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“How to Survive Your Church Christmas Pageant”

by
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SYNOPSIS

This hilarious one-act play has a role for everyone and illustrates the chaos and fun of putting on a church Christmas pageant while weaving in the story of Jesus' birth. The play culminates in a traditional nativity scene.

CAST

Gloria- An angel and our narrator; best played by a female, but could be either

Herald- An angel and our narrator/biblical scholar; would be best played by a male, but could be either

Director- Director of the children's Christmas pageant at church; male or female

Designer- Set designer for the pageant; male or female

Assistant- Director/Assistant director for the pageant; male or female

Choir Director (CD)- Children's choir director; male or female

Technical Director (TD)- Technical director for the pageant; male or female

Danny/Danielle- Child who frequently has to go to the bathroom, male or female

Butterscotch Nick/Nicky- Child who is passing out butterscotch candies, male or female

Children- (10+) As many as you would like in your production, all Ages. They will be dressed as Mary, Joseph, Shepherds, Wise Men, Cow, Sheep, and Angels and will be indicated in script by these names, male or female.

COSTUMES

Gloria and Herald should wear white robes and could additionally have wings and halos as desired.

Adult characters should wear modern day attire, which could also include Christmas themed attire, such as an ugly Christmas sweater.

Children should be in nativity costumes including costumes for:

Mary

Joseph

At least 2 shepherds

3 Wise Men

Angels

Animals

SET

This play takes place in the interior of a church setup for a Christmas pageant. This is a simple set but can be as elaborate as the director chooses. A loosely constructed nativity set is present center stage. Additional elements can be added throughout the play, culminating in the final "scene" in which the Director and children manage to stage a proper Christmas Pageant nativity scene.

PROPS

Bible
Clipboard with paper
Pencil
Partially completed cow costume with udders
Baby doll painted to look like a clown
Toolbox with hammer and other tools
Hay bale made out of a cardboard box
Butterscotch candies
Rolled up Designer plans
Elaborate set piece
Piece of paper

LIGHTS

Lighting changes can be used to transition in/out of Director scenes and Angel scenes if desired. Change of lighting could also occur for final nativity scene if desired.

TIME

Approximately 35-40 minutes

Gloria and Herald enter, in conversation. Herald carries a bible.

- Gloria:** So then I said to Jesus, I don't know what to serve for dinner at the annual Angel's convention. And do you know what he replied?
- Herald:** No, what?
- Gloria:** He said, "I have a couple loaves of bread and some fish if you need them." (*Chuckling*)
- Herald:** (*laughing*) I can't believe he said that.
- Gloria:** Most people don't know this, but Jesus has a really great sense of humor. I mean, his first day on earth was spent in a barn full of cows and sheep—what do you expect?
- Herald:** That is a pretty funny way to come into the world.
- Gloria:** (*sees nativity set*) Well, well... look what we have here—must be another Christmas pageant.
- Herald:** I just love Christmas pageants!
- Gloria:** Really?
- Herald:** The kids all dressed up in costume—Mary and Joseph and the animals. (*Elbowing Gloria*) And you know there's always an angel or two.
- Gloria:** As there should be!
- Herald:** Christmas pageants are the best!
- Gloria:** That's easy for you to say, you've never had to direct one.
- Herald:** And you have?
- Gloria:** Of course not. But I've heard enough prayers being sent up to the big guy to know that directing a Christmas pageant is no picnic.
- Herald:** I just love picnics!
- Gloria:** I thought you loved Christmas pageants.
- Herald:** I can love both.

Director enters, holding a clipboard, followed by the Assistant Director, who holds a half-completed child's cow costume and a doll painted to look like a clown. Angels step off to the side and observe.

“How to Survive Your Church Christmas Pageant”

Director: Alright, the pageant is two days. Let’s see how we’re doing with this production list. *(Looks at clipboard)* How’s the set coming along?

Assistant: It’s partially constructed.

Director: Costumes?

Assistant: Halfway there. *(Holds up costume)*

Director: What is that supposed to be?

Assistant: A cow.

Director: Are those...udders?

Assistant: I...think so?

Director: Are udders really necessary?

Assistant: I think the costumer was going for realism.

Director: If we were going for realism with this production, then Mary would not be played by a four-foot tall second grader.

Assistant: Good point. I’ll speak to the costumer.

Director: Great. *(Looks back at clipboard)* How are we doing with props? Did we secure a baby Jesus?

Assistant: Got him right here! *(Holds up clown doll)*

Director: *(horrified, screams)* Ah! Is that a clown?

Assistant: Only for now. Once we wrap him in swaddling clothes, he will be the Messiah. *(Holds out the doll toward Director)*

Director: *(backing away)* That doll is a lot of things, but a messiah it is not! Where did you find that?

Assistant: It was in the church nursery.

Director: Surely you can find a baby doll with a less...horrible painted smile?

Assistant: That’s all they had. But I’ll see what I can do.

Director: Please do. *(Writing on her clipboard)* So props are not ready...nor is the set...or costumes. *(Looking up)* Are the actors at least ready?

Assistant: Well, you see, I—

Danny enters and crosses to the Director.

