

Goose Story

For today's story I'm going to need a number of sensible—sensible—children who can follow directions.

First off, I need five children to be tame geese. You need to be able to honk at the right time. Who wants to be my geese?

[pick five children. Some of these can be smaller ones. Put them on the altar steps]

These tame geese have been locked up in the barn to keep them safe at night. Now I need four children to be the doors to that barn. Who wants to be a door?

[select four children. Have them link hands across the choir area, facing the congregation. The 'tame geese' are behind them]

I need five sensible children to be some wild geese. Who is willing to follow stage instructions here at the front?

[pick five children, probably best to be older ones. Place them in the church aisle and tell them to stay there for the moment]

Whew, I think we're ready! All I need now is a farmer, and xxxxx has already said he wants that part.

So, my story today happened on Christmas Eve, out in farm in the countryside. The farmer was at home, alone. His wife and children had gone to church for the carol service, even though it was windy and stormy outside. When they asked him to come to church with him, he just shook his head and said:

The Farmer: Why should I go to church? The whole story is absolute nonsense. Why would God want to lower himself to come to Earth as a human being? That makes no sense. God would want to stay safe in heaven.'

Soon after his family went off to church, the winds grew stronger and snow began to fall. Shall we have some sound effects?

[encourage the children to make some wind sounds]

The Farmer: Listen to that wind! I'm glad I've stayed inside the house, where it's nice and warm.

But then, the farmer heard a loud THUMP! Something had hit a window. Then he heard another, and another, and another. THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!

The Farmer: What on earth is making that loud noise? I'd better go outside and check.

So the farmer pulled on his coat and went outside into the howling wind and snow.

[encourage more wind noise from the children]

When the farmer got outside he found a flock of wild geese. It looked like they'd been flying south for the winter when they'd got caught in the snowstorm, and they were too tired to go on. They were lost and stranded, with no food or shelter from the wind and the snow. They just flapped their wings and flew around in low circles, blindly and aimlessly.

[encourage children in church aisle to flap arms and pretend to be lost]

Several of the geese had flown into the windows of the house. Those were the thumps the farmer had heard.

The Farmer: Those poor geese, they're going to die if they stay out here. I need to help them. I know, I have that nice warm barn back there, where all my tame geese are safe and warm. I could let the wild geese in with them.

So the farmer went up to the barn and opened the doors.

[The farmer unhooks hands of two innermost children and encourages them to move against the choir stalls, like doors opening up]

The tame geese inside gave happy clucks.

[encourage the children on the altar steps to pretend to be happy geese—but to stay in place!]

The farmer hoped that the wild geese would notice and fly inside. But the wild geese just kept flapping around the field.

[encourage children to flap around in the aisle]

The Farmer: Oh dear, that hasn't worked. Maybe if I get behind them I can shoo them inside the barn.

[The farmer goes down the side of the church to come behind the children in the aisle]

But the geese were frightened of the farmer, and just scattered around him.

[encourage children to scatter around the aisle and near the steps]

The Farmer: What can I do? If I leave these geese outside they're going to die of cold and lack of food. How can I get them into the barn? If only I were a goose, then I could save them. If I were a goose, they could understand me and know that I was trying to save them.

Then the farmer had an idea. He went back to the barn.

[The farmer goes up the steps and picks one of the older children from the altar steps]

The Farmer: If I take my own goose and let him go behind the flock, he'll go back to the barn and the wild geese will follow him.

[The farmer takes child down steps, into aisle, and lets him go.]

The tame goose flew back into the barn. And one by one the wild geese followed him, until all of them were safe in the barn.

[encourage children to follow these stage directions until all of the children are on the altar steps]

The farmer thought about what had just happened.

The Farmer: Those geese needed another goose to save them. They can understand another goose, they know they can trust another goose. That's what God did with Jesus. We were lost, like those wild geese. We needed God to become like one of us, so we could understand God, and trust God. That's why Jesus was born at Christmas.

And as the farmer went to close the barn doors, with all the geese safe and warm inside, he finally understood the message of Christmas.

The Farmer: Thank you, God, for coming as a human to save me.

Our prayer is that everyone here has a wonderful Christmas, and above all, that you come to know that God who came as a baby to save us from the storm. Amen.

[thank children and send them back to their seats]