

What Does Jesus Want?

An Alternative Christmas Event
Based on *Carols with Justice*

This intergenerational event mixes brief scenes and carols, is easy to produce and flexible in length. Any scene can be included or not. The original purchaser has permission to copy scripts on *recycled paper*.

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Purpose: to avoid fantasy that passes as mystery at Christmas, and to give a strong element of social justice to the traditional pageant.

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Adapt scripts as needed.
The script texts are on the CD-ROM “Simply the Best: Over 30 Years of Alternatives.”

Instructions: Everyone in the congregation must have access to ALL of the carols’ words used in the pageant – either in a printed program or projected on a screen.

The accompanist, song leader and soloists need a copy of the *Carols with Justice* booklet. Since most of the tunes are well known, the event organizer can:

1. Buy booklets for everyone (at quantity price from Alternatives)

2. The original purchaser may make copies on recycled paper.

3. Buy the CD-ROM “Simply the Best: 30 years of Alternatives” (\$15) or “Worship Alternatives” (\$25). Copy the texts from the CD-ROM to your printed or projected program.

4. Download the texts from SimpleLiving.org >> Services >> Archives

Costumes and stage: Modern day dress (preferably without commercial logos). Traditional crèche at front. Lower house lights during scenes; raise them for carol singing. Soloist/choir may be visible or not but should not distract from the carols’ words. All speakers must speak slowly and clearly. Mic actors if possible.

What Does Jesus Want for Christmas?

An Alternative Christmas Pageant/Service/Program/Event
Based on “Carols with Justice”

- Intergenerational
- Brief scenes mixed with carols
- Easy to produce
- Flexible in length. Include a scene or not.
- Original purchaser may copy scripts.

See back cover for contents and instructions.

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Scene 1 SCRIPT

What Does Jesus Really Want for His Birthday?

Six-ten elementary students gathered around teacher.

Teacher: We all know that birthday parties can be fun. I want you to imagine that you are going to Jesus' birthday party. The magi brought gold, frankincense and myrrh. What gift would you bring?

[hands shoot up]

Student 1: a new video game!

Student 2: some Legos

Student 3: my favorite movie

Student 4: a birthday cake

Student 5: lots of party hats

Student 6: a Christmas tree

Narrator: Let's think a minute. When we celebrate a birthday, we are careful to give what the person really wants or needs. Is there any doubt what Jesus

wants from us? He tells us that in order to give to him, we will find him and our joy in helping people who are hungry, thirsty, new to town or our school, don't have a winter coat, are sick or even people in prison.

By helping to provide a goat for a farmer in Honduras, a decent home for a family in a poor part of Mississippi, or food for those who are victims of war, we give Jesus a birthday gift he really wants.

Teacher: Can you think of something to give Jesus that's not a thing? This might be a little harder. A gift that's not a thing. Let's sing to get some ideas.

#1 - Angels We Have Heard on High (stanza 1- congregation; 2-3 - soloists)

Student 1: Oh, you mean like peace, helping people get along!

Student 2: How about taking care of the Earth?!

Student 3: I can sing, too. Singing isn't stuff!

Student 4: I can tell people how having Jesus in their lives can help

[Program back]

Suitable for Posting on the Office Bulletin Board, on the Refrigerator, and for Sharing with Friends and Relatives...

TEN TIPS FOR A SIMPLER, MORE MEANINGFUL CHRISTMAS

1. Plan ahead. Instead of going on auto-pilot the day after Thanksgiving, hold a family meeting to decide what the group really wants to do and who's going to do what.

2. If you need a symbol for giving (in addition to Jesus and the Three Wise Ones), learn about St. Nicholas. Santa Claus has been completely taken over by commerce.

3. Avoid debt. Refuse to be pressured by advertising to overspend.

4. Avoid stress. Give to yourself. Don't assume that things have to be the same way they've always been.

5. Draw names rather than everyone giving something to everyone else in your giving circle. Set a ceiling for each recipient. Give children ONE thing they really want, rather than so many gifts. If need be, pool funds.

6. Give appropriate gifts. Get to know the recipient. Give what they want to receive, not what you want to buy.

7. Give alternative gifts. Give 25% of what you spent last year to the needy... individuals or groups locally, nationally or internationally.

Buy crafts and clothing from developing countries at alternative gift markets, not from commercial importers, so that the artisans receive a fair price for their work.

Give of yourself, not just "stuff"- a coupon book for future services (such as baby-sitting or an "enchanted evening"); something baked, sewn, handmade, composed, etc.; or a family service project, such as working together at a soup kitchen.

