



**Mennonite
Church**
Canada

Resource Centre

From our Churches

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From Everlasting to Everlasting

Inspired by a story told by Thomas Troeger at the *Refreshing Winds* conference at Canadian Mennonite University, 2005.

Note: This script was written with specific congregational members in mind and would need to be adapted to each new congregational context. The power of the script, though, is in its contextual nature – and using the personal stories/names of congregational members.

Cast:

Narrator:
Director:
Samantha:
Mary:
Joseph:
Shepherds (3):
Magi (3):

Paul:
Lydia:
Augustine:
Waldensians (2):
Martin Luther:
Michael and Margaretha Satler:
Menno Simons:

Johann Cornies:
Peter & Elfrieda Dyck:
David Toews:
C.F. Klassen:
J.J. Thiessen:

Variety of congregational members:

Carols:

- #215 What Child is This?
- #191 O Little Town of Bethlehem
- #197 Angels we have heard on high
- #199 The First Noel, the angels did say
- #318 Joy to the World
- #194 Away in a Manger
- #193 Silent Night, holy night

Solo: "Mary did you know?"

Choir: Amid the Cold of Winter

Stage: Star up in the back. Straw bales for Nativity in middle. Director's chair.

Welcome and Prayer

Carol: #215 What Child is This?

Narrator: Most of us have sat through previews and advertisements at the movies. We have seen the build-ups to what Cineplex Odeon will release the next month. We have been encouraged to go and buy popcorn from the concessions in the lobby. We have been gently reminded to turn cell phones off - which is not a bad idea here either.

Well, one day, during the previews before one particular movie, an add came on that caught all of the theatre patrons off guard. On the screen came the words for the Christmas story, as recorded by Matthew and Luke the Evangelist. It was accompanied by a voice.

Scripture: Luke 2: 1-20; Matthew 2:1-12

Narrator: And then, when it was over, then came the caption..... "The Starlight Theatre" presents, "A Christmas Pageant" an amateur production. Auditions welcome from the public.' A murmur came over the crowd - some thinking it was a silly idea - others thinking that this may be something they would want to do. Word spread around the town, so much so, that when the stage hand opened the side door of the theatre on that Saturday evening, she was surprised at the good number of people who had come out. The evening went, more or less, like this.....

Director: So how are you this evening, Samantha?

Samantha: Pretty good... a little tired. But I am excited about this pageant! I wonder what the reviews in the paper are going to say about our Christmas pageant?

Dir. Sam, you are getting way ahead of yourself. We have to first fill some roles and put on this whole production before we can even think about reviews. Let's have our first auditionee.

Sam. I'll send her in.

Dir. *(To herself/audience)* Auditionee?? ... is that a word? Hmmm. I have to think about that one. *('Mary' walks on stage.)* Hello there. And what is your name?

Mary: My name is _____.

Dir. Okay _____. What role are you trying out for? Do you want to be the Innkeeper's wife,a shepherd....?

Mary: Well, actually...., I want to be Mary.

Dir. Mary? Nothing like going for the lead role! Have you done some acting before?

Mary No... I've never really done anything like this.

Dir. *(Patronizing)* I see. Well, we like to have people who are experienced in the lead roles. That way they can watch and learn, they can gain confidence, you know.....

Mary *(Interrupting)* But Mary wasn't experienced. *(Pause)* She was not a mother of six, or anything like that. She was young. She had never even known a man. And you say you want someone confident? Do you think she was confident? An angel tells her things in a dream, she has to be quiet about it. But I'm sure people talking behind her back. Who would understand her? How was she treated? Can you just imagine how anxious she would have been at times?

Dir. *(Pause, then compassionately)* Can you relate to her?

Mary Well, maybe I can. Not in so far as angels and dreams, or in pregnancy, but I think I have an idea what it is like to feel the worry that she must have felt. I have never dealt with a pregnancy, or a fiancé that wants to break an engagement, but I am anxious about other things.

