This program is founded on the belief that children and youth are exemplars of greatness in the Kingdom of God, and that, as Jesus says in Matthew 18:3, “Unless you [adult disciples] change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” Thus, with this program, we adults immerse our children and youth in a year-long story that covers the grand sweep of the Bible. Along the way, we provide space for children and youth to think about, comment upon, play with, and then, through our Kids-Lead Services, Youth-Lead Services and Christmas and Easter Pageants, to re-tell the Biblical story in their own youthful ways. In so doing, we put our children and youth in the position of teaching us and leading us.

This packet contains:
(1) A two-page Curriculum Overview (p. 3-4)
(2) A Weekly Lectionary for the Children’s Chapel and Youth Theology Forum (p. 5-10)
(3) A detailed description of the Children’s Chapel liturgy (p. 11-12)
(4) A description of the Kids-Lead and Youth-Lead services (p. 13)
(5) A sample Youth-Lead sermon (p. 14-18)
(6) A Christmas Pageant script, w/hymns, from Creation to the Birth of Jesus (p. 19-46)
(7) An Easter Pageant script, w/hymns, Jesus’ life, ministry, death, resurrection (p. 47-61)
(Both pageants take about 20 - 25 minutes to perform, require no more than two rehearsals to prepare, and are meant to replace the Liturgy of the Word and Sermon during Holy Eucharist.)

Hans Urs von Balthasar (Jesuit priest and theologian), on childhood as “the sphere of original wholeness and health”:

“Jesus’ attitude toward children is perfectly clear: No one will enter the Kingdom of God... unless he makes a turnabout and returns to the mentality of his beginnings... But how should someone already well on the way into his future life suddenly stop and set out in the opposite direction? ...And yet, at first sight, what is involved is something wholly understandable for us, an experience that each of us has had as a child and to which we must somehow return, an experience which every adult can approximate in his dealings with children... Jesus does not seek out a ‘model child’ in order to hold him up as an example. Things are much simpler... What he wants to show with the child he is lovingly embracing is something very simple, which the listening disciples should be able to understand as easily as the meaning of a straightforward parable... The [Israelites], along with the Greeks and the Romans, saw childhood as a stage on the way to fullness of humanity. It occurred to no one to consider the distinctive consciousness of children as a value in itself... childhood was ranked as merely a ‘not yet’ stage... But for Jesus, the condition of early childhood is by no means a matter of moral indifference and insignificance. Rather, the ways of the child, long since sealed off for the adult, open up an original dimension in which everything unfolds within the bounds of the right, the true, the good, in a zone of hidden containment which cannot be derogated as ‘pre-ethical’ or ‘unconscious,’ as if the child’s spirit had not yet awakened or were still at the animal level—something it never was... That zone or dimension in which the child lives, on the contrary, reveals itself as the sphere of original wholeness and health, and it may be even said to contain an element of holiness.”

- Unless You Become Like This Child, Ignatius Press, 1991
Dr. Judith Gundry-Volf (New Testament Professor, Yale University), on the “challenge to recapture in our own contexts the radicalness of Jesus’ teaching on children”:

“The most significant challenge before us is to recapture in our own particular contexts the radicalness of Jesus’ teaching on children. Children are not only subordinate but sharers with adults in the life of faith; they are not only to be formed but to be imitated; they are not only ignorant but capable of receiving spiritual insight; they are not ‘just’ children but representatives of Christ. What makes that challenge so difficult is that it would entail changing not only how adults relate to children but how we conceive of our social world. Jesus did not just teach how to make an adult world kinder and more just for children; he taught the arrival of a social world in part defined by and organized around children. He cast judgment on the adult world because it is not the child’s world. He made being a disciple dependent on inhabiting this ‘small world.’ He invited the children to come to him not so that he might initiate them into the adult realm but so that they might receive what is properly theirs—the reign of God.”


The Rev. Dr. Louis Weil (Liturgics Professor, Church Divinity School of the Pacific) on how “the authentic inclusion of children in parish liturgy may work for the salvation of adults”:

“The emphasis upon the primacy of a rational response is integral to the liturgical mentality which has dominated the Church’s prayer for several centuries... What we see in this development is the virtual swallowing up through verbal preoccupations of all the other dynamics of liturgical celebration. This emphasis upon the liturgical text carries with it an implied emphasis upon the rational, upon intellectual understanding. Affective and intuitive powers are left little, if any, space for realization within the liturgical context. The authentic inclusion of children in the normative models of parish liturgy may work for the salvation of the adults—and certainly for their wholeness as worshipers. For centuries, a false liturgical mentality has tried to let us forget that we have bodies, that we are physical persons, and that our worship involves us with each other—and not merely in perfectly ordered, cerebral ways. We need to learn and live the meaning of Tertullian’s phrase, ‘the flesh is the hinge of salvation.’ Children bring a naturalness to the liturgy which stands as a judgment upon our over-formalized routines... They bring a wonderful openness to the experience of word and gesture, touch and movement—to the whole array of human elements which lie at the heart of the liturgical act. Their feelings find articulation in the corporate context, since they have not learned to put on a religious mask.”

- “Children and Worship,” from The Sacred Play of Children, Seabury Press, 1983
A Little Child Shall Lead Them – Curriculum Overview

Chapter 1: God as creator and steadfast lover of everything and everyone

Text: The Hebrew Scriptures
Time Frame: Rally Day to the end of Ordinary Time (Sep – Nov)

As revealed in the stories of the Hebrew Scriptures—from Adam and Eve to Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, King David and King Solomon—God has created everything and is always present in our lives. God loves us and tries to help us in all that we do. We are called to learn to recognize God all around us, to listen to God and to love God. Together with God, we try to co-create beauty and goodness in our lives. But despite our best efforts, bad things can and do still happen. At such times, it can be hard to recognize that God is with us—how could God let such things happen? Yet if we look hard enough, we can still find God. Indeed, the presence of God can be most powerfully felt in the worst of circumstances.

1st Sunday in Oct. - Kids-Lead St. Francis Service with Blessing of the Animals
Ordinary Time Youth Lead Service

Chapter 2: God in the flesh: Jesus as Emanuel, “God with us”

Time Frame: Advent 1 to the Epiphany (Dec)

Bad things happen to all people at some point in their lives. And it can be hard to maintain hope, to keep finding joy and not be gripped by fear and anger. Lots of bad things happened to the ancient Israelites and they were feeling angry and afraid and were losing hope. Then God sent Jesus. Jesus is the steadfast love, presence, support and power of God right here and right now with us—another human being just like us, but at the same time Jesus possesses the overwhelming power, wisdom and goodness of God.

Christmas Eve: Christmas Pageant

Chapter 3: All the great and powerful joys Jesus taught us to celebrate

Text: Gospel Parables, the Sermon on the Mount, the Sermon on the Plain
Time Frame: Epiphany (Jan – Feb?)

Jesus taught us how powerful and joyful it is to love one another, to share a meal with one another, to give to one another, to heal one another—even those we think of as enemies. He taught us that every one of us is special, just as special as everyone else. He took our hurt, pain, fear, anger and sorrow, and made us feel happy and hopeful, gave us the strength to laugh and dance and sing.

Kids-Lead Epiphany Service
Chapter 4: Struggling to keep God in our hearts and minds

Text: Temptations in the Dessert, Healing and Exorcism Stories, Peter Stories
Time Frame: Lent (Feb? – April?)

But we often cut ourselves off to all the wonderful truths about joy, love and hope that Jesus taught us. We sometimes ignore how beautiful and wondrous life can be. We forget the importance of being thankful to God for all the good in our life, especially when we encounter the bad. Why do we do this? It’s hard to say; we just do, all the time.

Kids-Lead Lenten Service (with laying on of hands for healing by the children)

Chapter 5: Finding the good amidst the bad, the light in the darkness

Text: Gospel Resurrection Stories
Time Frame: Easter Season (March? – May?)

Jesus’ death and resurrection showed us the shining diamond of good that can be hidden in the dark coal of the bad, that through suffering there can be found joy and love, and that no matter how awful life seems to be, even in the face of death, God gives us opportunities for happiness and full life.

Sunday in Easter Season - Easter Pageant
Youth Lead Service

Chapter 6: Building the Kingdom of God

Text: Book of Acts (especially Ascension and Pentecost stories), Letters of Paul
Time Frame: Pentecost Sunday until the end of the Program Year (May? – June)

As a resurrected people, we must go out and try to love and embrace all people from all cultures, races and religions, just as we would those of our own family. And by loving all that we come across, demonstrate the truth of Jesus’ teachings and the power of Jesus’ resurrection.

Youth Service Camp/Youth Mission Trip, ages 10 – 17

Chapter 7: Meet new people, try new things and have fun!

