



*Written by
Cora Alley*

“A Heartfelt Christmas”

Scriptures:

John 1:14

“The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him, will not die but have everlasting life.”

Dramatic Category: Full-length Christian Play

Topic: Christmas

NOTE:

This play is a “storyline” only. It provides a context into which any number of Christmas songs will fit. This performance is ideal for soloists, ensembles, and choirs of any size and any age. The first six songs are interspersed into the first act, with the remaining songs making up the “Christmas Choir Concert,” which the “family” of characters attends.

Performance Time: 25 minutes of drama to add to any number of Christmas songs

Objective:

In this simple story of a heartbroken little girl, searching for her lost hamsters, we see the “heart” of God who came to Earth to rescue His beloved people. This play is a “storyline” only. It provides a context into which any number of Christmas songs will fit. Create an unforgettable family holiday memory that looks at the why behind Christmas.

Synopsis:

Have you ever lost something you really loved? Have you ever searched for it with all your might? Have you ever been broken hearted because you wanted it back? If you have, you have a lot in common with God. “A Heartfelt Christmas” tells the story a broken-hearted

little girl who is up all night searching for her beloved hamsters who ran away, because she left the cage door open.

While calling for them in the night, she wakes up her Grandpa, who has fallen asleep on the couch while reading the Bible. Grandpa attempts to take her mind off of her tragedy by reading to her about someone else who lost His beloved creatures and has a broken heart, too: God! Grandpa chronicles the story of God's quest to restore the fellowship lost in the garden. He begins with the calling of Abraham, goes on to the 10 commandments, then to the prophets, and finally he surprises his granddaughter by telling her that God became one of us so he could "find us by speaking our language."

This delightful story is artfully woven around your favorite Christmas carols. The script has suggested places when you can insert music that you feel best expresses the various scenes. The action culminates at a crisis point when Jeanne's brother refuses to attend the Christmas concert with his family because he cannot understand why God would ever come to earth and be born as a human being.

Jeanne explains that this was how we could know and understand Him, and most important of all, that our sins are forgiven because this little baby grew to be the perfect sacrifice.

Her new-found understanding of how the "lost" become "found," prompts little Jeanne to employ a hamster on a leash so he can "find his own kind." The story of God's search for His people is told in a way that will communicate to young and old alike as we celebrate the miracle of Christmas.

Cast:

Jeanne: *A little girl of seven*
Grandpa: *The highly animated "teacher" in the story*
Beth: *Jeanne and Keith's mother*
Alan: *Jeanne and Keith's dad*
Keith: *A 14-year-old, obstinate son*
Adam: *The director the Christmas musical*
Choirs: *Any number of performers of all ages*
Soloists: *Any number of soloists, as designed by the director*
Ensembles: *Any number of ensembles, as designed by the director*

Props:

A Bible for Grandpa (with a "**cheat script**" inserted into various pages)
Some children's Christmas books
Post-it notes scattered on stage
A marker
A clipboard for Adam with flyers for information
A rake
A basket of apples
Gift-wrap and ribbon
Boxes to be wrapped
Presents under the tree
Miscellaneous Christmas decorations for the house

2 baskets of apples
Winter clothes (coats, mufflers, hats, mittens) for the entire family

NOTE:

This script is challenging for Grandpa. Put a “cheat script” of his lines in his Bible.
Place parts of the script in various places, so he appears to progress through the story.

Music:

A gentle song about God’s love (with a long introduction) (same as Song 3, below)
A medley of instrumental Christmas songs

Songs:

The songs in this script are only suggested. Choose your own Christmas songs, based on the suggested “feel” or “theme” of the songs.

- Song 1: An “upbeat Christmas song”
 - Song 2: An “Emmanuel medley”
 - Song 3: A “song about God’s love” (with a long introduction)
 - Song 4: A “joyful children’s song”
 - Song 5: A “unique Christmas song” (Currier & Ives – type)
 - Song 6: A “unique Christmas song” (quartet?)
- Christmas Choir Concert

Costumes:

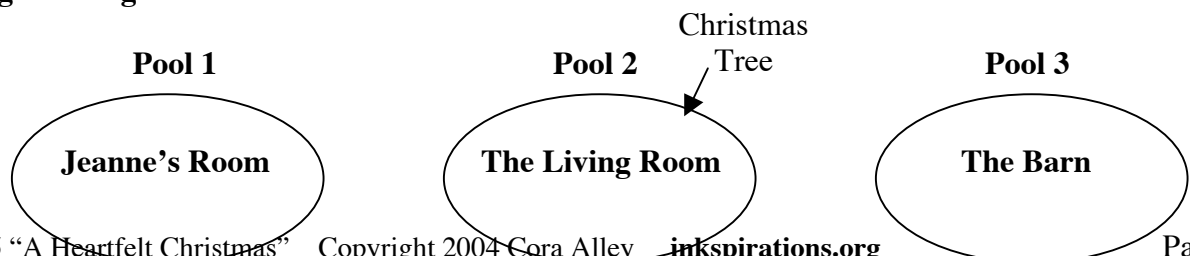
A flannel nightgown for Jeanne
A shawl, a cane, and a cardigan sweater for Grandpa
Christmas-type clothing
Whatever costumes are determined by the musical numbers

