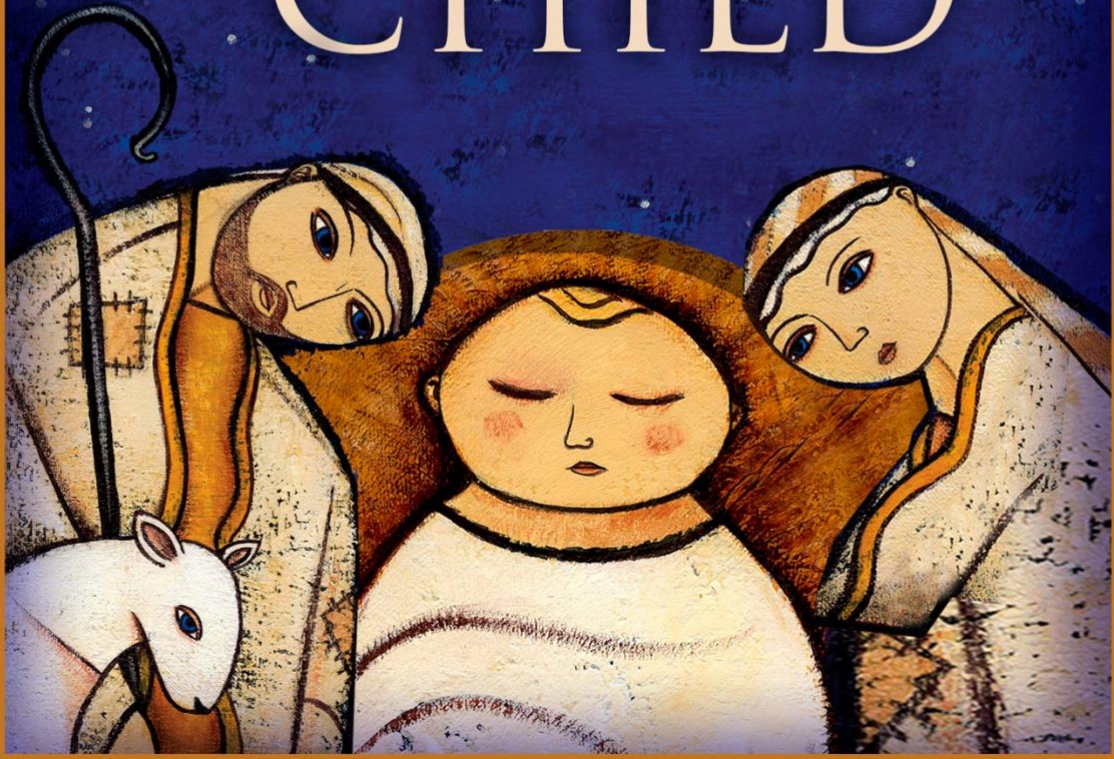


BEHOLD
The CHILD



Behold the Child provides a variety of ways to involve children in a Christmas service. Children of all ages can serve as readers, speakers, and nonspeaking characters for a variety of opportunities. Groups sing and present the Christmas story. Also consider using solos or ensembles for special music to involve more children and youth.

Because the service is in an editable form, you may delete or add parts. Reader parts can be combined or divided into even more parts, if you like.

Other *Behold the Child* Resources in This Set

The children's Christmas service for all ages includes these editable files: a script with leader notes, a children's message, a bulletin file for your service bulletin, and a lyrics file. An optional Christmas program for young children (early childhood) includes a corresponding set of editable files.

A selection of recorded songs and correlating song scores are provided with the *Behold the Child* set. Some songs are used for both options. Some are used only with the all-age children's service. Others are used only with the early childhood program.

Music Overview

Songs in the all ages service with recordings:

“Hark, the Herald Angels Sing,” *LSB* 380

“Joy to the World,” *LSB* 387

“Angels from the Realms of Glory,” *LSB* 367

“Infant Holy, Infant Lowly,” *LSB* 393

“Gentle Mary Laid Her Child,” *LSB* 374

“He Whom Shepherds Once Came Praising,” *Lutheran Worship* 54

“Angels We Have Heard on High,” *LSB* 368

Songs in the early childhood service with recordings:

“Hark, the Herald Angels Sing,” *LSB* 380

“Angels from the Realms of Glory,” *LSB* 367

“Sing Glory, Glory,” *Sing and Wonder*, page 30

“He Whom Shepherds Once Came Praising,” *Lutheran Worship* 54

“Angels We Have Heard on High,” *LSB* 368

Songs are provided as MP3 files that play on your computer.

