

# THE WORKING ANGEL'S GUIDE TO CHRISTMAS

*by Laura H. Nettles*



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# **THE WORKING ANGEL'S GUIDE TO CHRISTMAS**

*A children's play for Christmas*

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**SYNOPSIS:** Are you a newbie volunteer directing your first children's Christmas play? This is an excellent place to start. It will work for you seasoned directors too! This script unpacks it all and lays it out, with empowering encouragement to boost your knowledge and confidence. The drama depicts a group of angels charged with putting God's plan for the birth of Jesus into action. Follow them as Gabriel breaks the news to Mary and then as the heavenly host serenades the shepherds. The angel crew includes the cool and collected one, the excitable helper, the babysitter and the cherubic littlest angels, plus all the traditional biblical characters. The sight of the children in their angelic attire will surely elicit an "awwww!" from your audience. All the basics included, plus helpful hints on DIY costumes, music suggestions, and flexible casting for more or fewer children. If you barely know your stage right from your stage left, this is for you!

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(1 female, 1 male, 5 either, 2-30 extras)*

- ANGEL 1 (m/f).....In charge of enacting God's plan for Jesus' arrival. Calm and cool, though slightly annoyed by Angel 2's suggestions. *(41 lines)*
- ANGEL 2 (m/f).....Wants to help Angel 1. Keeps trying to add ideas to God's plan. Excitable and overemotional. *(32 lines)*
- GABRIEL (m/f).....Messenger angel tasked with babysitting the Littlest Angels. He's always on babysitting duty when charged with delivering God's messages. *(16 lines)*
- MARY (f).....Jesus' mother. *(4 lines)*
- JOSEPH (m).....Jesus' earthly father. *(1 line)*
- SHEPHERD 1 (m/f).....Watches flocks by night. *(3 lines)*
- SHEPHERD 2 (m/f).....Also tends sheep. *(4 lines)*

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LITTLEST ANGELS (m/f).....Pint-sized heavenly beings that tag along with Gabriel to visit Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds. (*1 line*)  
CHORUS (m/f).....All children.

**DURATION:** 30 minutes

### PRODUCTION NOTES

Staging a Christmas program for your church doesn't have to be hard and stressful. It can be fun for everyone involved! I know you're probably rolling your eyes at that statement, but it's true. The whole purpose of a Christmas program should be to draw the performers, directors, and audience into a recognition of the Christmas spirit. To that end, I'm including tips to take the stress off of you, the director, so you can experience the joy of Christmas also.

When you read the play, you'll notice directions like this: (*ANGELS exit Stage Right.*) and (*ANGELS enter Stage Left.*) Those statements indicate directions for the actors. When your actors move across the stage to their right, it will look like left to you. While that may seem backward, remember that the script is there to help your actors know what to say and how to move. Additionally, downstage is toward the audience, and upstage is away from them.

**SET:** You don't need a complicated set to stage this play. If you want to have a backdrop, go for it, but it isn't necessary. You basically need an area in front of your audience to serve as your stage. If your stage area has curtains, off-stage means that your actors will move behind the curtains. In our church, when our actors move off-stage, they come down from the pulpit area and sit on the front pews.

**SOUND:** We place several microphones on the periphery of the stage and encourage our actors to say their lines toward the microphones. We don't have enough lapel microphones for each person. If you can encourage your actors to project, you don't *need* lapel mics on each person. Microphones are entirely optional.

**LIGHTING:** We traditionally perform our Christmas program on the Sunday night before Christmas, so we leave the pulpit lights on and turn off the lights

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over the sanctuary. However, you can stage this play during the day with all the lights turned on. You won't need any special lighting.

**MUSIC:** This play runs about thirty minutes, including the songs. You may substitute other songs between the scenes. If you need the play to run longer than thirty minutes, you could sing two songs between each scene. If you need it to be shorter than thirty minutes, you may omit some of the songs.