Set:

An over-stuffed chair
A bookshelf
A standing lamp on a dimmer
Bales of hay and barn-type things
Jeanne’s bedroom stuff
A Christmas tree
Christmas paraphernalia

Animal: A live hamster or a guinea pig with a collar or a harness on a long leash.
(*This is for the closing scene.*)

Stage Arrangement:



The Script:

PROLOGUE

SONG 1: "An Up-Beat Christmas Song" (or a medley of them)

Choose a song that captures the joy of the season. The choir, clad in merry Christmas colors, might enter from all sides, through the audience, taking their places on stage as they sing.

Welcome: Adam

(Transition from the opening song, then set the stage for a new look at the Christmas story: the story of "God with us.")

SONG 2: "Emmanuel Medley"

More sacred-type Christmas Carols focusing on the birth of Christ.

(Stage the singers all around the stage, so they surround "The Living Room" area where Grandpa and Jeanne will do their scene, center stage.)

LIGHTS: FADE OUT ON SINGERS AND UP ON GRANDPA, POOL 2

ACT 1

Scene 1: "The Loss"

(Grandpa is seated in an over-stuffed chair at the center of the stage, asleep with the opened Bible on his chest. Jeanne enters, from UR dressed in a flannel nightgown and carrying post-it notes and a marker. She is peering all around, putting up post-it notes that say "Beware of Cats," or "Hamsters, Come Home," etc. Some notes have direction signs on them and read "This Way Home." She puts the notes on the lamp, the bookshelf, the chair, and on the floor. She is calling softly.)

Jeanne: Fred, Barney.
Where are you?
Fred, come out. Barney, come...

(She stops in mid-sentence as she sees grandpa asleep on the chair. She thinks he is dead and runs over to him. She shakes him violently.)

Grandpa! Don't die!
Grandpa, please, wake-up!

Grandpa: *(startled)* What? Who?
What's the matter?
Oh, Jeanne, it's you.
You scared me right out of my skin, little one.

Jeanne: I thought you were dead!

Grandpa: No such luck, Princess;
I'll have to stick around another day.

Jeanne: Don't talk like that.
You promised Mommy you'd stop making jokes about dying.
You're not funny!

Grandpa: Lots of people agree with you on that one.

Jeanne: What?

Grandpa: That I'm not funny.

Jeanne: *(comforting him)* Yeah, but you keep trying.

Grandpa: I know, I'm trying; very trying.

Jeanne: *(beginning to lecture him)*
You can't be too careful when you have heart trouble.
It's a very serious thing when your heart attacks you.

Grandpa: Does what?

Jeanne: That's what mommy said could happen;
you could have a heart attack,
and you have to be very careful.

(making him comfortable)
There, now; don't get excited.

Grandpa: *(pushing her away)* Okay, okay, enough of this heart attack business.
If I have any more fanatical female fussing,
I'm gonna' fume!

(regaining his composure)
So, tell me;
why are you up at this late hour?
This whole family knocked off hours, ago.

Jeanne: *(in a warning tone)* Grandpa!

Grandpa: *(defensively)* What?

Jeanne: *(warning him about dying jokes)* Knocked off?

Grandpa: Okay, went to bed.
What are you doing up?

Jeanne: I can't sleep.
I'm too worried about Fred and Barney.

(She sits down on the floor and leans on his knee.)

Grandpa: *(leaning down to her)*
You haven't found those hamsters, yet?

Jeanne: No, and I've been looking all day!

Grandpa: You shouldn't have left the cage door open.
I told you, hamsters don't understand an "open door policy."

Jeanne: I told them not to leave, but they didn't listen.

Grandpa: You should have locked them in.
Hamsters aren't very smart.

Jeanne: I didn't want them to feel trapped,
like they were prisoners or something.
That would have ruined everything.
I worked so hard on that cage.
Did you see it?

Grandpa: Yes Princess, I saw it.
It was pretty swank,
especially those little beds you made with matching blankets,
and that "Home Sweet Home" sign should have been enough to make 'em stay.

Jeanne: I'm so worried about them.
They need me to take care of them;
they don't know how to survive unless I'm right there.

Grandpa: *(putting his arm around her)* Maybe they aren't Fred and Barney;
maybe they're Betty and Wilma and they went shopping!

Jeanne: Grandpa! You're not funny!

Grandpa: Yeah, you keep bringing that up.
Well, Princess, this may be a hard thing for you to swallow,
but did you put the cats out?

Jeanne: Did you have to say swallow?

Grandpa: Sorry.

