

## HAIL REDEMPTIONS HAPPY DAWN!

A Christmas Sing-In  
For home or church  
Submitted by Linda Garner (Sandy, Utah)

A sing-in is a great way to celebrate the season. It can be produced with little preparation, as the songs are familiar and the narration is provided. All the carols are available in the LDS Hymnbook or Children's Songbook. Choose one or more carols from each list, or substitute your own favorites. Select a good reader to be the narrator and the fun begins!

Silent Night (Hymns p. 204)  
Have a Very Merry Christmas (Children's Songbook p. 51)  
Nativity Song (Children's Songbook p. 53)

Narrator: Christmas! It's the happiest time of the year. We love the sights and sounds and smells of Christmas. We revel in the memories of Christmas past and the dreams of Christmas future. For a short season we lay our cares aside and turn our thoughts to others. We are kinder, gentler, and more generous. We call it the Christmas Spirit. We hardly recognize ourselves as we go about spreading good cheer to friends, family, and sometimes strangers.

Yes, we love the tinsel, the gaily wrapped packages, the twinkling lights, but there is more. We know in our hearts there is a deeper meaning to Christmas, and we are not satisfied until Christmas takes us to the manger, if only in our hearts. We must travel through time to the stable in Bethlehem. Our hearts yearn to follow the star, to hear the angels song, to smell the hay and listen to the lambs. Our search for Christmas is not complete until we, too, find the baby in the manger. Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass. Oh Come, let us adore him.

Oh Come All Ye Faithful (Hymns p. 202)  
Away In a Manger (Hymns p. 206, or Children's Songbook p. 42)

Narrator: What kind of woman would God choose to be the mother of his son? Nephi calls her a virgin most beautiful and fair. Alma calls her a precious and chosen vessel of the Lord. Historians tell us that Mary was very young when she was told of her sacred mission, perhaps as young as 13, and probably not older than 16. Can you imagine the thoughts that must have filled her young mind? It would be she who would prepare Jesus for his triumphant mission. Her baby would be the son of God! This was neither the first nor last time that the Lord would choose someone very young for his most important work. David was just a boy when he was annointed King of Israel. The Savior would come through his blood line. Mormon was just 10 when he was entrusted with the plates, and 16 when he took charge of the Nephite armies. Joseph Smith was 14 when he saw the father and the son, and began his mission to restore the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the earth. We begin to see that you are never too young to be of great service to the Lord.

We love the words that Mary spoke as she accepted her sacred calling. "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word." If only we could be so obedient to the will of the Lord.

The name, Mary, means bitter...perhaps a reminder that a sword would one day pierce her heart.

Joseph was no less a hero. Imagine his feelings as he perceived that his love had been

betrayed. Imagine his heartbreak, his anguish at his shattered dreams. Yet, at the angel's word he too showed complete and immediate obedience. Don't you just marvel at the strength of his spirit, his trust, his faith. We know so little of Joseph, but we imagine him gentle and kind, strong and protective. We know that he would have been equal to Mary in righteousness and spirituality. What kind of man would God have chosen to raise his son? Joseph would stand beside Mary. He would teach and guide Jesus. He would act as father.

When Joseph Went to Bethlehem (Children's Songbook p. 38)

Once Within a Lowly Stable (Children's Songbook p. 41)

Picture a Christmas (Children's Songbook p. 50)

Narrator: The name "Jesus" was specified by the angel Gabriel. It means Savior. His other names are no less descriptive. Christ means anointed one. Messiah means deliverer. Immanuel means God with us. The scriptures teach "there is no other name given, whereby salvation can come to the children of men." Like Nephi, we can barely comprehend the condescension of God. This helpless baby nestled in the straw was Jehovah, the God of Israel, the Great I Am, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings, the Bright and Morning Star...and he became like us, that we might become like him.

Did Mary and Joseph know that Jesus must be born in Bethlehem, the house of bread? How appropriate that the <sup>3</sup>Bread of Life<sup>2</sup> would begin his life in the city named the house of bread. How did they feel about the humble place of his birth? Would they have chosen a stable, a manger? What did Jesus mean to teach us by coming in this way?

O Little Town of Bethlehem (Hymns p. 208)

Once in Royal David's City (Hymns p. 205)

Narrator: It was angels who sang the first Christmas Carol on that first Christmas night. Can you imagine a Christmas Celebration without the joyous music of Christmas? Perhaps it was their glorious song that inspired all other carols. Who were the angels who filled that heavenly choir? Departed spirits and spirits yet unborn who recognized this pivotal moment in history, who understood that the future of the world, and their own destiny, hung in the balance of the sacred mission which was about to begin. You and I no doubt looked on as the story began to unfold. In fact who knows but what we joined our voices in that glorious chorus..." Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth Peace, Good Will Toward Men."