When I wrote my first play, I knew I wanted music between the scenes, but I didn't really know where to find it. Then I discovered *God's Kids Worship Band Classic Christmas*. This CD of children singing traditional Christmas carols to upbeat music was just what I was looking for. I have used this one CD every year for all the Christmas plays I've written and directed.

Since that time, the company has changed the CD to mp3 format and lowered the number of songs that can be purchased as a bundle. If you wish to purchase their product, here is the link to the Christmas songs: <https://www.godskidsworship.com/p-525-classic-christmas-stereo-mp3s.aspx>. In the script, I usually list two songs that may be used at each scene break. That way, if the original song isn't included in the mp3, you've got other options already listed.

There is also a Christmas carols CD by Cedarment Kids that could be used in place of the God's Kids Worship mp3. I discovered Cedarment Kids only a few years ago, and I like their products for kids too. Here is the link to purchase their Christmas CD (and it's only \$3.99!):

[http://www.cedarment.com/store/product/christmas\\_carols](http://www.cedarment.com/store/product/christmas_carols). Because their selection of songs is different from God's Kids Worship, I have listed alternatives from the Cedarment Kids CD between the scenes as well so you don't have to find different songs for the play. No matter which CD you choose to use, it's a one-time music purchase, and you're set for years of Christmas plays and programs!

You don't even have to use recorded music. You can use whatever accompaniment you choose. I want this to be as stress-free as possible for you, so whether you purchase a CD, use piano accompaniment, or play a guitar, do what's easiest for you and your participants. The focus is on the message, not the music.

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**PROPS:** Two clipboards, a pen, a walkie-talkie, a doll to be baby Jesus (or you can recruit a baby if your Mary feels comfortable with it!), two wheelbarrows—or you can use two baskets or bags or whatever you have on hand, and six to ten stuffed sheep—the bigger the sheep are, the fewer of them you need.

**COSTUMES:** The costuming is flexible. You can always use the traditional Christmas costumes—the big bathrobes on the Shepherds and the choir robes on the Angels—or you can use jeans and T-shirts. Work with what you’ve got. The message is more important than the costuming. Angels 1 and 2 and Gabriel wear white shirts and jeans. Glow sticks may be used as halos, bracelets, or necklaces. Mary may wear a plain shirt and jeans, with an old shawl wrapped around her shoulders. Joseph wears a plain shirt and jeans. Shepherds 1 and 2 wear torn jeans or pants, old shoes or sandals, and a dirty-looking shirt, with a button-up shirt tied at the waist over their dirty shirt. I cut a large T-shirt down the middle from the bottom hem to the neckline and cut a horizontal strip off the bottom of the shirt to be used as the belt around the waist. The Shepherds may carry staffs if desired. The Littlest Angels wear oversized white T-shirts (they can be plain or embellished with designs painted on them with gold fabric paint) and halos.

Here is how to create halos for your Littlest Angels. You will need gold wire garland and gold, silver, and white ribbon. Wrap gold wire garland three to four times around each child’s head to ensure proper sizing. Remove the garland from the child’s head, and wrap the ends around each other to secure the size. Cut ten strands of ribbon to a length of eighteen inches to two feet. Gather all the ribbons together and tie one end of the bundle to the wire garland. Clip any ribbon ends that stick out conspicuously. When the Littlest Angels wear the halos, the ribbons should run down their backs. It’s really cute to see little ribbons bouncing along behind the Angels. I used grosgrain and satin ribbons on the halos I made. You could also use curling ribbon, but I would make the ribbon strands longer so the ribbon could be curled.

**CASTING CONSIDERATIONS:** Maybe you've read the script and production notes and you're thinking, "This is great! But I don't have enough actors. How am I going to stage this play?" Or maybe you're thinking, "Gosh, I love this play! But I have a ton of actors. How am I going to include everyone?" Well, never fear, because I am going to offer you suggestions on how to combine characters if you don't have enough children, and how to include a larger cast of characters.