Danny: *(tugging on Director's arm, interrupting)* Excuse me. I have to go to the bathroom.

Director: Can you hold it? We're just about to begin rehearsal.

Danny: I don't think so.

Director: *(to Assistant, exasperated)* Can you take Danny to the bathroom, please?

Assistant: Yes, ma'am. *(Hands Director the doll and holds out her hand to Danny)* Come with me Danny. *(As they exit, she starts shaking the hand Danny is holding)* Danny, why is your hand so sticky?

Danny: I don't know. It might be jelly...or it might not.

Assistant: *(sarcastically)* Great.

Exits with Danny as Director throws doll down.

Director: *(looking up to the sky or at the cross)* Dear Lord, please help me get through this Christmas pageant without losing my mind. Nothing is on schedule, the kids are driving me nuts, and I don't think I can handle one more sheep pun.

Shepherd Child enters.

Shepherd: I might be late for rehearsal—I just have to run home for something. But don't worry—I'll be baaaaack. *(Says baaaack making a sheep's baa sound. Laughs then exits)*

Director: *(throwing her hands up to the sky)* See what I'm working with here, Lord? *(Exits)*

Gloria: We've got to help these poor, hard working men and women who have *(uses air quotes)* “volunteered” to direct their church's Christmas pageant!

Herald: I agree, but how?

Gloria: They just need a little “how to” manual.

Herald: *(smiling, holds up the Bible and pats it)* Got that right here.

Gloria: Yes, well, that will be a huge help for sure. But I think you and I can help as well. *(Turns to the audience)* We'll give these nice people a ten-step guide on how to survive your church Christmas pageant.

“How to Survive Your Church Christmas Pageant”

Herald: These people right here? *(Points out at the audience)*

Gloria: Yep.

Herald: Right now?

Gloria: Right now.

Herald: Then where do we start? *(Opens up bible)*

Gloria: Let's start with number one— *(looks at audience)* be open to guidance.

Herald: *(excited)* Do you mean guidance from heavenly beings like us? Because I could be a great guide.

Gloria: Not exactly. What I mean is—

Herald: *(interrupting, excitedly)* You know who was a great guide? Gabriel. You know him, right? He's the one that visited Mary to tell her she was expecting the son of God and that she should name him Jesus.

Gloria: Yeah, I know Gabriel. He's a great guy. But what I meant was—

Herald: *(interrupting, looking at his Bible)* He also visited Joseph and told him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife—that this was all part of God's plan.

Gloria: I know. Gabriel did a great job with that one, no doubt about that. But in this case, the guidance I'm referring to is getting help from other people.

Herald: I don't get it.

Gloria: Just watch, and you'll see what I mean.

Gloria and Herald step off to the side as Director enters, carrying clipboard. She walks up to the set.

Director: This doesn't look right. *(Picking up a stray, half completed set piece)* No woman in her right mind would give birth in this mess. We are *never* going to be ready for the show tomorrow night. *(Sits on hay bale, which is a just a cardboard box covered in hay)* Yep. That's what I get for letting ten-year-olds be charge of set construction.

Designer enters, carrying a toolbox.

Designer: Pastor said you might be looking for some help on the set.

“How to Survive Your Church Christmas Pageant”

Director: *(standing, panicked)* He did? Does that mean he already know this show is going to be a disaster?

Designer: *(warily)* I don't know. He didn't say anything about a disaster. *(Backing away)* Maybe this wasn't such a good idea.

Director: *(rushing to his side and grabbing his arm, frantically)* No, no, no! You're here now. You can't go anywhere. You volunteered.

Designer: *(looking at the set)* This is a lot more work than I thought it was going to be. *(Picks up a set piece and looks at it)* When is the show again?

Director: Tomorrow.

Designer: *(laughing)* Ha! Sorry. I thought you said it was tomorrow.

Director: I did.

Designer: *(shocked)* You're joking.

Director: I wish.

Designer: *(setting down his toolbox with a sigh and taking out a hammer)* Alright, where should I start first?

Director: *(indicating the entire set)* Take your pick.

Designer: *(indicates broken hay bale)* How about right here?

Director: Works for me. *(Crosses to another hay bale)* I'll just be over here going over my notes.

Sits on hay bale. As it starts to collapse, Designer calls out.

Designer: That's not a good idea!

Director: *(rolling her eyes)* You don't say?

Director and Designer freeze or lights go down on scene as Gloria and Herald cross to center.

Herald: Well that didn't go very well.

Gloria: Maybe if she had asked for help sooner, that wouldn't have happened.

Herald: I bet Gabriel could've fixed that set up real quick.

Gloria: Maybe. Who knows? *(Turning to audience)* Now it's time to move on to our second step for surviving your church Christmas pageant.

