

# Martin's Christmas Carol

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A children's Christmas musical  
by Gary Sironen

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**SAMPLE SCRIPT - FOR PERUSAL ONLY - DO NOT COPY**

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

MARTIN, a monk and pastor

KATIE, Martin's younger wife

YOUNGEST KID

OLDEST KID

KID (this role can be divided among any number of children)

## SETTINGS

16th century Germany at the home of MARTIN and KATIE LUTHER, and in a church sanctuary, although time and place don't necessarily have to be obvious.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

The set can be simple or elaborate. Costumes can be period 16th century Germany or simply evoke the period. It would be most effective if MARTIN can actually play a guitar or at least strum a chord at the start of each line of song. The adult roles of Martin and Kate Luther could be performed by older kids, teens or adults. The speaking roles of Kids could be combined into as few as 3 children: one Oldest Kid, one Youngest Kid, and other roles doubled or tripled as necessary. The piano part is meant to be primarily for rehearsal purposes but can be used throughout at the discretion of the director.

## ABOUT THIS MUSICAL

This Christmas musical was written to commemorate the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, and to reintroduce Martin Luther's Christmas hymn, "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come" to church congregations. It is intended as an intergenerational piece and is especially suitable for congregations with a smaller number of children. Martin's comments about the Christmas story as presented in the musical are based on actual Christmas sermons written by Martin Luther. The hymn, "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come", was written as a Christmas pageant by Luther with verses for characters, children and congregation. All verses are adapted from Luther's original hymn (copyright 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship, admin. Augsburg Fortress), except for the verse about the Three Kings, which was composed for this play.

SCENE 1

*A small room in the home of Martin and Katie Luther. MARTIN is wearing a pair of angel wings. One wing is broken and drooping. KATIE is trying to fix it.*

MARTIN

Ouch! Katie, watch what you're doing back there. You just stabbed me.

KATIE

Don't be such a child, Martin. I'm doing the best I can.

MARTIN

Well, hurry it up. The kids will be here soon for rehearsal, and I don't want them to see me in this, this costume. It's embarrassing.

KATIE

If you're too embarrassed to wear it in front of the kids now, what will you do when you have to wear it in front of the congregation?

MARTIN

I don't know. I wish I didn't have to wear it at all.

KATIE

So then, why are you wearing it?

MARTIN

Because Prince Frederick saw his nephew wear wings during a Christmas sermon last year, and now wants me to do the same thing so I'll "inspire" other pastors to do it. He says we need to "communicate" better with the children. I don't know why I have to be the guinea pig for his crazy ideas.

KATIE

Well, you are the head of the Lutheran church.

MARTIN

Ooh! I hate that word "Lutheran". It isn't my church. I never wanted to start a new church. As far as I'm concerned, we're just reformers or protestors.

KATIE

Well, the "Church" kicked you out, so you now have your own church. Your followers wanted to honor you by giving it your name, so be quiet and let me fix your wings.

KIDS are heard talking and laughing  
in the background as they begin  
moving toward the stage.

MARTIN

You can finish it later. Just get it off me. The kids are starting to arrive.

KATIE

I can't get the laces on the corset untangled. This thing is older than me.

MARTIN

Corset? Great! Not only do I have to wear an embarrassing pair of wings;  
now I find out they're made out of your mother's old underwear!

KIDS are assembling on main stage  
area.

KATIE

Not my mother; my Mother Superior. (*MARTIN reacts*). I still can't get  
these laces untangled. Just go in the other room and get the rehearsal  
started. Tell the kids that you're a work in progress.

MARTIN

Oh, Lord, help me!

MARTIN joins the kids in the living  
room, Center Stage.

SCENE 2

*KIDS are playing and running around but come to immediate attention as MARTIN walks into the room.*

MARTIN

Alright, Children, let's go through what we worked on last time. Remember, we are telling the story of Christ's Birth, so be serious and reverent.

One KID giggles.

