

Scene 1: The Christmas secret

The Narrator is in the pulpit. Two angels are sitting down keeping quiet.

Narrator 1 Have you ever been the first to know a secret?

Narrator 2 Something no-one else in the world knows?

Narrator 1 Something so exciting that you are bursting to tell someone else, but you know you can't.

Narrator 2 Something someone has told you because you are special, and no-one has been told?

Narrator 1 Something you have discovered, and you are the first to find it?

Narrator 2 A secret about something that is so special that it changes your life?

The angels stand up.

Angel 1 I think they are talking about us.

Narrator 1 Who are you?

Angel 2 Well, we could ask the same about you?

Narrator 2 We are here to tell all these people (*indicates with a sweep of hand*) about something wonderful that happened 2000 years ago – something that was a special secret.

Angel 3 We have a secret too, a most amazing secret, but we haven't told anyone about it yet.

Narrator 1 Then we can't be talking about you and your secret, can we?

Angel 4 Well, in God's eyes one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, so you might have been talking about us.

Narrator 2 (*hesitantly*) OK..... But you *still* haven't told us who you are.

Angel 1 My name is Gabriel, but that is beside the point. Are we, or are we not, talking about the same secret?

Narrator 1 Well you tell me.

Angel 2 Our secret is the biggest secret ever. God is about to give the world his only son, and through his Son he will be able to save the world.

Angel 3 His son will come to be born as a baby boy, with real human parents.

Angel 4 Their names are Mary and Joseph. They are just ordinary people, who have just travelled a long way to Bethlehem. Their baby, the Son of God, is about to be born.

Angel 1 And we are *so* excited.

Angel 2 Oh no! We have just told all these people, and we weren't supposed to tell anyone – not just yet.

Angel 3 So you are all going to have to forget everything we've just told you.

Angel 4 (*points to congregation*) But if you guys are still 2000 years into the future,.....it doesn't really matter anyway! I think I might need to lie down to work this out!

Angel 1 No, we have work to do, and can't hang around chatting I am afraid. Bye for now, and remember, not a word to anyone! (*gesture fingers to lips, then run off the stage down the aisle*)

Narrator 2 They never did tell us who they really are! But if they have the same secret as we have, and I think they do, then we are all in for a very exciting time.

Scene 2: What do shepherds do at night?

Shepherds sitting around a fire.

- Narrator 1 We are taking you into a field on a dark night, to meet some shepherds looking after their sheep.
- Narrator 2 What do you think that they do to pass the time? Let's find out.
- Shepherd 1 Here's one for you, what do you call a sheep with no legs? *(pause)* A cloud!
- Shepherd 2 Ha, here's another. What did they call the sheep who had all its wool cut off? *(pause)* Shaun! Get it, Shaun sheep.
- Shepherd 3 And where did he get his wool cut off? *(pause)* At the baa-baa's!
- Shepherd 4 So what do you get if you cross a sheep with a kangaroo? *(pause)* A woolly jumper!
- Shepherd 5 What goes "Baa humbug? *(pause)* A sheep called Scrooge.
- Shepherd 1 So why did the sheep get arrested by the Roman traffic police? *(pause)* For making an illegal ewe turn?
- Shepherd 2 What do you get if your sheep studies karate? *(pause)* A lamb chop!
- Shepherd 3 Enough, enough! We will soon need to check on our own woolly animals.
- Shepherd 4 There's plenty of time, have another drink. *(passes over a mug, short pause)*
- Shepherd 5 Has anyone seen all the crowds in Bethlehem?
- Shepherd 1 No, I don't go down into the town very often these days.
- Shepherd 2 What's happening there?
- Shepherd 3 You don't know?
- Shepherd 4 We never know what is going on – nobody tells us anything!
- Shepherd 5 And we never hear about anything until it has already happened.
- Shepherd 1 Unless it is something bad. Like taxes. All the fuss in Bethlehem is about signing up for new taxes. We hear all about taxes.
- Shepherd 2 And when we lose our rights. The Romans are very quick to tell us about things we can't do any more.
- Shepherd 3 We're always the last to hear good news,
- Shepherd 4 Have you heard of that priest bloke called Simeon up in Jerusalem.
- Shepherd 5 No, tell us about him.
- Shepherd 1 Apparently he reckons that he has been told that he won't die until he has seen the Messiah with his own eyes.
- Shepherd 2 Boy, that's a dangerous thing to go round telling people.
- Shepherd 3 Is this Simeon chap a good priest?
- Shepherd 4 Apparently so. The people I know think highly of him.
- Shepherd 5 So, if a Messiah were to come, when do you think we would be told.
- Shepherd 1 Ha! I expect we would be the *last* to know!

