

# REFLECTIONS

*by Margaret W. Aron*



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# *Reflections*

**Five portrayals for use with  
the Advent wreath**

**by Margaret W. Aron**

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## INTRODUCTION

Sometimes biblical characters seem larger than life to us, and we think we have little in common with them. This collection allows the individual to get to know Joseph, a Shepherd, Elizabeth and friends, and Mary a little better and become personally involved with them. Through weekly visits from the characters to the congregation or class, we learn more about their experience and its effect on their lives. They share their love, their hurts, their fears, and their triumphs in the Lord. As the candles are lit each week representing love, hope, joy, and peace, the congregation learns that they have more in common than they ever thought with these men and women of old. They gain insight as to how to cultivate the traits of these characters in their own lives. As the fifth candle is lit, they reprise their roles in a reflection using the various names of Jesus. To close, each character takes his or her candle and they all light the Christ candle together.

The hymn titles included throughout the script are merely suggestions. They were selected because they appear in many church hymnals. Please substitute contemporary songs or other hymns with the themes of love, hope, joy, and peace as desired. Your church choir, small groups, or soloists may sing the hymns.

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# Because I Love You

## First Candle — Love

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**CHARACTER:** JOSEPH.

**COSTUME:** Be creative. A striped or plain-colored bathrobe; fabric to drape on head, held in place with a length of braided macramé cord (braiding it makes it stretchy and it holds better); sandals.

**PROPS:** A journal for JOSEPH (this holds his script). Advent wreath with five candles on the altar (this is needed every Sunday).

**SET:** Optional — a chair on the platform for JOSEPH to sit on and read from.

*(JOSEPH enters from rear of sanctuary carrying his journal. [This script may be read.] He stops to greet people at the front.)*

**JOSEPH:** Good morning! Let me introduce myself. I believe you know my son. My name is Joseph, and I am a carpenter by trade. My wife, Mary, and I are not so very different from you folks, although I think sometimes that you believe we are. We certainly have experienced some incredible events on our journey through life with our heavenly Father, and our relationship has, of course, endured some turbulent times, but through it all, he has taught us so much about our love for each other, his love for us, and ours for him. I have my journal with me. Perhaps if I share some entries, you'll see what I mean. *(He takes a seat on the platform and begins flipping through the pages.)*

Our “journey” begins with our prearranged marriage. Ah...here it is. I wrote this after that beautiful betrothal ceremony. “The light is growing dim as I write these words...words that seem so inadequate to describe what my heart is feeling. Our parents certainly picked well for me, Mary. You are so beautiful! You were glowing as we pledged ourselves to each other tonight. I’ve watched you for years, though. I even saw you praying one day. You had a look about you that was — I don’t know — comforting, I

1           guess. It was a look of peace. I know of your devout faith  
2           and am blessed to have gained a wife of such noble  
3           character. I know that our year of being apart until the  
4           vows are finalized will go slowly, but you are worth the  
5           wait. And wait I will...*because I love you.*" (He turns several  
6           pages.)

7           And a few months later, on that night that left me  
8           feeling so cold and alone: "Perhaps I should have known  
9           that something was wrong when you left town without  
10          warning. Not that you needed my permission to go, but it  
11          was so sudden and without explanation. And then, upon  
12          your return...the news that broke my heart. 'I'm  
13          pregnant,' you said. 'I'm pregnant.' With my head  
14          spinning and my heart pounding, I tried to grasp the  
15          concept. If we had not been together, then who? Oh,  
16          Mary. I was so confused. Your silence only added to my  
17          confusion, so I left. I walked for what seemed like hours,  
18          trying to make sense of everything. The stars lent their  
19          brightness to the night sky, but not to my heart, as I  
20          wrestled with the decisions that I was being forced to  
21          make. I could not marry you — not now. But I knew that  
22          the punishment for adultery was stoning and, my  
23          precious Mary, I could not allow that to happen to you.  
24          Maybe if I left you quietly, you could slip away for a while  
25          and avoid the public disgrace.