- Herald:** *(rubbing his hands together, excitedly)* Ooh! I can hardly wait!
- Gloria:** Step two—make sure to schedule bathroom breaks.
- Herald:** That’s an important one when working with kids.
- Gloria:** Kids always have to go to the bathroom when working on Christmas pageants.
- Herald:** They also go to the bathroom a lot on road trips.
- Gloria:** How would you know?
- Herald:** I hear prayers being sent up to the big guy too, you know. *(Hands Gloria the bible folds his hands in prayer and looks upward, praying)* Please God, just let us get to the next rest stop before Jimmy has an accident.
- Gloria:** *(chuckling)* Yeah, I’ve heard that one too.
- Herald:** Or there’s— *(shaking his finger at an imaginary child)* Jimmy if you ask to go to the bathroom one more time before we reach the state line, *(folds his hands in prayer)* so help me, God—
- Gloria:** *(quickly hands Herald the bible)* Yeah, I don’t think that one was a prayer, exactly.
- Herald:** *(opening a bible)* Speaking of road trips, Mary and Joseph had quite a long journey when they traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be registered for the census.
- Gloria:** That is true.
- Herald:** I hope they scheduled a lot of bathroom breaks.
- Gloria:** *(shaking her head)* I’m sure they did. *(Turning to audience)* Now let’s see why you should follow step two and schedule bathroom breaks during your Christmas pageant rehearsals.

Gloria and Herald step to one side as Designer helps Director stand then works on set in the background during the following scene.

Director: *(as he helps her up)* Thank you.

Designer: No problem.

Starts to work on set as Assistant enters, followed by Danny, dressed as a sheep, Nick, dressed as a shepherd and 5+ children dressed as Mary, Joseph, cows, and sheep.

Assistant: We’re ready to start rehearsing.

Director: Great. Let’s take it from the manger scene. Places everyone!

Assistant helps to get the kids in place.

Assistant: Everyone’s in their places.

Director: Alright. Let’s start from the second, “moo”.

Cow: Moo.

Mary: For unto us a child is born.

Joseph: Unto us—

Danny: Excuse me. I have to go to the bathroom.

Director: We just started rehearsal, Danny. Can’t you hold it?

Danny: I don’t think so.

Director: Fine. *(To Assistant)* Can you please take Danny to the bathroom?

Assistant: Sure. *(Holds out her hand to Danny)* Come on, Danny. *(As they exit, she starts shaking the hand Danny is holding)* Danny, why is your hand so sticky?

Danny: I don’t know. It might be peanut butter...or it might not.

Assistant: *(sarcastically)* Great.

Director: Ok. Where were we?

Joseph: I have to go to the bathroom too.

Assistant: *(stops and holds out her other hand)* Come on, then.

Cow: I have to go too.

Mary: Me too. *(Cow and Mary rush over to Assistant and exit)*

Director: *(throwing up her hands in frustration)* I guess we’re taking a break—*(looks at her watch)*—two minutes after we start rehearsal. If anyone else needs to go to the bathroom, now is the time.

All Children rush after Assistant and exit, except for Nick, who crosses to Director.

Nick: *(pulling a butterscotch candy out from underneath his costume)* Want a butterscotch?

Director: Where did that come from?

Nick: My pocket.

Director: How long has it been in there?

Nick: Who knows? Do you want it?

Director: *(after a brief pause, holds out her hand)* Why not?

Takes candy, unwraps it and puts in her mouth. Director, Nick and Designer freeze or lights go down on scene as Gloria and Herald cross to center.

Gloria: And that’s why it’s crucial to plan plenty of bathroom breaks.

Herald: Hey Gloria?

Gloria: What?

Herald: *(with a smirk)* I have to go to the bathroom.

Gloria: Angels don’t use the bathroom, Herald.

Herald: *(laughing)* I know.

Gloria: *(sighing)* Aaaaannndddd we’re moving on. *(To the audience)* Step three—take attendance.

Herald: That’s a good one! Most Christmas pageants have lots of kids in them.

Gloria: That’s right, Herald. And as we just learned, they go to the bathroom a lot. It’s important to keep accurate attendance records so you know exactly how many kids you have at each rehearsal and where they are at all times.

Herald: I bet the census takers in Bethlehem had to be very careful to take accurate records.

Gloria: Of course they did. That’s the entire point of a census.

Herald: They didn’t have as many names as we have now. Can you imagine how many Marys and Josephs there were back then? And Johns! There are so many guys named John in the Bible! So confusing!

Gloria: Very true.

Herald: Can you imagine when Mary and Joseph walked up to the census taker? I mean, here he was, just doing his job, taking the census, and he gets to meet *the* Mary and Joseph.

Gloria: I’m not sure I understand your point.

“How to Survive Your Church Christmas Pageant”

Herald: If the census taker had known that he was registering the parents of Jesus Christ himself, I bet he would’ve thought that was pretty cool.

Gloria: Mary and Joseph were just a man and a woman— *(indicating audience)* just like these fine people right here. Throughout history God has used regular people to help spread his message of peace and love

Herald: Like directors of church Christmas pageants?

Gloria: That’s right. They’re helping to spread God’s message too. *(Turning to the audience)* And that’s why I give you step three of how to survive your church Christmas pageant—take attendance.

Gloria and Herald step to one side as Set Designer resumes work on set in the background and Director looks down at her clipboard. Nick lines up in front of Director as Danny and other Children enter and line up.

Director: Next!

Nick: *(stepping forward)* Nick is here.

Director: Thank you. *(Puts a check mark on her clipboard)* Butterscotch Nick is here.