Scene 3: In the fields, later that night

Shepherds sitting around a fire.

Shepherd 1 1001, 1002, 1003 1004, ...

Narrator 1 It's a quiet night, and everyone seems to be asleep apart from a shepherd counting sheep.

Narrator 2 And I think he is *trying* to get to sleep. *(pause)*

Shepherd 1 No I'm not. I am keeping a careful watch. Is anyone else awake?

Shepherd 2 More-or-less, yes.

Shepherd 3 I say everyone, have any of you noticed there is a new star in the sky these days?

Shepherd 4 Whereabouts?

Shepherd 3 Look over there, towards Bethlehem *(points towards the back of the church)*. Then follow a line up from the horizon, and in the gap between the stars is the new bright star.

Shepherd 5 Yes, I first saw it a few nights ago. I wonder what it is.

Shepherd 1 Looks like it is right above Bethlehem!

Shepherd 2 Do you think it might mean something?

Shepherd 3 Like a sign?

Shepherd 4 Yes, or maybe it is something to follow.

Shepherd 5 But why would it be over Bethlehem? That doesn't make sense.

Shepherd 1 You think about it! I need to check on our woolly friends.

Shepherd 2 There's plenty of time for that; have another drink. *(passes over a mug, followed by a short pause)*

Shepherd 3 Look over there *(points)*, some people are coming.

Shepherd 4 They look different – do you think they may be star spotters or even star followers?

Shepherd 5 Well they are certainly coming our way. We can ask them.

Shepherd 1 Do you hear that, they seem to be playing music!

Music rises in volume, and the Kings then arrive to music from along the side aisle and come onto the stage from the side. The guards go to the back carrying the gifts and sit down.

One king moves to the front, claps his hands and music goes off

Shepherd 2 Can you do that *really*?

King 1 Sure, watch

King claps his hands and music goes on, claps again and it goes off

Shepherd 3 That was very impressive.

Shepherd 4 I can do that watch this.

Claps his hands and sheep start to baa, claps his hands again and the baas stop

Shepherd 5 So what brings you to these parts?

Shepherds move back, letting the Kings take the main stage position

- King 1 You see that star over there? We have been following it from a long way away.
- King 2 We understand that it is leading us to a new King, and we have come to worship.
- King 3 See, we have brought gifts: Gold (*servant brings forth the gold*), incense (*servant brings forth a bottle of incense*) and myrrh (*servant brings forth a bottle of myrrh*).
- King 4 And a team of bodyguards to keep them safe (*kings' bodyguards step forward, looking menacing*).
- King 5 We first went to Jerusalem to the King's palace to find the way.
- King 1 King Herod is his name. He didn't have the first idea what we were talking about.
- King 2 But he has a team of clever chaps, and they went off to their library and came up with the idea that the new King is going to be born in Bethlehem.
- King 3 And the plan is that when we have found the new King we should go back and tell Herod so that he can come to worship as well.
- King 4 So onward we go.
- King 5 (*Shouting as an order*) Guards, in line with the gifts.
Guards pick up the gifts.
- King 2 All set everyone.
- King 3 Farewell shepherds. Maybe see you in Bethlehem?
- King 4 See you in Bethlehem.
- King 1 Music! (*claps his hands, music starts*)
Kings parade off down the aisle. Shepherds move back to the front.
- Shepherd 1 That was a bit of entertainment for the night!
- Shepherd 2 So, a new King? And in Bethlehem? Has anyone else heard anything about this?
- Shepherd 3 It is like we said. We never get to know anything; we're always the last to know.
- Shepherd 4 Should we go to Bethlehem?
- Shepherd 5 Are you off your head? We get a visit from some wacky-looking blokes with more money than good sense, and then you want us to leave our sheep and follow them on a journey late at night.
- Shepherd 1 Yes we could end up being called the shepherds with no sheep – in a word, ewes-less!
- Shepherd 2 So you think that the suggestion is a baa'd idea!
- Shepherd 3 Very good.
- Shepherd 4 But what about the star?
- Shepherd 5 So what about the star? It's just a star; I agree that it is strange, but it's not strange enough to make me want to believe those wackos.
- Shepherd 1 Back to the sheep my star-struck fellows.

