

The GOOD NEWS from BETHLEHEM

By Rev. John B. Wintermute

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THE GOOD NEWS FROM BETHLEHEM!

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Bring the biggest news story ever to your congregation with special, on-the-spot reports from the hills of Bethlehem. Reporters interview villagers on the scene including shepherds who tell how the singing of angels led them to a stable where a baby has just been born. Soon the reporters interview Wise Men and even the baby's parents themselves. As one reporter closes the newscast he says, "I can't help but wonder what the world will one day make out of this story of bright lights, stars, angels, wise men and shepherds, a king and a savior."

CAST OF CHARACTERS

FIRST ANNOUNCER

SECOND ANNOUNCER

MOBILE ONE ANNOUNCER

MOBILE ONE CAMERA PERSON

MOBILE TWO ANNOUNCER

MOBILE TWO CAMERA PERSON

(Above characters may be male or female.)

SARAH: A woman of Bethlehem.

HANNAH: Innkeeper's wife.

SAMUEL: An elderly, almost deaf shepherd.

THOMAS: A younger shepherd.

RUTH: Innkeeper's young daughter.

CASPAR: A wise man from the East.

MELCHIOR: A second wise man.

BALTHAZAR: Old wise man (*non-speaking*).

JOSEPH: The father of Jesus.

SERVANTS: Any number (*non-speaking*).

THE TIME: The first Christmas Eve.

THE PLACE: The streets of Bethlehem.

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PRODUCTION NOTES: As the entire play consists of a number of interviews over television the Announcers may be either male or female, depending upon the need of the cast. Also, two or three TV camera people may be added. They have no lines but stand off to the side and aim their portable cameras at the scene unfolding before them at the moment. In most cases the Announcer stands behind one of the reading stands either the one SR or the one SL. If given in the sanctuary, the pulpit and lectern will serve nicely. The two stands should be lighted by a spotlight. A manger is between the stands, unlit until the Wise Men come to pay homage. The parts may be memorized or read but if the parts are read, then a great deal of attention should be paid to making sure they are performed in a convincing manner and with as little attention being paid to the script as possible. Biblical characters should be dressed in Biblical costumes.

PROPS: Props include microphones, headsets, and cameras for the media people; water jug for Sarah; staffs for shepherds; manger for the Baby; and gifts for wise men to present at the nativity.

SOUNDS: Christmas music offstage and radio static.

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(AT RISE: The stage is in darkness. The sound of a CHRISTMAS CAROL is heard. Suddenly the Christmas carol is stopped and the voice of the FIRST ANNOUNCER is heard.)

1ST ANNOUNCER: We interrupt our program of Christmas music to bring you the following special overseas newscast, directly from Israel ...

(The sound of STATIC is heard as if station is being tuned in on a foreign station. Then the voice of the SECOND ANNOUNCER.)

2ND ANNOUNCER: This is central control in Jerusalem, Israel. About midnight we began to get inquiries concerning the source of an unidentified, bright light that seemed to hover above the hills of Bethlehem, some five miles south of here. For the past several hours we have been trying to run down the source of this report. We have dispatched two of our mobile units to Bethlehem and they are now standing by to bring us up to date. Please come in mobile unit #1

(The LIGHTS come up on the reading stand SL revealing MOBILE UNIT #1 ANNOUNCER, who holds a microphone in his hand. His CAMERA MAN stands off to the side. Mobile #1 stands looking about.)

MOBILE #1: I'm standing here on a deserted street corner in Bethlehem. It is still very early in the morning. No one seems to be up and about ... *(After a brief pause.)* Ah, here comes a woman on her way to the village well. Pardon me, madam.

(MOBILE #1 stops SARAH as she enters with water jug from SR. They share the same speaking stand and microphone.)

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SARAH: (*Frightened.*) Oh, dear me!

MOBILE #1: I'm sorry if I startled you just now, but we've had several inquiries about an unidentified light which was seen hovering above the hills of this village late last night. You didn't happen to see such a light, did you? It was first sighted about midnight ...

SARAH: I should say not! I'm a busy housewife and when it's time to sleep, I sleep! Solid as a rock! (*Mutters in anger.*) That is, unless I'm kept awake by a gang of hoodlums shouting in the street outside my door, like I was last night.

MOBILE #1: (*Sensing a story.*) Men shouting in the street? Do you have any idea what they were shouting about so late at night?

SARAH: (*Suddenly suspicious.*) I don't know anything. If you're so nosy, why don't you go down to the village inn. I'll bet that's where those good-for-nothings came from last night. Hiriam ignores all the closing laws ...

MOBILE #1: (*Cutting SARAH off, but still fishing for a story.*) Was there anything at all about last night that seemed unusual to you? You're positive that you didn't notice any bright light in the sky?

(*SARAH starts to exit, her voice fading out.*)

SARAH: (*Snapping shut.*) I told you. I don't know anything. I've got to hurry down to the well if I don't want to end up standin' in line there half the mornin' ...

MOBILE #1: (*Disappointed.*) This may be a false alarm. We now return you to central control.

(*The LIGHT on the stand at SR goes off.*)

ANNOUNCER #1: We switch you now to mobile #2. Come in mobile #2.

(*The LIGHT on the stand at SL comes on, revealing MOBILE #2 ANNOUNCER and his CAMERA MAN.*)

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MOBILE #2: This is mobile unit #2 covering the inn at Bethlehem. I'm trying to wake up the innkeeper and interview him. He might know something. Ah, here comes someone to the door now ...

(HANNAH steps forward and shares the microphone with MOBILE #2.)

HANNAH: I'm sorry, sir, but we don't have a single room left in the inn. We've been packed to the thatched roof since yesterday at noon. What with everybody coming home for the census, business has never been so good. Caesar Augustus is a wonderful emperor as far as I'm concerned.

MOBILE #2: But madam ...

HANNAH: *(Cutting HIM off.)* No. Sorry. Really, there's no more room left inside the inn.

MOBILE #2: Is the proprietor in, madam?

HANNAH: *(SHE has never heard the word.)* The who?

MOBILE #2: The proprietor, the owner of this inn?

HANNAH: *(As the light dawns.)* Oh, you mean Hiram, my husband. He's inside sleeping. He's so tired, poor dear!

MOBILE #2: There are some people who thought they saw a strange, glowing ... a bright light over the hills to the west of town around midnight. Did you happen to see such a sight?

HANNAH: No, we were in bed by then. What with every last room taken, there was no need to wait up for some late traveler.

MOBILE #2: One thing more! One of the women in town said that some men were shouting in the streets last night. Do you know anything about that?

HANNAH: *(On the defensive.)* If they had too much wine to drink, you can be sure they didn't get it here. We obey the law about such matters!

MOBILE #2: And you didn't see anything or hear anyone after you went to bed last night?

End of Freeview

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