Each song has two recorded versions: one with vocals and one with accompaniment only. Some leaders use the vocals version while the children are learning the songs, and then they switch to the accompaniment-only version for the service. Music scores are also provided for each song. Use the resources that best serve your purposes and the abilities of your participants.

Note that we have included two versions of the recordings and scores of the hymn “He Whom Shepherds Once Came Praising.” The ending from the *Lutheran Worship* version may not be as familiar to those who are accustomed to singing the same tune in *Lutheran Service Book* 375. If your congregation would be more comfortable with the setting from *LSB*, use the recordings and scores marked “LSB ending” for that setting.

Be mindful that the program suggests shortening or dividing some songs.

The script suggests having the congregation join in the singing on specified hymns, but you may change that to whatever works best for you. Permission is given to print all congregational responses, readings, and lyrics in your worship bulletin. You may delete or substitute songs, but if any songs are not in the public domain, you must get permission from the copyright holders to use those songs and print the lyrics.

Mark up a copy of the worship bulletin to guide an accompanist. Ask him or her to provide soft background music as the children move into position for their parts. Note, however, that some hymns and songs are strategically placed to accommodate for such transitions.

Involve Your Pastor in the Service

If your service happens on a Sunday morning, your pastor will likely be involved already. If your service happens during a different time period, be sure to include your pastor in the planning as appropriate, asking what level of involvement works well for him. Don’t forget to let him know that there is an optional children’s message that he may want to use or adapt. During this busy time of year, it can be a real help to provide him with ready resources!

Individual Parts for All Ages

These parts are available for children’s participation:

6 Bible readings

2 responsive readings

5 rhyming verses, currently divided into 3 age-group recitations

Costumed nonspeaking characters: Mary, Joseph, angels, shepherds, Magi

Musicians/soloists

Group Parts for All Ages

The “Message Presented by the Children” follows a basic pattern: Bible reading, hymn, group rhyme, hymn, and a sign presentation. The Bible readings may be read by older children who are not participating in the group parts. The designated group of children can come up during the hymn. Have each group of children memorize their rhyme together to avoid stress and complications from absences, or divide the rhyme among the children. The hymn is treated as a musical response. Students may sit during the last stanza or a musical interlude while a designated person puts a sign on display. (See “Costumes and Props” below.)

Individual Parts for Early Childhood

These parts are available for children’s participation:

3 readers (adults or older children; parts may be divided further)

Costumed nonspeaking characters: Mary, Joseph, angels, shepherds, sheep, Wise Men

Responsive reading (This is an easy way to involve all students or to include your very small children and their parents so all ages are represented.)

Group Parts for Early Childhood

The older children (split into two groups) will ask the angels, shepherds, and Wise Men what they see as they behold the child. One action rhyme is provided; “Behold the Child” is designed for older nonreading children, perhaps four- and five-year-olds.

Staging

How you set up the presentation area and where children sit and stand depends on your facility, the number of children, and your local preferences. Keep in mind that smooth transitions help minimize behavior issues and that young children can stand for only so long!

Costumes and Props

One option for this service is to have different groups wear different costumes: angels, shepherds, Magi, in that order. Another option would be for costumed volunteers to come up during the nativity portrayal. You may choose one or both options.

Dress the children who act the parts of Mary, Joseph, shepherds, angels, and Magi in costumes of bathrobes or other clothing that represent biblical attire. These children can come forward during the reading that corresponds to their character. If you choose to have children dress up as sheep, a headband with felt ears and a white robe or large white T-shirt can be an easy costume.

Wrap a baby doll in a blanket to represent Jesus. If you do not have a manger, use a cradle or even a box to represent one. Set two chairs (for Mary and Joseph) in the stable area with the manger. Younger children may play shepherds and sheep, as these characters could sit and kneel.