Sunday Funday (parish volunteers lead activity of their choosing one Sunday each during usual Children’s Chapel time, Youth gather periodically for fun and fellowship)
Time Frame: Summer Ordinary Time (June - Aug)

Now we practice what we’ve preached—have fun, love one another, find joy in all creation, dance, dance, dance.

Vacation Bible School, ages 5 – 9 (Youth, ages 10 – 17, help serve as counselors)
### A Little Child Shall Lead Them

**Weekly Lectionary - Children’s Chapel and Youth Theology Forum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Bible Story or Character</th>
<th>Emphasis</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ord 1</td>
<td>What is worship? What do we do in Children’s Chapel? How is it worship? What is the prayer book? What is prayer?</td>
<td>Genesis 1, specifically: on the seventh day of creation, God rested</td>
<td>Introduce the kids to our Children’s Chapel liturgy; discuss liturgy and worship with youth</td>
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<td>Ord 2</td>
<td>What is the Bible? What sorts of stories does it tell? Why are stories important?</td>
<td>John 1, “In the beginning was the word…”</td>
<td>Throughout the parish hall, physically play out all the moving that the people of Israel do throughout the epic story of the Bible; with youth, field any questions they have about Bible and summarize the grand story we’ll explore during the year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ord 3</td>
<td>Creation</td>
<td>Genesis 1</td>
<td>God sends light into the dark, swirling, watery world, followed by plants, animals and ultimately humans. How are people reflections of God just as light reflects off everything in the world.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ord 4</td>
<td>Creation and Adam &amp; Eve</td>
<td>Genesis 1 – 3</td>
<td>Adam and Eve long for knowledge and even defy God to try to know what God knows. Why is knowledge so important to us? Can knowledge ever be bad?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ord 5</td>
<td>Noah, Flood and the Rainbow</td>
<td>Genesis 7-8</td>
<td>God promises never to do that again (the flood) to humanity (and the rainbow is the symbol of that promise), but why does God do it in the first place? Scripture says God changes God’s mind. How can that be? What does that mean?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ord 6</td>
<td>St. Francis</td>
<td>Canticle of the Sun: “Brother Sun, Sister Moon”</td>
<td>Who was St. Francis? Why is he associated with blessing animals? Stories of how he cared for poor, outcast and oppressed.</td>
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<td>Ord 7</td>
<td>Abraham &amp; Sarah</td>
<td>Abraham and Sarah told they will have a child, even when very old, and</td>
<td>What is it like to pack up and move? Especially to a place you’ve never been and know no one?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ord</td>
<td>Summary</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Jacob is renamed Israel, “one who wrestles/struggles with God”</td>
<td>The importance of struggling, struggling, struggling and never, never, never giving up.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Moses in Egypt</td>
<td>Why did God call Moses to lead the people? Was Moses up for it?</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Moses leading the Israelites through reed sea to promised land; God gives commandments in the desert</td>
<td>Why did the Israelites leave Egypt? Why do we need rules? Why didn’t God let Moses come into the Promised Land?</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Joshua and the Battle of Jericho</td>
<td>Is war ever necessary? Why? Why not? What does God feel about war? What sort of conflicts and difficulties with other people come up when you move and encounter new peoples?</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>David’s wars; Solomon’s peaceful rule, building of 1st Temple</td>
<td>Why are kingdoms good? Can a kingdom be somehow bad?</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>End of 2 Kings</td>
<td>How could God let something like this happen? What must it have been like to have everything you’ve worked for destroyed and then to be forced by those who destroyed it all to go live with them in their weird, foreign home?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advent 1</td>
<td>Return from Exile: What is a Messiah?</td>
<td>Who will be the Messiah? A child? A great warrior? What is a prophet? If a prophet told you to stay go back to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple, would you have felt hopeful enough to do it?</td>
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<td>Advent 2</td>
<td>Luke 1: 26-38</td>
<td>First, go over everything covered thus far. Discuss how after returning from Exile, Israelites are looking for a reason to hope—a great king, a great warrior, a great</td>
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<td><strong>Advent 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Joseph’s Dream</strong></td>
<td><strong>Matt. 1: 18-24</strong></td>
<td>defender (a superhero). They’re going to get a baby; Discuss Mary’s story and what it must have been like to be in Mary’s position. What’s it like to be given great responsibility you didn’t ask for? (Spiderman?)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Epiph 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>A New Kind of King: The Epiphany</strong></td>
<td><strong>Matt. 2: Story of Three Wise Men, Herod’s attempt to kill Jesus and the flight to Egypt</strong></td>
<td>What must it have been like to be in Joseph’s position? What’s it like to stick by someone who’s in trouble? What’s it like to stick by someone about whom other people think bad things?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Epiph 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>A New Kind of Prophet: John the Baptist, What is a Prophet?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Matthew 3: 1-12, description of John the Baptist and his predictions about Jesus</strong></td>
<td>John the Baptist heralds the coming of Jesus as a great King of Israel and warns the people to be “ready.” What does he mean by this? John is a prophet—what is a prophet? Jesus is also a prophet—how is he a new kind of prophet, different from John the Baptist?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Epiph 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>A New Kind of Prophet: John the Baptist, What is baptism all about?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Matthew 3: 13-17</strong></td>
<td>What is baptism? Why does even Jesus need to be baptized? Why do we get baptized? What do we know about our own baptisms? Go over the promises in BCP re: baptism. Explain how parents make promises for little kids and when kids get older they make those promises for themselves during Confirmation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Epiph 4</strong></td>
<td><strong>A New Kind of Prophet: Jesus tempted by the Devil in the Wilderness</strong></td>
<td><strong>Matthew 4</strong></td>
<td>Discuss the story of the three temptations of Jesus and talk through how the Devil tempts him and why Jesus refuses to take the bait. Discuss how Jesus is a prophet of hope while the Devil is prophet of fear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Epiph 5** | **“A New Kind of Prophet” The Call to Peter** | **Luke 5: 1-11, the story of Jesus calling the first disciples and the** | Discuss story of the call of the first disciples from Luke. Why was Peter so afraid? What does Jesus
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Epiph 6</th>
<th>“A New Kind of Teacher”</th>
<th>Sermon on the Mount 1: Love Enemies, Make Peace</th>
<th>What can we do to be peacemakers? How can we possibly love enemies? (Continue emphasis that Jesus teaches us to put aside fear.)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Epiph 7</td>
<td>“A New Kind of Teacher”</td>
<td>Sermon on the Mount 2: Blessed are the meek and poor, woe to the rich Matthew 6: 24-34</td>
<td>What does Jesus mean when he blesses the poor and meek and warns the rich and powerful? It seems to have a lot to do with teaching us not to be afraid. Discuss the “lilies of the field” passage from Matthew: why is Jesus so concerned about teaching us not to be afraid?</td>
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<td>Epiph 8</td>
<td>“God Made Flesh”: The Transfiguration</td>
<td>Story of how Jesus ascends the mountain with his disciples and encounters Moses and Elijah</td>
<td>What does it mean when we say Jesus is God made flesh”? Why does it matter that God took on a fully human form through Jesus?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lent 1</td>
<td>“God Made Flesh”: Feeding</td>
<td>Feeding thousands with Loaves and Fishes, Making water into wine at Cana, the meaning of the Eucharist</td>
<td>What is sharing? Why is sharing important? Point out how these stories are connected to our Eucharist service; how we break bread to share with one another.</td>
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<td>Lent 2</td>
<td>“God Made Flesh”: Healing the Body</td>
<td>Stories of Jesus healing, specifically discuss the woman who touches the hem of Jesus’ garment; discuss ritual of laying on of hands for healing</td>
<td>How can laying on of hands heal our bodies? What about hugs? How do they help? Practice laying on of hands prayer with one another.</td>
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<td>Lent 3</td>
<td>“God Made Flesh”: Healing the Spirit</td>
<td>Talk about how Jesus helps people let go of anger and bitterness and regret; story of the angry man in the synagogue</td>
<td>When have we gotten really, really angry with someone or something? How do we calm down and let it go? Practice laying on of hands prayer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lent 4</td>
<td>“God Made Flesh”: Bringing New Life</td>
<td>Story of the raising of Lazarus from the Gospel of John</td>
<td>Emphasize how Jesus weeps over the grave of Lazarus; how can God and Jesus give someone new life?</td>
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<td><strong>Lent 5</strong></td>
<td>Into the Darkness: The Last Supper</td>
<td>The Last Supper, as recorded in John, with foot washing—make</td>
<td>Wash each other’s feet: Is it embarrassing? Strange? Nice? Why</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>connection to Eucharist</td>
<td>is it so important that Jesus do this and the disciples let him? “Love one another as I’ve loved you”</td>
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<td><strong>Palm Sunday</strong></td>
<td>Into the Darkness: Good Friday</td>
<td>Entry into Jerusalem, plus Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion</td>
<td>Why do bad things happen to good people? Why do we sometimes do terribly bad things for no reason?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Easter 1</strong></td>
<td>“Finding the Light”: Jesus Lives On Among the Poor</td>
<td>Mark: Appearance of angel at tomb and call to return to Galilee</td>
<td>Why will the disciples find Jesus in Galilee? What’s special about Galilee?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Easter 2</strong></td>
<td>Finding the Light: Jesus Lives On When We Share a Meal</td>
<td>Luke: Jesus appearance on road to Emaus (make connection to Eucharist)</td>
<td>Why are the disciples so scared that they are leaving Jerusalem? How do they feel when Jesus appears to them? Why do you think they recognized him when he broke the bread?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Easter 3</strong></td>
<td>Finding the Light: Jesus Lives On as our close personal friend and teacher</td>
<td>John: Jesus’ appearance to Mary at the tomb (“Mary…” “Teacher!”)</td>
<td>How do think Mary felt when she recognized the resurrected Jesus? Do you all know someone special to you who has died but seems to live on with you in some way?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Easter 4</strong></td>
<td>Finding the Light: Jesus Lives On through faith</td>
<td>John: Doubting Thomas</td>
<td>What is faith? What is doubt? Why is it important to touch and see things for ourselves sometimes? Why is it sometimes hard to believe things we have never touched or seen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Easter 5</strong></td>
<td>Finding the Light: Overcoming Fear</td>
<td>All Resurrection stories</td>
<td>How does it change us to believe that people live on after death? How were the disciples changed by Jesus resurrection?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ascension</strong></td>
<td>Ascension story</td>
<td>End of Luke</td>
<td>Why does Jesus have to leave? Why can’t he stick around and keep doing everything for them? Why is it important for us to do things for ourselves and not have our parents and teachers do everything for us?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pent 1</strong></td>
<td>Pentecost</td>
<td>Acts 1</td>
<td>Learning new languages? Why is that important? If Jesus is for everyone, if the Resurrection is for everyone, does that mean it might</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pent 2</td>
<td>1st Apostolic Community in Jerusalem</td>
<td>Acts 1 - 3</td>
<td>Lots of sharing between those early Christians—is it hard to share with others? How do we try to share with those in our homes, our city, our country, our world?</td>
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<td>Pent 3</td>
<td>Peter’s Conversion: From fear to hope</td>
<td>Recall Peter’s denial of Jesus the morning of the crucifixion and then how in Acts, he becomes a great leader in Jerusalem</td>
<td>Have there been things in your life you were afraid about but later became confident and excited about? How’d that change happen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pent 4</td>
<td>Paul’s Conversion: from Persecutor to Missionary</td>
<td>The Road to Damascus</td>
<td>Have you ever not liked someone, thought they were bad, but later became their friend? What happened? How?</td>
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A Little Child Shall Lead Them