Jeanne: Yes, I put the cats out as soon I found out my hamsters ran away. I've tried everything, Grandpa, and I just can't find them.

(She begins to cry.)

Grandpa: *(comforting her)* Princess, I'm so sorry your hamsters ran away, but maybe they'll come back.

Jeanne: *(through her tears)* I told them not to go out, but they didn't listen, now they're lost!

Grandpa: *(grabbing for ideas)* Uh.... Hey, how about if I read you a story to take your mind off of what you lost, okay? How about it?

Jeanne: What kind of story?

Grandpa: Well, it's Christmas...how about a Christmas story.

(Pulling several children's books off of a nearby stack. He shows each one to Jeanne, but she's not interested.)

How about this one, The Littlest Angel?

(He removes the post-it note that is on the book. Jeanne shakes her head, "No." Grandpa holds up another book.)

How about The Grinch?

Jeanne: No, I'm not in the mood for those, besides, you cheat when you read this one.

(pointing to The Grinch)

Grandpa: Cheat?

Jeanne: Yeah, you turn two pages at one time, and you think I can't tell? Well, I can.

Grandpa: You are pretty slick!

So, what do you want me to read to you?

Jeanne: *(pointing to the Bible on his lap)* This story.

Grandpa: The Bible?

Jeanne: Yes. Read me the whole thing.
I'm not sleepy.

Grandpa: Jeanne,
I can't read this to you in one night!

Jeanne: It's okay if you cheat a little,
but read the main parts.

(Grandpa opens his Bible and settles down to read. He is about to start, then peeks over the Bible at Jeanne.)

Grandpa: You and I have a lot in common with the main character in this story.

Jeanne: *(surprised)* We do?

Grandpa: Yep. He's got heart trouble, and He lost his hamsters.

Jeanne: What?
Grandpa! That's the Bible, and it's the story about God.

Grandpa: I know.
God's beloved creatures ran away,
and they've been causing Him heart trouble ever since. Listen:

(reading from his Bible in Genesis)

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth..."

LIGHTS: FADE OUT ON POOL 2

ACT 1

Scene 2: "Missing?"

LIGHTS: UP ON POOL 1

MUSIC: INTRO MUSIC FOR A SONG ABOUT GOD'S LOVE (Song 3)

(Mom enters Jeanne's room to check in on her.)

Beth: Jeanne?
(*looking behind the bed.*) Jeanne?
Are you hiding?
Jeanne?

(*When she realizes that Jeanne is not there, she quickly leaves the room to look for her daughter.*)

MUSIC: INTRO MUSIC OF SONG ABOUT GOD'S LOVE FADES OUT

LIGHTS: FADE OUT ON POOL 1, UP ON POOL 2

ACT 1

Scene 3: "Free to Choose"

(*Return to Jeanne and grandpa in "The Living Room," center stage.*)

Jeanne: Poor God!
He went to all that trouble to make such a nice place for Adam and Eve to live in,
and they wouldn't obey Him either?

Grandpa: (*nodding his head*)
Now, do you see why you and God have a lot in common?
You both want your precious creatures back,
so they can love you,
and you can love them.

Jeanne: I know how God's heart feels.
But, why did God put that yummy tree in the middle of the garden,
then tell them not to touch it?

Grandpa: Why did you leave your cage door open?

Jeanne: So they would feel free.

Grandpa: Free to choose?
Free to come or go?
You see, Princess, love isn't really love unless it is given freely;
and to give it freely,
you have to have the choice to not give it at all.
God didn't want prisoners either.
People are free to choose good or evil;
that's why the world is in the mess that its in.

Jeanne: Some people aren't very smart, huh?
Don't they know who made their cage?
I mean, who made the world?
So, did God try to get them back?
Did he go hunting for them?

ACT 1

Scene 4: "Bedtime"

(Mom enters. She marvels that Jeanne is still awake.)

Beth: Here you are!
Jeanne, what are you doing up?
It's way past your bedtime.

Grandpa: She's on hamster patrol.

Jeanne: I've got to find them, Mom, before the cats get them.

Beth: *(consoling Jeanne)* I know, honey,
but you've been looking all day.
We'll get a fresh start tomorrow.
Now, come on.
Let's get to bed; tomorrow is Christmas Eve;
I need you help me wrap presents,
finish those pies we started,
and it all has to be done before we go to church for the Christmas Eve service.

(To her father)

Say goodnight, Dad.

Grandpa: Goodnight, Dad.

(Both Mom and Jeanne look disgusted at Grandpa's attempt at yet another bit of humor.)

Jeanne: *(hugging her Grandpa)*
Goodnight, Grandpa.
Thanks for the story.

Grandpa: There's more to it, you know.

Jeanne: I know.
Does God ever find his hamsters?

Beth: *(surprised)* What?
What story are you reading to her, Dad?

