

# LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT

## A Screenplay

by Howard W. Hallman

### Characters

Pastor Paul Ziegler (in his 50s), Muhlenberg Community Church

Amelia (70), church member

Sam (75), church member

Roy (50), rancher

Buddy (14), his son

Smitty (31), ranch hand

Hank Royal (45), professor of engineering (African American)

Dick Stuart (45), professor of engineering

Hitoshi Morikawa (62), astronomer (Japanese)

Michele (24), lead guitarist of rock band, "Searching"

Vicki (21), bass guitarist

Harriet (23), drummer (African American)

Loretta (21), keyboard

Jenny (19), singer

Craig (25), equipment manager

Rex Hanover (55), governmental official

Hugh Bates (about 60), businessman

*Major Boomer Slatterly (35), U.S. Air Force*

*Lieutenant Bernie Francis (25), U.S. Air Force*

*Officer Helen Crejsek, Nebraska Highway Patrol*

## *Analysis of Lead, Kindly Light*

*by Howard W. Hallman*

*This screenplay is about what happens when a group of skeptical, irreverant people are called upon to produce the Christmas pageant based upon the biblical accounts and what effects it has on their lives.*

*The setting is a community church in a small town located along I-80 in central Nebraska. Two days before Christmas the new pastor, there only since summer, discovers from two older members that the church used to put on a Christmas eve pageant. This ended ten years ago when a minister opposed to theater quashed it. The pastor, who loves theater, would put on the pageant at the drop of a hat if he had suitable cast. (pp. 1-2)*

*The next morning a diverse set of travelers in five separate vehicles drive west on I-80 in a raging blizzard, hoping to get to their destinations for Christmas. A highway patrol officer organizes them into a convoy. (pp. 3-11)*

*When the highway become impassable they seek shelter in the church. The pastor welcomes them, makes provision for food and bedding, and helps them settle in. (pp. 12-20) It occurs to the pastor that this might be the cast for the pageant. (p.20)*

*But first the pastor tries to get know his guests and assure that their needs are met. He discovers conflict, both within some of the groups and between persons from different groups as they start getting acquainted. As the word gets around that he is considering a pageant, some of them openly oppose the idea. He realizes that not only will he have to overcome*

*opposition but also resolve conflict that has emerged among his guests. (pp. 21-39)*

*Nonetheless, he sets out to recruit players for various parts in the pageant. In doing so he seeks to heal wounds, achieve reconciliation, and inspire, drawing help from his two parishioners and one of the guests. In the process he reveals how he has strayed from the light in the past but found his way back again. He succeeds in getting most of the guests to participate but realizes that some unresolved problems remain. (pp. 40-88)*

*The pageant has three scenes, drawing successively from the biblical accounts in Luke, Matthew, and John. Each is interrupted by a crisis and solutions that resolve conflict and contribute to personal growth. (pp. 88-128)*

## What *LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT* Seeks to Accomplish

by the Writer

*LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT* is a screenplay about how a pastor of a small church persuades a band of stranded, irreverent, skeptical, and conflict-ridden travelers to put on the Christmas pageant with life-changing consequences.

Presentation of the pageant in its entirety is an integral part of the screenplay for three reasons. (1) Actions within framework of the pageant complete the resolution of internal and interpersonal conflict for several of the characters. (2) Viewers have the pleasure of seeing the traditional pageant presented by an unusual group they have come to know. (3) Viewers themselves become participants in the pageant as they have the opportunity to sing along during carols and hymns.

### Structure

The nature of the story requires deviation from the conventional three act structure that builds to a complex crisis just before final resolution. In *LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT* a considerable amount of conflict must be resolved before the pageant can be presented. Thereafter, crucial resolutions occur in each of the pageant's three scenes rather than in one fell swoop toward the end.

The major sections of the screenplay are as follows:

(1) **The challenge.** The new pastor of a small rural church is challenged

by two parishioners to put on the Christmas pageant after a ten year lapse (pp. 1-2).

**(2) Finding a cast.** Five vehicles of quarrelsome travelers struggle through a blizzard the day before Christmas (pp. 3-11). A highway patrol officer gathers them together, leads them in a convoy along the interstate, and takes them to shelter at the church (pp. 12-18).

**(3) Conflicts emerge.** As the pastor helps the travelers get settled, he notices conflict occurring among various individuals and subgroups. Several of the guests display internal struggles in their lives. As word gets around that the pastor wants the travelers to put on the pageant, some of them react harshly against the prospect. (pp. 19-39)

**(4) Putting together the cast.** As the pastor, assisted by the leader of a rock band, tries to assemble the cast for the pageant, he encounters resistance and outright refusal from several of his guests. Furthermore, he must achieve reconciliation among various individuals and factions if they are to perform together. As he solves one problem, another emerges. (pp. 40-91)

**(5) The pageant.** Crucial matters remain unresolved as the pageant proceeds in three scenes, derived from the gospels of Luke, Matthew, and John in that order. Each scene is a mini-drama, a play within the play. (pp. 92-130).

Luke's story is interrupted when Jenny, playing Mary, goes into labor and gives birth to a baby boy in a nearby room while the congregation bides its time singing carols. She and her boy friend Craig, the baby's father, influenced by the pastor and a parishioner, reverse their animosity to religion

and decide to have their baby baptized. The scene ends with Craig promising to settle down and become a true family man, a commitment he has resisted until then.

The "star in the east" shining in Jenny's eyes as she looks at her baby leads Dick, an agnostic, highly skeptical scientist, to become the third wiseman in Matthew's story, something he had previously refused to do.

The Matthew presentation is disrupted when Bernie, an Air Force lieutenant cast as one of Herod's soldiers, refuses to play the role of child-slayer. For him this resolves a deep personal struggle as an emerging pacifist in uniform. Of the two who carry out the mock slayings, Boomer, a macho major is so repulsed that he vomits afterwards, but Smitty, a ranch hand, isn't phased.

John's gospel is more symbolic, particularly emphasizing light coming into darkness. When the narrator reads, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out", the lights in the church go out, leaving only lighted candles on the altar and advent wreath. When the pageant continues after more candles are lit, Bernie, having rejected violence, takes the role of the adult Christ and Craig, coming to the light, plays John the Baptist. The camera catches Smitty when the narrator speaks of men who "love the darkness rather than the light." The closing hymn, "Lead, Kindly Light" with its line "I was not ever thus" is biographical for the pastor and many of the players.

## **Characters**

The needs of the pageant influence the number and characteristics of the cast.

*At the church are:*

*Pastor Ziegler, resuming a busted career, who combines the roles of impresario and counselor of the diverse group.*

*Sam (75) and Amelia (70), who serve as hosts to the travelers and play Zechariah and Simeon, Elizabeth and Anna in the pageant.*

*The travelers include:*

*Roy, a rancher, his son Buddy, and ranch hand Smitty, who become shepherds.*

*Three scientists, Hank an African American, Dick a Caucasian, and Hitoshi a Japanese, who are the wisemen with traditional diversity.*

*Boomer and Bernie, two military officers to serve as soldiers.*

*Rex, a government executive, who becomes Herod.*

*Hugh, an intoxicated businessman with a tragic-comic role.*

*A rock band, whose pregnant singer Jenny becomes Mary, her roadie boy friend Craig is Joseph, and four instrumentalists, Michele (the leader), Vicki, Loretta, and Harriet, who provide music for the pageant, serve as angels, and fill several minor roles in the pageant.*

*Officer Helen Crejsek of the highway patrol officer, who gathers the travelers together, brings them to the church for shelter, counterbalances the macho major, takes on the role of narrator, and delivers the baby.*

*Of the 20 characters, some are protagonists, others antagonists, three serve as guardian angels, and some function as minor characters who make small but necessary contributions to the drama.*

### ***Challenges and Conflicts***



Pastor Ziegler is challenged first to provide shelter, food, and bedding for the travelers and then to forge them into a cast for the pageant. In the process he must resolve several sets of conflict among his guests, overcome skepticism, and help several persons resolve internal conflicts within their own lives. For the latter task he obtains assistance from Amelia, Sam, and Hank.

Jenny is nearly nine months pregnant, a runaway from home, and agnostic. She knows she can't stay on the road with the rock band after her baby is born, but Craig the father isn't ready to settle down with her.

Craig is a roadie with considerable skills as a sound engineer, but he keeps changing from one rock group to another, would like to advance as an electronics engineer, but can't stand classroom discipline to attain the necessary education. He isn't willing to make a commitment to stay with Jenny and provide for her and their baby.

Amelia, who asked for the pageant, is skeptical of casting the travelers, most of them not "God-fearing", for the presentation. She takes care of Jenny and tries to help her overcome her alienation.

Sam carries out an assignment to get church members and other townspeople to bring in food for the stranded travelers. Later the pastor asks him to convince Smitty to take part in the pageant.

Bernie struggles with an emerging pacifist outlook that contradicts his occupation as an Air Force lieutenant.

Boomer, a fighter-bomber pilot with combat experience, encounters the assertiveness of Officer Helen Crejsek of the highway patrol. He takes up

with Michele, but she rejects him when she discovers he is married.

Roy the rancher argues with Rex, a top official of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), which is curtailing Roy's grazing rights.

Buddy, Roy's 14 year old son, and Smitty the ranch hand annoy one another and scuffle.

Smitty flirts with Vicki but doesn't get very far.

Dick and Hank dispute "like brothers" over different views on space technology, which overlay different life outlooks. Dick is skeptical of religion and strongly resists becoming a player in the pageant, while Hank is a believer and quite willing to participate. Pastor asks Hank to help Craig overcome his alienation.

Dick's and Hank's dispute enlarges in a discussion in which Boomer favors a military base in space that Dick opposes, Hitoshi advocates a more powerful Hubble telescope but opposes men in space (which Dick favors), and Bernie criticizes the decision to build the A-bomb. Hitoshi, who grew up near Hiroshima, and Boomer argue whether the bomb should have been used.

Hugh, a businessman rejected by his family at Christmas because he has neglected them as he built a drugstore empire, becomes intoxicated.

When Pastor Ziegler starts casting the pageant, he encounters some cooperation, considerable resistance, and some outright opposition. Jenny vacillates over becoming Mary. Craig opposes then reluctantly consents to the role of Joseph. Buddy is hesitant about being a shepherd, and Smitty resists. Hitoshi doubts he should be a wiseman, and Dick adamantly refuses.

Amelia and Sam accept the roles of Anna and Simeon, but both of them balk for a while when asked to be Elizabeth and Zachariah as well. Harriet doesn't like Michele's order for her to be the innkeeper. Vicki refuses to wear the "trashy" angel costume in the church wardrobe.

### **Turning Points and Resolution**

Amelia out of her natural kindness looks after Jenny, becoming a surrogate grandmother. A turning point occurs as Amelia helps Jenny try on Mary's costume and tells Jenny how she played the role 50 years ago with her infant son as the baby Jesus. Amelia remarks, "When you say, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord', it really can." (pp. 57-58)

Jenny has a conversation with Craig to persuade him to be Joseph, pointing out that this is another example of his refusal to make a commitment (pp. 55-56). When Pastor Ziegler joins Jenny in trying to convince him, Craig agrees to play the role "for this one performance" (pp. 58-59).

Craig hears Pastor Ziegler tell about how he lost a big church for committing adultery, had a life-changing mystic experience on a moonlit beach that revealed God's grace, and gained acceptance at this little church when he reentered the ministry. "That's cool," Craig remarks. At the pastor's request, Hank talks with Craig about the joys of fatherhood and tells him of career opportunities in the alternate energy field (pp. 87-88).

Although Craig is in the pageant, it takes the birth of their baby to make him realize that he is now a family man with responsibilities as a provider (pp. 111, 119). For both Jenny and Craig the exposure to these friendly persons associated with the church lead them to a decision to have their baby

baptized on the spot (p. 109). Later Craig plays the role of John the Baptist as one who has come to the light (p. 124).

Bernie keeps giving indication of how troubled he is at being in the Air Force when he questions the use of violence (pp. 23-24, 27, 67-68, 74-75, 88-89). The pastor advises him, "Go with your conscience." Bernie does this by throwing down his sword in the Matthew segment of the pageant (pp. 116-117). In John's account Bernie takes the role of Christ, "the light that comes into the world and shines on all men" (p. 124).

Pastor Ziegler keeps working on Dick, the skeptical, anti-religion scientist, who refuses to be wiseman. At one point the pastor tells Dick a fable of three men looking for a portentous star and finding it in the "star in the east." He tells Dick that every person has a star in the east, as he himself did in his mystic, redeeming experience. (p. 83). Dick turns the pastor aside but then discovers his own star in the east "shining in Jenny's eyes as she looked at her baby" (p. 111). So he becomes a wiseman.

Boomer gets comeuppance when Officer Crejsek beats him in a pingpong match (p.61) and Michele spurns him (p. 82), but he retains his essential macho persona. However, his role as child-slayer in the pageant repulses him because even though play acting, "it's so personal. Not like releasing bombs from 5,000 feet."

Sam twists Smitty's arm, figuratively and literally, to convince him to be a shepherd in the pageant (pp. 84-85), but he doesn't change Smitty's basic, fightsy demeanor. Thus, Smitty takes up the sword that Bernie has thrown down and plays the role of child-slayer unfazed (pp. 117-118). Accordingly the camera focus on Smitty when the narrator reads John's words: "men love darkness rather than light, because they do evil things" (p.

125).

Michele the band leader approaches the pageant as show business (p. 42), but she is moved to tears during the singing of "Silent Night" (p. 124).

Roy and Rex begin to overcome their animosity as rancher versus BLM executive when the pastor asks them to go outside together to meet a woman bringing food (pp. 38-39, 44). Later they play checkers together and discover that they are both Bronco fans (p. 56). They become friends, superseding their occupational conflict, and work together in bringing out candelabra when the lights go out in the sanctuary (pp. 122-123).

Hitoshi and Boomer, who argued over the A-bomb, play Go together.

Hugh's drunkenness increases as the afternoon and evening wear on even though some of the men try to cheer him up. When he protests during the pageant that he wasn't given a role, the pastor says, "We'll talk about it in the morning after you've slept" (p. 123). But essentially Hugh's situation is not resolved.

Light is a constant theme of the screenplay. Pastor Ziegler tells the arriving travelers, "Come out of the cold and darkness into light and warmth" (p. 15). His own mystic experience that he recounts deals with a vision of light (p. 77). He tells Dick the fable about "the star in the east" (p.83). The presentation of John's story in the pageant deals heavily with light, including the sanctuary being plunged into darkness then re-emerging into the light (pp. 120-126).

The final hymn, "Lead, Kindly Light", brings the drama to final conclusion (p. 127). Like the pastor, many viewers will feel that the words

are biographical. But since the hymn isn't sung a lot in churches these days, many viewers won't know the words or be able to pick them up from the singing. For that reasons (in addition to bringing in viewers as actually participants), subtitles are used for carols and hymns. That's also why the film crew arrives on the bus.

### **Guardian Angels, Catalysts, and Neutrals**

Several characters serve as guardian angels to help others change, including Amelia with Jenny, Hank with Craig, and Sam with Smitty, though with only temporary effect. The pastor as combined impresario and counselor is a catalyst for change for a number of the characters. Their success in these roles is one aspect of their achievement in the story.

Officer Crejsek is an enabler: bringing the travelers to the church, adding the busload with the film crew, serving as narrator, delivering the baby. She shows concern for her own family, manages to put down Boomer a couple of times, and is basically a stable presence.

Some of the characters with relatively minor roles remain fairly constant and don't particularly grow or experience transformation. Hitoshi appears as a decent person who has philosophical rapport with the pastor (pp. 53-54). He supplements the pastor in setting the context for John's story (pp. 120-121). Rex is Roy's antagonist and Hugh's helper and is fairly constant in demeanor. Buddy teases and scuffles with Smitty but doesn't change much in the course of the drama.

The four instrumentalists are there in a large measure to provide a different kind of music for the pageant. Michele is on screen a long time in casting the pageant and provides a sauciness contrasting with Pastor Ziegler's

more staid manner. Vicki is a mischievous presence and a foil against Smitty's flirting. Harriet is a steady influence, courteous, and helpful. She bonds with Hank as fellow African Americans, provides him useful information about Craig, and draws out Hank to clarify who he is. Loretta is a romantic interest of Bernie, and she helps illuminate Bernie's hesitation and emerging pacifism.

### **Change of Pace**

Several elements are used to change the pace from conflict and serious dialogue, including pingpong games particularly the match between Boomer and Crejsek, playing checkers and Go, bringing in the wardrobe trunk, and doing the macarena, which also helps unify the assemblage as the time for rehearsal approaches.

# LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT

*A screenplay by*

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FADE IN

EXT - MUHLENBERG COMMUNITY CHURCH - DAY

*It is a fairly small church with sanctuary in front and an attached educational wing in the rear.*

*A light snow falls. It's beginning to cover sidewalks and a parking lot on the side where several vehicles are parked.*

*A man and a woman enter a side door, identified as "FELLOWSHIP HALL".*

INT - CHURCH FELLOWSHIP HALL - DAY

*The room contains a Christmas tree and has other Christmas decorations. Christmas carols can be heard playing from a boombox.*

*SAM, 75, dressed as Santa Claus, says goodbye MOS to a dozen elementary school children. The man and woman enter from the outside and join two other women as they help their children get bundled up to leave.*

*PASTOR MARTIN DAVID ZIEGLER, 55. dressed casually, bids goodbye MOS to the children and their parents. AMELIA, 70, smiles as she watches the children leave and says a few words MOS to the parents as they depart.*

*Amelia begins cleaning up the refreshments table. Pastor helps her. Sam takes off Santa's cap and beard, opens the jacket, and removes a*

*pillow.*

AMELIA

*How wonderful to have the children's  
Christmas party again.*

SAM

*Yeah, it's been three or four years since  
we had one.*

PASTOR

*What's Christmas without children?*

SAM

*It couldn't have happened, Pastor, if you  
hadn't got the Sunday School goin' again  
after you came here last summer.*

PASTOR

*It wasn't all that hard, Sam. There are  
some nice young families in Muhlenberg  
who were just waiting to be invited.*

AMELIA

*Pastor, I'm ready to admit that I wasn't  
thrilled when the church board called you  
to serve our church, what with your  
background and all. But now that I'm  
gettin' used to you, I'm glad you've come.*

PASTOR

Thanks, Amelia. That means a lot coming from you.

AMELIA

I just wished we could have the pageant tomorrow night on Christmas eve like we used to.

PASTOR

I didn't know this church ever put on the Christmas pageant.

SAM

It's been at least ten years since we had one.

AMELIA

We had a pastor who disapproved of "theater", as he called it. Said it was too worldly.

PASTOR

I love theater. I was even in some plays at college.

SAM

I thought you played football.

PASTOR

I did that, too.

AMELIA

*Then we started losin' members, so as we didn't have enough people for a cast and an audience both.*

PASTOR

*If I'd know you wanted a pageant, I'd have tried to get some folks from St. Mary's to help out, or maybe from the Grange.*

AMELIA

*Oh, I don't know about gettin' outsiders. They might not have the right spirit.*

PASTOR

*You've challenged me, Amelia. Somehow we'll find a proper cast.*

AMELIA

*But not this year.*

PASTOR

*You never know. We're often surprised by what God provides.*

AMELIA

*Humph!*

*Amelia shakes her head negatively to display her skepticism.*

*EXT - ALONG INTERSTATE HIGHWAY - DAY*

*A sheep-hauler semi-trailer, empty of sheep, plunges through heavy, blowing snow. Both lanes of the highway are plowed, but snow continues to accumulate. The truck drives by an "I-80" sign.*

*INT - TRUCK CAB - DAY*

*ROY, a 50 year old rancher, drives. His son, BUDDY, a husky 15 year old with ruddy cheeks, a boy becoming a man, sits in the middle. SMITTY, 31, a ranch hand, is on the outside. Smitty has a black eye.*

*Some wrapped Christmas presents are piled behind them. Country western Christmas music plays on the radio. Snow pounds against the windshield.*

*SMITTY*

*Wow! Look at it blow. How can you see the road, Roy?*

*ROY*

*Oh, I can see all right.*

*(beat)*

*How's your eye, Smitty?*

SMITTY

*It's better.*

*Buddy nudges Smitty and laughs.*

BUDDY

*That cowboy at the stockyard yesterday  
sure whopped you a good one.*

SMITTY

*I'd've got him first if he hadn't ducked.  
He shouldn't have made fun of our sheep.*

ROY

*You're new to ranching, Smitty. It's an  
old feud of the west. The cattlemen  
think sheep ruin the grass. But we got  
our rights, too.*

*An announcer cuts into the music on the truck radio.*

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

*We interrupt this broadcast to give you  
the latest weather report. A severe  
storm is now covering all of Nebraska on  
this day before Christmas.  
Accumulation of thirty inches is expected  
in the western part of the state by  
midnight. The state highway patrol has  
advised motorists to avoid traveling on all*

*secondary roads and to stay off Interstate  
80 if possible.*

ROY

*Damn it. It's goin' to be hard gettin'  
home for Christmas.*

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

*We now return you to our regularly  
scheduled program.*

*Music starts again on the radio.*

BUDDY

*What if we don't make it, Dad?*

SMITTY

*You're not skeered, are you, Buddy-boy?*

ROY

*We'll make it, son. I've driven in worse  
storms than this.*

*An extra strong blast of snow hits the windshield.*

INT - INSIDE A FULL SIZE SEDAN - DAY

*HANK ROYAL, 45, an African American, casually dressed, drives at  
moderate speed along the interstate through the raging blizzard.*



HITOSHI MORIKAWA, 62, sits beside Hank on the front seat. DICK STUART, 45, sits in back. Hitoshi and Dick wear suit and tie under their overcoats.

A bag of Christmas presents is beside Dick. The car radio plays a tape of a black gospel choir singing "Go Tell It to the Mountain".

Hank turns up the windshield wiper to high speed.

HANK

*It seems to be getting worse.*

HITOSHI

*Is winter weather always like this in Nebraska?*

HANK

*I don't know. I've never been here before in December.*

DICK

*If it wasn't for your damn fear of flying, Hank, we could've left Lincoln yesterday evening. We'd be in Vail with our families right now.*

HANK

*Well, Dick, we could've driven several*

hours last night if you hadn't wanted to do last minute Christmas shopping.

HITOSHI

At any rate, I'm looking forward to an American Christmas with you and your families.

DICK

If we get there. We should've stopped in Grand Island until the storm lets up, like I said.

HANK

Whatever happens, I'm glad you came with us, Dr. Morikawa. I'll give us a chance to learn more about your work in space astronomy.

HITOSHI

And I want to hear more about the issues you were debating yesterday at the Space Technology Forum.

DICK

This storm proves my point that Hank's push for solar heating is impractical.

HANK

I never claimed one hundred percent,

Dick. Just as much as possible.  
Anyway it's a surer bet than your power  
in the sky.

HITOSHI

His what?

DICK

The power satellite.

HANK

It'll never work.

DICK

It's a better way to go than your "small is  
beautiful" approach.

HITOSHI

Do you gentlemen argue like this all the  
time?

HANK

Just like brothers.

A minibus passes them on the left. "SEARCHING" is painted on its side.

DICK

That guy's an idiot to drive like that.

*The minibus cuts into the right lane and splashes their car.*

INT - MINIBUS - DAY

*The six passengers are CRAIG, 25; MICHELE, 24; VICKI, 22; LORETTA, 21; HARRIET, 23, an African American; and JENNY, 19, almost nine months pregnant.*

*Rock music plays on the tape deck. Vicki has an unconnected electric guitar and improvises lightly with the music.*

JENNY

*I wish you wouldn't drive so fast, Craig.  
It makes me awfully nervous.*

CRAIG

*I know what I'm doing, Jenny.*

VICKI

*Where do you think we'll get today?*

CRAIG

*We've got motel reservations in Cheyenne.*

HARRIET

*I'm going to hate being on the road for  
the second Christmas in a row. I miss  
my family this time of year.*

VICKI

*I know what you mean, Harriet. It's the best time of year for our family back home.*

CRAIG

*Not for mine. We usually spend the holidays bitching at one another.*

LORETTA

*I've already missed Hanukkah with my folks.*

JENNY

*Christmas was great when I was a kid. But I haven't had a good Christmas in six years.*

MICHELE

*Like it or not, if we're going to be the most famous rock band in America, we've got to go where the business is. If we don't get to Vegas by the 27th, we'll lose our next gig.*

JENNY

*I'll do Vegas, Michele, if this kid hasn't come. But after that you'll have to get another singer.*

MICHELE

*You gonna stay in Vegas?*

JENNY

*Yes, I think so. I figure I can get a job singing with some house band.*

*Michele gestures toward Craig.*

MICHELE

*And is he gonna stay with you?*

CRAIG

*I haven't decided.*

JENNY

*He's just a roadie. I can make it on my own.*

LORETTA

*I can see there's trouble ahead.*

*Craig passes a bright red sports coupe.*

VICKI

*Take it easy, Craig. I'd rather be tardy than absent.*

*Craig continues at the same speed.*

INT - INSIDE SPORTS COUPE - DAY

AIR FORCE MAJOR BOOMER SLATTERLY, 35 drives. LIEUTENANT BERNIE FRANCIS, 25, sits beside him. Both are dressed in military uniforms with topcoats. The car radio plays light rock of the '80s.

As the "Searching" minibus passes them, it splashes snow and ice on their windshield.

BERNIE

What kind of crazy driver is that?

BOOMER

Probably somebody trying to get home for Christmas. Like us.

BERNIE

Boomer, this is the worse stuff I've ever traveled in. And I grew up in Wyoming.

BOOMER

Yeah, it's nasty, Bernie. It makes me long for my old base in Saudi Arabia.

BERNIE

During the Gulf War, you mean?

BOOMER

Yeah. I had 17 missions.

BERNIE

I'm glad I'm in communications. I don't think I would like to fly in combat.

BOOMER

It's not much. After we knocked out all of their air defense, it was sorta like practice runs.

BERNIE

What does your wife think about it? Doesn't she worry?

BOOMER

You thinking of getting married?

BERNIE

If I can find the right girl.

BOOMER

I suppose she worries. But she's an army brat. Her father was in Vietnam. So she's used to it.

BERNIE



*So was my dad. Air Force.*

*BOOMER*

*Then you'll have lots to talk about when I drop you with your folks in Cheyenne.*

*BERNIE*

*I hope you get to Laramie before the roads close down.*

*BOOMER*

*Me, too. I'm glad my wife and kids got a two day start and are already there with my parents.*

*Ahead they see a waving beam of light and stopped vehicles.*

*EXT - ALONG INTERSTATE HIGHWAY - DAY*

*OFFICER HELEN CREJSEK, 36, of the Nebraska Highway Patrol waves a flashlight lantern and motions Boomer to stop. Beyond her are a snowplow, her patrol car, the ranchers' semi-trailer, the "Searching" minibus, and Hank's auto.*

*INT - INSIDE SPORTS COUPE - DAY*

*Boomer stops his car and rolls down the window as Crejsek approaches.*

*CREJSEK*

Hello, I'm Officer Crejsek of the Highway Patrol. We're forming a convoy to follow a snowplow from here to North Platte.

BOOMER

How far's that?

CREJSEK

About sixty miles. The road's pretty bad, but headquarters in Lincoln says to keep traffic moving as long as possible.

BOOMER

I'm glad for that. We're trying to get home for Christmas.

CREJSEK

Lots of folks are. You all have your own destinations, but you'll never survive unless we travel together.

BOOMER

You don't have to tell me that. It's basic military doctrine.

CREJSEK

I'm in charge. Okay?

BOOMER

*Okay, okay.*

CREJSEK

*I'm going to follow the snowplow. The semi's next to break the wind for the rest of you. You can bring up the rear. Got a car phone?*

BOOMER

*Sure thing.*

*Boomer holds up his car phone.*

CREJSEK

*If anything happens to any of the others, let me know. You can dial pound-77.*

BOOMER

*Will do.*

CREJSEK

*Okay. Let's go.*

*Crejsek trudges off. Boomer rolls up the window.*

EXT - MUHLENBERG COMMUNITY CHURCH - DAY

*Howling snow slams against the church, now surrounded by a foot and a*

half of snow. Mounds of snow are piled around the parking lot. On the lot are a pickup truck with snowplow attached and a sports utility vehicle. Sam pushes a snowblower along the sidewalk leading to a side door, labeled "OFFICE". Lighted windows are on each side of the door.

INT - CHURCH OFFICE - DAY

Most of the furnishings are old. One door leads outside, and another into the church interior. Amelia places a typed sheet of paper onto a small photocopier. Pastor, wearing a plaid flannel shirt, sits at a work table.

PASTOR

It was brave of you to come over this afternoon, Amelia.

AMELIA

I've been doing the bulletin for 19 years without missin' a week. Anyway, Sam gave me a lift.

PASTOR

He's doing a heroic job keeping the parking lot plowed and the sidewalks cleared.

AMELIA

The younger men oughta be doin' that.