MARTIN

*(Sternly)* Child, what are you giggling about?

KID

I'm sorry, sir, but what are you wearing?

Other KIDS try to stifle their giggles.

MARTIN

These are my angel wings. I'm going to wear them when I give my sermon on Christmas Eve.

More giggling.

Now what? Why are you all laughing?

KID

It looks like one of your wings is broken.

KID

And it looks like they're made out of lady's underwear.

Now all of the CHILDREN begin laughing out loud.

MARTIN

Enough!

KIDS continue laughing, pointing, generally getting out of control.

MARTIN

Katie, remove these confounded things now! I can't teach these kids anything while I look so ridiculous!

KATIE

(Entering the room with a guitar.)

Martin, don't try to teach them. Just tell them the story.

MARTIN

How? They won't settle down?

KATIE

Use your music, Martin. With this.

KATIE hands MARTIN his lute/guitar. HE turns to the kids, who are running around again and strums a chord. KIDS stop and look in his direction, then begin gathering around him as HE sings.

MARTIN

"FROM HEAV'N ABOVE TO EARTH I  
COME  
TO BEAR GOOD NEWS TO EV'RY HOME!  
GLAD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY I BRING  
TO ALL THE WORLD, AND GLADLY  
SING."

KID

What is that song, Father Martin?

MARTIN

It's what the angels sang to some shepherds in a field on the night Jesus was born. He's telling them he has good news for them.

KID

Shepherds? Why would angels tell lazy shepherds? Why didn't they go tell the Prince and the priests?

MARTIN

The angel wanted them to go see the Christ child and then tell others.

KID

But who would listen to them?

KATIE

(From the back room)

Perhaps God was trying to make a point.

MARTIN

I can handle this, Katie. Perhaps God was trying to make a point.

(Pause)

KATIE

Maybe God was telling them that Jesus was coming for all people.

MARTIN

Katie, please! Maybe he was telling them Jesus was coming for everyone, no matter their station in life.

(Another pause)

KATIE

Maybe God told them first because they needed to...

MARTIN

(Interrupting) ...because they needed to hear it most. Honestly, Katie, please stop interrupting my train of thought.

KID

I still don't get it. Who would believe a bunch of dirty shepherds?

Another pause; MARTIN takes a quick glance back toward Katie, who is pretending to ignore him.

MARTIN

Maybe that was God's point. Anyone would pretend to believe whatever a rich or important person says. But God wants us to believe because of what he tells us, not because of who tells us.

KID

So what was the good news?

MARTIN

Repeat after me. (CHILDREN echo each line.)

MARTIN

"TO YOU THIS NIGHT IS BORN  
A CHILD

OF MARY, CHOSEN VIRGIN  
MILD;

THIS NEWBORN CHILD OF  
LOWLY BIRTH

SHALL BE THE  
JOY OF ALL THE  
EARTH."

KIDS

"TO YOU THIS NIGHT IS BORN A  
CHILD

OF MARY, CHOSEN VIRGIN  
MILD;

THIS NEWBORN CHILD OF  
LOWLY BIRTH

SHALL BE THE JOY OF ALL THE  
EARTH."

KID

Why did Jesus come as a baby? Why didn't he just come as a grown-up?

KATIE

Maybe...

MARTIN

Katie, please! If I need your help, I'll ask for it! (To Kid) Jesus didn't just want to come to talk with us. He wanted to be one of us, to be born, to live, to grow up, to laugh and to cry, to be happy and sad, and to die for us, and then rise up again.

YOUNGEST CHILD

Father Martin?

MARTIN

Yes, Dear One?

YOUNGEST CHILD

What's a virgin?

Silence, except for some giggles  
from older KIDS.

MARTIN

Katie? I could use some help now!

OLDEST CHILD

A virgin is a woman who is not married and has never had a baby.

KID

You mean Mary wasn't married? And Jesus didn't have a father?

YOUNGEST CHILD begins softly  
crying.

