

Adaptation of “Christmas Gifts”

by Tanis Harms, Adapted by Anna Muhm

Set and props:

A Christmas tree

Wrapped gifts of various sizes at least 12 (pre-decorated boxes filled with tissue paper and taped closed)

Very large bow

Large roll of Ribbon (enough to go around the church) and wooden dowels

Traditional costumes from a Christmas pageant.

Bells (set out along the first row of the stairs on each side for kids to grab)

Bell cue cards

Bell CD and CD player.

Blue bins

Cast:

Up to 11 Narrators

Shepherds

3 kings (John Poor,

Angels

Mary

Joseph

Adults needed: Narrator, watch the kids in the back of church, cue Narrators, watch kids as they sit, press play on CD player

Except for the early narrators, the cast gathers at the back of church. As they come forward, they'll sit on the floor facing the altar, until they are needed as readers or for playing music.

The process

The gifts will be placed on and around the little tree to hide it from view – tree set up on table

Minimum of 3 kids – one up each aisle.

Kids will then sit on the floor facing the altar to watch the rest of the program.

Introduction:

Offertory: Narrators 1 and 2 come forward.

NARRATOR 1:

Christmas is the time of year when there is a huge focus on gifts. We get catalogs at home. The TV commercials show us the latest and greatest computers, gadgets, and toys. We spend hours trying to think of the perfect gift for everyone in our lives – from Grandma and Grandpa to the new born baby. The Elf on the Shelf follows our every move as we try to behave and hope that one great toy will be under the tree Christmas morning. We spend hours making cookies or other food to eat. We shop for new outfits, learn new recipes, and eat until we get sick. We rush from place to place to get everything done.

NARRATOR 2:

But in all of this excitement, something is missing. As we rush around trying to find our perfect gifts, outfits, and meals; as we try to behave well so Santa will leave us exactly what we want, all too often we forget the gifts that are most important – the things that you can't wrap and put under the tree or bake or buy. The things we can't find in a store or from Santa's workshop; the things we can't craft and share photos of on Facebook. Hidden by all of the packages surrounding us, are the gifts from God. In other words, the REAL gifts of Christmas. Come and join with us in song.

Sing: Oh Come all ye faithful # 234 UMH purple

(during the hymn, kids gather at the rear of church, EXCEPT for Narrators 3 and 4).

FAITH

(at the end of the hymn, the angels walk up with gifts and hold them out towards the congregation)

NARRATOR 3:

“O Come all ye Faithful” – the words are familiar. We sing them every year at this time. Did you ever really think about what they mean? It’s a call “Come here”. A call for everyone who has faith, for everyone who believes to come and celebrate. Faith is one of the real gifts of Christmas. It’s something we can’t buy or bake or make with a kit. Faith is our journey of belief that the child born on Christmas will grow to be our Saviour. Its trust that God knows what he’s doing – even when we don’t.

(angels place gifts on the table, hiding the tree and go and sit on the floor, facing the altar)

NARRATOR 4:

All it takes is the tiniest belief; just like a mustard seed. Just as the seed grows into a tree, so too does our Faith grow. In the words of Matthew, Chapter 13 verse 32 “Though it is the smallest of seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree”. God planted the seed of Faith in our hearts when his son was born– it was his gift to us. Today, we plant our mustard seed of faith anew, in the hopes that it will grow in our hearts from the smallest seed to the largest tree as we celebrate the birth of this special child. Let us sing of the town of Jesus’ birth.

Sing: O little town of Bethlehem #230 UHM Purple

Narrators 5 and 6 come forward.

PEACE

(Isaac and Sabrina walk up with gifts and hold them out the congregation)

NARRATOR 5:

In today's busy, crazy world, it can be hard to find peace. But in the midst of a war 100 years ago on Christmas Eve, soldiers living and fighting in trenches laid down their weapons. They got up, walked toward each other and gathered in peace. They played soccer, exchanged food and souvenirs, and sang songs of Christmas. It was only for a short time, just a day, but they proved that even on a battlefield there can be peace. Peace can be found anywhere, at any time. It is found in the quiet sounds of the forest, the swish of waves on a beach, and the eerie sound of falling snow. Peace is the quiet of night while everyone else sleeps and the feeling of safety and security we feel when we are surrounded by family and friends.

(Joseph and Mary place gifts on the table, hiding the tree and go and sit on the floor, facing the altar)

NARRATOR 6:

But one night, ages ago the quiet was pierced by the cry of a newborn child. And while the night itself was no longer peaceful, there was still a feeling of peace for everyone who saw this little one. It was a feeling of calm – that things would be okay; that the world had suddenly changed with that newborn's tears. Although crying loudly, that baby brought peace. Later, that child would say in the Gospel of John, chapter 14 verse 27: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." This advent season, let us welcome the Peace of Christ into our midst and celebrate what a wonderful child He is.