Children’s Chapel Liturgy, ages 4 – 9 (times correspond with 10:15 am service start)

Playtime and check-in: 10 – 10:15
Kids place their offerings of canned and dry goods in the offering basket, then find their name card and place it on the attendance banner. If a new kid, teachers make a new card with that child’s name. During this time, Teachers can ask students to volunteer for various liturgical responsibilities and write names up on whiteboard.
- 2 candle-lighters
- 2 candle snuffers
- 1 crucifer
- 2 or more basket bearers

Cleanup and all take seats on carpet. 10:15
Teacher sits in circle on carpet with kids. Candle-lighters come forward and light candles then take seats. After candles are lit, lead teacher reads over names on the attendance banner. If there are some kids new to the group, ask everyone to say their name and something they like (such as their favorite kind of animal, favorite desert, etc.)

Teachers lead class in Lord’s Prayer and Hymn: 10:15 – 10:20
(Sometimes, we’ll need to have the kids repeat after us depending how well the group knows the words).

Teacher: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Our Father, who art in heaven....

All stand and sing Hymn as led by teacher. (Seasonally appropriate hymns will be chosen which can later be included in a Kids-Lead service or Pageant.)

All sit for Bible story. 10:20 – 10:35
Teacher tells the story of the day’s Bible Reading in an accessible story-telling style, possibly with props, puppets, etc. Teacher then asks kids a couple questions about their lives that relates to the story and/or engages children in a game or other physical activity that relates to the themes of the story. During weeks prior to Kids Lead services or during time leading up to Christmas or Easter Pageants, this time may be taken up with rehearsal of one or two scenes. If an art project is planned for that day we will work on the project after a brief explanation of the project and how it relates to a Bible story.

Snack Time: 10:35 – 10:45
After everyone is seated at the table and before snack and drink have been served, take a moment of quiet with eyes closed. Then sing “Thank you, God” song to the tune of “Frere Jacques.”
Prayers of the People: 10:45 – 10:50
All reconvene on carpet and stand in circle facing inward and holding hands. Teachers ask kids to contribute at least one prayer for that day’s Prayers of the People. Prayers can be petitions on behalf of nearly anything—from the very general (for all pets, for all who are sick, for peace in the world, etc.) to the somewhat general (for the victims of Hurricane Katrina, for endangered species, for safe travel for those going away this weekend, etc.) to the very specific (for my grandmother who is having surgery, for St. Peter’s congregation, for the injured bird I found in my backyard, etc.) Prayers can also be thanksgivings for nearly anything. Teachers and any other adults present should join the circle and offer prayers of their own.

Teacher: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Teacher: Let us pray.

Beginning with kid to Lead Teacher’s left and then on around circle, everyone offers something to pray for. If a child cannot think of something to pray for, Teacher may offer to come back to him or her.

Each child: We pray for… (We give thanks for…) Lord in your mercy

All: Hear our prayer.

Finally: All sing “Thank You Song” with sign-language.

Candle-snuffers snuff out candles while all stand. Then crucifer takes cross and rest of kids take-up offering basket and all enter church during Offertory Hymn. (Teachers should try to be aware of when Offertory Anthem and/or Announcements happen since they will generally precede Offertory Hymn.)
**A Little Child Shall Lead Them - Plans for Kids-Lead and Youth-Lead services**

**Kids-Lead**

A week or so ahead of time, Children’s Chapel parents are asked to have their kids participate in the Kids-Lead service. Typically, at least 6 child volunteers are recruited. At least 2 to read the Old Testament, 2 to read the Epistle and 2 to lead the Prayers of the People.

Texts of these three readings are divided up by the youth minister to create a back-and-forth dialogue between the readers of each text. And texts are laid out on the page for the readers such that the end of each line is an appropriate place for a breath.

One rehearsal with the child readers ahead of time with parents present (if possible) can be very helpful so as to take the time to coach the kids on reading slowly and loudly and with expression.

**During the service**, all children should be seated together and up front.

Designated child-readers read Old Testament and Epistle, and lead Prayers of the People.

Children may perform one of the readings as a brief skit or display reading.

During sermon, adult preacher involves children by asking them open-ended questions and allowing their answers to shape the message—being sure to relay their thoughts and ideas unaltered to the congregation. Sermon could include brief presentation by children. Ideally, it makes sense for the kids to be prepared for the sermon by having already discussed the topic in Children’s Chapel.

In addition:
- Children may all process in with clergy and acolytes.
- Children may help lead the singing of the psalm or an anthem.
- The Children’s Chapel “Thank You” song may serve as the post-communion prayer.
- Children may all stand close by the altar during the Eucharistic Prayer.
- Children may be used as ushers, gift-bearers, oblationers, etc.

**Youth Lead**

Same as above, except ahead of time, each youth writes a short-to-medium length personal reflection in answer to an open-ended question posed by the youth minister. The question should come from a discussion of the scripture assigned for that Youth-Lead Sunday. Once all reflections have been written, youth minister reads them over and composes a brief set-up and concluding reflection to help hold the sermon together as a cohesive whole.

**During the service**, youth minister begins the sermon then each youth preacher reads her or his reflection in turn, and sermon ends with youth minister’s concluding statement. Please see sample youth sermon.

Youth may also greet congregation at church doors (like clergy) at end of service.
A Little Child Shall Lead Them – Sample Youth-Lead Sermon

Youth Minister

“You wicked and lazy slave! You ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest! For to all who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance! And from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away!”

So says the master in today’s parable from Matthew. The Parable of the Talents.

Is this the voice of God? It sounds kind of harsh.

“You wicked and lazy slave! You ought to have invested my money with the bankers and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest! For to all who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance! And from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away!”

Is that God talking?