Scene 4: Mary, Joseph and the lack of a room

Stage contains a hotel reception desk, and angels sitting at the sides. Narrator stands in the pulpit. The manager is to be played as someone without much sensitivity.

Narrator 1 Now we meet the only people who know the secret. Mary and Joseph have come from the North on a long journey.

Narrator 2 The Romans have declared a census for taxation, and because Joseph's family originally came from Bethlehem he has had to come back to register. But they are newly married, and Mary is about to have a baby.

Narrator 1 A long journey to Bethlehem hardly sounds like the best thing to do when you are so close to having a baby, but when the Romans tell you to go you don't have any choice.

Narrator 2 This will not be an ordinary baby. An angel called Gabriel ... now that rings a bell...

Angel 1 *(suddenly stands up)* That's me you're talking about again!

Narrator 1 Oh you again! Let us tell everyone our story, and you can add anything we forget

Angel 1 Okay, fair enough.

Narrator 1 The story began with a normal day for Mary, but in a quiet moment she was suddenly aware that she was not alone. An angel spoke to her and told her that she had been chosen by God to be the mother of His Son, who was to be called Jesus.

Narrator 2 Mary could hardly believe what she had been told, but she was prepared to put her faith in God.

Narrator 1 A bit later Joseph was also told in a dream about the child Mary was carrying, and immediately afterwards he married Mary and prepared for the birth of the baby.

Narrator 2 Then came the call to Bethlehem and the long journey. *(Pause, and now speaking to the angels)* Is that about right?

Angel 2 Yes, a very good summary.

Narrator 1 Mary and Joseph must have been very shocked when they met you.

Angel 3 Indeed they were!

Angel 4 It was hard for Joseph. He thought about calling off his marriage until we were able to tell him that Mary has been carrying no *ordinary* baby.

Angel 1 But they have been fantastic about it all. They are real superstars.

Narrator 2 So now Mary and Joseph are traveling to Bethlehem, and here they come ...

Angels step back in opposite directions and gently drift off the stage.

Mary and Joseph walk up from the back of the church.

Joseph *(from half way up the aisle, speaking loudly and sounding relieved)* Look, Bethlehem, we've arrived!

Continue walking up towards the stage, but not quite onto the stage yet.

Mary It's not quite as big as I was expecting. Do you think they actually have hotels?

Joseph I am sure they do. In fact, isn't that one there.

Mary *(Reading voice)* Bethlehem Inn. Doesn't look too big. Do you think they have other hotels?

Joseph Not obviously. But I am sure it is okay.

Mary Doesn't that notice say "No vacancies"?

Joseph I'm sure that they can squeeze us in. After all, you are about to have a baby, so they have to be able to do something to help.

Mary Just so long as it isn't the stable.

Joseph Let's go and ask.

Mary and Joseph climb onto the stage and head towards the hotel reception. The hotel manager unobtrusively stands behind the desk.

Manager Good evening.

Joseph Good evening to you too.

Manager Have you come from far?

Joseph Actually we have, all the way from Nazareth in the North. We have to register here for the taxes.

Manager My, that was a long journey. Was it okay?

Mary It would have been better had I not been expecting a baby. It is due any day now.

Manager Ah, so I see (*leans back to give Mary a once-over type of look*). So what can I do for you?

Joseph We need a room please, for a few days.

Manager Well, in normal times I would have been pleased to give you my best room. But we are somewhat busy this month, due to the taxation. So sadly I have no empty rooms. So sorry.

Mary I am not sure about "*So sorry*". Look at me, I need a room and a bed, and I need it *now*.

Manager I assure you that I am very sympathetic. Indeed, *most* sympathetic. But what can I do? My rooms are all full.

