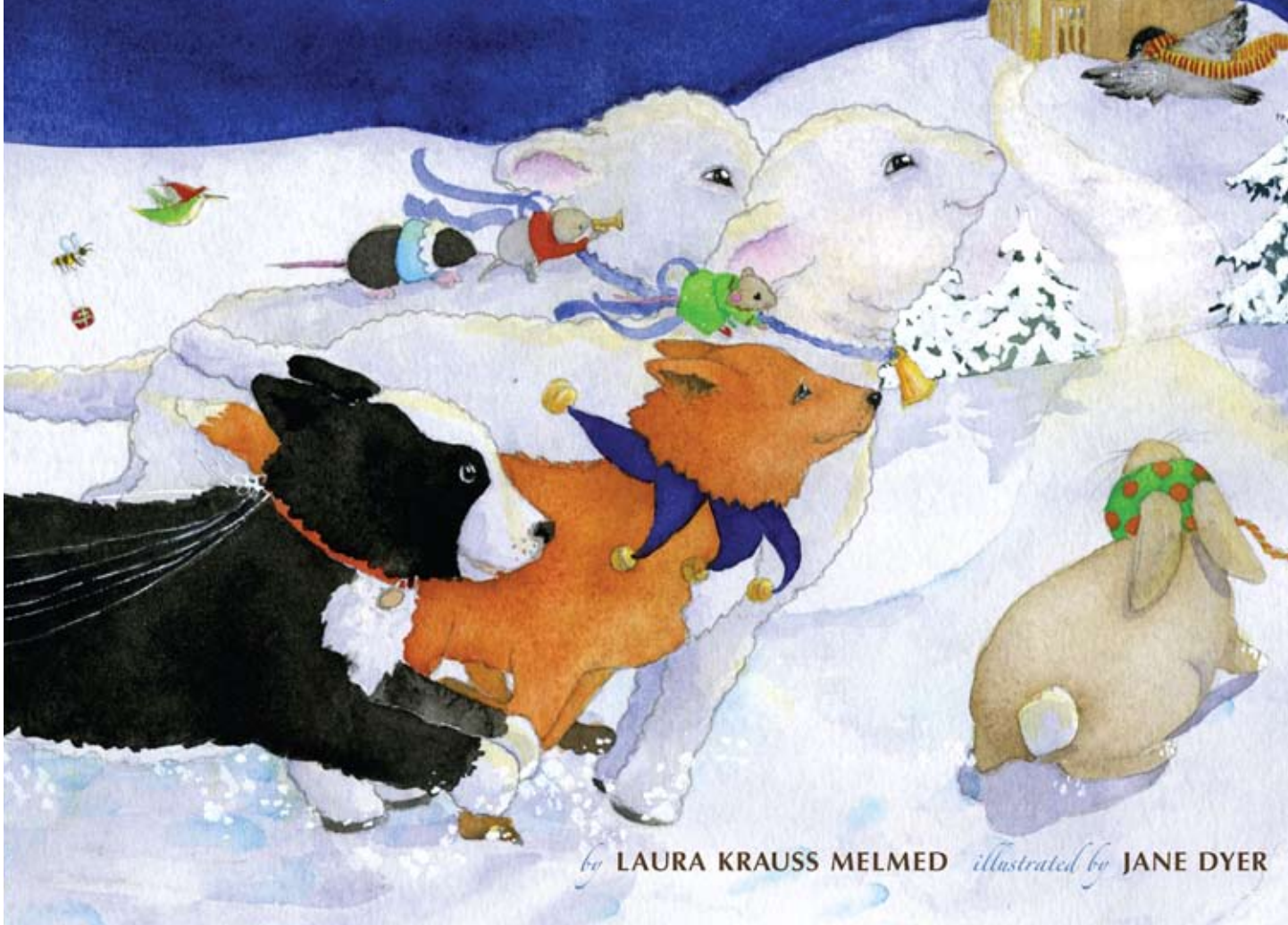


# Hurry! Hurry!

HAVE YOU HEARD?