This play has seven speaking parts. (As a side note, those clipboards might come in handy for Angels 1 and 2, as their scripts may be attached to aid in memorization.) You really can't combine any of the speaking parts since they all appear together in Scene 6. However, there are really only three large speaking parts (the Angels). The other parts can easily be learned by someone who can't read if you or a parent are willing to work with them a little bit.

The main roles that need to be cast according to gender are Mary played by a girl and Joseph played by a boy. The other roles do not have specific gender requirements.

There can be any number of Littlest Angels. Toddlers and preschoolers are great at this role, because the only requirement is to look cute. This age group is naturally curious, and their curiosity is hilarious on-stage. When we performed the play, one of our Littlest Angels got right in Joseph's face as he was sleeping and stared at him. Another one laid down beside Joseph and pretended to be asleep too! They also liked moving the sheep around while the shepherds were playing dead. They were hilarious and cute and exactly what I was going for when I wrote them into the script.

If you have a lot of toddlers or preschoolers, I would suggest giving Gabriel an assistant to help him. This Angel wouldn't have any lines, but he/she could prevent chaos from occurring on-stage. If you have no toddlers or preschoolers, you could always change "babysitting duty" to "dog-sitting duty," and have Gabriel carry several stuffed animal dogs. Gabriel could hold a bag with a dog sticking out of it, as well as wear a backpack with a dog sticking out of it, and also hold dogs in his arms.

Your chorus may be made up of your actors if you have a small number of participants (like we always do), or your chorus may be comprised of participants who don't want to act.

**SCRIPTURE:** There are portions from the Christmas story in Luke 1 and 2 that have been paraphrased for children. In addition, there is one verse from the King James Version.

## ***DEDICATION***

*Thank you to my sister-in-law, Laura C. Nettles,  
for the idea of a play written from the angels'  
point of view.*

**SCENE 1**

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**AT START:** *ANGEL 1 is at Center Stage, reviewing items on a clipboard, deep in thought. ANGEL 2 enters, sees ANGEL 1, and approaches eagerly.*

**ANGEL 2:** Hey! *(Cranes neck to see what ANGEL 1 is doing.)*  
Whatcha looking at?

**ANGEL 1:** *(Looks up from clipboard.)* Oh, I'm just reviewing the master plan for the Messiah. God gave it to me this morning, and I'm making sure it all happens to plan!

**ANGEL 2:** *(Super excited.)* That sounds awesome! Can I help? Please? Please? Pretty please, with whipped cream and a cherry on top?

**ANGEL 1:** Well, I don't know....

**ANGEL 2:** Oh, please let me help! I won't mess up anything, and I can take direction well, and I promise I'll do everything you tell me to! *(Drops to knees and clasps hands together in front of ANGEL 1.)*

**ANGEL 1:** *(Feels slightly embarrassed by ANGEL 2's gestures.)*  
Well, all right. I guess you can help.

**ANGEL 2:** *(Jumps up from knees and fist bumps the air.)* Yes! Oh, man, this is gonna be so cool! The Messiah is gonna come, and I get to help make sure it happens! So, where do we start? Neon signs? Inflatable bounce house?

**ANGEL 1:** God already has it planned out. We just have to follow it. Hence, the clipboard. *(Holds up clipboard.)* Come on. It's time to start our first assignment. *(Begins to exit Stage Right.)*

**ANGEL 2:** *(Still giddy and bouncy.)* Woo-hoo! Let's do this! *(Starts to follow ANGEL 1.)* Hey, can I get a clipboard too? *(Exits Stage Right.)*

**SONG:** "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" or "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing."

**SCENE 2**1  
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**AT START:** ANGEL 1 and ANGEL 2 are at Stage Right. They both have clipboards now.

**ANGEL 1:** OK, the first thing on the list is to send Gabriel to a young girl named Mary, down in Nazareth. Gabriel is going to tell her that she has been chosen by God to give birth to the Messiah.