Nick: *(pulls a butterscotch out of his pocket)* If you liked that butterscotch, I have another.

Director: Maybe later, Nick. Thank you. *(Nick steps off to one side)* Next! *(Danny steps up)* Hello, Danny.

Danny: Excuse me?

Director: What is it now?

Danny: I have a question.

Director: Danny, you’ve already been to the bathroom.

As Danny and Director speak, the Children start getting impatient and goofing around. They step out of line, play games, mess around on the set, some exit, etc.

Danny: That’s not what I was going to say.

Director: *(looking around quickly at emerging chaos)* Um, what is it, Danny? And make it quick.

Danny: I’m just wondering what my character’s motivation is.

Director: *(incredulously)* Your character’s motivation? Danny, you’re playing a sheep.

Danny: I know, but this sheep was present for a pretty epic moment. I want to make sure I get my lines just right.

Director: Your only line is, “baa.”

Danny: Yes, but how would my character baa? *(Trying out different, dramatic ways to say the line)* Is it baa? Or baaaa? Or maybe its baa? Or perhaps baa.

Set Designer, who is annoyed by children playing on the set, raises his hand.

Designer: Can someone call these children and get them off the set?

Director: *(looking down at her clipboard)* I would, if I could figure out who they all are.

Designer: Just call their names. They’re kids. They’ll come when called.

Director: I would...except I don’t know all they’re names!

Danny: Or maybe its baa.

Set Designer crosses his arms angrily, while Director just looks out at audience, panicked. All freeze or lights off as Gloria and Herald enter.

Herald: *(shocked)* Wow. That escalated quickly.

Gloria: Do you see why it would’ve been helpful if the director had taken attendance?

Herald: I sure do! Did you see that cow riding on the shepherd’ back? *(Laughing)* That was awesome.

Gloria: I’m sure our director disagrees. And that all could have been avoided by taking attendance as well as by adhering to step four of our plan.

Herald: What’s step four?

Gloria: *(turning to audience)* Step four—keep your cast size manageable.

Herald: Very true. Parties are fun with lots of people. Christmas pageants—*(shakes his head, “no”)* not so much. I don’t know why these directors insist on having five shepherds, ten angels, and twenty cows, sheep and pigs. There were nowhere *near* that many animals at the nativity.

Gloria: I think they just want to include as many kids as possible.

Herald: The director just needs to take the advice from the innkeepers in the nativity story. *(Opening his Bible)* When Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, they went from inn to inn, but they were all full. Everywhere they went, the innkeepers told them there was no room. *(Closing his Bible)* They couldn't let everyone inside, so they turned Mary and Joseph away.

Gloria: You know what, Herald. You're right. The innkeepers kept their numbers manageable, just as our directors should.

Herald: *(looking at the scene)* I hope our director takes our advice, or else things are not going to go well.

Gloria: I doubt it. *(Turning to audience)* But either way I give you step four of how to survive your church Christmas pageant—keep your cast size manageable.

Gloria and Herald step off to one side as action resumes in the scene, starting right where it left off, now with more chaos.

Danny: I could try it like, baaaaa.

Director: *(frantically looking around)* Sure, Danny. Whatever.

Assistant runs onstage.

Assistant: I've lost Sally.

Director: *(unsure)* Sally?

Assistant: Yes. You know the cute little blond girl who is playing an angel?

Director: *(looking down at her clipboard)* I have ten angels on my list, and at least half of them are blond. I have no idea who you are talking about.

Designer: Are you going to get these kids off my set or not?

Director: Just a minute!

Set Designer gets angry and storms off, exiting.

Assistant: So what are we going to do about Sally?

Danny: So what do you think? How should I say my line?

Nick: *(crosses to Director and holds out a butterscotch)* Do you want a butterscotch?

Director: *(ready to pull her hair out, screaming)* Stop! Everyone just stop!
(Children all stop and stare at Director) I want everyone out of here and lined up against the wall outside the sanctuary right now!

Assistant: Yes, ma'am. *(To Children)* Come on, everyone. Follow me.

Nick starts to get in line but Director stops him.

Director: Not so fast, Nick. *(Takes butterscotch from him)* You're free to go now.

Nick lines up as Assistant holds out her hand to Danny. Before he takes her hand, she pulls it back, quickly.

Assistant: You know, Danny, I think you're alright to go line up on your own.

Danny: Thanks!

Danny exits followed by Assistant with Children following as Director opens candy and pops it in her mouth, sucking on it and looking frantic. She freezes or lights dim as Gloria and Herald enter.

Herald: *(looking even more shocked)* Wow. Just...wow.

Gloria: I know.

Herald: No, but...seriously! Did you see that?

Gloria: I did.

Herald: *(taking out a cloth and wiping his brow)* I had no idea.

Gloria: I tried to tell you.

Herald: *(taking cloth and dabbing at his armpits)* That was stressful.

Gloria: That's why directors need to keep their cast sizes manageable!

Herald: I hate to say it but hope our next step doesn't involve so many kids.

Gloria: It doesn't.

Herald: So, what is it, then?

Gloria: Our next step is just to keep your set simple.