The all-age service uses three signs as visual cues about groups who “beheld the Child”: angels, shepherds and Magi. These signs could be banners, posters, or even projections. For banners, use felt, a dowel rod, and ribbon. Decorate with colored felt, puff paint, or glitter glue. For posters, use foam board for sturdy, lightweight signs. For groups who love to decorate, a three-foot figurine of each could be created using Styrofoam shapes and fabric. For projections, use your Internet search engine for “creative commons” images. These images should be free for you to use. If you have an individual or team who often find images for other events, you can enlist their help. This download also contains some images that could be projected as you choose.

Other *Behold the Child* Gifts and Resources

This Christmas service is designed to align with several other resources! Consider giving each child a copy of the book *Angel! Angel! What Do You See?* (CPH item no. 562552) or a homemade keepsake as a Christmas gift. The early childhood service uses some of the text of the book *Angel! Angel! What Do You See?*, so it could make a great gift for families.

Let your pastor and church leaders know that there are several resources the church can use during Advent and Christmas with the theme *Behold the Child*. See cph.org for more details.

BEHOLD THE CHILD

Behold the Child

A Children's Christmas Service for All Ages

Note to Director: For this service, notes are included in this script, marked as "Leader Note," instead of in a separate file. Review the end of this script for general notes and helps.

Leader Note: Don't forget to check all resources for this service! Your pastor may want to see the children's message. Your church office will be glad to know that a bulletin is already prepared and ready for your edits. Lyrics are ready to go for your teachers. Take some time to familiarize yourself with all the available tools. Also, if your church has primarily small children or if you have two different services, see also the early childhood service, which is available as an alternative option. Typically, when the notes indicate for children to sing, it is for the whole group of children to sing, even if a particular age group will be featured. If you have a large group, you could have individual age groups sing specific hymns that coincide with their parts, but if you have a smaller group, it's much better to have all the children singing together.

The Processional Hymn: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

LSB 380

Children:

Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With th'angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Refrain (sung by all)

Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Congregation:

Christ, by highest heav'n adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail th'incarnate Deity!
Pleased as Man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel! *Refrain*

Hail, the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Ris'n with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth. *Refrain*

The Invocation

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Responsive Reading

Leader: Behold the Child, our newborn King:

People: Whom shepherds find and angels sing,

Leader: Whom Magi seek with gifts so rare.

People: We come, our happy praise to share!

Hymn: Joy to the World

LSB 387

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders of His love.

The Christmas Meditation

The pastor may offer a brief meditation or use the children's message for this service.

Leader Note: Your pastor may have his own message, but you can offer him the included children's message as a starting place for ideas that tie in with the message of this service.

Offering

The Message Presented by the Children

Leader Note: The reader roles are great for older children. They can stand behind a podium, reading from the script or straight from the Bible. Memorization is not necessary, but an option. To include more volunteers, break the reader parts into smaller sections.

Reader 1: In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Reader 2: And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” *Luke 2:1–14*

Hymn: Angels from the Realms of Glory

LSB 367:1

Congregation:

Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o’er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation’s story,
Now proclaim Messiah’s birth.

Refrain

Come and worship, come and worship;
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

(Children in grades K–1 assemble during the hymn. One option would be for all children in this group to be dressed as angels.)

Leader Note: These rhymes weave throughout the service and assist with memory, but the language matures with the age group. To ease stress for children, have them say the rhyme together. You may choose to divide the rhyming pairs and assign to individuals to memorize if you’d prefer.

Children Grades K–1:

“Behold the Child,” the angels sing. *(Cup mouth with hands to proclaim.)*

A baby boy will be our King!
And just not any king is here.

(Hands form a crown on head)
(Shake head no.)

He's God's own Son, so give a cheer!

(Wave hands in celebration.)

Hymn: Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

LSB 393

Children:

Infant holy,
 Infant lowly,
For His bed a cattle stall;
 Oxen lowing,
 Little knowing
Christ the child is Lord of all.
 Swiftly winging,
 Angels singing,
 Bells are ringing,
 Tidings bringing:
Christ the child is Lord of all!
Christ the child is Lord of all!

Congregation:

Flocks were sleeping,
 Shepherds keeping
Vigil till the morning new
 Saw the glory,
 Heard the story,
Tidings of a Gospel true.
 Thus rejoicing,
 Free from sorrow,
 Praises voicing,
 Greet the morrow:
Christ the child was born for you!
Christ the child was born for you!