pray that all of us, being rooted and grounded in love may have power together with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that we may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

SONG: "Silent Night"

BENEDICTION: Now may the Lord bless you and keep you. May his face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. May he lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

RECESSIONAL: "Joy to the World"

End of Pageant

2. THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

*“A new heart I will give you; and a new spirit I will put within you.”
Ezekial 36:26*

ORGAN PRELUDE

PROCESSIONAL: SONG: “O Come, Little Children”

YOUTH READER: Would you all stand and join with me in the responsive reading found in your bulletin.

READER: We gather to worship Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

CONGREGATION: Hear us as we worship, praise and adore you.

READER: For unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given.

CONGREGATION: O come let us worship Him.

READER: As the Lord Jesus once came in love and great poverty to be born a child in Bethlehem.

CONGREGATION: So now He comes to us in the richness of His Word.

READER: As Jesus once came from Heaven to live with people in love,

CONGREGATION: So now He comes in the Word to give the light of the spirit.

READER: As He came to heal, to forgive and to save,

CONGREGATION: So now He comes to rescue, to relieve and to love.

READER: As He came to serve people in the depths of their need,

CONGREGATION: Help us, O Lord, to give our life in love to the world.

READER: O Jesus, give yourself to us again this year, this night, by the power of your Holy Spirit.

CONGREGATION: Grant us faith, joy and the willingness and power to bring your Gift of love to others.

ALL: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and uphold me with a willing spirit. Amen.

(CONGREGATION is seated.)

SCRIPTURE READER #1: The Scriptures chosen to move us in happy celebration of Christmas are Ezekial 36:26 and 2nd Corinthians 1:22.

“A new heart I will give you; and a new spirit I will put within you.”

SCRIPTURE READER #2: “He has put his seal upon us and given His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”

SONG: “God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen”

THE PASTOR’S MESSAGE

THE OFFERTORY

CHILD #1: Let us worship the Lord. Let us give thanks unto our God.

CHILD #2: We thank you, Father, for Jesus. We thank you for His love.

CHILD #3: We thank you, Jesus, that you came down from your throne above, to be our Lord and Savior and our God and King.

CHILD #4: And we thank you, Holy Spirit, for making our hearts sing.

SONG: “Do You Hear What I Hear?”

LITTLE CHILD: I’m here to say a little prayer
To our dear God above.
I pray this evening’s program,
Will bring your peace and love.
They said I might be much too small,
But I think I have surprised them all.
For I remembered what to say,
But that’s what happens when you pray.

NARRATOR: “Morley was dead to begin with ...” Thus begins the famous “Christmas Carol” of Charles Dickens – the story of the world’s grumpiest grump, Scrooge, who approached his Christmas with nothing more than a heartfelt, “BAH! HUMBUG!”

But we all know from the rest of the story, something happened to Scrooge on the way toward Christmas that changed not only his own life, but the lives of those around him. Scrooge came face-to-face with the Spirits of Christmas – the Spirit of Christmas Present, and the Spirit of Christmas Past, and the Spirit of Christmas Future.

Now, of course, this story is about the world's "spirit" of Christmas – that once-a-year expression of special good cheer and sharing among men and women, which too often never seems to last longer than the opening of the last present. So, let's see. How is your spirit of Christmas Present?

CHILD #1: Christmas spirit! Happy anticipation, lights, fun, excitement, hopes and dreams of happiness wrapped in packages. Christmas Present means Christmas present! Wow!

CHILD #2: Christmas spirit! Special greetings. Special treats. Special trips and special surprises. Special foods and special parties. Special everything! Christmas Present means that special Christmas presence. Ooooooooo!

CHILD #3: Christmas spirit! It sounds so great.
And all year long, we wait and wait.
And then it comes, and then it's past,
Why does it have to go so fast?
And even then we sometimes say,
Is this all there is to Christmas Day?

SONG: "Where's Christmas?"