MARTIN

What's wrong, Sweetheart?

OLDEST CHILD

She doesn't have a father.

MARTIN

Oh, Sweetheart, many children don't have a father for many reasons. In the case of Jesus, his father was God. And God chose Mary as the special mother of Jesus.

KID

But I thought Joseph was Jesus' father?

MARTIN

Joseph and Mary were engaged to be married.

OLDEST CHILD

Wasn't Joseph upset, to be engaged to Mary and then find out that she was pregnant?

MARTIN

To tell the truth, he was very angry. He wasn't going to tell anyone about Mary, but he did plan to leave her.

OLDEST CHILD

But he didn't leave her, right?

MARTIN

No, he didn't. He wanted to, but an angel visited him and told him Jesus was the Son of God, and that Joseph should take Mary as his wife and raise Jesus as his own. (*To the Youngest Child*) You see, Honey, God wanted to protect Mary and her child, just like he protects all of us, and he provided a husband and father for them.

YOUNGEST CHILD

Will God provide a father for me?

MARTIN

I don't know for sure, but I am sure that God loves you and your mother and will provide you with everything that you need.

KID

So what happened to the shepherds? How did they find the Christ Child?

(CHILDREN again echo each line)

MARTIN

"THESE ARE THE SIGNS THAT  
YOU WILL SEE  
TO LET YOU KNOW THAT IT IS  
HE:  
IN MANGER-BED, IN  
SWADDLING CLOTHES  
THE CHILD WHO ALL THE  
EARTH UPHOLDS."

KIDS

"THESE ARE THE SIGNS THAT  
YOU WILL SEE  
TO LET YOU KNOW THAT IT  
IS HE:  
IN MANGER-BED, IN  
SWADDLING CLOTHES  
THE CHILD WHO ALL THE  
EARTH UPHOLDS."

What's a manger?

KID

MARTIN

A manger is a box with hay and food in it for the animals to eat. It's in a small barn.

KID

Jesus was born in a barn? With animals? Wasn't it dirty and smelly in there?

MARTIN

Yes, it was very dirty and smelly. God wants us to know he came not just to live with us, but to be one of us and share all of the joys and the difficulties that we go through.

KID

What about the kings?

MARTIN

Do you mean the Magi, the Wise Men from the East?

KID

Yeah! The wise guys. Didn't they come to visit Jesus, too?

MARTIN

Well, not the night Jesus was born.

KIDS

But I want to be a king.  
We have to have kings!  
Yeah, we want the wise guys!  
We want the wise guys! We want the wise guys! We want the wise guys!

MARTIN

Katie!

KATIE

Children!

(Sudden silence)

KATIE

Martin, can't you include the Magi in the story?

MARTIN

But they weren't there that night. They arrived much later. It isn't theologically correct!

KATIE

But the kids only get to tell the story once a year. Can't you simply adjust things a little? For them? Write a verse in the song about the Magi.

MARTIN

And just how do you propose this verse should go?

KATIE

Well, let's see. *(Thinks for a moment)*

NOW SEE THE MAGI FROM THE EAST,  
THE GREATEST COME TO PRAISE THE  
LEAST,  
WITH FRANKINCENSE, AND MYRRH,  
AND GOLD  
FOR THIS SMALL CHILD THEY NOW  
BEHOLD

You see, Children, God wants us to know that Jesus came for everyone, the greatest and the least, the poorest and the richest, those who are honored and those who are despised, all people from every part of the earth.

MARTIN

OK, fine. But if this song gets into the hymn book, I'm taking that verse out!

KID

Yay!

KATIE

Martin, it's time for the children to go home.

MARTIN

But we haven't finished our rehearsal, yet.

KATIE

I have a feeling they have learned all they need to know to share the story.

ALL leave as scene ends.