Angels We Have Heard on High (Hymns p. 203)

Hark the Herald Angels Sing (Hymns p. 209)

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear (Hymns p. 207)

Narrator: Don't you love knowing that the shepherds were the first to receive the message that Jesus had been born; Jesus, who would teach us much about shepherding, Jesus who would call himself the "Good Shepherd," who would teach us how to feed his lambs, to find the lost sheep, to come into the fold; Jesus, who would remind us that "my sheep know my voice, they hear me and follow me." It seems so appropriate that shepherds would be the ones to get the news that the Lamb of God had come. Who were these humble shepherds? It was they who cared for the temple sheep from which the sacrificial lambs would be chosen. These lambs, like Jesus, would be sacrificed for the sins of the people. We picture the shepherds bringing a lamb as a gift for the baby Jesus. The symbolism is flawless. Shepherds worshipping the Good

shepherd...bringing a lamb as a gift for the lamb of God.

While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks (Hymns p. 211)

Far Far Away On Judea's Plains (Hymns p. 212)

The First Noel (Hymns p.213)

Narrator: Historians tell us that the wise men did not really kneel at the manger. They came much later, perhaps as much as two years later. The wise men, or Magi, came from afar, and unlike the common, humble shepherds were men of wealth, influence, and power, perhaps even kings. And so we see that the Savior did not come to just one nation or class of people.

The Savior's mission was to all people, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, humble and influential, Jew and Gentile. All men, no matter what their race or station can come to the Savior and become whole. We are reminded that when he comes again every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ.

We feel a sense of wonder as we imagine the Wise Men opening their treasures for the small Jesus. Their gifts were so well chosen. Gold, a gift reserved for royalty, a gift representing a crown, a gift befitting a king. Frankincense, a type of incense used by the priests in the temple. This was given as a symbol of his priesthood, his divine power, his Priestly nature. Frankincense was used in the temple for sacrificial offerings, and was given to the baby Jesus... Jesus, who would one day teach us much about sacrifice...Jesus, who had come to sacrifice himself for us, that we might live again. The third gift, myrrh, was a type of perfume used for burial, a gentle reminder that Jesus would one day die for us.

Don't you love these images: Learned men searching for Jesus, the source of truth and knowledge... Influential men traveling through the darkness, to find the light of the world--following the star to seek the bright and morning star... Perhaps even Kings, bowing before the King of Kings.

With Wondering Awe (Hymns p. 210)

Narrator: In reality, the search for Jesus will take us far beyond the manger in Bethlehem. If we would truly follow the star we must go to Nazareth, to Galilee, to Jerusalem. We must find not only the infant Jesus, but Jesus the man. We must find the fisher of men, the teacher, the leader, the healer, the friend. We will find him by the sea of Galilee. We will find him on the Mount of Olives. We will find him on the dusty roads of Palestine. We will find him with the leper, the adulterer, the crippled, the sick. Ultimately, if we would find Jesus, we must follow the star to the Garden of Gethsamane, to Golgatha, and to the Garden Tomb. Our worship must take us past the manger to kneel at the cross, for here he finished his work. The gift was complete. This is the gift that matters most...the gift of all gifts....the gift of the atonement of Jesus Christ. Without Easter there could not be a Christmas. This is the gift of which the angels exultantly sang ...good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. Joy to the World, the Lord is Come! Hail redemptions happy dawn!

Joy to the World (Hymns p.201)

I Stand All Amazed (Hymns 193)

He Sent His Son (Children's Songbook p. 35)

Narrator: In the tradition of the shepherds and the wisemen, we will give many gifts this Holiday season. Some will be meaningful, some will be frivolous. Some will be gaily wrapped, others unwrappable. Some will be expensive, some will come from the heart. None can match the priceless

gift that was given to us.

Will we bring a gift to our worship? What might we offer as we kneel before the manger? Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh seem strangely out of place this time.

What might we give as we kneel before the cross? Even a lamb will not do this time, for Jesus was the sacrificial lamb. Perhaps we might give a favorite sin, a heavy burden, a prideful spirit. Perhaps we could give obedience, our love, our will. Perhaps, we could offer our hands or even our heart.

And should we choose to give our heart to Jesus, he would give to us a new heart...a softer more obedient heart. He would take us and make us his. He would teach us to be like him.

With Humble Heart (Hymns p. 171)

More Holiness Give Me (Hymns p. 131)

I'm Trying To Be Like Jesus (Children's Songbook p. 78)