

Frequently Asked Questions – **Mesa Arizona Easter Pageant 2009, “Jesus the Christ”**

1. What is the Pageant?

The Mesa Arizona Easter Pageant, “Jesus the Christ,” presents the life, ministry, and mission of Jesus Christ through music, dance, and drama.

What began as an Easter sunrise service on top of a cotton wagon in 1928, has now become the largest, annual, outdoor Easter Pageant in the world.

“Jesus the Christ” is not a passion play focusing on the crucifixion, rather a celebration of the resurrection of the Savior.

Each year, people travel from throughout the world to see this spirit-filled and beautiful one-hour outdoor production.

IT IS FREE TO THE PUBLIC ... NO ADMISSION CHARGE, AND NO TICKETS REQUIRED (AS WELL AS NO DONATIONS ACCEPTED). THIS IS A COMMUNITY CELEBRATION OF EASTER.

2. When is it?

2009 performance dates are:

English: Wednesday, **April 1**; Thursday, **April 2**, and Tuesday through Saturday, **April 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11** (No performances on Sunday or Monday.)

Spanish and ASL: Friday, **April 3**, and Saturday, **April 4**.

All performances begin promptly at 8 p.m.

(In addition, a public-invited dress rehearsal will be held on Tuesday, March 31. English at 7 p.m.; Spanish at 8:30 p.m.)

3. Will language headsets be available at performances?

There are a limited number of headsets with Spanish and English translation. These can be checked out, free of charge, at the kiosk booths outside the Visitors’ Center.

4. Where is the Pageant performed?

The Pageant stage is erected each year at the west end of the Mesa Arizona Temple Visitors’ Center north lawn, 525 East Main St., Mesa, AZ 85204. Audience members sit in the grass “bowl” on the north side of the Visitors’ Center.

5. How early do we need to come for general seating?

During the first week of performances, attendance is lighter, so it is recommended to arrive at least an hour before the performance begins – to allow time for parking and getting a seat.

The seating area during the second week of performances, April 1-4, fills very quickly. It is recommended to arrive at least two hours early.

WHILE YOU ARE WAITING, YOU ARE INVITED TO STEP INSIDE THE VISITORS’ CENTER TO VIEW THE MAJESTIC “CHRISTUS” STATUE AND ENJOY FREE GUIDED TOURS, SHORT FILM PRESENTATIONS, AND

WONDERFUL DISPLAYS AND EXHIBITS. The Visitor's Center will be open before and after the Pageant.

6. Where do we park?

Parking is available on streets surrounding the Temple and Visitors' Center property, as well as on side streets. In addition, there is parking for about 600-700 cars on an unpaved lot, just west of Pioneer Park (on the north side of Main Street, directly across the street from the pageant venue).

Additional parking spaces are available behind Dairy Queen on Main Street, east of the temple.

7. How long is the performance?

The presentation runs 65 minutes.

8. Is it appropriate for children? How young?

The Pageant is appropriate for children. It is very colorful and fast-moving. There are beautiful scenes showing Jesus teaching and healing children, as well as scenes which use animals such as sheep, miniature horses, doves, and a donkey.

The betrayal, scourging, and crucifixion of Christ are portrayed, but these scenes are presented as tastefully as possible.

Although children of all ages are permitted to attend, children under the age of 3 years may not be able to see as well and may be uncomfortable in the chilly weather.

9. Is this a "Mormon" production?

The Pageant is sponsored by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but the text is taken from the King James' version of the Holy Bible. It is written and presented for all faiths, cultures, religions, and ages.

The Pageant is produced with great cooperation and help from the community at large, especially the City of Mesa, Mesa Visitors' and Convention Bureau, Mesa City Police Department, and various local businesses and community interfaith groups.

10. Is there proselytizing by Mormon missionaries?

Full-time missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will serve as ushers for the Pageant. They will be available to answer questions or direct you to information booths, only if you desire.

Audience members are invited to visit the displays, view films, or take guided tours at the Temple Visitors' Center before and after the Pageant.

11. How much are tickets and where do we get them?

Admission is free, and no donations are accepted. There are no tickets required. The LDS Church presents the Pageant as an Easter celebration and a "gift to the community."

12. Will donations be solicited?

No donations will be solicited, and unsolicited donations will not be accepted.