You see, I live day-to-day with a condition called, "Obsessive Compulsive Disorder". Having OCD means that I deal with a lot of recurrent and persistent thoughts. I worry a lot about
....., and it is more than just the everyday kind of worry that most people have - you know responsible-type worrying. Sometimes the stuff just won't let me go.....

Dir. How do you manage?

Mary I rely on God.... all the time. I rely on God to help me deal with the fears.....
.....
(Now thinking reflectively) So, I guess if you are looking for a Mary who is confident and strong, then maybe I should be the Innkeeper's wife or something.

Dir. No, I think you need to be Mary. Something tells me that you knew the kind of life that she had to lead. Go and have a seat over there. *(Mary goes over to straw bales, takes the baby out of the manger, holds it tenderly, and sits on the straw bale.)*

Solo: "Mary did you know?"

Dir. Okay, send the next one in, Sam.

Joseph: *(Timidly)* Hello.

Dir. Hello, and who are you?

Joseph My name is _____.

Dir. And you are auditioning for?

Joseph I would kind of like to be Joseph, if I could.

Dir. And why Joseph?

Joseph Well, I am a carpenter.....

Dir. Perfect! Have a seat across from Mary.

Joseph So, that's it? Not much of an audition.

Dir. Yeah, Joseph doesn't matter that much here. You are a carpenter, that's perfect.

Joseph So Joseph is only a carpenter to you?

Dir. Well, uh....., he was the father, uh, I mean, the 'adopted father', I guess. Now just hold on, an angel chose him in the first place, not me, I am just here to direct the play.

Joseph Ever thought about what it would have been like to be him? He didn't have a high powered job like some others around. He was not a man of great influence, but he had learned a trade and made an honest living. Imagine, his parents arrange his marriage, but then he finds out that Mary is expecting through a miracle of God. Instead of cutting her loose, he is faithful. I wonder if Joseph ever thought of doing a 'cut-and-run,' running for a distant land like Jonah did? Or I wonder if he ever thought negatively about his work, and thought about doing something else entirely - giving up carpentry, and try to make it big as a shipping baron, or financier in some foreign city, like some of his friends might have done. *(Reflective)* But he didn't. Despite the rumour mill, he remained a man of his word. He listened to the angel and obeyed. He went to Bethlehem, AND then instead of coming home, had to flee to Egypt to save his family. I have never had to do that, but I do try to seek his kind of obedience everyday.

Dir. Thank you..... Yes, you would be a good Joseph, not just because you are a carpenter.

Carol: "O Little Town of Bethlehem" #191

Dir. Sam. How does it look out there?

Sam *(Coming in from the side and looking a little concerned)* I don't know. There are A LOT of people out there, yet. These three wanted to come in together.

Dir. Okay, who are you three?

Shepherds: My name is _____.
My name is _____.
My name is _____. We want to be shepherds.

Dir. Shepherds, eh? Why do you want to be shepherds?

Shepherd 1: Well, being a shepherd was a very hard job. It was dangerous, low pay, bad working conditions. I know what that is like. You see, I had to leave my country, Colombia, because my life was in danger. And now I have to start all over in this country. It is not easy.

Dir. Okay, then what is your story *(looking to Shepherd 2)*?

Shepherd 2: My story is not much different than hers, except it happened back in the 1950's. I, along with my brother and grandfather had to flee Russia, because of the policies of Joseph Stalin. I crawled through ditches I lost my parents, my home - I was just 14. I came to this country to live in peace. But it was hard. I needed to learn a new language. I had to hoe beets in the beet field all day just to make \$..... So I know what it means to be relegated to a hillside at night.

Dir. And *(to Shepherd 3)* what is your story?

Shepherd 3: Much the same..... But even though the early years were hard, God has been good to me. I don't know where I would be, if not for the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Every day is a gift. God is good.

Dir. I think you would be good shepherds. Have a seat on the straw back there.

Carol: "Angels we have heard on high" #197

Magi 1: Hi. We would like to audition for the roles of the Magi.

Dir. *(Jokingly)* Why, do you come from the east?

Magi 2: Well, I do actually, but that's not the reason.

