

A Christmas Play--1gift4good

Written by Erin Anderssen and Joel Crouse

Edited by Susan Clark

Cast

Man/Fred: Noah

Mary: Sylvia

Teen/Peter: Mathis

Woman/Gloria: Poppy

Angel Gabriel: Clara

Narrators: Tristan, Lily, and Cody

Children's Verses: Brooklyn and Samson

Nativity Scene: Ila & Augusta
Anton & Charlie
Kole
Liam
Joshua & Elise
Antonia
Saige & Liam
Isabella
Ella & Kaiden

Ushers: Max and Chris

Greeting, Advent Prayer and lighting: Peter's Family

Prayers of Intercession: Alex and Greta

Offertory Prayer: Kelsey

Prayer after communion: Elsa

Blessing: Sophie

ORDER OF WORSHIP (Setting 2)

GATHERING—*The Holy Spirit call us together as the people of God.*

Organ Prelude

Gathering Song # 242

The Greeting and Advent Prayer

Lighting of Advent Candle sing vs. 4 # 240

WORD—*God speaks to us through the youth of our congregation.*

Telling the story of 'Igift4good'

Children's Anthem: *What If God Was One of Us?*

Scene 1: Mary Meets Fred

Luke 2:1-7 and Children's Verse

Hymn: *Away in a Manger* #278

Scene 2: Peter Meets Fred

Luke 2:8-15 and Children's Verse

Hymn: *What Child Is This* #296

Scene 3: Gloria Meets Fred

Matthew 2:1-12 and Children's Verse

Hymn: *People, Look East* #248

Scene 4: Fred Meets An Angel

Luke 2:16-20 and Children's Verse

Scene 5: Fred Experiences One Gift for Good

Children's Anthem: *What If God Was One of Us?*

MEAL—*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

Prayers of Intercession; sung response # 752

Offering and Setting the Table

Great Thanksgiving pg 129

Words of Institution and Lord's Prayer pg 134

"Lamb of God" (page 135) & Communion Hymns # 272, 295

Song and Prayer after Communion pg 135-36

SENDING—*God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.*

Blessing

Sending Song # 265

Dismissal *Go in peace in mission for others. Thanks be to God.*

*The scene: There's a bench in the middle and a man sits there, waiting for the bus.
He is wearing a scarf, a hat, and a heavy coat.*

MAN: Boy, this is a cold Christmas eve. Snow is beginning to fall; the weather forecast is calling for a blizzard. Just look at everyone bundled up in scarves and hats. Busy with their errands and heavy loads, trying to check off those last lists before Christmas. They don't even notice each other. There isn't a merry Christmas to be heard among them. Hey Merry Christmas! *(no one reacts)* If they just stop and listen, they might hear a choir. They sound like angels.

Children's Anthem: *What If God Was One Of Us?*

What if God was one of us?
Just a slob like one of us?
Just a stranger on the bus?
Trying to make his way home.
Just trying to make his way home.

If God had a face what would it look like
And would you want to see
If seeing meant that you would have to believe
In things like heaven and in Jesus and the saints and all the prophets

And yeah yeah God is great
yeah yeah God is good
yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah

What if God was one of us
Just a slob like one of us
Just a stranger on the bus
Trying to make his way home
He's trying to make his way home

(Children's Anthem was used with permission from Joan Osborne and her 2005 song "One of Us".)

(As the choir sings, a young girl who is clearly pregnant, emerges from the group of shoppers, looking lost, but searching for someone.)

MARY: I am so late. So late. What am I going to do?

MAN: Can I help you?

MARY: Can you help? I don't think so. I am afraid I'm lost. And it's so cold, and I can't find Joseph anywhere.

MAN: Just take a moment; have a seat here. I'm just waiting for my bus. Tell me what's happened.

MARY: We're going on this huge trip, you see. Going to Joseph's hometown - that's my husband - and it's really important we get there by a certain time - to Bethlehem. I am supposed to meet him at the train station - he's waiting for me. But we don't have much money, and if I miss train, I don't know what's going to happen. I don't even know the way.