Jeanne: *(as they exit toward Jeanne's room)*
He's not really looking for hamsters, Mom.
God's looking for people that broke His heart when they disobeyed Him.
See, God made this perfect garden for Adam and Eve.
It was just like my cage,
'cause God didn't want them to be prisoners either
so he let them choose...

(They walk out of the lights toward Jeanne's room. Grandpa is left alone on stage. He begins picking up the post-it notes, sits back down in his chair, and reads the notes softly to himself.)

LIGHTS: SLOWLY FADE DOWN ON POOL 2

Grandpa: *(reading)* "Come home."
"I love you"
"Beware of cats"

(He looks in the direction of Jeanne's room, then back at the Bible. He picks up the Bible, then looks up and says:)

What a faithful, broken heart you have.

LIGHTS: POOL 2 BLACK

ACT 1

Scene 5: "Goodnight"

LIGHTS: UP ON POOL 1

(Mom is seated on Jeanne's bed, leaning against the headboard. Jeanne's head is cradled in Mom's lap. It is a tender scene, Mom strokes Jeanne's hair.)

MUSIC: REPEAT OF INTRO MUSIC OF SONG ABOUT GOD'S LOVE (Song 3)

Beth: I'm sorry about your hamsters, honey, really I am,
but it's Christmas;
think about the miracle we are celebrating.
Christmas is when Jesus was born.
It's when love came down from Heaven and filled the whole world with light...

(Mom begins to sing the song about God's love that has been introduced twice, lullaby-style.)

SONG 3: “A Song About God's Love”

(After the song, Beth tucks Jeanne in and starts to leave.)

Jeanne: Thanks, Mom.

Beth: *(stops and turns, disappointed that Jeanne is not asleep)*
I thought you were sleeping.

Jeanne: Nope.

Beth: Close your eyes, sweetie.
Try counting sheep.

Jeanne: I don't want to count sheep.
I'd rather count hamsters.

Beth: I know.
Why don't you count toys?
Imagine what you might get for Christmas.

(Beth leaves, the lights fade slowly on the room. Use some dry ice, or synthesized music to create a dream sequence, but make it clear that the next act is Jeanne's dream. You may want the toys to actually enter Jeanne's bedroom, coax her out of bed, and have her join the parade.)

SONG 4: “A Joyful Children's Song”

LIGHTS: FADE OUT ON POOL 1, UP ON POOL 2

ACT 2

Scene 1: “Sleepless”

(Back at center stage, Grandpa has fallen asleep again. Jeanne enters quickly, looking out the imaginary window, down center. She startles Grandpa with her entrance.)

Grandpa: *(noticing Jeanne)* You're still awake?

Jeanne: *(peering out the window)*
Did you see a whole bunch of toys go by here?

Grandpa: You're dreaming, Princess.

Jeanne: Don't you hear music?

Grandpa: Sure I do, but those aren't toys;
that's a rehearsal for tomorrow night's Christmas Eve service.
The church is getting new carpet,
and the only place big enough to rehearse the whole choir is in our barn.

Jeanne: *(thrilled)* The barn!
Grandpa, that's it!

Grandpa: Yep, it's been a barn for as long as I can remember.

Jeanne: *(running to Grandpa)* They went to the barn.

Grandpa: *(unclear about her enthusiasm)* Yeah, they've been in the barn all evening.
I guess they just can't get it right.

Jeanne: *(tugging at his arm)* Let's go get them.

Grandpa: Are you nuts?
What do we want with all those people in our house?

Jeanne: *(pulling him along toward the barn.)*
They must be scared to death.

Grandpa: What kind of a person is afraid of a barn?

Jeanne: *(stopping in her tracks)* Not a person, Grandpa, my hamsters!
They must be in the barn.
There's hay in there, and it's warm.
That's where they are: the barn! Come on!

(She drags him offstage. He is so befuddled by all this that HE TAKES HIS SHAWL AND HIS BIBLE WITH HIM.)

LIGHTS: FADE OUT ON POOL 1 AS JEANNE AND GRANDPA EXIT, UP ON POOL 3 AS JEANNE AND GRANDPA ENTER.

ACT 2

Scene 2: "Rehearsal"

(At the barn. People are milling around. Adam is organizing the performers. After the scene is established as a rehearsal with small talk and the arranging of props, Jeanne and Grandpa enter. Grandpa motions to Jeanne that they will look for the hamsters later; he hushes Jeanne. Grandpa NOTICES THAT HE STILL HAS HIS BIBLE. HE LOOKS FOR A PLACE TO LAY IT DOWN AND PUTS IT ON A BALE OF HAY IN AN OBVIOUS PLACE. They sit together on a bale of hay and watch the performance.)

Adam: All right, people.
Let's take it from the top.
Places! Cue the music.

SONG 5: “A Unique Christmas Song”

Something done in “Currier & Ives” costumes, or 16th century “Madrigal” costumes, something that does not “fit into” the traditional choir concert.