NARRATOR: Oh, how often we have desperately chased after the "spirit" of Christmas Present, only to find, in the end, that it slips away ... into nothing, a false spirit. We are unhappy when we don't get what we want. We look with envy at what others have – or seem to have. Our high expectations often melt away into disappointment and Christmas becomes just another day – or worse.

Christmas can also be a time of sadness for some people – widows and widowers, the sick, the divorced, those away from home.

Loneliness and self-pity, feelings of isolation can well up, turning the world's spirit of Christmas into bitterness and despair. Like Scrooge, many just turn away and say, "Bah Humbug."

How can we find the true spirit of Christmas – and keep it long after the tree is down and the presents gone? That's the question - the answer to which all mankind is constantly seeking.

Thank God, the Apostle John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, gave us the simple answer to that greatest Christmas question of all when he wrote: "For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." That's the answer. That's the Christmas Spirit. That's the real thing. Jesus – conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin.

SONG: "His Love's the Real Thing"

NARRATOR: The love of God, that's what Christmas is all about. We don't need to read about Scrooge in order to understand the Christmas story present, past or future; for there is another Spirit of Christmas abroad in the land, a comforter, a bringer of the finest of Christmas presents, the kind that never break and never get old – love and joy and peace, of whom Jesus himself said:

CHILD: "When the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak of His own, but whatever he hears, he will speak and He will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you."

NARRATOR: A Comforter! A Spirit of truth! A Spirit of Christmas, present, past and future, who will testify directly to your heart the good news of Christmas!

CHILD #1: HOLY CHRISTMAS SPIRIT! Thank God for His Good News. "To you is born this day in the City of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

CHILD #2: HOLY CHRISTMAS SPIRIT! With eyes, ears, minds, hearts and all our being, we praise the Lord we love.

CHILD #3: HOLY CHRISTMAS SPIRIT! We praise the Babe of Bethlehem, remembering that "We love him because he first loved us."

CHILD #4: HOLY CHRISTMAS SPIRIT! "Show us Him who has been crowned King of the Jews."

SONG: "Oh, Little Town of Bethlehem"

NARRATOR: The true Christmas Present is but our remembrance and celebration of the Christmas Past, that very first Christmas Day so many years ago. But the world too often says, "Bah! Humbug!" to the Holy Spirit of Christmas, preferring to live its Christmas without Him. Still, the Spirit gently says, "Come and see. Let me show you the truth. Come and join me on the wings of faith. For I testify of the Baby Jesus, of whom God himself has said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

INSERT "CHRISTMAS STORY" HERE

NARRATOR: The HOLY SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS PAST has testified of Jesus.

The HOLY SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT has testified of Jesus.

The HOLY SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE has testified of Jesus, and will continue to testify throughout all eternity – the same Jesus, yesterday, today and forever – promising to enter into our hearts and to abide there forever.

CHILD #1: Let us love each other because Jesus first loved us. THAT'S THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT!

CHILD #2: Let us share our joy in Jesus with others. THAT'S THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT!

CHILD #3: Let us forgive one another so that His Peace can come to all people. THAT'S THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT!

CHILD #4: Ring the bells and bring the Good News. The Prince of Peace is born. THAT'S THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT!

NARRATOR: Invite the Holy Spirit of Christmas into your heart. Let Him join with your spirit. Be open to His gentle calling as He seeks to move you to a true celebration of Christmas.

LET THE SPIRIT MOVE YOU! Submit to His will and move with the flow of His power that the Holy Spirit of Christmas may enter your heart forever. COME, HOLY SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS, COME!

ALL OF THE CHILDREN: Come, Lord Jesus.

SONG: "Silent Night"

BENEDICTION: *(By NARRATOR or PASTOR.)* Now may the Lord bless you and keep you. May His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May He lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.

RECESSIONAL: "Joy to the World"

End of Pageant

DIRECTORIAL and TECHNICAL COMMENTS

Narrator comes forward and directly addresses the children. He/she should be continuously moving about to insure that all of the children participating in the pageant are constantly "involved."