MAN: Bethlehem, isn't that east of here?

MARY: East, west, north, south - I just need to get there. You probably noticed I am going to have a baby. But well, it's not something I planned for. It's not something I really wanted. Not right now, anyway. The timing is not good. And now I have to adjust to it. I have to have faith - that's what someone once told me: that I have been blessed by God. And to have faith. But it's hard, let me tell you. At least going all that way by train is a tad better than riding a donkey through the dessert in my condition. That's if I even make it to the bus.

MAN: Well, I wouldn't know about that, but I can help get you to the bus stop in time. How about I hail you a taxi?

MARY: A taxi? That would be great, but I don't have the money for that.

MAN: No worries, my treat. And don't worry about the rest of it: these things have a way of working themselves out. (He whistles.) Here's a taxi now! Merry Christmas! Keep that faith!

MARY: Thank you! You are an angel. A true angel.

NARRATOR: In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph 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. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her

child. ⁷And 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.

(As the narrators reads, our young Mary and Joseph take their place in the manger scene in the chancel behind the bench of the main dialogue. This scene builds throughout the play informing the audience of the connection to the Biblical narrative.) And the young children recite:

Mary and Joseph courageous and strong.

They followed in faith while travelling so long.

Hymn: *Away in a Manger*

#278

- 1 Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,
 the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
 the stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
 the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.
- 2 The cattle are lowing; the baby awakes,
 but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
 I love you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky
 and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.
- 3 Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay
 close by me forever and love me, I pray.
 Bless all the dear children in your tender care
 and fit us for heaven, to live with you there.

Text: North American, 19th cent.

As the hymn ends, we return to the man sitting by bus. A young man, with big head phones around his neck sits beside him, and buries his face in his hands.

MAN: Come now, son. It can't be so bad. Would you like to tell me about it?

TEEN: I don't think so. I don't think you could help.

MAN: Try me. I've been around the bend a few times.

TEEN: Well....

MAN: Seriously, what else are we going to do while we wait for the bus? It's running late with the storm.

TEEN: Well, here's the thing. I don't want to tell you everything, but let's say, hypothetically, a really powerful person – I mean really powerful – appeared to you. And let's say, they told you to do something, that something life-changing had happened, something that would change your, um, stars – and all you had to do was follow this one little direction to make it happen.

MAN: I gotta tell you, that sounds pretty good so far. What's the catch?

TEEN: The catch is I am, that is well, this hypothetical person, is scared.

MAN: Scared?

TEEN: Yes, scared. I mean, we are talking about changing everything, leaving your regular life behind. I mean, that life isn't bad. Sure sometimes, it does seem like everyone is wearing the same thing, and thinking the same way, and doing the same things. Sometimes, maybe, you feel you are just sitting around watching the other sheep, and maybe being a sheep yourself. But that's easy. Why upset things?

MAN: So you're afraid of change.

TEEN: Me? Not me. Hypothetically.

MAN: Well, hypothetically speaking, who isn't? Doing something you know is right, something that pushes you out of your comfort zone, is scary. It takes courage. But think what you miss if you never take the right kinds of risk. Won't you also wonder what you've been missing?

TEEN: You're right. I would always wonder.

MAN: That's courage, young man, and what always lies behind courage is hope: the belief that things can be better on the other side. In this case, I have no doubt it will be better – hypothetically speaking. In fact (he reaches into his pocket), I want you to have this: it's my lucky coin. I always rub it when I am worried about how things will turn out. I know it will be lucky for you.

TEEN: Really, you would give this to me.

MAN: Absolutely. Hope is contagious after all; it shouldn't just sit in someone's pocket. Now, don't you have somewhere to go?

TEEN: I do. I really do. Thanks, mister. You're an angel. A true angel.

NARRATOR: ⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" 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."