13. What about seating?

Seating is strictly first-come, first-served, with no general reserved seating. There is seating (metal chairs) available for about 8,000 people. You may want to bring a blanket to put on the chairs as the metal can get cold at night. Also, audience members are welcome to bring their own blankets and lawn chairs to sit on if there is free grass space.

14. Can we reserve seats?

Audience members may not reserve seats this year. Signs which are posted on chairs will be removed by Pageant staff. In addition, Pageant staff will not reserve any seating, even upon request. (Note: There will be ASL reserved seating the first week of the Pageant only, and Handicapped reserved seating every night.)

15. Can we come as a Ward?

We request that entire wards do not attend on an organized basis, since we need the seating for community members and the public. However, you may bring church youth groups **during the first week**, if they are sufficiently supervised by adults.

16. What about Senior Citizen groups?

Beginning this year, the Pageant will no longer reserve seats for Senior Citizen groups. We suggest that you come on Wed, April 1 or Thurs, April 2 as there will be plenty of available seats.

17. What about ASL seating and interpreting?

A reserved seating section and interpreting for ASL will be available April 1, 2, 3, and 4, on the south side of the audience, nearest the Visitors' Center.

There will be no reserved ASL seating or interpreting the second week of performances, April 7-11.

18. What about Handicapped Seating and parking?

A reserved seating handicap section for every performance, both weeks, will be available on the front, south side of the audience. Ushers will be available to help. Only one family member or non-handicapped helper may sit with each wheelchair.

Handicapped parking is available in the northeast parking lot of the Visitors' center grounds. However, that parking fills up extremely fast. If it is full when you arrive, you may drop off the handicapped person, and then park elsewhere.

19. Where should someone with a walker sit?

If the walker can be folded and easily-stored so as to not block aisle ways, it may be taken to general seating. If a person uses a non-collapsible walker, he or she should sit in the Handicapped Section by the south front rows.

20. Can we bring food?

Yes, you are free to bring a modest picnic dinner to eat at your seats while you wait for the Pageant to begin – but on the Visitors’ Center grounds only. Because of parking and seating limitations, many people need to arrive quite early, and there are no concession stands or beverage sales. However, we ask that you please respect the reverence of these sacred grounds. Buffet socials, pizza parties, or elaborate meals are not in keeping with the spirit of the event and are best re-located to Pioneer Park, directly across the street.

No food is permitted on the Temple Grounds located behind the iron, grated fencing.

Also, no alcoholic beverages are allowed on the Visitors’ Center grounds.

21. Is there a smoking area available?

No smoking is permitted anywhere, on either the Temple or Visitors’ Center grounds.

22. What will the weather be like? What is the dress?

Often, temperatures are cooler in the grass bowl than on the street. It is recommended that you bring a jacket. In addition, the metal chairs get cold to sit on, so you may want to bring a blanket to put on the chairs. Dress is casual. We recommend slacks or pants since the air radiating from the grass can be chilly at night.

23. If it rains, will there still be a performance?

Pageant performances are never cancelled because of rain, unless there is lightning. You are welcome to bring umbrellas and other suitable protection.

24. What restroom facilities are available?

Restroom trailers for men and women are provided in the east parking lot. The restrooms in the Visitors’ Center will not be opened to Pageant attendees.

25. What medical services are available?

Medical needs are supervised by the Mesa City Police Department who are on site every night. There is designated space in the Visitors’ Center during performances as a medical emergency location.

In addition, there is immediate access to paramedics, emergency vehicles, and helicopters through the Mesa City Police Department and the City of Mesa. Full-service hospitals are within 3-4 miles.

26. What if I need help with a security problem or with someone bothering me?

Ushers, security personnel, and police officers are available before, during, and after performances to assist audience members.

27. How can I get information to hand out at my office or to my organization or group?

Flyers containing Pageant information are available, at no charge, at the Visitors' Center information desks, in any quantity you would like. If your ward has need of more flyers, please contact David Allen, 602-625-1704.

28. What is the average attendance each night?

For the nine formal performances, nightly audiences range from about 4,000 to 12,000 people, with the most crowded nights being the final Friday and Saturday nights.