26          "Well, I guess I dozed off then, because seemingly from  
27          nowhere, an angel appeared to me. I'll never forget his  
28          words. He called me by name and said, 'Joseph, don't be  
29          afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what is  
30          conceived in her is the result of a miracle performed by  
31          the Holy Spirit. The baby will be a boy whom you are to  
32          name Jesus, because he will save the people from their  
33          sins.'

34          "When I opened my eyes, suddenly the stars seemed  
35          brighter and my heart, lighter. I made my decision and

1 ran back to the house to tell you. We both know people  
 2 will talk for a while and assume the worst, but they will  
 3 understand someday. You looked so happy and relieved  
 4 at my decision, Mary...but I made this decision *because I*  
 5 *love you.* (*Turns pages again.*)

6 “How proud I am of you, Mary. It was a long and  
 7 difficult trip. I did my best to find you a room, and to no  
 8 avail. But you never complained — not even once. When I  
 9 heard your cries of pain from that stable, I would’ve done  
 10 anything to take it away. Then, when you pulled me  
 11 gently by the hand to see our beautiful child, all of  
 12 creation seemed to stand still for a moment.

13 “Oh, how did we get to here, Mary? To this awesome  
 14 place? We have been given the responsibility and  
 15 privilege of raising — from a babe, to a child, to an adult  
 16 — the Son of almighty God! Tonight, my heavenly Father,  
 17 I pledge to you to be the best dad that I can be to your  
 18 Son, because I love you...and him. And to you, my dear  
 19 Mary, I pledge, forever, to be the best husband I can  
 20 be...*because I love you.*”

21 (*He closes his journal and walks to the wreath to light the*  
 22 *candle.*) **The first candle we light on our Advent wreath**  
 23 **represents love.** (*He stands by the lit candle as group sings*  
 24 *“Love Came Down at Christmas” or other appropriate song about*  
 25 *love. When song is done, all leave by the same way.*)

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## Hope of Hopes

### Second Candle — Hope

**CHARACTERS:** SHEPHERD, HOMELESS PERSON, ALCOHOLIC,  
HURRIED SHOPPER.

**COSTUMES:** SHEPHERD — bathrobe, headdress and sandals.

Instead of the bathrobe, a simple costume can be made as follows:  
Stitch two 1½-yard pieces of burlap together at the sides, leaving  
about a 12-inch opening at the top of each side. Stitch across each  
side of the top leaving an opening of about 10 inches in the  
middle. Cut a slit about 7 inches long at the front of the neck  
opening. Turn inside out. Run a rawhide shoelace back and forth  
through the front slit, crisscrossing it. Use a rectangular piece of  
burlap for the headdress, tying it on with sisal or your choice of  
cord. ALCOHOLIC — can be dressed in street clothes;  
HOMELESS PERSON — dressed shabbily, e.g., mittens with  
holes, worn-out sweater or jacket, and hat; HURRIED SHOPPER  
— dressed in street clothes, coat, pocketbook, and watch.

**PROPS:** A crook or branch from a tree (optional); a wine bottle; a  
large cardboard box with one side cut open; a few colorfully  
wrapped packages, a shopping list, and a large shopping bag; a  
folder for the SHEPHERD's script, if he's reading it.

**SET:** A park bench and a chair.

*(SHEPHERD enters from rear of sanctuary with his crook.)*

**SHEPHERD:** Good morning. And it *is* a good morning,  
because there is hope for all people — the people in this  
church, in this town, and for people everywhere.

I am a shepherd and my home is in the field. Sheep are  
my business...my only business. But there was one starlit  
night that I will never forget, when I took a little — as you  
folks might say — business trip. The evening started out  
pretty normally. I hadn't planned on doing anything but  
tending my flock and watching the stars, one of my  
favorite pastimes.

1            Suddenly, a light shone around us, and we felt a,  
 2 well...a *presence*. We turned, and there stood an angel!  
 3 Frankly, it scared us out of our wits! But the calmness in  
 4 his voice quieted our fears as he told us of an incredible  
 5 event that had just taken place over in Bethlehem. It was  
 6 good news...news of joy that this angel brought us, and it  
 7 wasn't just for us, but for all people, everywhere! Today  
 8 our Savior had been born! Christ the Lord. Then he said  
 9 a strange thing...that we would find him in a cattle stall,  
 10 lying in, of all things, a manger. And then the sky filled  
 11 with angels, all of them praising God for his gift.

