A Pathway to Jesus, the Light of the World.

Advent Pageant 2005, based on John 1-3 and Luke 2

Adapted by Elsie Rempel from the Advent sessions in the Centered Teaching supplement for Jubilee: God’s Good News, Cycle C, written by Sandi Hannigan and Eleanor Snyder in 2002

Decorations:
Create lanterns by cutting off the narrow top part from clear plastic 2 L pop bottles. Fill the base with sand, then place votive candles inside. Set the lanterns outside the church to create a pathway that invites people to and sends them from the worship service. Post a sign or banner nearby that reads, “Come and see. A pathway to Jesus, the Light of the World.”

Create a pathway inside the church by tracing the children’s footprints and taping them onto the sanctuary floor to create a meandering path. Characters in the pageant will use different parts of the path. For other props, see the introduction to each scene.

Scene 1: Getting Ready for Jesus.
(John 1: 1 – 28)

The Narrator carries a large Bible. He walks along the path of footprints as he talks with the aid of a roving mike. John the Baptist is wearing rugged clothes and sandals. Jesus is dressed in a simple, light-coloured robe and sandals.

Narrator: Tonight’s telling of good news is from the gospel of John (lift up the open Bible). In the very beginning, before anything else was, there was One who is called the Word. The Word was with God and the Word was God. With this Word, God created everything and gave life to everything. This life was there for everyone. This light shines in the darkness and the darkness can never put out the light (turn on spotlight).

(John gets up from his place in the congregation and walks beside the narrator until they enter into the light of the spotlight.)

There was a man sent from God. His name was John. He was not the light but he came to tell everyone that the true light was coming. He wanted everyone to know about and believe in the light that was coming into the world. This true light would show God to everyone. Many people did not believe in the true light. However, some people did believe. They became known as God’s children, as followers of this light.
This true light, who was also called the Word, was born as a baby named Jesus. Jesus lived with people here on earth and grew to be a young man. Before Jesus was born, people tried to please God by obeying God’s laws. When Jesus, the true light, came, he helped people understand; he showed them how to live and follow God’s ways.

Because John baptized people in a river, he was called John the Baptist. Some church leaders didn’t understand who John was so they asked him, “Who are you?” Other people thought John must be a prophet, or even the Messiah, God’s anointed one. John explained to them who he was:

John: God sent me to help you get ready for the Messiah. I am a loud voice calling out in the desert, ‘Get this road ready for God to walk on.’

Narrator: John told the people that Jesus was nearby, even when they didn’t recognize him.

John: He is so much better than I am. I am not even good enough to untie his sandals.

Narrator: The people were amazed. They knew Jesus must be someone very special.

Tonight Jesus and John have come to visit our congregation. How will we welcome them? What will we say and do? Jesus is the light that still shines in the darkness. John still points us toward that light. Jesus wants to shine in our darkness. Take a moment to silently name the darkness in your life. (pause) Invite Jesus to shine on it this Advent. (pause) Jesus also wants to shine through you into the darkness of our world. (pause) Into what darkness are you willing to take Jesus’ unquenchable light this Advent?

Congregational song:
HWB 182 Oh, How shall I receive thee or 183 On Jordan’s banks the Baptist’s cry

Scene 2: Come and See—Follow Me
(John 1: 29 – 46)

There are six characters plus the ongoing narrator for this scene: John the Baptist, Voice in the crowd, Miriam (Mim), Andrew (Andy), Simon, Jesus.

The characters, except for Simon, who is seated in the audience, will enter at the back of the sanctuary along the path of footprints, mimicking the actions of the ‘leader’ until the ‘leader’ picks a new leader. Change leaders two or three times, depending on the length of your ‘path’. Finish this playful entrance with John the Baptist stepping into the spotlight and the other characters standing behind him but in the shadows. The narrator remains at the main mike the whole time.