8. Celebrate Advent for four weeks before Christmas. Use the booklet "Whose Birthday Is It, Anyway?" or some other appropriate guide.

9. Put the gifts under the tree shortly before opening them. Then take turns opening them around the tree, not all at once, so that each gift can be admired and each giver thanked.

10. Make changes slowly but persistently. Don't try to change everything and everybody all at once. The resistance will make you feel defeated and lonely.

For more help and a free catalog of ideas, call **Alternatives for Simple Living, 800-821-6153** or visit www.SimpleLiving.org Ten Tips on line at SimpleLiving.org >> AboutUs >> News >> Christmas >> 10 Tips

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[Sample Program]

What Does Jesus Want for Christmas?

An Alternative Christmas Pageant/Service/Program/Event
Based on “Carols with Justice”

Greeting: The purpose of our pageant this year is to avoid much that passes as important at Christmas, and to give it a strong sense of social justice. It’s based on a collection of traditional carols that have some new words. Please note the instructions for each hymn. Some stanzas are sung by all of us, some by soloists. Pay close attention to the words. Be sure to read the “Ten Tips” on the back of the program. [And use the family Advent booklet “Whose Birthday Is It, Anyway?” at home. It’s available in the narthex/from Alternatives.

Opening Advent Hymn: #14 - Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel
Stanza 1-congregation; 2-soloist

Scene – What Does Jesus Really Want for His Birthday?

Carol #4 - Go, Tell it on the Mountain

Scene - Thoughts While Not Listening to the Christmas Story

Carol # 5 - Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful

Scene - The Story of Jason, “Whose Birthday Is It, Anyway?”

Carol # 11 - Once in Royal David’s City

Scene - “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas”

Optional Carol Sing (secular)

16 - Deck the Halls

17 - We Wish You a Merry Christmas

Prayers

Closing Hymn: #12 - Silent Night, Holy Night!

Stanza 1-congregation; 2-soloist [additional traditional stanzas optional]

Benediction

them have less stress and debt, be more hopeful, and live happier.

Teacher: Let’s see what the hymn, The First Noel, tells us about what else we can do.

#15 - The First Noel (stanzas 1 & 2 - congregation)

Student 5: Does care for the Earth mean that I should hug the dirt?

Student 6: No, silly! It means that we try not to pollute or be wasteful. Instead we do things that keep plants and animals and water and air healthy.

Student 3: Like recycling and picking up trash at school?

Student 4: That’s good. I try to think and decide if something I do is good for the Earth and will keep it healthy and beautiful. The answer to that question helps me decide what to do.

Teacher: That is a really good idea! Let’s see what the hymn “O Little Town of Bethlehem” tells us about gift giving.

#10 - O Little Town of Bethlehem (stanza 1-congregation, 5-soloist)

Student 1: I don’t get this song!!

Student 2: I don’t either!

Student 1: What is “willful waste”?

Student 2: Is “avarice” like licorice? Is it candy?

Student 3: I’m guessing that “worthless taste” is those cold French Fries that I found on the diningroom table this morning. I tried one, yuck!

Student 4: Well I get what the last two lines mean – God gives us treasures and we should share them with other people.

Teacher: Thank goodness! Let’s see. “Willful waste” means to waste things on purpose. Like taking lots more food on your plate than you know you could ever eat.

Student 5: I did that, then I felt bad.

Teacher: “Avarice” is not a candy. It is another word for greed. Wanting to have lots of things just because you want lots of things. Avarice makes us think of ourselves and things more than other people and what is best for everybody.

Student 6: I try to think of other people, but I admit that sometimes I only think of myself!

Teacher: It gets easier to do as you practice, believe me. You will get better at having “charity” as the hymn says.

[All exit during next carol.]

Scene 1 SCRIPT variation

What Does Jesus Really Want for His Birthday?

Four-five actors kneel at creche like the magi/shepherds.

Narrator: Imagine that you are going to honor the baby Jesus. The magi brought gold, frankincense and myrrh. What gift would you bring?

Student 1: My new toy machine gun. [reverently takes it from out of view and places it in front of the manger]

Adult 1: My credit card. [likewise]

Adult 2: My SUV. [likewise]

Teen: My imported sport shoes make in a sweatshop. [likewise]

Narrator: Let’s think a minute. When we celebrate a birthday, we are careful to give what the person really wants or needs. Is there any doubt what Jesus

wants from us? He tells us that in order to give to him, we will find him the face of people who are hungry, thirsty, new to town, without enough clothes or climate correct clothes, sick or in prison.