(After the song is over, the performers congratulate each other.)

Adam: Excellent!
We’re ready to go on that one!
Good work, folks!
Next up, let’s go! Cue music.

(Jeanne jumps up from her bale of hay and continues to look for her hamsters. She motions to Grandpa to continue looking also, but he scoops her up just as she about to be run over by the entrance of yet another “special music” group (the group that sings Song 6). She is startled, and both she and Grandpa hide behind a bale of hay and watch the next number.)

SONG 6: “Another Unique Song” (perhaps a quartet or a trio)

(After the song is finished, the performers gather around Adam. With clipboard in hand, Adam speaks to the crowd as he distributes the information flyers for Christmas Eve.)

Adam: Great number!
That’s it for tonight, ladies and gentlemen.
Pick up one of these scoop sheets for tomorrow night.
Call time is 5:00 for make-up...

(His announcements fade out as he and the entire group exit the stage. No one has noticed Grandpa and Jeanne hiding behind the bales of hay.)

ACT 2

Scene 3: “The Search”

(Jeanne and Grandpa peek out from behind the hay. Jeanne slowly begins to search through the hay.)

Jeanne: They’ve got to be here, Grandpa.
(holding up a handful of hay) This is what I put in their cage.
They must have gotten confused
and come here because the barn is full of hay, too.

Grandpa: Princess, do you know how late it is?

Jeanne: *(pleading)* Come one, Grandpa!
I can’t keep the cats out of the barn.
This is a dangerous place;
if those hamsters don’t come to me,
they’ll be dead in no time.
(She starts calling) Fred! Barney!

Grandpa: Okay, I'll help you look.

(They begin searching, calling and turning over some of the items in the barn. They don't have any luck. Jeanne becomes desperate. She sits on a bale of hay and starts to cry.)

Jeanne: *(crying)* They're not here.

Grandpa: I'm sorry, Princess.
Let's start looking again in the morning.
(yawning) Aren't you tired?

Jeanne: No. I can't sleep.

Grandpa: *(resigning himself to the mood of his granddaughter.)*
Do you want to keep looking?

Jeanne: No. They're not here.
I'm tired of looking.

Grandpa: Okay.
(sitting beside her on the bale of hay)
If we're not searching, and we're not looking, what are we doing?

(She notices the Bible on the bale of hay. She goes to get it and brings it to Grandpa.)

Jeanne: Tell me the rest of the story.

Grandpa: *(in disbelief)* Now?
Tonight?

Jeanne: Does God get His hamsters, I mean His people, back?

Grandpa: Yes.

Jeanne: Well, how does He do it? Tell me!
Maybe it will give me some ideas.

Grandpa: All right, little miss, but just for a little while.
If your mother finds us out here, we're both in for it.

Jeanne: I'll protect you.
What did God do after Adam and Eve left the garden God made for them?

Grandpa: *(opening his Bible)* As the children of Adam and Eve had children,
and their children had children,
the world filled up with people.
Some of them obeyed God,
but most of them did not.
Finally, there was only one family on the earth that obeyed God and loved him.
That was the family of Noah.

Jeanne: Nobody else believed in God?

Grandpa: Oh, they believed all right,
but not in the one true God who made them;
they believed in hundreds of false gods.

Jeanne: What's a false god?

Grandpa: *(thinking)* Hmm, let me explain it to you this way.
How would you feel if your hamsters showed up at Mandy's house,
and asked to live with her hamsters because they didn't like you anymore.

Jeanne: *(shocked)* What?
Mandy keeps her hamsters locked up.
She doesn't trust 'em.
Oh, I'd be so mad!

Grandpa: Wouldn't that give you heart trouble?

Jeanne: That would break my heart.

Grandpa: It broke God's heart too, listen to what He did.

(He opens his Bible to the next section that has the script in it.)

"The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become...
the Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth,
and his heart was filled with pain.
So the Lord said, 'I will wipe mankind from the face of the earth...
for I am grieved that I have made them.
But, Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.'"

Jeanne: Oh, I know that story;
about the Ark and the animals who came in twos.

Grandpa: Yep, you might say Noah was the world's first Arkiologist!
(He laughs to himself.)

Jeanne: Hey, that was pretty funny, Grandpa.

Grandpa: Well, I guess there's a first time for everything.
So, God flooded the whole earth with water,
and every living thing was wiped out.
Kinda' like when your mom hoses out the patio
and all the bugs and lizards go flyin'.

Jeanne: So God started over with a whole new Adam and Eve,
except this time it was Mr. & Mrs. Noah?

Grandpa: That's right, and everything worked out okay for a while,
but pretty soon people started worshipping false gods again.

Jeanne: No!
(She gets up and starts to pace.)
That's terrible!
After everything God did for them,
how could they do that?