Sing: Jesus, Jesus Oh what a wonderful Child 3 times. # 136 NCH Black

Send up Narrators 7 and 8

HOPE

(Shepherds walk up with gifts and hold them out the congregation)

NARRATOR 7:

Hope. It's a feeling of expectation and a desire for something to happen. We see it on the faces of children as they peek out to see the Christmas tree on Christmas morning. We see it in the faces of the parents to be and in the eyes of teachers and grandparents. The glow, the smiles, the bright eyes – we can't wrap those. We can't place them under the tree. And even with video and cameras, we can't really capture those moments. All we can do is take an image – but the feeling of hope is lost in flat blotches of color.

(shepherds place gifts on the table, hiding the tree and go and sit on the floor, facing the altar)

NARRATOR 8:

That night so long ago, the world was gifted again with hope – the desire that this little baby would one day grow up and change the world; and that those changes would be for the better. It is a feeling all new parents have – and Mary and Joseph were no different. They were blessed with hope in the form of a tiny baby. And we are too. Hope is a gift – given by God to all of us through a his son. And even though we can't wrap hope up, that doesn't mean we can't share it with others. In the book of Job chapter 11 verses 17 and 18, we hear: “life will be brighter than noonday, and darkness will become like morning. You will be secure – because there is hope.” Let us be joyful as we play:

Bell Ringers: Joyful joyful we adore thee

(kids stand and pick up bells, then turn to face the congregation).

Play track 16

Director will stand in front of the kids as they stand and play; after the song, the kids place the bells on the ground and sit where they stand, facing the congregation.

LOVE

Narrators 9 and 10 walk forward

NARRATOR 9:

God's Love for us brought us the gift of Jesus. At this time, he is only a baby, small and helpless. But his earthly parents Mary and Joseph will teach him, hold him when he cries, kiss his scraped knees, and shower him with love. As he grows, Jesus will teach us that love means more than simply caring for those in our family. Love is showing kindness to everyone we see – no matter what they look like or talk like or live like. Love is opening our hearts and minds to those who aren't the same as we are. Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians: "and these three remain: Faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is Love."

(As the narrator begins to read the part below,

Three children go to back of church and get the 1 ribbon each. Each walks down an aisle unspooling as we go.

Two Children get large bow and hold it.)

NARRATOR 10:

God is love – and on a peaceful night so long ago, he gave us something special. It's not something we can buy in a store. It's not something we can find under a tree in a few weeks' time. It's not the best toy ever or the most delicious cookie ever or the most fashionable outfit. It's even more than a little baby. It's what that baby means – It's Faith, Hope, Peace, and Love. If we can't buy these gifts in a store, where can we find them?

We can find them here: when we gather in faith, to praise God. when we strive for a better world by giving hope to the lost when we spread the calm and peace of our hearts to others. And where God's Loving arms wrap tightly around us.

(the kids should be at the front of church by the end of this reading) Narrators 11, and 12 come forward.)

NARRATOR 11:

These are the REAL gifts of Christmas. Faith, Hope, Peace, and Love. There isn't a big enough box to hold them, or enough wrapping paper in world to seal them up because these gifts are IN us, just as they were IN the baby Jesus. Jesus was God's gift to us many years ago and today WE are gifts to each other. WE are the real gifts of Christmas and since we are gifts to each other, we are being wrapped in ribbon.

Children are not playing the last song – they stand and hold the ribbon.)

NARRATOR 12:

Now, it is up to us to bring these gifts from our hearts out into the world. This Christmas, celebrate with family and friends, enjoy the presents and the cookies and the outfits. Remember while you do so that just because the real gifts of this sacred season can't be placed under the tree it doesn't mean we can't give them. So give freely this holiday season by spreading, Faith, Hope, Peace, and Love. Let us bring Joy into the world as we sing:

Hymn: Joy to the world

During the hymn, the adults collect the ribbon in blue bins.

(during the benediction, the children or adults collect the ribbon in blue bins so the congregation doesn't trip leaving the pews)

Narrator 13 comes forward.

DIRECTOR:

I leave you today with the words of Howard Thurman:

When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with their flocks,
the work of Christmas begins:

NARRATOR 13:

to find the lost,
to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry,
to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among the people,
to make music in the heart.

Go now Faith, in Hope, in Peace and Love. In Jesus's name, Amen.