

# Drama - Zooming in on the Nativity: A Virtual Christmas Pageant

## Cast Members

- Director 1 [carrying a stopwatch]
- Director 2 [carrying a movie clapper board that they snap when the pageant starts]
- Tiny Tim
- Joseph [carrying a staff, a broom handle is fine]
- Mary [carrying a baby doll in a blanket]
- Star [with a glittery cardboard star around their face, carrying a flashlight]
- Innkeeper [carrying a sign that says "NO ROOM"]
- Shepherd 1
- Shepherd 2 [both carrying shepherd's crooks made from cardboard]
- Various animals from the stable [as many as you want with whatever costumes you have]
- Wise person 1
- Wise person 2
- Wise person 3 [each carrying a wrapped gift]
- Zoom Host [off camera]

## Notes

*This is the second Zoom pageant I have written. The first pageant was recorded by several churches, you can find them on YouTube by searching "Zooming to Bethlehem". Each church did it differently: some record the whole pageant in one go, others have an editor polish it up. Watching those examples on YouTube may give you ideas about how a Zoom pageant can work (and what can go wrong)! An intergenerational cast is always a bonus.*

*The advantage of a Zoom pageant is that it can be recorded ahead of time. The day of the broadcast everyone can watch, even the participants. Having a Zoom Host who can toggle easily between Gallery and Speaker view is important. And it doesn't hurt to have someone who can edit the video to take out any extra pauses.*

*The actors should change their name on the Zoom screen to be their character. The actors keep their microphones on through the pageant, but they must be told to be very quiet when they are not speaking. Don't even try to do the play with actors turning their microphones on and off because you know they won't remember, and they will say their lines and you won't hear them. If very little kids are involved as animals, you will have to mute their microphone because it's not realistic for them to be quiet that long--the adults just must pay attention and turn their mic on when it's their line.*

*Actors must speak the first words of their lines loudly, so the microphone picks them up and Zoom automatically makes them the speaker. As you practice, make sure people don't rustle their script papers by the microphone of their computer, or it will cause interference.*

*Sometimes it will work to have two people on a screen (like Mary and Joseph, or a horse and a cow) but make sure they are not sitting too far back. You need to see their faces. Lighting is important, so people can see the actors.*

Director 1: *[speaking loudly]* OK, are we ready to start the Zoom pageant? Does everyone have their scripts? Hold them up for me to see. *[Zoom Host changes to Gallery View and everyone waves their notes. Stay on Gallery View for this speech.]* Hey, you shepherds, your screen is too dark, please turn some lights on so we can see you properly *[some lights come on them]*. Mary, do you have the baby ready? *[she holds up a doll right to the screen.]* Joseph, where is your staff? *[he waves the staff in front of the camera]*. Innkeeper, do you have your sign? *[they hold up a sign]* Animals, are you ready to go? *[they all wave]* The three wise people--you are looking very royal! *[they raise their crowns and nod their heads]* And I can see the star...you have your flashlight, you're ready for my signal when it's time to shine? *[They blink their flashlight on and off a few times.]* And where is Tiny Tim? *[Tiny Tim waves, he is sitting far back from his camera, so he is very small.]* Ah, there you are, you are so small it's hard to see you. Come up closer to the screen. Good, we are good to go. *[Zoom Host switches to Speaker View]* Christmas is about to arrive. *[looking at his stopwatch]* T-minus 60 seconds, 59, 58, 57. *[This opening speech is a way of introducing the cast to the audience]*

Director 2: Wait, wait, as co-director, before we start the performance, I just have a few words to say. Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today...

Narrator 1: *[Interrupting]* Are you serious? We don't have time for this, our pageant is ready for liftoff...

Director 2: I am serious, as a matter of fact. I think there is always time to remind ourselves about the purpose of pageant, the reason for the season. *[Speaking slowly and with a deep voice, and with big hand gestures, as if they are going to talk for a long time]* Where is God in this pageant? What is God's purpose? What is the big picture here? The Nativity, that great celebration of the birth of our Saviour...

Tiny Tim: *[interrupting]* Excuse me, Mr. Director? Can I ask something?

Director 2: What is it, Tiny Tim?

Tiny Tim: You want to talk about the big picture, but what about the little picture? The little picture is important too, isn't it?

Director 1: Why definitely, Tiny Tim. Who knows more about the importance of little things than children? Out of the mouths of babes! We are going to pay attention to little things in this pageant, as a matter of fact.

Director 2: And of course, the big things.

Director 1: Christmas pageant time, everyone! *[looking at his stopwatch]* C-minus 5 seconds 4, 3, 2, 1.