Grandpa: I'm sure God felt the same way,
but He patched up His broken heart
and tried again with another family;
this time it was the family of Abraham.
God picked out Abraham because Abraham worshipped the one true God,
and didn't bow down to false gods.
As a reward for Abraham's faithfulness,
God promised Him this:

(Grandpa stands up on the bale of hay and shouts out in a booming "God-like" voice as he points down to Jeanne.)

"I will make of you a great nation,
and I will bless you.
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on the earth will be blessed through you. "

God took Abraham on a journey to a promised land called Canaan...

Jeanne: *(interrupting him with her song)* "Twelve men went to spy on Canaan,
ten were bad and two were good."
That's a song I learned about the land of milk and honey.

Grandpa: Nice song.
Anyway, everything went pretty well
until there was a famine in Canaan
and the family of Abraham ended up in Egypt
because that's where the food was.
You know what they did while they were in Egypt?

Jeanne: Don't tell me they started worshipping false gods again?

Grandpa: Yep.
They started marrying Egyptian people and worshipping false gods.
This time God did something kinda' like what you did this afternoon
with all these little post-it notes.

(He grabs one that was stuck on his Bible, and tries to get it off his finger.)

Jeanne: He made signs for his people?

Grandpa: Well, He didn't make signs that said, "Cage This Way"
or "Beware of Cats" or "I Love You Hamsters," like you did,
but God did leave His people a message that He wrote with His own hand.

Jeanne: What did He write on?

Grandpa: Stone tablets.

Jeanne: Tablets?

Grandpa: Not the kind you take with a glass of water,
these are like really big post-it notes made of rock!
He chose a man by the name of Moses to lead His people out of Egypt
and back to the promised land of Canaan.

(He climbs up onto several bales of hay that are stacked up like stair-steps and pretends to climb a mountain, using a rake as a cane as he tells this story.)

Moses gathered the people at the foot of Mt. Sinai
and he hiked up to the top
and got a note from God called the Ten Commandments.
God wanted his people to obey his rules and survive.

Jeanne: Did it work, Grandpa?
Did people stop breaking God's heart?
Did they stop worshipping false God's and being dumb?

Grandpa: It worked for some people,
but most of them just went on living their own way.

Jeanne: What did God do then?

Grandpa: The same thing you did after Mom told you these post-it notes wouldn't work
because hamsters can't read.
Do you remember what you did?

Jeanne: I called my friends.

Grandpa: That's right, and what did you ask them to do?

Jeanne: To look for my hamsters.
They did, too.

Grandpa: I know.
I heard Kathy, and Pamie, and Sandy
calling for those hamsters all afternoon.

Jeanne: They didn't find 'em, though.
Did God send His friends to look for His people?

Grandpa: Yep, He sure did.
His friends are called prophets,
and the Old Testament is full of their voices
calling to God's people, asking them to turn from their wicked ways
and worship the God who loves them.
Listen to what God's friend Jeremiah says,

(Grandpa takes a few steps down from the top bale and on to a lower level. He takes the shawl that was draped around his shoulders, and he puts it over his head to look like a biblical headdress. He holds his Bible with one hand and shakes his finger in the air with the other.)

"Your fathers left me, declares the Lord,
and followed other gods,
and served and worshipped them.
They left me and did not keep my law.

But you have behaved more wickedly than your fathers.
See how each of you is following the stubbornness of his evil heart
instead of obeying me."

But Jeremiah goes on to say,

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
His mercies never come to an end.
They are new every morning, great is thy faithfulness."

And listen to what God's friend Micah says,

(He takes off the muffler, ties it around his waist and grabs the cane.)

"He has shown thee, oh man,
what is good and what the Lord requires of you.
To act justly,
and to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with your God. "

Jeanne: *(clapping at grandpa's performance)* Very good, Grandpa!
You make a good prophet.

Grandpa: *(returning to his seat)* Better a prophet than a loss.

Jeanne: *(puzzled)* Huh?

Grandpa: Never mind, it probably wasn't funny.

Jeanne: Did it work?
Did God's friends get God's people to go back to Him?

Grandpa: Well, it worked for some,
but most of them kept right on disobeying God,
and their lives were a mess.

Jeanne: Did God cry, too?
That's all I can do, Grandpa.

(She bursts into tears.) When I think about them.
I've tried everything to get them back where they will be safe.
I think maybe they got outside,
and the cats ate them.
Mom's right, the notes don't do any good;
they can't read.
They don't speak English,
so I could call them 'till I'm blue in the face,
there's just no way to get them to understand me.

(Grandpa climbs down, and consoles Jeanne.)

(though her tears) What did God finally do to get his people back?

Grandpa: Something so amazing you can't even imagine it.

Jeanne: What? Tell me!

ACT 2

Scene 4: "Discovered"

(Grandpa is just about to tell her when the door of the barn swings open at the other end of where Jeanne and Grandpa are sitting. In bursts Keith, followed closely by his father, Alan. Grandpa and Jeanne are startled at the fury of the entrance, but Alan and Keith do not notice them.)

