

## Notes for In Bethlehem

This Christmas play was first produced and performed at Peace Lutheran in Poplar, WI in Advent of 2005. The play attempts to show that the Nativity is told from both Luke's and Matthew's perspectives. Also the prophecy of Micah tells people how important Bethlehem has been to God's people since the time of King David.

The play uses two songs, *While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks* and *That Boy Child of Mary*, which will be in the new worship book, Evangelical Lutheran Worship. The first song is sung by the Luke and the Angel Gabriel as part of Luke's narrative. All the angels join in singing Verse 6. The second song is song is sung responsively between Luke's characters and Matthew's characters. The young children join in on the chorus.

Mary and Joseph have a duet based on *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* from the Christmas musical, *The First Christmas*, G-5746. The duet can be purchased from GIA by calling (800) 442-1358 or going online at [www.giamusic.com](http://www.giamusic.com).

With the exception of the duet, the play is free for you to use and modify. **If you use this play please send an email note to [peacepoplar@centurytel.net](mailto:peacepoplar@centurytel.net).** Let us know how the play worked for your church.

We used paper towel centers for our scrolls that Micah, Luke and Matthew characters used. We wrote Micah in vertical letters to distinguish the Hebrew Old Testament writing from the Greek New Testament writings of Matthew and Luke.

We used middle school youth for several of the speaking and solo parts. The youngest children wore star head dresses and carried star wands. Youth of all ages were shepherds, angels, magi, and other biblical characters.

Near the back wall we created Bethlehem buildings out of cardboard boxes that were back lit with small Christmas lights. Cardboard stars were applied to the wall above the buildings. A large star was raised at the appropriate time and brought to rest over the manger by using fish line looped through two eyelets affixed to a beam above the sanctuary.

If you have any questions or comments about the play, feel free to call me at Peace Lutheran, (715) 364-2593. I hope you and your children have a wonderful time bringing the story of Bethlehem to life.

Ever in God's grace,

Greg Gullicksrud

## IN BETHLEHEM

PROPHECY OF MICAH (Youth dressed as a prophet enters and reads from a scroll)

But you, O Bethlehem, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth.

And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

(Pianist waits a full minute before playing to give the congregation the experience of waiting expectantly for the Savior to be born.)

SONG        *O Little Town of Bethlehem* (Congregation sings as children enter. The youngest children gather in front of the manger)

*O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light.  
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.*

*For Christ is born of Mary, and, gathered all above  
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond'ring love.  
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth,  
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to all the earth!*

NARRATOR (Dressed in contemporary clothes announces from the pulpit)

The stars shined in Bethlehem where the Light of the World was soon to be born.

THE STARS OF BETHLEHEM (Youngest children sing and then return to the pews until later in the play)

*Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are.  
Up above the world so high, like a diamond in the sky.  
Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are.*

OLD SHEPHERD & GRANDSON (Two children dressed as shepherds dialog stage left)

GS: Grandfather, Tell me again of that special night when you were my age.

OS: It was a clear night – like this night. A few lights were shining from the houses in Bethlehem.

GS: The stars shined too! Didn't they?

OS: Yes, the stars shined bright and the angels sang. But wait. A man has written a story about that night. Let me tell you the story as Luke wrote it: In those days . . . (story is continued by the youth portraying Luke)

2

LUKE'S GOSPEL (Youth dressed as the gospel writer reads from a scroll)

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

DUET *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* \* GIA Copyright (Children dressed as Mary & Joseph enter, sit by the manger and sing)

*Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are.  
Up above the world so high, like a diamond in the sky.  
Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are.*

*Subsequent verses call GIA at (800) 442-1358*

*Or go online at [www.giamusic.com](http://www.giamusic.com)*

*Ask for publication G-5746*

LUKE'S GOSPEL (Youth portraying Luke continues reading from the scroll)

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

(Shepherds and angels take their places)

SONG *While Shepherd's Watched Their Flocks* (Children portraying Luke and Gabriel sing the appropriate parts of the first five verses. All the angels join Gabriel in sing Verse Six)

LUKE'S GOSPEL (Youth portraying Luke resumes reading from the scroll and pauses for a shepherd to recite the underlined portion)

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

### 3

SONG            *Away in a Manger* (Shepherds, Stars and Angels sing by the manger. The Stars hold their star wands over the manger during the underlined portion of this verse)

*Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,  
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;  
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,  
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.*

NARRATOR (Speaks from the pulpit)

The stars continued to shine on Bethlehem, and one night a special star shined among them. Those who saw and followed that star never forgot it.

THE STARS OF BETHLEHEM SING

*Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are.  
Up above the world so high, like a diamond in the sky.  
Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are.*

SERVANT WOMAN & GRANDDAUGHTER (Two youth have a dialog stage right)

GD: Grandma, how long have you served the king?

SW: O child, I have served the king and the king's father since I was a little girl your age. I was even among the caravan that followed the great star to Bethlehem. Do you know? There is a man, Matthew, who has written about that trip and the baby we found in Bethlehem.

GD: Tell me the story.

SW: It is a long story about Jesus the Savior. I have memorized the part about our trip and the gifts our king and others brought to Jesus. Here is how Matthew tells it:

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL (Youth dressed as the gospel writer reads from a scroll pausing for a king, scribe and Herod to deliver their respective lines)

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage."

4

SONG            *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* (Stars & Caravan sing)

*Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are.  
Up above the world so high, like a diamond in the sky.  
Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are.*

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL (Youth portraying Matthew resumes the gospel)

When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

SONG            *That Boy Child of Mary* (The entire cast gathers: Mary, Joseph and the stars are by the manger, Luke's people are stage left, Matthew's people are stage right)

*Refrain: All Youth  
Verse 1: Matthew Side  
Verse 2: Luke Side  
Refrain: All Youth  
Verse 3: Matthew Side  
Verse 4: Luke Side  
Refrain: All Youth*

*Verse 5: All Youth*  
*Verse 6: All Youth*  
*Refrain: All Youth*

NARRATOR (The narrator announces)

To this day the stories Luke and Matthew wrote proclaim the joy in Bethlehem that has come to all the world.

SONG *Joy to the World* (Congregation sings as children recess)

*Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive its King;  
Let ev'ry heart prepare him room and heav'n and nature sing,  
And heav'n and nature sing, And heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.*

*Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ,  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy.  
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.*

*He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove  
The glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love,  
And wonders of his love, and wonders, and wonders of his love.*