Director 2: And it's.... ACTION! *[holds the clapper board up to the camera and snaps it shut.]*

Joseph: And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. My name is Joseph, and I am a poor man, a carpenter. It's hard to find work these days. I have a new wife, and we are just setting up our new home. I have so little money and now I'm supposed to take part of that and give it to the Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus. As if he doesn't have enough money already!

Tiny Tim: Why are you giving money to the emperor?

Joseph: That's a good question Tiny Tim. Because I must. That's the way things are in our little country, we are ruled by a foreign ruler who always takes and never gives.

Tiny Tim: Couldn't you just not pay your taxes?

Mary: I wish it was that easy, but that's not the way taxes work. The emperor has an army who is occupying our land with swords and spears and chariots. We have no choice. They tell us where to go and we go. We had to go a long way to pay our taxes. All the way to the province of Judea, where my husband Joseph is from.

Joseph: To my hometown, the City of David, the little town of Bethlehem. I can see it now... the dark streets, the silent stars. And the sleep we had there, so deep and dreamless!

Mary: Joseph and I had not been married very long, and now there was this trip we had to take.

Tiny Tim: Was it sort of like a honeymoon?

Mary: Well...not really, it wasn't a trip for fun, it was a trip to pay taxes. And it was a hard trip to take because I was expecting...*[pause]* expecting a baby.

Tiny Tim: What else could you have been expecting?

Mary: I suppose I could have been expecting some peace and quiet after our marriage, a nice time with my family, a baby shower with all my relatives...but that was not to be.

Joseph: I recall it was a dark night when we finally arrived in Bethlehem. I went looking for a place to stay. I had a hard time finding a place that would take us in. The Comfort Inn, the Holiday Inn, the Best Eastern, all filled up, with not a room to be had! Finally, I knocked at the door of a little inn at the edge of town and explained, "We have travelled here all the way from the province of Galilee, the town of Nazareth. We are here to pay our taxes. Is there room for two travellers?"

Innkeeper: *[they have their sign facing the camera]*. Hmm, let me check. Let me read my sign here. *[They turn the sign around to read it]* Oh, it says "No room." *[Turning the sign back around and pointing to it.]* There is no room for you two.

Joseph: Well, then, is there room for three, because my wife is about to have a baby.

Mary: You can say that again.

Joseph: My wife is about to have a baby!!!!

Innkeeper: Oh, my goodness! Well in that case, I will find room for you after all. Well, maybe not a room. Would a stable do? We have some fresh straw, and it's a roof over your head.

Joseph: Any sort of stable environment will do; we are so grateful! About paying those taxes, as we were coming into town, I noticed there were some long lines at the taxpayer's booth... do you have any advice about how to ...

Mary: *[interrupting]* Joseph, the baby is coming, can you talk about that later?

Joseph: Oh, right, certainly dear.

Tiny Tim: Did you really go and stay in a stable? Is that like a barn?

Joseph: Well in Bethlehem there were many families who had their animals living in a room attached to the side of their house. So, a stable wasn't always like a barn, a different building far away-- it was more like the next door over. Animals were all part of the family.

Mary: I didn't mind sharing a room with the animals, I was glad to just have a place to lie down. The sounds of the animals reminded me that we were not alone.

Cow: Moo      Chicken: Bok Bok      Horse: Neigh *[as many animals as you want]*

Joseph: That was a long night!

Mary: You're telling me! I still remember that big star shining in through the window.

Star: *[light flashing]* Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle.

Mary: I think that starlight gave me hope through all that labour. It was like a sign from God. It reminded me somehow of Gabriel, the angel visitor who came to me months before, who said that my baby was going to be special, the Messiah, the chosen one of God.

Tiny Tim: And was your baby special?

Mary: Yes, he was. A little boy, my first baby. We called him Jesus. I counted his little fingers and his little toes, I kissed his nose, and I wrapped him up. *[she kisses the nose of the baby doll she is holding]* We were so tired, and I needed to sleep.

Joseph: There was fresh straw in the manger, that was a shelf that held the hay for the animals, and so that's where we tucked Jesus, safe and sound.

Mary: I remember I had just dropped off to sleep when I was woken by voices outside.

Shepherd 1: That was us, that was our voices you heard! We were stumbling along in the dark, there was no moon that night, only that bright star.

Star: *[light flashing]* Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle.

Shepherd 2: And I think our eyes were still dazzled from those angels that we had seen.

Tiny Tim: Angels, you saw angels? How did it happen? What did they look like?

Shepherd 1: Well, it was just a regular day, we were keeping watch over our flocks by night, as per usual. Then there was this bright light, like ten thousand candles burning all at once in the night sky.