Herald: Simple is often better. Just ask Mary and Joseph. *(Opens Bible)* Mary gave birth to Jesus in simple surroundings...in a stable, surround by nothing other than hay and animals. *(Closes his Bible and indicates the set)* Because of that decision, these Christmas pageants have a really cool setting for their story.

Gloria: More importantly, Jesus had a warm, safe place in which to be born.

Herald: Yeah, that too. *(Looking at the set)* This set looks pretty simple. I’m sure these guys will be just fine.

Gloria: The way things are going, I’m not so sure. But we’re about to find out! *(Turns to audience)* And now here’s step five of how to survive your church Christmas pageant—keep your set simple.

Gloria and Herald step to one side as Director crosses to set and tries to put things together.

Director: This is nowhere near finished and now my set designer has walked out on me. *(Looks up into the sky, or at cross)* Now what am I going to do?

Set Designer enters, carrying rolled up plans and an elaborate set piece.

Designer: I’m back.

Director: That was fast.

Designer: *(puts set piece down)* Now that I’ve had some time to sit down and think, I’ve gone ahead and put together some plans to liven up the set a little.

Designer opens up rolled out plans. They are large and complex.

Director: *(incredulously)* You just did all this now?

Designer: Yep.

Director: *(pointing offstage)* While you were out there?

Designer: Of course. *(Picks up set piece)* And I made this little beauty too.

Director: *(looks up at sky or at cross)* What am I doing wrong, Lord?

Designer: *(drawing her attention back to the plans)* If we work really hard all night and tomorrow, we should be able to get this done. *(Picks up plans and crosses to set, pointing out items from the plans and where they would be on the actual set over the next few lines)* So I was thinking, we could construct the town of Bethlehem with some 4x8 flats and some simple framework which would give us a lovely backdrop behind the stable.

Director: Yes, but—

Designer: *(interrupting)* And if we have any artists in the congregation, we could get a large painter’s tarp and they could paint a night sky that we could hang behind the town.

Director: I don't even know how we would find someone so last minute. Besides, I really don't think—

Designer: *(interrupting, with a smile)* Now follow me on this. *(Grabs her arm and pulls her in the opposite direction)* What if— *(holds up his arms, as if painting a grand picture)* instead of the wise men just showing up out of nowhere, we construct a grand palace where they meet up with King Herod before starting on their journey.

Director: *(holding up the script)* King Herod's not even in this script!

Designer: Just write him in.

Director: I'm not a playwright!

Designer: *(rolling up plans)* This is a lot of work, so I'm going to get started. *(Starts to cross to set, then stops)* Oh, and if you could get me a crew of about twenty-five guys in the next hour, that would be great.

Director: Do they need to be over the age of twelve?

Designer: *(laughing)* Ha! Good one.

Set Designer starts to hammer on set as Director looks frantic. Director and Set Designer freeze or lights dim as Gloria and Herald cross to center.

Herald: They're never going to get all that done before tomorrow.

Gloria: You can say that again!

Herald: They're never going to get all that done before tomorrow.

Gloria: *(shaking her head)* Herald, have you ever heard of an idiom?

Herald: Of course I have! *(Clapping a hand over Gloria's mouth and looking around)* But it's not nice to call people names. You never know when the big guy might be listening.

Gloria: *(removing Herald's hand from her mouth)* He's always listening. And you clearly *don't* know what an idiom is.

Herald: What is it then?

Gloria: It's a common phrase people use, such as "you can say that again" that means—

Herald: *(interrupting)* What is it then?

Gloria: I'm trying to tell you.

- Herald:** I know. You told me to say it again, so I did.
- Gloria:** *(shaking her head)* I think I’m starting to get a taste of how our director’s feeling right now.
- Herald:** Things aren’t going well, huh?
- Gloria:** You can say that again.
- Herald:** Things aren’t—
- Gloria:** *(claps a hand over his mouth and turns to audience)* Now let me introduce our next step—keep special effects to a minimum.
- Herald:** *(excited)* Ooh! I love special effects! I can just see it now. *(Runs over to the set and waves his arms like explosions)* Flash! Bang! There’s a big explosion over here. *(Runs to the other side of the stable)* Suddenly the wind picks up. *(Indicates behind blown backward)*
- Gloria:** Tell me, Herald, when exactly did the explosions occur in the nativity story?
- Herald:** Good point. Maybe not explosions then. *(Thinks for a minute)* Angels! Of course. Why didn’t I think of that? *(Rushes over to another part of the set)* Coming down from the sky are a chorus of heavenly angels. *(Looks up at the sky and opens up his arms, wide, and sings)* Hallelujah! Hallelujah! *(Super fast now)* Hallelujah! Hallelujah! *(Slower)* Hallelujah!
- Gloria:** *(shaking her head in disbelief)* That’s exactly what I’m warning against, Herald.
- Herald:** But special effects are amazing!
- Gloria:** They can be, but if a director wants to survive their Christmas pageant, they need to stick to maybe one or two manageable effects. *(Crosses to set and picks up star or indicates it)* Like maybe having the star light up or something.
- Herald:** But that’s boring.
- Gloria:** No, it isn’t. The star that shone over Bethlehem was a wonderful sight for all to behold and was nothing like anyone had seen before.
- Herald:** *(opens up the Bible)* It must’ve been wonderful to see. It was so bright, the wise men used it as their guide on their travels to find the newborn king.
- Gloria:** Exactly. God didn’t need any special effects when Jesus was born. *(Holds up or indicates star)* He just needed one bright star. *(Looking at*

“How to Survive Your Church Christmas Pageant”

audience) Which is why I recommend step number six of how to survive your church Christmas pageant—keep special effects to a minimum.

