

*A Children's Christmas Play:
The First Christmas (And the Donkey Who Was Also There)*

Based on the Video: Christmas Eve Wishes

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9Wqq17zEFE&t=5s>)

Written by Rev. Dr. Leanne hadley

Adapted into a script and premiered by: Halley Kim, Pastoral Assistant, First Congregational Church of Webster Groves

Scene 1: Narrator on stage, holding a Bible. Kids are in bean bag chairs on the floor along the front pews.

Narrator: The Christmas Story begins in the book of Luke, the first chapter and the 26th verse...

In the sixth month, the Angel Gabriel was sent from God, to a town in Galilee, called Nazareth, to a woman named Mary. **(Look up)** You know what I wish... I wish we could meet the angel Gabriel. I wish we could go back in time and meet Mary and Joseph, don't you? And I REALLY wish we could go back in time to talk to one of the animals that was there!

Do you want to try it? Should we make a wish? Okay, let's all shut our eyes and wish as hard as we can!!! Wait – popcorn – that helps make wishes come true! **(Pass out popcorn to all the kids. Dave will assist).** We wish to go back in time to the first Christmas!!!! Children, are you wishing? We wish, we wish... say it with me... we wish!!! **(exit stage left)**

(Gong sound effect, solo sax)

Scene 2: Gabriel on stage (enter from stage left).

The Angel Gabriel: Children, open your eyes, your wish has come true! I am the angel Gabriel. I watched as God created the heavens and the earth. I saw the first clouds float across the sky, the first humans take their very first breath! I was there!

I have been a messenger of God for a long time and I've seen so many amazing things! But never have I ever seen anything as magnificent as Mary. So young ...but chosen by God to play such an important part! (exit stage right)

SONG: "THE ANGEL GABRIEL" (Carolers sing verses 1&2)

Scene 3: Mary (enter from stage left) and Gabriel (enter from stage right) on stage.

Mary: (to kids) I will never forget this. I mean, would you forget it if an angel was standing in your kitchen, right in front of you? (point at Gabriel incredulously) I have loved God for as long as I can remember, but I have never told anyone how much I love God! No one's ever asked. And now, there he is, *the angel Gabriel* and he said that God had *noticed*. I'm confused...noticed what? No one's ever noticed me before. (turn towards Gabriel)

Gabriel: God has noticed your loving heart. God has heard your prayers. God has seen your compassion for the poor. God has seen your heart.

Mary: (again addressing the kids) I'm stunned. I can't move. It's not the angel that's scaring me, it's that for the first time in my life, I am a somebody. (face Gabriel again) God has noticed ME?

Gabriel: Not only has God noticed you, God has chosen you! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High and his kingdom will never end.

Mary: I'm confused. I'm engaged to Joseph but I'm certainly not pregnant! How could this be? I'm being asked by *God* to give birth to a baby who would be *the king? The messiah?*

Gabriel: Do you need proof? I can give you proof... your cousin Elizabeth is also pregnant. (Mary looks surprised). Go and see her and then you will know that I am telling you the truth.

Mary: (again addressing the kids) But in my heart I already know the angel's words are true. I can't explain it.. but I know. And so, I said, "I am a servant of God. Let it be! If this is what God has chosen me to do, I will do it. (pause) I will do it.

Gabriel: A young woman... so brave ... magnificent! I have seen the wonders of the world, but never have I seen anything like her. (Gabriel exits stage right, Mary exits stage left)

SONG: "THE ANGEL GABRIEL" (Carolers sing verse 3)

Scene 4: Donkey enters from stage right, stops next to Gabriel on the way to address first line to him on way to mainstage.

Donkey: Ummm... excuse me! (directed to Gabriel). I was there too and I have never seen anything like Mary either! That angel spent five minutes with her and acts like he knows her so well! Ridiculous!!! Oh, hello children... I am the donkey. My name? Never got one. So I guess you will just have to call me the Donkey!

I was there way before the angel showed up! I used to give little Mary rides on my back when she was just a tiny girl. She used to feed me carrots. I used to help her daddy plow the fields so that her family could grow vegetables and eat. Anyway, you'd think someone would have given me a name! But no.. you can just call me the donkey like everyone else!