3. LO, I STAND AT THE DOOR

*“Here I am. I stand at the door and knock.
If anyone hears my voice and opens the door,
I will go in and eat with him, and he with me.”
Revelations 3:20*

Jesus not only came into human history exactly as the Scriptures had foretold, but he also stands ready to come into our hearts as well and to dwell with us in everything we do.

The following pageant combines these basic scriptural truths with a third scriptural theme, that of praise as being a powerful key to the very throne room of God. The praise of children is lifted to the Heavens, opening wide the door of the heart to admit the Babe of Bethlehem.

Doors open to bring in the light, to bring friends into our house, to allow us to move out into the world surrounding us. But they can also shut – and lock – blocking the light and keeping us prisoner, joyless and alone.

Christmas is the celebration of history’s greatest and most spectacular door – the birth of the Messiah, the doorway to Heaven itself – of Jesus, who a few years later on a cross would batter down the door of separation between God and man and who, through the Holy Spirit, forever raps gently at the doors of human hearts with his message of reconciliation and peace with God.

Doors hold great symbolic meaning for all of us, both good and bad, and Christmas combines the great expectation of the “opening” door with the joy of finding Jesus standing just across the threshold.

ORGAN PRELUDE

PROCESSIONAL: “O Come, Little Children”

YOUTH READER: Would you all stand and join with me in the responsive reading found on the first page of your bulletin.

READER: Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.

CONGREGATION: Serve the Lord with gladness; come before his presence with singing.

READER: Know ye that the Lord, He is God.

CONGREGATION: It is He that has made us, and not we ourselves. We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.

READER: Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise.

CONGREGATION: Be thankful unto Him and bless His name.

READER: For the Lord is good, His mercy is everlasting.

CONGREGATION: And His truth endureth unto all generations.

READER: Praise we the Lord.

Praise Him in his sanctuary.

Praise Him in the mighty heavens.

Praise Him for his acts of power.

Praise Him for his surpassing greatness.

Praise Him with the sounding of the trumpets.

Praise Him with the harp and lyre.

Praise Him with tambourine and dancing.

Praise Him with strings and flute.

Praise Him with clash of cymbals.

ALL: Let everything that has breath PRAISE THE LORD!

SCRIPTURE READER #1: The Scriptures chosen for today to move us in happy celebration of Christmas are Revelations 3:20 and Ephesians 3:16.

“Here I am. I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in and eat with him, and he with me.”

SCRIPTURE READER #2: “I pray that Christ may settle down and be at home in your hearts by faith.”

SONG: “Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne Above”

THE PASTOR’S MESSAGE

THE OFFERTORY

YOUNG PRAYER LEADER #1: Come, Lord Jesus, come inside our open hearts, and there reside forever. Amen.

SONG: “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come”

(There is a large door standing in front of the altar covered by a large red heart. On the heart are many smaller hearts, each one bearing the following words, "Come into my heart, Lord Jesus," and each previously signed by the CHILDREN participating in the pageant. Each child has his or her own special heart on the door.)

NARRATOR: Praise the Lord for God's gift of children. I don't know about you, but I believe there is perhaps no sweeter sound in all the world than children giving their praises to the Lord Jesus Christ, be it singing, shouting or whatever. No matter how it might sound to human ears, to the ears of God it is perfect praise. Let's give God a shout of praise!

(The children all shout and clap their hands.)

NARRATOR: Jesus himself said of his Father in heaven that "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, thou has perfected praise. From the lips of children and infants, you have ordained praise." Ordained it, commanded it, established it, and blessed by the very authority of God himself. Through praise, we pass through the heavenly doorway to the very throne of God.

And, speaking of doorways, I'll bet you're all wondering about that doorway up there in front of the altar. It's something, isn't it. Someone worked very hard to make it look so nice. But why on earth is it there of all places? Who can tell us about doors?

CHILD #1: They open and shut.

CHILD #2: They let us go in and out.

CHILD #3: They keep out the rain.

CHILD #4: They let our friends come inside to play with us.