12           Well, after talking it over, we decided to take a little  
 13 trip down there and see for ourselves this thing that had  
 14 happened. We'd been waiting for this for a long time.  
 15 When we arrived, we saw the little family in the stall and  
 16 quietly approached them. We didn't want to wake the  
 17 baby. So this was him...the sweet little baby who would  
 18 become our King of Kings...our Lord of Lords. The hope  
 19 of all creation! We returned to the fields full of hope and  
 20 praising God for everything that we had heard and  
 21 witnessed firsthand.

22           As I watched my sheep and cared for them, I couldn't  
 23 help thinking how, in one way or another, we all have  
 24 strayed, like my sheep do from time to time, and of how  
 25 this baby "King-to-Be" would grow to be our good  
 26 shepherd, always leading us back to him when we get off  
 27 the path. He truly is our hope. He's the hope for the  
 28 homeless and hungry... (*HOMELESS PERSON enters and*  
 29 *takes his/her place on the platform, kneeling down and placing*  
 30 *cardboard covering over his/her head*) ...and he's even the  
 31 hope for the misguided... (*ALCOHOLIC enters and assumes*  
 32 *position on park bench with bottle in hand*) ...and he's even the  
 33 hope of the hurried... (*HURRIED SHOPPER comes in with*  
 34 *boxes, bags, and shopping list in hand and collapses breathlessly*  
 35 *on chair.*) ...Yes, he is our King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and

1           **our Hope of all Hope in today's troubled world.**  
2           *(SHEPHERD walks to candle.) Today we light the second*  
3           **candle on our Advent wreath, symbolizing the hope we**  
4           **have in Christ.** *(Lights candle and stays by altar until song is*  
5           *complete. [Select an appropriate song about hope, such as "My*  
6           *Hope Is Built on Nothing Less.]" During the last few bars of the*  
7           *song, one by one, the "seemingly hopeless" on the platform rise to*  
8           *a standing position, smile, turn their faces upward, and clasp*  
9           *their hands in prayerful praise...the HOMELESS PERSON*  
10           *laying down the cardboard, the ALCOHOLIC laying down the*  
11           *bottle, and the HURRIED SHOPPER setting down packages and*  
12           *lists.)*

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## What's Missing?

### Third Candle — Joy

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**CHARACTERS:** ELIZABETH, MORIAH, CLAUDIA.

**COSTUMES:** Plain-colored bathrobes; fabric or scarves to drape on heads and in some cases over the shoulder, held in place by pinning at the nape of the neck; sandals.

**PROPS:** Folders for scripts, if they are being read.

**SET:** Three chairs with their backs to the congregation.

*(ELIZABETH, MORIAH, and CLAUDIA enter from rear of sanctuary, conversing. They are praising God rather boisterously. About halfway down the center aisle, they turn around and are surprised at the congregation.)*

**ELIZABETH:** Oh, excuse us! We didn't mean to interrupt. I'm Elizabeth, and these are my friends, Claudia and Moriah. We just heard that there was worship here today and, well, I guess maybe we were a little exuberant. It happens whenever I worship my Lord. You see, God has touched me with a joy that I cannot contain!

**MORIAH:** Tell them, Liz. I'm sure they'd like to get to know you like we do!

**ELIZABETH:** Oh, I don't know. They seem quite preoccupied. We'll just sit down quietly and not interrupt. *(They take their places in the three chairs on the platform with ELIZABETH in the middle — backs to the congregation, hands folded. Pause. ELIZABETH peeks over her shoulder, then whispers loudly.)* Something's missing. *(MORIAH and CLAUDIA turn bashfully in their seats to see what she's talking about.)*

**CLAUDIA:** What do you mean, Elizabeth?

**ELIZABETH:** I'm not sure. They're here...They appear to be listening...They gave their tithes and offerings, but... something is *still* missing.