PASTOR

*Sam insists.*

AMELIA

*Pastor, how many bulletins should I run?*

PASTOR

*Fifty should be enough.*

AMELIA

*Do you think that many will come tomorrow on Christmas morning in this weather?*

PASTOR

*The storm ought to be over by then. At least I hope it will.*

*Amelia enters the number on the photocopier and presses the print button. Copies start coming from the machine.*

*The outside door opens, and Sam enters, covered with snow.*

PASTOR

*I don't what we'd do without you, Sam.*

SAM

*If I don't plow every hour or so, we could never get the lot plowed for church tomorrow.*

AMELIA

*It sounds like it's gettin' worse.*

SAM

*I think its the last hard blast before the end.*

PASTOR

*Let's hope so.*

SAM

*As I was comin' in, a patrol car pulled into our lot.*

AMELIA

*I wonder what that's about?*

*There is heavy knocking on the outside door. Pastor opens the door, letting in a burst of snow. Officer Crejsek enters.*

PASTOR

*Come in, my friend.*

CREJSEK

*I'm Officer Helen Crejsek of the state highway patrol. I'm leading a convoy west. We were trying to make North Platte, but the snow's so deep we can't go any farther.*

SAM

*I'm not surprised.*

CREJSEK

*There's no room for them at the motel  
out by the interstate. Can you offer us  
shelter?*

PASTOR

*Of course we can. How many are you?*

CREJSEK

*Must be fifteen to twenty.*

PASTOR

*We have plenty of room.*

CREJSEK

*Good. I'll let them know.*

*Crejsek takes a mobile phone from her jacket and dials a number.*

CREJSEK

*Roadblock, this is Officer Crejsek. I've  
found a church where we can stay.  
Send them up Main Street. They'll see  
my flashing lights in the church parking  
lot. Better tell the semi to park on the  
street.*

PASTOR

*They can use the next door into the fellowship hall. I'll turn on the lights.*

CREJSEK

*Thank you for your help, Pastor. I'll meet them on the parking lot.*

*Crejsek goes out into the raging storm.*

AMELIA

*But we just got fellowship hall cleaned up after the Christmas party.*

PASTOR

*All the better. Sam, get on the phone and call our people -- at least those who live nearby. Have them bring food, blankets, pillows, towels.*

SAM

*Right away.*

*Sam goes to the desk, sits down, and starts dialing the phone.*

PASTOR

*Amelia, will you make some coffee? I*



*believe there's some in the kitchen.*

AMELIA

*Yes, but it belongs to the women's society.*

PASTOR

*We can repay them later.*

*Amelia and Pastor exit through the door into the hallway.*

INT - FELLOWSHIP HALL - DAY

*Beyond the serving counter in the kitchen, Amelia finishes putting coffee in a large urn, puts on the lid, and plugs it in.*

*Pastor stands near the door to the outside. Crejsek enters and tosses a duffelbag against the wall.*

CREJSEK

*Here's my hearty band.*

PASTOR

*They're all welcome.*

*Crejsek stands by the door. Hank, Dick, and Hitoshi enter.*

PASTOR

*Come out of the cold and darkness into light and warmth.*

*Hitoshi bows.*

HITOSHI

*Thank you kindly.*

*Pastor bows awkwardly. Hank, Dick, and Hitoshi carry suitcases across fellowship hall.*

*The rock group enters: Michele, Vicki, Harriet, Loretta, and Jenny supported by Craig. They carry backpacks and duffelbags. Amelia comes from the kitchen to watch.*

JENNY

*I didn't think we would ever make it,  
Craig.*

CRAIG

*I told you we would, Jenny.*

*Pastor notices Jenny's condition.*

PASTOR

*How are you, my dear? There's a sofa in  
the office if you'd like to lie down.*

JENNY

*Yes, I believe I would.*

PASTOR

*Amelia, would you show her where it is?*

AMELIA

*Come with me, child.*

*Amelia leads Jenny toward the hallway connecting with the office. Craig follows, carrying their luggage.*

JENNY

*Craig, you don't have to stay with me.*

CRAIG

*I want to, Jenny.*

JENNY

*That's not what you said a while ago.*

CRAIG

*I'm here for you now.*

JENNY

*You think you can choose whether to come or go. Just like my old man.*

AMELIA

*You're not married?*

JENNY

*He's not the marrying type.*

AMELIA

*Poor child.*

*Jenny, Amelia, and Craig exit into the hallway.*

*Loretta, Michele, Vicki, and Harriet throw their gear next to a piano located near the hall doorway.*

*Boomer and Bernie come in, followed by Roy, Buddy, and Smitty.*

*BOOMER*

*See, Bernie, I told you we'd make it.*

*PASTOR*

*Make yourselves at home.*

*Boomer, Bernie, Roy, Buddy, and Smitty toss their duffelbags against a wall.*

*CREJSEK*

*That's the last of 'em.*

*Pastor closes the outside door. It is immediately opened from the outside.*

*REX HANOVER, 55, enters.*

*REX*

*Do you have room for one more?*

*PASTOR*

*Of course.*

*REX*

*I've been chasing the convoy for an hour.*

*The roadblock sent me here.*

CREJSEK

*I thought I saw lights behind us.*

REX

*I'm Rex Hanover from the Bureau of Land  
Management.*

ROY

*Oh, hell! Not one of them.*

BUDDY

*Dad, take it easy.*

ROY

*Buddy, you know what the BLM is tryin'  
to do to us.*

*Pastor lets this pass and goes to center of the room.*

PASTOR

*(to all)*

*All of you are welcome to the Muhlenberg  
Community Church. I'm Pastor Martin  
Ziegler.*

HANK

*We appreciate your shelter.*

PASTOR

*I know its tough on you getting stranded the day before Christmas, but we'll do our best to make you comfortable.*

*BERNIE*

*We're just glad we got here safely.*

*PASTOR*

*We have coffee perking in the kitchen. We're calling members to bring in food and bedding.*

*BUDDY*

*(to Smitty)*

*I sure could use something to eat.*

*PASTOR*

*Please make yourselves at home. The restrooms are down the hall. You can use the phone in the office if you want to. If anyone needs anything special, please let me know.*

*Crejsek slumps onto a chair near the door and stares at the floor. Pastor goes over to her.*

*PASTOR*

*Officer Crejsek, don't look so downhearted. You just led all these folks to safety.*

CREJSEK

*I was thinking of my family back in Grand Island. The road is closed to the east as well as westbound. I won't get home for Christmas.*

PASTOR

*I'm awfully sorry. Do you have children?*

CREJSEK

*A daughter age seven and a four year old son. My husband will have to be Santa alone.*

PASTOR

*They'll miss you as much as you'll miss them. Though it won't be the same, we'll celebrate Christmas here together.*

*Crejsek looks up with half a smile.*

*Loretta tries out the piano with scales, arpeggios, and some light rock. She and Harriet have "Searching" on the back of their jeans jackets.*

*Smitty saunters over to the musicians, and Buddy follows him. Smitty sits next to Loretta on the piano bench and puts his arm around her. While still playing, Loretta slides along the bench and nudges him off. Buddy laughs.*

*Pastor observes this as he walks toward the hall doorway and chuckles.*

*INT - CHURCH OFFICE - DAY*

*Jenny sits on the sofa with Craig beside her. Amelia sits nearby. Sam is at the desk, completing a phone call MOS and writing on a notepad. Pastor enters.*

*PASTOR*

*Are you comfortable, Jenny? Can I get you anything?*

*JENNY*

*No, thank you. I just want to sit here a while and warm up.*

*CRAIG*

*Where are we, anyway?*

*PASTOR*

*In Muhlenberg -- about 20 miles east of North Platte.*

*CRAIG*

*Wow! We've come only 40 miles in two hours.*

*(beat)*

*Have you heard anything about the road conditions?*



PASTOR

*The highway is closed for the next 150 miles to the west, both to Cheyenne and Denver. Eastbound, too.*

CRAIG

*You mean we're stuck in this dump?*

JENNY

*Craig, that's not very polite.*

PASTOR

*We'll do our best to make it a happy Christmas for you.*

JENNY

*That'd be a change.*

PASTOR

*How's that?*

JENNY

*Like last year. On Christmas our band played a job in a crummy bar in Phoenix.*

CRAIG

*That was my third month as their sound engineer.*

JENNY

*The year before, just before I became  
vocalist with the band, I was alone in L.A.*

AMELIA

*Alone?*

JENNY

*Yeah. I'd run away from home 'cause  
Mom and me were arguing all the time.*

AMELIA

*Where did you stay?*

JENNY

*Here and there.*

PASTOR

*What about your dad?*

JENNY

*Oh, he walked out on us when I was  
thirteen.*

PASTOR

*That must've been a blow to you.*

JENNY

*It was awful.*

AMELIA

*This Christmas will be better. I promise.*

JENNY

*I hope so.*

*Sam picks up his notepad.*

SAM

*Pastor, the Franklins are bringin' in  
spiced ham, the Kruegers some  
homemade sausage, and the Andersons  
pressed veal.*

AMELIA

*Their Christmas specialties.*

SAM

*Plus homemade bread and cookies,  
vegetables, and milk. Also blankets,  
pillows, and sleeping bags.*

PASTOR

*That's great.*

SAM

*They'll be here soon.*

AMELIA

*I'd better meet them in the kitchen so  
they don't mess things up.*

*Amelia gets up and heads for the door.*

PASTOR

*Keep on calling, Sam. I'll check whether  
the folks out there need anything.*

*Pastor rises and follows Amelia to the door.*

INT - FELLOWSHIP HALL - DAY

*Amelia and Pastor enter from the hall and pause in the doorway.  
They see the travelers dispersed around fellowship hall.*

*Nearby clustered around the piano are Smitty, Buddy, Michele, Vicki,  
Harriet, and Loretta, who continues playing ditties.*

*On the far side of the room Roy and Rex stand together toe-to-toe  
arguing. Beyond them Dick, Hank, Hitoshi, Boomer, Bernie, and  
Crejsek sit around a table.*

PASTOR

*What do you think, Amelia? Could this  
be the cast for our pageant?*

AMELIA

*An unlikely bunch.*

*Amelia walks to the kitchen. Pastor strolls past the group around the piano. They pay him no heed.*

SMITTY

*(to Vicki)*

*Sweetie, how about you and me exploring the rest of the building?*

VICKI

*I'd rather stay where I'm safe.*

*Pastor smiles as he passes. He comes up to Roy and Rex.*

ROY

*It's true. You're tryin' to drive us off the land.*

REX

*I say it isn't so.*

*Roy turns to the Pastor. Rex steps back a bit from Roy.*

ROY

*Howdy, Pastor. I'm Roy McKean of Pathfinder, Wyoming.*

PASTOR

*Nice to meet you. How's it going?*

ROY

*I've discovered that Rex here is a big shot  
in the BLM.*

REX

*I'm regional director in Denver.*

ROY

*He's the one who's tightening the screws  
on me with all of those damn regulations  
and cutting back on grazing land.*

REX

*I'm sorry if our regulations have  
inconvenienced you, Roy.*

ROY

*Inconvenienced, hell. You're puttin' me  
outa business.*

REX

*We're just trying to protect the range  
from overuse.*

ROY

*Then how come the oil and gas companies  
are gettin' them leases.*

REX

*It's all done through competitive bidding.*

ROY

*Yeah. Rigged for the big boys. I've been workin' on ranches since '68, and it's got worse every year.*

PASTOR

*I'm fairly new around here, but I have had heard a lot of talk about the Bureau of Land Management.*

REX

*We're doing what Congress tells us to do.*

ROY

*We're goin' change that.*

PASTOR

*It's not something we can settle here and now. How about some coffee? I think its ready.*

REX

*Yes, I could use some.*

ROY

*Me, too.*

*Rex and Roy go to the kitchen. Pastor goes to the table where Dick, Hank, Hitoshi, Boomer, Bernie, and Crejsek sit.*

*Dick has loosened his tie but still wears a suit jacket. Hitoshi remains in suit and tie. The officers wear military dress uniforms with name tags ("Major Slatterly" and "Lt. Francis"). Boomer has a pilot's badge and three rows of ribbons, Bernie one row.*

HANK

*Oh, come on, Boomer, you can't be serious about a military base in space.*

BOOMER

*I'm totally serious. We better get one before the Russians or Chinese do.*

PASTOR

*Sorry to interrupt, but I wonder how you folks are doing.*

HANK

*We're warm again.*

PASTOR

*Food is on the way. Coffee's perking. Do you need anything else?*

DICK

*Not now, thank you.*



PASTOR

*You folks came in so fast, I didn't catch your names except for Officer Crejsek.*

CREJSEK

*Helen's the name now that we're inside.*

BOOMER

*I'm known as Boomer. The lieutenant is Bernie.*

DICK

*I'm Richard Stuart, and this is Henry Royal. We're from MIT. And this is Dr. Hitoshi Morikawa, a distinguished astronomer from Japan.*

HANK

*Dick and I are on a national tour debating approaches to outer space.*

DICK

*I favor a manned space station and sending men to Mars.*

CREJSEK

*Don't leave out women.*

DICK

*Sure, if they can qualify.*

HANK

*I prefer unmanned satellites and robot landings -- neuter general.*

CREJSEK

*We use communication satellites to cover the state.*

BOOMER

*If we had a base in space, I'd love to fly a space fighter.*

CREJSEK

*Like Han Solo!*

PASTOR

*And what about you, Dr. Morikawa.*

HITOSHI

*You can call me Hitoshi, as people do in the States.*

PASTOR

*Fine, Hitoshi.*

HITOSHI

*As an astronomer, I love the Hubble space telescope. I wish we had another one*

*even more powerful. But I don't see a need for men in space.*

*BERNIE*

*I weigh in for small scale projects. It's the big projects that get us in trouble. Like the A-bomb. It should've never been built.*

*BOOMER*

*How can you say that, Bernie? Our mission is nuclear deterrence.*

*Hitoshi lowers his head and rubs his forehead.*

*HANK*

*What's the matter, Hitoshi?*

*HITOSHI*

*I was a boy of ten living about eight miles from Hiroshima when the first A-bomb exploded. The mushroom cloud, the wounded streaming into our village, I'll never forget.*

*BOOMER*

*It was regretful, but it had to be done. War is war.*

*BERNIE*

*But did it? Why didn't we bomb an uninhabited island to show them the power of our new weapon?*

HITOSHI

*Yes, I think our leaders would have surrendered.*

BOOMER

*That's an old argument. We learned at the Academy that President Truman considered that possibility but rejected it. He knew we had only the two bombs ready.*

*(to Hitoshi)*

*If you hadn't surrendered, many more lives would've been lost in an invasion.*

BERNIE

*We should've tried.*

CREJSEK

*When I think of my children, I wish we could get rid of all the bombs and missiles in the world.*

BOOMER

*We can't. We have to be concerned about Russia, China, North Korea, Iraq, and Iran. And who knows what other rogue states might emerge.*

PASTOR

*Well, it seems I've walked into a hornet's nest.*

*Beyond the serving counter, two men come in carrying provisions through the outside kitchen door as snow blows in. Amelia directs them to put their load on a counter. Crejsek notices this happening.*

CREJSEK

*Looks like some food's arriving. I'd better see if the lady needs some help.*

*Crejsek goes into the kitchen.*

HANK

*How about some coffee, fellows?*

DICK

*Good idea.*

*Hank, Dick, Hitoshi, Boomer, and Bernie go to the kitchen.*

*Sam comes out of the hallway, approaches Pastor, and hands him a sheet*

*of paper.*

SAM

*Pastor, here's a list of food and beddin'  
that's comin'.*

PASTOR

*You've done a good job, Sam.*

SAM

*Mrs. Schmidt is comin' in about fifteen  
minutes with a casserole, pie, and sleepin'  
bags. She doesn't want to get out of her  
car, so she'll honk when she gets here.*

PASTOR

*That's okay. I'll recruit somebody to go  
out and meet her.*

*Sam goes to the kitchen. Roy comes out carrying a coffee mug.*

PASTOR

*Was that your son who came in with you,  
Roy?*

ROY

*Yep. He goes as Buddy. The one with  
the shiner is Smitty, my ranch hand.*

*At the other end of fellowship hall Michele, Vicki, Harriet, Loretta, Smitty,  
and Buddy burst out with laughter.*

PASTOR

*Buddy seems like a good kid.*

ROY

*He is. Usually. But I still worry about him. There's so much that can harm a youngster these days.*

PASTOR

*I'm afraid that's so.*

ROY

*Especially since he's takin' a likin' to girls.*

*Across the room Buddy talks with Vicki.*

PASTOR

*I bet the young folks would like to play pingpong.*

ROY

*Good idea. That'd keep 'em occupied.*

*Pastor and Roy walk to where Michele, Vicki, Harriet, Loretta, Smitty, and Buddy are gathered around the piano.*

INT - KITCHEN - DAY

Sam checks some food packages. Crejsek, Hank, Dick, Hitoshi, and Rex stand around a counter, drinking coffee. Amelia hands a mug of coffee to Boomer.

BOOMER

Thank you, ma'am.

She starts filling another mug for Bernie.

BERNIE

No coffee for me, thank you. It's bad for my ulcer.

AMELIA

We've got some milk in the refrigerator. Would you like some?

BERNIE

Yes, please.

Amelia takes a bottle of milk from the refrigerator.

INT - FELLOWSHIP HALL - DAY

The pingpong table is in place. Smitty and Buddy attach the net. Harriet and Vicki stand nearby holding paddles. Pastor places two other paddles and a ball on the table. Roy watches.

HARRIET



*(to Smitty and Buddy)*  
*Vicki and I challenge you to a game.*

SMITTY  
*I ain't played for a long time. But you're  
on.*

*Vicki hits the ball down the center. Smitty and Buddy hit each other's  
paddles as they both go for it. Roy laughs.*

*As the game continues, Michele and Loretta come over from the piano to  
watch.*

PASTOR  
*Hello, I didn't catch your names when you  
came in.*

MICHELE  
*I'm Michele. I play lead guitar with our  
band.*

LORETTA  
*She's the boss.*

ROY  
*I'm Roy. Buddy's dad.*

LORETTA  
*Nice to meet you.*

*Michele gestures to Loretta standing next to her.*

MICHELE

*This is Loretta, our keyboard artist.*

ROY

*I figured that.*

*Michele points first to Vicki and then to Harriet.*

MICHELE

*Vicki plays bass and Harriet drums.*

PASTOR

*What do you play? I mean, what's your style.*

LORETTA

*I call it light rock with a new age message.*

*Harriet hits a hard smash that bounces off Buddy's paddle. Roy retrieves the ball and hands it to Buddy.*

BUDDY

*Dad, why are you hangin' around here?*

ROY

*All right, I'll go. But behave yourself.*

*Buddy scowls. Roy walks away toward to the other end of fellowship hall*

*to the table where Hank, Dick, Hitoshi, Rex, and Sam sit and drink coffee.*

*Crejsek comes from the kitchen with a coffee mug in hand and joins Pastor to watch the pingpong match.*

CREJSEK

*Pastor, shall we challenge the winners?*

PASTOR

*Sorry, Helen. It's not my sport. But I'm sure they'll let you have a turn.*

*Buddy hits a winning volley and cheers.*

INT - KITCHEN - DAY

*Boomer and Bernie sit at a counter and eat sandwiches. At another counter Amelia makes a sandwich. She has a tray holding a glass of milk. Loretta and Michele enter.*

MICHELE

*Hi, fellows. May we join you?*

BOOMER

*Sure. I'm Boomer, and this is Bernie.*

MICHELE

*I'm Michele, and this is Loretta.*

*Michele goes close to Boomer.*

MICHELE

*You're certainly well decorated, Boomer.*

*She runs her fingers over Boomer's row of ribbons. Boomer backs away.*

BOOMER

*I've seen action in a fighter-bomber.*

*Boomer points to several ribbons.*

BOOMER (Cont.)

*This one's for service in Korea. This one is for the Gulf War. And this one represents the distinguished flying cross.*

LORETTA

*What about you, Bernie?*

BERNIE

*I'm in communications.*

BERNIE

*Would you two like a sandwich and coffee?*

LORETTA

*Sounds good to me.*

*Bernie goes to the coffee urn and pours two mugs of coffee. Michele and*

*Loretta start making sandwiches. Amelia leaves the kitchen carrying the tray with a sandwich and glass of milk.*

INT - FELLOWSHIP HALL - DAY

*Amelia walks through carrying the tray with the sandwich and glass. Pastor goes over to her from the pingpong table.*

AMELIA

*I'm taking these to Jenny.*

PASTOR

*I'm glad you're looking after her. Do you think she would play Mary?*

AMELIA

*You're sure you want these folks to put on the pageant, Pastor? As far as I can tell, there ain't a church-goer among them. Except maybe that fellow they call Rex and the Negro.*

PASTOR

*Well, most of the original cast weren't church-goers either: a bunch of grubby shepherds in the field, some itinerant*

*astrologers, an innkeeper who wouldn't accommodate a pregnant woman, a puppet king subservient to Rome.*

AMELIA

*But Mary and Joseph were God-fearing folk.*

PASTOR

*True. But don't forget: Joseph needed a push. And what really do we know about Mary? Except that she was a Jewish village girl who became a teenage mother.*

AMELIA

*I'm not impressed with this Craig, if you're thinking of him as Joseph.*

PASTOR

*We'll have to see.*

*Amelia walks on to the hallway leading to the office.*

INT - OFFICE - DAY

*Jenny sits on the sofa, leaning forward. Craig sits beside her, rubbing her back.*

JENNY

*That feels good, Craig.*

CRAIG

*It's been a long day for you, Jenny.*

*Amelia enters, carrying the tray with milk and sandwich. Craig pulls back from rubbing Jenny's back.*

AMELIA

*Don't stop on account of me. I remember when I was in Jenny's condition years ago how good a back rub felt.*

JENNY

*That's okay. It's enough for now.*

*Amelia gives the tray of food to Jenny.*

AMELIA

*Here's a snack for you, little one.*

JENNY

*There's food in the kitchen now, Craig, if you want to help yourself.*

CRAIG

*I oughta stay with Jenny.*

AMELIA

*I'll look after her.*

JENNY

*It's all right to go, Craig.*

CRAIG

*Are you sure?*

JENNY

*Yes, I'm sure.*

CRAIG

*Okay, I'll go for a while, but I'll be back.*

*Craig leaves.*

INT - FELLOWSHIP HALL - DAY

*Pastor carries boxes of dominoes, checkers, and Chinese checkers to the table where Roy, Dick, Hank, Hitoshi, and Rex sit.*

PASTOR

*If you men are interested in some light recreation, here's some games for you.*

HANK

*Good idea. What do you have?*



*Pastor places the boxes on the table. Hank takes a checkers board and pieces out of a box and arranges them.*

*HANK*

*Would anyone like to play checkers?*

*ROY*

*I haven't played since I was a boy, but I'm willing to give it a try.*

*HANK*

*We're not playing for money, Roy, so you don't have to hustle me.*

*Chuckles from the men. Roy takes a chair opposite Hank, and they start playing checkers.*

*Pastor goes into kitchen.*

*INT - KITCHEN - DAY*

*Michele and Boomer, Loretta and Bernie sit in pairs at a counter, eating sandwiches and drinking coffee, except milk for Bernie. Craig makes a sandwich at another counter. Pastor enters.*

*PASTOR*

*Good! I see you've found the food.*

*BERNIE*

*Yes, your folks have provided for us well.*

*Pastor fills a mug with coffee. Vicki enters.*

*VICKI*

*Helen took my place. I've been delegated to get something cold to drink.*

*PASTOR*

*There's some punch in the refrigerator, left over from yesterday's children's party.*

*VICKI*

*That should do.*

*Vicki goes to the refrigerator. Pastor finds a stool to sit on.*

*MICHELE*

*Boomer, would you and Bernie like to play pingpong with us?*

*BOOMER*

*Not just now.*

*MICHELE*

*Loretta, they why don't we challenge the winners?*

LORETTA

*I'm willing, but I'm not very good.*

*Michelle and Loretta leave, carrying their coffee and sandwiches with them.*

CRAIG

*(to Boomer and Bernie)*

*So you guys are Air Force. Where's your base?*

BERNIE

*Offutt, near Omaha.*

BOOMER

*We're part of the U.S. Strategic Command. Used to be known as SAC, the Strategic Air Command.*

CRAIG

*Isn't that the outfit that chooses targets for nuclear bombs?*

BOOMER

*That's part of our job.*

*Vicki looks up from filling glasses with punch.*

VICKI

*So you're the big brave men who will push the buttons to wipe out a thousand cities and kill millions of people to save our way of life.*

*BOOMER*

*I wouldn't describe it quite like that.*

*VICKI*

*But just the same, Major Slaughter, you'd drop the H-bomb if they told you to.*

*BOOMER*

*The name's Slatterly.*

*VICKI*

*Oh, sorry.*

*BOOMER*

*Our mission is peace.*

*CRAIG*

*Even if you have to go to war to preserve it.*

*BOOMER*

*You'll be glad to have us if Russia rearms, North Korea starts trouble, or Iraq acts up again.*

CRAIG

What about you, Lieutenant? You're awfully quiet.

BERNIE

The truth is, the ROTC paid my way through college. I made a contract to serve, and I'm serving.

VICKI

Forget it, man. Tell 'em to stuff it.

BERNIE

I'm obligated.

VICKI

No one's obligated to anyone but himself.

BOOMER

Oh, a representative of the "me" generation.

CRAIG

Me, schmee. That's what I learned growing up on Long Island. Everyone was out for number one.

BERNIE

*There oughta be a better way.*

*CRAIG*

*If there is, I sure haven't found it.*

*PASTOR*

*Maybe a better way is out there searching  
for you right now.*

*VICKI*

*That doesn't make sense.*

*Vicki leaves the kitchen, carrying a tray with glasses of punch. Boomer follows her.*

*Sam and Dick come in with coffee mugs and fill them from the urn.*

*SAM*

*How ya comin' with the pageant cast?*

*PASTOR*

*You know my plans?*

*SAM*

*I was just talkin' with Amelia.*

*CRAIG*

*What pageant?*

SAM

*This church used to have a pageant every year on Christmas eve -- depicting the birth of Jesus. But it's been ten years.*

PASTOR

*As I get acquainted with you folks, it occurs to me that you've got the makings of a good cast.*

CRAIG

*Oh come off it, Reverend. You're not going to get us to play your fairy tale of angels, a virgin, a bright star, and kings from the East.*

PASTOR

*Why not? It's a beautiful story, full of great truth. Besides, you're stuck here -- in this dump, as you call it -- with nothing to do.*

CRAIG

*It'd be better for our group to improvise a concert.*

PASTOR

*We can work your music into the pageant.*

DICK

You're going to ask us to be in your  
pageant?

PASTOR

That's what I've been thinking.

DICK

I can't speak for the others, but I'll have  
no part in it.

SAM

Why not?

DICK

The Christmas story is an outmoded  
superstition.

PASTOR

It remains a beautiful story for our age.

DICK

How can you say that? In this day of  
modern science and precision  
engineering, these old folk tales are  
hopelessly out of date. Angel chorus --  
that's a joke. And a star standing  
still -- preposterous.



BERNIE

*But I've read somewhere that astronomers believe that there was a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter during the last year of Herod's reign. Couldn't that have been the star of Bethlehem?*

DICK

*If there was, it only gave somebody material to write a fable. Lieutenant, we've been in space. There's no heaven. There's no God up there.*

PASTOR

*Maybe you're looking for God without when God is really within -- in the depth of being.*

DICK

*You're inventive, you ministers. You find a new expression every time an old one is proven false.*

BERNIE

*But it's clear that Jesus was a historical figure. Herod's name appears in other writings besides the Bible. Maybe the exact details of Jesus' birth are exaggerated, but I'm not ready to dismiss*

*it entirely.*

*CRAIG*

*You're something, soldier boy. All this Jesus talk, but you serve in an outfit that's ready to bomb the hell out of the Russian, the Chinese, or anybody else you're told to.*

*PASTOR*

*Craig, aren't you being a little harsh?*

*CRAIG*

*It's the same bullshit like in the churches back home. None of this crap for me.*

*Craig stomps out to fellowship hall.*

*DICK*

*Likewise. Here in the middle of Nebraska, it's like being back in the 19th century -- maybe even the middle ages. It'll take somebody more naive than me take a role in your pageant, Pastor Ziegler.*

*Dick goes into fellowship hall.*

*PASTOR*

*Sam, it may be harder putting together a cast than I thought.*

*BERNIE*

*If it's any help, I'm willing to take a part.*

*PASTOR*

*Thanks, Bernie. It'll take quite a few more.*

*Pastor exits into fellowship hall, followed by Bernie.*

*INT - FELLOWSHIP HALL - DAY*

*Pastor enters from the kitchen. He goes to where Roy and Hank are playing checkers and watches the game in progress. Dick, Hitoshi, and Rex play Chinese checkers at the other end of the table.*

*Harriet comes over from the pingpong table to the game table where Pastor stands.*

*HARRIET*

*(to Hank)*

*What's happenin'?*

*HANK*

*Same-o.*

*HARRIET*

*Pastor, I just want to say thank you for taking us in. I don't know what we'd have done without you.*

PASTOR

*You're quite welcome, Harriet.*

HARRIET

*If there's anything I can do to help, please let me know.*

PASTOR

*I sure will.*

*Harriet walks away toward the pingpong table.*

ROY

*It's rare these days to see a young'un with nice manners.*

HANK

*Yes, I'm afraid that's so.*

*Roy moves a checker.*

*Across fellowship hall at the pingpong table Harriet rejoins Loretta, Bernie, Craig, Buddy, and Smitty watching Vicki and Crejsek compete against Michele and Boomer. Crejsek and Boomer are both strong players. As the players complete a game, Crejsek lays her paddle on the table and walks away. Smitty reaches for the paddle, but Buddy grabs it first.*

Smitty pushes Buddy, who drops the paddle to the floor. As Smitty reaches to retrieve it, Buddy pushes Smitty, who tumbles to the floor. Smitty comes up with his fists cocked. Buddy raises his fists.

BUDDY

Want me to black the other one?

SMITTY

Just try, asshole.

They feint but make no contact.

Across the hall at the table, Hank and Roy look up from their checkers game to watch Smitty and Buddy spar.

HANK

Aren't you going to stop them, Roy?

ROY

Naw. They're just fightin' over who gets to play with Miss Vicki. Let them settle it.

At the pingpong table Craig picks up the paddle from the floor.

CRAIG

I'll play with you, Vicki.

Crejsek steps between Buddy and Smitty.

CREJSEK

*Break it up, you two.*

SMITTY

*Who says?*

CREJSEK

*I say so.*

SMITTY

*Oh, hell.*

*Smitty and Buddy sulk away in opposite directions.*

*At the table across the hall, Hank and Roy return to their checkers game. Hank's three kings drive Roy's two kings toward a double corner. Pastor watches them. Rex plays Chinese checkers with Dick and Hitoshi at the other end of the table.*

PASTOR

*You're a patient man, Roy.*

ROY

*Them two's always scufflin'.*

PASTOR

*I've a favor to ask of you, Roy, and you, too, Rex.*

ROY

*What's that?*

PASTOR

*A lady's coming in a few minutes with some food and bedding. Would the two of you grab your coats and go out and meet her?*

ROY

*It's all right with me.*

REX

*Sure, I'll do it.*

PASTOR

*Sam's in the kitchen. He'll tell you when and where to go.*

*Roy brushes the checker pieces off the board.*

ROY

*I concede, Hank. You've got me cornered.*

*Roy and Rex get their coats and go into the kitchen.*

HANK

*Would you like to take Roy's place, Pastor?*

PASTOR

*No, I think I'll go see how Jenny's getting along.*

*Pastor walks toward door into the hallway. Hank starts resetting the checkers.*



INT - OFFICE - DAY

*Pastor enters. Amelia is at the work table folding bulletins. Jenny is stretched out on the sofa but sits up as Pastor comes in.*

PASTOR

*How you feeling now, Jenny?*

JENNY

*Much better thank you. I'm warm. I was glad for the food Amelia brought me.*

AMELIA

*Any more food arrived in the kitchen?*

PASTOR

*It keeps coming in. Roy and Rex are helping Sam receive it.*

JENNY

*Pastor Ziegler, Amelia says you want us to help put on your Christmas pageant.*

PASTOR

*I'm hoping so.*

JENNY

*She said you want me to be Mary.*

PASTOR

Yes, you'd be lovely. I'd like you to sing,  
too.

JENNY

At first I thought it would be kinda fun.  
Now I'm not so sure.

PASTOR

Why not?

JENNY

I'm too tired.

PASTOR

We can make it easy for you.

JENNY

It's not only that. It's that I have --  
uh -- a different life style than the virgin  
Mary.

(beat)

You see, I lost my own virginity at age  
fourteen -- to the boy next door.

PASTOR

I'm not asking for a confession.

JENNY

In the tenth grade I dated the whole  
basketball team, if you know what I

mean.

PASTOR

*You can spare us the details.*

JENNY

*After I left home I took up with this rock group. It was a relief to be with all girls.*

PASTOR

*Yes, group life has advantages.*

JENNY

*Then this roadie, Craig, came along. He's been my boy friend for the past year.*

*Jenny rubs her stomach.*

JENNY (cont.)

*And this happened.*

*(beat)*

*So you see, I'm not the one for your pageant.*

PASTOR

*Jenny, my dear, no one is here to judge your past. It's what you are now, and what you might become.*

JENNY

*You see who I am. It's what I've been,*

*and what I will remain.*

PASTOR

*God loves you.*

JENNY

*There is no God.*

PASTOR

*There is. God exists whether we believe or not. God's love is pervasive, even when we falter. I know from my own life.*

*Michele enters with a mug of coffee and a cookie.*

JENNY

*I wish it were true -- but it isn't.*

MICHELE

*Wish what were true?*

JENNY

*A loving God. That's what the pastor claims.*

MICHELE

*Don't listen to him, Jenny. That's his lingo.*

PASTOR

*Michele, let me explain it to you.*

MICHELE

*No, Reverend, I didn't come to discuss theology. Craig says you want to stage a Christmas pageant. I love to put on shows, so I'll help you.*

PASTOR

*It's the story of God's love come to earth.*

MICHELE

*That's all right. The subject doesn't matter. We can join together, you and me, because we're both in the illusion business.*

PASTOR

*Really?*

MICHELE

*Yeah. Six times a week we put on a show to make people feel better. You do it every Sunday.*

PASTOR

*I can't speak for you, Michele, but what does on at church is hardly illusionary. It doesn't escape reality. It penetrates*

*to Ultimate Reality.*

MICHELE

*Words, words.*

PASTOR

*Well, I accept you as you are, Michele.  
Join the pageant and let its meaning grab  
you -- if you're open.*

MICHELE

*I'm always open to new experience,  
man -- sober, drunk, or stoned.*

PASTOR

*I offer you sober exhilaration.*

MICHELE

*Far out, if you can do it.*

PASTOR

*You, my friend, can be the angel Gabriel.  
It's a "he" in the scriptures, but I doubt  
that heaven has sexual differentiation.*

MICHELE

*Me an angel?*

PASTOR

*You'll do well as Gabriel because you're so full of pronouncements.*

MICHELE

*Well, why not?*

PASTOR

*I've asked Jenny to be Mary.*

MICHELE

*(to Jenny)*

*And you consented?*

JENNY

*I haven't decided.*

AMELIA

*I wish you would, Jenny. I had the part fifty years ago. I'd like you to play the role this year.*

JENNY

*I doubt that I should.*

PASTOR

*If you're Mary, we can ask Craig to be Joseph.*

AMELIA

*Are you sure?*

PASTOR

*Yes, he's the right one.*

MICHELE

*I doubt that he'll do it, the way he was talking.*

JENNY

*It doesn't sound like something Craig would agree to.*

PASTOR

*I'll ask him anyway.*

*(beat)*

*Michele, if you're Gabriel, the others in your group can join in the angels' chorus that sings to the shepherds.*

MICHELE

*Vicki and Harriet might be willing,*

PASTOR

*What about Loretta?*

MICHELE

*She could be the organist if you need one. She turned down a scholarship to Julliard*



*to join our group.*

PASTOR

*Excellent. The rest of you can play your instruments, too.*

AMELIA

*But, Pastor, they probably play rock-and-roll, not church music.*

PASTOR

*That's all right. It's not the style but the spirit that counts.*

MICHELE

*What about costumes?*

AMELIA

*We have a closet full, left from celebrations years ago. They're out in a wardrobe in fellowship hall.*

MICHELE

*Then let's go look at them. You want to see them, Jenny?*

JENNY

*Sure, why not?*

AMELIA

*Pastor, you show them. I want to check  
the kitchen.*

*Pastor opens the door for Michele, Jenny, and Amelia as they all exit into  
the hallway.*

*INT - FELLOWSHIP HALL - DAY*

*Amelia, Jenny, Michele, and Pastor enter. Pastor leads Jenny and  
Michele to a wardrobe in the corner. Amelia goes on through to the  
kitchen.*

*Beyond the serving counter, a man comes into the kitchen from outside  
with parcels of food, followed by another man with blankets and pillows.  
Both are covered with snow. Sam, Rex, and Roy receive the items.*

*Amelia comes into view in the kitchen and directs where the food should  
be placed.*

*At the pingpong table Bernie and Loretta play as partners against Buddy  
and Smitty. Harriet, Vicki, Craig, Crejsek, and Boomer watch.*

*Craig notices that Jenny has come into the room and goes over to join her.  
He hugs her. She responds coolly.*

*JENNY*

*Where you been? I thought you were  
coming back to be with me.*

*CRAIG*

*I got to talking with some folks in the kitchen.*

JENNY

*You were probably arguing*

CRAIG

*Then I played a game of pingpong*

JENNY

*I might have known.*

*Pastor opens the wardrobe closet as Michele, Jenny, and Craig look on. Pastor pulls out a radiant, multi-colored costume.*

PASTOR

*I believe this is for a wiseman.*

MICHELE

*Wow, way out!*

PASTOR

*I'd like to present the versions of Matthew and Luke separately, and do something with John, too.*

MICHELE

*Whatever you say.*

PASTOR

*The wisemen are in Matthew. We can use our scientists.*

*Pastor drapes the wiseman's costume over a chair and pulls out a plainer costume.*

PASTOR

*And this is for a shepherd -- in Luke. The ranchers would be natural for the role.*

MICHELE

*Right, let's start with them.*

*Roy and Sam come out of the kitchen with loads of blankets, pillows, and sleeping bags.*

MICHELE

*Roy, will you come over here? I've got something I want you to do.*

*Roy and Sam put the bedding in a corner. Roy walks toward the wardrobe, and Sam follows him.*

MICHELE

*Hey, Smitty, Buddy. I need you guys.*

*Smitty and Buddy put down their paddles and walk toward the wardrobe.*

SMITTY

*Sure thing, sweetheart.*

JENNY

*Craig, I'd like something more to eat.*

CRAIG

*Me, too. Let's see what's new in the kitchen.*

*Craig and Jenny go to the kitchen. Roy and Sam, Smitty and Buddy come up to the wardrobe.*

MICHELE

*Men, me and the pastor are puttin' on a pageant tonight, and we want you to be shepherds.*

ROY

*That's what we do: herd sheep.*

PASTOR

*Yes, I know.*

SAM

*Pastor, let me help you with the costumes. I think I can find the crooks.*

*Sam starts rummaging in the wardrobe.*

PASTOR

(to the ranchers)

We're doing three versions of the coming of Christ. You'll be in Luke's.