Manger Scene: Shepherds and sheep take their places in the manger scene. And the young children recite:

Shepherds and Sheep they followed that star.
They walked and they walked no matter how far.

Hymn: *What Child Is This*

#296

- 1 What child is this, who, laid to rest,
on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the king,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
the babe, the son of Mary!
- 2 Why lies he in such mean estate
where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
the silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce him through,
the cross be borne for me, for you;
hail, hail the Word made flesh,
the babe, the son of Mary!
- 3 So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;

come, peasant, king, to own him.
The King of kings salvation brings;
let loving hearts enthrone him.
Raise, raise the song on high,
the virgin sings her lullaby;
joy, joy, for Christ is born,
the babe, the son of Mary!

Text: William C. Dix, 1837-1898

Then the audience returns to the man on the bus bench. This time a business woman sits next to him. She is frantically typing on her blackberry, and occasionally brushing away a tear.

MAN: Now, Miss, just relax those fingers, and take a breather. It's Christmas Eve.

WOMAN: It's a Christmas nightmare is more like it.

MAN: Now, it can't be that bad. Why don't you tell me about it?

WOMAN: I don't know. I don't even know you.

MAN: Sometimes, a stranger's ear is just what you need. Lay it on me.

WOMAN: Okay. Well, I'm a pretty person, right? I've had my share of good luck and some natural talent. I earned myself a good job, with prestige and money. At my work, they considered me a wise woman. Someone who has things figured out. But not this time.

MAN: What do you mean?

WOMAN: Well, it's my boss, you see. He's learned about this special event that our competitor is planning; this really great and wondrous thing that's about to happen, bigger than the Iphone 5. It's a real game changer. And he's worried because he's thinking that this new special happening will steal some of his thunder; that the players involved in this big event might compete with his glory. He doesn't like that. So he's asked me to head out, to travel to Bethlehem, to pretend to bring gifts but really just spy on them.

MAN: Bethlehem, eh? That's a weird coincidence. What are you going to do?

WOMAN: I don't know. If I don't do it, I will probably get fired, or worse. If I do, well, I don't think I can live with that.

MAN: Hmmm. That is a quandary. In my experience, it's always good to trust your gut. It's usually speaking the truth. If you don't feel right, it's probably because what you're about to do isn't, well, right.

WOMAN: So what should I do?

MAN: I have an idea. Your boss doesn't sound like a great guy to start with, so maybe you need to think about a new job anyway. What if you head over to the special event and check it out; maybe you will get there, and realize it's where you always wanted to be in the first place. Not to spy. But to deliver those gifts like you mean them. Because it's the right place to be.

WOMAN: You know what? That's awesome advice. That's exactly what I will do. I feel peaceful already.

MAN: Exactly, peace is really about knowing you are where you should be. Here, take this; it's my key holder and it has a compass. Maybe it will help you remember where you ought to be.

WOMAN: Wow. That's really nice. And you don't even know me. Thanks so much. You're an angel. A real angel.

NARRATOR: In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men 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." 3When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; 4and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. 5They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:6'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.'" 7Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 8Then 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." 9When 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. 10When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. 11On 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. 12And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Manger scene: as the narrator speaks, three wise men walk up the aisle and present their gifts at the feet of Mary and Joseph. Then they take their place with the shepherds and sheep at the manger scene. And the young children recite:
The wisemen appeared with their good gifts.
And they didn't care what old mean Herod did.

Hymn: People, Look East

#248

- 1 People, look east. The time is near
of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able,
trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east, and sing today—
Love, the Guest, is on the way.
- 2 Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,
one more seed is planted there.
Give up your strength the seed to nourish,
that in course the flow'r may flourish.
People, look east, and sing today—
Love, the Rose, is on the way.
- 3 Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim,
one more light the bowl shall brim,
shining beyond the frosty weather,
bright as sun and moon together.
People, look east, and sing today—
Love, the Star, is on the way.
- 4 Angels announce with shouts of mirth
him who brings new life to earth.
Set ev'ry peak and valley humming
with the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look east, and sing today—
Love, the Lord, is on the way.

