

2006 Christmas Play

The main idea is to present the Christmas story from the perspective of the angels. They had, in fact, been involved in the Christmas story for many centuries, if we can imagine that they had some part in God speaking through the prophets. The hope is that we can capture a little of the excitement there must have been in Heaven that night.

The main actors will be the angels. Since they are organising the Christmas events, they will be pictured as stage managers. One benefit of this is that the main actors can legitimately have clip boards with their lines in place to help them with reasonably complex dialogues.

Introit

Song: **Tell out, tell out the news**

Welcome and opening prayer (vicar)

Presents to be brought to the tree

1. Welcome to Heaven

Play some background "busy" music. Angels rush across the stage looking busy, exchanging words, talking on their mobile phones. The chief angel walks up more gently, exchanging words with angels as they pass by, appears to be organising things, and finally moves into the pulpit.

Chief Angel: *[Talking to congregation]* Ah, hello everyone. Welcome to Heaven. I'm sorry, I'm quite busy, so I may not be quite as good a host as I would normally like to be.

You have come on a rather special night, and we are all rushing around, as you can see, but it is quite good because you will see something rather spectacular.

[Looks at watch] Oh, I have to be somewhere else now. Now where am I going? *[Looks at clipboard]*. Let my assistants explain it all to you. *[Blows his whistle]*

Four angels rush onto the stage and salute to the chief angel.

Chief Angel: Okay you four, I have to go to do an important job now. Can you tell all these people here *[sweeps his/her arm to point to the congregation]* what we are doing?

Angel 1: Yes, we can do that.

The chief angel goes off stage via the front, and the angels now turn to talk to the congregation

Angel 2: Hello everyone. You are in for a real treat now, because you have come on a very special day. Let us explain.

Angel 1: What you are going to see tonight comes after many years of planning. It all started when God first created men and women. Back then they were perfect.

- Angel 2: But sadly people decided to do things that displeased God, and so He needed a plan to rescue the situation.
- Angel 3: The project plan is very simple, but pay attention while we briefly run through it. [*Point at the projected project chart*]. First, look at this. God is going to send His Son Jesus to become a man, and live in Israel and teach the people how they should live.
- Angel 4: But that is only part of the plan. The main part is that Jesus will die for the people in place of the punishment everyone deserves.
- Angel 3: That way, God can forgive anyone who wants to follow Him.
- Angel 4: Simple really, but very clever, and very bold.
- Angel 3: And then everyone can live with God in Heaven, having been made perfect again.
- Angel 4: But look at the detail of the plan. First we had the prophets [*points to the prophets bit on the projected plan*], then the parents [*points to Mary and Joseph details*], and look at this, there is a star we had to organise [*points to the star part*].
- Angel 3: And tonight is when this project plan 'Goes live', because Jesus is going to be born.
- Angel 1: Okay everyone, you all know that this is Heaven. Well, we can do *anything* here.
- Angel 2: We can even take you back in time. Let us first of all show you how we used to tell the prophets about the plan. We were so excited that we used to visit the prophets and tell them little bits about what was going to happen.
- Angel 1: Sometimes I think we used to tell them more than we were supposed to. Actually, we told them *everything*. Bethlehem, the virgin birth, riding on a donkey, 30 pieces of silver, dying for our sins,... In short, *everything*.
- Angel 2: Look over there! [*Points to scene in corner of stage*] You can see an angel telling Isaiah the prophet about tonight, and that was 600 years ago.
- The scene now moves across the stage to where an Angel and Isaiah are talking*
- Angel 3: Isaiah, we have a message for you to proclaim to the people. [*Hands Isaiah a scroll.*]
- Isaiah: [*Reading prophecy*] The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. For to us a child has been born, to us a son has been given. He will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. He will reign on David's throne and uphold it with justice and righteousness. Then you will say "Give thanks to the Lord, sing to the Lord, for He has done glorious things."
- Angel 4: We have many other messages for you, about the time in the future when God will save His people.
- Angel 1: Times of joy and not sadness, of hope and not fear.
- Angel 2: Look around, and you see evil kings, wars, fighting, people cheating in the marketplace.

- Angel 3: But the time will come when God will end all this.
- Angel 4: And it will start with the baby you have just heard about.
- Carol: **Angels from the realms of glory**

2. Nine months ago ...

The Chief angel and Gabriel are in discussion. Two other angels are on stage in the same discussion, but when the scene starts they step back until after the Joseph dialogue. On either side of the stage sit Mary and Joseph.