As the Youth Group considered this passage during their sleepover here about a week ago, in preparation for preaching this morning, the kids couldn’t help feeling sympathy for the slave with the one talent. They could really relate to that slave’s decision to bury the talent in the ground and not to do the work and take the risks necessary to invest that talent and make more from it—as do the other two slaves with the talents they are given.

In fact, when discussing those other two slaves, the Youth Group kids seemed get downright annoyed. Those two slaves really are such teacher’s pets.

So we talked about the sorts of things they had that were precious and hard to let go of, even if there might be a significant return on the investment. I asked them: what do you have that you’d sometimes prefer to bury in the ground for safe-keeping rather than give up in hopes of receiving back something greater.

And almost all of them thought of their time and energy. Time and energy. These kids do so much—with school, sports, music, church, jobs, family, friends. Any spare time and energy they might have can feel like something rare and precious, something they’d like to hold on to and never let go.

But time and energy is slippery stuff. You can’t hold onto it. You certainly cannot bury it underground and dig it up later. You have to simply use it… or lose it.

“You wicked and lazy slave! …For to all who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance. And from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.”

Youth 1 (Boy, age 14)

The master in this story maybe be greedy, but at least he’s honest. When the slave who got one talent comes back with nothing gained, it was because he knew that the master is a greedy man who “reaps
where he does not sow.” But the master pushes back against his somewhat lazy actions by saying, basically, “I know that I reap where I do not sow, so you could at least have tried to make more from what you had. Either way, I’m still a greedy person and you’re still a slave. Burying your problems in the ground doesn’t solve that.”

A lot of times, I feel the same way as that slave, don’t you also? There are probably countless times in your day when you are tired and don’t feel like doing something, like listening to a group of random teenagers talk about a passage from Matthew. But, regardless of what you decide to do, you’re still tired, so you might as well be tired while doing something worthwhile. So even though your aches and pains might seem to make a valid argument to not do something, just do it. Period. You’ll feel better. Trust me.

Youth 2 (Girl, age 16)

Part of me feels bad for the man with the one talent. He does exactly as his master commands, and yet, when his overachieving co-workers return with double the money, he seems by comparison someone who is, what? poor? terrible? average? underachieving? a non-risk-taker?

The master implies that he should have invested the money and got more from it. But this does not guarantee a gain. The master would have been FURIOUS if the slave had lost the talent or come back with a debt he could not pay. Our current economic crisis stems from risky loans like that.

In a hypothetical sense, I probably would recommend taking a risk, living a little, because life is short and it will be boring if all your time and money and skills are hoarded away in the ground of your life. But with something as valuable as a talent at stake, maybe a risk is not advisable. The pleasure that comes from owning something—it could be anything at all—can be more than enough for some people. But you may get something more or something different in return, if you let go of what you have. Then again, you may lose everything. After all, for the first two slaves to double their money, someone must have lost what they gained. But if you don’t take a risk, you’ll never know.

Youth 3 (Boy, age 12)

An experience in which I invest a lot of myself is basketball. I could just run around doing nothing during games. I could even walk. Instead, I run around, getting open, blocking my man, making passes, trying to make things happen.

Like the first two slaves in this passage, I try to get energized and work hard to earn something, to find something more. All that running around during a basketball game may not always lead to more points for my team but there’s no way we’ll win if we don’t try and actually do SOMETHING. I have to do something if I expect to earn anything worthwhile.

Youth 4 (Boy, age 13)

There are a lot of times when I don’t want to do anything at all. My life is very busy with school, sports and church. Every day, I have to get up early. During the week, I have to get up early for school. And on the weekends, I have to get up early to go to sports. There are times in life when you want to curl up in bed, but you have to commit. And it pays off because you learn and have fun.
**Youth 5 (Girl, age 12)**

In fifth grade, I had to do community service. Although it was with my friends, I thought it would be a drag. When I got there and started to do stuff, I didn’t think it was that bad. We made cards and wrapped presents for poor people across the US. It was nice knowing that we were helping people, especially knowing that there were people out there who were not going to get any presents for Christmas.

After a couple of weeks, I went back to clean up all of the extra presents that were not sent, and sorted them into different groups. Also, we sorted clothes to be sent to people who could use them. It felt really good and I’m glad I did it, rather than just watching more TV.

**Youth 6 (Girl, age 13)**

A very valuable thing to me is my free time. Free time is something that, as I’m getting older, I find that I continually have less and less of. With so many things to do, such as homework, sports and other after school activities, it’s difficult to find time to yourself and just relax.

There’s two ways to look at this though. I’m giving up my own time to do something worthwhile or I’m giving up my free time for nothing. Daily, I have this debate with myself. When I get up in the morning, do I really want to be using up my time at school? Or would I rather stay home and just relax? I know that learning at school will be better for me and more useful in the future, but the idea of staying home and not doing much is quite tempting.

I face the same sort of question after school ends every day, when I normally go to swim practice for two hours. I knot that going to swim practice is good for me and will help me improve, but thinking about how tired I will be makes me not want to go at all.

In the end though, I know all my hard work pays off, and it makes me happy to see myself become a better and better swimmer. I can tell it’s a good investment of my time.

**Youth 7 (Girl, age 12)**

From this reading, I have realized how much time I waste doing things that don’t matter as much as others. Just by doing one thing, someone can make so much more of a difference in the world.

For example, when the Youth Group went to Rosebud, I noticed how when I helped those people at the reservation Co-op, or the kids at the reservation’s elementary school, or when I helped with construction on someone’s house, it was really helpful for the people involved. They were getting clothes or food or help with school or a better house. For me, personally, I also had a wonderful time meeting some great people. Friends that I wouldn’t have ever met if I just stayed home.

This was a life-changing experience for me. It felt like I did so much with my time, and inside I feel so good about it.
**Youth 8 (Girl, age 13)**

The Rosebud [youth mission] trip was something I went on because my parents told me I had to. Personally, work every day and getting up at 6 am is not my idea of vacation. Spending it with forty strangers too? This did not excite me.

We joined the trip a day late and missed out on an entertainment show and dinner. Then, after making a 6-hour road trip to the Rosebud reservation, we discovered that we were staying in a tiny green cabin. The twenty-two girls on the trip had to sleep in what looked like a giant pink mouth full of bunk beds, which was plagued by the cold and various insects.

Each morning, we rose at six, grabbed lunches, and spent six hours working—building houses or running a store, our choice.

Leaving was harder than I had imagined. Who knew? I made some great friends there. One day after work we attended a sweat lodge ceremony. I smashed everybody in mini-putt golf. We ate bison and venison. I went canoeing for the first time.

That’s a lot of memories for a week I thought I’d rather not attend.

**Youth 9 (Boy, age 13)**

There are a lot of different examples of things I’d like to hoard—just like that third slave hoards the one talent—but the one thing that comes most to mind is my energy. A lot of times, I want to hoard my energy, keep it to myself and just lie there. But I know if I get up and make the most of my energy, that I will somehow become better; that I will make more of myself by doing something, rather than just sitting around.

For example, if I had had to wake up for school and I really didn’t want to, so I just sat there and slept and hoarded my energy, I know it wouldn’t better me. But if I get up and go to school and learn, I know it will be good for me in the long run. Even just one day of school could affect the rest of my life. There could be a lecture on something I have never heard of, and I might end up taking a big interest in it. Who knows? The investment of that one day of showing up at school could give me back something very valuable for the rest of my life.

**Youth Minister**

“For to all who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance! And from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away!”

It’s so hard for me to believe that the master of this parable is somehow a stand in for God. What happened to the great eschatological reversal—that the last shall be first and the first last, that those who are poor will inhabit the Kingdom of Heaven and that it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle than to get into the Kingdom of Heaven.

But I don’t think this parable is really about money or financial investments. I think it is ultimately about those most precious of commodities, those two things that our Youth Group prizes above all
things: time and energy. After all, they’re still kids and they don’t have much or any money. They don’t have to worry about all that as of yet.

And so they are able to see more clearly that what we really have to invest during this life is ourselves through our use of our time and our energy. And for to all who have time and energy, to all who make the time and find the energy, more will be given, and they will have an abundance! And from those who say they have little time, that they are low on energy, even what they have will be taken away!”

Don’t you see, you wicked and lazy slaves!

It sounds harsh. And I suppose it is a hard lesson to learn—that if we don’t give of ourselves to live our lives to the fullest, God will, in a sense, take away what little life we have. But in our hearts, I think we all know it to be true.

It’s a lesson we learn when we’re still quite young.
A Little Child Shall Lead Them
Christmas Pageant Script
To be performed during a Eucharist service in place of the Liturgy of the Word and the Sermon (as in a Lessons & Carols service). All performers process to seats facing congregation in front of the altar (except for narrators who take their positions at lecterns). Congregation is invited to sing all hymns as printed in service bulletin while remaining seated. Hymn numbers and lyrics follow the script

Speaking Parts
(Narrators need not memorize lines—they read their parts while positioned at lecterns. All others should memorize lines. Multiple roles can be performed by the same child if practical.)