Text: Eleanor E. Farjeon, 1881-1965

Text © Miss E. Farjeon Will Trust, by permission of David Higham Associates.

Return to the man on the bench, who is still sitting, waiting for the bus. Finally, an angel sits down beside him.

ANGEL GABRIEL: Hello, Fred.

FRED: Whoa. You're a – a – a – real angel.

ANGEL: Yes, I am. They call me Gabriel. I've been watching you.

FRED: (looking around nervously) Uh, watching me? Why would you waste your time watching me?

ANGEL: It wasn't a waste of time Fred. I watched you offer a seat to a young lost woman who needed a hand. I saw you hail the taxi for her. I saw you give faith that things would be okay.

FRED: That was nothing. Anyone would do that.

ANGEL: Well, we like to hope so. But that brings me to Peter, who was the teenage boy you helped. He was afraid to change his life for the better, and you made time for him. You gave him your lucky coin. And most importantly, you gave him hope.

FRED: He looked like he could really use it.

ANGEL: And then, you met Gloria. She really needed some good advice, and you gave it to her. And more, with your compass, you gave her a reminder of her path. And you gave her peace. You are an angel, Fred; an angel on earth.

FRED: I was just being nice.

ANGEL: Now, Fred. You have been sitting here for a long time. Let me ask you: there's no bus, is there?

FRED: What do you mean – it's coming any minute.

ANGEL: Fred, I am the Angel Gabriel. Don't you think I would know if the bus was coming?

FRED: You're right. The truth is, I don't have anywhere to go. But it's Christmas, and I thought I would just people watch.

ANGEL: Ah, Fred. Instead you did so much more. Will you come with me? I want to show you something.

NARRATOR: So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

*Scene: The angels move into our manger scene. And the young children recite:
The angels they came, to tell, lead and live.
And everyone learned from their one gift to give.*

FRED: It's beautiful, Gabriel. Really beautiful.

(He looks around but the Angel Gabriel is not as his side. MARY, GLORIA also stand watching the manger scene. Suddenly, PETER appears at his side.)

PETER: Hey, mister!

FRED: The name's Fred.

PETER: How do you know my...never mind. I'm going to do what you suggested. I think your lucky coin really helped. But listen, I talked to my parents, and I was wondering if you might like to come to our place for Christmas Eve dinner. We have plenty of room, and good food. Unless you have somewhere else to go?

FRED: Why Peter, that sounds lovely. I guess I am lucky that bus never did turn up. What a wonderful Christmas!

(They head out off stage. The angel Gabriel stands to address the congregations)

ANGEL GABRIEL: So Fred and Peter went off to a very merry Christmas indeed, having shared the gift of peace, faith, hope and kindness – the gifts of Christmas, the gift that comes to us, as Christians, through the birth of Jesus. For us, that is our first gift for good, given to us, that we might share the blessings we receive from God with those around us. Sometimes, we are lucky to receive them

ourselves. Sometimes, we are called to give those gifts ourselves, even in unusual places like on a bench waiting for the bus. It can be as simple as a lucky coin; as compassionate as a kind word. Often, they make a bigger difference than we may ever know.

On Christmas Eve, it took one gift to bring good into the world. And we are called, in every step of our lives, to pass on that same love and hope and charity, for the good of others. Amen

Children's Anthem: *What If God Was One Of Us?*

What if God were one of us?
Just a slob like one of us?
Just a stranger on the bus?
Trying to make his home.
Just trying to make his way home.

If God had a face what would it look like
And would you want to see
If seeing meant that you would have to believe
In things like heaven and in Jesus and the saints and all the prophets

And yeah yeah god is great
yeah yeah god is good
yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah

What if God was one of us
Just a slob like one of us
Just a stranger on the bus
Trying to make his way home
He's trying to make his way home

(Children's Anthem was used with permission from Joan Osborne and her 2005 song "One of Us".)