

While Shepherds Watched – A Commotion!

A nativity play by Silvia Purdie
for the Methven Presbyterian Church, Mt Hutt NZ

Setting: A high-country hut created with:
2 lines of chairs set at an angle, as beds
2 mugs on a small table
Some old jerseys and blankets lying around.
A door (or just space between 2 chairs)

People required:

- Narrator
- Fred (Fred and Ted could be dressed in bush shirts)
- Ted
- Angel (wearing a shiny or bright coloured large scarf)

The congregation are required to provide sound effects.

Music: prepare the church musicians to play 1 line of the Halleluia Chorus, or short audio clip on sound system.

Sing: *'While Shepherds Watched'*

Narrator: One chilly night, two shepherds were watching their flocks. They worked on a large high country farm, and they were moving a flock from one part of the station to another, across a high pass. Too far for one day, so they had to overnight in a farm hut on the way. It was a quiet evening, and from the hut they could see down the hill a small village, just a handful of houses, a school, a church and a pub.

They had started early and walked many miles, and Fred and Ted were tired. They finished checking on the sheep and they staggered into the hut to make a brew.

Fred and Ted come forward and sit down in the hut.

Fred: Gee whizz, Ted, I'm buggered!

Ted: Too right, Fred, I'm done!

Fred: Not a bad day though. So far so good.

Ted: Too right, Fred. We did OK.

Fred: Cuppa, Ted?

Ted: You beauty, Fred!

Fred: Cheers!

Narrator: They were just relaxing when they heard a commotion outside. Something had upset the sheep. Now, folks, we need your help with this. Can we get some 'baaing'?

Congregation: *Baaaaa!!*

Fred: What the - ??!

Ted: Quite the carry on, Fred! Better check it out.

Narrator: So Fred and Ted went out to check on the sheep.

Fred and Ted go out the door.

Narrator: There was baaing (*congregation* – “baa!”) and running about.

Fred: Oi, you lot!

Ted: Calm the farm!

Fred: It's that blimmin old ram! He's trying it on with all the Sheilas!

Ted: Oi, Cecil. Cut it out!

Narrator: Having restored the peace, the shepherds went back in the hut.

Fred: Time for some shut-eye, Ted.

Ted: You bet-ya, Fred.

Fred and Ted try to get comfortable.

Narrator: They were just dozing off when they heard a commotion outside. The party in the village pub were leaving, and there was much revving of engines.

congregation: vroom vroom

Loud music blared out from the cars, there was yelling and cat calls.

Fred: Blimey, Ted, those fellas have had a few!

Ted: A few more than a few, Fred!

Narrator: The party-goers drove away and peace and quiet returned to the valley.

Fred: Right O, Ted, I'm a gonner. You all good there?

Ted: Yep, sweet. You?

Fred: Yeah. You better not snore!

Narrator: As Fred and Ted, and their sheep, drifted off to sleep, the stars shone and all was still. But down in the village, in one house, lights were turning on, people were rushing about getting towels and boiling water. It was too late to head into town! Too late even to call the midwife!

Fred and Ted slept - until they were woken by yet another commotion!

For this particular commotion, I need all you folks to stand and sing us a couple of nice rousing Halleluias:

Sing: “Halleluia! Halleluia! Halleluia!” from Handel’s Messiah. Then sit down.

Fred: By crickey, Ted, what is going on?!

Ted: Beats me, Fred!

Narrator: Fred and Ted wrapped their blankets around them and staggered out into the night. The sight they saw rocked them to their boots.

Fred: Wha ... ?

Ted: Wha ... ?

Narrator: In a sky filled with angels singing glory to God, they could hear one voice clear as day.

The Angel steps forward and stands on a chair to the side of the hut.

Angel: Don't be afraid!

Fred: We aren't afraid!

Ted: Speak for yourself!

Angel: I have great news for you!

Fred: For us?

Ted: Why us?

Angel: I have great news for all the world! The promised one has come! The Christ, the King, the Saviour of the world! He is here! He is born!

Fred: Born where?

Angel: Right here.

Ted: Here??

Angel: No, there.

Narrator: The angel pointed down the hillside, to the house with lit windows.

Angel: Go, see the sign, greet the child!

Fred: What, us?

Ted: What, now?

Angel: Yes, you! Yes, now! Go!

Narrator: So they went. They took off down the hillside. The Bible even says that they ran. That's pretty keen in the pitch dark across the paddocks. And when they got there, they found a newborn baby. The Bible does not say what they said to the family they met that night, or what they did next, or what the family thought about shepherds barging in. But the story was passed on, and we treasure it today.

We can only imagine how that night changed those shepherds' hearts. We might imagine them as old men meeting Jesus the man, maybe telling him about the night of his birth and the angels blaring out their glory song into the stillness. For they were there. They were witnesses. They saw heaven opened. They heard the message of peace and salvation for all the earth. They touched him, the tiny child, Son of God and Son of Man. And they invite us to join them.

Thank you.

Sing: *'Carol our Christmas an Upside Down Christmas'*