NARRATOR: You're all right. Doors are wonderful things. How would we get in anywhere – or out of anywhere – if we didn't have doors? Can you imagine having to crawl through a window in order to get into your house? And how would we ever get outside to play? One of the exciting things about doors is to hear the knocking or ringing and then run to see who is on the other side of the door ... hoping it might be a friend waiting there to come in. They have to wait because even our best friends don't just come in without knocking first and waiting to be invited in. And, besides, the door might be locked.

But did you know that each of us has a door inside of us? It stands right in front of our hearts, and like any other door, we can open it and shut it. Oh, it doesn't look like that door up there, but it is still a door. And only you have the key that can lock or unlock your door.

And do you know something else? There is someone who is always standing outside the door to our hearts, someone who wants to come in ... who keeps knocking on the door. Now who do you think it is that is standing just outside the door to our heart, knocking to get in? (*All the CHILDREN shout "JESUS."*) That's right, it's Jesus. And he'll stand there as long as we live, knocking on the door, until we take the key and open our door and invite him to come in.

Sshhhhhhhhhh ... listen. (*There is a KNOCKING on the door in front of the altar, quietly at first, and then louder.*) Did you hear that? Someone is knocking at the door. Who could it be? And how are we going to open the door and see who it is and let him come in?

Listen, I have a plan. Let's see if we can open the door with our praise and thanksgiving. If it is who I think it is, the Bible tells us that we can enter his doors with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise. Is that a good plan?

(*There are shouts of "Yes, yes" and "Let's do it," etc.*)

CHILD #1: Christmas Day is coming,
It's a blessed time of year.
The time when we remember
How God sent his Son so dear.

CHILD #2: We thank you, Baby Jesus,
For showing us the light,
And giving us your gift of love
That starry Christmas night.

CHILD #3: We praise the name of Jesus,
We will show him that we care.
Let us praise and thank and glorify
God's Son, so sweet and fair.

CHILD #4: We praise you, God the Father,
For the sacrifice you made.
Our hearts are filled with gladness,
And our mouths are filled with praise.

CHILD #5: So let God's Son come in.
Give your heart to him.
Jesus really loves you,
And he'll save you from your sin.

CHILD #6: Yes, let God's Son come in,
Give your heart to him,
OPEN UP THE DOOR
AND LET THE CHRIST CHILD IN.

SONG: "Let All the Little Children Praise the Lord"

(The door slowly opens, the CHILDREN cheer.)

CHILD #7: The door to our hearts is open and Jesus has come in to be with us. Come and let us worship the newborn Babe.

CHILD #8: Enter through his doors with thanksgiving for all that he has done for us and for all that he has given us.

CHILD #9: Enter into his courts with the true praise that comes from the overflowing of his love in our hearts.

CHILD #10: The door is open. The Lord is with us. Alleluia!

NARRATOR: Many, many years ago, the Lord spoke through his prophets and foretold this coming of Jesus. And the people heard the prophets and rejoiced and yearned in their hearts for the coming of the Messiah. But the days passed and the years passed and became centuries and not much seemed to be happening. *(The door slowly closes.)* The seasons passed and passed again. Nations rose and fell away. Centuries piled upon centuries.

And then one day, one day as any other day, like a sudden crack out of the blue, the Holy Spirit of the Most High God moved upon the face of the earth, splitting time itself. The time to execute God's eternal plan had come. God's time and season had arrived and all of his creation moved in concert to carry out his purpose. THE DAY HAD COME!

SONG: "This Is the Day That the Lord Has Made"

INSERT "CHRISTMAS STORY" HERE

NARRATOR: Is there room in your heart for Jesus, as there was for the shepherds and the three kings? Or is your heart too full of the cares of the world, too full of things that take up your thoughts and your time – your job, your children, your problems – too full of yourself to allow room for Jesus to come in. Open your heart to the one who is knocking, standing patiently and lovingly at its door. Invite Jesus into your heart, right now, and let him renew your life, sweep away the doubts and bring you abundant peace and joy for now and forever. For whosoever believes in him shall not perish but shall have eternal life.