Anyway, I was there. I saw the angel, I saw Mary say yes and I am the one who carried her to see her cousin Elizabeth. Wow.. that was a journey, 81 miles from Nazareth to the hill country! I carried Mary up and down the hills for 81 miles! Whoa... that's hard on a donkey's hooves! You'd think after all that, someone would have thought to give me a name. (exit stage right)

SONG: "IN THE BLEAK MIDWINTER" (Sax and piano)

Scene 5: Elizabeth on stage with a 6-months-pregnant belly , busying herself with a task, when Mary enters from stage right.

Elizabeth: Mary!?! You're here!?! (look shocked, embrace Mary in a hug)

Mary: I'm here! It's so good to see you.

Elizabeth: I am so surprised and so glad to see you! I have so many things to tell you. I mean, first of all, I am pregnant! I know, I am so old, and I had given

up all hope of ever having a baby. Something holy must have happened. Can you believe how big my belly has gotten already? **(Touches belly)**

Mary: It's a miracle, Elizabeth! You know, funny thing that you're pregnant too because—

Elizabeth: **(cutting her off)** Wow, my baby is really moving! **(place hands on belly, look a bit unnerved)** Umm, my baby is **jumping**...is that even possible?! **(Long pause, gesturing between own belly and Mary's smaller belly, look shocked as if you've had a major realization)**

Mary...**(now louder)** *Mary!* You are here because **you** are pregnant too! **(takes Mary's hand into her own)** And...and...you're pregnant with...the son of God? The son of God! **(starts to laugh in joy and disbelief).**

Mary: That's what the Angel Gabriel tells me!

Elizabeth: I cannot believe it! The mother of God has come to visit me! And my baby, who has yet to be born, was the first to notice! Oh Mary ... Mary!! We are going to have babies! This is the happiest day of my life! **(hug again, Elizabeth and Mary exit stage right)**

SONG: "GOOD CHRISTIANS FRIENDS, REJOICE!" (Carolers sing verse 1)

Scene 6: Donkey enters from stage right.

Donkey: They are going to have babies!!! They are going to have babies!!!! I'm so excited...just think how excited I'd be if someone would give me a name. **(roll eyes)** I wish I had a name!

Anyway, Mary stayed with Elizabeth for a long time to celebrate. But when she went home, Joseph had some terrible news. **(exit stage right)**

Scene 7: Joseph enters from stage left with a scroll, sighing in deep frustration. Mary and Donkey enter from stage right about 30 seconds later. Mary is carrying a bag as if just returning from Elizabeth's home. Mary waddles up to Joseph and gives him a hug, Donkey stands off to the side.

Joseph: Mary, you're home! It's so good to see you.

Mary: It's good to be home (pause, noticing alarm on Joseph's face). What's wrong? You look troubled.

Joseph: (deep sigh) Yes...I am so sorry, but the king has asked all of us to return to our home towns and be counted -- he is going to increase our taxes again. He is building another palace and a huge stadium and we'll have to pay for it. It's wrong, but we can't stop it. I hate to leave you here but it is such a long journey to Bethlehem and it is almost time for you to have the baby.

Mary: But I want to go with you!

Joseph: No, it is too dangerous! Stay here with your mother. (pause) I know you don't want to be alone... wait. We do have the donkey... (gesture towards donkey)

Donkey: (acknowledging Joseph and Mary and then speaking to the kids) Oh yes... the donkey... the donkey, the donkey, the donkey. Here I am.. ready to help, ready to save the day! Everybody needs the donkey. But nobody names the donkey. (glare at Mary and Joseph) I wish I had a name! (Mary and Joseph exit stage right)

Well anyway, they loaded me up with food and water for the journey. (Mary and Joseph sat on my back. Whoa...that baby must have been a big one because she was heavy!!! And off we went...for 90 miles this time! Hardest trip of my life! I mean at first it was easy in the flatlands, but once the hills came along... whooo... and poor Mary. I knew she was uncomfortable and I tried to make the trip easy on her, and I am not wanting to complain, but making it easier on her made it harder on me! But who cares, I am just the donkey... without a name! (exit stage right)

SONG: "O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM" (Sax and piano only)

Scene 8: Mary (with a 9mo pregnant belly), Joseph, and Donkey enter from stage right slowly, clearly exhausted from their long journey. Mary is having obvious contractions every few minutes.

(Joseph knocks on imaginary door, Leon provides sound effect)

Inn Keeper: (comes through door from stage left, exasperated) What? What do you want??

Jospeh: A room for the night, please.

Inn Keeper: You and everybody else! Didn't you see the "we are full -- go away" sign in my yard? I have ten rooms... all full.