- Chief Angel: Hello again. [*asks the congregation*] Are you still with us?
- So let us bring you a bit more up to date with the story. Things really started to get hot about 9 months ago. Here is Gabriel, tell him about it.
- Angel Gabriel: First of all I visited Mary, and I told her that she would have a baby called "Jesus". This is what happened. [*Goes over to Mary, takes her by her hand to help her stand, and both go to stand near a microphone*]
- Mary, rejoice! You are highly favoured of the Lord, and He is with you. You are blessed among women.
- Mary: What do you mean? What are you saying to me?
- Angel Gabriel: Mary, do not be afraid, for you have found favour with God. You will have a baby boy who will be called Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest.
- Mary: How is this possible?
- Angel Gabriel: With God nothing is impossible.
- Mary: I am the Lord's servant. Let it be according to your word.
- Mary sits down and Gabriel goes back to the Chief Angel.*
- Angel Gabriel: That was a bit of a shock to Mary, but she was very pleased that God had chosen her to be the mother of Jesus.
- Chief Angel: And then there was her husband to deal with.
- Angel Gabriel: Ah Joseph, yes. He was engaged to marry Mary, but he was so surprised to hear that she was expecting a baby that he even thought about cancelling the wedding. So I woke him one night from his sleep. [*Goes over to Joseph, takes him by his hand to help him stand, and both go to stand near a microphone*]
- Angel Gabriel: Joseph, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child she is expecting is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son who will be called "Jesus", for He will save His people from their sins.
- Joseph: Let it happen according to God's will
- Joseph sits down and Gabriel moves back to the other angels.*

- Angel Gabriel: Joseph is a good man, and I am glad that we chose him to be the Father of Jesus.
- Angel 5: You are right – they will be very good parents. Mary and Joseph are now married, and baby Jesus is to be born soon.
- Angel 6: But there is one small problem – they can't stay in their home in Nazareth.
- Angel 5: No, the Romans want people to return to the towns of their ancestors to help them sort out their taxes, and so today Mary and Joseph are travelling to Bethlehem.
- Angel 6: So Jesus will be born in Bethlehem, and it is our job to make sure that everything goes well.
- [Phone rings. Chief Angel takes out a mobile phone and talks into it.]*
- Chief Angel: Okay guys. Apparently Mary and Joseph have just been spotted approaching Bethlehem.
- [To audience]* I'm afraid all our angels have to go now – they are needed elsewhere.
- [To angels]* Right, are you all ready? *[Nods from the angels]* On with the shades.
- All the Angels produce a pair of dark sunglasses and put them on with an exaggerated deliberant style.*
- [Speaking to the congregation.]* Ah these. *[wobbles sunglasses with hands]* Just you wait, we are going to put on a fantastic light show on for some shepherds later tonight! Just you watch! *[Angels show a thumbs-up sign to the congregation]*
- Carol: **Ding dong merrily on high**

3. At the Inn

The Innkeeper and wife are busy organising and cleaning. They look up to exchange a few words. (Mary and Joseph need to be at the back of the church)

- Wife: We seem to be so busy that I haven't seen you all day.
- Innkeeper: In spite of what the politicians say, taxation is good for business. *[Gets out and shakes moneybag]* Lots of people in the inn tonight. The end of the year profits are looking good.
- Wife: Excellent. I should tell you that I have just let the last room. So we are now completely full for the night.
- Innkeeper: Wonderful. I always like a full inn. *[Shakes his money bag again]*
- The Innkeeper and wife return to their jobs. The angels walk onto the stage again.*
- Angel 7: Hello again. That is the inn that Joseph and Mary were supposed to stay at.
- Angel 8: But there has been one small hiccup – we meant to make sure that one of the rooms was left empty for them, but someone seemed to slip in when we weren't watching.

- Angel 7: We should have arranged for Joseph and Mary to leave earlier.
- Angel 8: [*Sounding exasperated*] Well, we tried, but Mary wanted to check that the doors were locked, to check that the fire had been switched off, to check that all the lamps had been switched off, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera
- Angel 9: And then the journey took longer as they got lost and couldn't agree whether they should have turned left or right at the junction back there.
- Angel 8: But, I do know that there is some space around the back. Not ideal, but it will do.
- Angel 9: And Gabriel did tell one of the prophets that Jesus would come in humble surroundings.
- Angel 8: You can't get much more humble than that stable round the back!
- Angel 9: [*To congregation*] You watch this – no-one down there can see me.
- Mime: *The angel goes down the church to collect Mary and Joseph, leading them by their hands and bringing them to the front and leaving them just before the stage. The Innkeeper and wife move towards the microphones. A door-knocking sound plays.*
- Wife: There is someone else at the door. The trouble is that we are full.
- Innkeeper: We are – I will send them away.
- Wife: Looks like trouble – she's expecting a baby.
- Innkeeper: Well, we have no room.
- An angel moves up and whispers into the innkeeper's ear, without the innkeeper moving. The Angel moves back.*
- Innkeeper: I have just had an idea, they can stay around the back in the stable.
- Wife: That is a good idea. It isn't a great place, but it ought to be warm enough.
- Innkeeper: I will show them to the stable then.
- The innkeeper takes Mary and Joseph onto the stage and sits them down.*
- Innkeeper: I know it is not very much, but I hope it will be okay for you.
- Joseph: Many thanks indeed. I am sure we will be all right.
- Carol: **Once in royal David's city**

4. In the fields

The stage is clear and contains some angels. During the previous carol most angels should have gone around the outside of the church to the back of the church, and be given streamers. The angels who start this scene stay near the front. After the carol, the chief angel moves onto the stage.