### SCENE 3

*Lights dim. A manger filled with hay sits Center Stage. SHEPHERDS are tending sheep STAGE LEFT. An ANGEL is standing CENTER STAGE on a raised platform behind the manger. A READER is standing STAGE RIGHT.*

READER(S)

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them,

Lights come up on the ANGEL and the SHEPHERDS.

ANGEL

FROM HEAV'N ABOVE TO EARTH I COME  
TO BEAR GOOD NEWS TO EV'RY HOME!  
GLAD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY I BRING  
TO ALL THE WORLD, AND GLADLY  
SING:

Lights come up on MARY and JOSEPH as they arrive at the Manger.

TO YOU THIS NIGHT IS BORN A CHILD  
OF MARY, CHOSEN VIRGIN MILD;  
THIS NEWBORN CHILD OF LOWLY BIRTH  
SHALL BE THE JOY OF ALL THE EARTH.

ANIMALS arrive as Mary places a baby in the Manger.

THESE ARE THE SIGNS THAT YOU WILL  
SEE  
TO LET YOU KNOW THAT IT IS HE:  
IN MANGER-BED, IN SWADDLING  
CLOTHES  
THE CHILD WHO ALL THE EARTH  
UPHOLDS.

READER

The shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

SHEPHERDS leave their sheep and  
go to the Manger.

KIDS

NOW LET US ALL WITH JOYFUL CHEER  
GO WITH THE SHEPHERDS AND DRAW  
NEAR  
TO SEE THIS WONDROUS GIFT OF GOD,  
THE BLESSED CHILD TO US BESTOWED.

READER

When the shepherds saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

AUDIENCE

LOOK, LOOK, DEAR FRIENDS, LOOK  
OVER THERE!  
WHAT LIES WITHIN THAT MANGER  
BARE?  
WHO IS THAT LOVELY LITTLE ONE?  
THE BABY JESUS, GOD'S DEAR SON.

O LORD, YOU HAVE CREATED ALL!  
HOW DID YOU COME TO BE SO SMALL,  
TO SWEETLY SLEEP IN MANGER-BED  
WHERE LOWING CATTLE LATELY FED?

READER

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." They set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the

place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

MAGI enter and go to the Manger,  
presenting their gifts of frankincense,  
gold and myrrh

AUDIENCE  
NOW SEE THE MAGI FROM THE EAST,  
THE GREATEST COME TO PRAISE THE  
LEAST,  
WITH FRANKINCENSE, AND MYRRH,  
AND GOLD  
FOR THIS SMALL CHILD THEY NOW  
BEHOLD.

WERE EARTH A THOUSAND TIMES AS  
FAIR  
AND SET WITH GOLD AND JEWELS  
RARE,  
STILL SUCH A CRADLE WOULD NOT DO  
TO ROCK A PRINCE SO GREAT AS YOU.

READER  
Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The  
shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and  
seen, as it had been told them.

The CAST, including MARTIN and  
KATIE, turns to face the Audience  
and join the singing.

CAST  
AH, DEAREST JESUS, HOLY CHILD,  
PREPARE A BED, SOFT, UNDEFILED,  
A QUIET CHAMBER IN MY HEART,  
THAT YOU AND I MAY NEVER PART.

AUDIENCE AND CAST  
MY HEART FOR VERY JOY NOW LEAPS;  
MY VOICE NO LONGER SILENCE KEEPS;  
I TOO MUST SING WITH JOYFUL TONGUE  
THE SWEETEST ANCIENT CRADLE-  
SONG:

GLORY TO GOD IN HIGHEST HEAV'N,  
WHO UNTO US THE SON HAS GIV'N.  
WITH ANGELS SING IN PIOUS MIRTH  
A GLAD NEW YEAR TO ALL THE EARTH!

End

Alternate wording for final verse

ALL GLORY BE TO GOD ON  
HIGH,  
WHO SENT HIS SON TO US THIS  
NIGHT.  
WITH ANGELS, NOW WE  
GLADLY SING  
OF THIS, OUR SAVIOR AND  
OUR KING.