Narrator: We are about to experience John the Baptist’s preaching. Remember, John was not a diplomat. He was “a voice crying in the wilderness”. Imagine yourselves there, standing on the rocky soil, feeling the hot sun beat down on your head, hearing the hum of the locusts, seeing lizards dart between scrubby shrubs. Are you ready to let John help you get ready for Jesus?
John: Hey, people. Here’s some truth worth hearing. There is a better way to live. Stop making poor choices in life. Turn away from evil. Change your ways and I will baptize you.

Voice: Wow, what a preacher! He really believes what he says. Let’s get his autograph.
John: Who me? No, no! You’ve got it all wrong! I’m not the important one.
Voice: If you’re not the important one, then who is? Tell us! We want to know.
John: His name is Jesus. He is the one who can make things right for you when you fail. Give you a new start. Help you make good choices in life.
Voice: Wow. That’s amazing!
John: Talk about amazing! I didn't even recognize that Jesus was God’s special One. As I was baptizing him, it looked like the very Spirit of God came down from heaven and landed on Jesus, just like a dove landing on a branch. I didn't know Jesus was the One. But I had a feeling deep within me that God would give me that sign. This is the one we've been waiting for for so long. This one really is the Son of God!
Voice: Now that’s incredible!

(Miriam and Andrew enter, greeting John with a “high five” and join John in conversation)

Andy: Hi, there, John the Baptist. Mind if we join you? (Broaden spotlight, if possible)
John: Not at all, Miriam and Andrew. I love hanging out with special people like you.
Mim: You seem pretty excited, John.
Andy: Yeah, what’s up?
John: I’m excited about following Jesus.

(Enter Jesus)

Mim: Hey, who is that confident looking guy?
John: Speaking of Jesus, here he is, Jesus himself, the Lamb of God.
Andy: (Aside to Mim) Hey, Mim, why don’t we check him out, like, you know, follow him around for a day or so. I want to find out if he’s as awesome as everyone says.
Jesus: What are you looking for, my friends?
Mim: Well, ah, umm, we’re kinda, hmm, wondering…where you’re hanging out these days.
Jesus: Come and see. Follow me. You hang out with me and I’ll show you how to be really cool.

Andy: Hey, Jesus, I’ve got a brother, Simon. Can he come, too? I’m going to get him. I’ll be right back! (Runs off and re-enters dragging a reluctant Simon.)
Simon: Hey, bro, where are we going this time? Why are you so excited?
Andy: Simon! We've found the Anointed One, the Son of God. Come and see him!
Jesus: Hello, Simon. You're John’s son, right? (Simon nods, puzzled.) I think I'll call you Peter, the rock, OK?
Peter: (pleased with the new name) You are the one we’ve been waiting for.
Mim: Teacher, I’ve got a friend, Philip, who lives in the next town. I know he’ll want to join your group of followers.
Andy: And my friend Nathaniel, he’s not going to believe you’re the One from God. He always says that nothing good comes out of Nazareth. Ha! Wait till he meets you!

Jesus: Come, my new friends. Follow me. With me, you’ll see greater things than you have ever imagined! Come and see! (All exit together, with Jesus in the lead, playing follow the leader again, stopping in between to make poses of prayer, preaching, healing and other forms of serving.)

Narrator: How could John have been so sure that Jesus was the One that people were to follow? (pause) How could those early followers be so quick to decide to follow Jesus? So quick to invite their friends? (pause) What does it take for us to accept and share that invitation with our friends? (pause) Imagine yourself walking with Jesus. What are the sights, sounds, and smells you experience as you walk with him? (pause) How do you feel when Jesus stops to talk with you? What do you tell him? (Allow 30 seconds or so for silent meditation.)

Song:
HWB 20 Come and See and 200, Where is this stupendous stranger? (v. 1, 4)

Narrator: Pray with me, please.

(A Sunday school group could act out this prayer as the narrator speaks the words.)

Oh God (open hands raised upward)
Open our minds to understand you (place hands on head)
Open our eyes to see you (place hands on eyes)
Open our hearts (cross hands over heart area)
To receive Jesus (open hands as if cradling a baby)
Open our lips to tell others about what we have found (move hands outward form lips)
Open our hands to share your love (spread open hands outward to both sides)
Amen.