By helping to provide a goat for a farmer in Honduras, a decent home for a family in rural Mississippi, or food for those who are victims of war, we give Jesus a birthday gift he really wants.

Can you think of something to give Jesus that’s not a thing? Let’s sing to get some ideas.

#1 - Angels We Have Heard on High (stanza 1-congregation; 2-3-soloists)

Narrator: So, now can you think of something to give Jesus that’s not a thing?

Student 1: Oh, you mean stuff like PEACE! Like helping people get along!

Adult 2: [pause, “gets it.”] How about taking care of the Earth?!

Student 2: I think it means we are to give our time, money, and help to poor people.

The Story of Jason:
Whose Birthday Is It, Anyway?

In the Land of Puzzling Tales, there lived an eight-year-old boy by the name of Jason.

Now in this land and in the neighborhood where Jason lived, the unexpected always happened.

Instead of football they played kneeball; instead of the children “going to school” the teachers were busy “going to homes.” In the summer time, it was not uncommon to see water freeze and in the winter time to see leaves on trees. It was a funny, strange place.

One incident in the Land of Puzzling Tales stands out. When it was time for Jason’s ninth birthday, as usual, the unusual happened.

Jason’s grandparents came from their home across the country to help celebrate, but of course, when they got to Jason’s neighborhood, they went immediately to the Browns’ down the street and visited and stayed there. When Jason’s mother baked the birthday cake, she gave it to the letter carrier to eat.

And when all the neighborhood kids heard it was Jason’s birthday, they exchanged gifts with one another and, of course, Jason got none.

There was a blizzard of birthday cards. The post office had to hire extra workers and work longer hours to handle the deluge of cards. Of course, in the Land of Puzzling Tales, the expected was the unexpected, and all the kids, the moms and dads, grandparents, and even a couple of dogs and a parakeet got cards, while poor Jason got none.

Finally, at about nine o’clock, in a fit of frustration and anger, Jason went out of his house, borrowed the school cheerleader’s megaphone, rode up and down the street on his unicycle and shouted at the top of his lungs, “*Whose birthday is it, anyway?*”

And the night was so silent that all night long echoes bounced off the mountains. “*Whose birthday is it, anyway? Whose birthday is it, anyway?*”

The baby Jesus will be kidnapped again this year and held ransom for billions of dollars. This year North Americans will surrender billions of dollars to the stores to buy gifts to swap.

But it is Jesus’ birthday! Jesus ought to receive the gifts. Jesus said, “Inasmuch as you have done it to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you have done it to me.” We give to Jesus when we give to the poor, the weak, the hungry, the homeless, the refugees, the prisoners.

It will be a great birthday celebration when God’s people begin in earnest to give once again to Jesus. For after all, it is his birthday, isn’t it?

- Rev. Arley Fadness, Harrisburg, SD

starving children and cut back on my Christmas budget this year.

Adult 2: We already did it. We even sent each person on our list a note telling them that we had made a donation to feed a hungry child in their name. That way, more people are thinking about it and getting involved.

Adult 3: I'm still going to think about it. It's a big change for us at Christmas.

Adult 2: I guess we're supposed to love people even if we don't like 'em.

Adult 1: [appearing from the side of the stage]. Oh great! I've only got one more gift to buy! I'm not sure what to get for Melvin, he's got everything. Surely there must be something fun that I can find. Then off to sort, and wrap, and mail, and hide the presents, and decorate the tree, and bake the cookies, and go to the party, and...

[Turning to the audience]

Why are you looking at me? You'd better get busy! Are you any different than me? [She leaves the stage mumbling.]

Narrator: Let's sing God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen, Hymn #8, stanza 1.

#8 - God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen (stanza 1-congregation; 2 & 3-soloist)

NOTE: To add more visual action and contrast to Scene 2, pantomime a traditional manger tableau as the script progress, i.e. pace the entering of Mary and Joseph, shepherds, angels, magi, etc. in costume, up the aisles to the front, very slowly and mute.

Adult 1: I can tell people how having Jesus in their lives can help them have less stress and debt, be more hopeful, and live happier.

Narrator: Let's see what the hymn, The First Noel, tells us about what else we can do.

#15 - The First Noel (stanzas 1 & 2 - congregation)

Adult 1: Maybe we have enough stuff already.

Student 1: Caring for the Earth means that we try not to pollute. Instead we do things that keep plants and animals and water and air healthy.

Student 2: Like recycling and picking up trash at school?

Student 1: That's good. But there's more. I try to think and decide if something I do is good for the Earth and will keep it healthy and beautiful. The answer to that question helps me decide what to do.

