

**Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
A SHEPHERD REMEMBERS**

Christmas Carol Sing
Prelude
Chiming of the Hour

Bell Choir Processional	“Random Ring”	
Welcome and Scripture		
Bell Sextet	“Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee,” Beethoven	
*Processional Hymn	“The First Noel” (shepherds, choir, congregation)	#199
Shepherd’s Monologue No. 1	“Living in the Fields”	
Solo	“O Holy Night”	
Anthems:	“While Shepherds Watched” “Rise Up, Shepherds”	
Shepherd’s Monologue No. 2	“The First to See!”	
Hymn	“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”	#178
Lighting the Advent and Christ Candles		
Christmas Prayer		
Solo	“What Child Is This?”	
Bell Choir	“O Come, All Ye Faithful,” “Joseph, Dearest, Joseph Mine,” “Silent Night, Holy Night,”	Wade, arr. Berry & Van Valey German Carol, arr. Thompson Gruber
Christmas Carols and the Circle of Light		Choir and congregation
	“Silent Night, Holy Night”	#193
	“Away in a Manger”	#194
	“It Came upon a Midnight Clear” (vv. 1, 2, 5)	#195
Shepherd’s Monologue No. 3	“The Good Shepherd”	
Anthem	“We Are Reconciled”	
*Closing Hymn	“Joy to the World”	#318
*Chiming of the Hour		
*Postlude		
*Congregation stands		

All hymns are from *Hymnal: A Worship Book*

This order of worship and monologues were created by Daniel M. Petry, senior pastor, Middlebury Church of the Brethren, Middlebury, Ind. Copyright © 2000.

Stage notes from the author: I gave this material to our actor two months in advance. He memorized it and dressed in shepherd’s garb. We spotlighted him as he entered and exited from various points in the sanctuary. We also projected a star, a cross, and silhouettes of the Good Shepherd and the Crucified Christ at appropriate points in the drama. You should use your imaginations in staging this. The choir anthems and congregational hymns were specifically chosen to enhance the message of the drama.

A SHEPHERD REMEMBERS

Living in the Fields Shepherd's Monologue #1

Living in the fields—that was my life as a young shepherd near the village of Bethlehem. It was like camping, only it went on forever and there was no hot shower or trip to McDonalds at the end of the week. We smelled of the earth and of the sheep that we tended and of the smoke of our cooking fires. We were a rough lot—and I was the worst of the bunch. If I could get a hold of anything to smoke, chew, or drink, I did. Our language and our jokes around the campfire were not the sort of talk I could repeat in mixed company or in a holy place like this.

Because of our hard living and agricultural aura (some would spell that “odor”), we were not much liked or appreciated by the townsfolk—the rich people who actually owned the herds of sheep that we tended. They were glad we were out there doing our jobs—watering, finding pasture, chasing off wolves and lions, and tending to the wounded—but they didn’t want to have anything to do with us. Shepherds and townies just didn’t mix.

Our whole economy pretty much depended on sheep—broad-tailed sheep they were. We drank their milk, spun their wool into clothing, ate their flesh, and used their skins and leather for all sorts of things. The best part of the sheep was that broad tail—some of them weighed ten or even fifteen pounds. It was *our* filet mignon! And, of course, sheep were of great importance to our sacrifices and one of our primary mediums of exchange. So our jobs were important and we took pride in doing them well, yet we were never respected. As I said before, shepherds and townies just didn’t mix . . . until late one cold winter’s night.

Winters are rainy and sometimes frigid in Palestine. It can even snow in the higher elevations. The night I remember started out cloudy and cold. The ground was still damp from the afternoon rain when we sat down to have our meager supper. The fire felt especially welcome that night. As evening wore on, the clouds parted, and by midnight the sky was completely clear. I remember, because I woke up from the cold and pulled my blanket a little tighter around me. The stars were brilliant by then. What you call the Milky Way stretched from one horizon to the other. It reminded me of the strips of cloth we wrapped our babies in—swaddling clothes we called them—only this was translucent and shimmering as it wound its way across the meridian.

And there was one star that was unusually bright. Drifting back to sleep I mused, “That’s something new; I wonder what it means?”

A SHEPHERD REMEMBERS

The First to See! Shepherd's Monologue #2

Can you believe it? I was the first to see the Messiah! Prophets, priests, princes had longed for the fulfillment of God's promise—but died waiting. I, on the other hand, never put much stock in eternal things—not as a young man. Wine, women, and wages—that's about all that interested me in those days. And yet God chose me to be the first to glimpse his Son and our Savior. That night I learned there was such a thing as grace.

Being chosen by God has a funny way of turning your life upside down. We ran into town, checked all the stables—little caves carved into the hillside—and finally found him behind the inn. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. A manger, mind you! Not even a rough-hewn cradle like other poor folks' kids, but a lousy feed trough! If you've ever been in a barn, you know what I'm talking about. Our Savior's first bed was encrusted with the dried cud of cows and sheep. It was a place whose smell and feel was familiar to us, but we all wished him better. A birth announced in the heavens seemed out of place in the hay.

Yet there was such a peace in that stable. Our Lord was not even conscious of himself, yet already he was reconciling the world to himself. Shepherds and townies were kneeling around his makeshift bed and all were welcome. The young mother and father listened to our story, believed us, and thanked us for our simple gifts. They did not guard the baby jealously as some young parents do, but seemed to understand he belonged to us all. We were welcome there, there at the feet of Jesus.

Life went on, but I watched for him, waited for him. For thirty long years, the vision of his star remained emblazoned in my memory. Finally, when I was fifty years old (an old man in my day), he appeared, teaching and preaching. You won't find my name in the list of disciples, but I was one of the first. I believed in him. I believed in him.

A SHEPHERD REMEMBERS

The Good Shepherd Shepherd's Monologue #3

He too was a shepherd—the Good Shepherd. I was there the day he said:

“I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.”

He was right about me—the hired hand. I’ve run from a wolf or two. In fact, on that dark Thursday night, we all ran and left Jesus to take on the wolf by himself. He stood tall and brave, but the wolf tore him and broke him. And the next day, on the hill called Golgotha, my Star went out and I was left with a cross. Yet, even there in my agony and his, I was welcomed and embraced by grace. For kneeling at the feet of Jesus, I heard him say, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Brother, have you heard? Sister, do you know? The wolf’s den was not dark enough or deep enough to keep my Lord! On the third day he arose. With my own eyes, I saw the great Shepherd of the Sheep—hands, feet, and side still pierced by the fangs of the wolf and yet undeniably alive! I was in that Upper Room when he came and stood in the midst of us. I was among the one hundred and twenty when his Spirit came upon us with power. And I am here to tell you that His Star still shines! He is Lord of Lords, King of Kings and Prince of Peace! He is reconciling the world to himself. And His Star still shines!

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