Gloria and Herald step off to one side as Set Designer resumes working on set. Director looks down at her clipboard as Technical Director, wearing flashy clothing, enters, followed by five Children dressed as angels.

TD: *(dramatically)* Technical Director in the house! *(Kisses two fingers and then points them upward or at the cross)* God’s house, that is.

Director: *(aside, to herself)* Great. Just what I need right now.

TD: *(crossing to Director)* Hello theater people! It is I, your technical director, ready to give this show the pizzazz it so obviously needs. *(Looks scornfully at set)*

Director: Thank you for coming. We definitely don’t want to turn away any volunteers.

TD: *(shocked)* Volunteer? Who said anything about volunteering? *(Pulls a piece of paper out of his jacket and hands it to Director)* My fees. *(Walks past her, toward the set)*

Director: *(looking at the paper)* You’ve *got* to be kidding me! We can’t pay this.

TD: *(ignoring her)* I see the set is still under construction. That’s not a problem. In fact, it gives us more room to install the rigging we need to fly your angels.

Director: *(aghast)* Fly our angels?

Director, Set Designer, and Technical Director freeze momentarily as Herald steps into scene, pulling Gloria with him.

Herald: See! This guy thinks outside the box. He has vision. Flying angels—exactly what I was thinking! Now *that* is a church Christmas pageant.

Gloria: And this is why the big guy put *me* in charge.

Drags Herald off to one side as action resumes in scene.

Director: *(rushing over to Technical Director)* We can’t fly angels. I’ll be lucky if I get this *production* off the ground, let alone a half dozen five-year olds!

TD: *(sighs dramatically)* What kind of second-rate production is this.

Director: It’s a children’s Christmas pageant. What did you expect?

TD: *(striding past **Director** and ripping the paper from her hands)* I'm going to need to take another look at the terms of my contract. *(Snaps his fingers)* Come, little angels.

*Technical Director exits in a huff as **Director** watches him exit, incredulously. **Director** and **Set Designer** freeze or lights dim as **Gloria** and **Herald** enter.*

Herald: Seriously...you didn't think that guy was super cool?

Gloria: He was super...something.

Herald: You know who else is super cool?

Gloria: Who?

Herald: *(smiles)* Gabriel.

Gloria: Why am I not surprised?

Herald: Surprises! I love surprises!

Gloria: I'm glad you said that, because that's our next step.

Herald: What is?

Gloria: Surprises.

Herald: *(with a smirk)* Oh really. How fascinating. Tell me more about it. *(Sneaks away to hide behind a set piece during next line)*

Gloria: I will, Herald. Thank you. It's nice to see you being a little more serious about this process. *(Starts to pace around as she speaks)* Step seven is to be ready for surprises. As anyone who has worked on a children's pageant knows, no matter how well you plan for every possible outcome, surprises are bound to happen. But if you plan some contingencies, you should be just fine. Wouldn't you agree Herald? *(Looks around but doesn't see **Herald**)* Herald? *(Starts to move around the set, looking for him. Finally, she stops at the set piece behind which he's hiding)* Herald?

Herald: *(jumping out from behind set piece)* Surprise!

Gloria: *(startled)* Ah! *(Now angry)* What did you do that for?

Herald: You said the next step was surprises. I just wanted to help illustrate the point.

Gloria: Once again you seem to have *missed* the point, Herald.

Herald: No I haven't. *(Opening his Bible)* It's just like in the nativity story.

Gloria: Ok, now I'm missing *your* point.

Herald: You know, the shepherds were out in the field, tending to their sheep, minding their own business, when suddenly out of nowhere a great chorus of angels suddenly appeared. *(Looks at Gloria)* Surprise! *(Looks back at his Bible)* And proclaimed that the Messiah had been born. *(Closes his Bible)* As surprising as that must have been, they remained calm and heeded the angels' words and went to see the Christ child.

Gloria: Wow. That's exactly right, Herald.

Herald: I know. I was there.

Gloria: You were not.

Herald: *(taps the Bible)* Well after reading this, I *feel*/like I was there! This is a great story.

Gloria: Finally, something you and I can agree on. *(Turning to the audience)* And on that note, I give you step seven of our guide on how to survive your church Christmas pageant—be prepared for surprises.

Gloria and Herald step off to one side as Director and Set Designer resume action.

Director: *(to Set Designer)* How's everything going over there?

Designer: It would be better if I had twenty-five more sets of hands.

Director: *(gives him a thumbs up)* Working on it! *(Turns away)* That is *so* not going to happen.

Choir Director enters, frazzled, followed by a Child, dressed as an angel, who is clutching at her throat, as if it hurts.

CD: We have a problem.