**ANGEL 2:** *(Shocked.)* Whoa, whoa, whoa! The Messiah is going to be a baby?

**ANGEL 1:** *(Referring to clipboard.)* That's what the plan says.

**ANGEL 2:** Um, can we go talk to God about that? I mean, come on. The Messiah ought to come to earth on a shining stallion with the sound of a thousand angels singing his praises. *(Gets lost in his idea, with glossy eyes, smiling face, and arms outstretched.)*

**ANGEL 1:** That's not God's plan. We're following God's plan. Hmmmm, I wonder where Gabriel is. *(Pulls out walkie-talkie and talks into it.)* I need Gabriel to the main hall, please. Gabriel to the main hall.

*GABRIEL enters Stage Left, leading the LITTLEST ANGELS.*

**GABRIEL:** You called?

**ANGEL 1:** I did. I need you to go to Nazareth and give Mary a message from God. She is to give birth to the Messiah. She is highly favored of God, and she should name the baby Jesus. *(Notices the LITTLEST ANGELS.)* Um, why are the little angels with you?

**GABRIEL:** I'm on babysitting duty today. They'll have to go with me.

**ANGEL 1:** Well, OK, I guess. *(Makes note on clipboard.)* It's time for you to deliver God's message to Mary.

**GABRIEL:** Sure thing. *(To LITTLEST ANGELS.)* Come on, little ones. We're going on a trip. *(GABRIEL and LITTLEST ANGELS exit Stage Left.)*

1 *ANGELS 1 and 2 stand at Upstage Right corner. MARY enters*  
2 *Stage Right and goes to Center Stage. After MARY is in place,*  
3 *GABRIEL and LITTLEST ANGELS enter Stage Left and go to her*  
4 *at Center Stage.*

5

6 **GABRIEL:** Hail, you who are highly favored of the Lord! God is with  
7 you!

8 **MARY:** Who are you?

9 **GABRIEL:** I am God's messenger, and—

10 **MARY:** *(Interrupting and pointing to the LITTLEST ANGELS.)* Who  
11 are they?

12 **GABRIEL:** Oh, they're the little angels. I'm on babysitting duty  
13 today.

14 **MARY:** They're cute.

15 **GABRIEL:** Thanks. Anyway, God has chosen you to give birth to  
16 the Messiah! He will be great and will be called the Son of the  
17 Most High, and his kingdom will never end! You shall call his  
18 name Jesus. God's Holy Spirit will overshadow you; that's how  
19 you will know he is the Messiah.

20 **MARY:** I am the Lord's servant. May it be as you have said.

21

22 *GABRIEL and LITTLEST ANGELS exit Stage Left. MARY watches*  
23 *them leave, bows her head in prayer, then exits Stage Left.*  
24 *ANGELS 1 and 2 come down to Center Stage.*

25

26 **ANGEL 2:** Oh, man, that went awesome! Did you see how willing  
27 she was? This is the bomb! *(Goes to high five ANGEL 1, who*  
28 *doesn't notice. ANGEL 2 tries again, to no avail. He keeps his*  
29 *hand in the air, waiting for ANGEL 1 to high five him.)*

30 **ANGEL 1:** Item one complete! *(Checks off item on clipboard.)* Now  
31 we need to start on item two. Let's go get everything ready.  
32 *(Exits Stage Right.)*

33

34 *ANGEL 2 is still waiting for a high five as ANGEL 1 heads Off-stage.*  
35 *Seeing as she isn't going to high five him, ANGEL 2 high fives*  
36 *himself and runs after ANGEL 1.*

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38 **SONG:** "He Is Born" or "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen."

**SCENE 3**1  
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**AT START:** ANGELS 1 and 2 stand at Center Stage, looking at clipboards.

