

THE BABY KING

by Mary Joyce Love



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The Baby King

A participation program for children and adults

by Mary Joyce Love

*With gratitude to the five- to ten-year-olds of
St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Berwick, Pennsylvania,
who in wonder and awe shared the words which became
The Baby King.*

*Extra special thanks to Janice Fink,
without whose inspiration and help this play
would not have been published.*

Editor's Note

Some uniquely creative Christmas programs are so very special that only the church of origination can make them work effectively. That might have been the case with *The Baby King*, conceived and developed by Mary Joyce Love at St. Paul's United Methodist Church of Berwick, Pennsylvania. But because we were able to work with the author to find a way to create a pattern program, now any church can do *The Baby King* with the same poignant simplicity as in its original form.

The concept of the program is to use the ideas and words of the children themselves in telling the Christmas story. The author, in developing the presentation, talked with many five- to ten-year-old children, making notes and recording their expressions as they related the events of the Nativity. She told them that there were no wrong or right ways to do it, but simply to express their understanding of what happened. She used open-ended questions like: "How would you feel if you saw that angel?" "How do you think the animals felt when they saw a new baby in their stable?" "What was it like to ride a donkey?"

She told them that their words and ideas would be used in the program. Faithfully, she used them as part of the narration accompanying the silhouette re-enactments. Hearing their own words and ideas being used in the presentation gave them a special feeling of pride and made the story very much their own.

This we see as the unique delight of this program. But because the original script was comprised of the words of the children of the author's church, they cannot provide the special feeling of participation for your children. To make this script the special creation of your church school children, you may use the same method by substituting or adding the words or phrases of your youngsters.

Considering that many churches may choose to use the script based on the original design, but with a grammatical flow for easy understanding, we have edited out expressions similar to what you may want to use from your children.

The children of the Berwick church, for example, called this “a much, much special miracle.” They said, “Jesus was a very little bit small.” For easy narration we substituted “Jesus was very small.” They said “Joseph and Mary ... were going to Bethlehem to find a place to sleep,” To be a bit more factual we substituted “... to be counted.” It will be for you to decide how much or how little of the actual phrasing of your children that you want to use.

Whatever your approach may be in developing your version of this program, we believe the structure is effective in its direct simplicity as originally conceived.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Silhouette Performers

MARY

GABRIEL

ELIZABETH

JOSEPH

INNKEEPER

THREE SHEPHERDS

THREE WISE MEN

Other Performers

ADULT NARRATOR

CHILD 1

(Small girl)

CHILD 2

CHILD 3

CHILD 4

(Small girl)

PRODUCTION NOTES

The program's narrator or narrators may be adults and children. An adult narrator is recommended for most of the narration in the interest of pacing the flow of the production.

Staging Area

Sanctuary chancel, fellowship hall, or classroom.

Though some special props and lighting are required, this program can be produced without too much difficulty. A "committee" of helpful stagehands will make everything go easily and according to plan.

Props

The key prop of the program is a screen for the silhouettes. This may be as simple as a large white sheet hanging from a rod between two portable holders. Or, given the help of a handyman, it may be a translucent curtain of any type stretched on a large frame. The light from behind may be provided by a halogen lamp or any other bright light source. The brighter the light, the more pronounced the silhouette.

Live figures may be used in the silhouettes with minimal mime action, as indicated in the narration.

For the animal figures, large cardboard cutouts can be used. Cut out only the first one-third of the animals (donkey, camel, sheep). Staple it to a flat piece of wood and hold it at the side of the screen (see photo, page viii).

A large star may be formed from cardboard and covered with foil. Crisscross with lights.

The twinkle lights seen in Scene 6 may be fastened to the side of the screen and turned on at the appropriate cue.

Other props needed are:

Scene 1: Stool or bench, material for "sewing."

Scene 2: Small table, bowl.

Scene 3: Board, hammer or mallet.

Scene 4: Cardboard donkey, lead rope and reins.

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Scene 5: Same as Scene 4.

Scene 6: Beanbag for hay bed, doll.

Scene 7: Manger with baby's arms and legs. Cardboard animals.

Scene 8: Shepherds' staffs.

Scene 9: Manger with baby.

Scene 10: A large star.

Scene 11: Manger with baby. Gifts from wise men.

Scene 12: Spotlight on manger.

Costumes

The costumes are easily managed by using available robes and gowns. Possibilities by character are:

Mary: Traditional robe.

Gabriel: Choir gown, sleeves lifted open to give illusion of wings.

All others: Choir gowns, tied loosely at the waist; head-pieces, such as scarves, tied on the head; cardboard crowns, to define each character.

The script as published calls for candlelighting at the end of the program. Candles can be given to each person on arrival. They will be lit in sequence by participants and members of the congregation.

Music

The music portion of the program is optional except for the singing of "Silent Night" at the end. An a cappella rendition is called for, but this is at the discretion of the choir director.