Director: *(sighs)* What is it now?

CD: Janey has lost her voice.

Director: That stinks.

CD: Yes, it does. Janey was my lead soloist for the big musical number.

Director: Can't you just give the solo to someone else?

CD: Give it to someone else? *(Scoffs)* Do you know how long Janey has been working on this?

Angel nods and looks sad, or rubs her fists near her eyes, indicating that she's been crying.

Director: I'm sure she has been, but that's the only solution I have for you right now.

CD: That would be great, but there's one more problem.

Director: What's that?

More children enter, dressed as angels. They are all coughing, sneezing, etc as if they are sick.

CD: My entire choir has come down with a cold.

Director: That's not good.

CD: No, it's not.

Designer: *(calling out)* Watch out below!

Star or other set piece falls.

Director: What was that? *(Turning to **Set Designer**)* Are you alright?

Designer: I'm alright. *(Picks up star or set piece)* But I'm not so sure about this star.

Director: *(taking a big, deep breath)* Well, this day is going from bad to worse.

*Danny enters and crosses to **Director**, tugging on her arm.*

Danny: Excuse me. I have to go to the bathroom.

Director: *(sarcastically, looking out at the audience)* What a surprise.

*All freeze or lights dim as **Gloria** and **Herald** enter.*

Herald: Hey, speaking of singing, did you know there is a song written about me?

Gloria: No there isn't.

Herald: Yes, there is. They named it after me and everything. It's pretty famous.

Gloria: Now I know you're pulling my leg.

Herald: I'm not, seriously! It was on the Billboard charts and everything!

- Gloria:** Alright. What’s the name of this song?
- Herald:** *(smugly)* Hark the *Herald* Angels Sing.
- Gloria:** *(shakes her head)* You’ve got to be kidding me! That song’s not about—
(Stops) You know what. Never mind. I’m just going to give this one to you. *(Smiles)* Congrats Herald. That’s a great song.
- Herald:** So, you know it, then?
- Gloria:** I do.
- Herald:** Did you know there’s another song that gives you a shout out?
- Gloria:** *(interested)* No, I didn’t. What song is that?
- Herald:** Angels We Have Heard on High. Right in the middle they sing, *(Sings or speaks the lyric)* Gloria. In excelsis deo.
- Gloria:** Oh yeah, that’s right. I love that song.
- Herald:** I just have one question...what does “in excelsis deo” mean? Is that you’re nickname or something?
- Gloria:** It means “God in the highest.” The song is about giving glory to God.
- Herald:** *(opening his Bible)* Just like the wise men did.
- Gloria:** I guess you’re right. The three wise men heard about the birth of the newborn king and wanted to pay their respects and give him glory.
- Herald:** And presents like gold, frankincense and myrrh, right?
- Gloria:** That’s right. So they followed the bright star and traveled a far distance to see Jesus.
- Herald:** *(closing the Bible)* Do you want to know a fun fact?
- Gloria:** This is against my better judgement, but sure...
- Herald:** Even though most Christmas pageants depict the wise men as part of the nativity scene, the wise men actually didn’t arrive with their gifts until much later.
- Gloria:** That is true, Herald. Great job.
- Herald:** Thank you.
- Gloria:** And it actually leads me to the next step of our guide—don’t be afraid to postpone.

Herald: *(aghast)* Postpone the Christmas pageant! But how?

Gloria: This is the greatest story ever told, so if you need a little extra time, your audience will wait to hear it. The wise men didn't get to the birth of Jesus on time. No need to rush your show either. *(Turning to audience)* Which is why you shouldn't be afraid to heed step eight of our guide on how to survive your church Christmas pageant—don't be afraid to postpone.

Gloria and Herald step off to one side as action resumes in scene.

CD: So what do you want me to do about my choir?

Designer: *(looking at plans)* If you want this done in time, we're going to be here all night.

Director: I don't think we're going to be ready for tomorrow.

Danny: I still have to go to the bathroom.

Director: *(looking down at Danny)* Of course you do, Danny.

Technical Director enters, crosses to Director and shoves a piece of paper at her.

TD: I've revised my contract. Instead of rigging the angels to fly, I'll scale back my plans and just focus on the technicolor light show for your starry night sky.

Director: *(looking at the paper)* Technicolor light show? How long will it be until that's done?

TD: *(snapping at her)* As long as it takes!

Director: *(shaking her head)* I think we need to postpone.

TD: Postpone?

Designer: *(looking up, slightly alarmed)* Postpone?

CD: *(aghast)* Postpone! *(Starts to storm off)* Pastor is *not* going to like this!
(Exits)

Director: That makes two of us.

All freeze or lights dim as Gloria and Herald enter.

Herald: What should they do now, Gloria? This pageant is going downhill, fast!

Gloria: *(pauses for a few moments, staring ahead, shocked)* I...I don't know.

Herald: You don't know?

Gloria: I don't. This is so much worse than even I could have imagined.

Herald: What's the next step in our guide?

Gloria: The only thing I can think of is to give up.

Herald: Give up! *(Opens Bible and leafs through it)* Nowhere in here does it say to give up.