A good alternative to avoiding large crowds is to come to the Dress Rehearsal Performance on Tuesday, March 31. This rehearsal is performance-quality, with no stops. Attendance is much smaller that night, with better parking and seating. The English performance begins earlier (7 p.m. instead of 8 p.m.). There is also more convenient access to the Visitors' Center displays and tours.

29. Can we take pictures and videos of the Pageant?

No flash photography or video photography is allowed during the performance. Flash photography is distracting to the actors, technical crew, and audience members. Video shooting is against copyright laws.

However, cast members will be available for photos before and after the pageant, as they circulate among audience members. You are welcome to use your own cameras.

30. Can we purchase a video or soundtrack of the pageant?

Because of copyright restrictions, no copies of the music, narration, or performance are available.

31. Can we meet the actors?

Yes, before and after the performances, cast members will be walking through the audience. Feel free to stop and talk with them – they love it! Also, actors will be available after performances on the southwest side of the Visitor's Center, on the lawn area against the building.

32. Can we get our picture taken with Christ?

You may take pictures with the actor who plays Christ, but only after the performances and on the southwest side of the Visitors' Center, against the building. However, there is usually a long line of people waiting to do this, and the actors are available for only a very limited time period.

33. When did the Pageant first start?

The pageant was first held in 1928, as a choral sunrise service atop a wooden cotton wagon. The presentation was not held during some of the war years but has been held every year since. Today, it has evolved into a full-scale, professional theater production, with a 9,600 square-foot stage, towering four-stories high.

34. How many are in the cast?

There are approximately 450 people in the cast – men, women, and children of all ages. Another 400 people donate their time and efforts as production staff. No one is paid; this is strictly a volunteer effort.

Many of the production committees work year-round to prepare for the production.

Actors come to rehearsals at night and on Saturdays after working their day jobs or attending school. More than 1,000 people typically audition for the Pageant each year.

35. Where do you get the Costumes?

A 20-person costume staff works year round to research Biblical costumes, create, design, and sew them. No costumes are rented; they are all constructed by pageant volunteers. Most of the fabric is donated (some even coming from Saudi Arabia and Israel).

Great care is taken to make sure the costumes are historically correct. During Biblical times, cultures from throughout the Mid-Eastern World, and as far away as Africa, gathered in Jerusalem -- making it a very eclectic gathering place of native costumes of all colors and designs. Of course, the pastoral people dressed more humbly in color, fabric and style.

The only scene in the pageant with which we take creative license for outdoor theatrical costuming is the Dance of the Ten Virgins' Parable.

36. Who takes care of the animals?

The Pageant takes great care to make sure the animals are safe and well-tended. An Animal Coordinator is on site for every rehearsal and performance. The owners of the animals are also on site during rehearsals and performances. A pageant large animal veterinarian is on call 24-hours a day.

37. Can a non-Mormon be in the cast?

Yes, however, each cast member is required to maintain very strict standards of dress, character, and conduct. Therefore, each cast member must have a signed ecclesiastical endorsement. Please see the Pageant website for more information about this: www.easterpageant.org - then click on the link that says, "Auditions."

38. How do I find out about auditions for next year?

The website information regarding auditions for the 2010 season will be posted by Oct. 1, 2009. Please go to the website noted above.

39. How can we get a performance schedule for next year in order to plan a family vacation?

The Mesa Arizona Easter Pageant is always presented the first two weeks prior to Easter Sunday each year, excluding Sundays and Mondays.

40. Is there someone associated with the pageant that I can call for further information?

Please leave your name and phone number with someone at the Visitors' Center, and they will have a Pageant representative contact you. Or, you may contact the pageant director, Nanci Wudel, at 480-844-8847.

41. Bus Parking: Tour buses generally park on the east side of LeSueur St., facing north. (LeSueur borders the temple on the west.)

42. Are souvenir programs available? There are a limited number of beautiful, 5-color programs available. These are distributed before the pageant begins by the ushers and pre-show cast greeters, or at the information kiosks by the Visitors' Center.

Mesa Arizona Easter Pageant 2009:

For press and media information, please go to: www.easterpageant.org
(Click on the link which says "News Room.")

For media questions, contact:

J.R. Wright

O: 480-833-8111

C: 480-694-8509

jr@larryjohnwright.com