CHILD #1: Jesus is knocking. Who will answer?
Who will let the Lord come in?

CHILD #2: Jesus is knocking. Who will let him in?
He comes to take away our sorrows and our sin.

CHILD #3: Jesus is knocking. Who will answer?
Who will sup with him today?

CHILD #4: Jesus is knocking. Who will let him in?
Who will throw wide the door and let the Christ Child stay?

CHILD #5: Come, Lord Jesus, be the guest of our heart.
Now and forever, be glorified tonight, Lord Jesus,
Through the praise of your children, who love you.
Amen.

(The door opens wide. The CHILDREN shout, “JESUS!”)

SONG: “Silent Night”

BENEDICTION: *(By NARRATOR or PASTOR.)* Now may the Lord bless you and keep you. May his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May he lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

RECESSIONAL: “Joy to the World”

End of Pageant

DIRECTORIAL AND TECHNICAL COMMENTS

The door does not need to be elaborate. A piece of strong cardboard on a light wooden frame will very adequately suffice. The door needs to be rigged, however, so that the person opening it from the rear cannot be seen.

Narrator comes forward and directly addresses the children. He/she should be continually moving about to insure that all of the children participating in the pageant are constantly involved.

4. WHITER THAN SNOW

*“Though your sins be as scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow.”*

Isaiah 1:18

We have all thrilled to a landscape covered by newly fallen snow. Its whiteness covers everything, pure and glistening in the rays of the winter sun.

The following pageant uses this joyful and comforting picture as an analogy to the whiteness with which Jesus, through the cross, has covered up our sins in order to present us pure and blameless before the judgment seat of God. The filth and dirt of our sinful natures is completely obliterated through his loving and willing sacrifice.

How as little children did we rush outside to the thrill of that first snowfall. Just as children today, we reveled in its beauty, felt the snow melting on our lips and studied with awe the uncountable different shapes of each snow flake as it drifted to the earth. And, like Bing Crosby, our hearts are filled with the hope of a White Christmas.

Yet the true whiteness of Christmas does not lie in the snow that may or may not fall, just as our deepest vision of Christmas has nothing to do with snow. For the whiteness we all really yearn for is the whiteness of the love of Jesus that he so willingly bestows on all who seek him so that “though our sins be like scarlet, they can be as white as snow.”

The birth of Jesus announces the most spectacular and the whitest “snowfall” of all time, a whiteness that can cover everything, pure and glistening in the warm rays of his love.

ORGAN PRELUDE

PROCESSIONAL: “Oh How Joyfully, Oh How Merrily”

YOUTH READER: Would you all stand and join with me in the responsive reading found on the first page of your bulletin.

READER: The heavens declare the glory of God:
The skies proclaim the work of his hand.

CONGREGATION: Day after day they pour forth speech;
Night after night they display knowledge.

READER: There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.

CONGREGATION: Their voice goes out into all the earth;
Their words to the ends of the world.

READER: The earth is the Lord's and everything in it,
The world and all who live in it.

CONGREGATION: Let all the earth fear the Lord;
Let all the people of the world revere him.

READER: From heaven the Lord looks down and sees all mankind;
From his dwelling place he watches all who live on the earth.
He who forms the hearts of all, considers everything they do.

CONGREGATION: We wait in hope for the Lord; in him our hearts rejoice.

READER: The Lord loves righteousness and justice;
The earth is full of his unfailing love.

ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost through whom we can
approach the heavenly throne WHITER THAN SNOW!

SCRIPTURE READER #1: The Scriptures chosen today to move us in a happy
celebration of Christmas are Isaiah 55:10 and Isaiah 1:18.

“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without
watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower
and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth. It will not return
to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent
it.”

SCRIPTURE READER #2: “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as
snow.”

SONG: “Whiter Than Snow”

THE PASTOR'S MESSAGE

THE OFFERTORY

YOUNG PRAYER LEADER: Dear Jesus,
We thank you for your wondrous birth,
And glorify your name of earth.
For you were born in manger low,
That we might be as white as snow.