Keith: I'm old enough to decide if I want to go to church or not.

Alan: Why are you being so difficult?
Is it such a big deal to go to church with your family on Christmas Eve?

Keith: I'm not being difficult;
I'm being my own person, Dad.
I don't want to be a hypocrite.

Alan: A hypocrite?
About what?

Keith: About what I believe.
I'm just not sure, that's all.

Alan: What's not to be sure of?
We've raised you to have faith.

Keith: Well, maybe that's it.
You've raised me with your faith;
it's time for me to have my own,
and if I'm going to have it, then I'm going to find it.... myself.

(Keith storms out of the barn leaving Alan staring after him, helpless. Grandpa gets up and takes Jeanne by the hand. Alan notices them.)

Grandpa: He'll come around, Alan.
He's just flexing his muscles, that's all.
I remember another young man who did that at his age.

Alan: Oh, Dad.
Was I this stubborn?

Grandpa: Stubborn?
Naw, we don't have any stubborn people in this family.

(Grandpa looks affectionately at Jeanne who refuses to give up on the hamsters.)

Alan: What in the world are you doing at this hour in the barn?

Grandpa and Jeanne: Looking for hamsters.

Alan: Does Beth know you're in here?

Grandpa: Not unless you tell her.

Alan: (to Jeanne) You should be in bed, young lady.

Grandpa: Uh, oh...he “young ladied” you.
You’d better get to bed.

Jeanne: But you haven’t finished the story, Grandpa.
What did God do after he hosed down the world,
and wrote the stone post-it notes, and had his friends over?

Alan: (in disbelief) What are you telling my daughter?

LIGHTS: FADE OUT DURING THIS CONVERSATION AS THE CHARACTERS EXIT.

Jeanne: (to Alan) See, Daddy,
God left the cage open when He made the first people.
There was this tree...

ACT 3

Scene 1: “A Busy Day”

LIGHTS: UP ON POOL 2

MUSIC: PLAY A MEDLEY OF INSTRUMENTAL CHRISTMAS SONGS

(The family is bustling with the business of Christmas preparations. Jeanne walks across the stage with some firewood. Mom walks across the stage with gift-wrap and ribbon. Christmas music is playing. Dad carries large boxes from the opposite direction. This continues several times. Improvise the activity of Christmas. Mom puts a present under the tree; Dad walks by and adjusts the star on top. Jeanne comes in again and secretly shakes a present, etc. Finally, they cross and stop for a moment.)

Beth: Did you talk to him?

Alan: Yes.

Beth: Is he coming?

Alan: No. Shall I force him?

Beth: Yes! We’re going to the Christmas Eve service as a family.

Alan: Do you really want him there even if he doesn’t want to be there?

Beth: Where is he?

Alan: In the barn.

Jeanne: *(enters, carrying the basket of apples)*
Mom, are these enough apples for the pies?

Beth: *(glancing at the apples)* No, honey.
There's another basket in the barn.
Would you bring that one in, too?

(Jeanne starts for the barn, and Mom calls after her.)

While you're there, talk some sense into your brother.
Tell him we want him to come to the Christmas Eve service with his family.

(Mom and Dad exit talking about Keith and pointing out to the barn.)

LIGHTS: OUT ON POOL 2, UP ON POOL 3

ACT 3

Scene 2: "The Rescue"

(Jeanne enters the barn and sees the basket of apples standing in an obvious place. She picks up the bucket and begins to head out the door. Her brother, Keith, is perched on a bale of hay like a statue, and interrupts her exit.)

Keith: *(defiantly)* I'm not going, so save your breath.

Jeanne: Mom wants us to be together.

Keith: Save it.

Jeanne: Save what?

Keith: Your lecture.
The whole thing doesn't make sense to me,
so why should I go to church and pretend to "get it."

(She puts down the bucket of apples and walks over to Keith. She turns a bucket over and uses it as a stepstool so she can step up to sit beside him.)

Jeanne: *(gently)* What don't you get?

Keith: The whole Christmas thing.
Why would He do it?

Jeanne: (*very matter-of-fact*) What don't you get about Christmas?
It's Jesus' birthday.
That's why we sing "Away In A Manger,"
then we open presents because the baby Jesus got presents from the wise men,
then we eat so much food that we fall asleep on the couch.
What's "not to get" about that?

Keith: (*looking at her with disbelief at her simple explanation.*)
You don't get it either, do you?

Jeanne: Sure I do,
and you're really going to "get it"
if you don't come inside and get ready to go to church.

Keith: No!
(*jumping down from the bale of hay and beginning to pace*)
Don't you know who that baby was in the manger?

Jeanne: Sure I do, that's the baby Jesus, the Son of God.

Keith: That baby was God!

Jeanne: What?

Keith: We call Him the "Son of God" because... well,
because He was the part of God that became human.