Joseph So are there any other hotels in Bethlehem?

Manager Sadly no, we are the only one. But if you don't mind the smell of cattle, I could let you stay in the stable for, let us say, (*pause*) half the price of a normal room.

Mary (*Exclaims*) How much?

Joseph (*Butting in*) We'll take it. We have no choice. And is breakfast included in the price?

Manager Of course. Come with me and I'll take you there. And your donkey can stay in the stable for free too. Never let it be said that I don't treat my clients fairly.

Off they go to the stable

Scene 5: The secret revealed

Shepherds sitting around a fire.

Shepherd 1 Has anyone noticed that the star is getting brighter?

Shepherd 2 Actually it is getting brighter and brighter as we look at it.

Shepherd 3 *(Sounds alarmed)* What's that noise?

Angels run up the aisle waving ribbons and accompanied by sound effect, and end up on stage

Shepherds Wow!!!

Angel 1 Did you like that?

Shepherd 4 Who are you?

Angel 2 Who are we? We've come to bring you good news. So don't be frightened. This is the best day of your life, and we need to tell you about it.

Shepherd 5 No-one comes like that to bring us news. In fact no-one tells us anything.

Angel 3 Well, we are here to tell you something that no-one else knows. This will be good news of great joy for everyone

Angel 4 In the town of Bethlehem, this very night, a baby has been born who is saviour of the whole world.

Angel 1 He is God's own Son. Not just a human baby, but the very Son of God.

Angel 2 Yet you will not find him in a palace, but in a stable; not in a grand bed but lying in a straw manger; not wrapped in silks, but in simple cloths.

Shepherd 1 Does anyone else know this?

Angel 3 Not that we know.

Shepherd 2 Are you sure? There were some strange chaps who passed us by recently, with loads of expensive stuff. They said they were looking for a newborn King.

Angel 4 Ah yes, they have an idea of what has happened, but not much more. They are following that star.

Angel 1 If you go quickly now, you will get to Bethlehem before them. Then you will be first to see God's Son, the Saviour of the world.

Shepherd 3 Wow, that's fantastic

Shepherd 4 What are we waiting for? Let's go ...

Shepherds pick up their stuff and start to leave but are called to stay

Angel 1 Hang on, hang on! There's no hurry.

Angel 2 You have plenty of time.

Angel 3 We are angels. And angels sing.

Angel 4 And after we have told you first of such good news, the least you can do is let us sing to you.

Angel 1 And you can join in as well.

Angel 2 *(Leaning over to the congregation, and sweeping with an arm)* And so can you lot too!

Angel 3 It is Christmas, and soon we will all see the new-born Son of God.

Angel 4 By the way, His name is Jesus.

Angel 1 Also known as Wonderful Counsellor,
Angel 2 Mighty God,
Angel 3 Everlasting Father,
Angel 4 and Prince of Peace.
Angels Glory to God in the highest, and peace to all people on earth.

Scene 6: The stable

Stable scene.

Narrator 1 And so our story takes us from our everyday life towards Bethlehem, to the stable, to Mary and Joseph, and to a new born baby, the secret birth of the Saviour of the whole world.

Music based on simple minor chord progression plays, with animated images of moving from our ordinary life into church, whilst the stable scene is deliberately assembled followed by Mary and Joseph coming on stage carrying a baby, which is placed into the manger, followed by the angels running from the back and gathering along the back of the stage.

Narrator 2 Humble shepherds have come quickly to the stable, to worship. The one who is born to be the Saviour of the World has been hidden from the rulers and powers, and revealed to ordinary people. The 'Only Begotten of the Father'; and the shepherds are the first to know.

Shepherds come in and kneel in worship.

Narrator 1 The wise men saw a sign in the East. They left their homes to seek out one who was to be born as King of the Jews, and have come to worship with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Kings come in, present their gifts, kneel and worship.

Narrator 2 Finally all us here today can bring our own worship. We too have been shown the new-born Saviour of the world, the Son of God come to us in human form as a baby. As the shepherds left their fields to seek out Jesus, so we too, each Christmas, leave our homes to come to meet the Christ. Let us celebrate the birth of our Saviour and welcome him into our lives.