Magi 1: You see we here are all teachers/researchers, scientists and mathematicians, in particular. We have made our livings from imparting knowledge to people.

Magi 3: It is quite a daunting responsibility actually. We expose people to new ways of thinking.

Dir. So why do you want to be magi?

Magi 3: When you work day to day in the world of science, you get very comfortable working with things like cause and effect, data, test results, analysis..... We look for the proof in everything, and then draw conclusions. In Math, you have a problem, and you find the answer.

Magi 2: Sometimes faith can come under stress in this world. How exactly does God operate on earth - in the universe for that matter? What does it mean to be in relationship with God? I think I can identify with those Magi who travelled to find out what it was that was under the star. I have that same kind of curiosity. I also want to know how God is present in the world.

Magi 1: I work at the University. I work in a lab where I study bacteria. I work in the field of genetic research. As you know, there are no easy answers. Some genetic research has been profoundly helpful, other stuff..... well people think it is going too far. The reason I want to be a magi is that I want the Christ child to guide my thinking, my work, my whole life actually. *(Director nods consentingly..... the magi walk back to sit on the straw bale).*

Carol: "The First Noel, the angels did say" #199

(DURING THIS HYMN, ALL REMAINING ACTORS except for the choir COME OVER TO THE PIANO SIDE OF THE SANCTUARY AND BE READY TO GO ON IN QUICK SUCCESSION)

Dir. Well, that about does it, eh Sam? We have our cast, we can start talking about parts and lines....

Sam. *(Looking very concerned!)* Uh, I don't think you can stop yet.

Dir. Why not?

Sam. *(Stressed)* Because there are some people out there that really want to speak to you. *(As Paul walks in)* Excuse me sir, I asked you to wait outside....

Paul. Hi. My name is _____ and I want to audition for the Christmas pageant.

Dir. Sorry, but our cast is already full. See, behind you we have Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the magi. I suppose we could make you an extra, like the innkeeper or something.

Paul: I don't want to be any of those. I want to be the Apostle Paul.

Dir. What?! He wasn't in the nativity scene!

Paul: Well, you're right. But he is part of the Christmas story. Think about him for a minute. He had a powerful conversion on the road to Damascus - Jesus appeared to him there and changed his life. Then he preached salvation through God's Messiah. He took the story outside his own Jewish circles, took it to the Gentiles, to foreign lands - he travelled all over the known world. He said that in Jesus, God was beginning again.... the 'new Adam' he called him. People could find new life, new hope.... But he was scorned for his preaching, he was shipwrecked, he was stripped and beaten, he was imprisoned - and even there he witnessed to the saving power of Jesus Christ. Come on,.... open your mind a little bit... Paul can fit in here.

Dir. *(Frustrated)* Well, okay. I am not sure how I am going to explain this, but you can be in it for now. Just don't expect your name in the program. Go stand in the back somewhere there.

(Checking his clip board.) Okay, I think everything is looked after here.

Sam. *(Still stressed)* What about all the others out there?

Dir. How many? 5 or 10? Just send them in, we need some extra's.

Sam. *(Urgently)* Oh, there is more than 5 or 10. They are lined up all the way down the block and around the corner.

Lydia *(side-stepping Sam)* Hi, my name is _____. I want to be Lydia.

Dir. Lydia? Who is Lydia?

Lydia I am a friend of the Apostle Paul. You know - Acts chapter 16. Paul had a dream that he was to come to Macedonia to preach the word there, and when he and Silas arrived in Philippi, they met me. It was the Sabbath day, and they came to the place outside the gate by the river where we were gathering for prayer. Paul preached the gospel to us. The Lord opened my

heart. I believed and was baptized. From there I opened my home to them. We established a house church. When Paul and Silas were released from prison, they came to stay with the believers at my house for a few days. (*Motioning to the back*) I will go back there and stand beside Paul.

Dir. But...

Augustine: My name is _____. I want to be Augustine.

Dir. (*Patronizing again*) No, no! See, you don't understand. "A decree went out from Caesar AUGUSTUS."