Silhouette Scenes

1. Mary and Gabriel
2. Mary and Elizabeth
3. Mary and Joseph
4. Mary and Joseph Traveling
5. The Innkeeper
6. Jesus Is Born!
7. Animals in the Stable
8. Shepherds and Angels
9. Shepherds Find Jesus
10. The Star and the Wise Men
11. The Wise Men Love Jesus
12. Our Gifts for the holy baby King



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1 NARRATOR: At this moment, Mary is sitting on her little
 2 stool sewing and quietly whistling. Suddenly, she looks
 3 up. A very bright light appears before her. It's an angel!
 4 A large angel! Bigger than a person. A very pretty angel.
 5 And wonderfully shiny! It had wings as tall as me.
 6 (*NARRATOR gestures as GABRIEL enters silhouette.*) And it
 7 came to about three feet from Mary. At first Mary was
 8 frightened half to death! But she wasn't too scared. She
 9 knew that this angel lives in heaven. Then Gabriel
 10 spoke:

11 GABRIEL: Mary, you are going to have a little baby. Really
 12 small. And very special. It will be a boy baby. And you
 13 will name him Jesus, because he will grow up special.
 14 He will help people. And clean their feet. And he will
 15 help a lame man walk.

16 NARRATOR: Mary was very surprised. She didn't know she
 17 was to have a child. It was hard for her to believe. But
 18 she was very, very happy! So happy was she that she
 19 couldn't wait to tell somebody. (*MARY jumps up excitedly*
 20 *and exits.*) She jumped up and ran out the door to tell the
 21 first person she could find ... (*Silhouette lights off; dark.*)
 22 That was her neighbor, Elizabeth.

23
 24 Silhouette Scene 2
 25 Mary and Elizabeth

26
 27 **Props:**

28 Stool or bench, small table, jar or bowl.

29
 30 **Silhouette Image:**

31 ELIZABETH enters from side, places a jar or bowl on table. MARY
 32 enters from opposite side, then ELIZABETH sits down.

33
 34 NARRATOR: Mary didn't even knock. She just ran right in.
 35 (*Silhouette lights on. MARY enters.*) "Elizabeth!" she called.
 36 "Guess what?! I'm going to have a baby. It's Jesus!" At
 37 first, Elizabeth just sat there. She was stunned. And
 38 surprised! "How do you know?" she asked. Mary said,

Silhouette Scene 4

Mary and Joseph Traveling

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Props:

Cardboard donkey shape, lead rope and reins.

Silhouette Image:

JOSEPH, at center screen, holds lead rope. MARY stands inside edge of screen, shoulders bent forward, head down. She holds cardboard donkey shape, as though riding donkey.

NARRATOR: They had to ride on a donkey, because they had nothing else unless they wanted to walk. Joseph was kind. Instead of his riding on the donkey, he let Mary ride. It was a bumpy ride, because the road was hilly and rocky. And because the donkey walks only one leg at a time. Mary became very, very tired. And almost sick. She hung onto the ropes of the donkey very tight. Joseph walked beside the donkey. When the donkey needed to rest, he helped Mary off. At last, Joseph said, “Mary. Be of good spirits. We are close. See those lights? *(JOSEPH points.)* “When we get to those lights, we will be at Bethlehem.” The lights were on because it was getting dark. Now Joseph is tired. And the donkey, too. They are in Bethlehem. Joseph tries to find somewhere to spend the night. But he cannot find a place. *(JOSEPH looks from side to side. Silhouette lights remain on.)*

Silhouette Scene 5

The Innkeeper

Props:

Same as Scene 4.

Silhouette Image:

JOSEPH faces MARY, shakes head “no.” JOSEPH then goes to opposite side of screen, “knocks,” steps back to center. INNKEEPER steps on screen, facing JOSEPH, who points to MARY.

1 INNKEEPER shakes head “no,” then goes off screen. JOSEPH turns
2 back to MARY. INNKEEPER re-enters, points off screen.

3

4 **NARRATOR: Joseph knocked on one door. Then on another.**
5 **But the people all said, “No.” They were too full of**
6 **people. Joseph said, “Don’t worry, Mary. I know we’ll**
7 **find a place.” He knocked on one more door. He thought**
8 **this place would be full of people, too, but he was going**
9 **to try anyway. A man came to the door. He was big.**
10 *(INNKEEPER enters, stands side of stage.)*

11 **INNKEEPER: Who’s there?**

12 **JOSEPH: Joseph.**

13 **INNKEEPER: What do you want?**

14 **JOSEPH: My wife is having a baby. We need a place to stay.**
15 **Right now! Please, we haven’t found a place yet. Can**
16 **you let us stay with you?**

17 **INNKEEPER: We don’t have enough room in the house.**

18 **NARRATOR: He looks at Mary. *(INNKEEPER moves around***
19 ***then off.)* Then the innkeeper hurries around the house.**
20 **Joseph started to go to another place. But the**
21 **innkeeper came running back. *(INNKEEPER enters.)***

22 **INNKEEPER: My barn is empty out back. It’s a little bit cold.**
23 **But there’s room in it for you. You can stay there, if you**
24 **like. *(Silhouette lights off; dark.)***

25 **NARRATOR: The stable is like a little wooden hut. It’s close**
26 **to the house. All the farmer’s animals live in it. Joseph**
27 **didn’t have a stable because he wasn’t a farmer. But he**
28 **knew all about stables. *(Silhouette lights on.)***

29

30 **Silhouette Scene 6**

31 **Jesus Is Born!**

32

33 **Props:**

34 Bean bag (to suggest a mound of hay for MARY). Doll on floor beside
35 the mound of “hay.”

36

37 **Silhouette Image:**

38 JOSEPH helps MARY onto the mound of “hay,” then kneels beside her.



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