**CLAUDIA:** What could it be?

**ELIZABETH:** Hmm...I've got it! It's the joy. That's it. It's the joy!

1 MORIAH: Then tell them, Liz!

2 ELIZABETH: I guess I'm going to have to. (*She stands and walks*  
 3 *around to in front of the chairs. CLAUDIA and MORIAH turn*  
 4 *sideways in their seats to watch her.')* Pardon me for  
 5 interrupting again, but I have something I just must  
 6 share with you. It's about the joy...my joy, I mean. It all  
 7 started many years ago when my husband, Zechariah,  
 8 went to serve his term at the temple. He was long overdue  
 9 at home, and I think some of you ladies know what  
 10 waiting for a husband to come home is like. (*MORIAH and*  
 11 *CLAUDIA nod in agreement.')* We all wondered what could  
 12 be taking him so long, and when he did return, he was,  
 13 well, *speechless*. I mean he was *really* speechless!  
 14 Couldn't talk. Well, he proceeded, in sign language  
 15 (*Gestures with her hands*) to tell me that he had seen an  
 16 angel while in the temple. This angel had told him — get  
 17 this — that I was going to have a baby — *me*. At my age!  
 18 (*MORIAH and CLAUDIA smile and nod.')* A son! We were to  
 19 name him John. The angel said that he would be a great  
 20 joy and delight to us, and that many would rejoice  
 21 because of his birth. He foretold that John would be great  
 22 in God's eyes, bringing many of the people of Israel back  
 23 to the Lord. What more could any woman want than a son  
 24 who would prepare the way for the Messiah?!

25 Well, I soon became pregnant. I kept to myself much of  
 26 the time, praising God for blessing me this way in my  
 27 latter years. Then one quiet day there was a rap on the  
 28 door, and there stood Mary. When she spoke her greeting,  
 29 the baby within my womb leaped at the sound of her  
 30 voice, and the Spirit filled me with joy such as I had never  
 31 known! I knew, through the Spirit, that my cousin, Mary,  
 32 was the mother of my Lord! That's why the baby within  
 33 me had leaped for joy at the sound of her greeting!

34 I wonder...could that be what's missing? Do you really  
 35 feel the joy when you come into the Lord's presence? I

1 think you twentieth-century Christians have a few things  
2 to learn. For some of you, celebrating the Lord's birth  
3 means:

4 Shopping here, wrapping there,  
5 Off to a party; nights at home are rare.  
6 And don't forget, there's all that cooking.  
7 Better smile now, someone's looking.  
8 Hustle, hustle! Busy, busy!  
9 Come to worship...in a tizzy.

10 We need to recapture the joy of just being in his  
11 presence. If a baby, inside his mother's womb, leaped for  
12 joy in the presence of the Lord, should not we experience  
13 joy when we come into his presence? And if we  
14 experience it, shouldn't we express it? Where there is no  
15 joy...is there really Jesus? Today we light our third  
16 candle of Advent—the candle representing joy. *(She*  
17 *lights the candle as she's speaking, and then turns toward the*  
18 *congregation, as an introduction to "Joy to the World" or another*  
19 *selection with a joyful theme.)* **So capture it! The joy, I mean.**  
20 **You are in the Lord's presence!** *(She remains by the candle as*  
21 *the song is sung.)*

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## Peace in the Midst

### Fourth Candle — Peace

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**CHARACTER:** MARY.

**COSTUME:** A plain-colored bathrobe or choir robe turned backward;  
a 2-yard piece of blue fabric to drape over her head and  
shoulders, and sandals.

**PROPS:** Folder for script, if being read.

**SET:** Optional — a chair on the platform for her to sit on and read from.

**MARY:** Good morning. Your presence here is a tribute to my son...and I thank you. I am Mary. Most people know me best as the mother of Jesus. But they sometimes don't think about the fact that I was also a daughter, a daughter who was unsure of how my parents would react when they learned of my pregnancy. I was also pledged to be married to Joseph. I was with child, but he was not the father. The punishment for my presumed indiscretion was death by stoning. But you know, God is *always* in control of those who trust in him.