Angel 1 (Narrator)
Angel 2 (Narrator)
Shepherd (Narrator)
Adam
Eve
Snake
Noah
Sarah
Abraham
Jacob
Moses
Joshua
King David
King Solomon
Babylonian Soldier 1
Mary
Joseph
Elizabeth
Magi 1

Non-Speaking Parts

Sheep
Arc Animals
Temple Builders
Babylonian Soldier 2
Donkey
Magi 2
Magi 3
The Pageant

All stand and sing chorus and first verse of “Go Tell It On the Mountain.”

Angel 1: Wow!
   A new King has been born!
   How wonderful!

Angel 2: Are you sure that little baby,
   in that little barn,
   is a King?

Angel 1: Of course!
   God said so!
   A new King!
   Who will save humanity!
   And that’s not just a barn.
   We call it a manger.

Angel 2: He doesn’t look like much of a king.
   Where are his royal robes?
   Where’s his palace?
   Where are his armies?

Angel 1: He’s a new kind of king,
   sent by God to build a new kind of kingdom.

Angel 2: A new kind of kingdom?
   What do you mean?
   One with taller and thicker walls?
   That’s a good idea,
   a kingdom with taller, thicker walls might work.

Angel 1: No, no, no.
   This king will build an entirely new kind of kingdom.
A kingdom with no walls at all.
He will build a kingdom of heaven!

Angel 2: A kingdom of heaven?
   What is that?
   A kingdom up in the sky?
   They’re going to need awfully tall walls
   if they’re going to build a kingdom way up there.

Angel 1: He’s not going to build a kingdom way up in the sky.
   His kingdom of heaven
   will be right here and right now,
   And peace and love will rule,
   instead of violence and fear.

Angel 2: But what about the walls?

Angel 1: Come on!
   Look, we’re angels, okay.
   And angels are messengers of God.
   So let’s just do our job and spread the news
   of the birth of the new king.
   Let’s, you know, go tell it on the mountain!

Angel 2: Go tell it on the mountain?
   It’s the middle of the night
   and this is the middle of nowhere.
   Where are we again?

Angel 1: Bethlehem.
   This is the town of Bethlehem.
   The same place the great King David was born.

Angel 2: Well, it’s a tiny town, and everyone’s asleep.

Angel 1: We could tell those shepherds over there.
Angel 2: Those shepherds?
They’re asleep.

Angel 1: Well, let’s wake them up
and tell them about the new king!

Angel 2: All right.
On three:
One.
Two.
Three!

Angel 1 & 2: Behold!

(silence)

Angel 1 & 2: Behold!

(Stubborn Shepherd starts to get up and rub his eyes)

Angel 1 & 2: Behold!

Angel 1: A new king has been born this night!

Angel 2: A new savior has come
to build the kingdom of heaven!

(Shepherd, still rubbing eyes, stands up slowly).

Shepherd: A new king?
A savior?
A new king has been born?

Angel 1 & 2: Yes!
Angel 1:  Isn’t it glorious!

Angel 2:  Hallelujah!

Shepherd:  Okay. All right.
            Whatever.
            I’m going back to sleep.

Angel 1:  Come!

Shepherd:  What?

Angel 2:  Come and behold!

Shepherd:  What?

Angel 2:  Come and behold the newborn king!

Shepherd:  I see…
            I get it…
            You want me to leave here
            and come with you
            to see this baby.
            And then I suppose you expect me
            to follow him as my savior,
            wherever he might lead.

Angel 1:  Well… Yeah… Actually…

Angel 2:  That’s the whole point!
            Of course!
            He’s the savior.

Angel 1:  He leads.
            And you’re supposed to follow.
Shepherd: Well, count me out. I’m sick of all the walking and marching and moving. God, and God’s prophets, and God’s angels, you’re all the same. You’re always moving, moving, moving. You never, never, never stay anywhere for long. And I’m tired of following. In fact, I think I speak for all the people of Israel when I say, we are tired. We are sick and tired of moving here and there, across deserts, over mountains, and through rivers. So I don’t want to see this savior, this new king. No thank you.

Angel 2: He’s not that far away. He’s right over there, sleeping in a barn.

Shepherd: I don’t care. I don’t want to go. He’ll probably be beautiful and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, and soon I’ll be traveling all over creation following him.

Angel 1: How do you know he’ll want you to travel all over creation? How can you be so sure?

Shepherd: How can I be so sure?
I’m an Israelite!
God has always
called us Israelites to move, move, move.

Angel 2: That’s not quite true. Sometimes, God—

Shepherd: Oh no?
Let’s take a look back, shall we?
Let’s go all the way back to creation
and let’s recall how we came to this time right now.
You’ll see.

Angel 1: Okay. We’ll take that bet.

*Adam and Eve enter with animals, playing hide and seek around the tree.*
*Garden background.*

Angel 2: Who is that?
And wait—where are we?

Angel 1: That is the first man and the first woman,
Adam and Eve, playing together
in the Garden of Eden.

*All stand and sing “All Creatures of Our God and King”*

Angel 2: They seem happy,
And very much at home.

Shepherd: At home?
Well, just you wait.
Just wait.
Eve:  Adam!
Isn’t this a beautiful garden?
I could live here forever!

Adam:  Yes! I could live here forever also!
It’s so peaceful and warm.

Eve:  And there’s always so much to eat!

Adam:  But there is that one thing
we aren’t supposed to eat.

Eve:  Right.
We’re not supposed to eat
from the Tree of Knowledge.

Snake enters and slithers around them, then slithers over to the tree and
takes the fruit and comes over to Adam and Eve.

Snake:  Don’t you want to know
what this tastes like?
Aren’t you curious?

The snake puts the fruit in Adam’s hand, then slithers off. Adam and Eve look
at each other, then Eve takes the fruit and eats. She passes it to Adam and he
takes it and eats. Suddenly the lights flash off and on. Adam and Eve look up,
scared. They stand up hanging their heads and walk off.

Shepherd:  See?
They had to leave the garden!
The first man and the first woman
were also the first movers.

Angel 2:  But they ate the fruit!
They broke the one rule God gave them!
Shepherd: Oh come on!
Do you mean you would not have taken
a bite of that fruit?
Wouldn’t you have been curious
what the fruit of knowledge tastes like?

Angel 1: Okay. Fine.
But then Adam and Eve and their children
settled down happily in the East.

Shepherd: Sure.
They settled down.
But it did not last.

*Noah and animals enter. Rainy background.*

Angel 2: Oh that’s right.
The flood!

Angel 1: And there’s Noah!

Shepherd: Noah and his family had a nice house and a farm.

Noah: Now we have a big, ugly boat.
And it’s full of animals.

*Noah looks up and then opens up his umbrella and leads the animals off.*

Shepherd: They had to float around in the rain,
on that boat, with all those animals.
And all because of God!
Can you imagine?

Angel 2: He kind of has a point with that one.

Angel 1: I suppose so.
Shepherd: Oh… But we’re just getting started.  
   Just getting started.

_Sarah and Abraham enter._

Shepherd: Do you remember Abraham and Sarah?  
   Do you remember what God told them to do?

Abraham: Sarah!  
   I just had the most amazing conversation!  
   God appeared and spoke to me!

Sarah: God!?  
   God spoke to you?

Abraham: God came to me  
   and said that you and I will have a child!  
   You will be a mother!  
   I will be a father!  
   Even in our old age!

Sarah: _laughing_ Ha!  
   I am going to have child?  
   God told you  
   that I am going to have a child.  
   That’s hilarious!

Abraham: It’s true!  
   God called me, “Abraham,”  
   which means ‘father of a multitude.’  
   God said that you and I are going to be  
   the mother and father of an entire nation of people!
Sarah: *(still laughing)* Ha!  
What else did God tell you?

Abraham: We have to move.

Sarah: We have to *move*?  
But I like it here.  
And we’re old.

Abraham: God says we have to move.

Sarah: Did God say *where* we have to move *to*?

Abraham: No. No he didn’t.

*Abraham shakes his head and takes Sarah’s hand to help her up.*

*All stand and sing “God Has Spoken.”*

Shepherd: See?  
Do you see what I’m talking about?  
God made Abraham and Sarah parents,  
even in their old age.  
But he also made them move.  
The nerve!

Angel 1: Okay. Okay.

Angel 2: You don’t need to get so worked up.

*Jacob enters and lies down and goes to sleep. Night background.*

Angel 1: It’s night-time again.