Augustine: No, not him. I want to be Saint Augustine - one of the early church fathers - not the Roman emperor. Augustine had a conversion experience when he was 32 years old. Among other things, he wrote two famous works, "Confessions" and "City of God". His work was used to counteract some of the heresies of the early church. It was some of his work that kept Christianity on track in the early years.

Waldensians: We want to represent the Waldensians. Back in the 1100's we were a group of people who took a new interest in the Scriptures. We claimed them as the guide for Christian living. We committed large portions of Scripture to memory. And we sent out evangelists in the fashion of the Apostles. In many ways we were forerunners of the Anabaptists.

Luther I want to be Martin Luther. In his early life, Luther was tormented by what he called the "the four last things" - death, judgement, heaven and hell. He was so scared of God, that he grew to hate him. He had to find a new way. Through prayer and study, he did. In the Scriptures he discovered that we are "justified by faith" and not by works. On October 31, 1517 Martin Luther nailed 95 points of protest to the door of the Wittenberg Church. Of the document that was posted, Erasmus said, "The breach in the church is now irreparable."

Sattlers: We want to be Michael and Margaretha Sattler. Michael was a former monk. He left the monastery in search of the authentic Christian life. From Luther's work, he and the other radical Anabaptists took things farther and formed a doctrine to separate church and state. Then in 1527, Michael, along with others, published the Schleithem Confession. Michael died a martyr's death because of it. Margaretha suffered the same fate.

Menno I want to be Menno Simons. Menno was a priest in North Holland. He was exposed to Luther's writings in the monastery. Once he read them, he could not remain the same. He began to preach and teach differently than he ever had. Eventually a group of people formed around him that became known as the "Mennists", then eventually the "Mennonites". They were known for their life of discipleship, their beliefs in peace and non-resistance, and their emphasis on the authority of Scripture for daily living.

Dir. Okay, okay.... this is getting out of hand here. (*Moving her chair off of the stage now and down the centre isle*) Sam! Sam! Close the door please.

Sam. I can't! There are too many people out there. They are lined up as far as I can see.... And they keep getting past me to get in.....

Johann Cornies, David Toews, J.J. Thiessen, Peter and Elfrieda Dyck:

We want to represent Johann Cornies, David Toews, J.J. Thiessen, C.F. Klassen and Peter and Elfrieda Dyck. All of them played roles in finding the Mennonite places to live when they had to flee because of political persecution. Johann Cornies found land in Russia when Prussia was pushing them out. C.F. Klassen, David Toews and J.J. Thiessen brought many to Canada when Russia was persecuting them. Then, at the end of WWII, Peter and Elfrieda Dyck and C.F. Klassen again, through the Mennonite Central Committee brought more to Paraguay, Canada and other places around the world.

Few from congregation:

We want to be ourselves. We are not great people of history like these others. But we took a big risk 50 years ago now, and began this church. Look at it now. Look what God has done.

(CHOIR BEGINS TO COME FORWARD NOW AND CROWDS ONTO THE STAGE)

- Person 1 My name is _____. I work in the Oil and Gas industry. I try to be a witness everywhere I can. But once a month I volunteer with a program called M2W2. It is a prison visitation program. I like to think I have a place in this story.
- Person 2 My name is _____. I am from Jordan, in the Middle East. Through MCC I am spending a year in Canada, learning about faith and life in North American culture. I am part of this story.
- Person 3 I am _____. I volunteer at the MCC Thrift Store.
- Family We are the _____ family. We are part of this story too.
- Dir. Just a minute!!!! Stop for a minute please..... *(Slowly)* If I include all of you people in this Christmas story, it is going to go from everlasting to everlasting!!!
- ALL: *(Shout)* AMEN!!
(Go immediately into 'Joy to the world')
- Carol:** Joy to the World #318
(During the carol, the whole stage empties - "actors" all return to their seats)
- Offering** (with carol: "Away in a manger" #194)
- Closing comments**
- Final carol:** Silent Night, holy night #193