I surely was surprised that day when the angel greeted me. He told me of my value to the Lord and assured me right away that the Lord was with me. Quieting my fears, he gave me the incredible news that I was to be the mother of the Messiah! I, Mary, a poor young woman betrothed to a carpenter. Were *we* to raise the Son of the Most High?

“But I am a virgin,” I said. “How can this be?” I couldn't imagine.

He went on to explain. “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God.”<sup>1</sup> He then reminded me that “Nothing is impossible with God.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Luke 2:35

<sup>2</sup>Luke 2:37

1           Being a devout Jewish girl, I knew that this was true.  
2           So...trusting God implicitly, I committed. "I am the Lord's  
3           servant. May it be to me as you have said,"<sup>3</sup> I replied. And  
4           then he was gone. The angel had told me about  
5           Elizabeth's miraculous pregnancy, and now I wanted to  
6           see her more than ever! I ran to the hills where she lived,  
7           filled with excitement. I was so happy! When I entered  
8           and spoke to her, her baby leaped for joy in her womb! I  
9           still had a hard time grasping that I, a poor Jewish girl,  
10          would give birth to the Christ child. But I believed and  
11          trusted my heavenly Father, and *he gave me peace*. My  
12          song to the Lord was solely one of praise for allowing me  
13          to serve him in this way. I stayed with Elizabeth for three  
14          months and came back, uncertain of how Joseph would  
15          react to the news, yet still at peace about how it would all  
16          turn out. My uncertainty didn't last for long, as I soon  
17          learned that he, too, had been visited by an angel who  
18          had explained everything to him. My Joseph understood  
19          and not only still wanted me as his wife, but was totally  
20          committed to the responsibility of raising the Son of God.  
21          God is faithful when we trust in him.

22          Joseph and I moved our wedding day up and didn't  
23          worry if people assumed the worst. We knew God was in  
24          control, and *he gave us peace*. Even when we had to go to  
25          Bethlehem for the census, we went together. It was a long  
26          trip that a pregnant woman really had no business  
27          taking, but we knew that the child was to be born in  
28          Bethlehem. God would take care of us. Even when the  
29          inns were full, it didn't matter. We were used to humble  
30          circumstances. Only earthly kings are concerned with  
31          pretentious surroundings and earthly wealth. The King  
32          of Kings was born in humble surroundings to show us  
33          what is really important and what brings real peace.

34          Oh, I knew that the baby would become the boy...and

35          <sup>3</sup>Luke 2:38

1 the boy, the man...and the man, well, at that moment, all  
2 that mattered was that we were together — Joseph,  
3 precious little Jesus, and I. A family. Joseph and I shared  
4 our commitment to the task of raising God’s son as our  
5 own, and to accepting all of the changes in our lives that  
6 this unique responsibility would bring. He’d been faithful  
7 and brought us to this little cattle stall. It was so still,  
8 with only the sound of an occasional lowing of a cow  
9 interrupting the silence. The moon filtered its soft light  
10 through the cracks in the walls, illuminating our son,  
11 who had to come to illuminate the world. *We knew what*  
12 *real peace was.*

13 Peace isn’t found in the glitter of your lights and  
14 decorations or in your tantalizing holiday foods. Nor is it  
15 found in that perfect gift under the tree. True peace is  
16 found in answering God’s call to trust him to help you be  
17 what he wants you to be. Joseph and I knew that.

18 So enjoy the decorations and the glitter of the lights,  
19 but find peace in the Light of the World. Savor all the  
20 tantalizing foods, but get your real food from the Bread of  
21 Life. Be thoughtful in your giving, but give your greatest  
22 gift of all to the Lord. Trust him with your whole life. He  
23 will give you peace.

24 Today we light the fourth candle on our Advent  
25 wreath, the candle representing peace. *(She lights the*  
26 *candle as the introduction for “When Peace, Like a River” or*  
27 *another appropriate hymn with the theme of peace begins.)*  
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