Angel 2: Who is that sleeping down there?  
Another sleeping shepherd?
Shepherd: That’s Jacob.
       Jacob. Abraham’s grand-son.
       He will become a shepherd.
       And God will name him Israel,
       ‘One who struggles with God,’
       and he will become the father of the 12 tribes of Israel.
       But right now, he’s just a young man
       and God has already told him to move.
       To move out and find his place in the world.

Angel 2: Where is he sleeping?
          Is this the wilderness?

Angel 1: Is that a rock he’s using for a pillow?

Angel 2: Yes.
          A rock for a pillow.
          That looks cold, and hard and scary
          sleeping down there.

*Ladder enters and is placed next to sleeping Jacob.*

Angel 2: Hey look!
          A ladder between earth and heaven!
          I want to play!

*Angel 2 goes down and starts climbing and sliding down over and over.*

Jacob: *(waking up)* Hey!
       What’s going on?
       I’m trying to sleep!

Angel 1: This place, here,
          in the middle of the wilderness,
          is known to God.
Behold!
Angels carry the message of God
between heaven and earth even here,
in this deserted land!

Jacob: That’s great.
Do you think you Angels could go play
somewhere else?
I’ve been walking all day.
And I don’t even know where I’m going.
God told me to go,
so off I went.

Angel 1: Jacob, do you see the ladder
and the Angel climbing up and down the ladder.

Jacob: Do I see it?
How could I miss it?

Angel 1: The ladder and the angel are a sign,
a sign that God will always be beside you
no matter where you are.

Jacob: That’s great.
Can I go back to sleep now?

Angel 2 stops climbing and sliding and returns to her pulpit. Ladder is removed.

Angel 1: Sleep well, Jacob.
And remember that God is with you wherever you are.

All stand and sing, “God Beside Me.”

Shepherd: See!
This is what I don’t understand.
If God is with Jacob,
if God is with all of us wherever we are,
why does God want us to move so much?

Angel 2: You know, I hate to say it,
but I’m beginning to agree with him.

Angel 1: Oh come on!
Not you too!

Shepherd: Do you two remember what happened next?
Jacob’s family, the people of Israel,
moved all the way down to Egypt.

Angel 1: Right!
And the Israelites stayed in Egypt for a long time.

Angel 2: But Egypt was a lousy place for the Israelites.
They were treated like slaves!

Moses enters with his sheep.

Shepherd: That’s right.
The Israelites were treated like slaves in Egypt.
That’s why that one Israelite, Moses,
ran away from Egypt.
And he started a family
in a nice, quiet place called Midian.
He became—you guessed it—a shepherd.

Moses tends to sheep then suddenly and dramatically looks out at the congregation.
Moses: That bush!  
   How strange!  
   That bush is on fire!  
   But it’s not burned up!  
   What could that mean?

Angels 1 & 2: Moses!

Moses: What?  
   Who said that?

Angels 1 & 2: Moses!

Angel 1: This is the voice of God!

Angel 2: Speaking to you from the bush!

Moses: The voice of God?  
   Speaking to me from a bush?  
   Why would God speak from a bush?

Angel 2: Well, it got your attention.  
   Didn’t it?

Angel 1: Never mind the bush.  
   Listen to the voice of God.

Angel 2: That bush is really weird.  
   It’s on fire but not burning up!

Angel 1: Never mind the bush!  
   Moses!  
   You are to return to Egypt  
   and lead the people of Israel out  
   and into the land God has promised them.
Moses: Go back to Egypt?
But I already left.
And I don’t want to go back.

Angel 1: You are to return to Egypt
and lead the Israelites out
and into the land God has promised them.

Moses: Oh yeah? How?
Why would the Israelites follow me?
And why would the Egyptians let them go?

Angel 1: Go!
Go to Egypt!
And God will go with you.
All things are possible with God.

Moses: Oh. All right. I’ll do my best.

*All stand and sing, “Go Down Moses.” Moses and sheep exit.*

Shepherd: Moses spent the rest of his life on the move.
He moved back down to Egypt
and led the Israelites out of Egypt
and then they traveled to the land
God had promised them.

Angel 1: But they made it!
Eventually, the Israelites made it
to God’s promised land,
the land of Canaan.

Shepherd: Yes, okay, sure.
But Moses died before they got there.

Angel 2: Really?
He died?
After all that?
He died without ever setting foot on the promised land?

Shepherd: That’s right.

Angel 2: Wow.
Like I said, I’m beginning to think
this shepherd has a point.

Angel 1: But the Israelites did make it to the promised land!
And they settled there.
And they built a great kingdom!

Shepherd: But before they built the kingdom,
they traveled all over
and fought many wars.

Angel 2: Wait…
The promised land already had
other people living there?

Shepherd: Of course!
And the Israelites fought many wars with them
before they got control of the land.

Angel 1: I’m not sure that was what God intended.

Shepherd: What did God expect?
When one people moves into land
controlled by other people,
there’s going to be war.

Angel 1: I don’t think it has to happen that way.
God knows there are ways other than war.
Joshua enters, marching.

Angel 2: Look! It’s Joshua!

Shepherd: The great Israelite leader.
He led the Israelite army
against the great city of Jericho
with its high, thick walls.

Joshua: (draws sword) And the walls came a’ tumbling down!

Joshua marches off.

Angel 1: I still think it didn’t have to happen that way.

David and Solomon enter.

Angel 2: This is the part of the story that I like.
King David, King Solomon
and the glorious Kingdom of Israel!

David: I am David, youngest son of Jesse.
As a boy, I was a shepherd
near the little town of Bethlehem,
before God came to me
and anointed me
to lead the people of Israel.

Shepherd: Shepherds are so cool.

David: I fought in many wars
but I also built the great city of Jerusalem
which means, “City of Peace.”
And it truly was a city of peace,
a place where God and God’s people
could live together in harmony.
Solomon: I am Solomon, son of David.
For many years, I ruled wisely over the Israelites and maintained peace in the land of Canaan.
I also built the great Temple of God, the most important place for the Israelites to know and worship God.

Solomon points to workers and then to blocks of the Temple, directing the building of the Temple until it is fully constructed. David and Solomon exit.

Angel 2: So after all that moving around the people of Israel can now, finally, settle somewhere! They have their holy city. And they have their holy temple. They can live in peace. And God can dwell among them. Perfect!

Shepherd: Sure. It sounds good. But it doesn’t last.

Angel 2: Why not?

The Babylonians enter.

Shepherd: The Babylonian army came from the east and destroyed the temple, burned Jerusalem and forced the Israelites to move again, far, far away, all the way to Babylon.

Angel 2: The Babylonians?
Who are the Babylonians?

Babylo 1: We are the Babylonians!
    We have a great empire!
    And we will destroy your puny Nation of Israel!

*Babylonians destroy temple.*

Angel 2: They destroyed the temple?
    They burned Jerusalem?
    And they made the Israelites move far away?
    How could God let that happen?

*All stand and sing “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” and rebuild the Temple.*

Shepherd: How could God let that happen?
    *That* is a very good question.
    We’ve moved back now.
    And we’ve rebuilt Jerusalem.
    And we’ve even rebuilt the Temple.
    But how can we know it won’t be destroyed again?
    How can we know God will protect us?
    One thing I do know—
    I’m tired.
    And the people of Israel are tired.
    We need to rest.

Angel 1: Okay. Look.
    Nevermind that God has chosen this baby
to lead God’s people.
    Nevermind that this child will grow up
to teach the world
    that the greatest force is love.
    Nevermind that this baby will grow up
to show the world
    that the greatest strength is sacrifice.
Nevermind that this baby will grow up
to lead humanity to the true Promised Land.
A promised land that isn’t on a map,
A promised land found around a dinner table,
where friends and enemies, neighbors and strangers
meet and share their lives together.
Nevermind all that.

Angel 2: Yeah.
Nevermind that.
That’s another pageant.
That’s the Easter Pageant.
Coming this Spring
to a [name of church] near you!

Mary steps forward and kneels facing the congregation, her hands clasped
together in prayer. Joseph steps forward and sleeps next to Mary.

Angel 1: Just come see this baby.
He’s beautiful.
And his mother, Mary, is beautiful.
And her husband, Joseph, is beautiful.
Did you know the baby was conceived
outside of marriage?

Angel 2 steps down to Mary.

Angel 2: Mary, don’t be afraid.
You will have a child
Who will be the son of God!

Mary: But how can that be?
I will have a child?
The son of God?
Oh… I’m scared…
Shepherd: Conceived outside of marriage?
That’s scandalous!

Angel 1: The Spirit of God came to her
and overshadowed her
and she conceived a child.

*Elizabeth enters.*

Elizabeth: Mary, what’s wrong?