by LAURA KRAUSS MELMED illustrated by JANE DYER

## A Conversation with Laura Krauss Melmed



chronicle books

**Laura Krauss Melmed** is the author of more than a dozen books, and *Hurry! Hurry! Have You Heard?* (November 2008) is her second title with Chronicle Books. Though she grew up with a love of books and reading, it wasn't until several jobs and a few children later that she wrote her first manuscript. She has since come to consider herself a "real" author and wouldn't trade writing for any other career. In *Hurry! Hurry!* she brings us her delightful version of a Christmas classic, featuring the animals of the field and forest, as rendered by illustrator Jane Dyer. Ms. Melmed has kindly answered a few questions about her inspiration on writing a new version of an old classic.



## A Conversation with Laura Krauss Melmed

Chronicle Books (blue) Laura Krauss Melmed (black)



**What inspired you to take on the writing of a classic religious story? I also wonder how your own religion affected your interest in this story. In your version, the nod to religion is vague—do you think this makes the story more accessible?**

I've always been attracted to old stories—myths, fairy tales, Bible stories—for the universal truths they impart. As a child growing up, my immediate family was Jewish but respected the traditions of other groups. My extended family was religiously, ethnically, and racially mixed, and so were my parents' friends. We often spent Christmas with Christian friends who had a traditional celebration. Probably because of my early exposure to other religious traditions, I became fascinated by the varied ways in which religious thought and belief manifests itself across cultures.

To me, the beauty of the Christmas story is embodied in a familiar hymn I sang in grade school, "Joy to the World," particularly the idea of heaven and earth rejoicing in the birth of a baby. In *Hurry! Hurry!* I wanted to show how the woodland creatures and other animals might have reacted if they were invited to celebrate this all-important occasion. In leaving the religious part of the story vague, I was saying that the birth of every child is a cause for jubilation and that each new baby brings hope and untapped potential to the world.



"I know I'm slow, but still I'll go  
To wish the child good cheer."



**Since the two books you've worked on for Chronicle are religious stories (and I know most of your others aren't), I'm curious to know if you brought those specifically to your editor/Chronicle for one reason or another, or by pure coincidence.**

Pure coincidence. The same editor has worked on both *Hurry! Hurry! Have You Heard?* and *Moishe's Miracle*, but we've also worked together on many books that have nothing to do with religious holidays.

**What inspired you to center the story around animals coming together to see the baby Jesus? There are many books on this religious theme and holiday, but the animals make it an unusual, hence new version. Is that what you feel most distinguishes it from similarly themed books?**

I love animals. Animals of one kind or another appear in every one of my fiction books, from a jealous mother weasel (*The Rainbabies*) to a talking sea turtle (*Prince Nautilus*), to a restless baby elephant (*Jumbo's Lullaby*), to a passel of loving mothers of various species in *I Love You As Much*. There have been other stories about animals visiting the baby Jesus, but not the specific cast of animals that appears in my story. The fact that some of those species may not actually live in a habitat near Bethlehem was meant to comment on the universality and timelessness of the story, something Jane Dyer [the book's illustrator] picked up on in setting the story on her farm in Massachusetts.

**It's usually the case that authors don't work directly with illustrators on their books. Was this the case for you?**

I have admired Jane Dyer's work for years and was absolutely thrilled to learn that she had agreed to illustrate *Hurry! Hurry! Have You Heard?* Although we didn't work together directly, my editor sent me images of Jane's sketches and paintings as her work unfolded. I'm delighted with the book; Jane has really captured the essence of my text and added her own special magic to it.

**[CLICK HERE](#) for more information about *Hurry! Hurry! Have You Heard?***



**Hurry! Hurry! Have You Heard?**

By Laura Krauss Melmed

Illustrated by Jane Dyer

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