Scene 3: Come and Celebrate
(John 2: 1 – 11)

"Make boxes from old Christmas cards in Sunday school or clubs. Fill them with a candy or cookie and a note that says, “Expect to be surprised by God”. Hand them out to the congregation as part of this scene.

Some members of a Sunday school class can share the narration for this scene, by paragraphs, while the others or another class act it out.

Dress up in simple costumes (drape a blanket around you if you don’t have simple Bible times tunics) to act out the story. Decorate as elaborately as you wish. Carrying in a decorated backdrop and a few low tables would facilitate a smooth transition.

Lighting should be full for this scene.

This story can be told as it is or with the addition of water jugs or pitchers. If using the jugs or pitchers, carry them in along the footprint path and set six water containers onto the stage or communion table. Have a large pail of water nearby, perhaps just behind the communion table. In one of the six
containers (which one cannot see through), place a package of grape flavour crystals mixed with a small amount of water. When you get to the part of the story where Jesus “turns the water into wine”, simply add water to this container and pour a drink… purple juice.

**Narrator 1:** One day, soon after John the Baptist had baptized Jesus, there was a great party. It was a huge wedding celebration in a place called Cana of Galilee. Jesus, his mother, his disciples and a lot of friends were there. The place was decorated in the finest form. Tables were spread with food and wine galore. There was music, fun, and laughter. Everyone was having a good time.

**Narrator 2:** But after a while, the wine ran out! Jesus' mother said to him, “Son, we are out of wine!” Then she saw some servants and told them, “Do whatever Jesus tells you to do.”

**Narrator 3:** Nearby, there stood six very large stone jars. These jars usually held water for people to wash their hands and feet when they arrived after a long journey on dusty roads. Washing was an important Jewish ritual to make people clean and pure.

**Narrator 4:** Jesus said to the servants, “Go and fill these jars with water.” So, they did just as Jesus told them to do. Then Jesus said, “Now, take a jug of this water to the chief steward who is in charge of the feast.” Again, they did just as Jesus told them to do. They took the water to the steward. The steward tasted the water. But, it wasn't water anymore. It was wine!

**Narrator 5:** The steward was surprised and amazed. He didn't know where such good wine had come from. He ran to the bridegroom and said, “Most people serve the best wine first and serve the poorer wine once people have drunk too much. But you have kept the best wine until now.”

**Narrator 6:** Everyone at the party was amazed at Jesus. They were surprised at his power. Jesus did the first amazing and wonderful act in Cana of Galilee. Because of this act, his followers were sure that Jesus was God’s chosen Son.

God still surprises us in delightful ways. The Sunday school children have participated with God's surprising ways and prepared some surprises for you tonight. If there is a note taped underneath your seat, raise your hand and they will bring you a surprise to remind you of our loving and surprising God. Then, if you think someone else needs this gift more than you do tonight, pass it on.

While we are passing out these surprises, we invite you to reflect on some Christmas miracle stories that you'd be willing to share. We will provide the opportunity for up to three stories. In between stories, we'll sing about God's surprise gift to us that first Christmas.

**Sing:**

*HWB 201 Hark, the Herald angels sing, 206 Infant holy, infant lowly and 216 Christ, whose glory fills the skies.*
Scene 4: Birth and Rebirth  

This story also works well as a monologue by Nicodemus (see Centered Teaching script), though it is written here as a dialogue between Nicodemus and Jesus. Dress up in simple costumes (drape a blanket around you if you don’t have simple Bible times tunics) to tell the story. Keep the lights low to present an atmosphere of secrecy in the night.

When Nicodemus remembers the birth of Jesus, the usual Nativity characters come up the path and take their places on one side of the stage. A choir of Angels recites the good news and sings HWB 199 The first Noel, the angel did say.

After the concluding paragraph, Nicodemus asks the angels and other characters to hand out candles to all. The adult Jesus goes down the aisles with his candle and lights the first candle in each row.

Nicodemus: Hello. My name is Nicodemus. I am an important leader in my church. I am a Pharisee. Last night I had the most amazing conversation I have ever had! I’d like to tell you about it.