SONG: "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"

(In front of or above the altar there is a large, black placard with a large, scarlet-colored earth in the center. Both must be high enough to be seen above the heads of pageant participants standing in the altar area. On the scarlet earth are written the words, "Though your sins be as scarlet ...". Also six large, handmade snowflakes are clearly visible scattered about the front of the church. In the pews, each child has his or her own small personal snowflake upon which each has written, "Jesus Makes Me Whiter Than Snow" and then signed. These snowflakes are kept out of view until the end of the pageant.)

(NARRATOR #1 comes down and directly addresses the CHILDREN. Throughout the pageant, he/she should be continuously moving about to insure that all of the children participating in the pageant are constantly involved.)

NARRATOR: *(Clearing throat and singing robustly.)*

"I'm dreaming of a White Christmas. ... bu, bu, bu, bu."

Does that remind you of anyone?

CHILD #1: Frosty the snowman?

CHILD #2: The manager of a ski resort?

CHILD #3: A sick reindeer?

NARRATOR: Hey. Wait a minute. You've got to be kidding. Come on now. Bing Crosby – right?

CHILD #4: Bing what?

NARRATOR: I can't believe it. You actually have never heard of Bing Crosby? *(Waits — no response.)* What in the world has happened to the cultural education of our youth? I'll just go to where I know I'll be more appreciated. *(Turns from the CHILDREN to address the ADULTS present.)* "I'm dreaming of a White Christmas ... bu, bu, bu, bu." Does that remind you of anyone?

AN ADULT: A sick reindeer?

NARRATOR: OK, OK. I give up. *(Then back to CHILDREN.)* Well, my young friends, even though you may not have ever heard of Bing Crosby, that song I was trying to sing just happens to have sold more records than any other song ever written. It's probably the most famous Christmas song of all time, and it's so popular because it stirs some very basic feelings in the hearts of the people who hear it – the picture in our minds of a fresh white snow gently falling outside as friends and relatives gather together in a warm house to celebrate Christmas. And that's what we're here to do tonight, isn't it,

to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas – the birth of Jesus, the Savior of all mankind, born into a sinful, dirty world so that we might be born again under his blanket of forgiveness.

And that's what I was really singing about in the first place ... forgiveness ... that wonderful Christmas gift from God that gives us a new beginning in life by covering up all our sins and making us in God's eyes as white as snow ... even whiter than snow! Who can tell me about snow? What are some of the things you really like about snow?

CHILD #1: I like to play in the snow ... roll in it till I'm all covered up like a snowman.

CHILD #2: I like to melt falling snow on my tongue. It tastes so cold and clean!

CHILD #3: I like to look at all the different shapes of snow flakes. They're so beautiful and each one is so different.

CHILD #4: Snow covers everything up so that the whole world looks clean and fresh and beautiful.

NARRATOR: Those are some really great answers. But the best part about snow is that it is absolutely FREE! It comes down without our asking for it or even wanting it sometimes. We wake up and there it is.

Like so many things in nature that God has created, snow has a hidden spiritual message that can only be seen by the eyes of faith. Just think about it – the soft fresh snow that covers up all the dirty things underneath will melt in the Spring and become the water with which new life will begin again throughout creation. Can that help but remind us of God's "divine snow," the grace of forgiveness that God in his love through Jesus sends to cover up the dirty and sinful parts of our lives with the freshness and whiteness of a new life, making us pure in the eyes of God the Father.

And it all began on that Holy night which was the first Christmas.

SONG: "O, Holy Night"

NARRATOR: Do you understand now what it means to dream about a white Christmas?

DREAMER #1: I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
Where the snow is gently falling
And the Spirit softly call
To our hearts, "Come to me. Come to me."

DREAMER #2: I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
With our friends and family near us
And with Jesus walking with us
Through the snowfields of our lives.

DREAMER #3: I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
And people covered with His snow
So that all the world may know
That he is Lord and Savior.