Chief Angel: *[To the congregation]* Now you are in for a spectacular treat. Look over there at those shepherds. They are coming in our direction. Keep an eye on what happens. *[Puts his dark glasses back on again.]*

The shepherds walk from the back, and position themselves on the stage watching their sheep and keeping warm. Whilst they walk the chief angel moves off the stage.

Shepherd: *[After they are all on the stage]* Is everyone all right? Man, it is a dark night ... but what is that light over there? *[Now shouting excitedly]* Get down everybody, what is it?

Angel 10: *Appears to the shepherds, who fall to the ground and listen stunned.*

Don't be afraid. I have good news for you. Over in Bethlehem a baby has been born, who is Christ the Lord. He will be the saving of His people.

Angel 11: This will be the sign. He will be wrapped up in cloth and lying in a manger.

Angel 10: Glory to God in the Highest

Angel 11: Peace to you and goodwill to all men.

Angels: *All angels shout from the back, things like "whoah" and "come on".*

[Angels run from the back up the aisle towards the shepherds, waving their streamers, and assemble as a choir, with some prompting from the Chief Angel and his assistants.]

Songs: **Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna to the King of Kings**

Peace to you

Angel 10: *[Points with outstretched arm, and speak with authority]* Go quickly to Bethlehem!

Shepherd: Come on everyone. We have to find this baby!

Shepherds pick up their stuff and run down the church, followed by the angels.

5. The Kings

Chief Angel: *After the singing the Chief Angel gets a phone call, and moves to the front and pointedly removes his sunglasses whilst talking on the telephone with the usual one-sided conversation.*

[To the congregation] Okay, we have to explain what's happening now. Some time ago we sent a star over from the East and some clever Kings realised that we were sending them a message about the birth of Jesus.

So they set off following the star, just as we wanted, and the idea was that they should come to Bethlehem and worship the baby Jesus.

BUT, yet another hiccup. They got LOST. LOST, can you imagine it. They only had to follow the star – I know its not SatNav but it's not that far off. You would have thought that would have been easy enough to do!

And what's worse, they called in on King Herod to ask the way. KING HEROD – I ask you. That bloke is pure evil, and you can bet he won't sit still and do nothing now.

So now we have to act quickly, or else the project will be at serious risk of failure.

[Blows whistle and on run two other angels]

Okay guys, we have a big problem.

Angel 12: Yes, we've heard. And we have a plan.

Angel 13: I am going over to Jerusalem in a minute, and will get Herod's advisers to point the Kings towards Bethlehem.

Angel 12: And once the Kings have visited Jesus, I will tell them in a dream not to go back to Jerusalem but to get out quick in the opposite direction.

Angel 13: And then I will tell Joseph to take his family off to Egypt.

Chief Angel: But don't Mary and Joseph have to take Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem a few days after he has been born?

Angel 12: That's okay. There is time on our side. Herod won't have his act together by then.

Angel 13: Remember, he won't know what he is looking for.

Chief Angel: Okay, sounds good to me. You think of everything!

Mime: *During the song we set up the crib scene with Mary, Joseph and the shepherds. The Kings walk around the church, led by the Chief Angel carrying a star, and then present their gifts.*

Song: **The Servant King**

6. Finale

Angel 14: So that was what happened on the first Christmas.

Angel 15: For a little while longer we will stay excited. Finally God has come into the world in the form of a human, as a little baby.

Angel 16: But later on things will get very sad and painful.

Angel 15: When the baby Jesus will have grown up to be a man the authorities will kill Him on the cross.

Angel 16: But that is still part of the same plan, so that God can save His people.

Angel 15: But now we have more work to do. We have to get Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus out of Bethlehem and off to Egypt safely.

Angel 14: An angel's work is never done!

Angel 16: But we have still have a minute or two for another song, don't we?

Angel 15: Absolutely! Okay everyone, on your feet. Let's all celebrate the birth of Jesus and the joy and hope it brings.

Everyone joins the crib scene on stage and stands to sing.

Song: **To Bethlehem we go**

At the end of the song, let off poppers, then all sit down.

Word from the vicar

Carol: **Hark the herald angels sing**