**ANGEL 1:** OK, Mary knows, but now we need to let her fiancé know about everything.

**ANGEL 2:** (*Shocked and surprised.*) Hold up, now—Mary isn't married?

**ANGEL 1:** No, she isn't. God needs a virgin to give birth to Jesus so it's obvious that Jesus is the Messiah.

**ANGEL 2:** Whew—I bet her fiancé is gonna be aaaan-gry!

**ANGEL 1:** That's why we're sending Gabriel—so Joseph will know it's legit.

**ANGEL 2:** Oooohhhh....

**ANGEL 1:** Exactly. We're going to send Gabriel to Joseph in a dream. Gabriel will tell Joseph that he should go ahead and get married, that it's all part of God's plan.

**ANGEL 2:** Gotcha. So, what kind of dream? I'm thinking smoke and everything's kinda dim, and then wham! There's an angel and bright lights and glitter! Lots and lots of glitter! (*Glazes over imagining his idea, moving his hands like glitter raining down on the stage.*)

**ANGEL 1:** (*Knocks on ANGEL 2's head.*) Hel-loooo in there! We're going to follow God's plan on this one, just like we did with Mary. See how well that turned out? I just need to call Gabriel. (*Pulls out walkie-talkie and talks into it.*) Gabriel to the main hall, please. Gabriel to the main hall.

**ANGEL 2:** Hey, can I get one of those things?

**ANGEL 1:** Nope.

**GABRIEL enters Stage Left, once again bringing the LITTLEST ANGELS.**

**ANGEL 1:** Babysitting duty again?

**GABRIEL:** Yeah, I traded with Michael. I didn't know you were going to need me again so soon.

1 **ANGEL 1:** It doesn't matter. I need you to go back to Nazareth to  
2 a man named Joseph. Appear to him in a dream and tell him to  
3 go ahead and get married to Mary. Tell him that the child she is  
4 carrying is God's Son, the promised Savior.

5 **GABRIEL:** Marry Mary. Got it! *(To LITTLEST ANGELS.)* Come on,  
6 little ones. Another field trip!

7

8 *GABRIEL and LITTLEST ANGELS exit Stage Left. ANGELS 1 and*  
9 *2 go to Upstage Right corner. JOSEPH comes in from Stage Right,*  
10 *lies down at Center Stage, and appears to be asleep.*

11

12 **GABRIEL:** *(Enters with LITTLEST ANGELS Stage Left and stands*  
13 *behind JOSEPH at Center Stage.)* Greetings, Joseph! The Lord  
14 has sent me to tell you to go ahead and get married to Mary. The  
15 child she is carrying is God's Son, the promised Savior, the  
16 Messiah! *(Exits Stage Left with LITTLEST ANGELS.)*

17 **JOSEPH:** *(Wakes up from dream, stands up, stretches, and*  
18 *yawns.)* Wow, that was some dream! Mary's baby is the  
19 Messiah. Think of that! There were some pretty cute little angels  
20 in that dream too.... *(Exits Stage Left.)*

21

22 *ANGELS 1 and 2 come back to Center Stage. ANGEL 2 is*  
23 *practically bouncing with excitement.*

24

25 **ANGEL 2:** It's all coming together perfectly! I cannot wait for this  
26 baby to be born! Do you know how awesome this all is? Woo-  
27 hoo!

28 **ANGEL 1:** Yes, it's exactly according to plan. *(Checks off items on*  
29 *checkboxlist.)* Two items down, three to go. We need a couple of  
30 things before we can oversee this next part of the plan. Let's go  
31 take care of that. *(Exits Stage Right.)*

32 **ANGEL 2:** *(Not paying attention, talking to self and gesturing*  
33 *grandly.)* I can see it now, sprayed across the headlines:  
34 "Messiah to be born soon!" *(Giddy, imagining; looks up, sees*  
35 *ANGEL 1 is exiting stage; runs after her.)* I'm coming! Wait up!

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37 **SONG:** "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly" or "Away in a Manger."