DREAMER #4: I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
And of the Baby Jesus born in manger low
Sent to earth to bring forgiveness
Let it snow. Let it snow. LET IT SNOW!

NARRATOR: What a wonderful message God sends to us with the snow. What a reason to rejoice and celebrate. And celebrate we will ... with our own little snowflake festival. You see all those snowflakes scattered around the front of the church? Well, those are Kingdom Snowflakes and each one of them has floated down from heaven with a wonderful message for us here on earth. Now, I need six Snowflake Kids to go out there and get those Kingdom Snowflakes and tell us their very special messages.

(Six children come forward and each retrieves one of the snowflakes. Then, one by one, they deliver the snowflake messages.)

SNOWFLAKE KID #1: From heaven above to earth I come
to announce SALVATION to everyone.
I am the Snowflake of Salvation.

SNOWFLAKE KID #2: From heaven above to earth I come
to bring RIGHTEOUSNESS to everyone.
I am the Snowflake of Righteousness.

SNOWFLAKE KID #3: From heaven above to earth I come
to show God's PEACE to everyone.
I am the Snowflake of Peace.

SNOWFLAKE KID #4: From heaven above to earth I come
to proclaim God's JOY to everyone.
I am the Snowflake of Joy.

SNOWFLAKE KID #5: From heaven above to earth I come
To share God's MERCY with everyone.
I am the Snowflake of Mercy.

SNOWFLAKE KID #6: From heaven above to earth I come
to tell of God's LOVE for everyone.
I am the Snowflake of Love.

SONG: "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come"

NARRATOR: And so now you can see what a "White Christmas" really means – for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. And what a divine dream it really is – a dream that lies at the inner most part of every man, woman and child that has ever lived. For throughout history, mankind has truly yearned for and dreamed of the true whiteness of Christmas – for that blanket of holy whiteness found with the Baby Jesus in his bed of straw.

Come, let us remember and celebrate the glory and wonder of his birth. Sit back and turn your spirits toward the Lord and dream of the total whiteness of that first Christmas, when a veritable blizzard of God's love fell to the earth in a little town called Bethlehem.

SONG: "O Little Town Of Bethlehem"

INSERT "CHRISTMAS STORY" HERE

NARRATOR: The wise men and the shepherds were wise because they had the eyes to see and the ears to hear God's wonderful plan for mankind – for that Baby, lying in the straw in a Bethlehem stable, was the Son of God sent to earth so that whosoever might believe in him should never die but have eternal life ... might be made as white and, indeed, even whiter than snow.

(The six SNOWFLAKES KIDS come forward and, one by one, affix their snowflakes to the large scarlet colored picture of the earth until it is completely covered by whiteness.)

SNOWFLAKE KID #1: Jesus brings us ... SALVATION.

SNOWFLAKE KID #2: Jesus brings us ... RIGHTEOUSNESS.

SNOWFLAKE KID #3: Jesus brings us ... PEACE.

SNOWFLAKE KID #4: Jesus brings us ... JOY.

SNOWFLAKE KID #5: Jesus brings us ... MERCY.

SNOWFLAKE KID #6: Jesus brings us ... LOVE.

NARRATOR: We see now how the blanket of snow that God sends us contains a powerful message for a scarlet world bogged down in sin and unbelief. Behold, says Jesus, I make all things new. Though your sins be as scarlet, they can be made as white as snow, for him who believes in me.

Do you dream of a White Christmas? Then believe in Jesus and make your dream come true. Accept him now into your heart and you can begin a New Life – right here, right now, this Christmas – with a life that is Whiter Than Snow!

(All of the CHILDREN in the pews arise, turn toward the audience and throw their own little snowflakes.)

ALL: Merry Christmas! Let it snow, let it snow, LET IT SNOW!

SONG: “Silent Night”

BENEDICTION: *(By NARRATOR or THE PASTOR.)* Now may the Lord bless you and keep you. May his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May he lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

RECESSIONAL: “Joy to the World”

End of Pageant