



**SCRIPT:**            **Looking Forward to Christ**  
*An Instant Pageant for the Fourth Sunday of Advent*

**AUTHOR:**           **The Rev. Donnel O’Flynn**  
*With thanks to the people of St. Thomas’ Episcopal Church in  
Hamilton, New York*

*“Instant pageants” came about as an adaptation to busy modern schedules. Elaborate productions on Christmas Eve that require many rehearsals do not suit the realities of many families’ lives. St. Thomas’ Church in Hamilton, New York developed pageants that can be performed as the Liturgy of the Word on a Sunday morning near to Christmas, which only require one rehearsal the day before. By reserving all the speaking parts for older children who narrate and by having the congregation sing carols during scene changes, we have discovered a very effective model. For this pageant, hymns are chosen from The Hymnal 1982. We have found that complete rehearsals can in fact take place in less than two hours and that the final performances are well received. The cast can expand and contract as necessary, by using or not using some of the minor roles.*

*A couple of points a producer/director might want to bear in mind: You should pick a day for the rehearsal in which the public schools are either still in session (say late Advent) or when they have resumed after Christmas break (late Christmastide or Epiphany). You will want as many actors as possible to be part of the show, so the date you choose to have your pageant is one of the most important decisions you will make. It is perfectly okay to keep things simple. With only one rehearsal (almost immediately prior to the performance), elaborate costumes are not necessary for everyone. Very simple signifiers of a child’s role will be fine. It is still necessary to create your cast list in advance so that a person in charge of wardrobe can have everything ready to hand out at the rehearsal. It is also helpful that narrators be given their parts in advance.*

*At the rehearsal: be calm, it will all work out! We have found that the best approach is to have the children set up each tableau in turn, without music or narration, as their first step. That way they will get their locations worked out, as well as the general sequence of the play. Then a second time through will allow the narration and perhaps some of the music to be added, and a third time through for good measure will have everyone amazingly well prepared. On the day of the pageant ask everyone to be there early to get the costumes on.*



## CAST:

John the Baptist  
Residents of Judea and Jerusalem  
Isaiah the Prophet  
Miriam the Prophetess  
Dancing Women  
Abraham  
The Camel  
Mary  
Gabriel

## NARRATORS:

Four

## COSTUMES:

**John the Baptist** is a shaggy desert dweller. He should have dark long hair and beard, an over-the-shoulder skin/fur wrap, a staff, and sandals or bare feet. The skin/fur wrap can be a roughly cut patchwork of fake furs and “pleather.” At Advent, it’s usually impractical to expose much bare skin; the actor might consider solid colored long underwear for underneath.

**Residents of Judea and Jerusalem** all wear neutral colors—browns and beiges—in order to make a coherent visual impact as a social group. If under layers are necessary they should be solid, neutral colored long pants and long sleeved tee shirts, and sandals. On top can be a combination of several items that signal their modest social status: knee-length burlap vests over tunics, rope belts, long, unfitted gowns, shorter head scarves held in place with stretchy headbands.

**Prophet Isaiah** is distinguished in long white hair and beard, no head covering, and voluminous, solid-colored robe over tunic. He carries a scroll or book.

**Miriam** is a dancer so her arms and feet must be free to move and be seen; a solid/bright colored sleeveless, ankle length dress with a belt at the hip (not waist) is ideal for showcasing movement. If possible, her dress should be made from a jersey (knit) fabric to enhance the drape and swing. A colorful scarf can be wrapped around her head—use a stretchy headband to anchor it, don’t completely cover the head. Don’t forget her tambourine!





**Abraham** must look like the imposing patriarch that he is, so he should be big and colorful. The actor can wear a jacket underneath for bulk. The next layer is a tunic and wide sash for the waist. Over that is a richly colored or textured robe; then sandals on the feet, staff in the hand, long white hair and beard (even longer than Isaiah's,) and head cloth or cap.

The **camel** requires two actors, both wearing brown pants and shoes; #1 in front carries the camel's head on a stick (dowel, broom handle) with a long, brown fabric drape attached at the neck to cover #1 and #2 over their bent, arched backs. #2 can attach a tail to his/her back end. The actors move as one unit, covered by long, brown fabric drape.

**Virgin Mary** appears delicate and ethereal but not elaborate. Drape her in large pieces of soft fabric in a range of solid blues. Her head can be covered in a large square (secured by a stretchy headband) that flows over her shoulders and creates a soft but solid shape.

**Angels** are sometimes costumed with sparkles but in Gabriel's case, because he holds a very important symbol, the Easter lily, his/her robe should be pure white. A choir robe will serve nicely over white tights or leggings. If it isn't too cold, Gabriel's feet should be bare and head uncovered. An artificial, long-stemmed, white Easter lily can probably be found at a hobby store.

## SCENERY/ PROPS:

Except for Gabriel's lily, Miriam's tambourine and Isaiah's book/scroll no special props are needed for this pageant.