**SCENE 4**1  
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*ANGELS 1 and 2 enter Stage Right and go near Center Stage.*

**ANGEL 1:** *(Looking at clipboard.)* OK, so our next assignment involves getting Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. What's going to happen is that they will travel by donkey to Bethlehem for a census that Caesar Augustus wants done.

**ANGEL 2:** *(Disgusted.)* Hold up, now. A donkey? You do know that Mary is, like, humongously pregnant, right? That is *not* going to be a comfortable ride. Surely we can do better... like a carriage pulled by ten magnificent steeds with extra pillows for Mary to sit on! And Joseph could have a giant fan to fan her with! *(Gets glassy-eyed as he imagines it; mimes fanning ANGEL 1 with clipboard.)*

**ANGEL 1:** *(Clears throat loudly.)* Ahem! This is God's plan, not yours. Remember?

**ANGEL 2:** *(Shame-faced.)* Right.

**ANGEL 1:** *(Businesslike)* OK, so back to the plan. Mary and Joseph will arrive in Bethlehem on a donkey. They won't be able to find anywhere to stay, so they will be offered a place in a stable. *(Triumphant, excited that the Messiah is coming.)* They'll take it, because the Messiah is going to be born in that stable!

**ANGEL 2:** *(Indignant.)* What? The Messiah is going to be born in a stable? You're telling me that the Savior of the world is going to be born in a barn? That can't be right. The Messiah needs the best five-star room there is, with fluffy pillows and soft blankets! Let me see those notes. This can't be God's plan! *(Looks at notes on clipboard.)* Whoa. This *is* God's plan.

*As ANGELS are talking, MARY [Holding Jesus] and JOSEPH enter Stage Left and stand at Center Stage, silently.*

**ANGEL 1:** Yep, it's God's plan all right. Don't look now, but a special little Somebody has been born.

1 **ANGEL 2:** *(Instantly forgets his disgust of a moment earlier.)*  
2 What? Where? *(Looks to Center Stage.)* Oh my goodness, he is  
3 so cute! Look at those chubby cheeks and that little nose. I just  
4 wanna squeeze him! Hey there, little guy!

5 **ANGEL 1:** *(Consulting clipboard.)* Exactly according to plan.  
6 *(Checks item off clipboard. To ANGEL 2.)* Come on, we've got  
7 to get ready to let people know about Jesus. *(Walks off Stage*  
8 *Right.)*

9 **ANGEL 2:** Aw, can't we stay and look at him? He's so cute! Am I  
10 right? *(When no one answers, looks around.)* Am I right? Hey,  
11 wait for me! *(Runs out Stage Right after ANGEL 1.)*

12

13 **SONG:** "O Little Town of Bethlehem."

14

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## SCENE 5

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18 *ANGELS 1 and 2 enter Stage Right and stand at Downstage Right.*

19

20 **ANGEL 1:** *(Looking at clipboard.)* The next step in God's plan is to  
21 let the world know the Messiah is here.

22 **ANGEL 2:** Oh, boy! Let's do neon signs and put advertisements on  
23 the sides of donkeys! Do you think the innkeepers would let us  
24 pass out flyers to their customers?

25 **ANGEL 1:** Uh, no.

26 **ANGEL 2:** You're right. Too mundane. We need to go all the way  
27 to the top! I'm talking King Herod and Caesar Augustus, baby!  
28 So, how are we planning to tell them?

29 **ANGEL 1:** We're not.

30 **ANGEL 2:** What?

31 **ANGEL 1:** *(Points off in the distance.)* Do you see those guys down  
32 there?

33 **ANGEL 2:** Yeah. What about them?

34 **ANGEL 1:** We're going to tell them.

35 **ANGEL 2:** Them? Them?! *(Stuttering.)* They're—they're—they're  
36 shepherds! *(Exasperated.)* Why are we telling them? Nobody  
37 likes a shepherd. That's why they're out in the fields and not in  
38 the cities. They're shepherds for a reason, you know.



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