Mary: Oh Elizabeth! My cousin!
An angel came to me.
And told me I will have a child.

Elizabeth: An angel came to me too.
I’m going to have a child also.
Isn’t it amazing?

Mary: You too?
How can that be?
I’m scared.
What is happening?

*Elizabeth hugs Mary.*

Elizabeth: God is with you.
And everything is possible with God.

*All stand and sing “Magnificat.” Elizabeth exits, leaving Mary kneeling alone again.*

Shepherd: The Spirit of God came to her
and she conceived a child?
And Joseph, her husband,
he didn’t mind?
Angel 2 whispers in Joseph’s ear.

Angel 1: Well, he was going to send her away. But then an Angel appeared to him in a dream.

Joseph wakes up.

Joseph: I just had the strangest dream. An angel of God just told me that Mary’s child is going to save the world! And that she and the baby need my help. I must stay with her!

Angel 2 takes Joseph’s hand and Mary’s hand and puts their hands together. They turn and walk up toward the manger.

Shepherd: And why are they here in Bethlehem? This is just a small, country town, Why come here?

Angel 1: The Roman army has ordered all Israelite men to return to the place of their birth. This town, Bethlehem, is the city of Joseph’s birth.

All stand and sing, “O Little Town of Bethlehem” as Angel 2 leads Mary and Joseph around behind the background screen.

Shepherd: So they traveled all this way, To be here, in Bethlehem. And let me guess—there was no room at the Inn.

Angel 1: Right. There was no room at the Inn.
But the Inn-keeper found some space for them in a manger around back.

_All stand and sing “Away in a Manger.”_

Shepherd: I think the more common word is, “barn.”
   You’re telling me that the savior of the world has been born in a barn?

Angel 1: Yes!

Shepherd: Born in a barn?

Angel 2: Yes!

Shepherd: And he’s our new King?

Angel 1: Yes!

Shepherd: Okay, now I’m curious.
   And it wouldn’t hurt to take a _look_ at the little guy.
   Come on…
   Let’s go welcome him into the world.

_Shepherds and sheep walk over to see baby. Sing “Oh Come All Ye Faithful.” Baby is revealed._

Angel 1: Hurray! The shepherds are here!
   And there he is! There’s the baby!
   Now we’ve got to tell the rest of the world!

Angel 2: I’ve got an idea!

_Angel 2 grabs star and holds it up. Three wise men walk towards center._
Angel 1:  It’s working!
         They’re coming!
         From the far corners of the world!
         To see the newborn King!

Magi 1:   And we’ve got presents!

*All sing* “Oh Come All Ye Faithful” *again as three Magi march up and kneel and present gifts.*
Christmas Pageant Hymns and Lyrics

Go Tell It On The Mountain (99)

Go tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere;
Go tell it on the mountain,
That Jesus Christ is born!

While shepherds kept their watching
O’er silent flocks by night,
Behold throughout the heavens
There shone a holy light.  (repeat chorus)

All Creatures of Our God and King (400)

All creatures of our God and King,
Lift up your voices, let us sing:
Alleluia, alleluia!
Bright burning sun with golden beams,
Pale silver moon that gently gleams

O praise him, O praise him,
Alleluia, alleluia
Alleluia.

God Has Spoken (536)

Open your ears, O faithful people
Open your ears and hear God’s word
Open your hearts, O royal priesthood,
God has come to you.

God has spoken to his people,
Hallelujah!
And his words are words of wisdom,
Hallelujah! –Hallelujah!
**God Before Us** (WLP 791)

God before us, God behind us  
God under our feet.  
God within us, God over us,  
See all around us is God

**Go Down Moses** (648)

When Israel was in Egypt’s land,  
Let my people go;  
Oppressed so hard they could not stand,  
Let my people go;  

Go down, Moses,  
Way down in Egypt’s land,  
Tell old Pharoah  
To let me people go.  

The Lord told Moses what to do,  
Let my people go;  
To lead the children of Israel through,  
Let my people go. (repeat chorus)

**O Come, O Come Emmanuel** (56)

O come, O come Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the son of God appear

Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

**Magnificat** (Taize)

Magnificat, magnificat  
Magnificat anima mea dominum

Magnificat, magnificat  
Magnificat anima mea
O Little Town of Bethlehem (78)

O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie,
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by

Yet in they dark streets shineth
The ever lasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.

Away in a Manger (101)

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

O Come All Ye Faithful (83)

O come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him, born the King of angels;

O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
Christ, the Lord.
A Little Child Shall Lead Them

Easter Pageant Script

To be performed during a Eucharist service in place of the Liturgy of the Word and the Sermon (as in a Lessons & Carols service). All performers process to seats facing congregation in front of the altar (except for narrators who take their positions at lecterns). Congregation is invited to sing all hymns as printed in service bulletin while remaining seated. Hymn lyrics follow the script.

Speaking Parts

(Narrators need not memorize lines—they read their parts while positioned at lecterns. All others should memorize lines. Multiple roles can be performed by the same child if practical.)

Peter (Narrator)
Mary Magdalene (Narrator)
Jesus
Devil
Groom of wedding at Cana
Bride of wedding at Cana
Skeptical Disciple 1
Skeptical Disciple 2
Sick Person 1
Sick Person 2
Sick Person 3
Angry Man
Temple Guard 1
Thomas

Non-Speaking Parts

Wedding Guests
People Fed By Loaves and Fishes
Temple Guards
The Pageant

All stand and sing “Were You There” (#172) 3rd verse (“laid him in the tomb”) as Jesus is laid in tomb. When verse ends, stop singing. Jesus then throws off the sheet, stands up and walks away. Mary goes to the tomb. Peter walks to center front. Mary runs to Peter.

Mary: Come and see for yourself, Peter. Jesus’ body is gone!

Peter: Really? His body is gone? How could that happen?

Mary: Come! I’ll show you.

Mary and Peter walk over to the tomb.

Mary: See?!

Peter crouches down in tomb and picks up white sheet. Peter drops sheet in tomb and Mary and Peter walk up to pulpit.

Peter: You’re right…
He’s gone…
How could this happen?
What does it mean?

Mary: What does it mean?
I wish I knew…
Could someone have taken his body out of the tomb?
Why? And who?

Peter: I don’t know…
I don’t understand…
He should have been the greatest king
That the nation of Israel has ever known.

Mary: A king?
No, not a king.
He was a great teacher.
The greatest teacher…
He tried to teach people
A whole new way of living together.
A new *loving* way of living:
Loving enemies…
Embracing outcasts…
Forgiving debts…
Releasing captives…
Welcoming foreigners…

Peter: No, no, no…
Sure he was a pretty good teacher.
But first and foremost,
He was our Lord and King.
And he should have become the King of Israel,
And eventually the King of the whole world.
Sure, he taught love…
But don’t you remember how powerful he was?
He performed all those amazing miracles
By healing the sick,
And feeding the hungry,
And casting out demons.

Mary: Maybe…
But I heard
that after he was baptized by John the Baptist,
he cast aside all earthly power.
He went into the desert
and was tempted three times by the devil.

*Enter Jesus and the Devil. Jesus sits down with his eyes closed on the top step in the center. Devil circles him while talking.*

Devil: Hello, Jesus.
I see that God has filled you
with the power of the Holy Spirit.
Show me. Show me how powerful you are.
Turn these rocks into bread.

Jesus: Humanity does not live by bread alone.

Devil: Humanity does not live by bread alone?
What does that mean?
Do you mean that God’s goodness feeds you?
All by itself?

*The Devil grabs Jesus from behind and makes him stand up on top step and holds him precariously over the next step. Jesus opens his eyes.*

Devil: If God is so good,
If God loves you so much,
Jump from this cliff
And see if God will save you!

Jesus: We should not put God to the test.

*Devil lets go of Jesus and backs away. Then puts his arm around Jesus in the manner of an old friend while speaking the following, and he gestures out toward the congregation as if he is looking out at the whole world.*

Devil: Ooooooh… aren’t you faithful!
If you’re so good,
If you’re so filled with the goodness of God,
Why don’t you become the King of the whole world?
I can give you power!
Power over all the kingdoms
and all the money
in all the world.

Jesus: We should not worship power.
And we should not worship money.
We should worship only God.

Devil: Oh….
    Whatever!
    Nevermind!

*Devil stomps off.*

All stand and sing “What Wondrous Love” (#439)

Mary: Don’t you see, Peter?
    I suppose Jesus could have become a great King.
    But he chose not to.
    He chose to lay aside his crown for our souls.

Peter: Okay… I understand your point…
    But what about all those times
    he used his great power?
    What about all those times
    he performed amazing miracles?

Mary: I remember…
    Those were awesome…
    Do you remember the wedding at Cana?