Narrator: That is a really good idea! Let's see what the hymn "O Little Town of Bethlehem" tells us about gift giving.

#10 - O Little Town of Bethlehem (stanza 1-congregation, 5-soloist)

Student 2: Now those are gifts we can really get excited about!

All: Yeah!

[All exit during next carol.]

Scene 2 SCRIPT

Thoughts While Not Listening to the Christmas Story

Narrator at podium; two teenagers out of sight; three adults in back of church

[Narrator reads Christmas Story – Luke 2:1-14 – quietly. Two teenagers talk over the reading so the audience can clearly hear what they are saying.]

Teen 1: Yeah. I got a little puppy. Really cute and soft and cuddly and lively. But now I've got to teach him to use the newspaper, to be housebroken.

Teen 2: Oh yuck, you mean... oh yuck. We're trying to toilet train my little brother. What a mess.

Teen 1: My grampa used to tell me stories about cleaning out the barn on

the farm. Am I glad I don't live on a farm. That's gross. Farm animals, yuck.

Adult 2: Kids. How many? How old?

Teen 2: Dis-GUST-ing. Did you hear that?! Jesus was born in a manger, a feed box, a cattle stall. Have you EVER seen how much cows slobber?! Who would ever let their kid be born in all that stink and... and stuff. It's not even sanitary!

Adult 1: She has four. I asked her how things were going and she said money was tight. I think I'll look through my kids' closet and see if there are some clothes that might fit her kids.

Teen 1: Yeah, he's lucky he survived. Sure glad nobody has to put up with that anymore!!

Adult 2: That's nice of you. I'll wait to see how I like her before I offer to help.

Teen 2: Well, at least nobody in America.

Adult 1: I guess we're supposed to love people even if we don't like 'em.

Teen 1: Yeah, right.

Narrator stops reading: Let's now sing It Came Upon the Midnight Clear, Hymn #6, Stanza 1.

Narrator stops reading: Let's now sing Away in a Manger, Hymn #2, Stanza 1.

#6 - It Came Upon the Midnight Clear (stanza 1-congregation; soloist-5-8)

2 - Away in a Manger (stanza 1-congregation; 5-soloist; other stanzas optional)

Narrator resumes muffled reading of Christmas story.

Narrator resumes muffled reading of Christmas story.

Adult 1: Did you see that new girl at work today?

Adult 1: Let's see, I've got something for Jennifer and Angie. I need to run to the mall tomorrow and get the new salad shooter for Ruthie and the new computer game for little Ralphie. Hmmmm. I hope I don't exceed the limit on the credit card again this year.

Adult 2: Yeah, a foreigner. One of THEM.

Adult 1: She did show me some pictures of her kids. They sure are cute.

That hurt. Maybe I could call and try to get it raised again. I surely don't want to be a cheapskate like Jamie and give my kids and relatives hand-made stuff. I'd never live that down. Home made bread! Poetry! How old fashioned! Coupon books for baby sitting and lawn mowing! How juvenile. When there's so much new stuff to get and collect and show off and... and... and dust. That reminds me. I need to get a lock for my glass case. I can't take a chance of any of my prize plates getting stolen, especially with those new people from Africa moving in down the street.

Adult 3: Shepherds. Bet those guys had body odor! No wonder Jesus grew up being an outsider! He never did associate with the right people... from the very beginning. He helped outcasts and lepers and women with low morals. No wonder the leaders got angry at him!

Adult 1: Now let's see, I've bought for three people. Two more to go. Got to hurry. Got dinner to get in the oven and a party to get ready to go to.

Narrator stops reading: Let's now sing What Child Is This, Hymn #13, stanza 1.

Narrator stops reading: Let's now sing - Angels from the Realms of Glory, Hymn #9, stanzas 1 & 2.

#13 - What Child Is This (stanza 1-congregation; 2, 3, 4-soloist)

#9 - Angels from the Realms of Glory (stanzas 1 & 2-congregation)

Narrator resumes muffled reading of Christmas story.

Narrator resumes muffled reading of Christmas story.

Adult 2: I saw a commercial about starving children on TV last night.

Adult 2: Swaddling cloths. Rags. How primitive. Couldn't Mary have done better than that? No wonder Jesus grew up being an outsider! He didn't have the right clothes... from the very beginning.

Adult 3: I did too. It was really hard to watch. Those bloated stomachs and those sad eyes.

Adult 2: My husband looked into the organization and they make sure that almost all the money goes to help the kids.

Adult 3: I'm thinking about making a monthly donation to give food to