



skiturgies

PAGEANTS, PLAYS, RITES AND RITUALS
FOR THE CHURCH YEAR



A Christmas *Present*

Illustrations: Laurie Westhafer

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SCRIPT: **A Christmas Present**

AUTHOR: **Allison de Kanel**

The plot of this pageant involves a modern kid (boy or girl) who is called upon by St. Francis of Assisi to visit Bethlehem on the night of the original Christmas Eve. There he (or she) meets St. Nicholas, the Three Kings, Shepherds and Sheep, as well as some aliens arriving from outer space for the birth of Jesus. Other figures, such as the Italian gift-bearer La Befana, are introduced, and the modern kid is called upon to play a key role in sending the Holy Family to safety in Egypt. The original Holy Family is not part of this play, remaining offstage until the finale. The final scene is a tableau of a Sunday School Christmas Pageant finale, with all of the previously introduced characters, as well as additional children to make up the nativity scene.

In 1999, at the end of our Christmas pageant rehearsal, everyone was preparing to leave, but the Three Kings were nowhere to be seen. I found them in the Chapel, waiting to be called; we had forgotten them during the rehearsal. To make it up to them, I offered to write a new pageant for the next year. As a science fiction fan, I was thinking of wise aliens. They asked if there could be a modern kid in the pageant. Recklessly, I agreed, and threw in Santa Claus, too.

The next fall I handed our new associate priest (also a science fiction fan) a draft script with aliens, Saints Nicholas and Francis, Signora La Befana, and a dinosaur. The pageant was performed on the Fourth Sunday in Advent, December, 2000, revised and presented in 2001, then again in 2002. The last revision benefited from a suggestion by Lucy Clark, then directing the pageant. In all three performances a dog participated; in the middle year we tried to depict Wise People from different parts of the world, including one from the Americas. Two alpacas joined us. (It turned out that alpacas have a very hard time walking on freshly waxed floors.) The director or producer may decide to include or omit a horse, camel, elephant, or llama. In different years we did or did not have a children's chorus to sing Silent Night or All God's Critters, but the structure and plot of the pageant remained the same.

As Signora La Befana learns, our Christmas present to Jesus does not have to be perfect, but it should be the best we have. This pageant was written, revised, performed, and offered to Him in that spirit.

Although we revised and expanded the pageant, it is also possible to shorten it and to reduce the cast of characters to fit a smaller congregation or due to time or rehearsal constraints. For example, various animals are easily omitted.



Except for St. Francis, St. Nicholas, Signora La Befana, Mary, and Joseph, all parts may be played by either boys or girls. Change pronouns/brother/sister in the script as appropriate.

One of the concepts in the script is that God may send Angels in any form necessary. So, for speaking to a combined group of sheep, shepherds, and a dog, God sends angels in human form, in sheep form, and one in dog form. To distinguish between the sheep and the sheep angels: use the same costume, except put the sheep in black or white socks on hands and feet. For the sheep angels, put silver colored socks on hand and feet, if possible, and use the same sock color for the ears. For face makeup, give the sheep black noses, but give the sheep angels silver noses and silver socks for ears. The sheep-angel's wings should be fleecy, while the human angel's wings may be feathery or glittery. All that the dog-angel needs is a glittery collar with small wings attached and a small halo, as well as a human angel holding the leash.

In Scene 5, during singing (in our production, the cast sang "All God's Critters"), the audience may be invited to join the cast in kneeling before the Baby. At the line "or anything they got, now" the aliens wave their tentacles.

Hymns (from The Hymnal 1982, Church Publishing Incorporated) suggested during this pageant are:

#96: Angels We Have Heard on High (Gloria)

#111: Silent Night, Holy Night (Stille Nacht)

#99: Go Tell it on the Mountain

All God's Critters (A Place in the Choir) by Bill Stains (1983: Mineral River Music)

If A Christmas Present is presented as part of a church service, consider including in the service one or more of the following hymns which reinforce the themes of the pageant:

#112: In the Bleak Midwinter (Cranham)

#412: Earth and All Stars

#114: "The Huron Carol" (Une jeune pucelle)

#387: We Sing of God (Magdalen College)



CAST:

Dude (or, if a female: Dudette)
Child 1
Child 2
St. Francis of Assisi
St. Nicholas
Signora La Befana
Elf (not necessarily small)
Brother Wolf
Shepherds
Shepherd A
Sheep
Spokes-Sheep
Clueless Sheepdog
Clueless Sheepdog's Watch-sheep
Angels in Human form
Angels in Sheep form
Angel in Dog form
Wise Alien
Not-So-Wise Alien Head A
Not-So-Wise Alien Head B
Dinosaur
Magus 1
Magus 2
Magus 3
Ship (voice off-stage)
Mary
Joseph
Baby Jesus
Donkey
Camel
Ox or Cow
Horse
Elephant
Llama or alpaca
William White
Your Church's First Bishop (or Founder)
Your First Clergy Person or Lay Leader



COSTUMES:

DUDE: Jeans, t-shirt or sweatshirt, coat or jacket, scarf, gloves, knit hat.

CHILD 1: Same as Dude.

CHILD 2: Same as Dude.

**ST. FRANCIS
OF ASSISI:** Brown robe with hood, rope belt, sandals.

ST. NICOLAS: Red Robe, cape with hood, hat that looks more like a miter than our normal image of Santa's hat, carrying a shepherd's crook, white gloves, black belt, black boots.

**SIGNORA
LE BEFANA:** Black skirt and top, black shawl, black kerchief, black gloves, a broom, a black pot.

ELF: Green or red pants, suspenders, white shirt. The hat must be pointed and will cover Elf's pointed ears. It also holds St. Nicholas's business card.