Shepherd 2: It was their singing that I remember. They were singing like angels... "Glory to God in the highest!" It made me want to sing along.

Shepherd 1: And the angel said to us, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign, you will find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

Mary: And when they came here, Jesus was lying in a manger!!!

Shepherd 1: When we saw the baby, we knelt and gave thanks to God right there and then. Finally, a Saviour coming to help our people!

Shepherd 2: We were so thankful, so deeply thankful that we had a chance to meet this little baby, a gift from God at such a time as this!

Mary: And I was almost falling asleep through your visit, remember? I was so tired.

Joseph: I appreciated the shepherds coming and telling us of the visit of the angels, but that wasn't the only sign we received.

Wise person 1: Is this our time to enter the picture?

Wise person 2: We are travellers from a land far, far away. We are Wise people, who watch the stars. And we were given a sign, a star to follow.

Star: *[flashing light]* Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle.

Wise person 3: We were told of the birth of a great king.

Wise person 1: We headed to Jerusalem first, the capital city of this land. We thought that would be the logical place to find a newborn king.

Wise person 2: We did find King Herod there; he knew nothing about a new baby king. In fact, he seemed rather alarmed at our quest.

Wise person 3: Then he said that he wanted to meet this new king, so he could worship him too. He asked us to send word to him when we found him. But we didn't trust him. We think he hates the idea of another king.

Wise person 1: We weren't going back to tell that evil King Herod anything! We would take a big detour around Jerusalem on our way home.

Joseph: I didn't like the idea of King Herod taking an interest in our baby...he was so small. What could we do to protect him from King Herod and his soldiers?

Mary: I wondered whether we were in danger. I thought the danger was just finding a place for him to be born, but now suddenly, I worried about the bigger picture. I asked Joseph what we should do to protect Jesus.

Joseph: And I told her not to worry. "I will sleep on it, and perhaps God will give us an answer of how to keep our baby safe."

Wise person 1: We brought gifts to the baby: gold,

Wise person 2: frankincense

Wise person 3: and myrrh. [You can have each person each hold up their gift to the camera and Mary receives the present by pulling it from her camera towards herself]

Mary: I was so thankful for their visit and for the gifts.

Joseph: It was another reminder that God was with us.

Mary: We needed that support because we had a long road ahead of us as parents of this special Saviour sent from God.

Tiny Tim: I just don't understand. You call this baby a Saviour...what is a Saviour?

Joseph: That's a good question, and there isn't an easy answer. Our people had gone astray.

Shepherd 1: Sort of like sheep, each going our own way.

Shepherd 2: You should try herding sheep, it's no picnic! Those sheep have a mind of their own!

Joseph: Our people lost sight of who God was, and what we were called to do.

Mary: And things had been going from bad to worse, and now there were all these soldiers and taxes. We had nowhere to turn, we needed help!

Joseph: And Jesus, our little son, was a promise that God was here among us. God was coming to save us.

Mary: God was with us. Jesus was Immanuel, God with us.

Tiny Tim: I wish I could have been there that night, with you and the baby and all the animals in that stable. It sounds like a little bit of heaven.

Mary: I think you would have found that heaven was a bit noisy.

Animals: *[All make their noise in turn]*

Mary: And having a baby around is a lot of work, all that feeding and changing, and I was so tired. We didn't know what the future held. I was anxious.

Joseph: We both were. But we remembered the song that the shepherds shared with us, the song of the angels:

Shepherd 2: *[the Host of the Zoom call changes to a Gallery View so all actors are visible]* "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to all people." *[As they say this the shepherd and then raises their hands in the air.]*

Director 1: *[Zoom Host changes back to Speaker View]* And we will cut there!

Director 2: And that's a wrap! *[holds the clapper board up to the camera and snaps it shut]*

Director 1: Excellent, excellent. I think this was virtually the best pageant we have ever done.

Director 2: I agree, I think that our vision for this pageant really came through, all these people coming together to remember the night Jesus was born. A holy night! A night divine!

Director 1: A pageant divine! Thanks everyone for playing your part, we couldn't have done it without you!



Tiny Tim: But what happens next? Is there Part 2 of the pageant called, “The Saviour Returns”? Or maybe it’s called “A New Hope”?

Director 2: Now that, Tiny Tim, is a big picture question! And the answer is yes! Keep your eyes open, this is one of those situations where the sequel is even more amazing than the first installment!

Star: Watch for the signs *[blinking light on and off]*.

Tiny Tim: Well then, in the meantime, God bless us, everyone! *[Zoom Host changes back to Gallery View and all actors wave good-bye]*

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