SMITTY

Oh no, not me. I ain't gonna make a fool of myself.

PASTOR

We're not asking you to look foolish. Just take part in the pageant.

SMITTY

No way. I ain't been in church since my sis got married ten years ago. I ain't gonna break my record now.

MICHELE

Oh, come on, Smitty. It'll be fine entertainment.

SMITTY

I don't know nothin' about the Jesus story.

ROY

Maybe we should help out the pastor, Smitty. He's given us shelter and food.

SMITTY

*Are you gonna do it, Roy?*

*ROY*

*Sure. I was in one of these a long time ago when I was a kid. I'm willin' to do it for the pastor and Miss Michele.*

*Pastor hands Roy a costume, which he starts putting on.*

*MICHELE*

*What about you, Buddy?*

*BUDDY*

*Naw, I don't want to either.*

*PASTOR*

*We really need you.*

*BUDDY*

*Why don't you get somebody else, like those soldier guys?*

*PASTOR*

*There are other roles for them.*

*MICHELE*

*Buddy, Vicki's going to be an angel who serenades the shepherds.*

*Buddy hesitates.*

BUDDY

*Well, maybe I will then.*

*Sam gives Buddy a costume, which he starts putting on.*

MICHELE

*Smitty?*

SMITTY

*Not even with Vicki.*

*Sam pulls a couple of crooks from the wardrobe.*

PASTOR

*Buddy's not your real name, is it?*

BUDDY

*Naw. It's David.*

PASTOR

*I might have known from your ruddy cheeks. David is my middle name -- in more ways than one.*

*Buddy now has the costume on. Sam hands him a crook.*

SAM

*Here's a crook for you, David.*



BUDDY

*I prefer Buddy, or Dave, not David.*

SAM

*Okay, Dave.*

*Roy is now garbed. Sam hands him a crook. Roy looks at himself in the wardrobe mirror and laughs. Smitty laughs with him.*

ROY

*Well, it's better than the bathrobes we used to use at our church.*

PASTOR

*You sure you won't change your mind, Smitty?*

SMITTY

*No, never.*

BUDDY

*You can call him Dennis, if you like. That's his real name.*

SMITTY

*Don't you dare.*

MICHELE

*(to Roy and Buddy)*

*You're lookin' great, men.*

*(beat)*

*Pastor, do they have spoken parts?*

PASTOR

*Yes, a few lines. I'll provide them later.*

ROY

*Can we go now?*

MICHELE

*I guess so.*

*Roy, still in costume, heads to the game table. Buddy loosens his costume but leaves it on. He and Smitty go back to the pingpong table.*

*Pastor goes to a nearby bookshelf and pulls out a copy of the New Testament. He hands it to Sam.*

PASTOR

*Sam, I want to use this translation. Would you please make fifteen copies of first two chapters of Matthew and Luke and five copies of the first and third chapters of John. Later I'll mark the parts for our actors.*

SAM

*There's no birth story in John.*

PASTOR

*It has beautiful symbolism: the light that*

*comes into the world and shines on all men.*

SAM

*I don't see you you'll act that out.*

PASTOR

*I have an idea.*

SAM

*Well, I'll do what you ask.*

PASTOR

*Thanks. And Sam, would you have a talk with Smitty? I have a feeling you can get through to him.*

SAM

*I'll give it a try when I get a chance.*

*Sam takes the New Testament and exits through the hallway leading to the office.*

INT - KITCHEN - DAY

*Jenny and Craig sit on stools at the serving counter, looking into fellowship hall. Jenny drinks milk and eats a cookie. Craig drinks*

*coffee and has a sandwich. Suddenly Jenny feels her stomach.*

JENNY

*There! He did it again. He'll probably  
be a soccer player.*

*Jenny takes Craig's hand and places it on her stomach.*

JENNY

*Do you feel him?*

CRAIG

*Yeah. Or maybe a drummer.*

JENNY

*Or whatever he wants to be.*

CRAIG

*If he's lucky.*

*Craig sighs, then takes a bite from his sandwich.*

INT - FELLOWSHIP HALL - DAY

*At one end of the game table Hitoshi spreads pieces next to an unfolded Go game board as Dick watches. A completed Chinese checkers game is nearby on the table. At the other end Rex plays checkers with Hank. Roy approaches the game table.*

ROY

*What ya playin', Hitoshi?*

HITOSHI

*It's called Go. A favorite in Japan.*

*Roy slips out of his costume.*

ROY

*Boy, I'd hate to ride herd dressed like this.*

*At the wardrobe Pastor pulls out two more wisemen's costumes as Michele watches. The other costume for a wiseman remains on a chair.*

PASTOR

*Why don't we do the wisemen next?*

MICHELE

*Sure. What are their names?*

PASTOR

*The African American is Hank. The others are Dick and Hitoshi.*

MICHELE

*Hey, Dick, Hitoshi, Hank. Would you guys come over here, please?*

*At the game table Dick and Hitoshi look across toward Michele.*

HITOSHI

*I wonder what she wants of us?*

DICK

*I think I know, and I don't like it.*

HITOSHI

*We better go see anyway.*

*Hitoshi and Dick rise and start for the wardrobe.*

*At the other end of the table Hank, playing checkers with Rex as Roy watches, looks toward the wardrobe then back to Rex.*

HANK

*Excuse me, Rex. I'm being paged.*

*(beat)*

*Roy, why don't you take my place?*

REX

*Yes, please do.*

ROY

*It's all right with me.*

*Hank rises, and Roy slips into his chair.*

*Hank goes to the wardrobe and joins Dick, Hitoshi, Michele, and Pastor, who holds two wisemen's costumes.*

MICHELE

*Gentlemen, we've got a great role for you in the Christmas pageant we're putting on tonight. We'd like you to be the wisemen.*

DICK

*Don't count on it.*

PASTOR

*You'll be featured in Matthew's presentation of Jesus' birth.*

HANK

*I see you got Roy to be a shepherd. If he's willing to be in it, I will, too. Give me a costume.*

MICHELE

*That was easy.*

*Pastor hands Hank a costume, and he starts putting it on.*

PASTOR

*What about you, Hitoshi?*

HITOSHI

*I've never done anything like this before.*

MICHELE

*You have Nō plays and Kabuki theater in Japan.*

HITOSHI

*That's for experts.*

PASTOR

*Christmas pageants always rely on amateurs.*

HITOSHI

*But I don't speak very good English.*

PASTOR

*Yes, you do. But you don't have to have a speaking part.*

HITOSHI

*But I'm not a Christian.*

PASTOR

*Neither were the original wisemen. They were probably Zoroastrians.*

HANK

*I'd like you to join me, Hitoshi.*

HITOSHI

*Well, all right.*



*Pastor hands Hitoshi a costume, which he starts putting on.*

PASTOR

*Thank you.*

*Michele takes the other wiseman's costume from the chair and offers it to Dick.*

MICHELE

*Here's your costume, Dick. You'll be our third wiseman.*

*Dick pushes the costume away.*

DICK

*With all due respects, I don't think you should cajole men of science into medieval pageantry.*

PASTOR

*Medieval? The tradition is ancient, but the Christmas pageant tells a story that's fresh for each new generation.*

DICK

*It's the ideas you're conveying, Pastor. The superstition. The belief in a God who doesn't exist.*

HITOSHI

*That may be your feelings, Dick, but not mine.*

DICK

*Hitoshi, I thought you, more than anybody, would know there is no God. You're peered billions of light years and seen nothing but light and matter.*

HITOSHI

*The more I look and study, the greater my awe.*

PASTOR

*How so?*

HITOSHI

*With the Hubble telescope in space we are probing deeper into the vastness of the universe than ever before. We have found regions in our own galaxy where stars are now being born. We live in a very dynamic universe.*

HANK

*We certainly do.*

HITOSHI

*Although some things appear chaotic, there is a sense of order indicating that*

*an underlying intelligence is present.*

DICK

*But have you seen God out there?*

HITOSHI

*What you westerners call God is not something you see with your eyes. Taught by eastern religions, I have learned through meditation to experience the deeper sense of life. In that manner I have discovered the eternal entering the finite.*

DICK

*But is that God?*

HITOSHI

*It is for me. Clearly the universal spirit is alive even if some of the old concepts of God are dead.*

HANK

*Hitoshi, I couldn't express it as well, but I say, Amen, Amen. It's true for me.*

*Hitoshi and Hank are now costumed. Sam returns with copied pages and hands them to Pastor.*

SAM

*Here you are, Pastor.*

PASTOR

*Thanks, Sam. Just put them on the table.*

*Sam puts the pages on a small table near the wardrobe.*

SAM

*Only two wisemen?*

PASTOR

*The other one hasn't decided yet.*

DICK

*You'll have to find somebody else, or get by with two.*

PASTOR

*That's all right. Matthew doesn't give any number. It's tradition that says three.*

*(beat)*

*But I haven't given up on you, Dick.*

*Dick returns to the game table. Hank and Hitoshi remove their costumes. Sam searches the wardrobe for other costumes as Michele watches.*

PASTOR

*Hitoshi, I wish I had your insights on  
God's creation.*

HITOSHI

*I wish I had your composure and sense of  
God's love.*

PASTOR

*It hasn't come easy.*

HITOSHI

*Nothing of value does.*

*Hitoshi and Hank walk toward the game table with their costumes over  
their arms.*

INT - KITCHEN - DAY

*Sitting at the serving counter, Jenny and Craig watch Hank and  
Hitoshi walk to the game table.*

JENNY

*Craig, it's time to settle on a name.*

CRAIG

*I've told you, you can decide.*

JENNY

*He's your baby, too.*

*CRAIG*

*Yes, I know. But...  
(hesitating)*

*JENNY*

*But you don't know if you'll be hanging  
around.*

*CRAIG*

*Jenny, you know I love you.*

*JENNY*

*Forever, or just while I'm with the band?*

*CRAIG*

*As long as I can.*

*JENNY*

*How long is that? You drift from job to  
job.*

*CRAIG*

*I've been with your group fifteen months.*

*JENNY*

*That's the longest job you've ever held.*

*CRAIG*

*It's because of you.*

JENNY

*But you won't commit yourself to stay with me after our baby is born.*

CRAIG

*I haven't said I won't. Anyway, you're the one who always says, "Marriage, who needs it?"*

JENNY

*I'm not interested in a license or wedding ring, just a lasting commitment.*

CRAIG

*Yeah? How many times have I heard you say, "I can make it on my own"?*

JENNY

*I have to be prepared for that.*

CRAIG

*I really do love you, Jenny. But it's hard for me to settle down.*

JENNY

*Humph!*

*Michele comes up on the other side of the serving counter.*

MICHELE

Hey, you two. We've got the costumes  
for Mary and Joseph ready.

CRAIG

Who said we're going to take the parts?

MICHELE

The pastor wants you to.

JENNY

Craig, let's at least look at the costumes.

CRAIG

You're willing to be Mary?

JENNY

I might. If you'll be Joseph.

CRAIG

No way.

JENNY

I understand. You're afraid.

CRAIG

Afraid of what.



JENNY

*To make a commitment even for thirty minutes in a lousy little Christmas pageant.*

MICHELE

*Will you two quit arguing and come with me?*

*Jenny gets off her stool and exits the kitchen for fellowship hall. Craig tags along.*

INT - FELLOWSHIP HALL - DAY

*At the game table Roy makes a series of jumps to defeat Rex in checkers. Hank watches.*

REX

*That was a quick finish. Reminds me of the way John Elway is always coming from behind.*

ROY

*Do you remember the time he led the Broncos down the field eighty-seven yards in the last two minutes to beat the Chargers?*

REX

*Which time?*

ROY

*How about a snack?*

REX

*Sounds good to me. Will you join us,  
Hank?*

HANK

*No, Hitoshi's teaching Dick how to play  
Go. I want to learn, too.*

*Hank slides down to the other end of the table where Hitoshi and Dick are  
just beginning to play Go.*

*At the wardrobe Michele, Jenny, Craig, and Pastor watch Sam pull out  
the costume for Mary. Amelia comes out of the kitchen and joins them.*

AMELIA

*Well, Jenny, have you decided to be  
Mary?*

PASTOR

*I hope you will.*

JENNY

*Even if you know who I am?*

PASTOR

*It makes no difference to me.*

AMELIA

*Or to me either.*

JENNY

*Well, all right. I'll do it.*

PASTOR

*Wonderful.*

SAM

*Here's Mary's robe.*

*Sam hands Jenny her costume. Amelia helps her put it on.*

AMELIA

*Jenny, when I was Mary fifty years ago,  
my husband was Joseph, and our infant  
son was the baby Jesus. He cried a little,  
not like in the song, but was so sweet.*

JENNY

*Then your son is fifty now. Does he still  
live around here?*

AMELIA

*When the boy was twelve, Harold -- that*

was my husband -- took him on a fishin' trip to the Rockies. There was a flash flood, and they both drowned.

PASTOR

*I didn't know that, Amelia. What a calamity.*

AMELIA

*It was a terrible time for me.*

PASTOR

*I'm sorry.*

JENNY

*(to Amelia)*

*I'm sure you were more deserving than me to be Mary.*

AMELIA

*Oh, I was chaste at marriage, but not perfect by a long shot. As I sat there with my own baby lying in the manger, the pastor read how Mary pondered the events in her heart.*

*(beat)*

*Ponder. I like that word better than the new-fangled version.*

*(beat)*

*I pondered a lot. I settled down, and I think I was a good mother for the twelve*

*years my son lived. Yet I retained my feeling that life could be fun.*

JENNY

*I wish I had known you then.*

AMELIA

*I've watched other girls play the part of Mary through the years. For a few it was hard to do because of the comparison with their own lives. But for most girls, being Mary was a renewal, a gift to cherish. When you say, "My soul doth magnify the Lord," it really can.*

*Jenny is now garbed as Mary.*

CRAIG

*You look lovely, Jenny.*

PASTOR

*Yes, you do.*

*Sam hands Pastor the costume for Joseph.*

SAM

*Here's the one for Joseph.*

PASTOR

*How about it, Craig? Will you be*

Joseph?

CRAIG

Why do you keep harping at me?

PASTOR

Actually you're a bit like Joseph. He, too, was reluctant at first.

CRAIG

Yeah, so?

PASTOR

But he was an honorable man.

JOSEPH

What else do you know about Joseph?

JENNY

You're stalling, Craig.

PASTOR

In Matthew's Gospel some one asks of the adult Jesus, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" So we assume that Joseph was a skilled tradesman, a steady provider for his family.

MICHELE

So do it, Craig.

CRAIG

Well, uh. I just don't know.

PASTOR

Why don't you give it a try? You may discover that role fits you well.

JENNY

Please, Craig. For my sake.

CRAIG

Oh, what the hell. I might as well.

PASTOR

Good for you.

CRAIG

But just for this one performance.

PASTOR

You will make a fine couple. Here's your costume.

*Pastor hands the costume to Craig, who holds it over his arm. Jenny puts her arm around Craig.*

JENNY

Thank you, Craig.

PASTOR

*Sam, is there a costume for Anna?*

*(beat)*

*Amelia, I want you to play that role.*

*Sam rummages in the wardrobe.*

AMELIA

*Once a young mother, fifty years later a wrinkled widow.*

PASTOR

*But younger than the biblical widow, who was eighty-four.*

*Sam hands a costume to Amelia.*

SAM

*Here you are, Amelia.*

*Amelia holds the costume at arm's length and examines it.*

*Suddenly Jenny grabs her back.*

JENNY

*Oh!*

CRAIG

*What's the matter?*



JENNY

*I don't know....It hurts.*

AMELIA

*Let's go to the office. You can lie down  
on the sofa.*

JENNY

*Yeah. Okay.*

CRAIG

*I'll go with you.*

*Amelia puts an around Jenny's shoulder as they walk toward the  
hallway door. Craig follows.*

JENNY

*(to Amelia)*

*Why are you so kind to me?*

AMELIA

*Because I think you're special, Jenny.*

JENNY

*That's what my grandmother used to tell  
me.*

*Jenny, Craig, and Amelia go down the hallway to the office. Pastor,  
Michele, and Sam remain at the wardrobe.*

MICHELE

*What about the rest of my group? You got angel clothes?*

PASTOR

*What have you used in the past, Sam?*

*Sam reaches into wardrobe.*

MICHELE

*Vicki, Harriet. We're ready for you now.*

*Vicki and Harriet put down their paddles and go to the wardrobe. As they come up, Sam pulls out some faded white robes and tattered wings.*

SAM

*How about these?*

VICKI

*Oh, come on, man. You can't expect us to wear those trashy things.*

HARRIET

*I should say not.*

MICHELE

*Vicki's right, Reverend. These won't do. We've got better threads in the bus.*

*(beat)*

*Where's Craig?*

PASTOR

*He went in with Jenny.*

MICHELE

*Vicki, get a couple of the guys to help you  
bring in our wardrobe trunk.*

VICKI

*Out in the storm, are you crazy?*

MICHELE

*It's got to be done.*

*Vicki looks toward the pingpong table where Boomer, Bernie, Loretta,  
Crejsek, Smitty, and Buddy are standing around.*

VICKI

*Boomer, I've a favor to ask. Will you  
help carry in a trunk from our bus?  
Maybe Bernie can help, too.*

BOOMER

*Sorry, I'm not one who volunteers.*

SMITTY

*I'll help you, sweetie. I'm used to  
working outside in winter.*

BUDDY

*I'll go, too.*

SMITTY

*(to Buddy)*

*You little twerp, why do you always have to tag along?*

HARRIET

*(to Vicki)*

*I'll go with you for protection.*

*Harriet goes off for their jackets. Smitty and Buddy go for theirs.*

*At the wardrobe Sam continues to sort costumes. Michele and Pastor stand together.*

MICHELE

*Later on Craig can bring in our instruments and the sound equipment if you really want us to play.*

PASTOR

*Yes, we would like to have your music.*

MICHELE

*But we'll take care of the costumes first.*

*Harriet returns with her jacket on. She gives Vicki her jacket, which she puts on. Smitty and Buddy zip up their coats.*

HARRIET

*I'm goin' hate this.*

BUDDY

*Ain't nothing.*

*Buddy, Smitty, Vicki, and Harriet go out into the howling blizzard.*

PASTOR

*The storm continues to rage.*

MICHELE

*What if nobody can get out tonight for the pageant? I'd hate to prepare and have nobody come.*

SAM

*I think its one of those twenty-four hour storms.*

PASTOR

*Then it should be over by four-thirty or five.*

MICHELE

*So who else do we need in our cast.  
Pastor?*

PASTOR

*Let's see. We still need Simeon, Herod, soldiers, an innkeeper, and a priest.*

MICHELE

*Sounds like roles for men. I'll round 'em up.*

*Michele goes around fellowship hall. Pastor turns to Sam.*

PASTOR

*Sam, I'd like you to take the role of Simeon in Luke's story.*

SAM

*Me? I ain't never been in one of these.*

PASTOR

*Never?*

SAM

*No, never. Once they tried to get to be shepherd and another time a wiseman, but I refused. I just like to watch.*

PASTOR

*But we need you. You know who Simeon is, don't you?*

SIMEON

*Of course. I used to teach a Bible class.*

*He's that old codger who comes into the temple, sees the baby Jesus, and says, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word."*

PASTOR

*You've got it! Except we're going to use a more modern translation, Sam.*

SAM

*So I have to learn some new words, too?*

PASTOR

*I know you can do it. If we're going to have a pageant tonight, everybody's got to pitch in.*

SAM

*I guess I'll do it. As a personal favor to you, Pastor.*

PASTOR

*I appreciate it.*

*Michele comes up with Boomer, Bernie, and Rex.*

REX

*Your costumes are splendid, Pastor.*

PASTOR

*A little worn, some moth holes, but serviceable. We hope that you gentlemen will be willing to take part in our pageant.*

*BOOMER*

*What do you have in mind?*

*PASTOR*

*We need someone to be King Herod in the Matthew story.*

*MICHELE*

*How old is Herod?*

*PASTOR*

*The Bible doesn't say, but he died a few years after Jesus birth.*

*MICHELE*

*Then how about Rex? He has a regal bearing.*

*REX*

*Did you ever work for the government, Michele? Your flattery sounds like someone seeking a promotion.*



PASTOR

*I know you're not as wicked as Herod,  
Rex, but I hope you'll consent.*

REX

*Well, my new friends, Roy and Hank, are  
cooperating, so I might as well go along,  
too.*

PASTOR

*Excellent. Sam, do you have a costume  
for Herod?*

*Sam hands Rex his costume.*

SAM

*Here it is.*

*Rex takes the costume and starts putting it on.*

PASTOR

*Bernie and Boomer, I'd like you to serve  
as soldiers.*

BERNIE

*Are you sure?*

PASTOR

*You said you would participate.*

BERNIE

Yes, I guess I did.

Sam hands Bernie a tunic, which he starts putting on.

BOOMER

What rank?

PASTOR

The Bible doesn't say, but they were probably foot soldiers.

BOOMER

Well, frankly, I was expecting a more important role.

REX

I'll yield Herod to you.

BOOMER

No, that's not me. I prefer the Old Testament generals. Like Joshua.

MICHELE

Who "fit" the battle of Jericho?

BOOMER

Yes. Or Joab.

MICHELE

Who?

PASTOR

*King David's leading general.*

BOOMER

*There was a superior warrior.*

PASTOR

*It's the wrong testament.*

*Michele puts her hand around Boomer's biceps.*

MICHELE

*Boomer, you make a great soldier at any rank.*

*Boomer draws back from Michele.*

BOOMER

*I'll give it some thought.*

*Lieutenant now has on his tunic.*

BERNIE

*This doesn't seem to fit me.*

PASTOR

*The tunic is just your size.*

BERNIE

No, I mean the role.

BOOMER

Bernie, you had basic training. Just recall what it's like being a foot soldier.

BERNIE

What about you? Did you have basic?

BOOMER

Yes, once upon a time.

PASTOR

Then you'll agree to be one of our soldiers?

BOOMER

Well, okay. You've given us shelter, Pastor, so I'll help out with your pageant.

Sam hands Boomer a tunic, which he puts over his arm. Boomer and Rex go to the kitchen. Bernie wanders over to the pingpong table where he renews conversation with Loretta.

Crejsek comes up to Pastor, Michele, and Sam.

CREJSEK

Pastor Ziegler, you seem to be casting everybody but me. Why am I being excluded?

PASTOR

*It's not intentional, Helen. Why don't you be the innkeeper?*

CREJSEK

*Don't you think you should take that part yourself? You're obviously an accomplished innkeeper.*

PASTOR

*I would prefer not. How about Harriet or Vicki? The innkeeper appears before they come on as angels. There'd be time to slip off the innkeeper's costume.*

MICHELE

*Okay. I'll talk to one of them when they come back in.*

PASTOR

*You have a really nice voice, Helen. Why don't you be our narrator?*

CREJSEK

*Would I have to wear a costume?*

PASTOR

*Not a biblical costume. But we could give you a choir robe.*

CREJSEK

Well, all right. Provided that I can look over the text in advance.

From the nearby table Pastor picks up a copy of the material Sam provided earlier. As he talks, he marks some passages and hands the copy to Crejsek.

PASTOR

Here's what we're using. In Matthew start after the genealogy and go to the end of chapter two. In Luke begin after the introduction and go most of the way through the second chapter.

CREJSEK

That's a lot.

PASTOR

And in John I want to use selected passages from chapters one and three. I'll mark them for you later.

CREJSEK

I'd better find a quiet place to read it through.

Crejsek goes to a far corner of fellowship hall to read.

MICHELE

(to Pastor)

*Did you say we need a priest?*

PASTOR

*Yes.*

MICHELE

*What about you?*

PASTOR

*I guess I can't duck out altogether. I'll do it.*

MICHELE

*Any other parts?*

PASTOR

*There's Zechariah and Elizabeth if we do all of chapter one of Luke.*

MICHELE

*Who are they?*

PASTOR

*The parents of John the Baptist -- their first child, who came when they were quite old.*

MICHELE

*What about Sam and Amelia?*

PASTOR

*Amelia is already Anna, and I've got Sam to be Simeon.*

MICHELE

*Why can't they play two parts?*

SAM

*Don't press your luck. One part is more than I ever intended to play.*

MICHELE

*Sam, you can do it. You look like a natural actor.*

SAM

*I dunno.*

MICHELE

*You'll be great.*

SAM

*I'll have to think about it.*

MICHELE

*What about Amelia?*

PASTOR



*I'll sound her out.*

*The outside door opens. Vicki, Harriet, Smitty, and Buddy enter with a blast of snow behind them. The men carry a trunk with "SEARCHING" on it. Vicki has a sign under her arm. Loretta and Bernie come over from the pingpong table.*

HARRIET

*Man, it's freezing out there.*

PASTOR

*"Searching". What's that?*

MICHELE

*It's the name of our group. We're "Searching".*

BERNIE

*Aren't we all?*

VICKI

*Who's gonna be the innkeeper?.*

MICHELE

*Harriet, but I haven't told her yet.*

HARRIET

*Come on, Michele. We're off duty. You can't boss me now.*

PASTOR

*Let me ask you then, Harriet. Would you please consider being the innkeeper in our pageant?*

HARRIET

*Sure. Since you asked me so nicely.*

VICKI

*(to Harriet)*

*Then you can use this sign I lifted from a motel.*

*Vicki holds up a "NO VACANCY" sign.*

PASTOR

*I don't think it's authentic.*

LORETTA

*I could write it in Hebrew.*

PASTOR

*That won't be necessary.*

BERNIE

*Open your trunk, Vicki. I want to see your costumes.*

MICHELE

*No, let's take them to some place where*

*we can spread them out.*

PASTOR

*Why don't you use the junior high room upstairs? That's where I suggest you women sleep tonight.*

HARRIET

*Okay, just point us the way.*

PASTOR

*Down the hallway, then left up the stairs. The room is marked.*

VICKI

*Smitty, can you move this again?*

SMITTY

*Whatever you say, sugar.*

BERNIE

*Let me give you a hand.*

*Smitty and Bernie carry the trunk away, followed by Michele, Vicki, Harriet, Loretta, and Buddy.*

*In the corner where Crejsek is studying her script, her hand-held, two-way radio crackles.*

VOICE (V.O.)

Roadblock to Crejsek. Roadblock to  
Crejsek.

CREJSEK

Come in, roadblock.

VOICE (V.O.)

We just got word that a bus is headed our  
way. It may arrive within a half an  
hour. Do you have room at your  
shelter?

CREJSEK

How many passengers?

VOICE (V.O.)

About twenty-five, I think.

CREJSEK

Pastor, can you accommodate another  
twenty-five people?

PASTOR

Let me see. There are five other Sunday  
School rooms. And some could sleep in  
the sanctuary if necessary. Sure, we can  
do it.

CREJSEK

Roadblock, we can handle them. Send them up when they arrive.

VOICE (V.O.)

Okay. Over and out.

PASTOR

We'll need more food and blankets. I'd better call Father O'Reilly at St. Mary's and somebody from the Grange and see if they can help out.

Pastor goes out to the hallway. Crejsek returns to her corner to read the script. Sam goes to the game table.

Boomer and Rex come out of the kitchen and stroll to the game table where Hitoshi and Dick play Go at one end and Hank and Roy play checkers at the other end.

BOOMER

What's going on out here?

DICK

Hitoshi is trying to teach me to play Go, but I don't understand it.

BOOMER

May I give it a try?

DICK

*Sure, if you want to. Do you know how to play?*

*BOOMER*

*Yes. I took up the game during a tour of duty in Japan.*

*HITOSHI*

*Please join me, Major Slatterly.*

*BOOMER*

*It will be my pleasure, Professor Morikawa.*

*Boomer sits down and starts playing Go with Hitoshi.*

*Bernie and Loretta come in from the hallway, holding hands. They sit together on the piano bench facing outward.*

*BERNIE*

*Your friends are sure plain spoken, Loretta. Vicki especially has a sharp tongue.*

*LORETTA*

*Actually Vicki's quite goodhearted, and a tremendous guitarist. She'd like to play lead, but Michele is even better. And Michele's the boss.*

BERNIE

*I've noticed that. But you can tell her to quit wasting her time on Boomer. He's married.*

LORETTA

*That's a reversal. Usually it's married men chasing her.*

*(beat)*

*And what about you, Bernie?*

BERNIE

*What do you mean?*

LORETTA

*You seem so -- how can I say it -- so hesitant.*

BERNIE

*You mean about my role in the pageant?*

LORETTA

*Yes, but it seems to go beyond that. Do you like the Air Force?*

BERNIE

*No, not really. I'm in 'cause my dad wanted me to join.*

LORETTA

*How's that?*

BERNIE

*He was an Air Force sergeant and wanted me to become an officer. I respect him, so I joined the ROTC.*

LORETTA

*Why the doubts now?*

BERNIE

*Because of my grandpa on my mom's side. He was medic in World War II, a religious objector who refused to bear arms.*

LORETTA

*A Quaker?*

BERNIE

*No, a Methodist. I really loved him and admired him.*

LORETTA

*That's how I feel about my grandparents.*

BERNIE

*After he died last year, I got to thinking what he stood for. I asked myself, do I really want to be in the killing business? That's what the armed forces are about*



ultimately.

LORETTA

So where does that leave you?

BERNIE

I'm not quite sure. I've got some hard choices to make.

LORETTA

You sure do.

Bernie and Loretta look up and see Craig coming from the hallway. He walks to the game table where Hitoshi and Boomer play Go, Hank and Roy play checkers, and Dick, Rex, and Sam watch.

SAM

How's Jenny getting' along, Craig?

CRAIG

She's okay.

REX

I suppose the pastor's lining up more provisions.

CRAIG

Yeah, it's amazing how that old buzzard can get these folks to bring food for people they don't even know. In this

*blizzard yet.*

SAM

*That's the way people are in Muhlenberg.*

CRAIG

*And he's inviting them to come to the  
pageant tonight.*

REX

*What I don't understand, Sam, is why a  
man like him is serving a small  
congregation out in the....*

*(hesitating)*

SAM

*Go ahead, say it -- the boondocks.*

REX

*Well, yes.*

SAM

*No offense. We're lucky to have him.  
You see, he's starting over in the ministry.*

REX

*How's that?*

SAM

*He used to be head pastor of a big church*

*in Cincinnati. Had a couple of assistant pastors under him, a budget well over half a million. Had a television program and was on the radio three times a week.*

*Pastor comes out of the office and stands a little ways behind Sam and Craig, who don't notice his presence.*

SAM

*He was a big shot, and I guess he knew it. But he got carried away, broke the seventh commandment, not once but regularly.*

CRAIG

*Cut out the riddles. I don't know the god damned numbers of the commandments.*

SAM

*You just broke the third. For Pastor Ziegler, it was adultery.*

CRAIG

*Adultery! How about that!*

*Pastor steps up. Boomer, Hitoshi, Hank, and Roy look up from their games.*

PASTOR

*I'm glad you're telling them about my sordid past, Sam.*

SAM

*Oops! I'm sorry.*

PASTOR

*That's all right. They should know what a sinner they're dealing with.*

SAM

*Well, you've been open with us.*

PASTOR

*After my wife divorced me and the church board fired me, I drifted for a while, took odd jobs, roamed the beaches of California.*

HANK

*Whereabouts?*

PASTOR

*Around Monterey. There I had an experience of a lifetime.*

REX

*What happened?*

PASTOR

*In late January a terrific storm battered the shore for three nights and days.*

HANK

*That sounds like Monterey.*

PASTOR

*When it finally quit raining, I went for a walk along the beach. The surf was still angry, but the moon was breaking through the clouds. I rounded a huge boulder and saw a clear, smooth stretch of sand. Suddenly I realized, "God forgives." Simply that. No still small voice like Elijah heard. No rushing winding as at Pentecost. Only a realization that God forgives. I was aglow with an inner light. It was as if that boulder had fallen from my shoulders.*

CRAIG

*I knew a fellow who saw lights when he was on PCP.*

PASTOR

*No, it wasn't like that at all. I know, because I tried drugs when I was drifting. Then you're not yourself. On the shore, and since, I had my full, natural consciousness, but much more. I was*

*stirred to the depth of my soul, uplifted,  
refreshed by the presence of  
God.*

HITOSHI

*That's wonderful!*

PASTOR

*For the first time in my life, I truly  
understood what grace is -- even though  
I used to preach about it all the time.*

*Pastor looks at Craig.*

PASTOR (cont.)