A new teacher moved to my town. And, being a church leader, I was very interested. I had heard about some of the miracles he was supposed to have performed, like turning water into wine. I also heard him teach – very impressive! So, last night I decided to pay him a visit…I waited until it was dark so no one would see me going… I didn’t want my friends to know that I had questions about God or that this teacher could tell me anything… (Use a softer voice, as though you are telling a secret.)

You know, there is a rumour going around that Jesus has a special relationship with God. People say Jesus is actually God’s son, but I know he was born in Bethlehem and that Mary is his mother. That’s what I needed to check out. (Moves to a table where Jesus is sitting having tea. Jesus lights a candle and then offers Nicodemus a cup as he sits down to chat with him.)

Rabbi. (aside to audience) That’s what we call teachers or those whom we highly respect. (back to Jesus) Rabbi, I know you are a great teacher who has come from God. No one can do the amazing things you do without the presence and power of God.

Jesus: That’s right, my friend. Only those who are born again can be part of God’s community.

Nicodemus: Born again?!? (scratching his head and looking very confused) I’ve never heard of this. I don’t get it! How can a grown up be born a second time? You can’t go back into your mother’s womb!

Jesus: I tell you the truth, my friend. No one can enter the community of God without being born from your mother like you were, but also being born with God’s Spirit. We all come into the world as human babies. But, we can also be born any time after that as children of God’s Spirit, or as spiritual babies. Don’t be surprised when I say you must be born in a new way.

Nicodemus: I know you are trying to help me understand, Jesus, but I am getting even more confused. How can this be? (N. walks back to the main mike, Jesus stays at the table)
Jesus kindly explained everything to me that night so that I could understand… He told me about his birth in Bethlehem, in a stable, to Mary and Joseph. (Nativity characters walk in silently and take their places.) It was an amazing night when Jesus was born. Angels gave some shepherds the biggest and best surprise of their whole lives.

**Angels:** (recite in a joyful voice) Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour who is Christ the Lord!

**Nicodemus:** The angels were telling simple shepherds about this special child who was going to bless God’s world in new surprising ways.

**Angels:** (sing) HWB 199 The first Noel

**Nicodemus:** Finally, I understood. Jesus came into the world to show people how to live in harmony with God’s Spirit that was within them. The Spirit of God shone in Jesus brighter than the stars on the hillside in Bethlehem, and brighter than the moon that guided me home last night. I’m still not sure what it really means to be born of God’s Spirit, but I know that this teacher, Jesus, can show me the way to walk in God’s light, can help me participate in God’s community. God’s Son is the light that shows people like me and you how to live, and how to experience and share the community of God with others. Isn’t this a wonderful thing? Jesus is the best gift of all. Jesus is the light that will never go out.

*(Jesus stands up with his burning candle and moves toward the first row of the congregation. Nativity characters begin handing out candles [that are waiting in baskets around the edges of the sanctuary] to the entire congregation at this point. Jesus goes down the aisles lighting the aisle candles in each row. Those people then share the light of Jesus with the persons next to them, who do the same, until all candles are lit.)*

**Song:**

*(During or after the lighting of candles)*

HWB 193 Silent night, 209 Oh, how joyfully, 318 Joy to the World, and 319 Jesus shall reign

**Closing Blessing**

*(Actions can be modeled by the Sunday School children, but all should be invited to participate.)*

**One:** As we blow out these candles, may the rising smoke remind us of God’s Spirit who is with us and sends us into God’s world. (Leader blows out candle)

**All:** We blow out our candles, remembering that the light of Christ will never go out. (All others blow out candles)

**One:** May the light of God lead you this week. (Hands held out as a blessing)

**All:** May the light of God lead us this week. (Hands receive a blessing)

**One:** May the love of God surprise you. (One arm sweeps in front)

**All:** May the love of God surprise us. (Raise arms)

**One:** May the joy of God fill you and overflow from you. (Raise arms in praise)

**All:** Wherever we go, we’ll celebrate and share new life in God’s Spirit. (Raised hands are brought down in a circular motion.)