*Groom and Bride stand (from opposite sides) and walk toward one another.*

Bride: This is such a great day.
    Such a great celebration.
    It’s wonderful to see all our family and friends
    Laughing and talking and dancing together.

Groom: It’s a celebration of faith and hope.
    A celebration of my faith in you.

Bride: And a celebration of my faith in you.
And of our family and friends’ faith in both of us!
And of God’s faith in all of us!

Groom: There’s one problem…
I think we’re running out of wine.

*Jesus walks up to bride and groom with a jug.*

Jesus: You have more wine than you think.
Here… Try this.

Bride: But that is only a jug of water.

*Groom takes a sip from the jug.*

Groom: That is the best wine I’ve ever tasted!

Jesus: Party on.

Bride: Party on, Jesus!

*All stand and sing “Joyful, Joyful” (#376).*

Peter: Turning water into wine is one thing.
But remember when he fed all those people
With only a few pieces of fish
And a few loaves of bread?

*Three cast members enter and kneel, with their hands extended, as at the altar rail, while Jesus and two Skeptical Disciples meet in the middle of the stage.*

Disc1: Jesus, we are in a deserted place.
There is no food out here.
And all these people are hungry
Disc2: Tell them to walk to a town. There, they can find some food.

Jesus: No. We must feed them. Right here. Right now. We will feed them.

Disc1: We will feed them?! How? With what food?

Disc2: We only have enough food for ourselves.

Jesus: Give me what you have. It will be enough for everyone here.

*Skeptical Disciples give Jesus a loaf of bread. He raises it over his head and looks heavenward. Then two Disciples and Jesus place food in the hands of those kneeling and all eat.*

Mary: Yes. I remember… How many people did Jesus feed that day?

Peter: Some say three-thousand. Some say five-thousand. It was a lot. That’s for sure.

Mary: You are right. Jesus was very, very powerful.

Peter: And don’t forget all the times he healed those who were sick.

*Three sick people enter, each accompanied by someone—one dragged on a mat with cloth tied around his feet; one walking with a cane and cloth around his eyes, one with a cloth tied around her ears (running from under her chin to the top of his head.*
Jesus walks over to each and lays his hands on them, then takes off the cloth tied to them. After taking off the cloth, each one in turn exclaims.

Jesus: You are healed. Go in peace.

Sick1: What? What did you say? I heard you! I could hear what you said! I am healed!

Jesus: You are healed. Go in peace.

Sick2: I can see! I can see! I was blind and now I can see!

Jesus: You are healed. Go in peace.

Sick3: (standing) My legs! I can walk! I can run! I can jump! Thank you!

All stand and sing, “Heal Me Hands of Jesus” (WLP 773)

Mary: You’re right that he was very powerful. He healed the sick and fed the hungry. But I still think of him as a teacher. Remember all of those great lessons he taught us During his sermon on the mount.

Jesus goes to front of tomb and speaks to rest of cast and congregation who turn in their seats to face him.

Jesus: Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger for justice, for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will receive mercy.  
Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called children of God.

Angry:  
(stands) Who are you?  
How do you know you’re a child of God?  
What makes you so special?

*The rest of the cast yells at the man to “shut up” and “be quiet” and “sit down.” Jesus calms them down.*

Jesus:  
I say to you: Do not resist your enemies.  
If anyone takes your coat, give your cloak as well.  
And give to everyone who begs from you.  
And do not refuse anyone who borrows from you.

Angry:  
That is ridiculous!  
Give away everything?  
Be nice to those who are mean to you?  
That makes no sense!

Jesus:  
I say to you: Love your enemies.

*Jesus hugs the Angry Man. All stand and sing “A New Heart” (by Eric Law?)*

Peter:  
His teachings were so inspiring!  
Just imagine if he had become King!  
His teachings could have become the laws of our country!  
That would have been so wonderful!

Mary:  
Maybe…  
But I don’t think anyone can make anyone else  
Follow Jesus’ teachings.
Peter: Remember when Jesus entered Jerusalem?  
I was so sure he would soon become King…  
The greatest King Israel has ever known…

*Jesus walks around the stage waving to the crowd and bowing while everyone sings “All Glory Laud and Honor” (154). Then Jesus walks to the center.*

Peter: But everything went wrong.  
Instead of becoming a great King,  
He became a great criminal…

*A Temple Guard enters and grabs Jesus.*

Temp Guard: You’re under arrest!  
For breaking our traditional laws!

*Mary and Peter talk—and all sing—while temple guards take off Jesus’ cloak and make him lie down in the tomb and place the white cloth over him.*

Mary: I’ll never forget how awful it was,  
Standing at the foot of the cross,  
And watching Jesus suffer like that.  
Do you remember? Were you there?

*All stand and sing. “Were You There?”*

Peter: No.  
No, I wasn’t there.  
No.  
I did not see Jesus on the cross.  
I was too afraid.  
Afraid that I would also be arrested.  
Afraid that I would also be killed.  
I did not see Jesus die  
because I was afraid of death.
So I ran away.
I just ran away.

*Jesus casts off white sheet and stands up out of the tomb.*

Mary: Hey! Who is that?

Peter: I don’t know…
But he looks familiar…

Mary: Maybe he knows where Jesus’ body has been taken!

Peter: Hey! You there!
Who are you?
Do you know where our King has been taken?

Mary: Someone has taken away my teacher.
And I do not know where they have taken him!

Jesus: Why are you so afraid?

Mary: Sir, if you have taken him,
Please tell us where he is.

Jesus: Mary… Mary…

Mary: Teacher?
Teacher!

*All stand and sing “Now the Green Blade Riseth” (204) while Mary and Peter go down from pulpit to hug Jesus.*

Jesus: Do not hold on to me.
Go.
And tell the whole world
That I am alive.
That my teachings live.
That my kingdom lives.

Sing second verse of “Now the Green Blade Riseth” (#204) while Peter and Mary return to pulpit. Then Thomas enters.

Peter: Look! There’s Thomas! Let’s tell him!

Mary: Thomas!
Jesus is alive!
His Kingdom lives!
His teachings live!

Thomas: What?
What are you talking about?
He died on the cross.
He was laid in the tomb.
He’s as dead as dead can be.

Peter: We just saw him!
He’s alive!

Thomas: You’re both crazy.
I don’t know what you saw,
But it couldn’t have been Jesus.

Mary: We saw Jesus.
Alive.
It’s true.

Peter: We hugged him and he talked to us.
He told us not to be afraid.

Thomas: Don’t be afraid?
Well! I am afraid.
The authorities might come and arrest us too.
They might come and arrest us and kill us at any time!

Jesus: Hello, Thomas.

Thomas: Who are you?
     I know you…
     Jesus?

Jesus: Peace be with you.

Thomas: My Lord and my God!

*Thomas and Jesus hug.*

Peter: Can you see it now?
     Can you see his kingdom?

Mary: I can see his kingdom now,
     And I can feel the power of his teachings!

Peter: A new kind of teacher
     *And…*

Mary: A new kind of king.

Peter: God among us.

Mary: God made flesh.

Peter: Trampling death.

Mary: Restoring life.

*All stand and sing, “Christ is Risen, Trampling” (WLP 816)*
**Easter Pageant Hymns and Lyrics**

“Were You There” #172 (verses 1 and 3)

Verse 1

_Were you there when they crucified my Lord?_  
_Were you there when they crucified my Lord?_  
_Were you there when they crucified my Lord?_  
_Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble._  
_Were you there when they crucified my Lord?_

Verse 3

_Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?_  
_Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?_  
_Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?_  
_Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble._  
_Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?_

“What Wondrous Love” (#439)

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul!  
What wondrous love is this, O my soul!  
What wondrous love is this  
That caused the Lord of bliss  
To lay aside his crown for my soul, for my soul,  
To lay aside his crown for my soul.

“Joyful, Joyful” (#376)

_Joyful, joyful, we adore thee,_  
_God of glory, Lord of love;_  
_Hearts unfold like flowers before thee,_  
_Praising thee, their sun above._  
_Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;_
Drive the dark of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness,
Fill us with the light of day.

“Heal Me Hands of Jesus” (WLP 773)

Heal me, hands of Jesus,
And search out all my pain,
Restore my hope, remove my fear
And bring me peace again.

A New Heart

A new heart I’ll give to you,
A new spirit I will put within you,
And I’ll take out of your flesh
A heart of stone
And give you a heart of flesh.

“Now the Green Blade Riseth” (204)

Now the green blade riseth from the buried grain,
Wheat that in dark earth many days has lain;
Love lives again, that with the dead has been.
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

“Christ is Risen, Trampling” (WLP 817)

Christ is risen from the dead,
Trampling down death by death,
And on those in the tomb
Bestowing life.
Bestowing life!