Gloria: *(sadly, turning to audience)* I now give you step nine of our guide on how to survive your church Christmas pageant—just give up.

Gloria and Herald sadly cross to one side as action resumes in scene. All children enter and start acting wild—playing games, running around, messing with the set, etc. Set Designer and Technical Director are arguing. Choir Director and Assistant enter and cross to Director, frantically trying to get answers out of her. At one point, a child picks up the clown doll and shows the Choir Director who screams and hides behind Assistant. Through all of this, Director just stares out at audience, wide-eyed. After a few moments, Director speaks.

Director: I give up.

CD: *(yelling)* You what?

All chaos stops and everyone looks at Director.

Director: I give up. It's over. Done. Finito. *(Handing clipboard to Assistant)* I quit! *(As she exits)* Director, out! *(Exits)*

TD: Can she do that?

Designer: It looks like she just did.

All freeze or lights dim as Gloria and Herald enter.

Herald: *(nearly crying)* This can't be how it ends! There has to be a Christmas pageant. There just has to!

Gloria: *(dejected)* I'm sorry, Herald, but I'm out of ideas. I just don't know how to help these people.

During the next several lines, the set is fixed and all children get into place for a beautiful, simple, well put together nativity scene. Set Designer, Assistant, Technical Director and Choir Director help and then stand off to one side.

- Herald:** *(patting Gloria's shoulder)* That's ok Gloria. I know where to find the answers.
- Gloria:** *(uncertain)* You do?
- Herald:** Yep! *(Pats his Bible)* All the answers they need can be found right here—*(Points to the sky or cross)* And right up there.
- Gloria:** What do you mean?
- Herald:** In times of trouble, all people need to do is turn to the big guy himself—God. He always knows what to do.
- Gloria:** That's true.
- Herald:** *(opening his Bible)* And one of the greatest things God ever did for us was to send his only son to earth, so that peace and love could spread throughout the land. *(Closes his Bible)* That's what Christmas is all about, you know—celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ our Lord, and all the wonderful gifts he brought to earth when he was born.
- Gloria:** *(smiling)* I couldn't have said it better myself.
- Herald:** I think we know what our tenth and final step should be.
- Gloria:** I do too.
- Herald:** Then say it so we can see how this Christmas pageant turns out!
- Gloria:** *(takes Herald's arm and brings him center stage)* I think you should do the honors, Herald.
- Herald:** Really?
- Gloria:** *(smiling)* You earned it.
- Herald:** Alright. Here goes. *(Turns to face audience)* And now I, Herald the angel, give you the tenth and final step in our guide on how to survive your church Christmas pageant—put your faith in God.

*Herald waves his arm toward the scene, then he and Gloria cross to one side of the stage. As action resumes, we see a nativity set ready to be performed. Lights are dim on all but the scene. During the next few lines, Director enters slowly, in shock, and crosses to Assistant. ***Note: Angels' lines can be further divided among more children if you desire.*

- Nick:** Now there were shepherds nearby living out in the field, keeping guard over their flock at night.

1ST Angel: An angel of the Lord appeared to them,

2ND Angel: And the glory of the Lord shone around them,

Shepherd: And they were absolutely terrified.

3RD Angel: But the angel said to them,

4TH Angel: Do not be afraid! Listen carefully, for I proclaim to you good news that brings great joy to all the people.

5TH Angel: Today your Savior is born in the city of David. He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you:

Mary: You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.

Joseph: Suddenly a vast, heavenly army appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

All: Glory to God in the highest,

Danny: And on earth peace among people with whom he is pleased!

All Directors clap and cheer. Audience may join in as well.

Assistant: *(patting Director on the back)* It really is a wonderful show. You did a great job. *(Starts to cross with Director to center)*

Director: *(looking around, incredulously)* But...how?

Assistant: You just have to put your faith in God and know that everything will work itself out.

Director: Even Christmas pageants?

Assistant: *(smiling)* Even Christmas pageants. *(Puts her arm around Director in a half hug)*

Director: *(turning to Children)* Great show, everyone! Now who wants Christmas cookies?

Children cheer and exit, followed by Assistant, Technical Director, Set Designer, and Choir Director. Director hangs back just a minute as Gloria and Herald enter. She looks over at them and smiles, acknowledging them. They smile back and wave. Director turns back to where kids exited.

Director: Wait for me! *(Exits)*

“How to Survive Your Church Christmas Pageant”

Gloria: *(to audience)* Well, there you have it folks—our ten step guide on how to survive your church Christmas pageant.

Herald: I was kind of nervous for a minute that they weren't going to pull it off.

Gloria: With God's help, we can do anything, Herald.

Herald: That's right. *(Thinking)* Do you think that count for angels too?

Gloria: What do you mean?

Herald: I mean, in theory, if I wanted to, say, fly over the Grand Canyon on the back of a mighty steed, do you think I could do it? That would be super cool, huh?

Gloria: *(shaking her head and laughing)* That would be super...something.

Gloria starts to exit, with Herald following.

Herald: You know who could probably do that with one arm tied behind his back?

Gloria: Let me guess....

Herald: Gabriel.

Gloria: *(smiles)* Why am I not surprised?

Exits. Lights black. The end.