*God loves us, regardless of who we are or  
what we do. The worse we are, the  
harder God searches for us. Grace is  
God's searching love.*

*Pastor turns toward Rex.*

PASTOR (cont.)

*After that I decided to re-enter the  
ministry by seeking a church which  
needed me rather than what I needed to  
fulfill my ego. And one that would  
accept all I had been. So I came to the  
Community Church of Muhlenberg.*

REX

*I appreciate hearing your story. It's not easy to be so open.*

PASTOR

*It's an experience I want to share.*

*Boomer and Hitoshi resume playing Go with Dick watching. Roy and Hank go back to checkers with Pastor watching. Sam and Craig walk off together toward the kitchen.*

CRAIG

*Did he really have that experience on the beach?*

SAM

*I'm sure he did.*

CRAIG

*Did he really change?*

SAM

*Yep.*

CRAIG

*And you folks really accept him in spite of his past?*

SAM

*We sure do.*

CRAIG

*That's cool.*

*Sam and Craig go into the kitchen.*

*Pastor pulls up a chair near Hank and Roy.*

PASTOR

*I suppose you two have noticed Craig.  
He's on the edge of fatherhood but not  
quite ready to take on the responsibility.*

HANK

*It's a big obligation.*

ROY

*It sure is.*

PASTOR

*Hank, you seem to have a good feel for  
people. Maybe you could offer him some  
advice.*

HANK

*I have no magic wand, but I'm willing to  
talk with him when I get chance.*

PASTOR

*Thanks.*

*Amelia comes from the hallway and approaches Pastor at the game table.*



AMELIA

*Jenny's sleeping now.*

PASTOR

*That's good.*

AMELIA

*You got it worked out for the pageant?*

PASTOR

*It's coming along, but they're some loose ends to tidy up.*

*Amelia looks across the serving counter into the kitchen.*

AMELIA

*I'd say the same thing about the kitchen.*

*Amelia walks toward the kitchen. Sam and Craig come out of the kitchen, carrying coffee mugs. Craig goes to the pingpong table, and Sam stops at the game table.*

PASTOR

*Well, Sam, have you decided to be Zechariah?*

SAM

*No, I haven't.*

HANK

*Why don't we vote on it?*

ROY

*Good idea.*

HANK

*All in favor, say "aye."*

HANK, ROY, PASTOR, BOOMER

*Aye!*

SAM

*I've been snookered.*

PASTOR

*Then you'll do it?*

SAM

*I guess I have to.*

DICK

*Don't try that on me.*

*Dick sets his jaw and clenches his fist.*

INT - KITCHEN - DAY

*Amelia washes dishes. Harriet comes in.*

HARRIET

1

May I help, Amelia?

AMELIA

Sure. You can dry. There's towels in that drawer.

Harriet finds a towel and starts drying dishes. Hank enters.

HARRIET

Hi, Hank. Did you come in to help?

HANK

No, I came to ask about your friend, Craig.

HARRIET

What's he done now?

HANK

Nothing. But he seems so alienated.

HARRIET

He's okay. The best sound man I ever worked with. It's just that he'd like to be an electronics engineer, but he can't stand school.

HANK

Oh, so that's it.

AMELIA

(to Hank)

Young man, if you're goin' to stand around talkin', you might as well dry, too.

HANK

Sorry, ma'am. That's where I draw the line.

AMELIA

Typical man.

HARRIET

I'm surprised, Hank. You usually seem so cooperative.

HANK

I've struggled a long time to get out of the kitchen, so to speak. So I'm not willing to go back in.

HARRIET

Where are you from?

HANK

L.A. The Watts area.

HARRIET

I've been there.

HANK

We were the first to revolt in the sixties. I was one of the hellraisers.

HARRIET

*But you're not now. How come?*

HANK

*Got old.*

HARRIET

*It must be more than that.*

HANK

*True. A black preacher taught me nonviolence. And a white engineer tutored me and opened doors of opportunity.*

HARRIET

*You were lucky.*

HANK

*And my wife. She's a steady influence in my life.*

HARRIET

*Tell that to Craig.*

HANK

*I will.*

*Hank eases out of the kitchen.*

INT - FELLOWSHIP HALL - DAY

*Hitoshi and Boomer play Go at the game table. Hitoshi is ahead, but Boomer plays a good game.*

HITOSHI

*You play well, Major.*

BOOMER

*I like the challenge of this game. And I love your country and the people.*

HITOSHI

*Most Japanese like Americans, too.*

BOOMER

*I hope you didn't take it personal when I defended the bombing of Hiroshima.*

HITOSHI

*No, not at all. That was another era.*

BOOMER

*I wasn't even born yet.*

*Boomer makes a move at Go.*

HITOSHI

*What disturbs me is the huge stockpile of nuclear warheads held by United States, Russia, and the others.*

BOOMER

*We don't intend to use them. Just to deter aggression.*

HITOSHI

*But if you did use them, think of the millions who would die.*

BOOMER

*We target military installations and war plants and do our best to avoid collateral damage.*

HITOSHI

*Collateral?*

BOOMER

*Incidental harm to civilians.*

HITOSHI

*You're talking of women and children, the elderly. Don't you ever think of innocent victims when you fire a missile or drop a bomb?*

BOOMER

*We don't see them.*

HITOSHI

*Perhaps you should visualize them as well*

*as the physical targets.*

*Boomer looks down. Hitoshi makes a decisive move at Go.*

*Buddy comes up to the other end of the game table where Roy and Rex play checkers with Hank watching.*

BUDDY

*Dad, can I have the keys to the truck?*

ROY

*What for?*

BUDDY

*I want to get somethin' out of the cab.*

ROY

*Like what?*

BUDDY

*A present to give Vicki.*

ROY

*You're not thinkin' of the scarf you bought for your mother?*

BUDDY

*Well, yeah. I'll find somethin' else for Mom.*



ROY

*No, I don't think that's a good idea.*

BUDDY

*Why do you always control my life?*

*Buddy slams his fist on the table, then stomps off. There is rumble overhead and a crash outside the nearby wall. Rex looks up.*

REX

*Sounds like an avalanche from the roof.*

HANK

*You don't suppose Buddy caused that?*

*Rex, Hank, and Roy laugh.*

*Pastor and Dick stroll across fellowship hall and sit together near the Christmas tree.*

PASTOR

*Dick, I know you believe the story of the wisemen is nothing but a fable.*

DICK

*Of course, it's just made up.*

PASTOR

*There are other legends about these same wisemen. I guess they're made up, too,*

*but they carry messages worth listening to.*

DICK

*Like what?*

PASTOR

*One legend tells how three young men each on his own started searching for a portentous star that would herald a great event. They didn't know where the star would arise or what the event would be, but they knew they would recognize it when they saw.*

*(beat)*

*After many years their paths crossed, and they continued their search together. Finally they saw a great star rising in the East. They knew this was their star. So they followed it to Jerusalem and on to Bethlehem to the cradle of the new-born baby.*

DICK

*Why are you telling me this?*

PASTOR

*For each of us there is a star in the East that will lead us along new paths in the journey of life. For me it was moonlight shimmering on a storm-washed beach.*

*For others it's something else.  
Sometimes all you have to do is open your  
eyes, and there it is.*

DICK

*I'm sorry, Pastor. I see things as a  
scientist, not as a poet.*

PASTOR

*Then I'm sorry for you.*

*Lights flicker, dim, then come on bright again.*

PASTOR

*Let's hope we don't lose power.*

*Pastor rises and heads for the table near the wardrobe.*

*Vicki, Michele, Loretta, and Bernie play pingpong. Smitty and Buddy  
watch. Sam comes up.*

SAM

*Smitty, can I have a word with you?*

SMITTY

*I guess so.*

*Sam and Smitty step over to a quiet spot.*

SAM

*What's this I hear about you not wanting to take a part in the pageant?*

SMITTY

*That's sissy stuff, plus being in church to boot.*

SAM

*Aw, come on, Smitty. Do you take me for a sissy?*

SMITTY

*No.*

SAM

*Or Boomer?*

SMITTY

*Certainly not Boomer.*

SAM

*Well, Boomer and I are both in it. I even have two parts.*

SMITTY

*You do?*

SAM

*Roy's in it, too.*

SMITTY

*I know, but he does lots of funny things.*

*Sam takes hold of Smitty's arm playfully.*

SAM

*Now Smitty, I could twist your arm until you say, "Yes, I'll be a shepherd." Or you could just say, "Yes, Sam, I'll be glad to do it because you asked me so nicely."*

*Sam twists Smitty's arm a little. Smitty laughs.*

SMITTY

*Oh, all right, Sam. I'll do it as a favor to you.*

SAM

*Good! I'll tell the pastor.*

*Sam releases Smitty's arm. The lights flicker again.*

*Pastor marks parts at the table near the wardrobe.*

PASTOR

*(singing)*

*"Lead, Kindly Light,  
amid th'encircling gloom,  
Lead Thou me on!  
The night is dark,  
and I am far from home...."*

*Sam approaches.*

SAM

*Pastor, Smitty will be a shepherd.*

PASTOR

*How did you persuade him?*

SAM

*Let's just say I twisted his arm.*

*Sam goes off. Michele and Loretta come up to Pastor.*

MICHELE

*Reverend, is it time to start rehearsing?*

PASTOR

*As soon as we round out our cast.*

MICHELE

*Who's left?*

PASTOR

*The part of Elizabeth and perhaps another wiseman.*

MICHELE

*You haven't asked Amelia yet?*

PASTOR

*No, I haven't.*

MICHELE

*I'll go get her.*

*Michele goes toward the kitchen.*

LORETTA

*Reverend, if I'm going to play the organ tonight, I'd better try it out.*

PASTOR

*I'll have Amelia show you where it is in a minute.*

LORETTA

*What about music?*

PASTOR

*There's some by the organ.*

*Pastor reaches in for Elizabeth's costume and holds it out. Amelia and Michelle come in from the kitchen.*

AMELIA

*What's this about wanting me to play the part of Elizabeth?*

PASTOR

*Will you do it? Here's the costume.*

AMELIA

*You've already got me as Anna.*

PASTOR

*The two are in different scenes.*

AMELIA

*And who's Zechariah?*

PASTOR

*Sam said he would.*

AMELIA

*Me? Married to that old goat?*

LORETTA

*(laughing)*

*It's only a pageant, Amelia.*

AMELIA

*I'll think about it.*

PASTOR

*While you're thinking, would you please  
take Loretta to the organ?*

AMELIA

*(to Loretta)*

*This way.*

*Amelia and Loretta go down hallway to sanctuary.*



At the other end of fellowship hall Hank and Craig sit in a couple of chairs. Craig straddles his chair backwards.

HANK

So you're about to become a father, Craig.

CRAIG

Seems like it.

HANK

Greatest thing can happen to a man. I know. I've got a son and two daughters.

CRAIG

You do?

HANK

Sure. And a great wife.

(beat)

So are you ready to settle down?

CRAIG

Sometimes I think about it. But sound systems for rock groups is what I do best, and that requires travel.

HANK

What about something else in electronics?

CRAIG

Such as?

HANK

*Like in alternate energy. You know:  
solar heating, windmill generators,  
experiments with new approaches.  
There's a great future.*

CRAIG

*Don't you need a college degree for those  
things?*

HANK

*I know a company in California that's  
offbeat but very creative. They're  
always looking for good technicians, and  
they don't worry about credentials.*

CRAIG

*Jenny would like it if I hooked up with  
something like that. Maybe I would, too.*

HANK

*I'll give you their name and address.  
You can use my name when you write  
them.*

*Hank pats Craig on the shoulder.*

*Pastor continues marking parts at the table near the wardrobe.  
Michele looks at the costumes remaining in the wardrobe. In the*

*distance the organ plays the opening of J.S. Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, a pause, the start of the fugue, then being modified to a rock beat.*

PASTOR

*(to Michele)*

*I never expected to hear music like that.*

MICHELE

*I told you she can play everything. She's had classical training but prefers rock and Latino music.*

*The organ switches to a familiar Christmas carol with a calypso beat.*

PASTOR

*As soon as I finish marking the parts, we'll start rehearsal. You can ask everybody to start gathering in the sanctuary.*

*Michele goes off. Bernie comes up to the wardrobe. Loretta's background playing continues.*

BERNIE

*Pastor Ziegler, are you sure you want me in the pageant? I'm no actor.*

PASTOR

*None of us are. We're all just folks.*

BERNIE

*But couldn't I have some other part?*

PASTOR

*We need soldiers, Bernie.*

BERNIE

*Will there ever be a time when we don't?*

PASTOR

*When I was young, I thought so, but now I'm not sure. We inescapably live in a world filled with strife. It's who we are and what we do that matters.*

BERNIE

*What do you do if you don't believe in fighting, in killing?*

PASTOR

*Go with your conscience, Bernie. Do what's right for you.*

*Suddenly a cipher occurs in the organ.*

PASTOR

*Sounds like a cipher.*

BERNIE

*What's that?*

PASTOR

*Air leaking through a pipe that's not  
suppose to sound.*

BERNIE

*I bet Craig can fix it.*

*Bernie goes to where Craig and Hank are sitting and speaks MOS to Craig.  
Craig goes to the hallway leading to the sanctuary. Hank and Bernie go  
to the table where Pastor marks parts.*

HANK

*Well, Pastor. It looks like Murphy's Law  
is starting to afflict your pageant.*

PASTOR

*What's that?*

HANK

*It's an engineering principle that says, "If  
anything can go wrong, it will go wrong."  
The organ's squeaking. The lights are  
flickering. Who knows what'll happen  
next.*

*There is rumble overhead and a crash outside the entrance door. Hank  
goes to the door, tries to open it, but can't.*

HANK

*Now we really are snowbound.*

PASTOR

*I think Sam's snowblower is just outside the door, too.*

BERNIE

*Do you have shovels?*

PASTOR

*There are some in the storage room.*

*Bernie goes to the storage room. Amelia comes out of the hallway.*

AMELIA

*I can't believe it. We're really having the pageant.*

PASTOR

*Yes, we really are.*

AMELIA

*I guess you can put me down for Elizabeth. But don't expect any miracle.*

PASTOR

*The whole event is miraculous.*

*Boomer comes storming out of the hallway and goes to Pastor.*

BOOMER

*Pastor, I'm resigning from the pageant.*

PASTOR

What's the matter?

BOOMER

Michele's too bossy. I don't need that.

Smitty comes from the hallway.

SMITTY

If Boomer's quitting, so am I.

PASTOR

Relax. I'll be in in a moment. We'll work it out.

Hank laughs.

HANK

Looks like Murphy's law is entering the human domain. I bet we're in for more surprises tonight.

PASTOR

That's possible. But don't forget what the poet wrote:

"God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonder to perform;  
He plants his footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm."

HANK

We'll see who wins: Murphy or the poet.

PASTOR

Or God.

Bernie comes from the storage room with two snow shovels. Michele comes out from the hallway.

BERNIE

Come on, Boomer. The Air Force can clear the path to the door.

MICHELE

No, we need you guys at rehearsal.

BOOMER

In that case I'll go with you, Bernie.

PASTOR

That's all right. You're in Matthew, and we're starting with Luke.

HANK

Okay, let's get this show on the road before something really calamitous happens.

Pastor, Amelia, Michele, Smitty, and Hank start for the door to the hallway. Boomer and Bernie put on their overcoats and with their shovels head for the kitchen door to outside.





MICHELE

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EXT - FRONT OF MUHLENBERG COMMUNITY CHURCH - NIGHT

*The church is lit. It has ceased snowing. Piles of snow line the cleared sidewalk. Heavily-clothed people enter the church.*

INT - CHURCH SANCTUARY - NIGHT

*The sanctuary that seats 80 to 100 is becoming comfortably full. There is a center aisle and a divided chancel. The organ console is on the pulpit*

side of the chancel. Choir pews on that side have been removed to make room for "Searching".

With Loretta at the organ, "Searching" plays a medley of traditional Christmas carols with a rock beat. Michele, Vicki, and Harriet wear suit jackets over "angel" costumes.

People come in from outside. Some of them carry blankets and sleeping bags, which they deposit on a back pew.

INT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Two doors on one side are labeled "SANCTUARY", and a single door on the other side is designated "NURSERY". Jenny, dressed as Mary, watches Craig, dressed as Joseph, pace back and forth. Pastor, wearing a black gown and clerical collar, is with them. "Searching's" music is faintly heard.

JENNY

Pastor, do you really think we can pull this off after only one rehearsal.

PASTOR

I pray to God we will.

CRAIG

What if I forget my lines?

JENNY

You'll remember them.

*Amelia, dressed as Elizabeth, comes along the hall, followed by Sam, dressed as Zechariah.*

AMELIA

*You did it, Pastor. So far.*

PASTOR

*I told you I would.*

SAM

*I just hope none of them back out at the last minute. Like Smitty or Boomer.*

*Amelia hugs Jenny.*

AMELIA

*I'm so glad you're Mary.*

JENNY

*Thank you.*

*Amelia and Sam go through one of the sanctuary doors.*

*Hank and Hitoshi, dressed as wisemen, and Dick with suit and tie come along the hallway.*

PASTOR

*(to Dick)*

*It's not too late to change your mind,  
Dick.*

DICK

*No way.*

HANK

*(to Craig)*

*Go well, young man.*

CRAIG

*I'll do my best.*

*Hank, Hitoshi, and Dick go through the other sanctuary door.*

*Roy, Buddy, and Smitty, dressed as shepherds, come into the hallway.  
Roy has a hand on Smitty's elbow. Smitty brushes it off.*

SMITTY

*Don't crowd me, Roy.*

ROY

*I just want to make sure you don't back  
out.*

SMITTY

*Sam won't let me.*

*Roy, Smitty, and Buddy go through the door that Amelia and Sam  
entered.*

INT - SANCTUARY - NIGHT

*Boomer and Bernie in their uniforms sit in a front pew with Rex, who wears civilian clothes. Hank and Hitoshi, dressed as wisemen, and Dick join them. Roy, Buddy, and Smitty, dressed as shepherds, enter and sit in the front pew on the other side. The sanctuary is now full.*

*A boy garbed as an acolyte lights a pair of candles on the altar and the five candles of an advent wreath.*

INT - BACKROOM ON LECTERN SIDE - NIGHT

*Crejsek, dressed in a choir robe, stands next to the door leading into chancel. Amelia, dressed as Elizabeth, and Sam, dressed as Zechariah, sit on chairs. Sam reads from a 3x5 card and rehearses a gesture.*

SAM

*"Let us praise the Lord, the God of Israel!  
He came to help his people and...."*

AMELIA

*(interrupting)*

*Sam, you'll do all right. Don't worry.*

*Sam puts his card down and gives Amelia a weak smile.*

INT - SANCTUARY - NIGHT

*Crejsek comes out a side door of the chancel and sits near the lectern.  
Pastor comes out a door on the other side and steps to the pulpit. Music  
fades.*

PASTOR

*I want to welcome all of you to our  
Christmas eve pageant. For our cast we  
draw upon a diverse group of travelers  
brought here this afternoon by Officer  
Helen Crejsek, our narrator. We  
welcome especially the busload who  
arrived an or so hour ago. We give  
hearty thanks to you townfolks who have  
brought food and bedding for our guests.*

*(beat)*

*(cont.)*

PASTOR (cont.)

*Our pageant portrays the coming of  
Christ in three scenes. We first hear and  
see what Luke reveals to us, for he takes  
us back to the earliest part of the story.  
Then we turn to Matthew and finally to  
John. Each of these gospels considers  
Jesus' origin in its own distinct way.*

*(beat)*

*This afternoon one of our skeptical guests  
grilled me unmercifully about the gospel  
accounts....*

*Dick fidgets uncomfortably in the pew.*

PASTOR (cont.)

...."Are these stories really true?" he demanded. I would prefer to rephrase the question and inquire: Do the stories of Jesus' birth convey the truth? God's truth.

(beat)

I invite you to watch with fresh eyes. Listen as if you were hearing these stories for the first time. Decide whether they reveal God's truth for you.

(beat)

May the pageant begin.

Pastor sits down. Michele, Vicki, and Harriet rise. Michele strikes a chord on her guitar, and they sing a capella in unison "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence" (tune: "Picardy").

MICHELE, VICKI, HARRIET

(singing)

"Let all mortal flesh keep silence,  
And with fear and trembling stand.  
Ponder nothing earthly minded,  
For with blessings in his hand,  
Christ our God to earth descendeth,  
Our full homage to demand."

Michele, Vicki, and Harriet sit down. Crejsek rises and goes to the lectern. She opens a New Testament.



CREJSEK

*"During the time when Herod was king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah."*

*Sam (as Zechariah) and Amelia (as Elizabeth) enter the chancel from the door on the lectern side.*

CREJSEK

*"His wife's name was Elizabeth. She also belonged to a priestly family."*

*Sam goes to the altar. Amelia stops part way and kneels to pray.*

CREJSEK

*"They both lived good lives in God's sight and obeyed fully all the Lord's commandments and rules. They had no children because Elizabeth could not have any, and she and Zechariah were both very old."*

*Sam lights incense from a candle on the altar.*

CREJSEK

*"One day Zechariah was doing his work in the Temple, taking his turn in the daily service."*

*Michele rises and slips off her jacket, revealing a radiant white dress. She moves next to Sam at the altar.*

*CREJSEK*

*"An angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar where the incense was burned."*

*As Michele (as Gabriel) approaches, Sam draws back in fear.*

*MICHELE (as Gabriel)*

*"Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son. You are to name him John."*

*SAM (as Zechariah)*

*"How shall I know if this is so? I am an old man, and my wife is old also."*

*MICHELE (as Gabriel)*

*"I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, who sent me to speak to you and tell you this good news. Because you have not believed, you will be unable to speak; you will remain silent until the day my promise to you comes true."*

*Sam tries to speak, but no words come from his mouth. Michele returns*

to her seat. Sam and Amelia start for the lectern door. Loretta plays background music.

CREJSEK

"Some time later his wife Elizabeth became pregnant, and did not leave the house for five months."

Sam and Amelia pause.

AMELIA (as Elizabeth)

"Now at last the Lord has helped me. He has taken away my public disgrace."

Amelia and Sam exit through the lectern door. Music continues.

INT - BACKROOM ON PULPIT SIDE - NIGHT

Jenny, dressed as Mary, and Craig, dressed as Joseph, sit with door to chancel slightly ajar. Craig reads the script. Jenny is nervous. Background music is heard.

CRAIG

(to Jenny)

You're on next.

JENNY

*I've never performed in a church before.*

*CRAIG*

*I believe in you, Jenny.*

*Craig squeezes Jenny's hand. She smiles at him, rises, and steps near the door. Music ends.*

*INT - SANCTUARY - NIGHT*

*Crejsek stands at the lectern.*

*CREJSEK*

*"In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy God sent the angel Gabriel to a town in Galilee name Nazareth. He had a message for a girl promised in marriage to a man named Joseph, who was a descendant of King David. The girl's name was Mary."*

*Jenny (as Mary) enters from pulpit side and comes out to center of chancel. Michele (as Gabriel) rises and joins her.*

*MICHELE (as Gabriel)*

*"Peace be with you! The Lord is with you and has greatly blessed you!"*

CREJSEK

"Mary was greatly troubled by the angel's message..."

*Jenny raises her eyebrows and looks around anxiously.*

CREJSEK

"...and she wondered what the words meant."

MICHELE (as Gabriel)

"Don't be afraid, Mary. God has been gracious to you. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God."

JENNY (as Mary)

"I am a virgin. How, then, can this be?"

MICHELE (as Gabriel)

"The Holy Spirit will come on you, and God's power will rest upon you. For this reason the holy child will be called the Son of God."

JENNY (as Mary)

"I am the Lord's servant. May it happen to me as you have said."

CREJSEK

*"And the angel left her."*

*Michele returns to her seat. Loretta plays background music.*

CREJSEK

*"Soon afterward Mary got ready and hurried off to the hill country of Judea" to visit her relative Elizabeth.*

*Jenny crosses toward the lectern side.*

CREJSEK

*"She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth."*

*Amelia (as Elizabeth) enters, and Jenny (as Mary) greets her. Music ends.*

CREJSEK

*At that moment Elizabeth's "baby moved within her" and she "was filled with the Holy Spirit."*

AMELIA (as Elizabeth)

*"You are the most blessed of all women, and blessed is the child you will bear!"*

*Vicki strikes a chord on her bass guitar and accompanies Jenny as she sings.*

JENNY (as Mary)

(singing)

"My heart praises the Lord;  
My soul is glad because of God my Savior,  
for he has remembered me, his  
lowly servant!  
From now on all people will call me happy,  
because of the great things  
the Mighty God has done for me.  
His name is holy;  
From one generation to another  
He shows mercy on those who fear him,  
He has stretched out his mighty arm and  
scattered the proud with all their plans.  
He has brought down mighty kings from  
their thrones, and lifted up the lowly.  
He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away with empty hands.  
He has kept the promise he made to our  
ancestors, and he has come to the help  
of his servant Israel;  
He has remembered to show mercy to  
Abraham  
and to all his descendants forever!"

CREJSEK

"Mary stayed about three months with  
Elizabeth, and then went back home."

*Amelia exits through the lectern door, and Jenny moves back across the chancel. Loretta plays background music.*

*As Jenny walks, she has grabs her back in pain. Pastor watches her anxiously as she heads for the pulpit door. Jenny exits, and Pastor follows her. Music continues.*

*INT - BACKROOM ON PULPIT SIDE - NIGHT*

*Jenny enters the side room on the pulpit side. She holds her back. Perspiration dots her forehead. Craig helps her to a chair. Pastor comes in. Music is heard in background.*

*PASTOR*

*Are you all right, Jenny?*

*JENNY*

*That's the worst pain I ever felt.*

*Craig reaches under his costume, takes out a fresh handkerchief from his pocket, and wipes Jenny's brow. She looks at him with a brave smile.*

*INT - SANCTUARY - NIGHT*

*Crejsek stands at the lectern. Music continues.*

*CREJSEK*

*"The time came for Elizabeth to have her*



*baby, and she gave birth to a son."*

*Sam (as Zechariah) and Amelia (as Elizabeth) enter the chancel through the lectern door. Amelia carries a doll baby in a blanket. Sam has a 3x5 card in his hand.*

*CREJSEK*

*"When the baby was a week old, they came to circumcise him." They named him John as the angel Gabriel had told them.*

*Sam and Amelia move toward the altar. Amelia sits on a stool.*

*CREJSEK*

*"Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit" and regained his speech.*

*Sam faces the congregation. Music ends.*

*SAM (as Zechariah)*

*"Let us praise the Lord, the God of Israel!*

*He has come to the help of his people and set them free.*

*He has provided a mighty Savior for us, a descendant of his servant David."*

*Sam takes the doll baby from Amelia. He glances at the 3x5 card.*

*SAM (as Zechariah)*

*(to doll baby)*

*"You, my child, will be called a prophet  
of the Most High God.  
You will go ahead of the Lord  
to prepare his road for him;  
to tell his people that they will be saved  
by having their sins forgiven."*

*Sam with the doll baby and Amelia leave through the lectern door.*

*CREJSEK*

*"The child grew and developed in body  
and spirit. He lived in the desert until  
the day when he appeared publicly to the  
people of Israel."*

*Loretta starts a musical interlude. Harriet slips out the pulpit door.*

*INT - BACKROOM ON LECTERN SIDE - NIGHT*

*Sam slumps onto a chair. Amelia stands nearby. Music is heard in  
background.*

*AMELIA*

*You did it, Sam. I knew you could.*

*Sam holds up the 3x5 card.*

*SAM*

*With a little help from a friend.*

*Sam heaves a big sigh of relief.*

INT - BACKROOM ON PULPIT SIDE - NIGHT

*Pastor helps Harriet put on innkeeper costume. Background music is heard.*

*Jenny rises and is a little shaky. Craig stands beside her. Jenny gasps as she experiences pain.*

PASTOR

*Jenny, are you sure you feel well enough  
to go out again?*

JENNY

*I can do it.*

CRAIG

*Don't force yourself.*

*Jenny winces with pain as she moves to stand by the door into the chancel.*

INT - SANCTUARY - NIGHT

*Crejsek stands at the lectern.*

CREJSEK

"At that time Emperor Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Roman Empire. When this first census took place, Quirinius was the governor of Syria. Everyone, then, went to register himself, each to his own town."

Craig (as Joseph) and Jenny (as Mary) enter through the pulpit door and walk to center of chancel. Pastor enters and sits near pulpit.

CREJSEK

"Joseph went from the town of Nazareth, in Galilee to the town named Bethlehem in Judea the birthplace of King David. Joseph went there because he was a descendant of David. He went to register himself with Mary,..."

At this moment Jenny is stricken with a sharp pain and grasps her back.

CREJSEK (cont.)

"...who was promised in marriage to him. She was pregnant."

Jenny places both hands on her lower back.

JENNY

Oh!

Harriet (as innkeeper) comes out from the pulpit side. Craig and Jenny approach her.

CREJSEK

In Bethlehem "there was no room for them to stay in the inn."

Harriet shakes her head "No".

CREJSEK

"While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have her baby."

Jenny is again stricken with pain.

JENNY

Ow! I think my baby's coming. Right now.

CRAIG

You can't have it here.

Pastor comes out from his place by the pulpit. Amelia enters through the lectern door.

PASTOR

Quick! Go to the nursery across the hall.

Craig puts his arm around Jenny and leads her toward the pulpit door. Jenny has another pain. Pastor looks out at the congregation.

PASTOR

*Is there a doctor present?*

*The congregation buzzes with excitement, but no one responds.*

*Crejsek goes over to Jenny.*

CREJSEK

*I've had training in child delivery.*

PASTOR

*Good, you can help her.*

*Jenny, supported by Craig, continues toward the pulpit door. Amelia and Crejsek follow.*

AMELIA

*I'll get some towels and blankets.*

HARRIET

*I'll help you.*

*Jenny walks by Pastor.*

JENNY

*Pastor, go on without me. Please.*

PASTOR

*Don't worry about the pageant, Jenny.*

*Jenny, Craig, Crejsek, Amelia, and Harriet hurry through the pulpit door.*

*People in the congregation whisper to one another excitedly. Pastor goes to the pulpit.*

PASTOR

*(to congregation)*

*My friends, this real live drama may bring our pageant to an early end.*

*However, the young lady says we should go on with the show. But I doubt that we can.*

*(beat)*

*For the moment, though, why don't we sing some of our favorite Christmas carols.*

*Pastor takes a hymnal from under the pulpit.*

PASTOR (Cont.)

*Let's start with "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing." It's number 94 in the hymnal.*

*Loretta plays through the first and last line of "Hark the Herald". People in the congregation take hymnals and find their place.*

ALL

*(singing)*

*"Hark! the herald angels sing,  
`Glory to the new born King..."*

*Pastor slips out through pulpit door.*

INT - NURSERY - NIGHT

*Singing of "Hark the Herald" is heard through a loudspeaker above the nursery door.*

*Jenny lies on the day bed. Amelia wipes her head with a cloth. Crejsek (with choir robe removed and shirt sleeves rolled up) prepares to deliver the baby.*

*Harriet (with innkeeper costume removed) comes in with a basin of warm water. Jenny grimaces as she starts to give birth. Craig paces the floor. Pastor looks in for a moment and then leaves.*

INT - SANCTUARY - NIGHT

*As the congregation completes "Hark the Herald", Pastor reenters the chancel and goes to the pulpit.*

PASTOR

*(to congregation)*

*I can report that Jenny has started to deliver her baby. All is going well.*

*Let's continue our singing with "O Come, All Ye Faithful" -- number 101.*



*The congregation starts to sing.*

**BEGIN MONTAGE**

**INT - NURSERY - NIGHT**

*Delivery proceeds. Singing of third verse of "O Come All Ye Faithful" comes through loudspeaker.*

*Pastor comes in. Jenny looks at him with weak smile. Pastor bows his head in silent prayer.*

**INT - SANCTUARY - NIGHT**

*Congregation sings part of "Angels We Have Heard on High".*

**INT - NURSERY - NIGHT**

*Delivery of the baby continues. Singing of "It Came upon the Midnight Clear" comes through loudspeaker.*

**INT - SANCTUARY - NIGHT**

*Congregation sings the chorus of "The First Noel". Pastor is at the pulpit.*

**END MONTAGE**

**INT - NURSERY - NIGHT**

*Jenny perspires, grimaces, and moans as she delivers her baby.*

*Singing of "There's a Song in the Air" commences through loudspeaker.*

*Crejsek holds up new born baby boy, who cries at the carol's words -- "and a baby's low cry".*

*Crejsek gives the baby to Jenny to hold. Tired but happy, Jenny nestles her baby. Craig comes close to admire him and gently strokes his hair. Craig kisses Jenny on the forehead. She squeezes his hand.*

*Amelia and Harriet stand by, beaming with happiness. Harriet exits.*

*INT - SANCTUARY - NIGHT*

*The congregation sings the last two lines of "There's a Song in the Air". Pastor stands at the pulpit. Loretta is at the organ. Michele and Vicki sing from hymnals.*

*ALL*

*(singing)*

*"Ay! we shout to the lovely evangel  
they bring,  
and we greet in his cradle  
our Savior and King!.*

*Harriet bursts into the chancel from the pulpit door.*

HARRIET

*It's a boy! A lovely, little boy!*

*Harriet, Michele, and Vicki hug one another and bounce around. Loretta plays a burst of joyous music. Harriet hugs Pastor. So do Michele and Vicki.*

PASTOR

*(to congregation)*

*We can all rejoice.*

*Sam comes out the lectern door.*

SAM

*Hurrah for Jenny! Hurrah! Hurrah!*

*On the front pews Bernie, Hank, Dick, and Hitoshi on one side and Roy, Smitty, and Buddy on the other cheer and slap one another on the back. Others in the congregation clap and cheer.*

INT - NURSERY - NIGHT

*Jenny continues to nestle the baby. Amelia smooths her hair. Craig stands nearby. In a corner Crejsek rinses her hands in a basin and dries them.*

AMELIA

*He's a beautiful baby, Jenny*

JENNY

*Yes, I know.*

*Jenny smooths the baby's hair. Singing of "O Little Town of Bethlehem" starts coming over the loudspeaker.*

JENNY

*Amelia, will you go tell the pastor to continue the pageant?*

AMELIA

*How can we without you?*

JENNY

*I intend to go out there in a few minutes.*

CREJSEK

*You can't do that.*

JENNY

*Yes, I can.*

AMELIA

*I think we should end it now with the birth of your baby.*

JENNY

*No. Birth is a beginning, not an end.*

Mary didn't quit when Jesus was born.  
The shepherds came, then the wisemen.

CRAIG

Don't do it, Jenny. Please.

JENNY

I insist. Amelia, please tell him to go  
ahead.

AMELIA

I have my doubts. But I'll do what you  
say.

*Amelia leaves.*

INT - SANCTUARY - NIGHT

*Pastor stands at the pulpit as the congregation completes the second verse of "O Little Town of Bethlehem." Amelia comes in from the pulpit door. There is a pause in the singing.*

AMELIA

*Pastor Ziegler, Jenny says she wants to  
complete the pageant.*

PASTOR

*Are you sure? I don't know how she can*

do it.

AMELIA

Yes, she insists. She says it's a new beginning.

PASTOR

These show people are hard to repress.

(beat)

Well, if that's what she wants, let's see what we can work out.

(to congregation)

While we're getting ready to resume, let's sing the rest of "O Little Town of Bethlehem."

Loretta plays the organ. The congregation starts singing.

INT - NURSERY - INT

Jenny lies in bed. Craig rocks the baby gently in his arms. The carol comes over the loudspeaker.

JENNY

Craig, were you baptized as a baby?

CRAIG

I think so.

JENNY

*Me, too. Why don't we have our baby baptized by Pastor Ziegler? He's been so nice to us.*

CRAIG

*Give me some time to think about it.*

JENNY

*I don't want to make a federal case out of it.*

CRAIG

*I'm sorry. I should quit giving you a hard time over everything.*

*(beat)*

*Okay. Let's do it.*

JENNY

*I've settled on a name. I choose Jonathan.*

CRAIG

*Jonathan. I like that.*

*Craig kisses Jenny on the forehead.*

INT - SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Pastor stands at the pulpit. Harriet sits with Michele and Vicki and their instruments in the choir loft. Crejsek in her choir robe sits near the lectern. The congregation sings the last line of "O Little Town of Bethlehem."

PASTOR

*I believe we can pick up where we left off.*

Pastor nods to Crejsek, then slips out pulpit door. Crejsek steps to the lectern.

CREJSEK

*"While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to have her baby. She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger -- there was no room for them to stay in the inn."*

*(beat)*

*At that time "there were some shepherds in that part of the country who were spending the night in the fields, taking care of their flocks."*

Roy, Smitty, and Buddy (as shepherds) come out of the front row pew and move to the bottom of the chancel steps.

CREJSEK

*"An angel of the Lord appeared to*



*them..."*

*Michele as an angel approaches the shepherds*

CREJSEK

*"...and the glory of the Lord shone over them. They were terribly afraid."*

*The shepherds draw back and shield their faces.*

MICHELE (as angel)

*"Don't be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. This very day in David's town your Savior was born -- Christ the Lord! This will prove it to you; you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."*

CREJSEK

*"Suddenly a great army of heaven's angels appeared with the angel, singing praises to God."*

*Vicki and Harriet remove their outer garments to reveal dazzling white dresses like Michele's.*

MICHELE, VICKI, HARRIET

(singing)

*"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and*

*peace on earth to those with whom He is pleased!"*

CREJSEK

*Then "the angels went away from them back into heaven."*

*Michele, Vicki, and Harriet return to their places.*

ROY (as shepherd)

*"Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us." Come on, boys.*

*Loretta plays a jazzed up version of "Masters in This Hall". Roy, Smitty, and Buddy (as shepherds) proceed along a side aisle to the rear of the sanctuary.*

*Harriet (with jacket in hand) goes out the pulpit door. Vicki carries a manger and a stool with a pillow on it to the front of the altar.*

INT - NURSERY - NIGHT

*Pastor pushes a wheelchair into the nursery and goes beside the bed where Jenny cradles the baby. Craig stands near by. Music is heard over the loudspeaker.*

PASTOR

*What a wonderful baby!*

JENNY

Yes, he is.

PASTOR

He looks like you, Craig.

CRAIG

You think so?

PASTOR

Jenny, I would prefer you not strain yourself by going back out. But if you insist, we'll make it as easy as possible for you.

JENNY

I can do it.

*Harriet wearing her jacket comes in. Jenny hands the baby to Harriet, who cuddles him. Craig helps Jenny out of the bed into the wheelchair. Harriet gives baby to Jenny. Craig pushes the wheelchair out the door. Pastor and Harriet follow.*

INT - SANCTUARY - NIGHT

*Roy, Smitty, and Buddy walk behind the rear pews. Music continues.*

ROY

*This ain't so bad, is it Smitty?*

SMITTY

*I still feel silly in this outfit.*

*Smitty gestures at his costume.*

*The shepherds start down the center aisle toward the chancel.*

INT - BACKROOM ON PULPIT SIDE - NIGHT

*Jenny in wheelchair hands baby to Harriet. With Craig's help Jenny gets out of wheelchair. Pastor guides them to the door leading into chancel. Music is heard in background.*

INT - SANCTUARY - NIGHT

*Jenny (as Mary), supported by Craig (as Joseph) enters the chancel through the pulpit door. Harriet follows, carrying the baby. She discretely shows him to Loretta, Michele, and Vicki, who smile. Pastor comes in and takes a sit near the pulpit.*

*Craig helps Jenny to the stool beside the manger in front of the altar and then stands behind her. Harriet places the baby in the manger and returns to her place with "Searching".*

*The shepherds come up the steps, walk to the manger, and kneel. Music*

ends.

*Crejsek stands at lectern.*

CREJSEK

*The shepherds "found Mary and Joseph,  
and saw the baby lying in the manger."*

ROY (as shepherd)

*(to Jenny as Mary)*

*Angels came to us in the field and sent us  
here.*

BUDDY (as shepherd)

*It's just like they said it would be.*

*After a few moments the shepherds rise.*

CREJSEK

*"The shepherds went back, singing praises  
to God for all they had heard and seen."*

*Roy, Smitty, and Buddy (as shepherds) walk down the chancel steps and  
along the center aisle toward the rear of the sanctuary. Loretta plays a  
jazzed up version of "The First Noel".*

ROY (as shepherd)

*Glory to God in the highest! Peace on  
earth!*

*(several times)*

BUDDY (as shepherd)  
Peace on earth! Glory to God in the  
highest!  
(several times)

*Crejsek stands at the lectern.*

CREJSEK  
"Mary remembered all these things and  
thought deeply about them."

*Jenny (as Mary) leans her head on an upraised fist and looks away in  
thought.*

INT - NARTHEX - NIGHT

*Roy, Buddy, and Smitty enter from the sanctuary.*

BUDDY  
We did it, Dad! We did it!

ROY  
I knew we would.

*Roy holds out his palms, and Buddy slaps them in a "low five". Music  
coming from the sanctuary ends.*

INT - SANCTUARY - NIGHT

*Crejsek stands at the lectern.*

CREJSEK

*"The time came for Joseph and Mary to perform the ceremony of purification as the Law of Moses commanded."*

*Craig helps Jenny to a stool toward the front of the chancel. Harriet comes out, picks the baby out of the manger, gives him to Craig, and returns to her place with the musicians.*

CREJSEK

*"So they took the child to Jerusalem to present to the Lord, as written in the law of the Lord, 'Every first born male shall be dedicated to the Lord.'"*

*Pastor, wearing a robe and headdress of a biblical priest, comes out from behind the pulpit. Craig hands the baby to Pastor as (priest).*

CREJSEK

*"At that time there was a man living in Jerusalem, named Simeon."*

*Sam (as Simeon) enters from the lectern door. He holds a 3x5 card in his hand.*

CREJSEK

*"He was a good and God-fearing man" who "had been assured by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's promised Messiah. Led by the Spirit, Simeon went into the temple. Seeing the child, Simeon took him in his arms, and gave thanks to God."*

*Sam takes the baby from Pastor.*

*SAM (as Simeon)*

*"Now, Lord, you have kept your promise,  
and you may let your servant go in peace.  
With my own eyes I have seen your salvation,  
which you have prepared in the presence  
of all peoples;  
A light to reveal your way to the Gentiles,  
and bring glory to your people Israel."*

*Sam glances at the 3x5 card.*

*SAM (as Simeon)*

*(to Jenny as Mary)*

*"This child is chosen by God for the destruction and the salvation of many in Israel. He will be a sign from God which many people will speak against, and so reveal their secret thoughts. And sorrow, like a sharp sword, will break your heart."*



Sam hands the baby to Jenny and goes to the altar where he kneels in prayer. Pastor returns to the chair next to pulpit.

CREJSEK

"There was a prophetess, a widow named Anna. She had been married for only seven years, and now was eighty-four years old."

Amelia (as Anna) enters from the lectern door.

CREJSEK

"She never left the temple; day and night she worshiped God, fasting and praying."

Amelia (as Anna) goes to where Jenny (as Mary) holds the baby. She looks at the baby.

CREJSEK

"That very same hour she arrived and gave thanks to God."

Amelia (as Anna) lifts up her hands in prayer. Then she walks down the chancel steps.

AMELIA (as Anna)

(to persons on front pew)

This is the child we have long expected,  
sent by God to set Jerusalem free.

*Amelia heads for exit from front of sanctuary.*

CREJSEK

*"When Mary and Joseph had finished  
doing all that was required by the law of  
the Lord...."*

CRAIG

*Pastor Ziegler, if we can interrupt the  
pageant again, we'd like you to baptize  
our baby.*

*Pastor comes out, still costumed as the priest. Amelia stops her exit, and  
Sam at the altar turns around to watch what is happening.*

PASTOR

*Really? Right now?*

JENNY

*Yes, we would. We decided before we  
came back out.*

PASTOR

*Are you certain? Don't you want to  
wait and have him baptized with your  
family present?*

JENNY

*You are our family.*

*Jenny looks around, especially at Amelia.*

JENNY (cont.)

*All of you.*

PASTOR

*Very well. Sam, will you get water from the font?*

*Sam brings water in a basin from the font. Pastor removes his headdress. Craig and Jenny push back their biblical headcoverings.*

*Amelia returns to the chancel and stands next to Sam. Michele, Vicki, Harriet, Loretta, and Crejsek move to where they can see. Pastor takes the baby from Jenny.*

PASTOR

*What name shall be given to this child?*

CRAIG

*Jonathan.*

PASTOR

*Jonathan. The Hebrew for "God has given."*

JENNY

*Yes, he has.*

PASTOR

*And what is the child's surname?*

CRAIG

*What?*

PASTOR

*His last name.*

*Craig looks at Jenny.*

CRAIG

*Me and Jenny will have to talk about that later.*

*Jenny looks at Craig.*

JENNY

*We'll work it out.*

*Pastor takes water from the basin Sam is holding to baptize Jonathan.*

PASTOR

*Jonathan, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. May your life be ever blessed. Amen.*

SAM, AMELIA

*Amen.*

Pastor kisses Jonathan on the head and hands him to Jenny. Sam and Amelia exit through the lectern door. Michele, Vicki, Harriet, and Loretta return to their places.

Pastor gestures to Crejsek to read, then moves behind the pulpit, removes his priest costume, and sits down.

CREJSEK

"When Mary and Joseph had finished doing all that was required by the law of the Lord, they returned to their home town of Nazareth in Galilee."

Loretta plays background music. Jenny, carrying Jonathan, and Craig exit through the pulpit door. Pastor follows them out.

CREJSEK

"The child grew and became strong; he was full of wisdom, and God's blessings were with him."

(beat)

Thus, says the Gospel according to Luke.

Crejsek sits down. Boomer, Bernie, Dick, Hank, and Hitoshi go out through a door at the front of the sanctuary. Michele, Vicki, and Harriet join Loretta in interlude music.

INT - BACKROOM ON PULPIT SIDE - NIGHT

*Jenny sits in the wheelchair, holding Jonathan with Craig beside her. The interlude music is heard in the background.*

*Pastor brings in a portable crib, takes Jonathan from Jenny, and places him in the crib. Pastor then goes out through the door to the hall.*

*Jenny and Craig look at Jonathan.*

JENNY

*He's a lovely baby.*

CRAIG

*Yes, he is.*

JENNY

*You do love me, don't you, Craig?*

CRAIG

*Yes, I do -- deeply.*

JENNY

*Then don't ever leave me.*

CRAIG

*I won't. We're a family now.*

*They embrace.*

## INT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Pastor and Hitoshi watch Hank, dressed as a wiseman, help Dick put on a wiseman's costume. Interlude music is faintly heard.

PASTOR

*When did you decide, Dick?*

DICK

*When I saw the star in the East shining in  
Jenny's eyes as she looked at her baby.*

*Pastor smiles and nods.*

## INT - SANCTUARY NIGHT

*Pastor enters chancel through pulpit door. The manger is gone from in front of the altar. Interlude music continues.*

*Seated in a front pew are Sam (dressed as a priest), Roy (dressed as a teacher), Amelia (remaining in Anna's costume), and Smitty and Buddy in their ranch clothes.*

*Pastor goes to the pulpit. The music ends.*

PASTOR

*(to congregation)*

*So we have Luke's story of Jesus' birth --*

and our own drama of Jonathan's birth and baptism.

*(beat)*

Matthew's version is next. It is also placed in Bethlehem, but Matthew doesn't describe the precise setting. There are some different characters, and you'll note that Joseph has a more prominent role. You'll also notice that Matthew keeps quoting the Old Testament. That's because the author was interested in linking Jesus' birth to Jewish prophecy.

*(beat)*

Let us begin part two of our pageant.

Pastor sits down by the pulpit. Crejsek goes to the lectern.

CREJSEK

"This was the way the birth of Jesus Christ took place. His mother Mary was engaged to Joseph..."

Craig (as Joseph) comes out from the pulpit door and walks around the chancel in thought. He sits down and dozes.

CREJSEK

"...but before they were married, she found out that she was going to have a baby by the Holy Spirit. Joseph was a



man who always did what was right, but he did not want to disgrace Mary publicly; so he made plans to break the engagement privately.

(beat)

"While he was thinking about this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream."

Vicki (as angel) comes out of the choir stall, goes to Craig, and wakes him.

VICKI (as angel)

Joseph, descendant of David, do not be afraid to take Mary to be your wife. For it is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived. She will have a son and you will name him Jesus -- because he will save his people from their sins."

Vicki eases back to her seat.

CREJSEK

"Now all this happened in order to make come true what the Lord had said through the prophet, 'The virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and he will be called Immanuel (which means, 'God is with us')."

*"So when Joseph woke up,..."*

*Craig rises and starts for pulpit door.*

*CREJSEK*

*"...he married Mary as the angel of the Lord had told him to. But he had no sexual relations with her before she gave birth to her son. And Joseph named him Jesus."*

*Craig exits through pulpit door.*

*INT - BACKROOM ON PULPIT SIDE - NIGHT*

*Jenny sits in the wheelchair. Jonathan sleeps in the crib. Craig comes in from chancel and leans over the crib to look at Jonathan.*

*CRAIG*

*But we named you Jonathan.*

*Craig smiles at Jenny and squeezes her hand.*

*INT - SANCTUARY - NIGHT*

*Crejsek stands at the lectern.*

*CREJSEK*

*"Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea, during the time when Herod was king. Soon afterward, some men who studied the stars came from the East to Jerusalem."*

*Crejsek looks toward the rear of the sanctuary. "Searching" starts playing a rock version of "We Three Kings".*

*INT - NARTHEX - NIGHT*

*Hank, Dick, and Hitoshi, dressed as wisemen, stand at the entrance into the sanctuary. Music is heard.*

*HITOSHI*

*I know you're nervous, Dick. Take three deep breaths and you'll be all right.*

*Dick breathes in deeply and exhales three times. Hank, Dick, and Hitoshi (as wisemen) head into the sanctuary.*

*INT - SANCTUARY - NIGHT*

*Hank, Dick, and Hitoshi (as wisemen) enter from the rear and walk down the center aisle. A star lights over the altar. As they reach the front pew, they turn to Roy (dressed as a teacher), who is seated there. Music*

*fades out.*

*HANK (as wiseman)*

*"Where is the baby born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star when it came up in the East, and we have come to worship him."*

*Roy rises.*

*ROY (as teacher)*

*In Bethlehem, according to the scriptures.*

*Roy sits down. Hank, Dick, and Hitoshi walk to one side at the front of the sanctuary. Rex (as Herod) comes out from the pulpit door and goes to the middle of the chancel.*

*CREJSEK*

*"When King Herod heard about this, he was very upset, and so was everyone else in Jerusalem."*

*Rex (as Herod) clenches his fists, sets his jaw, and shakes with rage.*

*CREJSEK*

*"He called together all the chief priests and the teachers of the Law."*

*Rex beckons to Sam and Roy, seated in the front pew. Sam (as chief priest) and Roy (as teacher) come up the steps to the chancel.*

*REX (as Herod)*

*"Where will the Messiah be born?"*

*SAM (as chief priest)*

*"In the town of Bethlehem in Judea."*

*ROY (as teacher)*

*"This is what the prophet wrote,  
 `Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
     you are by no means the least  
     of the cities of Judah;  
 for from you will come a leader  
     who will guide my people Israel."*

*Sam and Roy return to their seats on the front pew. Hank, Dick, and Hitoshi (as wisemen) come from the side to the center aisle below the chancel steps.*

*Rex (as Herod) beckons to them. They come up to the chancel. The four of them huddle and whisper MOS among themselves.*

*CREJSEK*

*"So Herod called the visitors from the East to a secret meeting and found out from them the exact time the star appeared."*

*REX (as Herod)*

*Go to Bethlehem "and make a careful search for the child. When you find him let me know, so that I too may go and*

worship him."

CREJSEK

"And so they left."

Hank, Dick, and Hitoshi walk down the steps and to the side of the sanctuary. Rex exits through the lectern door. "Searching" plays a rock version of "March of Turene".

HANK

(whispering)

That wasn't so hard, was it, Dick?

DICK

(whispering)

No, not at all.

Jenny (as Mary), carrying Jonathan, and Craig (as Joseph) come out through the pulpit door. Jenny sits on a stool at the front of the chancel. Michele and Harriet slip out through the pulpit door.

Hank, Dick, and Hitoshi (as wisemen) walk back to the center of the sanctuary at the front.

CREJSEK

"On their way to Bethlehem, they saw  
the same star..."

Hank points to the star over the altar.

CREJSEK

*"...they had seen in the East. When they saw it, how happy they were, what joy was theirs!"*

*Hank, Dick, and Hitoshi (as wisemen) smile at one another and gesture in exultation. Music ends.*

CREJSEK

*The star "went ahead of them until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They went into the house and saw the child with his mother Mary."*

*Hank, Dick, and Hitoshi (as wisemen) walk up the chancel steps and kneel before Jenny (as Mary).*

CREJSEK

*"They knelt down and worshiped him."*

*The wisemen offer gifts to Jenny (as Mary) and Jonathan (as baby Jesus).*

CREJSEK

*"They brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and presented them to him."*

*Hank, Dick, and Hitoshi rise, nod farewell, and descend the chancel steps.*

CREJSEK

*"God warned them in a dream not to go*

*back to Herod, so they went back to their country by another road."*

*Hank, Dick, and Hitoshi hurriedly leave through a door at the front of the sanctuary. Jenny (as Mary) and Craig (as Joseph) close their eyes as if asleep.*

*CREJSEK*

*"After they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph."*

*Vicki (as angel) goes to Craig (as Joseph) and shakes him.*

*VICKI (as angel)*

*"Herod will be looking for the child to kill him. So get up, take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you to leave."*

*Vicki returns to her place. Craig (as Joseph) wakes Jenny (as Mary), takes Jonathan, and they walk toward the pulpit door.*

*CREJSEK*

*"Joseph got up, took the child and the mother, and left during the night for Egypt."*

*Jenny and Craig, carrying Jonathan, exit through pulpit door. The star goes off.*



Rex (as Herod) comes out through lectern door. Roy (as teacher) and Sam (as chief priest) come up from the front pew.

ROY (as teacher)

(to Rex as Herod)

The men from the east have left the country.

CREJSEK

"When Herod realized that the visitors from the east had tricked him, he was furious."

Rex (as Herod) rages. He beckons Boomer and Bernie, who come out from the pulpit door, dressed as soldiers carrying swords. Roy and Sam return to the front pew.

Harriet and Michele, garbed as young mothers carrying doll babies, slip into the chancel through the respective pulpit and lectern doors.

CREJSEK

"He gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its neighborhood who were two years old and younger -- in accordance with what he had learned from the visitors about the time when the star had appeared."

Boomer (as soldier) waves his sword aggressively. Bernie (as soldier) holds his gingerly.

BERNIE

No! No! I can't do it!

BOOMER

You've got to. You agreed to play this part.

BERNIE

No! I can't kill, or even pretend to kill!

*Bernie throws down his sword and runs out the center aisle.*

BERNIE

I won't! I won't! I won't be a killer!

*Smitty comes up from the front pew.*

SMITTY

That lousy coward. I'll take his place.

*Smitty picks up the sword and feels the blade. Harriet and Michele (as young mothers) with their doll babies move out farther into the chancel.*

BOOMER

(to Crejsek)

Give us our cue again.

CREJSEK

Herod "gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its neighborhood who

*were two years old and younger."*

*Boomer and Smitty (as soldiers) grab the doll babies which Harriet and Michele (as young mothers) are holding, throw them to the floor, and stab them. Harriet and Michele fight back, scream, protest, and cry in anguish as their babies are slain.*

*Boomer and Smitty (as soldiers) run down the chancel stairs, stab imaginary babies, and proceed along the center aisle, stabbing more babies, and exit at the rear of the sanctuary. Bernie stands in the narthex and watches them come up the aisle.*

*Harriet and Michele (as young mothers) rush Rex (as Herod) and fall at his feet weeping. As they continue sobbing at Rex's feet, Loretta plays "Coventry Carol" as background music.*

#### CREJSEK

*"In this way what the prophet Jeremiah had said came true:*

*`A sound is heard in Ramah,  
the sound of bitter crying and weeping.  
Rachel weeps for her children;  
she weeps and will not be comforted,  
because they are all dead."*

*Crejsek looks up from her reading.*

**EXT - CHURCH ENTRANCE - NIGHT**

*Boomer dressed in his costume steps outside, leans over a pile of snow, and*

vomits.

INT - SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Harriet and Michele (as young mothers) rise and exit through the lectern door. Rex (as Herod) follows them.

Jenny (as Mary), carrying Jonathan, and Craig (as Joseph) enter through the pulpit door. Jenny sits on a stool in the chancel. Craig lies on the floor nearby and falls asleep.

CREJSEK

Mary and Joseph and the child stayed in Egypt until Herod had died. Then "an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph."

Vicki (as angel) goes to Craig (as Joseph) and awakens him.

VICKI (as angel)

"Get up, take the child and his mother, and go back to the land of Israel, because those who tried to kill the child are dead."

Craig picks up Jonathan. He and Jenny exit through pulpit door.

CREJSEK

"So Joseph got up, took the child and his

mother and went back to Israel." They went to the province of Galilee and made their home in a town named Nazareth. "And so what the prophets had said came true, 'He will be called a Nazarene.'"

(beat)

This ends Matthew's account of the birth of Jesus.

Crejsek sits down.

INT - NARTHEX - NIGHT

Boomer dressed as soldier comes back inside, wiping his mouth with a handkerchief. Bernie, still wearing the tunic, and Smitty come up to him.

BERNIE

Are you all right, Boomer?

BOOMER

I know it was play acting, but it's so personal. Not like releasing bombs from high altitude.

SMITTY

Don't matter to me. I know it weren't real. Anyways when I was in the army I did what they told me to do.

BERNIE

*You just don't get it, do you, Smitty?*

*Bernie shakes his head negatively.*

INT - SANCTUARY - NIGHT

*Pastor steps to the pulpit. Harriet and Michele come out with their young mother costumes removed and take their places with Vicki.*

PASTOR

*There you have Matthew's version of Jesus's birth in its entirety, reminding us of the violent world in which he lived. It's no wonder that Luke's story is more often read in church.*

*(beat)*

*The third version of the coming of Christ we offer you comes from the gospel of John. It has no baby, neither shepherds nor wisemen. So we will retire most of our players. We'll let Jenny and Jonathan rest in the nursery. I've asked the others to come as themselves and be*

our choir. This fine musical group, called "Searching", will play for us as they assemble.

"Searching" plays a rock version of "O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright". Roy and Sam come up to the chancel from the front pew, taking off their costumes as they arrive. Buddy comes up from a front pew.

Amelia, Rex, Hank, Dick, and Hitoshi come out from the lectern door, all in their regular clothes. Boomer in his Air Force uniform and Smitty in his ranch clothes come down the center aisle.

INT - NURSERY - NIGHT

Jonathan sleeps in a crib, Jenny rests on the day bed, and Craig sits beside her and holds her hand. Music is heard over the loudspeaker.

JENNY

Yes, we really are a family, Craig.

CRAIG

We always will be. And I'll be the provider, I promise.

Jenny squeezes Craig's hand.

INT - SANCTUARY NIGHT

*Crejsek stands at the lectern. Pastor sits near the pulpit. The others are in the choir loft. Music ends.*

CREJSEK

*"Before the world was created, the Word already existed; he was with God, and he was the same as God.*

*(beat)*

*"From the very beginning, the Word was with God. Through him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him.*

*(beat)*

*"The Word was the source of life, and this life brought light to mankind. The light shines in darkness, and the darkness has never put it out."*

*Suddenly all the lights in the sanctuary and chancel go out, leaving only the two lighted candles on the altar and the five candles on the advent wreath. The people gasp. Pastor rises and goes to pulpit.*

PASTOR

*Don't panic, folks. We'll be all right.*

*Pastor walks to the advent wreath next to the lectern and removes a lighted candle.*

PASTOR

*Sam, go down and start the emergency*



*generator while we get some more  
candles lit.*

*Pastor hands Sam the lighted candle. Sam exits through the lectern  
door. Pastor reaches under the lectern and pulls out candles.*

PASTOR

*Here are more candles. And there are a  
couple of candelabra just outside that  
door if somebody will bring them in.*

*Pastor points toward the lectern door.*

ROY

*Rex, will you give me a hand?*

REX

*I'll be glad to help you, Roy.*

*Roy and Rex go out.*

PASTOR

*Loretta, if you can make your way to the  
piano, we'll sing a carol while we're  
getting the candles lit.*

*Boomer rises and takes an advent candle.*

BOOMER

*I'll guide you, Loretta.*

*Boomer guides Loretta toward the piano on the sanctuary floor below the pulpit. Pastor hands unlit candles to all the players in the chancel. Crejsek lights hers from an advent candle and passes the flame along.*

PASTOR

*Friends, let us sing "Silent Night" while we are getting candles lit. The first and third verses. You all know the first verse. The third verse begins: "Silent night, holy night; Son of God loves pure light." You may remain seated.*

*Loretta plays the last line of "Silent Night" as an introduction.*

*Pastor with a lighted candle goes to the pulpit. Boomer moves near the lectern with his candle. Vicki, Michele, and Harriet stand together with lighted candles.*

*During the singing Roy and Rex bring in the candelabra and place them on the sanctuary floor at either side of the chancel steps. Hank and Buddy light the candelabra. The four return to their seats.*

ALL

*(singing)*

*"Silent night, holy night!  
All is calm, all is bright  
Round yon virgin mother and child.  
Holy infant, so tender and mild,  
Sleep in heavenly peace.*

*Sleep in heavenly peace."*

*Michele smiles as she sings. Tears stream down her face.*

ALL

*(singing)*

*"Silent night, holy night!*

*Son of God, love's pure light*

*Radiant beams from Thy holy face,*

*With the dawn of redeeming grace,*

*Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.*

*Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth."*

*Pastor stands at the pulpit. Boomer stands next to Crejsek at the lectern, holding a candle.*

PASTOR

*Now I believe we can pick up where we left off.*

*Pastor sits down.*

CREJSEK

*"The Word was the source of life, and this life brought light to mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out.*

*(beat)*

*"God sent his messenger, a man named John, who came to tell people about the light so that all should hear and believe."*

*Craig, dressed in rough clothing as John the Baptist, comes out the pulpit door and stands on the top step, illuminated by a candelabra.*

CREJSEK

*"He himself was not the light; he came to tell about the light. This was the real light -- the light that comes into the world and shines on all mankind."*

*Bernie, wearing a white robe as Jesus, comes out the lectern door and stands next to Craig on the top step, illuminated by the other candelabra.*

CREJSEK

*"The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father's only son. John spoke about him."*

*Craig (as John the Baptist) gestures toward Bernie (as Jesus).*

CRAIG (as John the Baptist)

*"This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'He comes after me, but he is greater than I am, because he existed before I was born.'"*

CREJSEK

*"Out of fullness of his grace, he has blessed us all, giving us one blessing after*

another."

*BERNIE (as Jesus)*

*"I have come into the world as light, that everyone who believes in me should not remain in darkness."*

*CREJSEK*

*"God gave the Law through Moses; but grace and truth came only through Jesus Christ."*

*BERNIE (as Jesus)*

*"As Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the desert, in the same way the Son of Man must be lifted up on the cross..."*

*Bernie extends his arms as if on a cross.*

*BERNIE (as Jesus) (cont.)*

*...so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."*

*CREJSEK*

*"For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have*

eternal life.

(beat)

"For God did not send his son into the world to be its judge, but to be its savior."

BERNIE (as Jesus)

"I tell you the truth: whoever hears my words, and believes in him who sent me, has eternal life. He will not be judged, but has already passed from death to life."

CREJSEK

"This is how the judgment works: the light has come into the world, but men love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil."

Smitty scowls.

CREJSEK

"Anyone who does evil things hates the light and will not come to the light, because he does not want his evil deeds to be shown up.

(beat)

"But whoever does what is true comes to the light..."

Craig beams with happiness and looks at Bernie (as Jesus).

CREJSEK (cont.)

*...in order that the light may show that  
he did his works in obedience to God."*

BERNIE (as Jesus)

*"I am the light of the world. Whoever  
follows me will have the light of life and  
will never walk in darkness."*

CREJSEK

*This is the testimony of the Gospel of  
John.*

*Loretta plays a chord on the piano. Michele, Vicki, and Harriet sing the  
"Dresden Amen" in three part harmony. As they do, the chancel lights  
flicker and then come on.*

MICHELE, VICKI, HARRIET

*(singing)*

*Amen, Amen.*

*Pastor goes to pulpit.*

PASTOR

*And so we have John's story of how the light came into the world to shine on us all.*

*Loretta starts moving from the piano to the organ. The sanctuary lights flicker, then come on and gradually reach their full strength.*

PASTOR

*It is a searching light that seeks us out. It is a kindly light, leading us through gloom that sometimes encircles us. It is light that darkness can never quench.*

*(beat)*

*And so we close our service by singing a hymn that is both a prayer and a tribute to that light. It is "Lead, Kindly Light", number 369 in the hymnal.*

*(beat)*

*For me it's a biographical hymn. And perhaps for some of you, too.*

*Loretta plays through "Lead, Kindly Light" (tune: "Lux Benigna"). Michele, Vicki, and Harriet prepare to join with their instruments when the congregation sings. Bernie and Craig move into the choir stall.*

*During the singing of the hymn we see a closeup of Pastor, a group shot of "Searching", and panning all the players in the choir as they sing enthusiastically. Part way through Sam slips in through the lectern door.*



Words appear on the screen as subtitles.

ALL

(singing)

"Lead, Kindly Light, amid th'encircling gloom,

Lead Thou me on!

The night is dark, and I am far from home;

Lead Thou me on!

Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see

The distant scene -- one step enough for me.

"I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou

Shouldst lead me on;

I loved to choose and see my path, but now

Lead Thou me on!

I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,

Pride ruled my will; remember not past years.

"So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still

Will lead me on;

O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till

The night is gone,

And with the morn, those angels faces smile;

Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile!"

Michele, Vicki, and Harriet sing a three part chant of "Nunc Dimittis", accompanied by Loretta on the organ.

MICHELE, VICKI, HARRIET

(singing)

"Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant  
 depart in peace according to Thy word.  
 For my mine eyes have seen Thy salvation,  
 Which Thou has prepared before the face  
 of all people;  
 To be a light to lighten the Gentiles  
 and to be the glory of Thy people, Israel."  
 Amen.

PASTOR

The pageant is ended. Go in peace.  
 May the spirit of God's love fill your  
 hearts and light your way, this day and  
 for evermore. Amen.

For a musical postlude "Searching" plays a rock version of "Lead, Kindly Light." The congregation moves toward exits.

Amelia rushes over to Pastor and hugs him.

AMELIA

Pastor, you did it! You did it! Thank  
 you.

PASTOR

*It was all of us, and the Lord, too.*

*Pastor smiles at Amelia.*

*Rex and Roy shake hands. Buddy stands beside his dad.*

REX

*Roy, my friend, we'll work it out.*

ROY

*I know you'll be fair.*

BUDDY

*You better be. It's gonna be my ranch  
some day.*

*Roy slaps Buddy fondly on the back. Rex laughs.*

*Hank hugs Craig.*

HANK

*That's quite a son you have, Craig.*

CRAIG

*He sure is. I hope he'll like living in  
California -- if I can get that job.*

HANK

*You will.*

Pastor comes up and grasps Craig's right hand with both of his. Hank walks away.

PASTOR

You were splendid, Craig.

CRAIG

Wow, man! I'm on top of the world.

PASTOR

Tell Jenny I'll be in to see her and Jonathan in a few minutes.

Craig leaves through the pulpit door.

Boomer puts his arm around Bernie's shoulder.

BOOMER

Now I understand your viewpoint,  
Bernie, even though I don't agree with it.

BERNIE

What next? Should I resign my  
commission?

BOOMER

We can talk that over tomorrow.

Boomer drops his arm, and Bernie walks away.

Dick starts to shake hands with Hank, but Hank gives him a bear hug instead. Hitoshi stands nearby.

HANK

You made a fine wiseman, Dick. You, too, Hitoshi.

DICK

I'm surprised how good it feels.

HITOSHI

It was a privilege I'll always remember.

Hitoshi bows.

DICK

But I still have questions.

HANK

So do most religious people I know, but they follow the light where it leads.

Hitoshi nods in agreement.

Bernie slides onto the organ bench beside Loretta as she plays. They look at each other with fondness.

Pastor shakes hands with Crejsek.

PASTOR

*Helen, thanks for providing our cast.*

CREJSEK

*Thank you for the pageant. I just wish my kids had been here.*

*Crejsek hugs Pastor.*

*Sam pats Smitty on the back.*

SAM

*You were great as a shepherd, Smitty.*

SMITTY

*And as a soldier?*

SAM

*Not so great.*

*Smitty frowns.*

*"Searching" stops playing. Pastor goes over.*

PASTOR

*Thanks, ladies. You were terrific.*

MICHELE

*It was a new high for me.*

HARRIET

*Best show I've ever been in.*

VICKI

*I just wish we'd recorded it.*

PASTOR

*It's preserved in our memory forever.*

*On the organ bench Bernie has his arm around Loretta.*

LORETTA

*You made your choice, Bernie.*

BERNIE

*Like the song said, "I don't ask to see the  
distant scene, one step enough for me."*

LORETTA

*Will you write me?*

BERNIE

*Yes, if you let me know where you're  
going to be.*

LORETTA

*I will. And I'll write you, too.*

*Loretta hugs Bernie.*

INT - NURSERY - NIGHT

*Jenny lies on the day bed, cradling Jonathan. Craig sits on the edge of the bed,*

JENNY

*This is the happiest day of my life.*

CRAIG

*Mine, too.*

*Amelia comes in and goes to Jenny.*

AMELIA

*How's the boy?*

CRAIG

*I couldn't be better.*

AMELIA

*I mean Jonathan.*

JENNY

*Perfect.*

*Pastor comes in and goes to the bedside.*

PASTOR

*How are you, Jenny?*



JENNY

*Tired but happy.*

PASTOR

*Thank you for the gift you brought us.*

JENNY

*It's the best Christmas I've ever had.*

*Jenny kisses Jonathan on the forehead.*

FADE OUT

THE END

# Lead, Kindly Light

## Treatment of A Screenplay

*It's two days before Christmas in central Nebraska. Pastor Ziegler, Amelia and Sam, two older members of the Muhlenberg Community Church, say goodbye to children leaving a Christmas party. As they clean up fellowship hall, Amelia laments that the church no longer puts on the pageant on Christmas eve. Ten years ago a pastor who disapproved of theater halted the production. This is a challenge to Pastor Ziegler, a middle-aged man who came last summer, for he has been in plays and loves theater.*

*The next day groups of travelers plunge westward along I-80 through a raging blizzard. In an empty semi-trailer sheep-hauler Roy, a rancher, his son Buddy, and ranch hand Smitty head for their ranch in Wyoming. Buddy teases Smitty about his black eye, acquired in a fight at the Omaha stockyard.*

*Hank and Dick, a pair of scientists from MIT, are accompanied by Hitoshi Morikawa, a Japanese astronomer, who they met the day before at a Space Technology Forum at the University. Dick and Hank are on a national debate tour, and Hitoshi is amazed that they are still arguing as they drive.*

*Members of "Searching", an all-female rock band, are packed into a mini-bus, trying to reach Las Vegas by December 27 for a new gig. Michele, lead guitar, is the boss. Vicki plays bass, Harriet drums, Loretta keyboard, and Jenny, nearly nine months pregnant, sings. Jenny's boyfriend, Craig (a roadie), drives. But he won't make a commitment to stay with Jenny after*

*their baby is born.*

*Boomer and Bernie, a pair of Air Force officers, cruise along in a red sports coupe. Boomer, a Gulf War veteran, talks casually of his air combat experience, while Bernie is content to stay on the ground in communications.*

*Because the storm is getting so bad, Officer Helen Crejsek of the Nebraska Highway patrol gathers these travelers into a convoy to follow a snowplow. They give up after forty miles and seek shelter in the Muhlenberg Community Church, where Pastor Ziegler, Amelia, and Sam are performing pre-Christmas chores. Pastor agrees to provide shelter. Sam starts calling around for food and bedding.*

*After all the travelers have entered fellowship hall, a straggler, Rex, arrives and joins them. Pastor graciously welcomes the stranded sojourners, but he soon learns that he hosts a contentious assortment. Roy discovers that Rex is from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) that has been imposing restrictions on his operations. Loretta, then Vicki deflect Smitty's flirtations, but 15-year old Buddy in a more subdued manner seeks to attract Vicki's attention.*

*Continue their dispute over the future of space, Dick opts for a manned space station and sending men to Mars ("Why not women, too?" Crejsek asks) while Hank prefers unmanned satellites and robot landings. Boomer would like a military base in space and the opportunity to flight a space fighter (a la Han Solo). Bernie favors smaller scale projects and believes that building the first A-bomb was a mistake. Hitoshi agrees because he was boy living in a village near Hiroshima when the A-bomb exploded. Boomer, though, is unapologetic for President Truman's decision to drop the bomb. Moreover, as an officer of the U.S. Strategic Command, he insists that nuclear*

deterrence must continue. Bernie, an officer in the same unit, has strong doubts.

As the travelers start to mingle, Craig and Vicki are even stronger in their condemnation of Boomer's position. But Boomer yields no ground.

To give his guests things to do, Pastor has the young folks set up a pingpong table and gets out checkers for the men to play.

On a personal level Amelia and the Pastor look after Jenny. They learn that her father left his family when she was thirteen, and she herself ran off at age sixteen because she didn't get along with her mother. Craig has been her boyfriend for a year, but he is restless and unwilling to make a lasting commitment.

Although Pastor recognizes that his guests are a contentious, irreverent bunch, he sees them as a potential cast for the pageant. Amelia, though, is skeptical because she doubts that there is scarcely a churchgoer among them.

When word gets around that Pastor would like them to put on the pageant, opposition breaks out. Dick, the skeptical scientist, is especially vociferous against being coerced into medieval pageantry. Craig, the roadie, is also strongly opposed.

Pastor isn't deterred. With Amelia's support he starts working on Jenny to play the role of Mary. She demurs, explaining that her life style is opposite the Virgin Mary's. Pastor replies that no one is judging her past, rather looking at what she might become. He himself faltered in the past, but the grace of God searched him out and restored him. Jenny still hesitates.

Pastor gains an ally in Michele, who wants to help stage the pageant. The subject doesn't matter to her. "We're both in the illusion business," she tells the pastor. He rebuts that what goes on in church is hardly illusionary but penetrates Ultimate Reality. As a start in casting, Pastor assigns Michele the role of Gabriel because she's so full of pronouncements.

Pastor and Michele start pulling out old costumes from the wardrobe. They invite Roy, Smitty, and Buddy to become shepherds for the pageant. Roy is willing, remembering that he was once in a pageant as a kid. Buddy is hesitant until he learns that Vicki will be an angel who comes out to sing to the shepherds. Smitty flat out refuses.

Next Pastor and Michele invite Hank, Dick, and Hitoshi to become wisemen. Hank is willing. Hitoshi offers excuses (never done this before, doesn't speak good English, not a Christian), but he finally agrees. Dick, though, absolutely refuses to partake in portrayal of superstition, the belief in a God who doesn't exist. Hitoshi responds that he himself experiences God, not out there, but within, affirming that "the universal spirit is alive even if some of the old concepts of God are dead." "Amen," says Hank. Dick still balks at being involved.

By now Jenny is leaning toward taking on the role of Mary and tries to persuade Craig to be Joseph. She notes that his refusal is just another example of his unwillingness to make a commitment.

Jenny accepts the role of Mary. As Amelia helps Jenny put on the costume, Amelia relates that she herself had the part 50 years earlier. She's seen other girls play the role over the years. "Being Mary," she declares, "is a renewal, a gift to cherish. When you say, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord,' it really can."

With pressure from Jenny and Pastor, Craig reluctantly agrees to play the role of Joseph. "But just for this one performance," he insists, still not wanting to make a permanent commitment to Jenny.

Suddenly Jenny feels an intense pain. Amelia takes her into the office to rest on the sofa. Craig goes with her.

As casting is going on, reconciliation starts occurring among various individuals. Pastor gets Roy and Rex to go out together to bring in food from a woman stopping by in her car. They warm up together, play checkers, and discover that they are both fans of John Elway.

Hitoshi tries to teach Dick how to play Go. After a while Boomer, having learned the game while based in Japan, takes Dick's place. This gives Hitoshi an opportunity to offer Boomer the victims' perspective of high level bombing.

When Michele calls Vicki and Harriet to be costumed as angels, they discover faded, tattered wings in the wardrobe chest. They decide to bring in their own costumes. Smitty and Buddy volunteer to help them. Roy unsuccessfully tries to block Buddy from going to the minibus with them.

Pastor is able to persuade Sam to be Simeon and Amelia to be Anna, but they both balk at also taking parts as Zechariah and Elizabeth. Rex agrees to be Herod in the pageant. However, neither Boomer nor Bernie want to be soldiers, but for different reasons. Boomer wants a better part while Bernie feels he's not cut out to be a foot soldier. Only a sense of duty to their host causes them to assent.

Crejsek accepts the role of narrator and goes off in a corner to read

through the text. She is interrupted by a call from the roadblock, saying that a bus with 25 passengers is arriving. Pastor agrees to take them in. He goes to the office to call around for more food and bedding.

Craig comes out of the study, amazed at "how that old buzzard can get these folks to bring food for people they don't even know." "That's the way people are in Muhlenberg," Sam explains.

Rex wants to know why a person of Pastor Ziegler's ability is serving a small, rural congregation. Sam explains that the pastor is starting over in the ministry after a stellar career back east was ruined by multiple occurrence of adultery. Pastor overhears. Then he tells how he was redeemed by a mystic experience on a California beach at night after a storm, revealing that God truly forgives. Craig is impressed.

Bernie reveals to Loretta that underneath his soldier's uniform he is a pacifist at heart. They discuss his dilemma as a member of the armed forces.

As time for rehearsal approaches, selective intervention occurs to round out the cast. Hank has a talk with Craig, encouraging him to settle down and suggesting a job opportunity. Sam figuratively and literally twists Smitty's arm to convince him to become a shepherd. Michele flatters Sam into taking on the role of Zechariah, and Pastor persuades Amelia to be Elizabeth.

Pastor tells Dick the legend of three young men searching for a portentous star who come together and see a great star rising in the east. They follow it to Bethlehem. "For each of us," Pastor concludes, "there is a star in the east that will lead us along new paths in the journey of life." "I'm

sorry," Dick replies. "I see things as a scientist, not a poet."

Warnings of adversity appear. The lights flicker. Snow avalanches slide from the roof. Loretta tries out the organ, and it develops a cipher. Bernie tries to back out of his role as a soldier. When Michele gathers the group into the sanctuary to start rehearsing, Boomer and Vicki walk out because Michele is too bossy.

Hank explains to Pastor that Murphy's principle is at work: "If anything can go wrong, it will go wrong." Pastor counters with the poet: "God moves in a mysterious way His wonder to perform."

By evening snow has stopped falling. Townsfolk come to the church for the pageant. The 25 bus passengers are there. "Searching", with Michele, Vicki, and Harriet in the choir loft and Loretta at the organ, plays a prelude of Christmas carols with a rock beat. Nervously the other players prepare to begin the three-part pageant that will present the versions of the coming of Christ as written by Luke, Matthew, and John. (As the pageant proceeds, "off stage" vignettes show some of their reactions to participation.)

Luke is first. Gabriel (Michele) tells Zechariah (Sam) that Elizabeth (Amelia) will bear a son in her old age. Gabriel tells Mary (Jenny) that she will have a child by the Holy Spirit. Mary visits Elizabeth and sings the song, "My Heart Praises the Lord." On her exit Jenny is stricken with pain. John is born to Elizabeth and Zechariah, who with help from a 3x5 card praises Lord. In the side room Jenny feels intense pain again.

Mary (Jenny) and Joseph (Craig) go to Bethlehem, where there is no place in the inn. Pain strikes Jenny again. She realizes that her own baby is about to be born. She quickly leaves the chancel, telling Pastor to go on without her. Jenny goes to the nursery, which has a day bed. Crejsek,



trained in child delivery, helps her. While awaiting the outcome, the congregation sings Christmas carols. Jenny delivers a baby boy. Harriet announces the birth to the congregation, which erupts with joyful cheering.

In the nursery Jenny insists that not only should the pageant go on that also that she intends to go back out. Amelia tells her they should end it now with the birth of the baby. Jenny replies, "No. Birth is a beginning, not and end. Mary didn't quit when Jesus was born. The shepherds came, then the wisemen."

Pastor reluctantly consents to Jenny's wish. After singing another carol the pageant resumes with the shepherds (Roy, Buddy, and Smitty) in the field, serenaded by angels (Vicki, Michele, and Harriet). While the shepherds are walking along a side aisle to the rear of the sanctuary and back down the center aisle, Pastor brings Jenny in a wheelchair to the side room. Supported by Craig (as Joseph), Jenny (as Mary) walks out on the chancel. Harriet carries their baby and places him in the manger.

The shepherds come to see the new born baby, then exit out the center aisle. As the baby is presented at the temple in Jerusalem, Simeon (Sam) and Anna (Amelia) offer their praise. Craig interrupts with a request to have their own baby baptized, a decision they made before coming back out. Pastor baptizes Jonathan, as the baby is named. As Luke's story ends, Jenny, Craig, and Jonathan go to the side room. Craig tells Jenny that he'll never leave her because "we're a family now."

As "Searching" plays a musical interlude, Pastor goes to the hall behind the chancel and finds Dick putting on a wiseman's costume. "When did you decide, Dick?" Pastor asks. "When I saw the star of the east shining in Jenny's eyes as she looked at her baby," Dick replies.

*Crejsek starts reading Matthew's birth story. Vicki is the angel who tells Joseph (Craig) that Mary, to whom he is engaged, will have a baby by the Holy Spirit. The wisemen (Hank, Dick, Hitoshi) appear, visit Herod (Rex), and go to Bethlehem to see the baby Jesus (Jonathan), Mary (Jenny), and Joseph (Craig).*

*The angel (Vicki) tells the wisemen not to go back to Herod, so they leave by another route. Jenny and Craig go to the side room as if going to Egypt.*

*Herod (Rex) is infuriated when he finds out what happened. He orders soldiers (Boomer and Bernie) to kill all boys in Bethlehem under age two. Suddenly Bernie revolts. "No! I can't do it! I can't kill or even pretend to kill!" He throws down his sword and runs out the center aisle of the sanctuary. Smitty steps up to take his place. As soldiers, Boomer and Smitty grab doll babies held by Michele and Harriet, garbed as young mothers, and slay them. They mime slaying of other babies as they run up the center aisle. Michele and Harriet fall sobbing at the feet of Herod (Rex).*

*Bernie watches from the narthex as Boomer and Smitty come up the aisle. Boomer goes on by, rushes out the door, and vomits on a snowbank. Coming back in, he explains, "I know it was play acting, but it's so personal." Smitty responds, "Don't matter to me. I know it weren't real. Anyways when I was in the army I did what they told me to do." Bernie comments, "You just don't get it, do you, Smitty?"*

*On the chancel Jenny, Craig, and Jonathan return from Egypt and leave the chancel as if going to Nazareth, ending Matthew's story.*

*Pastor explains to the congregation that the John's version of the*

coming of Christ has no baby, neither shepherds nor wisemen. That enables Jenny and Jonathan to retire to the nursery and most of the other players to serve as the choir.

Crejsek reads the opening verses from John, down to "The light shines in darkness, and the darkness has not put it out." Suddenly all the lights in the sanctuary and chancel go out, leaving only two lighted candles on the altar and the five candles on the advent wreath. Sam goes to the basement to start the emergency generator while others bring out a pair of candelabra on stands and light the candles. Loretta goes to the piano and plays "Silent Night" for the congregation to sing.

With candles lit, the reading proceeds. Craig comes out in the rough clothes of John the Baptist. Bernie appears in a white robe as the adult Jesus Christ. Each has one long line to say. Otherwise Crejsek reads selective passages from the first three chapters of John. When she reads that some men "love darkness rather than light", Smitty scowls. When she says "whoever does what is true comes to the light", Craig smiles broadly.

The pageant ends with the choir and congregation singing "Lead, Kindly Light", a hymn which Pastor indicates is biographical for him and perhaps for others, too. The words appear as subtitles.

"Lead, Kindly Light, amid th'encircling gloom,  
Lead Thou me on!  
The night is dark, and I am far from home;  
Lead Thou me on!  
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see  
The distant scene -- one step enough for me.

*"I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou  
Shouldst lead me on;  
I loved to choose and see my path, but now  
Lead Thou me on!  
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,  
Pride ruled my will; remember not past years.  
"So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still  
Will lead me on;  
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till  
The night is gone,  
And with the morn, those angels faces smile;  
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile!"*

*After the benediction, the players mingle and say words of reconciliation to one another and otherwise briefly convey the positive impact of being together and presenting the pageant.*

*[January 28, 1997]*

HOWARD W. HALLMAN  
6508 Wilmett Road  
Bethesda, MD 20817

January 16, 1996

Ms. Rosalie G. Heacock, President  
Heacock Literary Agency  
1523 Sixth Street, Suite 14  
Santa Monica, CA 90401-2514

Dear Ms. Heacock:

I am seeking an agent to help me market a Christmas screenplay, *Lead, Kindly Light*, envisioned as a movie for television. Would the Heacock Literary Agency be interested in representing me? The script is enclosed,

The opening segment of *Lead, Kindly Light* shows a diverse group in their natural habitat: ranchers unloading a flock of sheep at a stockyard, a female rock band in rehearsal, a pair of scientists engaged in debate, a businessman and government official in a motel lobby, a general and lieutenant leaving a military base. We become acquainted with them as they filter into a diner halfway across Nebraska on the day before Christmas with a raging blizzard outside. Their conversation reveals them to be earthy, skeptical, and mostly irreverent. Conflicts emerge. A highway patrol officer arrives, and she leads them west in a convoy behind a snow plow. After 80 miles they take shelter in a small town church. After taking them in and calling around for food and bedding, the pastor realizes that he has a potential cast for a Christmas eve pageant. At first many of the travelers resist but finally all of them agree to participate. As they are cast in roles and begin to consider the Christmas story, personal transformation commences for several of them and conflict among them begins to resolve. Then they present the story of

Jesus' origin as told by Luke, Matthew, and John, each version in sequence with music by the rock band. Each version is interrupted by surprising occurrences that complete personal transformations. A film crew that arrived on a bus films the pageant for later broadcast, at which time, so the Pastor announces, subtitles will be added when carols and hymns are sung so that viewers may join in the singing. The intent is to bring in viewers as participants.

My screenplay *Lead, Kindly Light* is based upon a stage play with the same title, which received five performances in December 1983 at Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C. (the one President and Mrs. Clinton are now attending). After watching the meager Christmas offerings on television this past season, I got out my old script and rewrote it for television. I have tried this medium before by writing several screenplays, though without marketing success, and have taken a university course on television production. I have another screenplay under development and am working on some ideas for interactive television on public issues. In other writings I am the author nine books and over 250 articles and papers. Because I am working freelance these days, I am in a position to travel to Los Angeles as necessary to facilitate the marketing and production of *Lead, Kindly Light*.

I hope that you will be willing to serve as my agent. But if not, please return script of *Lead, Kindly Light* in the enclosed SASE.

Sincerely yours,  
Howard W. Hallman

Mon-Thurs: 301 694-2859; Fri-Sat: 301 897-3668  
620-0232

Fax: 301

HOWARD W. HALLMAN  
6508 Wilmett Road  
Bethesda, MD 20817

January 29, 1996

Ms. Linda Hanick  
74 Trinity Place, 4th Floor  
New York, NY 10006

Dear Ms. Hanick:

As I mentioned on the phone, I have written a Christmas screenplay, entitled *Lead, Kindly Light*, and am seeking someone to produce it. I am sending a copy to you for your consideration.

*Lead, Kindly Light* depicts a group of earthy, skeptical, and mostly irreverent travelers stranded by a raging blizzard in a small church in the middle of Nebraska on Christmas eve. The pastor persuades them to put on the Christmas pageant in three segments: the versions of Luke, Matthew, and John. As a result, conflicts among the travelers are resolved and personal transformations occur.

The opening segment of *Lead, Kindly Light* shows a diverse group in their natural habitat: ranchers unloading a flock of sheep at a stockyard, a female rock band in rehearsal, a pair of scientists engaged in debate, a businessman and government official in a motel lobby, a general and lieutenant leaving a military base. We become acquainted with them as they filter into a diner part way across Nebraska on the day before Christmas with a raging blizzard outside. Conflicts emerge among them. A highway patrol officer arrives,

and she leads them west in a convoy behind a snow plow. After 80 miles they take shelter in a small town church.

The pastor, after taking them in and having a parishioner call around for food and bedding, realizes that he has a potential cast for a Christmas eve pageant. At first many of the travelers resist but finally all of them agree to participate. As they are cast in roles and begin to consider the Christmas story, personal transformation commences for several of them and conflict among them begins to resolve. Then they present the story of Jesus' origin as told by Luke, Matthew, and John, each version in sequence with music by the rock band. Each version is interrupted by surprising occurrences that complete personal transformations. A film crew that arrived on a bus films the pageant for later broadcast, at which time, so the Pastor announces, subtitles will be added when carols and hymns are sung so that viewers may join in the singing. The intent is to bring in viewers as participants.

My screenplay *Lead, Kindly Light* is based upon a stage play with the same title, which received five performances in December 1983 at Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C. (the one President and Mrs. Clinton are now attending). After watching the meager Christmas offerings on television this past season, I got out my old script and rewrote it for television. I have tried this medium before by writing several screenplays, though without marketing success, and have taken a university course on television production. I have another screenplay under development and am working on some ideas for interactive television on public issues.



Ms. Linda Hanick

January 29, 1996

Page two.

In other writings I am the author nine books and over 250 articles and papers dealing with neighborhoods, citizen participation, metropolitan governance, employment programs, and other urban issues.

These days I am working freelance and am therefore in a position to travel to New York to confer with you and others on *Lead, Kindly Light* and also to travel wherever it might be produced.

If after reading my script you decide that is not suitable for your production company, please return it to me in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope. But if you have any suggestions for who else might be interested, please let me know.

Sincerely yours,

Howard W. Hallman

Mon-Thurs: 301 694-2859; Fri-Sat: 301 897-3668  
620-0232

Fax: 301

HOWARD W. HALLMAN  
6508 Wilmett Road  
Bethesda, MD 20817

M-Th: 301 694-2859; F-Sa: 301 897-3668  
Fax: 301 620-0232

*Fax Message*

To: Bruno Caliandro  
Faith and Values Network

Fax: 212 964-5966

Date: January 29, 1996

No of pages: 2

Dear Mr. Caliandro:

As promised, I am sending you a synopsis of my script for a screenplay entitled *Lead, Kindly Light*.

I talked with Linda Hanick, as you suggested, and she agreed to receive and read my script. I would appreciate any further leads you might offer me.

My screenplay *Lead, Kindly Light* is based upon a stage play with the same title, which received five performances in December 1983 at Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C. (the one President and Mrs. Clinton are now attending). After watching the meager Christmas offerings on television this past season, I got out my old script and rewrote it for television.

*I have tried this medium before by writing several screenplays, though without marketing success, and have taken a university course on television production. I have another screenplay under development and am working on some ideas for interactive television on public issues.*

*In other writings I am the author nine books and over 250 articles and papers dealing with neighborhoods, citizen participation, metropolitan governance, employment programs, and other urban issues. I am a United Methodist, spouse of a United Methodist minister, and chair of Methodists United for Peace with Justice, a national association of laity and clergy.*

*These days I am working freelance and am therefore in a position to travel to New York to confer with you and others on *Lead, Kindly Light* and also to travel wherever it might be produced.*

*Sincerely yours,*

*Howard W. Hallman*

HOWARD W. HALLMAN  
6508 Wilmett Road  
Bethesda, MD 20817

January 29, 1996

*I am on this day mailing myself a copy of the script of my screenplay, *Lead, Kindly Light*, and a copy of the synopsis.*

*This script was registered with Writers Guild of America, East on January 22, 1996, registration no. 097111-00.*

HOWARD W. HALLMAN  
6508 Wilmett Road  
Bethesda, MD 20817

Phone: 301 897-3668

Fax: 301 896-0013

*October 19, 1996*

*Ms. Stacy Darline  
P.O. Box 803068  
Santa Clarita, CA 91380-3068*

*Dear Stacy:*

*As we discussed on the phone, I am sending you a copy of a script for a screenplay entitled LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT. I will greatly appreciate your reviewing the script and offering suggestions related to basic format, character development, plot structure, and other matters. For your services I am enclosing a check of \$195.*

*Although I have never had a screenplay produced, I am seriously interested in the medium. I have another script nearly completed and am working out ideas for two more. Therefore, your guidance on format will be helpful so that I can meet expectations of potential producers. Your suggestions on LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT will likely provide insights useful for other writing.*

*Please call me if you have any questions. Otherwise I will be expecting the return of LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT with your written comments in the enclosed SASE.*

*Sincerely yours,*

*Howard W. Hallman*

HOWARD W. HALLMAN  
6508 Wilmett Road  
Bethesda, MD 20817

Phone: 301 897-3668

Fax: 301 896-0013

October 24 1996

Ms. Stacy Darline  
P.O. Box 803068  
Santa Clarita, CA 91380-3068

Dear Stacy:

I have realized that I forgot to enclose my check for \$195 when I sent you the script for LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT. Here it is. Please excuse the delay.

Sincerely yours,

Howard W. Hallman

HOWARD W. HALLMAN  
6508 Wilmett Road  
Bethesda, MD 20817

301 897-3668 Fax: 301 896-0013  
mupj@igc.apc.org

February 12, 1997

Jackie Thompson, Literary Agent  
Quillco Agency  
3104 W. Cumberland Court  
Weslake Village, CA 91362

Dear Jackie:

I am submitting a screenplay, LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT, and request you to serve as my agent in marketing it.

This script is a thorough revision of a version you reviewed last August. At that time you declined to provide literary representation but encouraged me to pursue further development of an "intriguing" premise. Your office suggested a couple of script consultants who might assist me.

I revised the script, sent it to Stacy Darline for review, received her thorough analysis and suggestions, rewrote substantial portions of the script, sent the revision to Stacy, and received further comments from her. My latest draft encompasses many of her suggestions. She has been very helpful to me in matters of basic format, character development, and story structure. Of course, I have used my own judgment on language and story line as I have



rewritten LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT.

I ask you to review this latest revision and agree to provide literary representation.

These days I am engaged in free-lance writing and consulting. Therefore, I am available to go to the Los Angeles area to confer with potential producers and directors and to be on hand during production of my screenplay.

I am seriously engaged in writing other screenplays. I have a boy's sports story well along, have an outline for a screenplay featuring three generations of family conflict among first born sons, and have written a treatment of a screenplay on world politics. Thus, if you accept LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT, I will want to offer you further scripts when they are completed.

If you decline to represent me for LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT, please return the script to me in the enclosed SASE.

Sincerely yours,

# CITIZEN ROLES IN CITY BUDGET MAKING

## Experience in Three Cities

by Howard W. Hallman

When a city adopts its annual budget, it makes major policy decisions about program priorities, resource allocation, and tax level. Indeed, adopting the budget is the most important, annual policy-making event undertaken by local government.

In many localities, budget making is treated basically as a technical process and involves mainly paid administrators and elected officials. Citizens learn about the budget when it is completed and published, just prior to public hearings by city council. But in a few places citizens are involved from the very beginning of the budgetary process and continue to participate in sequential stages of budget making.

Three such cities are the subject of this report: Dayton, Ohio; Saint Paul,

Minnesota; and Portland, Oregon. Each of them has a dozen or more years of experience with citizen involvement in budget making, starting at the earliest stage and continuing throughout the budgetary process. This report reviews this experience in order to offer insights that may be useful to citizens and public officials in New York City who are looking at the role of the city's community boards to which the city charter assigns a role in city bud-get making. This is especially pertinent because of charter revision now underway in New York.

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The author has more than 30 years experience in research and action programs related to urban neighborhoods. He has had first-hand acquaintance with the structure and processes in New York, Dayton, Saint Paul, and Portland described in this report since they began in the 1960s and the early '70s.

He is the author of Neighborhood Control of Public Programs (Praeger, 1970), Neighborhood Government in a Neighborhood Setting (Sage, 1974), The Organization and Operation of Neighborhood Councils: A Practical Guide (Praeger, 1977), and Neighborhoods: Their Place in Urban Life (Sage, 1984). As president of the Center for Governmental Studies in Washington, D.C. (later renamed Civic Action Institute), he was publisher and editor-in-chief of two newsletters that reported neighborhood events around the country: Neighborhood Decentralization (1973-76) and Neighborhood Ideas (1976-83). Among other things these books and newsletters recorded experience in the three cities that are the focus of this report. In

February and March 1988 Hallman spent two days in each of these cities interviewing local officials and citizens and gathering up-to-date documents as the basis for this report.

I. LESSONS FOR NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION  
FROM EXPERIENCE IN THREE CITIES

*1. If citizens are to be influential in local budget making, they must be involved early and continuously in the process.*

Dayton and Portland have fiscal years beginning on July 1. In these cities neighborhood organizations begin developing needs statements in March to July of the previous year (12 to 16 months before the budget goes into effect) so that they are prepared to feed in their ideas before departmental budgets are formulated.

St. Paul has a fiscal year beginning January 1. For its two-year capital improvement program budget, citizens are involved in developing a capital allocation policy statement over a year in advance of the new budget year. Also at this early stage citizen-controlled district councils formulate their project ideas.

*2. For citizen involvement to be effective, it should be channeled through citizen-controlled organizations within neighborhood and community districts. There is also a need for citywide committees in which citizens*

*can participate during the middle stage of the budgetary process -- after departmental requests are in and before the budget office and chief executive wrap up the final budget.*

Dayton (179,000 in population) has seven neighborhood priority boards covering the entire city. They draw on ideas from 68 neighborhood associations. At the citywide level priority board representatives make up nearly half the membership of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Task Force, which formulates the capital portion of the CDBG budget.

Saint Paul (264,000) has 17 district councils. For the capital budget there is a citywide Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) Committee and three subordinate task forces: on Community Facilities; Streets and Utilities; and Residential and Economic Development.

In Portland (410,000) city government recognizes 89 neighborhood associations and encourages them to submit needs statements. Representatives of these associations come together to form district coalition boards. For the city as a whole there are 22 bureau advisory committees (BACs), each related to a city bureau, office, or department and an overall Bureau Advisory Coordinating Committee (BACC). Big-BACC, as the latter is called, is composed of representatives of the little BACs.

*3. To achieve legitimacy and accountability, democratic selection of neighborhood governing boards and district councils is highly desirable. Although direct election of members of citywide task forces and advisory committees may not be practicable, to the fullest extent possible a substantial part of their membership should be persons representing neighborhood and community district organizations.*

In all three cities elections are used to select members of neighborhood association governing boards, neighborhood priority boards, and district councils. Various electoral methods are used. Small neighborhood boards and associations are likely to have at-large elections.

Bodies serving larger areas, such as Dayton's priority boards, create small, single-member election districts (precincts). Dayton uses mail ballots for contested elections and yields an average of 30 percent participation by registered voters. In addition to members elected

directly by residents, some of Dayton's priority boards and Saint Paul's district councils provide representation from neighborhood associations.

The pattern of membership selection for citywide bodies varies. In Dayton priority boards determine their own representatives on the CDBG Task Force. The mayor of Saint Paul appoints members of the Capital

Improvement Budget (CIB) Committee, but district councils nominate candidates and they designate their own representatives to the task forces. In Portland the mayor and four commissioners each appoint members of bureau advisory committees related to their bureaus, but the BACs name their own representative to big-BACC. But even where the mayor or commissioner makes the appointment, that official often chooses persons active in neighborhood and district organizations.

*4. To provide credibility and strength, neighborhood and community district involvement in budget making should be part of a broader system of citizen participation.*

All three cities have processes for receiving complaints and service requests from neighborhood organizations. They also regularly notify neighborhood and community district organizations about proposed projects, rezoning requests, and other land use changes affecting the neighborhood. Dayton has administrative councils of mid-level city agency staff assigned to work with each priority board. Portland's bureau advisory committees give citizens access to departmental staff to discuss operating issues as well as the budget. In all three cities neighborhood associations and community district boards function as advocates, mobilize volunteers, and promote self-help activities. Site offices serve as a base for grassroots organizing.

*5. Staff assistance, accountable to citizens served, is essential for neighborhood and community district citizen organizations. By assuring that every neighborhood has staff assistance, lower-income areas -- where civic involvement is low historically -- can be brought into full participation in budget making and other citizen involvement activities.*

In all three places all parts of the city are served by staff paid by public funds and based in neighborhood offices. Dayton's Division of Neighborhood Affairs operates six site offices (one for each priority board, except the central business district). Although this staff is formally hired by the city, priority board representatives participate in personnel selection. Saint Paul makes funds available to 17 district councils so that each of them can hire a community organizer.

In Portland seven district coalition boards contract with the city to operate offices, run by a neighborhood coordinator and other staff.

*6. Neighborhoods and community districts should have methods for systematically determining and prioritizing needs.*

Dayton and Portland have annual neighborhood needs assessment processes that address a wide range of issues. Some identified needs require budgetary response, while others can be handled by currently available



services. When they first formed in the late 1970s, Saint Paul's district councils drew up district plans that were incorporated into the city's comprehensive plan. Project ideas continue to flow out of these plans, but also every two years the district councils solicit capital project proposals from groups and individuals in their districts.

*7. There should be a system for (a) feeding neighborhood needs and project proposals into the budget system before city departments prepare their own budget requests and (b) informing neighborhoods about departmental response. A city agency should be designated to carry out this function.*

All three cities have processes for obtaining departmental response. It is handled in Dayton by the Division of Neighborhood Affairs, in Saint Paul by the Budget Section, Office of the Mayor, and in Portland by the Office of Neighborhood Associations. Dayton and Portland use computer-aided systems to record needs and help track responses.

*8. After city departments have submitted their budget requests to the budget office, there should be opportunity for citizen review. For such mid-stage participation to happen, there is a need for some kind of citywide citizen committee or committees. This permits citizens to join city government personnel in determining priorities among competing proposals made by departments, neighborhood organizations, and other groups.*

Citywide advisory committees and task forces fulfill this function in the three cities: Dayton's CDBG Task Force, Saint Paul's Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) Committee and its three task forces, and Portland's 20 bureau advisory committees and the BACC. For capital projects both Dayton and Saint Paul have developed elaborate rating systems that draw on adopted policies on goals and objectives but also bring in the judgment of citizens and departmental representatives. In Portland two citizens serve on a Management Review Committee, composed mostly of city administrators, that goes over the budget in detail before it goes to the mayor for his final determination.

*9. After the chief executive (mayor or manager) submits the budget to city council, citizens have a final opportunity to make their ideas known.*

*However, by then only small, marginal changes are likely to occur. Involvement much earlier can be much more influential.*

In the three cities citizens participate in city council budget hearings, but they consider this much less important than in cities where this is about the first opportunity for citizen involvement.

*10. Structured citizen involvement at both levels -- neighborhood and citywide*

*-- provides for input of the detailed knowledge which neighborhood residents have*

*about their own needs and problems and at the same time brings in a citywide perspective. The latter -- the macro viewpoint -- is particularly useful in working out priorities for allocating scarce resources. The former -- the micro -- assures that important needs are not overlooked. The combination builds citizen support for public programs and for revenue measures needed to pay for them.*

In the three cities neighborhood representatives involved in citywide committees do indeed gain a citywide perspective. By meeting with representatives from other parts of the city, participating in hearings, and going on bus tours to view sites of proposed projects, they learn more about other people's needs. A sense of equity emerges and a willingness to find ways of overcoming the NIMBY ("not in my backyard") syndrome. In Dayton where blacks live mostly on one side of the city and whites predominantly on the other, residents from all parts of the city have a means to work together on common problems.

## *11. Citizen involvement in budget making and other citizen participation*

*processes are valuable to elected officials. It provides them information about needs they might otherwise not know about. It sets up a means for two-way communication supplemental to the political system of electoral campaign and constituency service. Particularly citizen involvement in mid-stage review is a partial counterbalance to dominance by the bureaucracy, thus providing elected officials a second source of information as*

*they make budgetary decisions. Especially where many proposed projects are competing for limited capital funds, a rating system with both citizen and agency input helps to set priorities and build consensus. In contrast, city councils lack the time for in depth review, and they are partially spared the burden of making controversial choices.*

This finding is derived from interviews with elected officials and top administrators in Portland, Saint Paul, and Portland.

*12. Goal setting and strategic planning connected to the local budgetary process has the potential of targeting public expenditures more effectively and making better use of resources. However, this practice is largely undeveloped, especially with meaningful citizen involvement. Major themes and specific objectives established at the beginning of the budget cycle could offer useful guidance to budget makers. Thus, citizen representatives, the mayor or manager, and city council together could inquire: what do we want our city to be like? what are the most important problems we face? how can the assets of city government be brought to bear on these problems? how can citizens, the private business sector, and non-profit organizations be effectively mobilized? what matters of priority should the upcoming budget address? This kind of goal setting, addressed to common problems, could be a unifying influence -- and at best, a challenge and inspiration for cooperative civic endeavors.*

Dayton's City Commission and manager periodically engage in corporate-style goal setting and strategic planning but without citizen input. Every two years Saint Paul draws up a new set of capital allocation policy guidelines at the beginning of preparing the next two-year capital improvement budget. Citizens have opportunity to be involved, but it is a weak process. Last year Portland's City Council used an outside facilitator to help them in goal setting, but this was their process alone, without broader participation. All three cities have considerable undeveloped potential for citizen involvement in goal setting and strategic planning, tied to the budget process and its citizen participation structures.

## II. RELEVANCE OF CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN BUDGET MAKING

Adopting the city budget is an important action. In allocating scarce resources, the budget establishes priorities among various programs, projects, and services. In its details the budget determines beneficiaries within the city's population and, especially the capital budget, among different sections of the city: downtown, neighborhoods, industrial districts, parks and land reserves. Because these are important policy decisions, budget making is a political process.

As Harold Lasswell once pointed out, the essence of politics is a "who gets what,

when, how." In the politics of budget making, "what" is the pattern of revenue and expenditures: taxes collected, salaries and purchases paid, projects and services provided. "How" is the budgetary process, encompassing many sequential steps between initial conception and final adoption. "When" is a calendar schedule that begins nine to fifteen months before the budget goes into effect and ends with budget adoption by the local governing body (city council or commission; in New York, the Board of Estimate) and in some jurisdictions acceptance by the mayor. "Who" consists not only of these officials with authority to give final approval but also numerous actors within city government: department heads and their staffs, union representatives, and others. "Who" also encompasses citizens with influence on budget decisions: politicians, business and civic leaders, neighborhood representatives, and persons from a variety of other interests.

The effort to increase citizen involvement in local budget making that has occurred in the last 15 years in some cities has aimed at broadening the number of persons "who" have a recognized role in the "how" of budget making.

In these cities new structural arrangements have developed for increased citizen participation in the budgetary process (combining "who" and "how"). The "when" comes early in the budget cycle, recognizing that to be influential citizen involvement cannot be delayed until the budget is fully developed and published. The intent is to have a positive effect on "what" the budget produces, that is, the pattern of expenditures and revenues.

There are other values underlying increased citizen participation in local budget making (though not often clearly articulated). One is the notion that representative democracy -- government of, by, and for the people -- requires civic participation going far beyond the periodic election of public officials. In reference to budget making, specific ideas citizens have about their needs and desires should be expressed as the budget is being formulated. This balances the views of experts who think they know what is best and the "imperial" desires of bureaucracies. Moreover, there is the practical effect that people will support the budget they have helped prepare -- and the revenues necessary to pay for planned expenditures. Finally, participation is a way to overcome alienation and to bring minority groups into fuller citizenship.

### III. BASIC PATTERNS IN NEW YORK, DAYTON, SAINT PAUL, AND PORTLAND

Before we start working our way through the budget process of the three cities under consideration, let's set the stage by briefly reviewing how their citizen participation structures and processes have evolved. And for comparison, we'll add New York to this historical review.

#### New York

New York City has been a leader in the effort to achieve greater citizen involvement in local budget making. The present community boards, which are now a primary focus for

such involvement, had their origins in a set of community planning boards in Manhattan, established in the 1950s by Borough President Robert Wagner, Jr. to advise on capital programming and other city planning issues. A 1961 charter amendment, adopted when Wagner was mayor, provided for community planning boards throughout the city, to be appointed by borough presidents. It took awhile to get them set up because first the City Planning Commission had to define community boundaries, a task completed in 1968 with the demarcation of 62 communities. Then the borough presidents made their appointments.

By then the administration of Mayor John Lindsay was carrying out new approaches to neighborhood decentralization, including a number of neighborhood city halls and a network of 50 urban action task forces. This led to establishment of an Office of Neighborhood Government and an experiment with decentralized administration of municipal services in eight communities. This program included redistricting service boundaries of certain operating agencies to achieve coterminality, delegation of increased powers to district supervisors, formation of district service cabinets, and appointment of district managers.

In a 1975 charter revision these measures of management decentralization were combined with the community boards (the term "planning" was dropped) to form the present arrangement. There are now 59 community boards, composed of up to 50 members, appointed by the borough presidents. City Council members elected from the community district nominate half the members and may participate as non-voting



members. The charter authorizes a wide range of advisory roles for the community boards, including involvement in service delivery issues, budget preparation, capital projects, and land use decisions. Each community board appoints a district manager, who has responsibility for processing service complaints and presiding at meetings of the district service cabinet. The cabinet consists of district supervisors of city operating agencies. Currently nine departments have established service districts co-terminous with one or more community districts. These departments and several other agencies have representatives on district service cabinets. There are also borough boards consisting of all chairs of community boards and City Council members from the borough, chaired by the borough president.

### Dayton, Ohio

Dayton has a city manager form of government with a five-member City Commission, elected at large. There are seven neighborhood priority boards, covering the entire city. The first one started as the Model Cities Planning Council, established in 1969 under an "equal partnership" agreement which neighborhood leaders negotiated with the City Commission. Two years later the city manager proposed and the Commission approved establishment of five neighborhood priority boards to cover the remaining residential sections of Dayton. At first they played a role in allocating a special \$200,000 city fund for neighborhood projects and then on how to spend \$5 million in federal money for Planned Variations to Model Cities. Later they took on an advisory role in the Community Development Block Grant Program. In the late 1970s

the Downtown Dayton Association began serving as the seventh priority board for the mostly-commercial, central business district, but as more downtown housing was constructed, a separate Downtown Priority Board has come into existence.

Staff assistance for the priority boards comes from the Division of Neighborhood Affairs, a city agency. It has a staff of 27, most of whom are based in six site offices located around the city. A Neighborhood Leadership Institute associated with Wright State University provides training for priority board members and other neighborhood leaders. Each priority board area has an administrative council consisting of city departmental representatives who are in charge of district operations (such as police lieutenants) or otherwise have a direct connection with services rendered in the priority board area. Monthly each priority board meets with its corresponding administrative council. The seven priority board chairs have regular meetings. A citywide Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Task Force has representatives of the priority boards and city departments.

### Saint Paul, Minnesota

Saint Paul is governed by a mayor and a seven-member City Council, elected by wards (a change from at-large elections that occurred six years ago). In 1975, after three years of discussion, City Council enacted an ordinance that divided the city into 17 districts and provided a ten-step process for the organization and recognition of district councils. This arrangement has allowed each district to devise its own plan of

organization. In some cases an existing organization became the recognized district council. In other districts, small organizations formed a coalition, and in some instances a new organization was set up.

A citizen participation coordinator in the Division of Community Development serves as liaison to the 17 district councils. The city gives each district council money to hire a community organizer, either as staff or as a consultant. Most of them have an office within the district. Under a requirement of state law, Saint Paul has a citywide Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) Committee consisting of three members from each of the six state senatorial districts within the city. Associated with the CIB Committee are three task forces with substantial representation from the district councils. (We'll review their functions later.)

### Portland, Oregon

Portland, Oregon has a commission form of government, that is, the mayor and four commissioners serve individually as administrative heads of clusters of bureaus and departments and also as City Council. In 1974 City Council passed an ordinance creating an Office of Neighborhood Associations and setting forth a procedure for official recognition of neighborhood associations to play an advisory role on matters affecting their neighborhoods. Some existing associations objected that the recognition standards were too inflexible. After some controversy City Council dropped the recognition process and instead set forth performance standards to qualify neighborhood associations to

receive assistance from the Office of Neighborhood Associations. There are now 89 associations that so qualify.

The Office of Neighborhood Associations has a six-member staff. There are seven district offices, each with a coordinator and several other positions. Although paid by public funds, they are under the control of district coalition boards made up of representatives of neighborhood associations.

In 1973 newly elected Mayor Neil Goldschmidt appointed five budget review committees to advise him on bureau budgets. Over the years this arrangement has evolved into 22 budget advisory committees (BACs) that relate to virtually every city bureau. In 1983 a Budget Advisory Coordinating Committee (BACC, sometimes called "big-BACC") formed to pull together the work of the "little BACs".

### Breadth of Budget Coverage

Although Dayton, Saint Paul, and Portland are leaders in providing citizen roles in budget making, in none of the three cities are neighborhood residents involved with all local public budgets that fund programs and services offered in their neighborhood. The total array of budgets encompasses the city's operating budget (called expense budget in New York), city capital budget, and the budgets of other local jurisdictions, such as the school board, counties, and areawide service agencies.

Portland has the greatest breadth of involvement, for the bureau advisory committees are concerned with both the operating and capital budgets of virtually every bureau and department of city government, including the budgets of the offices of the mayor and the four commissioners. However, many human services are handled by the county, the school budget is independent, and there is a separate metropolitan agency. These are beyond the scope of the citizen participation process.

The Saint Paul process deals only with the capital improvement budget, drawn from a variety of local, state, and federal sources, including the CDBG program. In Dayton neighborhood needs collected by the priority boards are fed into various aspects of the city budget, but board representatives are directly involved only in consideration of the CDBG budget and not other capital budget matters, nor the operating budget. Identified neighborhood needs may have an impact upon these budgets, but citizens lose sight of how this occurs as budget development moves through the bureaucracy. In Dayton and Saint Paul, as in Portland, the school and county budgetary processes do not offer citizens opportunities for early involvement.

### Depth of Citizen Participation

Like New York, the fiscal year begins on July 1 in Dayton and Portland, but on January 1 in Saint Paul. In all of these cities the participation process starts more than a year before the budget takes effect. This lengthy involvement adds depth to citizen participation.

Furthermore, in these cities the priority boards, district councils, and neighborhood associations deal with other matters beyond budget making. They are involved in review of city planning proposals and zoning applications. The citizen organizations and neighborhood offices serve as channels of complaints and requests for municipal services. They engage in basic grassroots organizing and sponsor self-help activities. This wider range of roles places them in a position to offer knowledgeable advice in the course of the budget process.

This should be kept in mind as we probe the practical experience emerging from these three cities. But before we go through the budget process step-by-step, let us consider a crucial underlying issue: legitimacy.

#### IV. LEGITIMACY

In inquiring about the legitimacy of the processes of citizen participation in local budget making, one can ask: by what authority do the participants speak? how representative are they of the neighborhoods and districts they serve? To answer we should look at methods of selecting members of neighborhood and district boards. We also need to understand how chosen representatives are perceived by other residents and by the general public.

In each of the three cities the participation system has been established by an

ordinance or resolution enacted by city council, not by charter. In some instances, a particular aspect began as an administrative action of the mayor or a city department, but after some experience received the blessing of city council. In all the cities the citizen boards and committees possess only advisory powers, though political dynamics make their advice quite influential in decisions made by the mayor, manager, and council.

Within this common framework of authorization, the three cities have different structural patterns for citizen participation.

### Dayton

Most members of Dayton's priority boards are directly elected by residents of the districts they serve. The boards range in size from 10 to 38. Typically members are elected from subdistricts and serve overlapping, two-year terms so that one-half of the board is elected each year. In some instances neighborhood associations designate their representatives. After years of experimentation, all of the priority boards conduct their elections by mailing ballots to all registered voters in subdistricts with contested elections. On the average 30 percent of the eligible voters return their ballots, but it sometimes runs 60 percent or more where electoral competition is intense. Each priority board elects its own officers.

With priority boards concentrating on advisory roles on various city policy matters and program activities in their districts, neighborhood development corporations have

been forming in recent years to carry out specific project activities. In addition, the priority board areas, being fairly large, have within them many neighborhood associations which serve as advocates for their particular subareas.

The priority board chairs meet together once or twice a month. Sometimes the manager or other city administrators attend their meeting. The chairs meet quarterly with the City Commission (mayor and four commissioners). The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Task Force consists of a representative of each of the seven priority boards (sometimes the chairperson, sometimes another representative), a citizen member of the City Plan Board, and eight city administrators. There are also some internal city committees that are involved in the budget process, but they contain no citizen representatives.

### Saint Paul

The seventeen district councils in Saint Paul are organized in different ways, as we have noted, but all of them have some kind of electoral process for selecting their governing board. Some have subdistricts, others have at-large election. Some of them provide representation for neighborhood and business associations. Elections occur annually but at different times of year for the different district councils.

The important Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) Committee is appointed by the mayor, according to state law, but the city administrative code provides that each district



council submit three nominees to the mayor and state first preference for appointment. And even though six state senatorial districts are the basis for appointment (three per district), the mayor tries to assure that each of the 17 district council areas is represented on this 18-member committee. The CIB Committee has three task forces: Community Facilities; Residential and Economic Development; and Streets and Utilities. Each district council appoints a member and an alternative to each task force, which also has members from the overall CIB Committee. Many persons appointed to the CIB Committee previously have had task force experience.

## Portland

The foundation for citizen participation in Portland is the numerous neighborhood associations organized throughout the city. They are organized in different ways but usually have some kind of democratic selection process for their governing board. They join together in forming district coalition boards. The associations and district boards play a major role in the neighborhood needs process, which we will examine later. The 22 bureau advisory committees (BACs), involving approximately 200 citizens, are appointed by the commissioner in charge of the bureau (that is, by the mayor or one of the four commissioners). Appointees are drawn from a pool of qualified applicants referred by the Office of Neighborhood Associations. They include both neighborhood representatives and persons representing citywide civic interests. The Bureau Advisory Coordinating Committee (BACC) has a representative of each BAC. It elects its own chair and vice chair. There is also a Management Review Committee, which plays a

crucial role in formulating the budget just prior to the mayor's final input. Most of the members are administrative officials, but two BACC representatives are also members.

### Analysis.

In the early 1980s academic scholars studied the participation processes in Portland and Saint Paul to examine who the participants were and how representative they were of their neighborhoods and districts. Today the basic systems in these two cities and the type of participants are about the same as they were when these studies were made. Therefore, their results would appear to remain applicable.

In Portland Charles R. White and Sheldon M. Ender (1981) determined that the active participants in neighborhood associations with ties to city government were demographically typical of their neighborhoods. They generally expressed perceptions of neighborhood conditions similar to those of non-participants. White and Ender concluded that "from an overall perspective, Portland's neighborhood associations provide a forum for the expression of perceptions and concerns which are indeed representative of the different regions of the city."

In studying participation and representation in Saint Paul's district councils, Richard C. Rich (1983) discovered that the typical participant was a middle-income, middle-aged homeowner with a college education and a professional-technical job who has lived in the community for more than three years. Underrepresented were renters, low-income

citizens, young people, and the elderly. Upper-income people were also less active. Nevertheless, there was a high level of awareness of the district council system among the wider public. Of persons surveyed, 65 percent recognized the name of the local district council, 41 percent had heard of the district council system, and 21 percent were knowledgeable about their local council. Of the latter nearly eight out of ten thought that the district council made the neighborhood a better place to live. Two out of three, when asked, said they were willing to pay \$10 a year more in taxes to keep their district council in operation if it could not get by without extra money.

I know of no similar survey for Dayton, but I would estimate that Dayton's priority boards achieve a similar pattern of representation and are likewise viewed as useful instruments by neighborhood residents.

Thus, these three cities have neighborhood and district citizens structures that have achieved a considerable degree of legitimacy. This has occurred for several reasons. The electoral process has kept open leadership opportunities for anyone who wishes to participate, and regular elections offer an ever-present potential for replacing incumbents of whom residents have come to disapprove. Good faith experience and demonstrable results have built citizen confidence in the system. This has enhanced the broader civic culture and contributed to acceptance of the participatory practices by elected and appointed city officials. Moreover, by now a number of members of city council or commission and some of city hall staff have risen from the ranks of neighborhood leadership, indeed have had their first civic and political experience as leaders of

neighborhood associations, priority boards, and district councils.

As noted, the study of Saint Paul found relatively lesser participation by upper- and lower-income persons. Observers in the other two cities indicate that a similar pattern prevails there, too. This seems to occur because upper-income people tend to have other avenues of access to city hall and have less need for entree through neighborhood organizations. Lower-income persons participate less across the spectrum of political life, so this falls into that pattern. However, in these three cities neighborhoods occupied by poor people and racial and ethnic minorities are fully involved in the budget process and other aspects of the participation system. This occurs because of the presence of community organizers and neighborhood offices that can function as a focus for organizing and achieving grassroots participation. Also, continual training and technical assistance contributes to talent development. So, equality of participation requires an input of resources for staff and training, targeted especially toward low participation neighborhoods.

When we come to the citywide committees, we find a number that are appointed rather than elected: the bureau advisory committees in Portland and the Capital Improvement Budget Committee in Saint Paul. However, the appointing authorities are sensitive to neighborhood preferences and have appointed people who for the most part are acceptable to residents. Also, certain citywide committees have persons designated by the neighborhood units: the CDBG Task Force in Dayton and the three task forces that relate to the CIB Committee in Saint Paul.

## V. CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT AT DIFFERENT STAGES

We turn now to the specifics of citizen involvement in budget making in Dayton, Saint Paul, and Portland and will trace the patterns at each stage of the budget cycle.

### (1) Setting Goals and Objectives

In a "rational planning" model designed by academic experts, an initial step is the establishment of goals and objectives. However, in the real world of local budget making this seldom occurs. There are a couple of reasons.

First, most budget making tends to be incremental, that is, it makes relatively small adjustments up or down in the budgets of departments, divisions, and bureaus. Accordingly, the tendency is to deal with details rather than the big picture. Although some have advocated zero-based budgeting to require each department to justify every program and service afresh each year, this rarely occurs.

Second, Americans generally and public officials specifically tend to be pragmatists and to steer away from exposition of theoretical goals. Although a foundation of carefully developed goals and clearly specified objectives has the potential for improving performance, we have relatively little governmental experience in this mode of operation. And when goal setting has occurred, such as in comprehensive city plans and "goals for

[name of city]", it has often been unconnected to means of implementation, thus lacking a sense of reality and the prospect for achievement.

Nevertheless, the three cities we are reviewing have made some modest efforts to set goals and establish policies to guide their budgets. However, citizen participation in this process has been slight or nonexistent.

Dayton. Functioning under the manager plan of city government, Dayton's top officials tend to follow a corporate model of decision making. The City Commission functions like a corporate board of directors, and the manager serves as chief executive officer. In the late 1970s the Commission and manager spent a great deal of time assessing the strengths of the city and its municipal government, defining problems, and formulating long-range goals and objectives. This effort was updated in 1984, leading to adoption of a statement on "The Goals and Objectives of the Dayton City Commission," published as a five page pamphlet. The subtitle offered the major theme: "Balance and Orderly Growth (1984-1990)." This was almost entirely the work of the City Commission, manager, and his staff without much involvement of city departments and with no participation of citizens. The next year the City Commission adopted a General Operating Fund Financial Plan (1985-1990), the third in a series of multi-year financial plans related to the search for financial stability in a fluctuating economy.

Each year the manager seeks to highlight certain aspects of the City Commission Policy Goals and Objectives by targeting key issues. In the 1988 budget he specified 18

such issues under four major categories, drawn from the Goals and Objectives statement: economic vitality, neighborhood vitality, community leadership, and professional management. The city budget document carries the title "Dayton 1988 Program Strategies" and has three major sections: financial plan, program budget, and appropriation.

Saint Paul. The principal effort of goal setting in Saint Paul occurs biannually in the adoption of the "Saint Paul Capital Allocation Policy." Staff of the Planning Commission have responsibility for initiating this process in consultation with other city staff and an Ad Hoc Citizen Advisory Committee. The latter is drawn from the Capital Improvement Budget Committee by inviting anyone who wants to participate to come to meetings. The last round in the fall of 1986 yielded only modest participation. The Capital Allocation Policy is adopted by the Planning Commission, transmitted to the mayor for approval, and then sent to City Council for adoption. This policy statement provides guidance to the Planning Commission in preparing a Capital Improvement Budget and Tentative Five-Year Program. It also sets policy guidelines for the CIB decision-making process.

The heart of the 1988-89 document is four policy statements: strategy policies, evaluation policies, project policies, and budget policies. Strategy policies are quite general. More significant are the evaluation policies, for they enter into the rating system used by the CIB Committee later in the process. Project policies indicate the kind of projects which will not be funded and the kind which are preferred. Budget

policies describe the sources of funds available for capital improvements.

City officials and citizen participants in Saint Paul realize that this aspect of policy formulation is weak. A committee is now being set up to review this process for the next biennial round of the capital improvement budget, which begins in the fall of 1988.

Portland. Portland's commission form of government, with the mayor and four commissioners serving individually as administrators and collectively as City Council, does not make goal setting an easy process. One observer calls it a "headless" operation. However, last year under Mayor Bud Clark's initiative an effort was made to come up with some long-range goals for the city. A facilitator was used to assist City Council members to formulate a set of goals. They identified five top goal areas: public safety, economic development, fiscal stability, long-range planning/vision, and productivity.

These

were sent to bureaus and citizen members of the bureau advisory committees for their information.

To provide greater specificity to the first of these goals, City Council in January 1988 adopted a Portland Safer City Plan, laying out a set of actions to respond to a growing crime rate, drug traffic, and infiltration of gangs from Southern California. In February City Council adopted a set of budget review guidelines. The first stated: "Priority for funding will be given to those programs that directly support the Safer City Plan or one or



more of the work elements with the Goals adopted by Council." The Bureau Advisory Coordinating Committee was upset because the same resolution established a funding level for the Police Bureau before citizens had completed their budget review. BACC countered with its own "Citywide Priorities Listing." City staff consider this listing to lack specificity. Thus, goal setting in Portland has produced some static in what otherwise is a fairly harmonious process of budget making.

Comment. In all three cities citizen involvement in goal setting is the weakest element of the budgetary process. The goal setting process itself is not highly developed in Portland and Saint Paul, something that leaders in both cities recognize and would like to improve. Dayton pursues a corporate style of goal formulation without much citizen participation. However, the citizen leaders I asked about this do not feel any great sense of loss from their lack of participation. They are more concerned with the immediate issues, where they have abundance of experience in effective participation, whereas they lack experience in longer-range planning.

## (2) Formulating Neighborhood Recommendations

The strength of citizen budgetary participation in all three cities is the input citizens have into the local budget before city departments make their own budget requests. In all three localities the budget process requires departments to consider neighborhood and other citizen recommendations in preparing the departmental budget.

How do neighborhood organizations, other citizen groups, and individuals go about developing their recommendations? Two patterns are observable. The one first draws up a plan for community improvement and then outlines projects and programs. The other focuses on immediate problems and tries to solve them. The one emphasizes analysis and goal setting and schedules actions over several years. The other collects expressed needs, prioritizes them, and then seeks practical responses as soon as possible. The latter method is more common in the three cities. But this more pragmatic approach can also have a multi-year dimension, for sometimes expressed needs that do not fit into the priorities of the current budget year (such as the desire for a new community center) are carried forward to the next year, and longer. Citizens realize that they may not get big-ticket items the first year they propose them, so they develop a multi-year advocacy framework. But they seldom put this on paper as a specific plan with goals, objectives, and strategies.

Dayton. Every year Dayton's priority boards collect, prioritize, and submit needs statements as part of the budgetary process. Needs assessment takes place in the spring of each year, starting 15 to 16 months before the next budget goes into effect. All priority board members have an opportunity to express their ideas of needs. So do neighborhood associations and individual citizens. This is done through neighborhood meetings, surveys, task force discussion, and other methods of outreach. Some of the needs are carried over from previous years because resources were not available to respond to them. Others are recurring problems. Some are new. After they are collected the priority board ranks them in order of priority, but the board sends all of them

to the city for consideration. The needs statements go to the Division of Neighborhood Affairs, which sorts them by departments, distributes them to the various bureaus, and publishes a composite "Priority Board Needs Statements." This is done in July, a little over eleven months before the next fiscal year begins.

Saint Paul. Saint Paul's capital improvement budget planning process also starts about 15 months before it goes into effect. While the Planning Commission, mayor, and City Council are considering and adopting the two-year Capital Allocation Policy in the months from November to January, the Budget Section in the Office of the Mayor circulates and collects proposal forms for capital improvement projects. These forms go to all city departments and divisions, to the 17 district councils, and to any other organization and individual interested in submitting proposals.

When the district councils were first set up in the 1970s, each of them had the assistance of a district planner from the Planning Department so that they could undertake the development of a district plan. Some took two or three years in this process. The Planning Commission reviewed these plans and adopted them as part of the city's comprehensive plan. In that earlier period when more financial resources were available, the district plans provided a basis for district requests to the Capital Improvement Budget, especially for CDBG-eligible projects. In some districts the plans remain as a useful legacy in developing capital improvement requests and some of them have been updated, but district councils also look elsewhere for capital improvement proposals.

In each of the last two years several district councils divided a special fund of \$10,000/year for needs assessment activities, such as focus groups. Beyond these kinds of analyses, district councils receive requests from neighborhood associations and other organizations within their districts, such as booster clubs from community centers. Budget procedures require the district councils to rank all proposals and to indicate their five top priorities. In doing so district councils might plot a strategy for getting preferred projects approved. During this period district councils may also hear from city departmental personnel who, realizing that district representatives are influential in the CIB task forces that will review all proposals from every source, want to form a working alliance to gain support for department projects in that particular district.

Portland. In Portland neighborhood needs identification was one of the first initiatives of the Office of Neighborhood Associations (ONA), beginning in 1975. As in Dayton, Portland's needs assessment process begins over a year before the start of the fiscal year. In May ONA mails need forms to neighborhood associations and civic groups. Neighborhood associations use different ways to identify and collect needs, such as general membership and board meetings, neighborhood surveys and petitions. Need reports are returned to ONA directly or through the district offices.