Jeanne: Really?
(*Jeanne's eyes get wide. You can see that she is thinking.*)

Keith: Yes, and that's what doesn't make sense to me.
Why would God, who created the entire universe, with billions of stars;
God, who has so much power that a volcano or an earthquake is nothing to Him;
why would He take all His incredible power and stuff Himself into a 7-pound baby?
That's the part I don't "get"!

(*Now Keith is working up a real lather. He looks like a preacher at this point, jumping up on bales of hay now and then and accenting his speech in volume here and there.*)

Imagine it, Jeanne, God...
God, the absolute most awesome force you can imagine,
grows up as a little kid with skinned knees and everything.
Then, one day He's a man preaching to everybody about how much God loves them
and how they're supposed to live.
Then He lets a bunch of miserable little people,
the people He created Himself,
hang Him on a cross and kill Him.

(Keith pauses for a moment to clear his head.)

Why, Jeanne?
Don't you understand what God turned Himself into?

(Jeanne, pauses a moment, then jumps up and stands on top of her bale of hay. She throws her hands up in the air and begins to bounce.)

Jeanne: Yes!

(She freezes, while she soaks it all in. Keith stares at her.)

(shouting triumphantly) God became a hamster!

Keith: *(puzzled)* What?
Have you lost your mind?
God became a human being, not a hamster.

Jeanne: I know;
I didn't mean He really became a hamster.

Keith: Loosing those hamsters has made you crazy.

Jeanne: No!
I'm not crazy!
I finally "get it."

Keith: Good, because now I'm really lost.

(Jeanne jumps down from the bale of hay and takes over the role of preacher. She gets more and more excited as she parades around the barn. Keith turns his body and follows her with his eyes.)

Jeanne: I know why God did it!
He was searching for His people,
and He tried all kinds of things to find them.
He gave Moses ten post-it notes;
that didn't work out so good,
so later He had his friends over, they were called prophets,
and everybody was looking for God's people.
Then, finally God became a person
so He could talk to us in our own language
and warn us about the cats
and show us the way back to the cage where its safe!

(She grabs Keith's hands and stares hopefully at her brother.)

Do you "get it" now?

Keith: *(Staring at her in disbelief)*
You lost me at Moses and the ten post-it notes.

Jeanne: *(reassuring him)*
I know that Christmas doesn't have anything to do with hamsters.

Keith: Or cats.

Jeanne: Or cats.
I know that, too,
but ever since I lost my hamsters,
I started knowing how God felt when He lost His people.
He really fell in love with us when He made us,
and you have no idea what He's been through.

(Jeanne picks up the bucket of apples and puts them in Keith's hands; she grabs on to one end of the bucket and pulls Keith and the bucket out of the barn as she continues the next speech.)

See, when God made Adam and Eve,
He gave them a choice to obey Him or not.
God wanted real love, not prisoners;
He sorta' left the cage door open.

Keith: What!

Jeanne: Never mind,
anyway, they disobeyed God,
and that's called sin.
The world turned into a real mess,
so God told Mr. & Mrs. Noah...

(They exit out of the barn as Jeanne is enthusiastically telling Keith the story of God's pursuit of His people.)

LIGHTS: FADE OUT ON POOL 3, UP ON POOL 2

ACT 4: "The Christmas Concert"

This is the "formal" choir concert. The choir will have had plenty of time to change from their merry opening song clothes, into a more formal "choir-look," if they so desire.

(The family enters down the center aisle of the church, all together. Keith is with them. He is smiling as he is being pulled along by Jeanne. The family takes a seat and enjoys the concert.)

Adam:

(Serving as the Master of Ceremonies and as the preacher for the concert of as many songs as desired.)

Welcome ladies and gentlemen, etc.

Conclusion:

A time of “decision” can be worked into the program if that is the ending you desire.

(After the concert the family makes their way down the center aisle of the church, as though they were leaving the concert. They bid “goodnight” to some of the people seated along the aisles.)

ACT 5: “The Reunion”

(Keith enters the barn, holding a hamster in his hands, the leash trails behind him. Jeanne and Grandpa walk a few steps behind.)

Jeanne: *(to Grandpa)* Do you think this will work?

Grandpa: I don’t see why not.
It takes a hamster to find a hamster, I always say.

Jeanne: *(surprised)* Do you always say that?

Grandpa: I do now.

(Keith puts the hamster down on the floor and steps back to give him plenty of leash distance.)

Keith: Shhh!
Don’t mess up his concentration.

Jeanne: Can Mandy’s hamster lead us to where my hamsters are hiding?

Keith: Sure, he’s looking for his own kind.

Jeanne: *(tugging on Grandpa’s sleeve)* I’m so excited.
He’s going to find his friends, isn’t he, Grandpa?

Grandpa: Yes Princess;
He will find his friends;
they just have to listen for him and come when he calls.

(The lights fade slowly as the three of them follow a little hamster, on a leash, through the barn.)

Closing Song

The End