Joseph: Please, we have already been turned away by every other inn nearby.

Inn Keeper: It really isn't my problem that you have knocked on every door in town.. I still have no rooms! You better bed down for the night and look for a place to stay tomorrow. (pause while Jospeh gestures to Mary's belly, Mary puts her hands on her lower back and breathes through a contraction) What's that now?

Joseph: (desperate) She's in labor, sir! Our baby is going to be born soon.

Inn Keeper: (Conflicted) Uhhhhh... Well, I mean, I can't just kick someone out of their room... I'm sorry, but there is nothing I can do. (Pause, Mary and Joseph look despondent) Oh, come on now...what's your name anyway?

Joseph: Joseph.

Inn Keeper: Okay, Joseph.. don't ... don't look so sad. And ma'am... what's your name?

Mary: (wiping away tears) My name is Mary.

Inn Keeper: Mary, Mary, I am sorry you are about to have a baby but...oh no... Mary, don't cry! (Mary cries, clutches belly, which prompts Donkey to start crying, Joseph looks anxious, Inn Keeper looks overwhelmed) Okay okay... if everyone will just stop crying, I might have an idea. There is a stable out back. The animals have to stay there but if you don't mind a few sheep, a horse, a rooster, four hens, the smell, and the straw you can bed down there for tonight. No charge... just stop crying and go to bed. I don't want any more drama tonight! (Inn Keeper gestures for Mary, Joseph, and Donkey to follow him, everyone exits stage left)

SONG: "O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM" (Carolers sing verses 1&2)
Elizabeth places two chairs in front of the alter for Mary and Joseph to use in the next scene.

Scene 9: Midwife speaking to kids with Mary and Joseph sitting in chairs in front of the alter, huddled close together and admiring Baby Jesus in Mary's arms (doll). Donkey stands behind them and peers at the baby over their shoulders.

Midwife: Well it wasn't too long after that I came into the story! I'm the local midwife. I was just about to go to bed when I heard a donkey braying outside my door. The animal seemed distressed so I followed her to the stable behind the inn down the road, and there I discovered a woman in labor, with her partner by her side and many animals nearby! I jumped into action because that's what you do when a baby has decided to make their way into the world.

Well, Mary's belly gave that baby a squeeze every few minutes to help the baby come out. And after a lot of work and a lot of squeezes Mary gave birth to a healthy baby boy! And Mary snuggled that sweet baby and nursed him and kissed him a hundred times! Eventually she wrapped him up and laid her baby boy in the manger... the place where animals eat their hay. And it was just like God was there with us.

Soon Mary slept, Joseph slept, and the baby slept... but not me... I stayed awake all night watching over the baby...and a certain donkey too.

Donkey: Yep, I was up all night too! I loved that little baby right from the start and I wanted to watch over him. And, yes, spend some more time wishing I had a name! **(all cast exit to stage left except Donkey who will remain on stage for the next song).**

SONG: "WHAT CHILD IS THIS?"

Scene 10: Gabriel enters from stage right to join Donkey, who is looking quite proud of herself.

Gabriel: **(to the kids)** Your wish came true! You got to meet the people who were there the first Christmas Eve. Now I bet you're wondering if the donkey

ever got a name. Not that night, and not the next, or the next or the next. She watched the shepherds arrive, she watched the kings arrive bringing gifts of gold, and frankincense and myrrh...she carried Mary and Joseph back to Bethlehem, she carried the holy family on her back all the way to Egypt where the child could be safe from King Herod. Still, she had no name.

But then one day, when the baby grew into a man and was ready to make the most important journey of his life into Jerusalem where people were waiting to wave palms... the man, whose name was Jesus, leaned over and whispered into the donkey's ear and said, "Well friend, let's make one more journey together."

Donkey: "Yep, this donkey got a name... friend. My name is Friend!" My wish came true! Let's sing! (both exit stage right)

SONG: "JOY TO THE WORLD"

(At the end of the song ... gong sound effect and solo sax -- kids are "back" from the 1st Christmas Eve!)

Scene 11: Narrator on stage.

Narrator: Oh kids, the donkey's wish came true and our wish came true...she got a name and we got to meet the people who were there the night Jesus was born. You know, that donkey is not the only one I'd call friend tonight... you are my friends. Thank you, friends, for being here! I wish you, my friends, a very merry Christmas!

SONG: "WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS"