

Gifts of Peace Christmas Cantata

A great honour and joy, but also daunting task is to create a Christmas program sacrament meeting program, or cantata. I've directed several over the years, and it is no easy endeavour. You maybe lucky to be in a ward with many musically gifted individuals who love to share their talents. You might also be in a ward where such a talent is scarce and sacred. This cantata can be used no matter the skill set in your ward.

The quotes and dialogue is from Henry B. Eyrings message "Gifts of Peace" from the 2016 Christmas Devotional.

All the songs in this cantata come from the hymn book. For the musical numbers you can find arrangements of these hymns, or play directly from the hymn book. Of course these songs are not absolute. If there are other songs you find of a similar message, please use them. This cantata is to give you a jumping off point; and the songs merely a suggestion.

I've also suggested whether the song should be performed instrumental, solo/duet, or by a choir. These are merely suggestions from what I used when our ward used this cantata. And again, please feel free to do whatever fits your needs.

I know preparing any musical piece in a sacrament meeting can be a challenge; let alone a whole program's worth. Please know the Lord loves and supports you in your calling. Let the Spirit guide your efforts, and don't overthink it. Seek to praise the Lord and not to impress the congregation. Let your love for Christ and Christmas be your guide.

Best of Luck,
Suzette Jamy

Opening Hymn: Joy to the World

Sacrament Hymn: Jesus Once of Humble Birth

Oh Little Town of Bethlehem (Hymn #208): Solo/Duet

1. President Eyring in the 2016 Christmas Devotional said, “I am grateful to share in this celebration of Christmas with you. Our purpose is to honor the Lord Jesus Christ. Our hope is to capture the true spirit of Christmas for ourselves and for those we love. That spirit is characterized by peace—not political peace, for the Savior was born at a time of fear and unrest so great that His family had to flee as refugees into Egypt; not economic peace, for He was born in a stable and laid in a humble manger; and not even the peace that comes when all the packages are wrapped, the trees decorated, and the table set, because that peace is only momentary. The peace of Christmas is “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.”¹ It is the peace that the Apostle Paul promised would “keep [our] hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”² And Paul was right. That peace we seek is only through and because of Jesus Christ.”

I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day (Hymn #214): Solo/Choir

2. President Eyring continues, “Some of us live in beautiful and peaceful surroundings, yet we are experiencing inner turmoil. Others feel peace and perfect serenity in the midst of great personal loss, tragedy, and continuing trials.

To all who have come into mortality, the Savior said, ‘In the world ye shall have tribulation.’³ Yet He gave this wonderful promise to His disciples during His mortal ministry: ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.’⁴ It is a comfort to know that this promise of personal peace continues for all of His covenant disciples today.

It is a promise given even on the very night of His birth. When heavenly messengers heralded the birth of the Savior, they declared, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace’⁵

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear (Hymn #207): Solo/Choir

3. Continuing in his address President Eyring says, “At this blessed season of the year, we—more than ever—seek peace through the Giver of all gifts.”

President Eyring suggests three ways to increase and continue the peace we feel at this time of year.

“First,” he says, “like the angels who sang on the night of His birth, we can feel peace as we celebrate our Savior, Jesus Christ. We can ‘come [and] adore him.’⁶

“...For Christmas is a celebration of a birth like no other. The birth of Jesus had been foreseen by God’s prophets for ages. This birth was the fulfillment of a promise made to us in the spirit world by a loving Heavenly Father. It was the birth of the promised Messiah.”

Oh Come All Ye Faithful (Hymn #202): Choir

4. Sharing an experience of hearing the Tabernacle Choir sing, President Eyring says, “I can hear in my mind exultant voices of a great choir singing: ‘For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.’”⁷

“The Spirit confirmed to my heart that the words I heard sung that night were true.... The feeling I had in the balcony of the Tabernacle that night was of faith and hope. I felt faith that because “unto us a child [was] born,” I could have hope in my heart that death would not be the end. I would be resurrected, and the sting of death would be removed for all of Heavenly Father’s children
And yet I felt more, so much more. I felt hope that because of Him, I could follow and serve Him and so be born to a newness of spiritual life. Because of the gift of His birth, my heart, your heart, and all human hearts can be changed to become again like that of a little child—pure, clean, and fit to go home again to the God who gave us a Savior and provided the way back to Him in His heavenly home. I felt gratitude and peace, and so can we all because of the gift of the Father and of the Son.”

Away in a Manger (Hymn #206): Solo

5. President Eyring continues, “The baby born in Bethlehem long ago was and is the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father. Those who knelt before Him came to worship the Savior. He was the Lamb of God, sent to break the bands of death by His atoning sacrifice. He came with the power to bear our sorrows and our grief that He might know how to succor us. And He was born to atone for all of our sins as only He could:

Born that man no more may die;
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the newborn King!”⁸

End of quote. Please turn with us now to hymn #209: “Hark the Herald Angels Sing.”

Hark the Herald Angels Sing (Hymn #209): Congregation

6. The second way President Eyring says we can experience peace at this time of year is quote, “like the shepherds who saw the Christ child and ‘made known abroad’⁹ the glad tidings of His birth, we can teach peace to our families and others whom we love. We do so best when we open the scriptures to their minds and hearts.”

President Eyring tells the story of how his family performed a yearly Christmas pageant with their young children. They started with only a few roles, but as the years progressed they added more and more.

“But then time passed” he says “—as it does. The players grew up, and now we are back to the beginning. I have watched those Josephs, Marys, shepherds, sheep, lambs, and kings move on to teach their own loved ones of the Savior and about the peace His birth makes possible. They were blessed to learn in the parts they played in our pageant something about the Savior and why we love Him.”

While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks At Night (Hymn #211): Choir

7. “Third” President Eyring says, “like the Wise Men, we can give gifts of love and peace as disciples of the risen Lord.”

“...You and your family will have built your own Christmas traditions to fit your circumstances, but they will have some things in common. They will draw hearts to the Savior. And they will include acts of kindness that will merit the approbation of the Savior. He said:

“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

“Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.”¹⁰

And He will say, “Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”¹¹

The First Noel: Instrumental Solo or Ensemble/Vocal Solo or Duet

8. President Eyring concludes, “Angels, shepherds, and Wise Men sought and found peace from their faith in Jesus Christ. So will you. The Savior’s birth is the gift that makes it possible for the Father to give us “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.”¹² We shouted for joy in the spirit world when we heard of that promise. Peace and joy come to us again when we hear words sung proclaiming that God’s loving promise was kept:

All is calm, all is bright. ...
Glories stream from heaven afar;
Heav’nly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ, the Savior, is born!¹³

Closing Hymn: Silent Night Hymn #204