BROTHER WOLF: A grey wolf costume, big ears, big teeth. When wearing sheep's fleece as disguise, the wolf's tail will continue to cause problems by protruding beyond the shorter sheep's tail.

SHEPHERDS: Flannel or cotton striped or brown robes—a classic bathrobe will work fine. Belts are ropes. Heads wrapped in kerchiefs or head coverings of some kind. Most will carry a staff or a crook. Sandals on feet.

SHEEP: White or grey sweat suits with white or black socks. Fleece caps with white or black socks for ears. Black noses. In Scene 4, the sheep may be wearing counting numbers.

**CLUELESS
SHEEPDOG:** White or gray sweat suit, marked with spots if possible. Feet should be larger than sheep—use double socks. Nose is pink. One ear is standing up (to emphasize that this is not a sheep) and one ear is droopy. Big fluffy tail, knocking into things—a feather duster will work.

**CLUELESS
SHEEPDOG'S
WATCH-SHEEP:** Same as other sheep.



ANGELS IN HUMAN FORM:	White clothing, wings, halo of tinsel. Note that the first angel should look somewhat alarming—that is why everyone is afraid. Lighting may help.
ANGELS IN SHEEP FORM:	White sweat suit, silver socks for hands and feet, silver socks for ears. Silver noses. Halos of tinsel.
ANGEL IN DOG FORM:	White sweat suit. Double silver socks for hands and feet. Silver socks for ears. Silver nose. Ears upright. Big, fluffy silver tail.
WISE ALIEN:	This alien may have tentacles, googley eyes.
NOT-SO-WISE ALIEN HEAD A:	This alien must look like a different species than the wise alien. Otherwise, anything goes.
NOT-SO-WISE ALIEN HEAD B:	Must match Head A in the body. The two heads may differ in color.
DINOSAUR:	Baggy costume of some kind. Fangs and claws, if possible.
MAGUS 1:	Finery associated with Asia.
MAGUS 2:	Finery associated with Africa.
MAGUS 3:	Finery associated with the Americas.
MARY:	Blue and white clothing and veil. Sandals.
JOSEPH:	Brown and white clothing and headscarf. Carries walking staff.
BABY JESUS:	Baby clothes but feet tucked into Elf's hat and wrapped in Dude's scarf.
DONKEY:	Standard donkey costume.
CAMEL:	Standard camel costume.
OX OR COW:	Standard bovine costume.
HORSE:	Standard horse costume.



ELEPHANT:

Standard elephant costume—perhaps grey sweats with a stuffed knee-sock or stocking for the trunk and a rope tail.

PROPS:

SCENE 1—THE CHAPEL

The scene opens in the chapel, with the “Three Kings” waiting to be called during the Christmas Pageant rehearsal. The children are not in costume. They may have with them their “gold, frankincense, and myrrh” packages. Dude must have his coat and scarf.

SCENE 2

A crossroads outdoors. It is nighttime. The land should seem terraced, if possible, using sturdy flats. There is a sign at the crossroads with one arm pointing to the left marked “Jerusalem,” one pointing to the right marked “Bethlehem,” one pointing to the right rear marked “Hills,” and one pointing to the rear marked “The East.” There should be a starry sky—either printed or painted cloth, and possibly some outdoor Christmas lights poked through to give the effect of lights. There is a bright comet right over Bethlehem. In the direction of Jerusalem there should be a silhouette of the city; in the direction of Bethlehem a smaller silhouette of a village. Props will include additional rods, staffs, and crooks for the shepherds and a business card for St. Nicholas.

SCENE 3

Same as Scene 2.

SCENE 4

Same as scene 1. Dude must have St. Nicholas’s business card.

SCENE 5

A traditional Sunday School Nativity Pageant. A manger, a crook for Joseph, a seat for Mary, a donkey, camel, horse, or cow as available. Dude’s scarf and Elf’s hat must be visible on Baby Jesus.



SCRIPT

SCENE 1:

A small church chapel. One or two pews or chairs, possibly a coat rack, lectern, or table. Two electronic games that include flashing lights, and a copy of one of the Harry Potter books. Dry ice or bolts of rainbow colored fabric to be used as “smoke.”

CHILD 1: Dude, when are they going to call us? I think they forgot all about us, like they did last year! I like Christmas, but this pageant thing is LAME.

DUDE: I don’t know. I guess it’s not so bad for LITTLE kids. And at least we aren’t playing angels or shepherds anymore.

CHILD 1: And we don’t have to play sheep, like we did one year.

DUDE: Hey, you wanna see my new Alien Paleontologist Dinosaur Encounter Game? I got it for my birthday.

CHILD 1: Yeah, I want one of those for Christmas. Thanks. Here, try my Interstellar Undercover Detective game—I got it last year— it’s got a really neat universal translator.

Dude and Child 1 swap games; Child 1 sits down.

CHILD 2: Hey, keep it down! I’m reading Harry Potter. Harry is having the STRANGEST dream. I want to know what it means.

DUDE: Well, it turns out—

CHILD 2: Stop! Don’t tell me! You’ll spoil the whole thing! I hate knowing how the story comes out!

DUDE: You mean, like we know how the Christmas pageant comes out?

CHILD 2: Well, sure, but that’s different. Listen, I think they did forget us and that’s fine with me. Let me read in peace.

Goes to another corner.

DUDE: Okay, okay, but I sure wish I knew whose big idea this Christmas pageant thing was, anyway.