Portland has many neighborhood associations participating in this process. They are clustered into seven districts, each with a district coalition board composed of neighborhood association representatives. Some, but not all, of these boards pull to-

gether the needs statements from all associations in their district, look at total district needs, and indicate their priority. But this is less complete and less systematic than in Dayton and tends not to have the planning basis found in Saint Paul.

Comment. In all three cities the process of neighborhood needs assessment tends to be reactive to immediate, recognized problems rather than analytical of underlying conditions. The priority boards, district councils, and neighborhood associations have neither staff of their own nor assistance from city personnel to undertake a systematic analysis of neighborhood conditions and feed this into a neighborhood planning process that moves through setting goals and objectives, devising strategies, and establishing priorities among various needs. This makes needs assessment intuitive rather than rationalistic. The squeaky wheel gets the attention because the need is obvious and the noise is grating to the ear.

This is meant as a descriptive rather than a judgmental comment. What happens through the process in each city is that problems which city personnel may be unaware of are brought to light. Especially where the neighborhood or district has a means for ranking these problems and assigning funding priorities, a useful assessment occurs that may be superior to the judgment of a budget analyst in city hall, who has no better data and no deeper analysis than the neighborhood body.

### (3) Feeding in Neighborhood Recommendations

All three cities have developed ways to feed neighborhood recommendations into the budget process. In each case there is an agency in city hall to handle this function. In Dayton and Portland the neighborhood liaison agency does this; in Saint Paul, the budget office.

Dayton. Dayton's Division of Neighborhood Affairs sends out needs forms to priority boards and other groups, and receives them back. During the last two years the Division has developed a computer-aided format to facilitate this process. This division is part of the Department of Human and Neighborhood Resources, and the department director transmits the Priority Board Needs Statement to the city manager so that he can send it to the department heads with instructions to give their responses. The document for the 1988 budget went to the manager on August 19, 1987 with a request that departmental responses be returned by September 25. Need statements were broken down by departments and showed which priority board area the request came from and who initiated it (the priority board itself, a neighborhood association, or some individual). The report also indicated which statements were carried over from the previous year.

Saint Paul. In Saint Paul the Budget Office receives capital project requests from varied sources -- citizen organizations, city operating departments, other public agencies, and private agencies. This occurs in January. The Budget Section takes requests received from all sources and divides them according to district within the city and department. Departments receive all requests relating to their activities. In addition, district councils are sent all requests for all projects that would be carried out

within their district, including proposals from city departments and other public agencies. Thus, there is a two-way exchange of proposals, facilitated by the Budget Section.

Portland. The Office of Neighborhood Associations in Portland receives neighborhood need statements from neighborhood associations and other sources, sorts them by city bureau, and dispatches them to the bureaus for their consideration. For each bureau the needs are organized by kinds of projects and the originating organization. These reports go to the bureaus in July with an expectation that they will reply by August. For a number of years ONA has had a computerized operation for this purpose, thus making it easier to track the requests and responses.

Comment. The two-way exchange of proposals -- neighborhood to department, and department to neighborhood -- is found only in Saint Paul. Because the Saint Paul process deals only with capital projects, it is possible to identify the district or neighborhood in which a project might be carried out and thereby easier to send departmental proposals to district councils for comment. But the same could occur with capital project requests from city departments in Dayton and Portland. However, it would be more difficult to do so with operating (expense) budget proposals because none of these three cities break down such expenditures by districts and neighborhoods (as New York does for a number of departments which have aligned their operational districts with the community board districts).

(4) Departmental Response

In all three cities the city departments are required to respond to neighborhood need statements and project requests, but the breadth and depth of this response varies among the cities.

Dayton. When department and division directors in Dayton receive the neighborhood need reports, they assign them to their staffs for analysis. Over a three to six week period in September and October they determine the nature of the requests, whether they can carrying out appropriate responses within existing resources, whether they require additional operating or capi- tal funds, and how the requests fit into departmental budgetary priorities. Departmental responses are sent to the Division of Neighborhood Affairs, which tabulates them by priority board, individual neighborhoods within the priority board district, and by department and units within the department. This takes the form of a computer-tabulated "Priority Board Need Statements Response," which totaled 250 pages in the latest edition, published in November 1987.

While this process is occurring, the priority boards are continuing their monthly meetings with the administrative councils on which all departments are represented by middle-level personnel. In this manner some identified neighborhood needs that are matters of current operations -- such as housing code enforcement and quality of sanitation services -- can be addressed in this format rather than as budget items. Because of this regular contact and because departments provide some kind of response to all need statements (though not necessarily always affirmative), the priority boards seem



to be satisfied with the response process.

Saint Paul. Departmental review of citizen-initiated capital budget requests in Saint Paul occurs in January and early February. Departments make preliminary cost estimates and offer their judgment on the merits and relative priority of the proposals. This occurs in context of a rating system that is used by Community Improvement Budget (CIB) task forces at the next stage of the schedule. At the same time district councils are reviewing departmental proposals. Both sides are likely to be in communication because it is hard for a proposal to get through the CIB process unless both the district council and the department favor it. It still may not gain approval because it lacks a high priority in gaining access to limited funds, but chances are nil without dual support.

In Saint Paul this process deals only with capital items and not a wide variety of other expressed neighborhood needs, as occurs in Dayton and Portland. Therefore, the kind of needs response publication that is produced in Dayton and Portland is not part of the Saint Paul system.

Portland. Following receipt of neighborhood need statements in late August, Portland's bureaus assign a contact person for each need, and the Office of Neighborhood Associations informs the neighborhood associations who it is. Bureau analysis occurs in September into October. Needs that relate to next year's budget are taken into account as the bureau develops its budgetary requests. Other kinds of responses, such as those to be handled as part of ongoing programs, are indicated. Bureaus provide response

information to ONA, which tabulates them and informs the originating neighborhood association. The report describes departmental response, whether accepted (and what will be done), rejected (and reasons for), ongoing program, and under review. The same information goes to the bureau advisory committees. In the course of a year ONA reports back to neighborhood associations at least three times: a contact list in August/September; an interim report showing known status of all need reports prior to budget submission in November/December; and a final report indicating status of all needs reports at the close of the fiscal year in May/June.

Comment. As in collecting neighborhood need requests so also in monitoring departmental responses and getting this information to neighborhood associations, district councils, and priority boards, a central agency is necessary. The neighborhood assistance agency fulfills this function in Dayton and Portland while the budget office handles this task in Saint Paul. When the citizen units learn about the responses, they can work with city departments in follow-through action, can accept reasons for lack of response at the moment, or can take steps to push for departmental action if the citizens are dissatisfied with the response. For service requests neighborhood organizations can use advocacy techniques to press for departmental action. Having a flow of information to citizens is essential for this process to work effectively.

#### (5) Mid-Stage Citizen Review of Budget Requests

As citizens are studying departmental responses, the departments are completing

their budget submissions. These departmental requests go to the budget office, which puts them together in the first draft of the city budget. At this stage in all three cities, citizens participate in reviewing certain aspects of the proposed budget, including departmental requests. In Dayton it is only the CDBG budget; in Saint Paul, the entire capital budget; and in Portland the total city budget, bureau by bureau. Neighborhood representatives come together for this purpose, sometimes joined by persons from city-wide civic organizations and interests. Participation at this stage is exceedingly important because citizens can have substantial influence on the determination of citywide priorities and funding level for various projects and programs. The techniques these cities have developed for establishing priorities and working out agreements among neighborhood and citywide interests are among their most significant innovations.

Dayton. Direct citizen involvement in citywide budgetary decisions in Dayton occurs primarily through the Community Development Block Grant Task Force. This Task Force concentrates on capital projects funded out of the federal CDBG grant. For the 1988 budget this was about \$2 million out of the \$6 million CDBG entitlement. This \$2 million amounted to 11 percent of the city's total capital improvement budget of \$18.3 million, drawn from several sources. The remainder of the CDBG funds were allocated to operating programs. The CDBG Task Force reviews these requests but not in as much depth as capital projects.

Dayton's capital budget process, of which the work of the CDBG Task Force is one part, has six stages:

- (1) Capital budget submission to the Office of Management and Budget
- (2) Project evaluation by an advisory committee of city staff.
- (3) Rating and initial selection of projects that will be considered,  
done by the Capital Investment Committee (CIC) composed of top  
departmental personnel.
- (4) Appeals of these selections by departments and priority boards.
- (5) Consideration of all CDBG-eligible capital requests by the CDBG
- (6) Final recommendations from the Capital Investment Committee to the

from d

Task F

Thus, by the time the CDBG Task Force convenes in October there is a preliminary set of ratings, developed by several sources, to consider. Three city departments rate projects for their impact in implementing the City Commission's policy goals and objectives. The Planning Department determines conformity with all approved plans and whether the project will be in a low- and moderate-income area. The Office of Management and Budget determines effect on replacement and maintenance schedule and energy consumption. Each city department identifies its top five priority projects, and each priority board does the same. Lastly members of the CDBG Task Force give their general appraisal of the project. These various ratings are combined into a numerical score, thus providing a preliminary order of priority.

Then the Task Force develops a final list through a "chit" system. Each priority board representative receives three chits (except the representative of the Southeast

Priority Board, the largest geographic area in the city, gets six). City department representatives receive two chits each. To move onto the list for final approval, a project among the first ten in preliminary ranking requires a vote of one chit. The next ten need two chits. All others must have three chits. Before this meeting occurs, priority board representatives caucus, and so do city department members, to trade support for various projects. Each priority board can get at least one project, and maybe more. After about three hours of negotiation and voting the priority list is determined. It sounds complicated and somewhat offbeat, but both the priority board representatives and departmental staff are satisfied that the result is fair and provides as good a balance of projects as any other system might provide.

Saint Paul. Another kind of rating system is used in Saint Paul by the Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) Committee and its three task forces. In preparation the Planning Commission staff analyzes capital project proposals for conformity with the comprehensive planning, capital allocation policies, and the five-year capital improvement program. The Budget Section and other city units look at other aspects. District councils develop their own priorities, and so do city departments. This becomes the raw material for a 24-part rating sheet used by the task forces.

The Budget Section assigns the projects to the three task forces: on Community Facilities, Streets and Utilities, and Residential and Economic Development. Each task force holds informal hearings on each proposal assigned to it so that citizen groups and city departments may explain their request and make a case for its importance.

Sometimes district councils and other citizen groups mobilize a sizable delegation to attend the hearing. Task force members are allowed to rate a proposal only if they have attended the hearing when it was considered. Then the task forces go on a bus tour to visit the site of every project under consideration. Some neighborhood organizations make a special effort to create a good impression, such as by having a playground full of active children or by arranging a stop where they can serve refreshments. But this tends to be a low-keyed, good-natured kind of lobbying rather than high-pressure tactics, which would probably backfire. Among task force members there may be some subtle trading of support, but heavy-handed dealing is considered out of line. After the tour the task forces complete the rating sheets, rank proposals (not necessarily in the order of raw scores), and prepare task force reports.

These recommendations then go to the CIB Committee, the 18-member body appointed by the mayor. The CIB executive committee develops some preliminary priorities, taking into account that certain projects reflect a long-term commitment (such as separation of storm and sanitary sewers and accompanying street repaving) and some are multi-year projects for which earlier stages were funded in previous years. This still leaves some leeway for new projects, and it is here that the CIB Committee has discretion and can be influential. The CIB recommendations then go to the mayor for his consideration before he sends the capital improvement budget to City Council. In 1987 the CIB task forces met first during the week of March 30, and the CIB Committee completed its work on June 26.

Portland. The heart of Portland's system for citizen involvement in budget making is the network of bureau advisory committees (BACs) and the Budget Advisory Coordinating Committee. There are 22 BACs, covering almost all city agencies. Members are drawn from neighborhood and citywide interests. In recent years such interests as the chamber of commerce, homebuilders, apartment owners, general contractors, and utilities have sought participation, giving testimony to a perception that BACs are influential. Members are appointed by the commissioner-in-charge for three year terms. Each BAC elects its own chair and a BACC representative. Persons designated for BACC membership are required to be active in their own BAC for at least a year. They are appointed to BACC for a two year term. BACC elects its own chair and two or more vice chairs. These officers are then relieved of their BAC responsibilities.

An orientation session is held in September to get the BAC process started for the new budget cycle. Thereafter, BACs start meeting regularly with representatives from the bureau they are supposed to advise. They receive neighborhood needs statements and basic information provided by the bureau. As the bureaus develop their budget recommendations, they share them with their BAC. Although the primary focus is upon the upcoming budget, BACs also get into operational issues, such as those identified in the neighborhood need reports. Budget analysts from the Office of Fiscal Administration also attend some meetings. Staff support for typing, duplication, and mailing is provided by the commissioner-in-charge or by the bureau.

Observers and participants believe that BACs have a positive impact upon the bureaus they relate to. Some of them put on friendly pressure for operational improvements and particular budget priorities. However, observers also point out that there is a degree of cooptation because as BAC members become well-acquainted with bureau operations they identify with bureau goals and objectives and become "cheerleaders" for bureau aspirations. Bureau personnel find it to be a time-consuming process, but there is broad acceptance and a realization that it is valuable to the city.

Composed of a representative from each BAC, the Bureau Advisory Coordinating Committee addresses citywide issues and policies. In its report for the 1987-88 fiscal year, BACC specified the following guiding principles:

- o The balanced "livability" of our city
- o No budget unit to be exempted from cuts, including Commissioners' Offices
- o Demonstrated efficiency as judged by least cost service delivery
- o Cuts to be based upon service priorities rather than across-the-board.
- o The City should examine options and needs for seeking additional revenues f

The report identified seven general categories of issues: public safety, long range planning, management efficiencies, preserving infrastructure, funding levels, city reserves, and affirmative action. By focusing on these overall issues, BACC overcomes some of the



parochialism of the BACs, which have more of a bureau orientation.

Comment. As the budget processes have evolved in these three cities, initial emphasis was upon the expression of neighborhood needs, fed into city departments while they were preparing budget requests. By now there have emerged methods for citizens to be involved in the review of departmental requests before the mayor or manager finalizes the budget and submits it to city council. Dayton and Saint Paul have devised rating systems to rank requests for capital projects. In Portland citizen committees interact with city agencies over a period of months as the budget takes shape, and a citywide committee looks at the overall budget. The entire city budget is subject to such review in Portland, but only capital projects and not the operating budget in Dayton and Saint Paul.

#### (6) Balancing the Budget

As the budget document takes shape for submission to city council by the chief executive, it has to be put together as a whole with a balance of expenditures and revenues. This is a complex, technical process as adjustments are made in numerous budget details. It is also a moment when important decisions on budgetary priorities are made: whether to include or exclude a new program, to increase, decrease or keep level the funding for a particular service or bureau. In most cities this process is handled by budget office staff with some consultation with the chief executive on crucial issues. This is what happens in Dayton and Saint Paul, but Portland has a review

committee on which citizens are represented.

Portland. This body in Portland is called the Management Review Committee (MRC). It is composed of a representative from each of the commissioners' offices, the auditor's office, managers of selected bureaus, and two citizen representatives from the BACC. As the budgetary process moves along, MRC reviews basic policies affecting the city budget. At the final stage it reviews bureau budget requests virtually line by line in a week or more of all day sessions. The objective is to bring the budget into balance before giving it to the mayor for his final review.

Although two BACC representatives are on this committee, they do not fully participate in the marathon sessions. As citizen volunteers they lack the time, which paid city employees have. Moreover, much of the discussion is highly detailed and technical. Although ultimately the decisions made can have significant policy implications, the work process is quite different than the consideration of broad policy principles that BACC is used to dealing with.

Portland also has a Capital Improvement Committee, consisting of city administrators and one BACC representative. It reviews capital budget requests submitted by the bureaus and the comments of the bureau advisory committees, and makes its recommendations to the mayor.

In Portland the mayor has an opportunity to make final adjustments in the budget

following its shaping by the Management Review Committee and the Capital Improvement Committee. But since a change in one item requires counterbalancing changes elsewhere, not a lot of modifications are made at this final stage. However, the mayor has ample opportunity for his wishes to be known at earlier stages, as do the other commissioners.

Dayton and Saint Paul. Likewise Dayton's manager and Saint Paul's mayor have final determination on the budget prior to submission to the city commission or council. In Saint Paul the mayor holds an evening public hearing on the CIB Committee report to give citizens a final opportunity for input. But from a political viewpoint he is constrained from making drastic changes in the priorities determined by the CIB Committee. Likewise Dayton's manager has to take seriously the recommendations of the CDBG Task Force. Citizens have spent long hours and numerous meetings working out priorities with departmental representatives, and the chief executive cannot easily ignore their recommendations without risking collapse of the system. Therefore, if the manager or mayor wants to be certain that a particular project is included, he must work through city departments earlier in the budget process so that it will be in the pipeline and gain acceptance by the citizen review body.

## (7) Budget Adoption

Once the budget is shaped, balanced, and approved by the chief executive, it goes to city council for consideration. Council holds public hearings at which city officials and

citizens testify. In many cities this is the first point of formal citizen participation in budget making, though it is quite late to have much of an impact. Beyond participation in hearings, citizens can also lobby council and the chief executive for changes.

In the three cities citizens have had considerable input long before the budget goes to city council. They may testify and otherwise offer their views to the city commission or council, but by and large there is no major mobilizing effort. For the most part the city commissioners and council members are satisfied with the system, for in the competition for scarce resources some tough choices must be made. Previous review, rating, and priority determination by citizen bodies takes the heat off city council in what otherwise could be a pressure situation.

Other factors are also present to make council consideration a relative noncontroversial process in the three cities. In Dayton the priority board chairs meet quarterly with the City Commission, and most of the commissioners have risen from the ranks of the priority boards. Thus, a pattern of good relationships exists. Both Saint Paul and Portland have developed a civic culture in which citizen participation is a well-accepted part of the way things are done. Elected officials have grown up and campaigned in this atmosphere.

This does not mean, however, that these cities are free from controversy. After Saint Paul switched to City Council elections by wards six years ago, the first council basically accepted the Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) system and respected the role

of citizens in capital priority determination. But two or three council members elected in the most recent election have taken a more independent course. This has shown up in the allocation of money from a new state-funded Urban Revitalization Action Program (URAP). \$7.6 million will be available over a two year period. Project eligibility is limited to neighborhoods of greater needs, and the intent is to have large scale projects -- in the \$1 to \$2 million range. This means a small number of projects. In Saint Paul URAP was initially set up to function within the context of the CIB system with Planning Commission guidelines and review of priorities by the CIB Committee. However, the new City Council has asserted itself and has taken on a larger role in project review than in the wider CIB process, as it legally is entitled to do. One reason is that a small number of large projects is easier to review than the numerous smaller projects that enter the CIB system. Moreover, the monetary value gives council members an opportunity to produce visible benefits to their wards. In addition, Mayor George Latimer has announced that he will retire after completing his fourth term, and several council members are considering the possibility of running for mayor. This gives them an incentive to gain greater individual recognition by championing particular projects. Although this has upset some people closely identified with the CIB system, who fear the introduction of "ward" politics into Saint Paul, it may be more the result of the nature of URAP rather than the beginning of unraveling of the CIB process. Furthermore, as URAP review has proceeded this year, City Council has given consideration to recommendations of the CIB Committee.

In Portland BACC leadership became upset this February when City Council passed

a resolution adopting policies for the FY 1988-89 budget before BACC had finished its review of budget requests. BACC members were particularly concerned about a commitment to fund the Police Bureau at a level permitting it to fill all existing vacant sworn positions and to cover expected overtime. Council was reacting to public concern over increased crime, but BACC leaders felt they should have been consulted first. This dispute has received news- paper and television attention, but by comparison with most other cities it is quite a mild controversy.

Ultimately city council has final authority in all three cities, and the role of the citizen bodies is purely advisory. Nevertheless, a pattern of acceptance and expectations has developed so that the citizen advisory committees exercise considerable influence in city decision making.

#### (8) Budget Changes During Fiscal Year

A city budget is a living document, for it undergoes modifications during the fiscal year through transfers and reallocation. For the most part this occurs internally within the city administration, but for some changes city council must be involved. Rarely do citizens participate in the process.

In Portland, though, citizens serving on bureau advisory committees have some knowledge of budgetary changes through quarterly reports provided by the bureaus they are working with. This is more a matter of being kept informed than of offering advice

on proposed changes.

In Saint Paul citizens have no role in budget changes, but they are involved in the implementation of particular projects undertaken in their neighborhoods by city departments. They may be consulted on design features and are provided information on project progress. In Dayton neighborhood priority boards are in touch with project implementation and ongoing service delivery through the monthly meetings with the administrative councils composed of mid-management city officials.

#### (9) Evaluation and the Next Budget Cycle

The citizen involvement processes in the three cities do not have strong evaluation processes to keep track of results and compare them with original goals and objectives. However, personnel in the neighborhood assistance offices in Dayton and Portland monitor responses to neighborhood need statements and provide periodic reports to the priority boards and neighborhood associations. In Portland the BACs, especially those meeting year around, are able to observe department performance. This information is useful in the next round of budget making. Although some new people enter the participatory system each year, there is considerable continuity because the majority of participants are holdovers.

## VI. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

## Relationship to Other Citizen Participation Processes

In this report we have concentrated on citizen involvement in local budget making in the three cities. This occurs in the larger context of citizen participation in a variety of ways and through different kinds of structures. Thus, budgetary involvement does not stand alone and cannot be judged by itself. Here let us briefly summarize the broader picture.

All three cities have neighborhood bodies that receive official recognition and support from local government: priority boards in Dayton, district councils in Saint Paul, and recognized neighborhood associations in Portland. These bodies are governed by democratically selected boards, accountable to the residents. All of them have staff assistance available: from city-run site offices in Dayton, community organizers paid by city funds but hired by district councils in Saint Paul, and district offices financed by public funds but under the control of district coalition boards in Portland. There are systems of notification of planning and zoning proposals and methods for receiving and processing citizen complaints. Beyond their advisory roles the neighborhood organizations sponsor self-help activities and recruit volunteers. In addition, there are other neighborhood entities, such as neighborhood development corporations and neighborhood associations.

Dayton has administrative councils assigned to each priority board district so that



each month the priority boards have face-to-face contact with city service personnel. Because the city staff have to return the following month to explain what they have done in response to issues raised at the previous meeting, there is an ongoing system of accountability. In Portland the bureau advisory committees, composed of both neighborhood and citywide representatives, fulfill a similar function, above and beyond their budgetary role.

Citizen training is a part of the participation systems in the three cities, accomplished through institutes, workshops, and orientation sessions. City agencies are also available for technical assistance. Site office personnel and organizers are in a position to help grassroots groups in addition to their role in assisting the official neighborhood body.

### Citywide Perspective

It is often observed that neighborhood organizations tend to be parochial, thinking only of their own needs. And why not? That is their task. If they don't look out for the interests of their neighborhood, who will? But neighborhood residents are also citizens of the whole city and can contribute to the broader domain. And this is occurring in the three cities in a number of ways.

Each city has a citizen structure with responsibility for determining funding priorities from a citywide perspective: Dayton's CDBG Task Force, Saint Paul's Capital

Improvement Budget Committee, Portland's Bureau Advisory Coordinating Committee. Participants and knowledgeable observers in all three cities indicate that members do indeed take a broad view of citywide needs, possibilities, and constraints. To be sure, there is bargaining in behalf of one's own neighborhood or district, but the wider perspective is also achieved. Public hearings and bus tours acquaint members with neighborhood needs they might not otherwise be aware of. A sense of equity emerges, recognizing that some are worse off than others and properly deserve more resources. Furthermore, as they work together on a citywide basis, they begin to look at matters that one neighborhood alone would not consider, such as management efficiency of local government and revenue issues.

On the latter, citizen board members, many of them homeowners, are very conscious of tax rates. They want the most for the public dollar and are opposed to waste and extravagance. But they are also aware of needs that require public action and therefore public expenditures. Accordingly, they may publicly support revenue proposals that would increase taxes. In Dayton, for example, the priority boards have repeatedly campaigned in favor of tax levy proposals, including that of the school district with which they have no direct relationship.

The neighborhood bodies together also provide a means for dealing with particular emerging issues. Thus, recently Dayton's priority boards provided the nucleus for a Citizens Police Task Force to stimulate crime prevention activities. The fact that the priority boards have worked closely with district police lieutenants through the

administrative councils has produced a cooperative relationship so that citizens and the Police Department can work together on common concerns.

The citywide connections are also helpful in dealing with troublesome societal issues, such as racial separation that occurs in most cities. In Dayton where blacks live mostly on the west side of the Greater Miami River and whites predominantly on the east side, relationships among the priority boards creates interracial contacts dealing with issues of common concern in a natural, easygoing setting. And historically the citizen participation process of Model Cities produced many qualified people who helped to racially integrate the city government work force and who have now advanced to top positions. Citywide connections also help to mitigate the NIMBY syndrome by which people say of certain kind of projects, "not in my backyard."

### Value to Governing Officials

The citizen involvement processes are important for local governing officials, not nuisances as some have claimed. For example, Dayton's Mayor Richard Clay Dixon describes how the priority board system provides the City Commission with first hand information on needs, offers little details that they cannot put their hands on, and reveals varied needs in different sections of the city. By giving citizens an opportunity to be involved in decision making, he points out, it is easier to get them involved in other matters, including support of tax levies. City Manager Richard Helwig in Dayton speaks of the communication network that occurs as site offices and neighborhood priority

boards reach out to 68 neighborhood associations and individual citizens. Citizens become involved in hard choices on priorities, and consensus can be developed on highly sensitive public issues. For over a decade Mayor George Latimer in Saint Paul has championed the capital improvement budget process with its deep citizen involvement and has welcomed and accepted citizen determination of priorities. Mayor Bud Clark campaigned in Portland on the need for wider citizen participation in a city where a lot was already occurring.

Participation, though, is not without its cost. It is time consuming. It requires a lot of lead time. It has expenses in salaries of city personnel who must attend seemingly endless meetings. Management officials acknowledge this, but they also point out the asset of information gained, unsound projects avoided, and greater citizen support resulting from participation.

### Talent Development

In Democracy in America Alexis de Tocqueville observed that

local assemblies of citizens constitute the strength of free nations. Municipal institutions are to liberty what primary schools are to science; they bring it within the people's reach, they teach men how to use and how to enjoy it. A nation may establish a system of free government, but without the spirit of municipal institution it cannot

have the spirit of liberty.

In our day and age when municipal government has become vast in size, the term "neighborhood organization" can properly be substituted in de Tocqueville's statement. And among their functions as the primary school of democracy, neighborhood organizations -- and this includes all those we have reviewed -- provide a highly valuable role in talent development. They are the training ground for civic leadership and a locale for persons with political ambitions to get beginning experience. This latter possibility concerned mayors and city councils in the late 1960s and early '70s, for they could see their competition emerging. They were right, for many elected city officials today have started their public careers in this manner. As incumbents they may not want to encourage future competitors, but they have come to realize the importance of this mode of civic participation. Certainly from the broader public perspective, talent development is one of the major achievement of these endeavors.

### Goal Setting Revisited

Finally let us take a brief concluding look at the matter of goal setting. As noted earlier, it is not something that we Americans do easily, and good examples connected to implementation are rare in American cities. Even rarer are cases where this occurs with ample citizen participation. Yet "strategic planning" has become a buzzword of the '80s, and some cities, especially those with the city manager form, have been trying to develop strategic plans along the line of corporate models.

Perhaps the next step for citizen involvement in local budget making would be to pay much more attention to the establishment of overall goals and objectives at the beginning of the budget cycle. That would be about a year before the budget is to go into effect. Citizen representatives, the mayor or manager, and city council together would inquire: what do we want our city to be like? what are the most important problems we face? how can the assets of city government be brought to bear on these problems? how can citizens, the private business sector, and nonprofit organizations be effectively mobilized? what matters of priority should the upcoming budget address? It may be that some of the problems require action far wider than the mission and resources of local government, but at least this is an opportunity to address major local problems and to foster cooperative acting in seeking solutions.

This kind of goal setting could be a unifying process for cities now divided into two or more segments -- black, white, Hispanic, Asian; rich and poor. How can all of us work together on common endeavors? How can our city be more just and equitable? And safer for everyone? This can set the stage for individuals and organizations to decide that they can be part of the solution by fulfilling their particular tasks and by joining with others in the broader arena.

In the cities we have reviewed a number of citizen bodies have demonstrated their capacity to make major contributions to public decision making and to undertake and support a variety of actions for civic improvement. They can now provide a foundation

for a goal setting process tied to implementation. The city budget, by being one of the largest accumulation of resources available, can be a focus for this to happen -- not as the sole place where community decisions are made and resources assigned, but a place to start. Then other resources from numerous other resources can be added, not in a single, all encompassing plan of civic action but as a joint venture in which volunteers and numerous institutions are involved. Among the largest resource is the people themselves, drawn into participation in local government and the civic arena in which they feel they belong, and are respected and accepted.

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### References

Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America. Translated by Henry Reeves.  
New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., n.d. vol. 1, p. 62.

Richard C. Rich, Participation and Representation in St. Paul's District Council System. Washington: Center for Responsive Governance, 1983.

Charles White and Sheldon Edner, "Participation in Neighborhood Organizations"  
Journal of Community Action, vol. 1, no. 1. Sept/Oct 1981. pp. 48-52.

April 5, 1988

PERSONS INTERVIEWED IN THREE CITIES OF STUDY

In Portland, Oregon on February 23-24, 1988

Stephen Bauer, Director, Office of Fiscal Administration

Geri Ethan, Neighborhood Coordinator, Northwest District Association

Tim Grewe, Budget Manager, Office of Fiscal Administration

Janet L. Jones, Administrative Services Officer, Office of Transportation



Dee Lane, City Hall Reporter, The Oregonian

John Legry, Bureau Advisor Committee Coordinator, Office of Neighborhood Assistance

Christine MacIver, Member, Bureau Advisory Committee, Office of Neighborhood Associations

Sharon McCormick, Crime Prevention Coordinator, Northeast Neighborhood Associations

Sarah Newhall, Director, Office of Neighborhood Associations

Gordon Oliver, City Hall Reporter, The Oregonian

Edna Robertson, Neighborhood Coordinator, Northeast Neighborhood Associations

Ethan Seltzer, Assistant to City Commissioner Mike Lindberg

Margaret Strachan, Executive Director, Central City Concerns; formerly City Commissioner

Casey Short, Assistant to the Mayor

Lianne Thompson, Chairperson, Bureau Advisory Coordinating Committee

Christine A. Tobkin, Executive Assistant to the Mayor

Attended meeting of Bureau Advisory Coordinating Committee which had  
11 citizen members and 6 city officials in attendance

In Saint Paul, Minnesota on February 25-26, 1988

Tamsen L. Aichinger, Budget Analyst, Budget Section, Office of Mayor; Executive  
Secretary, Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) Committee

Toni Baker, Assistant to County Commissioner; Member, CIB Committee (as citizen)

Susan Girling, Community Organizer, District 2; former member, CIB Streets and Utilities  
Task Force

Tom Gmeinder, Vice-Chairperson, CIB Committee

Robert Hammer, CDBG Grants Administrator, Department of Planning and Economic  
Development

Jerry Jenkins, Citizen Participation Coordinator, Department of Planning and Economic  
Development

Tom Kuhfeld, Director of Street Design, Public Works Department

Peggy Lexau, Planner, Planning Division, Department of Planning and Economic Development

Tina Moreland, Member, CIB Community Facilities Task Force

Kathy Tarnowski, Community Organizer, District 14

Sam Verdega, Westside Business Association

Mark Voerding, City Council Aide; former district council president and member of CIB Community Facilities Task Force

Ron Wagner, Community Organizer, Dayton's Bluff Community Council

John Wirka, Manager of Design and Construction, Division of Parks and Recreation

In Dayton, Ohio on March 9-10, 1988

Cilla Bosnak, Superintendent, Division of Neighborhood Affairs

Tony Capizzi, City Commissioner

Anita Corwin, Chairperson, Southeast Priority Board

Solomon Crane, Vice Chairperson, Northwest Priority Board

Mayor Richard Clay Dixon

Frank L. Gilland, II, Chairperson, Downtown Priority Board; Executive Director,  
Downtown Dayton Association

Richard B. Helwig, City Manager

Joe Kanak, Chairperson, Northeast Priority Board

Bill Littlejohn, Chairperson, Northwest Priority Board

Ray Reynolds, Director, Department of Urban Development

Andrea Solat, Management Systems Administrator, Office of Management and Budget

Troy Turner, Chairperson, Innerwest Priority Board

Paul R. Woodie, Director, Department of Planning

Met together with coordinators of six site offices of Division of Neighborhood Affairs:

Shirley Dorsey, Southwest

Elaine Johnson, Southeast

Barbara Meadows, Innerwest

Janet Myers, FROC

Norman Olsen, Northeast

Tambura Omoiele, Northwest

Attended a meeting of Northwest Priority Board

On March 11 interviewed James Kunde of Kettering Foundation and former citymanager in Dayton when he was in Washington, D.C.

Telephone interview with Mary Ellen Mazey, Center for Urban and Public Affairs, Wright State University

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[April 7, 1988]